

Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Durango, Colorado



**Jaffery Academy: Photography
and Documentary-making
Arusha, Tanzania**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

I worked at the Jaffery Academy Special Education Department. This is one of the only schools in Tanzania that offers a child with special needs an academic education, physical and/or vocal therapy, and training for a job once the child has graduated. My job while there was to work with my internship partner to create a documentary about the school, create a website, and teach the students and teachers photography literacy and storytelling.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

During my internship, my internship partner and I accomplished all the projects that we were sent to complete, except the documentary, which was a little larger of a project than was originally anticipated. During this internship, I learned how to use Adobe Premier Pro and Audition (both professional tools used to make high end movies and audio projects).

I also gained more experience in how to teach photography and photo literacy to students and to those with whom I do not share a common language. When first teaching photographic literacy, we first have to talk about the concepts of essence and cultural symbolism. These concepts are hard enough to express in English, so I struggled to break these complex and vague concepts down into pieces that could be both translatable and understandable. On my first go at it I failed on both accounts, in a semi-epic way. I defined essentialism using terms of cultural symbolism; I defined cultural symbolism using the terms of essentialism. Thus I failed completely because I defined two very different concepts as one concept. On my second round of teaching I did better because I took the time to break down the concepts into their simplest terms. Plus, I made sure that those simple terms existed in Swahili. It took many more lessons until I really got a feel for what was translatable and what was not, and how to break down concepts so that both translation and understanding were possible too.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

A problem at the school that I helped solve was that the school had a very limited online presence. This was a problem because parents who have children with special needs could not find out more about the school, and there wasn't a way for parents to see all the resources that the school has to offer for these children and their families. To solve this problem, I built a website and loaded it with a lot of the resources that the school has. Thanks to the classes that I have taken in digital design, and my work with a professor creating a digital archive, I was able to complete this task very quickly and now the school has a website that parents can access.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

My teamwork skills were strengthened in a variety of ways. Because I was never apart from my internship partner (we shared an apartment), I learned a new lesson everyday on how to work/live more harmoniously with another person. That said, the most important lesson that I learned was how important communication is. The importance of clear communication is drilled into all of us at school/during our trainings; when communication breaks down, projects go down too. I experienced this first hand. When I am working, I am not a very communicative person. I prefer to become completely absorbed in the project at hand. One day my partner and I were working and I needed a particular part of a project from her in order to finish the project. I asked her for this piece, and to my surprise, she was not even working on that project but instead was focusing on a different project. What had happened was that I had failed to communicate with her which project I was working on and she assumed it was the project we had worked on yesterday, a project that we had completed and I forgot to tell her. This type of event happened more than a few times between me and my partner. That said, by the end of the internship I was finally communicating better with her and we got a lot more work done, and far more efficiently, because of improved communication.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

This internship was very enlightening to me. I learned so much about myself and how I work with other people. My career plans are still the same after this internship: I plan on doing sustainable development work with photography in foreign countries. This internship highlighted areas that I need to improve personally in order to pursue this type of work. I also learned how to be more accepting of others' views of how work gets done, and what it means to be productive. I feel more committed to my career plans now and the steps that I need to take to reach my goals have become more obvious.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

My internship was in a country that I have never experienced before and the common language was one that I do not speak. In many aspects, everyone I met had a different background from mine and a completely different understanding of the world. Because of those differences, communication, and even how to act outside of our apartment, were difficult. My partner and I were lucky to have a very good translator/cultural guide/friend who showed and taught us how to act. One perspective that I really enjoyed learning from a few locals was the significance of how one walks. My partner and I were walking with some local friends and the subject of how I was walking was brought up. Our

friends said that I walked *on* the world, not *in* it. I am still reflecting on what the difference means. My friends did not clarify what they meant by words but by showing me how to walk *in* the world. It is very enlightening to me, to see that even walking is loaded with cultural difference and significance.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

I would just like to express how incredibly grateful I am to have had this experience. This experience has informed me so much about myself and how I want to contribute to the global society.