

Ghana: Hofstra anthropology major visits Africa

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about. "I have more insight (into African cultures)," said Leah.

The trip changed some of her perceptions about Africa and America, the Bristol Central High School

2008 graduate said. Since the group from Hofstra was mostly white, "We stuck out like a sore thumb." But Leah said, "I was taken aback by how friendly and accepting (the Ghanaian people) were of us." In America, Leah explained, there is still some subtle

racism. But in Ghana, she said, "They don't know anything about (racism)."

During the trip, Leah and her group visited a "slave castle" on the coast of Ghana. (This is where Ghanaians were taken prior to being brought to America to become slaves.) Leah said she expected the tour guide to make pointed comments about the slave trade and its effect on Ghana to this group of Americans. But, she said, the tour guide pressed upon them that history "brings us together... Without it, we wouldn't be here now."

Leah said she did see a lot of poverty in Ghana. "Poverty is everywhere," said Leah. She saw a lot of rundown villages and shacks and people were walking the streets asking for money. "It was sad, but that's how most of Africa is," said Leah.

However, Leah said, Ghanaians look at poverty differently than American. Many Ghanaians are self-

sustaining farmers. Even though they are poor by U.S. standards, Ghanaians "lived comfortably."

Ghana wasn't completely rural, said Leah. She said she did see a cosmopolitan side to the African nation. For instance, in the capital Accra, which has more than 2 million people, "There were skyscrapers, big buildings and gated houses I didn't know that existed."

While in Ghana, Leah also learned that Ghana depends on eco-tourism for its economy. (The country's primary export is gold, Leah said.) "It's the only tourism they have... All they have to offer is land and traditional lifestyles."

Leah showed photographs of some of the areas she visited. She showed a photograph from a nature preserve where an elephant just wandered into the shot behind her. Another photograph showed a tree so old and large, a gap in its width was like a shallow cave and the height of the tree

dwarfed Leah and her classmate.

Many of the preserves in Ghana have remained pristine because of their history, said Leah. Many of the open areas in Ghana initially were sacred tribal lands and were the source for many natural medicines used by the tribes of Ghana.

Sometimes the oppor-

tunity to put a major into a real world perspective can cause a student to reconsider his or her choice. But Leah said this was not the case for her. Instead, she said, "This trip solidified that this is what I want to do... I loved it. This is exactly what I want to do with my life."



COURTESY LEAH CARRIERE

Bristol's Leah Carriere, left, poses beside one of the large trees inside a nature preserve in Ghana.



COURTESY LEAH CARRIERE

Leah Carriere, left, with a school mate in a fishing village in Ghana.



COURTESY LEAH CARRIERE

Bristol's Leah Carriere poses with little girl in Ghana who came up to her and held her hand.

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