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Are you African-American?" "No, I am Black English." "No, I am Brazilian." "No, I am Black French." These are the common responses I received when I studied abroad this year in Ecuador. The common misconception I made that most blacks I saw in foreign countries were African-Americans was crudely incorrect; yes, we share similar African roots, but our culture and language differ widely. The same idea applies when people state that all African-Americans love fried chicken and watermelon. In fact, many African-Americans fit in this category (myself included), but other African-Americans don't. As a result, the double consciousness of being Black and American added personal and academic dimensionality to this current debate in anthropology.

What I have learned from studying abroad is that adaptability, patience, open-mindedness and a good sense of humor are needed to survive! Learning a particular language doesn't mean that you know the culture; it is a benefit to learning the culture. During my time abroad, I traveled throughout Ecuador and South America and volunteered in Quito's Baca Ortiz Children's Public Hospital in the child rehabilitation wing. My time abroad made me reassess my professional track. I want to go to graduate school to receive my PhD in Medical Anthropology, studying the African Diaspora in Latin America and how racial inequalities negatively affect physical health and life expectancy. Currently, I am applying for the Fulbright scholarship to conduct academic research in Ecuador next academic school year and also to the Peace Corps.

The things that we remember are the lessons we learn outside the classroom and can apply to our life. My study abroad experience has resulted in me gaining much more knowledge than the two degrees that I will receive next May. Each decision I made, each opportunity I took, each obstacle I overcame, each experience I had, and each person I met has played a crucial role in shaping me into a "well-rounded" international citizen, cognizant of his anthropological development as a man, a Black and an American.