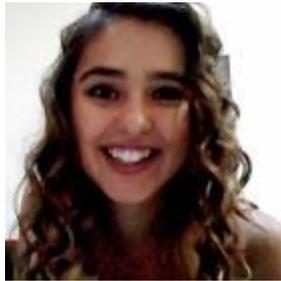


## Leadership and Community Involvement Formulate Student's Worldview

By Naomi McMillen



Kristen Powell knows firsthand the lasting impact that leadership and community involvement can have on one's worldview. It was through her various leadership activities and participation in the DU community that the junior sociology major discovered her passion for social justice.

"Leadership is important because it demands individuals to look beyond themselves," said Powell. "It inspires, engages and promotes collaboration. I believe this helps to make groups and societies greater than their individual contributors could be on their own."

At DU, Powell is involved with many organizations that allow her to promote social justice. She is the current president of the AHSS Student Advisory Council (SAC), a member of the Black Student Alliance and a former participant in the Social Justice Living and Learning Community.

"Participating in student alliances and student organizations that serve the DU community has helped me think of the bigger picture and ask questions that recognize the intersectionality of student identities and the diversity of concepts that must be kept in mind as we address social issues on and around our University," Powell said.

Out of all the organizations she has participated in at DU, Powell says that the Social Justice Living and Learning Community has been especially influential in developing her worldview and career goals.

"Not only did the Social Justice Living and Learning Community provide me with a strong sense of community and incredible networking opportunities, but it gave me a space to talk about social justice issues and topics that really matter," Powell said. "It has inspired me to challenge face-value assumptions and has ultimately encouraged me to engage with people who challenge me with their own experiences."

This past fall, Powell explored her passion for social justice further through a study abroad program in Arusha, Tanzania. She was able to learn about critical human rights issues while practicing her Swahili with her host family.

"Those three months were the most difficult and most rewarding part of my life. Exposure to new cultures and groups kept me open minded and excited as I tackled my own American perspective and bias. I was often exhausted, frustrated, and thoroughly shocked to realize I was alone on the other side of the world, but I would find myself in the midst of my Tanzanian companions, speaking Swahili, learning about the culture, thinking critically about human rights and international development and feeling so proud of myself for making the jump," she said.

Powell plans to use her sociology degree to promote social justice and address inequalities in the Denver metro area. She aspires to employ her research skills in a public policy setting.

“I would love to use this research for social and policy change, addressing systematic inequality and creating a more just system – particularly for the city of Denver,” said Powell. “Denver is a wonderful place, and I want to contribute to cultivating it into an even greater city through my public service and research contributions.”

Powell hopes that other students can also discover their passion through leadership and community involvement.

“Involvement in campus and community activities is a great way to meet new people, hear new ideas, and be exposed to other realities and passions shared within the DU community. Be open-minded, ask a few questions and consider showing up for a meeting,” she said. “You never know what might pique your interest and turn out great.”