

Bruce's Story

My name is Bruce and I am a Zimbabwean in South Africa. I was born in 1983 in Kwekwe in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province. It was a small town where we lived in a house. In the holidays we grew our vegetables, to do this we often went to the countryside where we lived in huts. I really enjoyed my youth, since at that time the state still functioned. I could go to school and was able to organize everything I wanted to do. But from 1998 it went downhill and I could barely enjoy my life. By that time it was really hard. Around the turn of the millennium the opposition in Zimbabwe appeared and an upsurge of political competition began. Whenever it came to elections, people were frightened and we boys were forced to participate in the marches of a particular party. When I had to stop my training as an auto mechanic, I realized that I had to go.



Why? Because I knew that I needed another country with more opportunity and where I could live a better life. Even my mother got her things together, went to South Africa and came back home with money. My brother did the same. From then on I knew that you could make something better of yourself in South Africa.

In 2004 I came to Cape Town for the first time and liked it very much. Although I returned to my home, I never resettled there. My friends and I always went back to Botswana, where we bought stuff like low-priced clothes and then sold them in Zimbabwe. In 2006 I traveled from Botswana to South Africa. I spent two nights with my cousin in Johannesburg, but my main goal was Cape Town. At that time, Pretoria and Johannesburg were already flooded with people from Zimbabwe, so I thought I first had to go further and take my chances there. In Cape Town, I sold African art, such as wood carvings, and continued to travel a lot to get my goods. As my friends and I had no money, we went hitchhiking in the backs of large trucks. In 2008 one of these trucks had a serious accident and all our goods were broken - that was the day I lost my business.

When I came to South Africa, the border guards gave us three months to stay in the country. But of course that was not enough to earn enough money, so I overstayed my visa for about a year. Fortunately for me it was exactly the time when the authorities began to issue refugee documents for all Zimbabweans in South Africa. I got my first asylum visa for six months and then I had to renew it. That period was too insecure, so I applied two years ago for a working visa, which is now valid until 2015.

After my goods were destroyed, I had no money left. So I started working in construction and then started in the restaurant business. I worked as a kitchen hand, waiter and today I mix cocktails as a bartender. This is now my career. But I dream of opening a bar or even a small restaurant if I work hard and I eventually save enough money. That's what I really want to do and I also want to build my business.

What I do not like about my new home? The fast pace, because of this, there is also more crime, drug trafficking and gang violence than in Zimbabwe. In addition, the native black population is often arrogant, comes up to you and starts talking to you in their tribal language. I feel that is an insult to those who do not speak their language. However, I now know that I love my new home. Because if you work hard, you will find a job. In addition, you can find people here from all over the world and the area around Cape Town is stunning. Most importantly: In Cape Town, I have found my love. She is a young German, who came to our bar and now she is my wife.