



Hands for a Bridge

Spring 2014

~Adventures in Northern Ireland~

Introduction by Hannah Brown

For all of us who travelled to Northern Ireland this past February, and had the honor of spending two weeks with Mr. Harkin, the Oakgrove students, and the myriad of incredibly honest, courageous and eloquent speakers we met, the experience was unforgettable. There's no question that those two weeks we will be "unpacking" for the rest of our lives. The days we spent in Northern Ireland were enlightening, joyful and challenging, bring with them new perspectives that only emerge when we left our comfortable, familiar circle of life. The trip reinforced the meaning of Hands for a Bridge, what we all were here to learn to do: to be brave, to listen intently, to be thoughtful and genuine and open.

It was an incredible journey, and the friendships we forged with our Seattle community and the Northern Ireland ones will never be lost. There are countless stories that we would love to share with as many ears as will hear them; the words shared by bus drivers, passerby, our host families, the tales of every bus ride conversation and rainy morning jaunt, dinnertime "slagging" and Corrymeela circle. Most of these, though, we'll have to share without words, remembering how strong we could be as we basked in the glow of that collective honesty and earnestness.

Here are a few stories of what resonated particularly with some of us travelers.

People by Liam Todd

Although the real importance of the Northern Ireland trip lies in the people we met, the places we went were of great importance as well. The crux of our journey was our stay at Corrymeela. We arrived after a long bus ride and I was terribly excited because our group would finally have a serious amount of down time together. I wasn't expecting anything in particular; I was just happy to be with everybody. When we got to Corrymeela, I noticed a few guitars. I was even happier now. On our first full day at the retreat, we hung out, played cards, played guitar, went for a walk, ate, and talked - quite a lot. Though the details of those stories must remain undiscussed, I learned a great deal about the kids over there and about our own class members. In groups, we discussed different questions about isolation, masks and our personal identities. In the evening, we staged an open mic session which was less serious than traditional open mics as we held them at Roosevelt because we only shared what we'd recently created, but still had a lot of fun. Following the open mic, we had a large discussion, all 57 of us in a circle, reflecting on our time together. This morphed into a much more profound discussion that still hasn't sunk in all of the way for me; it was deeply sad and one of the most influential conversations I've ever witnessed. After Corrymeela, our time with the Oakgrove students was nearly over. We were on our way down the mountain, but there was still learning left and much reflecting to be done. After we said our farewells and gave out countless hugs, we headed to Belfast. The next week in Belfast was great because it was our time to unwind. We stayed in Port Stewart for a night on our way and were still coming to terms with the fact that we had just said goodbye. We enjoyed ourselves, remembering the incredible week we'd just all shared. We went sight-seeing, played, and shopped. I think my time in Port Stewart was the most fun experience I had with the Seattlelites; we were a newly bonded group and it really showed. In my mind, the experiences we shared at the retreat at Corrymeela and in Port Stewart eclipsed most else; they demonstrated for me the depth of the friendships we'd forged.



Places by Anthony Weinland

During our time in Derry/Londonderry we had the incredible experience of meeting Roy Arbuckle. Roy Arbuckle is a local folk musician who sings about peace in his hometown and abroad and about his life experiences. He is 70 years old, has a deep, gravelly, baritone voice, and is an accomplished guitarist. Meeting him was an especially surreal experience for me because of my connection to music. I have played guitar for a number of years and brought one with me that I played when we had down time. Mr. Arbuckle arrived when we were in the middle of "Dancer To The Drum", a song written by Beth Nielsen Chapman that he had sung before with a past group, and which we had sung in class. We proceeded to play his version of the song, rather than our own, and then play some of his original work. Between songs we chatted about his life and what music means to him. We played a song he had written for an American Indian convention in the mid-west about coming together as a community. Our group learned the simple chorus and sang along. He was complimentary of our singing and joked about how nice it was to have his very own choir. We continued to play others such as "Dead Man's Ray-bans", his account of purchasing sun glasses in a St. Vincent de Paul thrift shop; and "A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart", a call to move away from the conflict and into a forgiving future. Meeting him was a great lesson because it showed us another perspective on the conflict: the perspective of an artist. Rather than form some



sort of organization for people to talk about their problems, he sings about them. His words create a poetic doorway through which others can share his emotional experience. In this way he is activist, using his special set of talents to reach out to the world.

Experiences by Anni Hong

The trip to Northern Ireland was a learning experience that altered the way I look at the world and myself. The most profound take

away from the trip for me is that everyone has a story, and it needs to be heard. As human, we tend to categorize things into boxes and label them right or wrong. However, when we actually got to Northern Ireland, I realized that there is no innocent side of the conflict, but only the best friends who were killed; there are no fundamental religious differences, but only strong political and economic barriers and perceived differences that divide people. One of our guest speakers in Derry/Londonderry explained the conflict from a human rights' standpoint; he said that all three sides, the British, the Unionist, and the Nationalist, had violated human rights. He explained his involvement in finding out what had happened behind each murder and explosion, because often times human lives became merely digits and plain descriptions in the newspaper. Due to the lack of neither truth nor justice following the deaths of loved ones, families aren't able to move on. He and the families do not seek prosecution but are simply looking for closure, to know what their loved one had experienced. Two other groups we met in Belfast expressed similar goals, WAVE (Widows Against Violence) Trauma Center and Healing through Remembering. I learned that the psychological damage of the victim is very important, and that one way to help release the tension is through sessions of medical help and story sharing. One of the reasons why the conflict is passed on through generations is because it is not worked through openly within communities. People try to put it in the past; try to pretend they're moving on and act like everything is fine. However compassion and understanding for both sides will only come through confession and storytelling. At the retreat, we also delved into individual storytelling, to come to greater peace within ourselves. The 57 of us had built such a great sense of trust that we were comfortable enough to share the most essential components of ourselves with each other, and tell some of the most personal stories we've ever shared. In big and small group discussions we listened to, supported and trusted each other, and discussed issues in our own community that we would not normally discuss. It was so beautiful and empowering to share our own experiences with each other, and struggle with others too, to come to greater understanding just as we saw the speakers who came to us do.

~Adventures in South Africa~

People by Calvin Peterson

In South Africa, we met many different people. It would be impossible to name and tell everyone's story, so here are a few highlights. First there was Joe, who led us through the District 6 museum. Joe helped us understand what living in District 6 was like through personal experiences. Joe had grown up in District 6 and was very eager to share what he had seen with us. Another notable person is Veronica, who is a Hands for a Bridge Alumni. She taught us the dance that we demonstrated at a potluck. Of course there was a number of teachers from the Belville and Isilimela schools who helped throughout the trip. Mr. Moss and Ms. Emery were a massive help, and the trip would not be possible with their help. Without these people, the trip to South Africa would not have been the trip it was, we will never forget them and their contributions to our incredible journey.

Places by Sarah Randall

Isilimela Comprehensive School is located on the edge of Langa, just off of the M-2 highway. For many locals, taking that turn off of the M-2 is a big step, because many of them have never been near Langa. We spent most of our first week and the end of the second week going to classes at Isilimela. Visually, everyone could see that we didn't belong. But after the students realized we were there, it went back to business as usual. Most of the teachers didn't even acknowledge us in their classrooms. At first this confused us, but looking back, we agreed that it made us feel more like we belonged there. In the classrooms, the desks were so close together that students often had to climb over the tables and chairs to reach their seat, which must have changed daily. At a table with four students, there would maybe be one textbook for the students to share. And they also would share water bottles, taking turns to fill it up at the faucet. Transitioning to Belleville was hard coming from Langa and Isilimela. The school is similar to Roosevelt in some ways, but many aspects were very strange for us to experience. We noticed that it was much more strict than our school, and that the students seemed to listen to and even respect the teachers more than what we have seen at Roosevelt. Most of the classes were in Afrikaans, so we often just sat in class. But the students liked to ask us about parties, prom, and other stereotypical American things. These were questions that we did not get at Isilimela. The Belleville students also expected us to ask questions about lions and wild animals because they assumed that that is what we, as Americans, connected with South Africa in our minds. During our two weeks in Cape Town, we visited four beaches, and Cape Point. Each time we went on a group outing with just the Roosevelt Hands for a Bridge group, we were able to enjoy each other's company, and become closer. Boulder Beach was the most interesting place to experience, because we were sharing the sand and sun with penguins. This was one of the biggest tourist attractions that we visited on our trip, but we still enjoyed this new and unusual experience. Before we left for the airport on our last day, we went to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, located at the bottom of Table Mountain. We were able to relax and reflect on our experiences in a beautiful setting. Writing and sharing reflections with the group gave us a sense of closure, even though many of us were not ready to leave. When we look back on the two weeks we spent in South Africa, we will remember the people and experiences we had, and the beautiful places that we were lucky enough to see together.



Experiences by Julia Morgan

Since being back, all of us-regardless of where we travelled-have been asked, "What was your favorite part?" I'm sure we all responded with various answers, but I know we all felt that this was simply an unanswerable question. For me, traveling to South Africa, full of fun and excitement as it was, did not leave me with an obvious 'favorite part'. From the welcome braai (a South African style barbeque) to the farewell braai, each moment was as magnificent and unique as the last. The people we met, the places we experienced and the atmosphere we created all made us feel both as if we were at home and on an exotic adventure.

During the first week we went to school at Isilimela everyday where we'd follow our new friends through the halls as they showed us their world. At lunch the clicks of Xhosa would fill our ears as the scent of fat cakes frying wafted over to where we sat. After school we'd dance and sing with both schools, watching as they realized they weren't really so different. At the end of the day we returned to the beautiful homes of our host mamas where a home cooked meal and a warm smile waited for us just behind the door.

Through it all we got to travel through the beautiful country. Exploring the top of Table Mountain and hiking up the rocky path to the Cape of Good Hope treated us to views worthy of the Gods. We were given the privilege to swim at beaches at the tip of the continent and sit in the sand alongside penguins and grooms. None of us have a favorite part, only because the entire experience of travelling to South Africa, with all the wonders we saw, was incredible.



Introduction by Rey Zane ~Activism~

On our return from South Africa and Northern Ireland the Hands for a Bridge Class embarked on activism projects. I the students, working in groups of four or five, have been working on a variety of goals from cleaning the hallways and bathroom to breaking down clicks. Despite the uniqueness of each project, they all have commonality in that they all were created with the intent to better the Roosevelt community.

Ninth Grade Outreach by Haley Barton

The transition from middle school to high school is never easy, but the groups of incoming freshmen at Roosevelt have become increasingly distant from their peers in the past few years. When students feel isolated and misunderstood, they can easily become unfocused and depressed, creating a negative learning environment and community. I teamed up with Celeste, Isabell, Kaiser, and Jayme to adopt Mrs. Magidman's ninth grade World History block classes through a series of three workshops. During our time with the freshmen, we sought to foster dialogue about our school and problems we face and emphasize the importance of respectful relationships between peers. We created lesson plans that involved games, artistic activities, discussions, and, of course, food. Although three days might not be a long enough period of time to truly get to know someone, it was great to see how the students began to open up and feel more comfortable with us and each other even after a limited amount of time. In one exercise, we asked students to write a response to a prompt about stereotypes and expectations at school, and we then read their answers aloud anonymously. This facilitated a fantastic discussion about the social structure and groups at Roosevelt, as well as ideas about how we might begin to break down these barriers. The community-building activities we led seemed to be beneficial to the group as a whole, and we hope that a similar project might continue into next year that would provide freshmen with a supportive community sooner.

Challenge Day by Chris Harris

Challenge day is an event based off of an MTV show called “if you really knew me”. It is an event during school hours where any student is welcome and students are encouraged to engage in conversation with people that they normally wouldn’t. It took place on June 4th in the little gym and lasted all day. We hope that through this event people will realize that they have more in common with people around them than they thought. Also we want them to realize that we are all more similar than we are different. We hope to accomplish these goals through targeted games and both small and large discussions. The event went very well and all of the participants felt better about the Roosevelt community after they left compared to when they came in. We were very happy that we attracted a wide arrange of people and we hope that this event will become an annual occurrence.

The F-Word by Kira Buss

The F-word, (the F stands for feminism) a new student run club, just had their first meeting. This club is dedicated to creating a safe environment for Roosevelt students, open to all who wish discuss gender issues, and learning more about the equality between women and men. The first meeting carried a healthy amount of attendees, and the material covered ranged from video clips to discussions centered around gender, and gender stereotypes. A second meeting is soon to follow, and even though we are coming to the end of our school year, the F-word is expecting to have a very solid turnout of students for the second meeting, and is hoping to carry this club into the next year. The creators of the club are now focusing their attentions on bringing a diverse crowd of people to club meetings in order to not only peak the interests of those already involved or interested in gender issues, but those who may be interested but haven’t yet had an opportunity to participate in any gender oriented discussions.

Integrating the ELL Students by Tianshu Song

Roosevelt is a welcoming place at first glance, but it is very difficult to become fully absorbed into the Roosevelt body. This is true for many students but even more so for those who have come to America within the last year or two. The ELL-English Language Learner– classes, taught by Mr. Wade, support non-English speaking students with their normal class work but provide an environment that attains greater proficiency in English. Outside of their ELL classes, however, these students are significantly marginalized and isolated in our school. So as an activist project for HFB, four students, including myself, decided to break the barriers, both gaining a better understanding of how the ELL program functions and integrating these students into the Roosevelt community. The project is still in progress, but we have already had two class discussions with Mr. Wade’s classes and one writing session in which the students were free to submit their writings or drawings to the Creative Arts Quarterly, which will be published next month. We hope to make the ELL students feel more included and supported in RHS, as well as make the community a more diverse place for all.

Lock-In by Simone Archer-Krauss

On Friday May 16th Roosevelt became a place for students from every grade and every social group to meet and discuss cliques, abuse, and barriers in one of our Activist Projects, a lock-in. As the first lock-in, an event where students come for the whole event in order to spend time with each other and aren’t allowed to leave until it is over, led by HFB, we had an excellent turnout with 71 people. When the students arrived Henry Mullin led them in games such as the Human Knot and Common Ground. Throughout the night students were able to enjoy discussions, art projects, writing workshops, and a game room. The night was capped off with a wonderful Open Mic.

The students enjoyed themselves immensely. Next year we are planning on continuing the lock-ins. We are creating an Activism club, modeled after the HFB clubs in South Africa and Northern Ireland and with the purpose of opening HFB to the rest of Roosevelt, which will be in charge of putting on one lock-in every quarter.

School Art Enhancement by Rey Zane

On March 25th Hannah Brown, Amy Pelz, Rachel Pollard and myself sat down to discuss what we believed the Roosevelt community was in need of from a group of activists like ourselves. We decided to work *“to create and sustain a joyful and livable school environment that encourages personal human progress rather than perpetuating an atmosphere in which bad decisions are made and seen as dismissible.”* For the four of us this meant not only bettering the relationship between students, but also a general improvement of school’s physical environment.

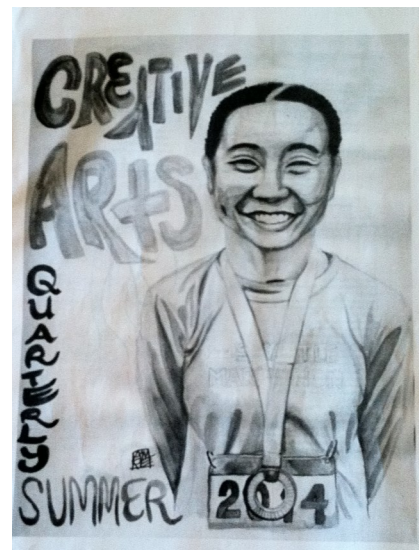
Our brainstorm included cleaning the “smokers corner” across from the school, painting over the graffiti in the bathrooms, creating arts walls for the enjoyment of the student body, and trying to install compost bins in classrooms and by hallway trash cans. We hoped also to involve students who were not from the HFB class to help us accomplish our tasks.

Thus far we have contacted the Roosevelt administration to attempt to bring composting into the hallways, classrooms and teacher lounges of the school. We also have spent time cleaning the “smokers corner” across the street from the school. At the moment we are focused on creating an art wall the students can use. The wall will later be hung in the school Commends area, to celebrate our school unity. We still hope to have a “spring clean” of the school which will involve students who are not in the HFB class!

As for myself, I have expanded my knowledge of what an activist does and why their role in a community is so important. I wanted to visibly improve our school from the inside and I would like these changes to be sustainable and encourage that other students in the future also have the power to change their school. This lesson has been an important lesson for me and my classmates and will be one that will continue to serve us and help us serve others.

Creative Arts Quarterly by Hannah Christman

The Creative Arts Quarterly is a student run arts publication featuring artwork of all types, ranging from photographs, writing and poems, sketches and drawings. The Quarterly provides an outlet for students to share their artwork- something that I feel is very important and that the Roosevelt community tends to lack. In order to continue, the Quarterly needs motivated and passionate students. This year, I expanded the staff of editors to include sophomores earning honors credit for their LA class, in hopes that it will create exposure to a wider community at Roosevelt. We organized conversations with Language Arts classrooms, with an emphasis on freshman and sophomore classes with students who will continue at Roosevelt for the years to come. We also put up folders in those classrooms for students to submit their work. Over the course of the second semester, the sophomores & upperclassmen staff have worked together to put out two 16 page Quarterlies with a combination of works they have gathered from their friends and classmates, and pieces submitted via email or one of the submission boxes or folders.



Magnuson Radiation by Hank Pollet

After three years of the Navy covering up dangerous radiation at their former facility at Magnuson Park, HFBers Raven Wade and Hank Pollet have worked to push the Washington State Government to force the Navy to clean up the radiation there to acceptable standards. We started by presenting in Roosevelt classes about the issues in the process and basic education on the dangers of radiation. The students have also started a letter writing campaign to Washington State Governor, Jay Inslee, asking him to direct the Washington State Department of Ecology, the regulatory agency, to enforce stricter standards on the cleanup process. They have also organized student attendance at public meetings with representatives of the Navy and The Department of Ecology. This project is important because the buildings with dangerous levels of radiation include the Arena Sports facility, which is used by large numbers of children, and is very close to the soon to open Waldorf school at Magnuson.

Identity by Grace Nakahara

~Projects~

Hands for a Bridge is a class that reaches opposite ends of the earth. Through the class, students form friendships that defy every fence thrown in their way. But HFB is also about self-growth; it allows for their paradigms to travel as far as they have. The class Identity Project allows students to reflect on their personal growth, begging the question, “What makes you, *you*?”

Identity is important. It’s the root cause for both intolerance and acceptance. It’s what separates an individual from the commonalities. It is a complicated collection of past experiences. The Identity Project was as well.

Students created a book with five expressions that differed from poems to songs to letters, and each was based off a word that helped to shape the life of each, individual student. Some students included artwork to further expand upon their personalities.

When the books were finished, each student shared two pieces with the class. Within one class period, each student shared one expression. There was laughter and tears and everything in between. The second pieces were shared at an open mic, which was equally as riveting. This new knowledge allowed for complex insight into the lives of our peers. It was both a shock and a relief to discover that even after a year of building friendships, there was still so much more to learn about one another.

Corn Husk Dolls by Raven Wade

When I heard that Polly was going to be coming into the classroom, I was very excited; those visits were special to me in particular because of my relationship with Polly, she has been like an aunt to me, a wonderful mentor, and I was ecstatic that she would be interacting with us in class. When she visited in the beginning of the year, it was great to see a familiar face and listen to her stories. She brings calmness to the class that I think we all appreciate. On this last visit, she shared a story with us and taught us how to make dolls made out of corn husks. It was very special to hear the mythical backstory behind these creations because it holds personal meaning for her, and it was brave for her to share that emotional moment. Afterwards, we talked about the important takeaways from the story, how it is important to always remember your responsibilities.

It was enlightening to see how each student constructed and then dressed their dolls. For me, I had some trouble with the string being too slippery, and when Polly came over and saw that I was struggling, her support and advice was helpful in reminding me that it was okay to take a step back and breathe and then go at it a different way.

Film Exploration by Forrest Allison-Brown

During the course of Hands For a Bridge, we have explored issues of social justice through many mediums: literature that examines race conflicts, projects that delve through complicated histories, discussions that regard the current state of women’s rights and many others; but there was one form that we had yet to utilize: *film*.

Having realized the absence of a visual medium, we were divided into small groups, of which each would host a showing of a film that displayed social injustice in one way or another. There were three catches, however: the film could not be in English, it could not be a Hollywood or Bollywood production and each region of the world could only be represented once.

With these guidelines set, the small groups set out to find a movie to host. The result? A wide variety of topics. Three examples of the films that were chosen are *También la Lluvia* (*Even the Rain* in English) that focused on the privatization of water in Latin America and its effects on the people living there, *Jellyfish*, which depicted the life of Israeli women and the everyday tasks and challenges that they face, and *Children of the Pyre*, that took place in India at sacred and very busy cremation grounds where children earn money by stealing burial shrouds for resale.

Each film proved to be a success in terms of displaying social justice issues, but also in working as group bonding experiences. Many of the showings took place at a student’s house, which created a more informal setting that allowed for friendly remarks and the sharing of popcorn as well as meaningful discussions following the movie.

International Family Day by Celeste Nygren

In 1994 the United Nations declared May 15 the International Day of Families to celebrate the importance of family, culture and people around the world. It has been celebrated every year since, and while a global observance, it is not a public holiday. Because of this, many including myself did not know this day existed. However, this year the Hands for a Bridge community decided to celebrate the day in a more personal way. We created the first “Hands for a Bridge International Family Day”, connecting all members of the program, as the name suggests, internationally. A small event, it was a symbol of the bonds that have been formed through the program. It all began with the one tradition every class has participated in, designing and wearing a T-shirt. Current students, faculty, and alumni were asked to wear their HFB shirts. These pieces of wearable art made appearances at school, work, college campuses and even just around the house. Pictures were taken of those that were able to gather together, and shared on the group Facebook pages, and everyone was encouraged to reach out to fellow HFB members. It was a reminder that HFB isn’t just a program that you complete and forget about, but a family that you are part of for the rest of your life.

Gender Project by Isabelle Griffith-Filipo

Throughout the recent spring months in Hands for a Bridge, the class embarked upon a unit enveloping all aspects of gender. Though it was a unit which Mr. Nolet had not originally planned on teaching, the class felt gender was a very important topic that needed to be addressed in HFB. The class was ultimately successful in getting him on board because of the strong collective desire to discuss gender. The group explored different perspectives surrounding this issue through reading and discussing poetry and novels, as well as writing and sharing personal stories in which gender played a role.

Everyone wrote two pieces narrating experiences they have had with gender, and shared with the class. The different opinions and occurrences provided an interesting and diverse look at the theme. All writings were read aloud, dissected and thoroughly explored.

For the Gender Book Extravaganza, each student was assigned to choose a book they felt dealt with gender in some way. After individually reading the book, each person shared important aspects and themes, allowing a great learning and discussion process to take place about gender and how it occurs in different works of literature.

Ultimately, we noticed through this project that gender is an everyday reminder that we are not yet equal. To solve this, everyone’s voice is important- to shed light on what is often covertly swept under the rug.



~Reflections~

Reuniting the Group by Claire Shearer

The unpacking event for Northern Ireland travelers and their families was a great opportunity to debrief on what the trip meant to us individually, and gave us an excellent opportunity to reflect as a collective. This formal gathering gave parents of travelers more insight into what it was we were all doing in Northern Ireland and our purpose there, rather than just the few words we sputtered out in the car ride home that hadn’t even begun to sum up our experience. Many parents asked questions and personal growth came from both sides. Sadly, not everybody was available to come, however, this made the conversation very intimate and casual. Parents walked away with a firm concept of the Northern Ireland culture and the ability to compare and contrast traveler’s different experiences. Students walked away fulfilled from the chance of reflecting on the trip with many new insightful realizations. Overall this unpacking event was very successful because it was the act of sharing our knowledge and continuing the Hands For a Bridge legacy.

Class Reunion by Merrill Liddicott

Both groups spent a wonderful two weeks in either Northern Ireland or South Africa. Our trips were both extremely valuable experiences, and full of personal growth. The trips were very unique and different from each other while at the same time they had a lot of things in common. Each trip group came back enriched, changed, and closer than ever. Travel created an incomparable bond between us. While experiencing different events in the respective countries, members of both groups had learned a lot about one another. With each group having become so close, everyone was curious as to what our reunited HFB class would be like upon return. The first day back we were tired and generally overjoyed to



see each other. We had all just been on very influential trips and this is something we knew we shared. However, realizing that we might know a lot more now about our trip-mates than the rest of our classmates made a lot of us feel a little lost. It was hard to combine as a class again, but, after coming back from something so empowering, we were all very motivated to make change. To do this, we had to work together. Knowing that, we got to work on new projects, such as our film project and our activism projects. Through working together to make change at Roosevelt, we connected again with those that we had spent two weeks without. Once again we

became the tightly knit Hands for a Bridge class that we had come to know so well earlier in the year.

Middle by Cole Garry

I can see the ocean.

I can see the vast, endless ocean, and maybe, just maybe, I can see the rest of my life.

I can see the future swaying in the branches of the trees, alighted on a rare cloud, and blowing past me in the wind.

My future terrifies me.

Sliding off the mountain, crashing into rocks, falling from the sky – my dream is liquid.

My future is ephemeral, not because it is short, but because even the lightest current could derail it.

I could ignore it, dive in the freezing water, swim away and never come back – or would that be good?

Will I instead sit here, waiting for a future that will never come, one that will lap at my feet and slowly wash away the very ground I stand on?

I want a future – any future – but I want to find it.

I want to climb the tree, fly to the cloud, and catch it in the wind.

And yet...if my future is light enough to be carried by the breeze, do I want it?

I can't let myself be carried off into nothing, nor can I sink to the bottom of the sea. So I'm just here, I guess.

I'm just stuck under the African sun.





Another Not So Typical Day by Henry Mullin

Cornflakes over everything. They are like the air you breathe here in the mornings. We finished our cereal, me declining the offer to heat them up in the microwave, and we left for school. I donned my street clothes (or “civies,” as they called them) and Ruben was dressed in his navy blue sweater and charcoal gray shorts. Today was our punishment; washing the vans. After continuously not texting Mr. Von Pohle on time, the teachers had to find a way to get it into our head that this was important. A safety issue. We all understood that, but punishing us by placing hoses and bubbles in our hands seemed rather foolish. Students at Bellville stared at us as we lackadaisically scrubbed every

last piece of African dirt off the once white vans. Halfway through, we were given a talking to because we weren’t doing a good job. “Use a little elbow grease,” was what Mr. Von Pohle preached. In our teenage response, we loaded up our elbows with suds and proceeded to scrub the vans in this fashion. Mr. Von Pohle was not amused, but we found it hilarious. After briefly going to school, taking more pictures with gangs of giggly girls and doing some writing, we headed for Robben Island. We swerved and curved through Capetown and made our way to the waterfront. Owned by White and worked by Blacks, it was the most touristy place we had visited. We briskly walked to the ferry, passing white tourists sipping bottles of wine and groups of Black deck-hands smoking crudely rolled cigarettes. We sprinted across a bridge, (I don’t think we could have looked like obnoxious tourists to any greater extent than that moment), and finally arrived at the ferry dock. And then we saw the sign. The sign that said all tours were closed that day to high winds in the Cape. What a spectacularly, magnificently, fantastic waste of time.

Corrymeela by Amie Stevens

The perfect setting for a retreat or as the Oakgrove students called it, a residential. We were right on the coast. Next to sheep in fields and the ocean. It was absolutely lovely. There were 57 of us total. In the beginning it seemed too big and almost impossible to bring everyone together and trust the group as a whole. But as we broke up into small groups and had personal discussions and began to break down barriers, we then found the large group size to be less intimidating and more comforting. The retreat was had the perfect mix of laughter, singing, talking, snacks, and stylish pajamas. We were forming this community full of acceptance, compassion, and joy. On the last night we shared together in a big group and it became quite personal and emotional for many of us. And the wind howled outside and shook the windows, while inside we dealt with our own storms and eased the burden with listening ears and warm hearts. Time felt irrelevant in this safe haven we had created for one another. And yet the next morning and our departure came. But that is what a retreat is. A space to reflect, accept, and understand. A place to escape and appreciate, and then spread what you have learned to those who did not have the opportunity to experience what you did. Corrymeela was one of the many homes I created with others in Northern Ireland and it was an unforgettable spot on my journey thanks to the efforts of the staff, our teachers, and my fellow HFBers.



Senior Farewells by Jayme Mina

Hands for a Bridge has been a huge highlight of my life, and being a part of this community was a great way to end this year. I think the best part was probably and unsurprisingly my trip to Northern Ireland. It was such a beautiful place and I feel really fortunate to have gone there. My favorite part was just being able to actually go to Northern Ireland and meet new people. I don't think I would have had to chance to go across the world and create these types of friendships otherwise. There were moments when we had down time and we'd just relax and have a good time. I remember while we were waiting to go to dinner with everyone some of us went to a park and had a chat along the way.

I really think it was the simple moments with my peers that I will cherish the most. I would never have dreamed I would be able to end my high school experience with something as awesome as Hands for a Bridge. I consider myself very fortunate to have been a part of Hands for a Bridge my senior year.



Senior Experiences by Kaiser Demaranville

As I come to the end of my senior year, many experiences made this year the best of my high school career. As a senior, I have thoroughly appreciated being a part of Hands for a Bridge. One specific experience I enjoyed was my trip to Northern Ireland. I really enjoyed visiting Derry and staying with an Oakgrove Integrated College student. My homestay, Peter, was the head boy at Oakgrove. He ran events and projects similar to those that ASR runs at Roosevelt. He was very open and friendly and his friends were really nice and funny as well. We first got to know each other by learning about the places we were from. I learned some of the slang they used and I shared some American slang in turn. We all had a great first night at the potluck and I loved meeting many of Peter's friends. I noticed that the seniors at Oakgrove were exceptionally courteous and well-mannered. At the school, there were kids from middle to high school so the age range was quite large. Peter introduced me to one of the younger kids there, Patrick. He hoped of becoming head boy at Oakgrove like Peter, who often acted as his role model. My experience in getting to know my homestay brother early on in the trip was an experience I will never forget.

