



Gilman Alumni Representative

Naida Montes

Equatorial Guinea, Spring 2008

Arcadia University



Studying abroad in Equatorial Guinea, Africa has been an experience like no other. During my stay, I spent several days doing primate research and conservation work with the Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program on Moraka Playa. I continued to do my own primate research as part of a class with the help of a local expert in Moca village. When I returned to Malabo city in the capital of Equatorial Guinea, I had the pleasure of volunteering to teach English at the Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial while also taking other classes. The Gilman Scholarship gave me the opportunity to experience a whole new world and really do something good out of appreciation for those who supported me when I was unsure of what life had in store for me.

I feel that my Gilman Follow-on Project, although completed, is ongoing. My project had a strange twist to it. My goal was and still is to promote study abroad, advancement, opportunity and literacy around the world. Being that I was a teacher in Equatorial Guinea, I really got to see the importance of books and education since many of my own students did not have any books. When I returned to the U.S., I continued working with book drives that would support not only international causes but local ones as well. I have had the opportunity to speak at information sessions at Arcadia University as well as my local Community College of Philadelphia. One of my greatest honors was to be invited to be a key note speaker at an 8th grade graduation by a woman who was amazed by a speech of mine as I shared my experiences. I had the opportunity to speak one on one with students from my local North Philadelphia community where drugs, violence, and dropping-out of school are prevalent. I shared some of my hardest experiences abroad and how that gave me strength. I was their voice during the graduation and had the opportunity to speak to parents and friends, giving a message of hope to this community. I continue to speak at places wherever I am invited bringing a message of love and hope to youth and adults.

I have just begun my Masters in International Development with a global concentration at Eastern University. This is a field I would have never even thought of going into about two years ago. In a year I plan to conduct field work in another country - loving, laughing, living and enjoying my passion to serve others around the world.



Naida conducted field research counting some of the most endangered primate species.



Naida with some of her English class students at the University.

From her experience teaching English to university students in Equatorial Guinea, Naida continues to channel her passion of helping others through her community service and her graduate work.

