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Learning Ecuadorian Culture

Elide Sanchez Rivera
Linfield College

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Elide Sanchez Rivera

Quito, Ecuador

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Learning Ecuadorian Culture

Ecuador is a Latin American country that still ties its society with patriarchal tendencies and religious views. Just like in the United States where there are certain gender roles that people still think relevant, there are those same tendencies here in Ecuador. Even though it's becoming a more modern country, the *machista* views are still seen integrated in the daily lives of people as well as the Catholic influence.

My host family defies these stereotypes a little; although my host mom still cooks and cleans, and my host dad is a little judgmental on other ways of lives, they both are of Hindu faith. They don't constantly pray to the Hindu gods but they have shared with me their spiritual experiences that they have encountered. It is very interesting to see a different religion being practiced and how that influences their lives. For example, my host family doesn't celebrate certain holidays for the religious beliefs but for the cultural ones. *Dia del los Difuntos*, which is known as Day of the Dead, is celebrated by them by giving respect to their family members that passed away and making traditional food like *wawa (guagua)* bread and *colorada moroda*. They do the cultural stuff but they don't follow the religious stuff; instead they pray to their Hindu god.

One thing that has surprised more than anything here in Ecuador is the lack of spicy foods. Although there is *aji* which is what they call spicy sauces and peppers, there is barely any that can satisfy my spicy cravings. In fact, most dishes do not have any spicy things and when I ask for it, the spiciness is really mild and limited. Fortunately, my host dad likes *aji* so whenever

he cooks, he makes his dishes have a little bit of spiciness, but even when we have *aji* it's just not that hot. My host mom does not like *aji*, but does like it when my host dad cooks because he makes Italian dishes. See, my host mom was born in Quito, Ecuador but my host dad is actually from Argentina, so that is why he makes Italian dishes. He told me that Argentina has had a lot of influence by the Italians who settled there.

Ecuador is a great country with beautiful pieces of nature to explore. There are tons of wonderful things to see here like the coast, the mountains, the indigenous communities; it's really a spectacular place. The people here are generally very nice but there are a lot of older men who tend to feel entitled to make comments on girls. There is a lot of catcalling that happens here, and though I generally ignore it, it still makes me feel quite uncomfortable. The best thing to do in this situation is to avoid contact and just keep walking with a face that looks like you're annoyed. My host mom tells me that there is no way around it but that you will generally be okay so long as you don't confront them. Other than that, Ecuador is a fabulous place to be. The land is beautiful and the communities are great.