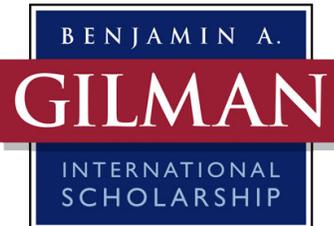


## ANDREA THOMPSON, SOUTH AFRICA, 2004

Dillard University  
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**M**y experience studying abroad in South Africa was perhaps one of the most enriching aspects of my undergraduate studies at Dillard University. I studied with the University of KwaZulu-Natal through the School for International Training (SIT). Having never traveled outside the U.S. and holding full-time employment to contribute to my tuition and books at my home institution, I didn't think that I could possibly afford to study internationally. However, I was pleasantly surprised that there were more opportunities for financial assistance than I had imagined. Following a visit to my university's International Studies Office, I was certain that I wanted to experience the benefits of living and studying in another country. I knew that this cultural immersion would not only widen my perspective on

international issues, but also provide me a better understanding of domestic issues. I saw this as a dually rewarding opportunity for me personally; I could learn more about my own culture and ethnicity while helping to provide valuable research on reconciliation and development during the ten year anniversary of the ending of the apartheid system.

The program was structured to provide students with three different homestay families, as well as the chance to live independently for the final four weeks. Having a variety of living experiences complimented the educational component tremendously because it gave me the opportunity to interact with locals on a daily and more personal basis. The intensive Zulu language component of the program proved to be quite useful. As an Urban Studies and Public Policy major, I was most interested in community development and sustainability programs. After gathering research, which included meeting with government officials and volunteering with local NGOs, I completed a 40-page independent research project on the provision of affordable quality housing in the New South Africa.

I am most thankful for the generosity of Gilman Scholarship Program for

providing the financial support for me to spend a semester studying abroad. My experience not only supplemented my undergraduate studies, but has largely shaped my career goals and efforts to contribute to pipeline and diversity initiatives that provide opportunities for students with limited financial means.

Following my admittance to a top law school, which I was unable to accept due to insufficient financial resources, I became very involved in efforts to reform student loan policies. I am actively volunteering with several organizations that provide scholarships and credit counseling to undergraduates.

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This past summer I had the opportunity to intern with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation through the Federal STIPDG Program administered by The Washington Center. I am currently employed with State Farm Companies and working diligently to finance my law school education.

### FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

I worked with Dillard University's International Studies Office to coordinate a local symposium in collaboration with the six Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the State of Louisiana. The Symposium was entitled

"Increasing Internationalization at HBCU's" and was well attended by hundreds of local students and faculty. I had the responsibility of being the facilitator of the Financing Study Abroad Workshop, where I discussed my experience and

presented information to students about the Gilman Scholarship and other opportunities for financial assistance. In addition, I served as a pre-departure assistant to five students who applied and received a Gilman Scholarship.