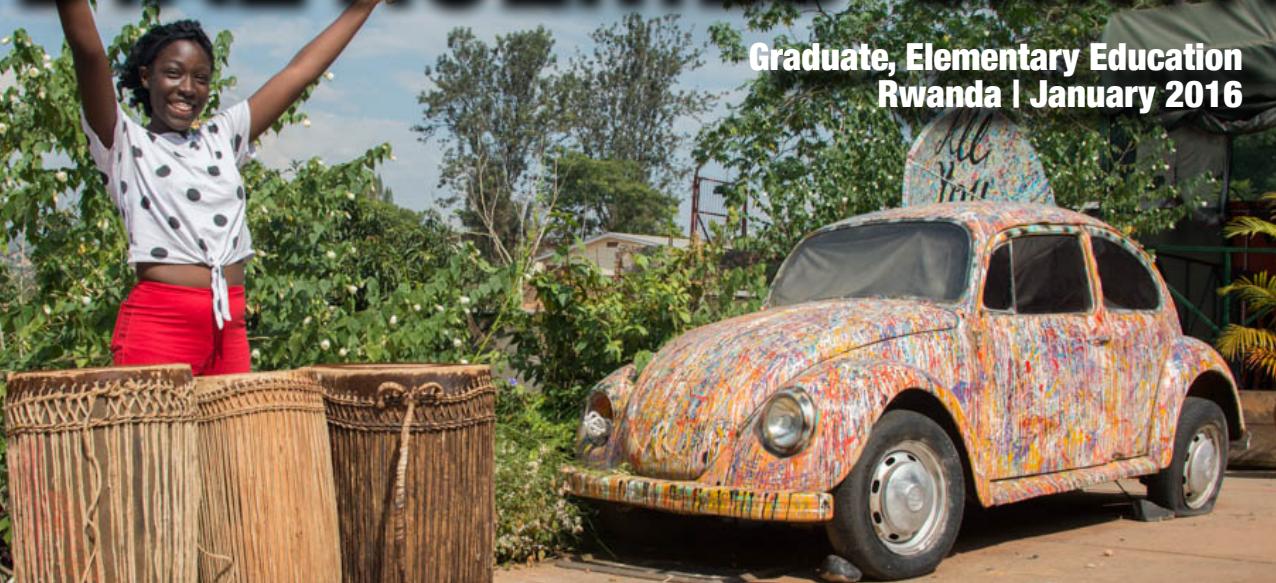


CRYSTAL HOLMES-SMITH

Graduate, Elementary Education
Rwanda | January 2016



I managed to overcome the language barrier and my own insecurities while fostering a great outcome with the Rwandan educators. I saw that, even with little experience, I do have expertise to share and now can see myself as an asset to my colleagues.

FORGIVENESS

This experience instilled in me the core values of appreciation, forgiveness, acceptance and appreciation for community. The concept of forgiveness especially resonates with me. Rwanda has reconstructed itself mainly because people have found the strength and compassion to forgive those who committed the most violent crimes against them. Seeing how Rwandans are building on forgiveness to move past the horrors of the 1994 Genocide makes it pretty hard for me to hold onto my petty grudges.

COMMUNITY

I greatly enjoyed playing with the children at an orphanage we visited. The children were filled with love and joy and left a lasting impression on me. It was particularly encouraging to see them carry such joy despite being in what one might perceive as a bad situation.

Meeting Genocide perpetrators was a unique and moving experience. It's not often you learn of tragedy and then have a chance to speak with those responsible. I was surprised to find that I didn't feel anger or disgust toward them. By this point I had experienced so much Rwandan forgiveness and kindness that their stories only moved me to see them as parents, grandparents...humans.

