

Trip to Bermuda



On the 12th of December 2015, we boarded a direct flight to Hamilton, Bermuda for a short-term (one week) faculty-led study. Every member of the team - Allie, Lakendra, Devin, Sally, Amore, Aaron was definitely excited and looked forward to our time in Bermuda with recognizable anticipation. We had five objectives for our trip: 1. Explore the island and experience the diverse cultures, cuisine & recreational activities on the Island; 2. Learn about the unique

architecture, history and physical geography of the island; 3. Learn about Bermuda's influences on the global market economy; 4. Explore the diverse social determinants of health on the Island; 5. Participate in community-based health & social programs as volunteers. Our learning emphasis however was on examining the social determinants of health in Bermuda. We accomplished every one of these objectives and had a great time in the process. Here are some highlights of our trip.

Arrival

We arrived mid-afternoon and met with nice breezy weather. We were told it had been raining the week before and were advised to bring our rain coats and umbrella's along. Although we came prepared, we did not have to use any of them because the weather stayed warm, breezy, and sunny throughout the week. The rain came on the day we left! As we drove through the winding roads lined with palm trees, we admired the unique architecture of structures and homesteads; they reminded of spaces and places in colonial Africa, specifically inspired by the Portuguese and the British. The Island's charm was instantly captivating and inescapable.



Welcome Dinner & Christmas Boat Parade

After a brief stop at the bus station to buy bus tickets and the Modern Mart to buy groceries for breakfast, we headed downtown for an evening of fun and relaxation. We were very hungry so we had to stop for dinner at



Flanagan's where we were all treated to very delicious food! We had to wait for what seemed like eternity for our food to come because the restaurant was completely packed, in fact the entire downtown was throbbing with people, residents of the island had come out of their homes and lined the main street by the ocean front to

enjoy the annual Christmas boat parade. The parade ended with a spectacular fireworks display. We were very privileged to be invited to join a group of banking professionals and financial experts at the roof top of the Butterflied bank (the largest bank in Bermuda) for a great view of the parade. We were treated to snacks and enjoyed good conversation with new acquaintances.

Church Service at Cornerstone Church



Bermuda has one of the highest churches per capita in the world. The majority of the population identifies themselves as Christians. We attended a church

service to experience some aspects of the religious culture in Bermuda. We enjoyed our time at Cornerstone Bible Fellowship and were able to connect our experience to some of what we have learned in class. "One of the first things that was shocking to me occurred while we attended church. Unlike the Southern USA, there was immense diversity. People from all different backgrounds and ethnicities seemed to live and worship in harmony with one another. This directly relates to health because it reminds me of an article I read this semester regarding how women who experienced racial discrimination had a greater rate of maternal health complications as opposed to women who didn't." - Amore Jones



Hiking in the “Forest”



fish and pasta prepared by Dr. Obidoa.

After lunch we embarked on a hiking trip in a nature forest reserve several miles from our guest house. Devin led the way. We walked and explored the forest. It was a little dark. We followed a path that led us deep into the reserve. We were a bit disappointed when we did not find any strange animals or people just a lot of cockerels! On our way home we discovered the beach and those of us who could swim had a nice dip in the very blue ocean water. We went home and had a nice dinner of

The Town Crier at the Hamilton City Hall

Our first stop on Monday morning was at the Hamilton City Hall. Hamilton is the capital of Bermuda and we had the opportunity of visiting and exploring its town hall. First we got to hear a very detailed and interesting history of Bermuda from Mr. Lance Furbert. He is absolutely knowledgeable about the history of Bermuda and shared his knowledge with us throughout the week. We met and visited with the city Town Crier Mr. Ed Christopher. At about 6 feet 7 inches, Mr. Christopher was definitely a sight to behold dressed in his Town crier regalia he educated us on his duties as a town crier, life experiences and the impact he has made on the town crier league during his career. He officially welcomed us to Bermuda with a resounding announcement on the steps of the city hall! “I really enjoyed our time with the Town Crier. I liked his humor and found his accomplishments and impact inspiring.” Dr. Obidoa



The Butterfield Bank & Symphony Investment Company

The primary economic activity of Bermuda is not tourism, as many assume for an island of beautiful beaches and clear blue waters, but rather international business. While studying the wider implications of economic activity on the health of the island, our Mercer cohort had the chance to interview with several corporate executives that enjoyed Bermuda’s relaxed regulatory environment. The first meeting we had was with the President of Symphony Management, a



small reinsurance firm which oversaw the administration of more than \$1 billion in assets. Reinsurance, the largest financial activity of Bermuda, is essentially the practice of insuring the insurance industry, further mitigating the risk of potential incidents for corporations around the world while also allowing them to declare assets in a tax-free zone. International business is certainly a defining feature of the island nation. “Originally, coming on this trip, I did not expect to uncover many issues because Bermuda is considered a wealthy developing nation; however upon arrival, we have learned that the unequal distribution of wealth places a large burden on the health of the middle and lower classes.” – Allie - Collins

The Hospital

We were taken on a tour of the hospital- King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in Bermuda. This is the only hospital on the Island. The hospital is an ultra-modern building with intricate codes and equipment that allow for efficient patient management and emergency health care during natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. We learned that

diabetes is a leading cause of death in Bermuda. A study published in 2011 among 30 affluent countries affected by high rates of diabetes, revealed that Bermuda had the highest amputation rate for women, 46 per 100 000 and the second highest for men, 43 per 100 000 (Lagan, 2011). “The visit to the



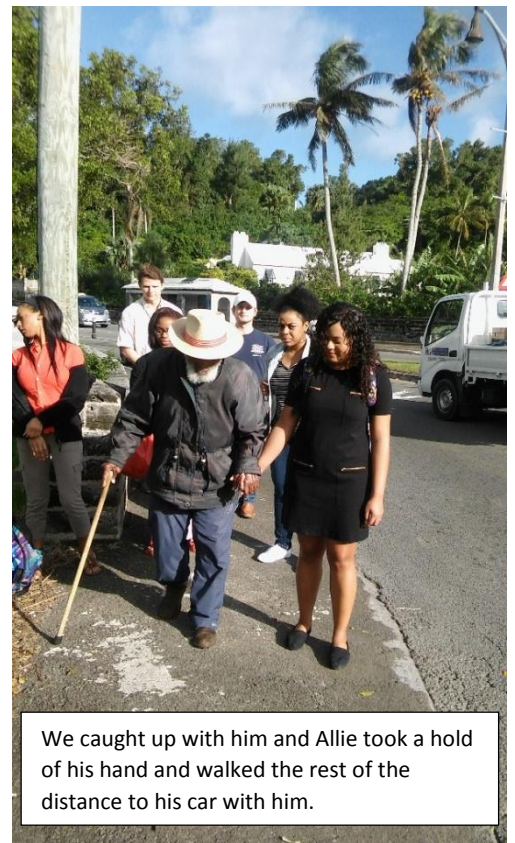
hospital gave me a look at what I want to do in the future. The hospital tour gave us insight into how the healthcare system functions with patient intake, the various specialties within the hospital and the health issues most plaguing the Bermudian population.” Allie Collins

Leading Causes of Death in Bermuda (2005)

Heart Disease, Cancer, Diseases of the Respiratory System, Diabetes, Renal Failure, AIDS, Accidents/Violence, Suicide, Drug-related deaths

Meeting a National Hero Johnny Barnes

On our way to our next site we met a national hero. Johnny Barnes - is more than just a cultural hero of the island, he is a landmark. Johnny is famous in Bermuda for standing by the busiest intersection in the island and waving to passing cars, an innocent grin turning his wrinkled face into the symbol of the island’s gregarious nature. The people of Bermuda love Johnny so much that they actually commemorated a statue of him, waving by the street side, and feature the real man next to it on their postcards. Our group of Mercerians actually had the chance to meet Johnny at the end of one of his mornings, crossing the street back to his car. Not realizing that we were helping a local legend,



We caught up with him and Allie took a hold of his hand and walked the rest of the distance to his car with him.

two of our students took him by the hand and helped him across the busy road. After regaling us with stories of his time on the island, the 92 year old Johnny gave each of us autographed postcards with his signature phrase, “I love you! God bless you!” We later found out that we met Johnny on one of his last mornings; he is planning to retire soon due to knee problems, after more than fifty years of impacting the mental and emotional well-being of Bermudians.



Left- Johnny Barnes praying with our students – the prayer was long!
Right- Statue of Johnny Barnes in Bermuda with Johnny Barnes

standing beside his statue.

Bacardi Limited



The second multinational corporation we visited on our study was Bacardi Limited, the largest privately owned spirit producer and distributor in the world. On our tour of the international headquarters, a spacious building on the edge of Hamilton, we stopped before a forty foot mural of the jungles of Cuba, the company’s original home. The office’s manager told us the story of Bacardi’s journey over 153 years, and how it came to Bermuda after

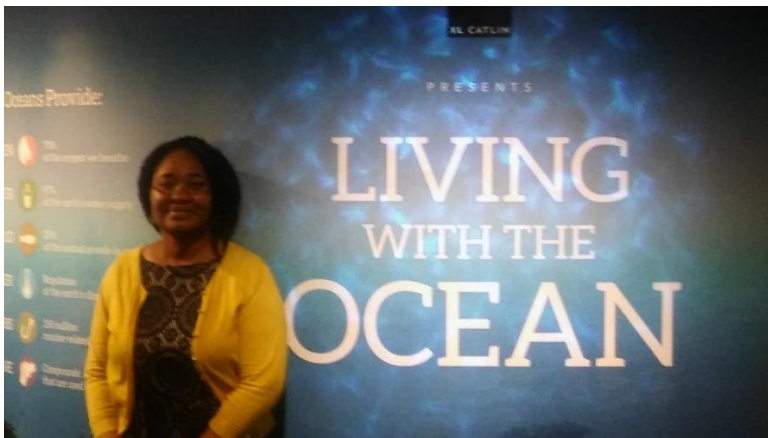
the communist government of Fidel Castro seized their first distillery. Bacardi does not produce any spirits on the island, but it does manage all of its accounting there, providing over fifty jobs for local citizens. It is only because of companies like Bacardi that Bermuda manages to maintain its high standard of living despite the huge costs of importing all of their goods; it is a nexus point for the global economy, the crossroads of billions of

dollars in financial transactions which allow multinational corporations to maintain their expanding profit margins in an increasingly interconnected world. It is no surprise that once Bacardi was forced out of Cuba it chose Bermuda as its second island home; the first represented an experiment in communist economic theory, while the second embodies the very spirit of a liberalized free-market trade policy.

Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute – BUEI

Bermuda is endowed with numerous endemic exotic plant and animal species. We visited the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute – BUEI to learn about Bermuda’s unique natural endowments. It was spectacular. We got the chance to take a simulated 7-minute trip to the ocean floor (at a depth of 12,000ft) by a modern Nautilus-X2 submarine. We toured the shell collection room to view its mind-blowing display of 1200 shells collected by a person named Jack Lightbourn. We saw the diving bell - an example of early diving gears and the *Treasure Room* that showcases many of the items collected by Teddy Tucker, a legendary scuba diver of Bermuda who collected numerous underwater treasures from shipwrecks (Bermuda Attractions). We also appreciated several displays showcasing information about global warming and its effect on Islands

and what can be done to reverse its impact.



Rainwater Harvesting in Bermuda

Even though Bermuda is surrounded by water, most of the water used in Bermuda is rainwater. One of the most observable socio-structural influence on health in Bermuda is how clean water

is harvested. In Bermuda, virtually all the water

that is used in homes and buildings is harvested from rain. Roofs in Bermuda are made of limestone slabs that are painted all white and are treated with limestone. The water caught filters into underground tanks, and later dispensed through water faucets and used for all household purposes. We did not get a chance to observe this process because it did not rain during our time in Bermuda but we saw the roofs and asked about the impact of such water.





Windreach Disabilities Center

The Windreach facility is a four acre recreational center focused on therapeutic and educational experiences for people living with special needs. The programs offered by the center include horseback riding, community gardening, adaptive sports such as wheelchair basketball, and music enrichment courses for all ages of Bermudians, all inspired by leading efforts in special education and rehabilitation from around the world.

Windreach is operated as a nonprofit with the support of countless volunteers from

A counselor demonstrates how animals are used for helping children with special needs cope with grief and build specific social skills.

around the island and generous donors that believe in expanding opportunities for people all too often left out by traditional recreational activities. Our cadre of students had the chance to tour the entire facility with the director and learn all about the various programs and the methodologies behind them. Seeing the kind of involvement that the center drew from the local community was truly inspirational. We had planned to volunteer at this facility with student needs but their programs ended for the year a few days before we arrived. "My favorite location of this trip was likely Windreach. Even though we didn't have the chance to volunteer, seeing how the program has grown and serves the local community was incredible. I didn't see many other socially conscious organizations on the island, but Windreach stood out as a tremendous success. Hearing about the variety of programs, the expansion of the facility, and the dedication of the staff gave me a lot of hope for the social sector here." – Aaron Scherf



Group picture with Tony, a former Olympian for Bermuda who no longer rides competitively because of health problems he sustained

Delivering Christmas Cheer – Packwood Home

We visited the Packwood home for seniors and spent some quality time with the residents. Upon the request of the staff we delivered some Christmas cheer to them by singing them a few Christmas songs. "My favorite experience was visiting the nursing home and singing the Christmas carols. I feel like we were able to make an impact on the lives of the residents simply by warming their spirits and seeing them shed tears from our thoughtfulness." – Amore Jones



Meeting with the Premier of Bermuda

Definitely the climax of our time in Bermuda was meeting the Premier of Bermuda – Michael Dunkley. The Premier is the equivalent of President of a nation but since Bermuda is still a protectorate of England, he is referred to as the Premier. Meeting the Premier was definitely surreal. It was very busy day for the government and parliament but he took time out to meet with us. We had a nice intimate chat with him about a variety of issues and he answered all our questions and invited us into the parliamentary session taking place at that time. We were all dressed in our Mercer T-shirts and represented Mercer University very well!



From left to right:
Allie Collins, Devin
Blais, Hon. Micahel
Dunkley JP, MP,
Premier of Bermuda,
Lakendra Young, Hon.
Leach Scott, JP, MP,
Dr. Obidoa,
Dr. Tinashe Johnson,
Aaron Scherf, Amore
Jones, and Sally
Idehen.

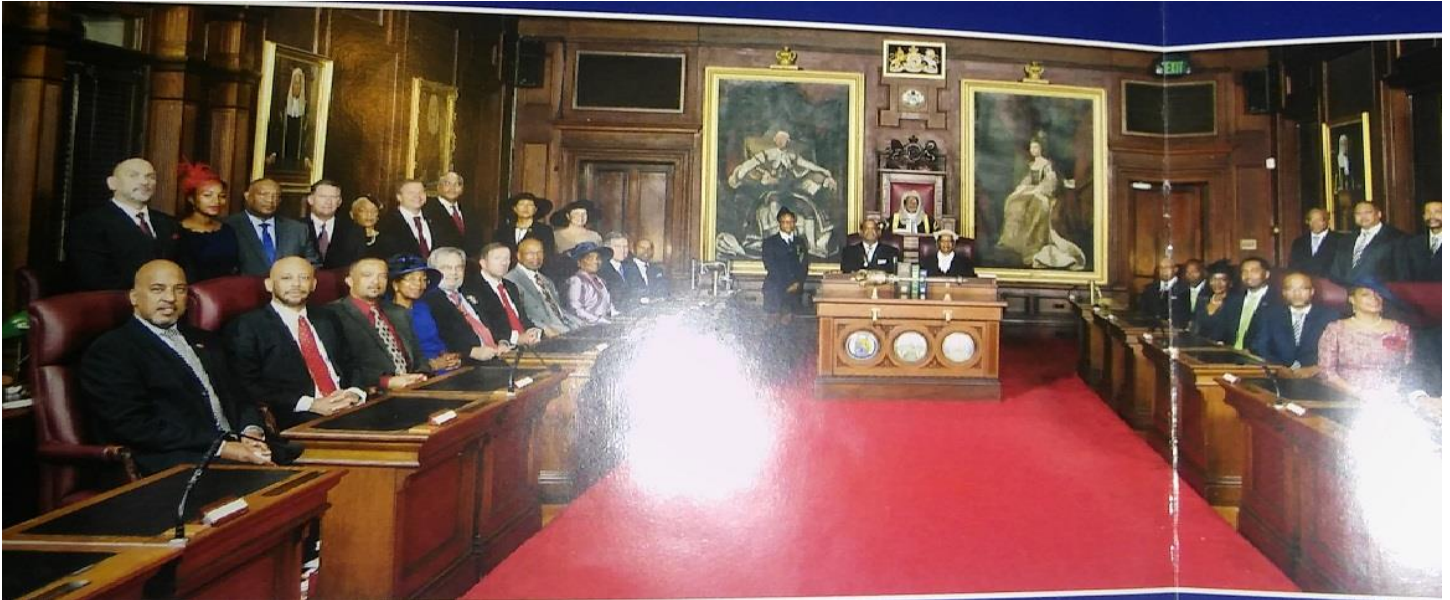


The House of Assembly at Sessions House

We had the awesome opportunity and privilege to sit in a parliamentary session and observe the house of assembly debate nicotine/cigarette laws in Bermuda from the public gallery. This was a significant experience for us, not only because we were in Bermuda to study the social determinants of health but also because it was an opportunity for us to observe how global public health policy-making takes place at the national level. We learnt a lot about the two different political parties and their stance on the issue. During the session several ministers and parliamentarians provided arguments for and/or against the banning of the sale of cigarettes by certain stores in Bermuda. The proposed bill was finally upheld.

“Parliament was enjoyable but it was frustrating. To see the animation and frankly, lack of adequate intelligence was an eye opener for me.” Devin Blais

“I also liked watching the process of voting on a bill and how stressful it can be.” Sally Idehen
We could not take pictures in the room so here is a picture of what the current house of assmebly looks like with its current members.



Mercer in the News in Bermuda



The sessions at the House of Assembly are aired on the radio. During our time at the house of assembly we were officailly welcomed by the deputy speaker of the house – Ms. Roberts-Holshouser. The welcome was heard on the radio and that night our tour guide Mr Furbet received calls inquiring about our visit. The Royal Gazette of Bermuda sent a reporter to do a story about our trip. The story was published in the Royal Gazatte on December 22, 2015. Here is the link to the story-

<http://www.royalgazette.com/article/20151222/NEWS06/151229933>

Meeting with Parliamentarians

We had the opportunity to meet with several parliamentarians.

Mr. Wayne Furbet, JP, MP, CPA, CA. He talked to us about his journey to becoming a politician and shared major highlights in his career. He also shared some encouraging and inspiring words.

Hon. Leah Scott, JP, MP

We had an engaging conversation with Hon. Scott at a café in downtown Hamilton. She shared her passion about education, health and social change in Bermuda.



The SmilesInc. Dental Clinic



We visited the SmilesInc. Dental Clinic. They were undergoing renovation of their new space so we got a tour of their current and future spaces. We met an American dentist Dr. Caldwell, who shares his time between Hamilton, Bermuda and Boston, where his family resides and he runs a dental clinic as well. "I also really enjoyed the dentist office. This was such a lovely experience and I cannot wait come back to Bermuda when I can actually make a difference." – Allie Collins

The Gombey Dancers

We had the opportunity to observe one of Bermuda's folklife traditions - the gombey dancers perform in downtown Hamilton. Gombey dance is a kind of seasonal folk dance performed by troupes of mostly male dancers during Afro-Caribbean styles of celebrations



(Bermuda Attractions). Although it is a fusion of African Indigenous peoples, Caribbean and British cultures, its roots in the Bantu cultures of Africa were clearly evident. "I recognized this folk dance – it is a common folk dance among the Igbo in Eastern Nigeria. I was fascinated to discover that their costumes, their dance style and the meaning of each piece of costume were exactly similar to that of the similar dance troupe found in Eastern Nigeria." Dr. Obidoa

Tour of St. Georges Island

St. Georges Island is one of the main Islands in Bermuda, the first part of the island to be colonised by the British. The town is quaint and full of charm with a breathtaking blend of both colonial and modern architecture. The town and its structures were designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO in year 2000. We were given a tour of the island by Mr. Furbert who was a former town manager of St. Georges Island. We visited the town hall, St. Peters Church, Lili Perfumery, and the burial ground for slaves and free Blacks. We learnt a lot about the history of Bermuda and the events that shaped the current social and political structure of the territory.

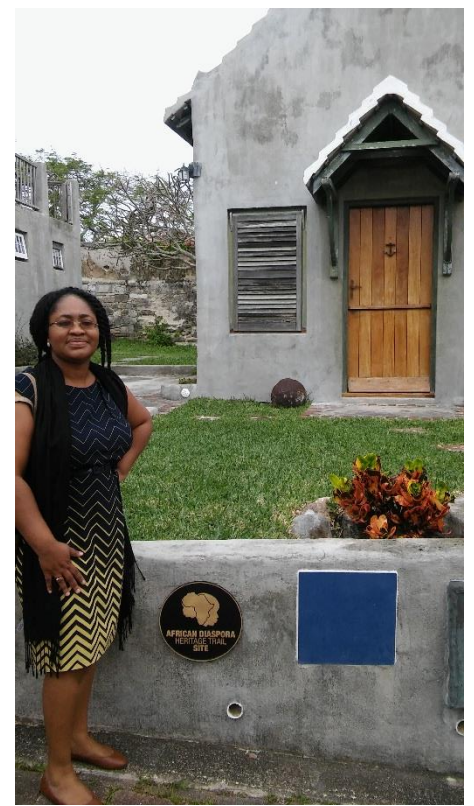


Lili perfumery produces exquisite fragrances inspired by the islands natural beauty. We toured the perfumery and learned about how fragrances are made. We also enjoyed a session of fragrance sampling. We not only left smelling really good, but with bottles of really good fragrances for friends and family.

Below- group picture with owner of Lili perfumery, Ms. Isabelle.



Right- Dr. Obidoa in front of one of the sites included in the Global African Diaspora Heritage Trail – the first house owned by a Black resident in Bermuda.



Bermuda College

Bermuda does not have a four-year university. Bermuda College is a two year college that awards associate degrees in diverse disciplines. We visited the college – just a few miles away from our guest house. We learned that the college partners with several universities in the U.S. and such partnership provides opportunity for students to complete their four-year degrees after their associate degree at Universities in the U.S.



Dinner with a Really Nice family!

The intimate social framework found in Bermuda is the first real indicator of just how small the island-nation truly is. With a population of less than 70,000 on a landmass of twenty square miles, it's no wonder that the entire place feels like a small town. Our local guides could not walk two blocks in the city of Hamilton without shaking hands with a friend or family member. The narrow roads are filled with cars honking, not because of traffic, but

because they recognize each other as they pass and want to say hello. Our Tour guide Mr. Johnson asked a friend of his to give some of us a ride to church on Sunday. He not only gave us a ride to church and back he invited us to dinner at his home. On Friday we all went to his home and had a delicious meal of Tilapia, corn on the cob, rice – Portuguese style and really good desert. We enjoyed a relaxing evening with food and really good conversation.

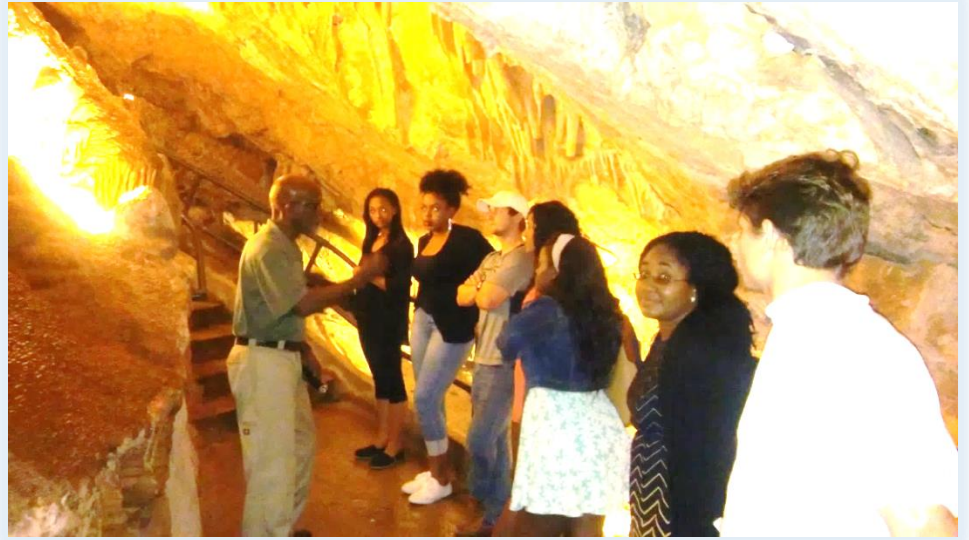
Attractions

We visited several tourist attractions in Bermuda which provided more insight into the Islands historic heritage and natural beauty.

Crystal and Fantasy Caves

Bermuda is home to one of the highest concentrations of limestone caves on earth. Some sources state that over 100 caves can be found under the Islands of Bermuda. We got the chance to visit two of the most popular caves on the island. We were informed that it was a very popular tourist destination for celebrities which have included, Oprah, Chris Brown, Beyonce etc. It was scary, we descended 83 steps below sea-level and were

struck by the wonder and beauty of the remarkable stalactite and stalagmite formations in the caves.



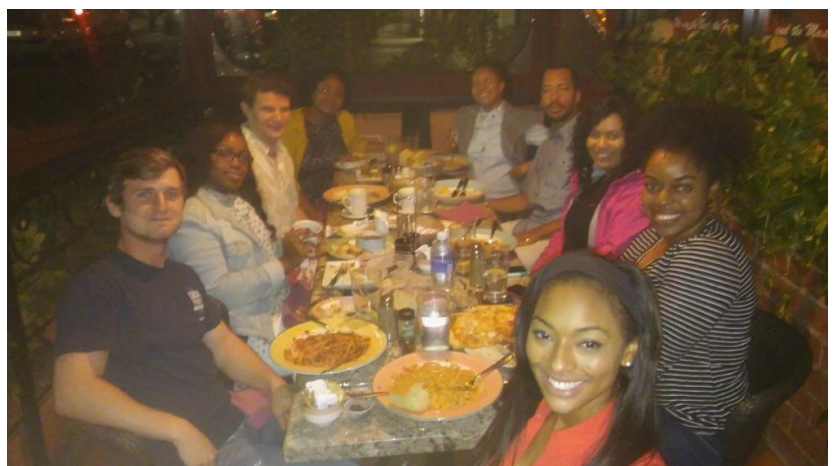
Top- group receiving instructions from the tour guide

Left- group picture in the heart of the Crystal Cave



Eclectic Cuisine

We intentionally explored Bermuda's eclectic cuisine and enjoyed food from different cultural influences. We savored Italian, Jamaican, Portuguese, Irish and American food. Right - Dinner at Portofino Italian Restaurant, Downtown, Bermuda



Beaches

No trip to Bermuda would be complete, of course, without a visit to its beautiful and historic beaches. One of the team's favorites was the site at which the Sea Venture crashed onto the coral reef surrounding the island, unintentionally changing the course of Bermuda's history. The Sea Venture was an English ship on its way to Jamestown, Virginia that wrecked on the eastern coast of the island in 1609. The ship's crew spent ten months on Bermuda building two new vessels to carry them safely home, and upon their return to England their stories of the beauty and wonders of Bermuda sparked the colonization of the island. The beaches, like the one pictured here, become legendary for their picturesque white sand and calm waters.



Other Attractions

We also had the opportunity to visit other sites such as the Gibbs lighthouse, art galleries at the Hamilton city hall, the cabinet building, several beaches, the Cathedral in Hamilton, Chewstick Foundation, the dockyard, rum cake factory and commissioners house.



We thank the founders of BLSD Bermuda, they were also the planners and hospitality co-guides of our trip, Mr Johnson and his wife Dr. Tinashe Johnson. Both went above and beyond our expectation to line up contacts, venues and events for us that provided an unforgettable study abroad experience, one that we will never forget. We are indebted to them and wish them well.

We are also indebted to Hospitality Hero & Guide – Mr Lance Furbert, who was with us every day and provided insightful historical and contemporary information about Bermuda throughout

the week.



Reflections



We had reflection sessions every day. The sessions helped us discuss and process our experiences. The goal was to find connections to our notes (what we have learned at Mercer) connections to our lives (previous and current life experiences) and connections to our future (what we plan to do in the future). Here are some quotes from our final reflection session.

“ I came on this trip with the intention of acquiring knowledge about social determinants of health on

an island, but I am leaving with so much more. If I can honestly take away two things, it will be quotes from two professionals; Dental Surgeon – fight through school, there will be many times you’ll want to give up, but stick through it, it will be worth it.” ; – do today what others won’t do so that you can do tomorrow what others can’t do” – Wayne Furbert “ Sally Idehen

“The visit to the hospital gave me a look at what I want to do in the future. Since coming to Mercer, I have always wanted to practice international medicine, where I would work both inside and outside of the country. Seeing the country’s need for specialists gave me hope for what I want to do in the future.” – Allie Collins

“Having the chance to explore the various factors affecting health here in Bermuda has been a great new experience for me. As a business minded person, the details of diseases and healthcare systems have gone slightly over my head, but exploring the financial and economic side of things has been fascinating.” Aaron Scherf

