



SET YOURSELF APART

RWANDA

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LEARN

I've woken up! I've learned that there is a whole other side of the Earth where forgiveness, compassion and love exist freely. I've seen how a nation can rise - physically and spiritually - from the tragedy of genocide to rebuild itself into a safe and humane place; I experienced that joy and forgiveness. After being in front of thousands of people speaking a language different than my own I've learned that I can perform and teach in front of anyone. I've learned how to be flexible when teaching, how to communicate with more than words, and how to embrace the uncomfortable in order to make a change. And I've learned that I have a duty to bring these lessons back to Buffalo.

TEACH

We trained teachers all across Rwanda about Drama-Based Education. DBE is a method all educators can use, which involves getting students out of the seats to use their bodies to tell the story of what they are learning - to demonstrate mathematics, to physically enact the use of tools or forming of a cell. DBE is such a neat way to invite the worlds of *education* and *theater* to collide. My happy place exists between these two worlds!

PREPARE

Before leaving we practiced methods of being mindful activists with simple activities such as breathing as a community. This was incredibly useful before, during and after our trip.



Lilly touring Rwanda (left), rehearsing to perform (right), and with Benite (below).

“I was terrified to perform in front of past génocidaires. I really had to push away from my comfort zone in order to be vulnerable enough to sing and dance with them. I learned to be present & to stay in the moment without judgment. This was the most emotional & freeing ‘humanity’ experience I’ve ever had.”

Favorite Aspects of the Program

- Eric! Our tour leader and main host, Eric became a brother. He took us on safari, trekking to see Colobus monkeys, visiting our sister city of Muhanga and more. But silly moments and conversations with Eric - on the bus and in the hostel - was a joy of its own.
- The Urukundo (love) compound was founded by Mama Arlene, a Pennsylvanian woman who adopted 35 children. We performed an improv of “The Ugly Duckling,” which the kids LOVED! I left a big piece of my heart at Urukundo after making deep connections with the children, especially 3-year-old Benite.
- Our day with the ladies of Azizi Life was such a highlight. We prepared a meal, helped in the garden, fed the livestock, fetched water, practiced weaving, and sang, danced and prayed together.

