A Journey through the Apartheid Museum

I am an international student from Nigeria, where I trained as a physician. Being from Nigeria, I had heard about apartheid in South Africa. In high school I had learned about the untold sufferings the apartheid regime brought onto blacks in South Africa. It was constantly in the news. I had read books on apartheid, but to visit South Africa and go to the Apartheid Museum helped me get a feel for the past.

The award-winning and internationally acclaimed Apartheid Museum attempts to present a balanced account of twentieth-century South Africa. It uses dark images, sounds and a bleak atmosphere to characterize that troubled era.

From its entrance to its exit, the museum recounts the political upheavals that marked the enforcement of racial segregation in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. It then moves on to the country’s unique transition from racist state into the continent’s beacon of hope. It is an interactive journey through the darkest years of South African history and a testament that good will always triumph over evil.

I will never forget the final words of one of the heroes of the apartheid struggle, Solomon Mahlangu. On April 6, 1979, at age 23, he was sent to the gallows for his belief in justice and freedom. His last words, which are written and framed on a wall, read, “Tell my people that I love them and they must continue the struggle. Do not worry about me but about those who are suffering.” It was an emotionally tense evening when our group gathered for reflection after that visit. Tears rolled down many faces as we reviewed that day’s event.

I am glad our group saw some things that would make them appreciate America, a land that proclaims its freedoms but also has its legacy of racism and segregation. By visiting these places, we all could learn to respect one another and live in peace, regardless of race, color, or nationality. That journey through the Apartheid Museum made me appreciate the gifts of love, freedom, and happiness.

— Edwin Omohwo