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Fighting for an Education: Building a Better School for the Youth of Uganda  
Jinja, Uganda

Whenever someone would ask me what I was going to be doing for the summer just a few short months ago I would reply and say that I would be traveling to Jinja, Uganda to do architectural research. The general response was a resounding sense of confusion. There's architecture to study in Uganda? No, they were not wrongfully perplexed; Jinja is not some secret architectural treasure hidden in East Africa. The truth is, I had a very specific project in mind for my thesis.

I first came up with my thesis after being involved with the Women's Boxing Club and Baraka Bouts on campus whose charity efforts raise money for an elementary and secondary school in Uganda. After speaking with one of my coaches I learned that the secondary school is having major foundation issues and is in danger of becoming unusable. Holy Cross Missions, however, has purchased a new site in hopes of raising enough funds to build a bigger and better school for the children. This is where I saw my opportunity. In our fifth year of architecture we are required to complete a design thesis of our choosing. I had yet to come up with any ideas that I feel I could become truly passionate about, but there it was. I was going to design the new campus of Lakeview Secondary School.

Having the opportunity to actually travel to Jinja and see the site for my design and the current site of the existing school was crucial. Gaining all of the architectural analysis and research for my thesis was always first and foremost on my mind however the most amazing parts of my experience that I will truly take away from it were the people I met. I could not have asked for a warmer welcome upon arrival.

One of the first days I arrived at the school I had the pleasure of getting a tour from the headmaster of the school and learning so much information from the school curriculum to the drainage issues on campus to life in Jinja itself. In addition, I was fortunate enough to share meals with teachers from the school as well as Ugandan Holy Cross Mission priests involved with the schools. Also, most importantly for my thesis I was lucky enough to meet with the architect who is currently working on the new campus design and discuss and learn about the local building methods in this particular part of Uganda. The conversations I had and the contacts I made within the architectural realm and beyond are the elements that will greatly assist in making my design as true to real life as could be. Also after speaking with Father Neary of Holy Cross he welcomes any ideas that I may come up with during my thesis for the new design of the school and is very willing to implement all and any that could be applicable which I feel is an amazing opportunity for me to truly make a difference in some small capacity.

I sincerely want to take this time to thank CUSE for giving me the chance to have this wonderfully eye opening and enriching experience. Not only do I believe that it will assist tremendously when I have to complete my thesis, but it was also an amazing personal experience as well. I highly recommend to anyone that is looking to do research about a location abroad to take the time and make the effort to go there. I know that my design will be extremely enriched by having the opportunity to experience the culture firsthand and meet these wonderful people. Thank you!