

**RENFORD REESE, CAL POLY POMONA**  
**CIEE REPORT ON SEMINAR IN SOUTH AFRICA, JUNE 10-21, 2000**

The CIEE seminar in South Africa gave me a superb opportunity to explore language, culture, and ethnic relations in South Africa. I learned about the different strategies South Africans have incorporated to foster positive ethnic relations in the post-apartheid era. Indeed, South Africa's courageous multicultural experiment is a model for the world. My interest in studying the dynamics of ethnic relations in South Africa is borne out of my experience growing up in the segregated South. At times in history, the state of ethnic relations in the southern U.S. and in South Africa have been parallel.

In my brief stay, I learned about the duties and roles of the newly developing Statutory Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Linguistic, Cultural, and Religious Rights. I learned about the role of the Pan-South African Language Board, which promotes all languages in South Africa. I became more knowledgeable about the impact the Reconciliation Trials have had on various sectors of the South African community. The CIEE seminar, coupled with keen observations, inspired me to enhance the Colorful Flags program, which I direct at Cal Poly Pomona University. While I was in South Africa, I introduced this program to various sectors of the South African community. And, although I had already been introduced to the concept of Ubuntu in a meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Emory University a couple of years earlier, I was able to see the manifestation of this concept when I visited the township of Crossroads in Cape Town.

The overall theme of the seminar in South Africa revolved around democratic governance. I teach "Introduction to American Government," "The Politics of the Public Policy Process," and "Public Human Resource Management." The fact that I am a political science professor put me in a unique position to understand, and take advantage of, the various topics discussed under this rubric. This seminar gave me new insights on the politics of the public administrative process in a different context.

Moreover, I emphasize a cross-cultural perspective in my classes--allowing students to bring their diverse experiences into dialogue. Each student in my class is responsible for learning something specific about a culture and sharing what they learned during periodic "cultural learning sessions." This experience has enabled me to further internationalize my courses by being able to discuss with students the socio-political and economic realities of South Africa from a first-hand perspective. I have incorporated South African languages and cultures into my "cultural learning sessions." I am positive that my rich CIEE experience will have a significant impact on my pedagogy and my scholarship.

On another note, on the last day of the CIEE seminar, I requested to be taken to the poorest school in the poorest area of Johannesburg so that I could give a donation. I was taken to the Tshebedisanong School in Soweto. This school contained grades K-6. They had approximately 200 students and five classrooms. The assistant principal of the school gave me a tour of their library. The library contained only 31 books. My experience in Soweto prompted me to collaborate with the Trust for Educational Advancement in South Africa (TEASA) to start a Soweto Schools Book Drive in the U.S. My involvement in this project stemmed directly from the candid realities to which the CIEE seminar exposed me.