

And So They Took My (Demonstrational) Dildos

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It's hard to believe that my time at Masakhane has come to an end. It feels like just yesterday that I showed up in Newark. Never in my life has three months gone by so quickly. I've learned an incredible amount about sexuality, facilitation, and the Newark community. The skills I've acquired are vast, and not all of them are quantifiable. It's difficult to explain all of the awareness I've gained – from just reading participant emotions to understanding that cultural biases are something easily overridden.

My experiences this summer have been invaluable to me. They've helped to shape my professional aspirations in a way that I was not expecting. I always new I wanted to work in a field of public health, preferably related to child and maternal health, but now I am much more sure that I want to be working in the field of sexual health and sexuality. I also never truly considered teaching as a career option, but now it's on the table. Teaching was an incredibly rewarding experience (though difficult at times). Even if I'm not teaching in the "traditional" sense, I would really like to be involved in some form or other of education. I'd like to continue teaching in a more alternative setting throughout the rest of my time at Tulane (perhaps as a doula - otherwise known as a labor specialist).

For anyone who is interested in sexuality or sexual health education, I would encourage them to read anything and everything they can get their hands on. Read as many differing opinions as you can. Inform yourself on current events related to sexual health, but also dig deeper. Don't just use Facebook, reading click bait titled "The Truth About Being Transgender," - look harder. Be critical, but also be sensitive. Recognize your own truths and biases. It's easy to get angry and worked up when reading intentionally inflammatory arguments on the Internet. Avoid as much Internet fodder as possible, or you will burn out. Sexual and reproductive health in America are such hot button topics, it's easy to get mired in the thousands of voices shouting at you that what you believe is wrong, your sexuality is wrong, and that your reproductive health is not yours to control. But sexual health education is so important, so valuable, and so misunderstood; giving up isn't really an option. At the end of the day, when a participant thanks you, and says, "I can't wait for next week" - it's all worth it.

And *no*, I didn't get to keep any of my demonstrational sex toys.