

2/28/07

Greetings from Atlanta! I can't believe it's already the end of February. Sadly, this means the year is halfway over. Because of February being Black History Month, we have been visiting several different places during our community days to learn more about the civil rights movement. The first place we went was The Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham, Alabama. I didn't really learn anything new about all the facts given, but the information hit me a lot harder now than it has in the past. My eyes welled up as I read about all the discrimination, abuse, lynching, and the pure hatred African Americans had to put up with for years and years. Yes it made me sad when I learned about it growing up, but I guess it hit me harder now because I so immersed in black culture since the majority of the people I'm around are African American.

Before I came here, I worked at a boarding school where the majority of the students were not white, in a part of Kentucky where unfortunately there is still a lot of racism. I coached soccer and softball and when we would go to certain schools to play a game, the other team would say some very racist and degrading things to my team. As a result, some of my girls would be in tears on the bus all the way home and I felt so helpless to comfort them. How could I get across to them that they are beautiful and intelligent young ladies who are loved very much by several people and most importantly God? I told them they are just as important as anyone else, no matter what anyone says, but words don't really help in a situation where words are what caused so much hurt in the first place. It makes me so angry that an ignorant person's words can damage another person's self esteem for a lifetime.

It's funny and sad at same time that I have caught myself being protective of the men I work for at the transitional house. It funny because the image of one petite white girl protecting thirty four big black guys (and two white guys), isn't very practical. It's sad because I feel like I have to be protective of them when I notice another white person around because I never know what might be said to them. I know that sounds like I think all white people are racist (I definitely don't think that) but the fact is that racism is still around and I'm going to try my hardest not to let it affect the people I care about.

What I would love to see before I die is a world that truly follows Jesus' teaching of loving your neighbor, although I feel like it's never going to happen when I notice how people negatively treat each other. My hope was renewed when we went to the Historic Museum where Martin Luther King Jr.'s writings and sermons were posted up for all to read. He had such a passion to fulfill his dream of ending racism and his determination to do so is amazing to me. I know he wouldn't have gotten as far as he did without his faith and support from God.

I think one of the worst emotions a person can feel is the feeling that you are not loved. I pray that God can use me somehow to show and tell everybody that they are important and that God loves them. I know that everyone in the world is a lot of people, but I also know that with God, anything is possible. With so many Christians in the world, of all different races, that truly love God and their neighbors, we can achieve this dream.

I know this letter is different than what I have written before, but I wanted to let you know not only what I have been doing while I'm here, but also what I have been thinking and feeling. I can't thank you enough for your support. These first six months have been amazing and I pray that God will continue to open my eyes and heart for the next six months. Also, thank you for your continual prayers. May God bless you!