

Scott Kloeck-Jenson International Travel Grant Report
Joseph Harris (South Africa 2008)

With the support of a Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship, I travelled to South Africa to conduct preliminary dissertation research on attempts to implement universal health care in that country over the past 15 years. Through this experience, I was able to speak with key actors involved in campaigns for universal health care and examine historical documents in relevant libraries and archives. The nearly three months I spent in South Africa significantly enhanced my knowledge of the issues, and, on a broader level, contributed to a greater historical sensitivity, understanding, and appreciation of the challenges of a country struggling to liberate itself from the legacy of apartheid.

In Johannesburg, I was fortunate to consult the libraries of the University of the Witwatersrand and the AIDS Law Project, as well as the South African Historical Archive (SAHA). SAHA especially proved to be a boon to my research, with an enormous number of holdings related to health-focused social movements both pre- and post-apartheid. From these records, I was able to gain a better sense of who were the leaders in the movement campaigning for health equity during apartheid and to see how their roles shifted once the government began to embrace the principles they championed after 1994 and onwards. This kind of deep historical understanding would not have been possible without a visit to South Africa to consult these important sources.

I also conducted interviews with a number of important figures in the health reform movement during my time there. Because the HIV/AIDS epidemic hit South Africa so hard, the issues of universal health insurance and HIV/AIDS treatment were often intertwined. Among the informants I met with were current and former representatives from the African National Congress, the Ministry of Health, the South African Medical Association, the AIDS Law Project, the Treatment Action Campaign, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, Doctors without Borders, LoveLife (a major South African AIDS awareness NGO), the Health Systems Trust, the Public Service Accountability Monitor, Discovery Health (the largest private health insurer in South Africa), medical doctors, and independent health economists involved in the issues. I also had the opportunity to listen to speakers at the University of the Witwatersrand and attend a conference on the relevance of the European Social Model to South Africa and a major conference on TB policy, sponsored by the AIDS Law Project. The majority of my fieldwork was carried out in Johannesburg. However, I also met with key informants in Durban, Grahamstown, and Capetown.

Despite all of the important progress I made on my research project as a result of my time in South Africa, I would count the direct exposure to the history of people's struggle against apartheid and the subsequent challenge faced by the ANC in fashioning a working government after its demise as being even more valuable. In one's teens and twenties, foundational experiences that change the way you think are fairly common. However, by one's thirties, these experiences become rarer (I was 32 when I went to South Africa). Confrontation with South Africa's history of apartheid in the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, in the District Six Museum in Capetown, in the township of Soweto, in interactions with people I met and talked with, and driving through parts of the country that had in the past constituted the African homelands made issues of institutionalized racial prejudice and discrimination

more real to me than anything I could have ever read about in history textbooks and biographies. I feel fortunate to have had this experience in my thirties when such foundational experiences are generally rarer. And for this, I have the Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship to thank. I will remember these experiences for life.

I also had fun documenting my experience in South Africa with the digital camera provided to me through the fellowship. The pictures I took illustrated snapshots of globalization as they uniquely manifested themselves in South Africa, and I hope the pictures I took will contribute well to the mission of the Center for Global Studies to draw attention to issues related to globalization. This was perhaps the most fun and creative part of my time in South Africa.

I am especially honored to have been selected to be a recipient of a Scott Kloeck-Jenson fellowship given the Scott Kloeck-Jenson's ties to the country I visited and would like to thank the Center for Global Studies and the family of Scott Kloeck-Jenson for this honor.