

See the Happiness of the **Rainbow** Country

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People say it is touching, whenever they see Tzu Chi volunteers dressed in white and blue uniforms, especially when they are overseas. Representing Taiwan in the 24th International Nurses Conference in South Africa, I found a very different looking

team dressed in white and blue uniforms. Despite of the difference in background and training, they all carry the same spirit of Great Love, the Tzu Chi humanistic values to make a difference in this world.



Average Life Span Is Low and AIDS Is Rampant

South Africa is on the southern tip of the African continent, the oldest on earth, but the highest in minerals and plant species. Beginning in the 16th century, explorers discovered and colonized the land, created racial segregation, resulting in a wide disparity of wealth among the population. A 2008 United Nations report estimates the average life span of South African males at 48.8, versus 49.6 for females. This is even lower than Iraq, a country still at war. In South Africa, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infected rate is 14.5% for males, and 21.8% for females. A high HIV infected rate is the major reason for low average life span in South Africa, which is the fourth highest between age 14 to 49 in the world, behind Swaziland (32%), Botswana (28.9%), and Lesotho (27.1%).

AIDS prevention is a critical problem in South Africa. Seeing the pain and suffering there, we feel fortunate to have a universal health program, and a network of public health providers in Taiwan. It is unfortunate that infected South African patients are treated as if they were sentenced to death. Many ill patients are deserted, or driven out of their families. The misunderstanding about AIDS has caused harm, and sometimes death, to many innocent victims, particularly children and women. South



Side by side, Tzu Chi volunteers visited the AIDS victims. They took on the responsibility of transferring AIDS care to local volunteer. Assistant Director of Nursing, Tzu Chi Buddhist General Hospital in Hualien,, Hui-Chun Chung, is pictured (right two).

African has gone from a white minority to a black majority government in recent years. The new majority African government has a long way to go in reviving the economy and creating a harmonious society for its people.

Tzu Chi Nursing Model Shines in South Africa

There are three objectives for my South African visit. The first one was to witness the nomination of Taiwan as the Vice President of the Asian Countries at the International Council of Nurses convention, held in South Africa on June 27th 2009.



Tzu Chi Nursing Department is attaining international recognition by attending this type of Nursing Conference. In the meantime, they experienced with the South African teams during at-home visits.

About 180 nursing professionals, among a total of 5,000 participants, represented Taiwan for the honor. It was a touching moment to see the flag of our own country rising inside the stadium. It represents a milestone for recognition of our contribution in the international nursing profession arena.

The second objective was to report, using color posters, the accomplishment of Tzu Chi “2007 – 2008” community infectious diseases program. Tzu Chi unique uniform, the dark blue “Qi Pao” (traditional Mandarin Chinese dress for women in the eighteen century), stands out in the colorful decorated stadium. Through direct exchange with participants from all over the world, volunteers are able to disseminate the message of Tzu

Chi’s spirit and culture to all people. In just a short while, we ran out hundreds of copies of the English edition of the Tzu Chi Nursing Journals. Thanks to our translation volunteers in the USA, their contribution made it possible for us to introduce the unique characteristics of Tzu Chi nursing model to our international counterparts.

Incidentally, I ran into a South African colleague who went to study at the Tzu Chi Nursing University just four years ago. That connection was a result of our first contact a few years ago. I did not hesitate to invite her to join us in the next South African mission, which is my third objective -- community based nursing.

I have been looking forward to meet the volunteers in South Africa, who are known to be dedicated in carrying out the Tzu Chi mission and taking on responsibilities. These blue and white angels, in my memory, are full of great energy, eagerness, and emotional expression. I think of their lovely children who are always in my thoughts and prayers. I am thankful for the staff in the religious department to arrange this special visit. I am also grateful to the Master, her disciples, the volunteers in South Africa, and my peers at the Tzu Chi General Hospital. Without naming them all, Hei-Ling Lai (Director of Nursing at Tzu Chi University), Chuan-Hsiu Tsai (Associate Professor of Tzu Chi Technical College), and Shu-Chen Wang (Supervisor of Nursing Dept., Tzu Chi Hospital), have been most satisfying and rewarding

Twenty Years of Hard Work – Their Eyes Look Like the Moon in a Clear Bright Night

Tzu Chi has been farming the communities in South Africa for over twenty years. The reach has expanded to Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg. Dedicated volunteers are active in the communities besides their regular duties in the local chapters. At the same time, they use every opportunity to spread the words of the Master and her teaching. The younger generation, known as the “Tzu Ching”, are the seeds of tomorrow.

A newlywed couple, together with their relatives from as far as Australia and Indonesia, joined the Tzu Chi in distributing supplies. What a noble way to celebrate their honeymoon vacation!

Whether it was for the family visit, or the distribution, the encounters were memorable. Their eyes looked like the moon on a clear bright night, shining upon the brilliant stars.

Our visit attracted attention in the local communities. Even our Taiwan nursing team wanted to come on board to do more, like family outreach. Due to limited transportation capacity, many did not have the opportunity. Instead, they donated materials and supplies, and the volunteers at the Durban office were grateful for their generosity. The materials, their love and anxiety will continue to make a difference in the communities.

The Rich Among the Poor Zulu Tribes – Great Love Is Like a Never Setting Sun

This convention had opened discussion of the AIDS disease, and we also visited some patients at their homes. I am proud of our fellow South African counterparts, many of whom have little experience or professional training, in assisting such victims. They represent a group of Angels, dressed in white and blue uniforms, helping their fellow citizen under extreme poverty and adverse condition. They are, in essence, the richest among the poorest.

The visits to the patients were satisfying and relaxing, but the story behind each case is solemn. The volunteers' faith for Master Cheng Yen is unmistakable. They embraced the AIDS victims with hugs



Children carry the Tzu Chi eco-friendly blankets on their heads.



The Zulu volunteers, in blue and white uniforms, are making a difference to the suffering in South Africa.

and words of comfort. They prayed for their health, and sang Tzu Chi songs. I was deeply impressed by their love and care. We are one in the family of Bodhisattva. With our hands held up in a cross, we greeted each other with gratitude from the bottom of our hearts. This is the humanistic culture of all Tzu Chi nursing profession because we experience from our own action -- the power of Great Love.

Given their lack of materials and supplies, we decided to assist them in every possible way. We demonstrated the proper techniques to care for AIDS patients during joint home visits. After our return to Taiwan, I began working on a series of training videos focusing on their most immediate need, for example, the caring of AIDS patients, wounds treatment, beddings hygiene, and the separation techniques for

patients with infectious diseases. These training materials will make them better prepared for the challenge, and for their own personal safety.

At the southern tip of the Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, overlooking the Indian Ocean, gusty wind is blowing at bone-chilling temperature. This piece of land is so remote yet there is this group of faithful volunteers, doing what the Master loves to do most. How can they be so persistent if not because of Master's guidance?

I had the opportunity to observe sunrise and sunset at my hotel balcony. In the Tzu Chi world, the sun never sets because there are always people pick up where others left off. It is a journey of relay to pass on the spirit of Great Love. There are these words in the Jing Si Aphorism, "Just do it! It's right."

After returning home, I decided to take a proactive stand in continuing the work of the South African volunteers. With the help of the Tai-Ai Television personnel, I am able to complete a set of training videos. I am looking forward to deliver these DVD materials personally to our counterparts during the end-of-the-year blessing ceremony, with my greatest appreciation and blessing.

I saw a nice rainbow while leaving at the Taiwan airport. The blue and white angels are like the rainbow, spreading joy and hope across the land. Our future of hope is not too far away.....