

I was an hour and a half northwest of Durbin at a school called Montebello and all of my students were Zulu girls. I had these enormous classes. 73 kids in my 9th english class, 50+ kids in my two different math classes. I was teaching Algebra. I was teaching Earth Science and European History to 11th graders, and coaching the volleyball team and leading aerobics classes. And what was so amazing to me was that you had these students who, at the time, you couldn't get any lower on the social totem pole than being a black, South African, girl. And the thought that they were going to have any opportunity was almost unfathomable, yet they knew, and their parents knew how important it was to get an education. And so, they were the most dedicated students I've ever seen. They were some of the happiest people I'd ever seen. And I remember just being amazed by that and thinking to myself if people can persevere through what is just an outright violent and immoral government and recognize that they need to educate themselves and to fight for liberation and ultimately, they were successful, it always has given me, I think, the strength to do what needs to be done and to recognize that just your presence sometimes is all that's needed, to help somebody to give them the dignity and respect and the value that they need to move forward.