

The De Guzman @ Cru HQ



Special Edition

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South Africa Summer Mission Trip

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When you go to South Africa, you go to a place that will change you forever. Not only would your perspective shift regarding life, but your understanding of certain aspects of the world entirely and wholeheartedly transforms. I never saw myself in South Africa ten years, five years, or even



two years before now, yet there I was witnessing a whole new culture and lifestyle different than those I'd seen in my typical everyday life. Most rural areas are popu-

lated by tiny houses generally scattered around without uniformity. The roads around these houses are usually just dirt paths. The people get around by walking or carpooling, so you see many waiting on the sides of roads as we were transported to our locations. South Africa, although, with its cities, isn't that different from what people would regularly see in the US. They have good malls, smooth roads, gas stations, restaurants, theaters, etc. Driving on the road's left side is one of the most confusing things you can see. But even with these advances in a better economy, the country is going through complex leadership changes and rapid inflation.

For two weeks, I worked as a rotation leader for nine to eleven-year-olds, helping them get to their stations. Altogether we had five stations: activity, snack and chat, game, craft, and story. Our entire group split into two teams and handled four locations, each comprising of about 150 kids. During our first week, our team and I got to help with a camp held at a school area with about 150 kids. Many kids can speak some English, but their primary language is Zulu. South Africa has eleven main languages. At first this was a problem with the children since we couldn't communicate normally. Some translators could help through the local church in the area provided as volunteers for the camp. But we mainly used hand signals, did fun little dances, played games, or reacted to what they did. This provided a cool and unique experience that ensured the kids were having a fun yet fulfilling time without using the usual means of communication. Many kids loved the camp, and I had an excellent time guiding and helping the 20-30 kids we oversaw.

Jojo & Heather De Guzman

During the second week came a new set of challenges that we had to overcome. In this other camp came a new set of kids that totaled almost 400.

The surrounding area was a shanty town, and the place we worked in



was no bigger than a quarter of a soccer field. Concrete structures littered the area, allowing only two field areas we could use. The main field area at first was covered with rusty metal rods sticking out of the ground, remnants of a past structure. Since we were playing games in that area, we covered the rods with plastic bottles so the children couldn't cut themselves while running around. The kids here were significantly different when it came to their demeanor. None of them knew English, so communication this way was out the window. We mostly played and got dragged around. And when almost ten kids are coming at you meaning to drag you around, it gets scary, but towards the end of the week, this behavior was less likely to be seen. I was able to connect with many of them meaningfully.

On the third week, many of us spread out to three separate teams to help work on smaller, but just as essential ministries. Some went to help build houses and dig trenches, others helped take care of babies left by their families, then some visited the elderly, and lastly, some people helped sort books. Throughout all this, I've grown to love working in South Africa, creating incredible friendships with the people there, and learning their culture, and trying to speak the language. Personally, while witnessing the poverty throughout many of the home areas, the trash lying about, and the poor conditions many of them go through, I can also see the children smiling, the volunteers happily singing while working, and most of all, the people's strong faith in the Lord. Encouraging and guiding these children as they walk on this path has been a blessing. Their enthusiasm regarding faith has made me change how I approach the subject to others and has helped me be more willing to share my faith in my community back home. *Thank you so much for your prayers and financial support. Because of your partnership, I was able to have this stellar opportunity that has really changed my life and the lives of others.*

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