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Stellenbosch, South Africa
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She stands in a red smock
Mesmerized by a large group of American students
Buzzing around the convenient store
I watch her watching us
Watching as her fleeting encounter with the "Americans"
Comes to an end as we begin to enter our bus
I approach the counter
She rings me up
Pauses briefly and asks
"Are you Americans?"
Not waiting on my response, she adds
"You must have a lot of money!"
I smile uncomfortable
Let out a slight chuckle as if it is funny
Then I say
Not really, but maybe someday
I know what she sees
When she looks at me
She sees privilege and opportunity
Not a member of a disadvantaged community
She sees all of our differences
None of our similarities
What a peculiarity
I see a Black woman
Living in a county where she was once hated
Now they promise her jobs and opportunities
But in reality, she is still discriminated
She is the face
Of a often too ignored place
Filled to the brim but still an empty space
A place where the young, old, and weak
Suffers the most
And the pain of silence and hunger seeps
A land of beautiful contrasts
Where you find million dollar beach homes
10 minutes away from
AIDS orphans struggling to survive all alone
Where hospitality is shown
Where patience seems to be becoming outgrown
The home of Simon's Town and Kyamandi
No place with a greater wealth disparity
A nation on the road to prosperity
Yet an unspoken racial tension
Lurks with intensity
I know to her I am symbol of privilege and opportunity
But all I see in those eyes are similarities
For I too am from an ignored space
She is me
Always given false promises
But never really truly free
A land of beauty beyond what the naked eye can see
South Africa
Land of beautiful contrast and disparity