

News Section IDACA website

Lauri Label (UCLA 2016) Peace Corps Volunteer in South Africa 2019

Lauri Label, part of the second semester 2016 IDACA cohort of SSA students at UCT, visited us in Cape Town in January as well as March this year. After graduating from UCLA, she joined the Peace Corps and was placed in a tiny village in northern KwaZulu-Natal on the border with Swaziland. Prior to her placement there, she underwent intensive training in the Zulu language to facilitate her teaching of English and Mathematics in a rural school there.

In March this year, she met up for an evening discussion with a number of current IDACA who were interested in hearing about her experiences as well as learning more about Peace Corps voluntary work first-hand. Lauri is living in a village where she boards with a family but lives in her own small rondavel (hut) with no running water. She teaches Mathematics and English to senior primary school students and when she gets the opportunity to leave the village for a short break, she uses local buses and the familiar mini-bus taxis to Durban, then down to the Eastern Cape and on to Cape Town. The distances are huge and the journey takes days. The bonds she has formed with the family, her students and the other Peace Corps volunteers are strong and she has very rapidly had to learn to live with no running water, an intermittent electrical supply and internet and “a village on the top of a mountain in a very beautiful area ” but with the hard reality of few resources and high unemployment, so prevalent in South Africa in rural areas.

It's been wonderful to keep in contact with her and watch her journey from UCT during the #FeesMustFall activism of 2016 to her graduation from UCLA and her return to South Africa in a very different context. She hopes to visit Cape Town in July when she'll meet up with the arrivals for the second semester IDACA group. She's considering returning to UCT for post-graduate study on completion of her Peace Corps work.

