

# What I did on my summer vacation

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Thomas A. LaVeist

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*Below is an excerpt from Dean Thomas A. LaVeist's journal from his experiences this summer. To see the full interactive journal, please visit:*

<https://sph.tulane.edu/dean-summer-holiday>

While the traditional image of summer break involves ocean waves, barbecues, and jet skis, my summer travels took me a little further afield.

Over the course of two separate trips, I spent a total of three and a half weeks in Africa this summer getting to know some of our existing colleagues and making new connections, all with an eye toward future collaboration.

**Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo**

First I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine first began working with partners there in 1978 when the country was still called Zaire. Those initial projects soon led to an effort, spearheaded by our own Dr. Bill Bertrand, to establish a school of public health at the University of Kinshasa, which opened in 1986.

If I had any questions about how involved Bill was in those early days of the Kinshasa School of Public Health, they quickly evaporated when I saw the monument lauding the school's founders. There was Dr. Bill Bertrand's nearly life-size face immortalized in bronze practically staring right at me right on campus.

I toured the school's campus and visited the main administrative building, as well as a classroom named after Bill Bertrand. I was fortunate to be able to spend time with KSPH's Dean Desiré Mashinda and discuss continued collaborations between our two institutions. Dean Mashinda will, in fact, be visiting us here at Tulane SPHTM at the end of September, with a [seminar on Monday, October 2](#) from 12-1pm in Room 1201.

Read more here: <https://sph.tulane.edu/dean-summer-holiday>