



## In the Face of Adversity

**M**Y STUDENTS FROM SUNY-OSWEGO and I went to Cape Town, South Africa, in January 2009, as part of a short-term interdisciplinary course. As a person who grew up in Southern African countries, I found it important to challenge the power of ideas that various media images—CNN, the Discovery Channel, and Animal Planet—may have imprinted on our minds, projecting Africa as a monolithic, broken down, “crying and dying show.” I was invested in initiating a discussion about the value of actually locating ourselves within the space we held only in our collective imagination. The complex difference between what students expected of Cape Town, and what they actually “met” was obvious on our first evening: standing on a balcony overlooking the mountains surrounding the bay, the Southern Cross burning into the night sky, one of my students said, “Neelika, I knew that it was not going to be what I thought, but I never expected this.” Indeed, the

Kaap die Goeie Hoop is full of wonder and delight: the hand of history still shadows the present, undeniably visible through the enormous contrast between the rich and the poor, the lack of access to avenues of mobility for those who were excluded by apartheid policies, and the high HIV rate among certain communities. The image above is from the day we spent at Themba Care, a clinic for children who are HIV positive. Despite all the exciting things we experienced in South Africa, our day at the clinic was the most significant event of the entire trip—not because we felt pity or hopelessness, but because we learned how to confront the enormity of the problem, while simultaneously, contributing tangibly toward solutions.

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**YOU'RE INVITED!** We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at [elainal@nafsa.org](mailto:elainal@nafsa.org).