

Lucas Hartwell

Moving across the world to a country that almost constantly seems to be on the brink of civil war is a questionable dream for someone to have. Nonetheless, it is a dream that I plan on making a reality. The University of Cape Town in South Africa is a beautiful campus situated on rocky cliffs that overlook the City of Cape Town and the Atlantic Ocean, and is the finest institution for learning on the continent. It is truly my dream school, offering almost any imaginable program to its students, from economics all the way to bioscience.

But to say that wanting to go there is a decision that requires little thought for me is far from the truth. South Africa is much like the rest of Africa in the way that it is built on a colonial past full of blood and pain, and today that past has a long and hurtful legacy that has made it a dangerous and often violent country. It is not considered a place for an American to go to school, and the state department (as well as my parents) deem it a hellhole. Poor working conditions, violence, drug smuggling, illegal arms production, and high rates of HIV/AIDs plague the nation. It is a far from ideal place for me to go to school when I compare it to East Lansing or Ann Arbor.

But all these violent and disgusting truths serve as a factor that motivates me to go to school there rather than deter me. If there is a place in the world that I can make a difference in after leaving high school, it would be in South Africa. I'm the son of a man who has represented organized labor for most of his life, and I'm brokenhearted by the ways the working class of South Africa are treated. Foreign companies seeking diamonds, gold, and valuable resources often work their employees like slaves, and in horrendous conditions that can often lead to an early death for them. If I can go to Cape Town after high school, I plan on entering their law program which would give me the tools and qualifications necessary to start making a difference by fighting for better working conditions for



these people.

Long nights have been spent by me on the phone with the admissions office of the university, trying to see what I would need to graduate with to be accepted. Longer days of consideration and research have been spent by my parents, seeing as to if it were financially feasible for me to go to school overseas. It is truly a long road ahead of me, but determination to get somewhere far from Grand Blanc to a place where I can make an impact always drives me forward. Maybe the optimistic and American values held by someone like me are meaningless in a place so far from home, but if I don't go then I genuinely believe I will have missed out on a momentous and historical opportunity. When the universe throws you a beautiful opportunity it is often in the most unorthodox of ways, and I feel that the University of Cape Town is that opportunity in my life.

