



Gilman Scholarship Program

Name: Leslie Camacho

Home Town: San Diego, California

U.S. Institution: Humboldt State University

Country: Nicaragua, Spring 2006

In January of 2006 I participated in Augsburg's "Social and Environmental Justice Program" in Mexico and Guatemala. The program was eye opening and connected me to people, organizations and regions in my field of study that I possibly might not have had the opportunity to encounter. My home-stay was incredible, so much that I remain in touch with my host mom to this day.

There were many highlights during my experience abroad, such as viewing the art of Diego Rivera, attending a fútbol game in Mexico City and learning to make tamales. Yet there were a few experiences that were particularly significant to me, one included the opportunity to hear Subcommandante Marcos speak on behalf of La Otra Campaña, a political campaign endorsed by the Zapatistas. This was an experience that most Latin American Studies majors rarely get the opportunity to witness.

This was an incredible experience creating in me an excitement and anxiousness to speak with minority students at my residing high school, Cordova High. This school is located in California's Sacramento public inner city school system that contains a very diverse student populace, predominantly that of Latinos and African Americans. In October 2006 I spoke in two history classes and two Spanish classes. I was able to speak to them at length about scholarships aimed at minorities. I also emphasized how this trip affected me, including personal and family reflections, and the feeling of empowerment from this experience abroad. Throughout our discussion I played a slide show of pictures that I had taken while abroad to reflect upon the cultural differences and similarities of our own culture. I was astonished and gratified with the attention and interest that I received. I really felt like I was able to influence more than a few to take an opportunity to expand one's life experiences.

After completing my follow up project I realized just how passionate I am in talking to disadvantaged youth. I enjoy being a mentor and hope to further this aspect within my career path. This study abroad experience definitely reemphasized how much I want to work within the Latin based sector and continue strengthening my Spanish skills, in hopes to one day live and work in the region. I am very thankful for this wonderful experience and had it not been for the Gilman Scholarship, I might not have been allotted this opportunity or that of furthering my travels through Central America.