

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity”

– Nelson Mandela

Stepping into the Slave Lodge in Cape Town, a building that holds such a deep South African history, was an awe-inspiring moment for me. A space that was once symbolic of oppression, but has now been converted to represent power. It revealed to me the ability we as South Africans have to reclaim our history in order to finally speak our narrative.

I learnt the rich history of South Africa. The non-Eurocentric, picturesque version of our story. And this opportunity allowed me to rectify my previous misconceptions on history. Walking through certain exhibits brought to life The Struggle in vivid detail. To see this as a born-free and to also hear our guide’s first-hand experience really helped to me understand the gruesome experiences of the past in an experiential way. Not only has my academic and historical knowledge grown insurmountably, but I have also felt my empathy and compassion develop too.

We were given the opportunity to hold our university structure under the social justice microscope. As a group of diverse students in a learning space, we were able to critically discuss the problems that plague the microcosm of Stellenbosch and to deliberate on how we can actively contribute to increasing our inclusion and promoting human rights as student leaders in our prestigious institution.

This has been a transformative experience for me. And something that I will be continually be grateful for.

*By Michaela Chetty*