



In March of 2017, I made the decision to participate in the study abroad program in Zambia. I had heard about the program through professors and peers; however, it was not just word of mouth that influenced my decision. It was the opportunities this program had to offer that truly sold me on the experience. Very few college students that I know will get to say

when they graduate that they went on a trip to Africa, let alone that they worked for a month on a diversified Zambian farm. My passion for animal agriculture and desire to travel paired together persuaded me to say yes to this opportunity.

After talking with students that had went on the trip in the past and with Dr. Ajuwon, I believe that my expectations for the class were clear. I expected that, over the course of the month, we would be able to develop a wholesome perception of Zambia and Africa agriculture. The trip also provided the chance to learn first person about African culture. Previously, I have read in books and heard in lectures about the differences and challenges between African agriculture and American agriculture. I expected that this study abroad course would enable me to discover these challenges and differences for myself and maybe allow me to elicit a small change in the process.



From working directly on the farm picking, washing, chopping, and drying cassava, to bottle feeding dairy calves whey, the course was truly a once in a lifetime experience. One great factor of the program was that it required me to recall information that I had learned in other courses and bring it into practice in Africa. The relationships that were built with the Zambian workers and other students in the course are great assets for the future. The course was true to its purpose and allowed me to gain a greater understanding of Africa and agriculture.

Disney and conservation media has done a great job painting Africa as this far off land with lush savannahs, warm sun, and endless herds of wild roaming animals. This may not have been my exact expectation for Zambia, but it was fairly close. I expected to be driving down an old dirt road watching majestic animals off in the distance. I expected for Zambian culture to be different than American culture. With only a short time as an independent country and my perceptions from books and lectures, I expected that Zambian culture would be rural and rugged. I expected for families to be independent and self-sustaining. Ultimately though, I knew that, no matter what my expectations were, they would be blown away by the realities of a country so different than mine.

After spending a month in Zambia, this expectation to expect the unexpected was the most accurate part. The geography and landscape of Zambia are much different than I imagined. Not to mention,



there was a lack of wild roaming animals and great savannahs. However, after learning more about the Zambian culture, all of these differences made sense in the reality. As John, our host, always said, Zambians are still hunter gatherers and that mindset is what dictates their entire life. The lack of forest, savannah, and animals all stem from hunter gatherers hunting for food and stripping the forest for barren farm lands. From a society standpoint though, I was greatly surprised by the Zambian way of life. Poverty permeated nearly everyone's life, yet there were individuals that were striving to break the cycle and become more. This could not be expressed more clearly than with Rogers, who started as a part-time hog keeper and is now a partial owner and sole manager of the chicken operation on the farm. With that said though, the hunter gatherer mindset was still a shock for me in many ways. The mentality of "if I can't have it then no one can" holds great truth in Zambian culture, and the endless burning and VooDoo enable this to be a constant threat to agricultural progress. This experience in Zambia will be one that I will never forget. Zambia will always hold a special place in my heart because of the people who are day in and day out struggling to make the lives of others better.