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## Branding and Web Design for Inkululeko: With Freedom Comes Hope

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# **Branding and Web Design for Inkululeko: With Freedom Comes Hope**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors  
May 2013

Honors Capstone Project in Graphic Design

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Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: May 7, 2013

**Please view the completed project at [www.inkululeko.org](http://www.inkululeko.org)**

## Abstract

My Honors Capstone Project is entitled “Branding and Web Design for Inkululeko: With Freedom Comes Hope.” I worked with a Syracuse native, Jason Torreano, who recently started up an education nonprofit in Grahamstown, South Africa. This program is called Inkululeko, which, in the local Xhosa language, means “freedom.” The organization seeks to combat the inequalities in education that are a result of Apartheid in South Africa. They operate under the belief that anyone deserves a quality education, and that education is the key to success in a place where people have been denied it for so long.

This project allowed me to combine my interest in education with my skills in graphic design. I have been tutoring students from Somalia for the past four years at Syracuse, and although their situation is different, I have realized how important education is to a child or teen’s success. So I was drawn to this project because it allowed me to mix two of my passions together for a good cause.

I did the majority of my work on this project when school was not in session, because I knew that this was the only time I would be able to design with a clear head. I designed the logo over winter break of my junior year, exchanging ideas with Jason the whole time. I began with sketches, and once we had settled on one that we liked, I began adding colors and typefaces. The finished product is an abstract combination of a sun emerging from a book. As per Jason’s request, the logo’s colors are bright (red, orange and yellow) and evoke a message of hope, change and movement.

After I returned from studying abroad in the spring of my junior year, I began work on Inkululeko’s website. I had never designed a real website before, only non-functional mock-ups for class. Since I did not know how to code in HTML/CSS, I enlisted the help of a friend and iSchool student, Julie Dellinger, to code the site for me. After I designed each page in Adobe InDesign, I would send them to her to start coding. The process took the majority of the summer, and extended into the school year. During the fall of my senior year, I took a basic web design class, and am now able to make minor updates to the site at Jason’s request. In the future, Julie plans to create a Wordpress theme from the site, which would allow anyone – even those with no background in web design – to edit the site. In this way, it would function almost like a blog. Additionally, Jason has hired an intern to take my place next year, and I have been training this student and providing her with the necessary materials to carry on what I have started with Inkululeko.

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## Capstone Summary

For my Honors capstone project, I designed a logo and website for Inkululeko. Inkululeko is a new nonprofit education organization based in Grahamstown, South Africa. The organization was founded by Jason Torreano, a Syracuse native, who became interested in South African education policy after studying abroad there in college. After witnessing the inequality from apartheid that still plagues South Africa and – especially within its educational system – he became determined to make a difference. He decided to start an education program in Grahamstown, South Africa, that would work within the community to provide sustainable change. Thus, Inkululeko was born.

Inkululeko's mission is:

“to provide South African township youth with the skills, support and guidance necessary to apply, attend and succeed in university; to challenge the bigotry of low expectations for township youth; and to provide sustainable, positive change – student-by-student, generation-by-generation.”

The organization uses resources from within the local Grahamstown community to identify challenges and opportunities to improve education. They have hired staff members and volunteers from South Africa and the United States to help lead programs. Inkululeko also collaborates with Syracuse University, Le Moyne College and Rhodes University in South Africa.

In order to understand how to fix the problem of education inequality, it is important to know how it all began. The history is long and complicated, but can be traced back mainly to the institutionalization of Apartheid in 1948. This policy of separateness segregated whites from blacks in South Africa when the National Party won

the white-only general elections that year. In 1953, the Bantu Education Act enforced this segregation by centralizing education under government control. The new laws forbid anyone from opening up schools for blacks without permission, which consequently lowered standards for black students. Little or no quality education meant that there were few job prospects, which led to poverty and extreme inequality between whites and blacks. The problem continues throughout generations.

Despite Apartheid's demise, these disparities are still very visible today. South African education is ranked as one of the lowest in the world – 132 out of 144. Low exam pass rates make many graduates virtually unemployable. Poor education is especially a problem in the rural township areas, where high schools are known for high dropout rates, drugs, alcohol, violence, sexual abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

Inkululeko's goal is to be a place for youth to improve on areas of academic deficiency. Socioeconomic and racial disparities should not be used as excuses for why students cannot succeed, and every person has the right to a quality education.

Impoverished people are just that – impoverished – not inherently unable to succeed.

Inkululeko operates under the belief that education is the first step in fixing the problems caused by Apartheid, if we want to start turning things around.

I was drawn to this project because it allowed me to combine two things that have become very important to me: creativity and education. I've been tutoring students from Somalia since my freshman year here at Syracuse, and while I know that their situation is much different from what students experience in South Africa, education has unexpectedly become something I'm very passionate about. I would love to have the opportunity to work for a nonprofit someday, preferably one that deals with education.

I'd also like to work for a graphic design firm, doing logo and website design. So this project was really inspiring to me, because it allowed me to take one skill set and implement it in a way that would benefit others.

In order to plan my capstone in a way that would fit my schedule, I decided to schedule the bulk of my work when I was not in school. I know that I always have too many other commitments going on during the school year, and I wanted to be able to work with a clear head.

I began by designing Inkululeko's logo during winter break of my junior year. I started with lots of sketches, which I sent to Jason for feedback. I then added color variations, and then typefaces. For each version I sent, Jason would reply with feedback on what was good, what wasn't, and what should be combined or changed. His responses were extremely helpful in steering me in the right direction. His initial guidelines were to create something that combined the ideas of hope and education, with bright colors and movement.

The logo we ultimately decided on is an abstract combination of a book with a sunrise emerging from the center. I used bright reds, oranges and yellows to fortify the idea of hope, and giving students a fresh start. I'm really happy with how it turned out, and I think it conveys the message that I intended.

The next task was to design Inkululeko's website. I had never designed a real, functioning website before – only mock ups for class. So I enlisted the help of a good friend and talented iSchool student, Julie Dellinger. Julie coded the site using HTML and CSS programming in Wordpress. Coding in Wordpress allows the web developer to make the site into a "theme," or template, upon completion. This means that anyone can –

even those without any HTML or CSS background in web design – can edit the site, almost like a blog. This makes the site sustainable, and facilitates changes to its content.

I began work on Inkululeko's website during my summer break of 2012. Getting started with the home page was the most difficult part. I knew that whatever design I ended up with for this page would determine the rest of the website, because it would serve as my template. I used mainly the same color scheme that I used for the logo, but added a cream color for the background.

From what I learned about web design for nonprofits in my graphic design classes, I knew that certain things are very important to include on the home page. Pictures are the best way to get viewers' attention, especially when the site has to do with a charitable cause. Making a human connection is essential. Furthermore, it is important that visitors have easy access to ways that they can get involved and/or contact the organization. I kept these techniques in mind as I designed the home page, and continued to design the rest of the site. After I finished designing and finalizing each page in InDesign, I sent them to Julie to begin coding. We continued this process throughout the majority of the summer, and into the beginning of the school year. During the fall semester, I took a basic web design class, and am now able to make minor updates to the site at Jason's request. I also helped to find a replacement for myself for next year: Andrea Bolf, a graphic design junior, will be serving as Jason's intern during the 2013-2014 school year.



## Reflective Essay

One of my career aspirations (and there are a *lot* of them) is to work for a nonprofit organization. I would especially like to work for a nonprofit that deals with education and provides opportunities to those who have been denied the quality education that everyone deserves. Before coming to Syracuse, I never would have imagined that I would have developed an interest in this area. During my very first week here, I participated in a pre-orientation program with Habitat for Humanity. Through that program, I met Robbi Farschman, who ran the Office of Engagement Programs in Hendricks Chapel. Robbi told me about International Young Scholars, a mentoring/tutoring program that works with Somali Bantu high school and middle school students in Syracuse. When the students come to the US, they are placed into the grade appropriate for their age level, despite the fact that many have never even stepped inside of a school. IYS mentors give them the extra help they need to succeed. We assist students primarily with reading and writing, but also help with Regents exams practice and science, math and history homework.

To be honest, I don't even know what compelled me to sign up for the program. I'd only tutored once before, and it wasn't the best experience. And tutoring high school students – when I had only been a high school graduate for three months – was a pretty terrifying prospect. But for some reason, I went through with it. Now, four years later, I can honestly say that IYS has been the most influential and amazing experience I've had here at SU. I worked with the same student for the majority of those four years, and he is now headed to Cazenovia College in the fall. It's been a learning experience on both

sides – I often feel as though I've learned just as much from him and the other students as they have from me.

Why am I telling this story? Because this is my motivation for doing what I do. My work with IYS was what really drew me toward this project with Inkululeko. While the situations are obviously different, the idea of doing what I can to help prevent someone from slipping through the cracks in the education system is what brings these two programs together in my mind. Tutoring has helped me find my niche – I like working one on one with students, and empowering them to succeed.

As a graphic design major, I struggled with the thought that my career might not be as beneficial to others as I'd like my job to be. Let's be honest: laying out a magazine probably won't change as many lives as being a social worker or teacher. The thought haunted me so much that I considered switching my major. But with Inkululeko, for the first time, I was able to put my skills to use in a way that would really benefit people. It was the first time I actually felt powerful as a graphic designer. While I wasn't the one tutoring students or fundraising, I was still playing a big role in getting the organization off the ground. I loved what I was doing, and knowing that I was helping to make a difference was a bit part of that.

I began the process in the fall of my junior year. Since I knew that I wanted to combine graphic design and nonprofit work for my capstone, my graphic design professor, Sherri Taylor, put me in contact with Jason Torreano. Jason is a Syracuse native who studied abroad in South Africa, and after witnessing the lasting effects that apartheid still has on education inequality, he decided he wanted to make a difference there. After years of planning, and many return trips to South Africa, he started

Inkululeko, a program that provides youth with the support they need to eventually attend university. After exchanging emails with Jason and meeting up to talk about the project, we decided that we would be a good fit, and began making plans to move forward. I knew that I would be far too busy to work on my capstone during the school year (especially since I planned to go abroad to Florence in the spring of 2012), so I scheduled the bulk of my work during winter and summer break. This ended up working out very well, and left me with plenty of time and a clear head with which to design.

Over winter break, I began designing Inkululeko's logo. Logo design is a tricky thing, and it can be hard to explain how difficult it is to someone not familiar with design. It comes with a great amount of responsibility. You're designing something that is going to be the face of an organization indefinitely. You're essentially making something from nothing, except for maybe a few nebulous terms that your client uses to describe the project. And if you mess up, or the design doesn't turn out well, it reflects negatively on the organization. So logo design carries with it a huge amount of responsibility.

At the same time, however, logo design can be very empowering. If it works out well, it's wonderful to think that you've created an entire identity for an organization. It's much more than a portfolio piece – it's really something to be proud of, and it will be there forever. Or at least until they decide to re-brand themselves. Needless to say, though, I was a bit nervous. While I was excited about the task, and I knew that with lots of work I could do a good job, I was still worried about ending up with something I couldn't be proud of.

Jason gave me clear directions about what he wanted for the logo, but not in a way that would stifle my creativity. He wanted something bold, bright and fun that would

evoke a message of hope, happiness and opportunity. Since the program is education-related, I should try to convey that message, as well. He gave me some examples of logos for inspiration, including the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa logo. It's an eye-catching logo with bright colors and a lot of motion. So this gave me a decent idea of what he was looking for. I also spent some time looking at other nonprofits' logos for inspiration.

I started my design process with lots of sketches. I focused a lot on trying to combine the image of a sunrise and a book – hope and education. I also tried some images of plants, leaves and trees to symbolize renewal and growth. We also toyed with the idea of including silhouettes of people in the logo, but in the end decided against it, because it made everything look too crowded. There are several pages of sketches in all. While it seemed like a lot to me, the amount that I produced was probably not all that many compared to what a lot of designers go through. I've learned that some go through hundreds of sketches before settling on the first one.

After sketching, I scanned the images into my computer and live traced them in PhotoShop, so they'd look slightly more professional, or less "sketchy." I don't know if this was necessary, and I haven't done it with the logos I've designed since then, but it worked in this instance. I sent the logos to Jason, who returned the file with handwritten comments on each one. This was very helpful, because it gave me a clear idea of what direction he wanted me to go in. Then I'd use his feedback to make alterations. We went through this back-and-forth process several times before settling on one sketch that he liked the best: an abstract sunrise with curving rays emerging from an open book.

Next it was time to start working with the logos in Adobe Illustrator, and add colors. Jason told me that he wanted bright colors, like blues, reds, oranges and yellows. I started by using these four colors in different variations on the logo – using some as outlines, some as background colors, etc. We both decided that the logo looked best without outlines, and with “shadow” pieces behind each ray. Once this part was decided, I came up with about a dozen more color variations, using different shades of red, orange, yellow, etc. I expected Jason to choose the original logo, which had the colors he had mentioned in the first place. But in the end, he settled on one with two shades of red, a dark orange, and a dark yellow. I was surprised at first, because it wasn’t the brightest of the logos, and I knew that that was what he had had in mind initially. But in the end, I think it was the best option.

After settling on a color scheme, we now needed to choose a typeface. Jason wanted the logo to include the tagline “With freedom comes hope” in addition to the name of the organization itself. I picked out about ten different typefaces that I thought matched the feel of the logo. We also tried putting some of the typefaces in color, just to see how that would look. But after seeing some of those options, we both agreed that the type looked best in black, which allowed the colors of the logo to stand out more. Some of the typefaces we tried were more formal, and others were more script-like. I was pretty sure that I knew which typeface Jason would choose; I thought he would go for one of the simpler, serif typefaces. But in the end, he chose Handwriting Dakota, which is a script typeface, which means it looks like it was handwritten. While I’m happy with how it looks now, at first I was surprised by his decision. I thought that this typeface looked a

little cheesy, and I thought that the organization deserved something more formal. Now that I have a better understanding of Inkululeko's mission, however, I think it fits well.

This experience taught me an important lesson about logo design: don't give clients options that you yourself wouldn't choose. Looking back on the options I gave Jason, I can't help but find some of them a little unprofessional. I think I assumed that he would just gravitate toward the ones that I thought looked more professional, but now I realize that this generally isn't the case when you're working with someone who doesn't have a design background. I don't say this to be pretentious – I mean that it should be my job to weed out the good from the bad, not the client's job. So this part of designing the logo really made me reconsider my role as a designer.

When the logo was finalized, I saved it in several formats so that it could be edited if need be. I also developed a style guide for the logo, which included which pantone colors I used, the typeface name, and sizes. This helped later on in the process, when other graphic design students did some more work for Inkululeko.

One final logo-related realization after everything had been finalized – I forgot to kern! Kerning means moving letters closer or farther apart to make sure everything is evenly spaced. For some reason, I didn't think to do this in the first place. By the time I realized my mistake, though, it was too late to make changes. I don't think anyone other than a designer would notice this, but it bugged me for a while afterwards! It's certainly something I won't forget next time. Since then, I've been very careful about kerning – almost obsessive. But it's better to be safe – and a bit of a perfectionist – than sorry.

The summer after I returned from studying abroad, I began working on the website. This was a much longer process than designing the logo, and lasted into the

beginning of the fall semester. My task was the design side of the website, Inkululeko.org. Since I did not have any experience with HTML or CSS coding yet, I wasn't prepared for the web development aspect of the process. So I enlisted the help of an iSchool student, Julie Dellinger, to code the website for me. Julie is a very trustworthy and responsible student, and a great friend, so I knew the project would be in good hands.

I started the web design process with the home page, designing the mock-ups in Adobe InDesign. I knew that getting started would be a challenge, because the first page would serve as a template for all of the other pages. So I had to make sure that everything was really working well before I moved on. I started by sketching out a basic template of what I wanted the page to look like. Jason really wanted the background to be a scrolling wallpaper of black and white images of the students in South Africa, an idea he saw on a different nonprofit website. (This was a challenge that I'll describe later). On top of this black and white image background, I stuck with the same red, orange and yellow color scheme that I used in the logo. I added a cream color for the stationary background.

The home page functions as a sort of jumping off point that leads visitors to all of the most important aspects of the site. It displays the organization's mission, how to get in touch, how to donate, and the Twitter feed, which provides a constant stream of updated information. The centerpiece of the home page is a scrolling billboard, which features photos of students with quotes from famous South African education and equal rights advocates. The idea was to give visitors an understanding of what the organization is about in the easiest and quickest way possible.

After the home page was finalized, I was able to move onto all of the other pages. The web design process was similar to the logo design process. I would design a version

of the page, send it to Jason for feedback, and then adjust the page based on his response. Some of the pages only required one or two revisions and took just a few days, while others had more than ten.

There were several main points I kept in mind throughout the whole web design process. In my first graphic design class, GRA 217, one of our projects was to design a website for a nonprofit organization. Although this project was much more basic than what I've done with Inkululeko – and also wasn't a functioning website – it gave me some good background on how things should be done. A different professor, Jen Harper, spoke to us about the important aspects of website design, especially when it comes to nonprofits. (This was where I first learned about charity: water.) A lot of the things he talked about in class that day really stuck with me, and I used what I learned there when designing for Inkululeko.

Professor Harper stressed the importance of using large pictures, especially for a nonprofit. This, more than words or anything else, is what draws viewers' attention to the issue at hand. The visuals are really important, because they cause the viewer to feel emotion. In addition, it's important that the organization's mission be displayed as clearly as possible on the home page. After the pictures, this is the next thing that anyone who visits the site will want to see, especially those unfamiliar with the organization's mission. Lastly, the home page should always have an immediate, visible call to action – “Donate here!” or “Sign up to volunteer!” People want to know exactly how they can get involved, and making them search the entire site to find the answer could cause them to lose interest and give up.



In total, I designed thirteen pages: Home, Mission, What's Happening Now, Multimedia Project, History, Method, Get Involved, Volunteer, Students, About Us, Staff, Donate, and Contact. The process was similar for each page, but with different components. I focused on making good use of pictures, and displaying content in a way that would be manageable for visitors. I also developed some icons to separate different elements. The Get Involved page, for example, lists several ways that those interested can become a part of Inkululeko. For each one, I created a little "logo" to go along with the content. These vector illustrations were a fun challenge, and I continued this theme on the What's Happening Now page, as well.

There were a lot of challenges I had to deal with in designing the website. The main challenge was the fact that I had never designed a functioning website before. Up until this point, I had only designed non-working websites for class projects. I found that designing a "real" website required a lot more thought than designing one for a class project. With web design, everything not only has to look nice, but has to be 100 percent functional. But the designer has to design without actually seeing the functionality happen. So at times, as a beginner, it was hard to know what would work and what wouldn't. This also made it difficult at times to communicate with Julie, who was coding the website. There were times when I didn't know how to ask for something, because I didn't know the proper terminology to use. It was a little embarrassing, but fortunately she was understanding about this. Another challenge was the fact that – understandably – Julie was still a student. So there were things that we wanted to implement into the website that she hadn't learned yet in her web design classes. But since she was so

dedicated, Julie took a lot of time researching anything she didn't already know how to do. In many cases, she was able to figure things out on her own.

The most difficult part of the entire process was getting the background of the site to scroll. Julie had never done this before, so I knew that I would have to ask someone with more experience. In the fall of my senior year, I took a basic web design course, ICC 565. I enlisted the help of my professor, Jeff Passetti, to try to make this part work. It was actually pretty difficult, and we had to meet several times throughout the course of the semester before we were successful. It involved experimenting with a lot of code that was more advanced than anything we had done in class. But we finally got it, and Jason was very happy.

One last challenge I faced with the website was working with the photography that the organization provided. Since Inkululeko is a nonprofit, they don't have a budget for photography. The fact that the organization is based in South Africa doesn't make things any easier. All of their photos were taken by volunteers, which meant that a lot of them weren't the best. This meant that I had to work hard to make photos that weren't the best quality look a lot better. This involved a lot of cropping and resizing to make everything look as nice as possible. I guess this is a lesson I can use if I end up working for a nonprofit in the future.

I drew inspiration from many different areas for this project. I've always had a huge admiration for an organization called charity: water, a nonprofit whose mission is to provide clean, safe drinking water to people in developing countries. I love everything about charity: water – their mission, photography, graphic design, videos, and how they keep in touch with interested followers via blogs and events. I think they're an incredible

organization, and it is one of my greatest career aspirations to work for them someday – or at least an organization similar to them. They have a wonderful artistic staff that complements their mission and really brings the organization to life in a way that attracts visitors. So although their mission is different from that of Inkululeko, I spent a lot of time looking at their website for inspiration, although my end product looks very different from charity: water’s website.

I also searched for other nonprofit websites that were known for their designs, especially those that dealt with education. Doing so gave me a feel for what sort of things I should prioritize when designing Inkululeko’s website. While I don’t think that my end product is quite as professional-looking as any of the sites I drew inspiration from, I still learned a lot from the process of seeking out examples to emulate.

This was the first time I had done so much graphic design work outside of class, and for a real client and organization. I think that sometime, though, I probably should have been a little more assertive about my own thoughts, or challenged myself to play the devil’s advocate role. I’ve always had a tendency to assume that others are right, and just follow along with their ideas, simply because I’m naturally a very shy person. There were a lot of times that Jason came up with ideas, and I just went forward with them, without thinking of how things might be done differently. As a designer, I now know that it should be my job to take a client’s ideas and make them work artistically, even if this means talking them out of things they might be very fond of.

To be honest, if I could go back and do it over again, I would probably make a lot of different design decisions. I think the biggest issue was the scrolling background. While I’m happy that it worked out in the end, I’m not sure that it makes the website look

as professional as I had intended. I know that it's not a huge issue, and that Jason is very happy with how it looks. But I think that if I could go back, I might talk to him more about my concerns about how this feature might affect the image of the website and the organization itself. This is another example of my shyness preventing me from playing the devil's advocate role, which is something I'll definitely need to work on when working with future clients.

That being said, though, Jason was an excellent client to work with. I feel so lucky to have had such a great experience working with Inkululeko, especially since it was my first real-life project. He always delivered constructive feedback in a timely fashion, and he was very encouraging and understanding throughout the whole process. His positive attitude was really inspiring to me, and always kept me motivated to move forward.

If I could go way, *way* back, I would rearrange my schedule so that I could have been taking web design classes earlier on, which would have allowed me to code the website myself. Web design is such an important skill for anyone in a creative profession to have, and I hope to take more web design classes on the side in the future, maybe through a local college back home. But since I've always had so many other requirements and commitments, I wasn't able to take web design until my senior year. I concluded that in order to take a more advanced class, I would need to have a relatively empty schedule because it's a time-consuming process for me. I'm a slow learner when it comes to anything involving technology. Web design is very mathematical, which makes it difficult for me. Once I understand it, I love it. But it's a long process, and I need a lot of time to let things sink in.

Now that I've taken the basic web design class, I'm able to make basic updates to Inkululeko's website on my own. I can make changes to the text, swap out pictures, and change colors on certain aspects of the site. I feel great – almost powerful – knowing that I have the ability to do this. I hope I can continue to expand my web design and development knowledge in the future. I know that doing so will make me a better, wiser, and more marketable designer.

So what's next for Inkululeko? Part of my job as the designer was to find someone to take my place next year after I graduate, so that Inkululeko can continue to thrive. I enlisted the help of a very talented junior graphic design major, Andrea Bolf, whom I met in my portfolio class this semester. I provided Andrea with all of the materials that she will need to carry on what I've started. We've met several times for training sessions, and also with Julie to familiarize her with the website. She will be Jason's new intern, and has already started working on some promotional materials for Inkululeko. I'm very excited to see where things go, and I have a lot of confidence in Andrea's abilities.

Furthermore, Julie will be integrating the website into a Wordpress theme. This means that the site can be edited very easily by anyone – even people who have never dabbled in web design before. Integrating the website into Wordpress theme basically turns the site into a blog template. I've worked on sites like this before for internships, and they are very easy to manage.

I think I've learned a lot about design just in the past year or so since I began the project. I think that with this knowledge, I would probably be able to do a better job, and would be able to give the site a more professional look. When I look at the finished

product now, I think it seems a little too rigid and juvenile. For one thing, I think I would make the pictures larger, and I might not use the cream color for the background. But maybe my own criticisms are just a result of staring at the site nonstop for almost a year. That being said, though, I have to accept the fact that I'm still learning. The fact that I can look back on this project and see areas where I can improve means that I have grown as a designer, even in a short amount of time.