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Becoming Part of Ecuadorian Culture

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Quito, Ecuador

April 2nd, 2018

Becoming Part of Ecuadorian Culture

Being in Ecuador has been quite the change of pace for me and as much as I notice it in my daily life walking around, there were quite a few things that surprised me simply by just talking to Ecuadorians. For my report, I interviewed a friend from the University named Martin Flores. One of the most obvious things that I encountered when I came to Ecuador was the prominence of machismo culture or culture with the general attitude that men are the ones should be working, and that men have more power. For example, I got here and I got cat-called a lot partly because I am a gringa but it happens to a lot of women. When I asked my friend about it he said that he doesn't really do it but it's just a general part of the culture. It happens a lot and it is perfectly normal for him and for everyone else. In fact, if a woman reacts instead of ignoring it the men will take it as a sign of interest and continue to do it. If I was at home and I got cat-called I would probably shoot a dirty look and whoever did it would back away embarrassed.

The culture is very different in a couple of ways. First off, drinking culture for college students is different because the legal drinking age here is 18 so all of the college students can go out to clubs and bars and drink without repercussions. In addition to this when they stay out, they stay out a lot later (until as late as 4AM) and by that time I will normally have been asleep for 2 hours at least at home. When I told my friend this he was really surprised. When I get tired early and want to go home they wonder why I wouldn't want to go to the "post-party" after the nightclub closes at 3. Secondly, the culture here is

a lot more caring/affectionate. I asked my friend what would happen if I didn't greet everyone with a kiss on the cheek when I entered a room or got to a small gathering. He told me not to even test it out because not doing so is considered really rude and you wouldn't want to upset people. When I see people at home I just greet them with a "hi" or maybe a hug on the occasion that I haven't seen them in a while and that is perfectly normal. So that was something that I had to create as a habit in my daily life.

I also had to get used to the fact that this country is a lot more conservative than the United States and especially Oregon so sometimes I have to be careful what I say because a lot of people don't agree with certain views that I have. However, when it comes to interests and what the people here do for fun there really aren't that many differences between college students in the United States and college students in Ecuador. We listen to music together, watch movies together, like to do things outdoors, among other things. When Martin and I were talking, we realized while there are some differences between our two cultures, there are still a lot of things that we have in common.

From this interview that I had with my friend I learned that while there are some cultural adjustments that I had to make when I got to Ecuador, there were a lot of things that I could relate to when talking to and spending time with Ecuadorian students. I found that the Ecuadorians are often more knowledgeable/aware about history and world events than a lot of the US students, and the way that they go to school and are tested for their career paths is a bit different than how we do it in the United States. However, despite some of the societal and cultural differences, there were still a lot of similarities and things we could relate to each other on. We listen to a lot of the same music, and see the

same movies, and generally like doing similar activities with our friends. I found that I actually prefer some aspects of Ecuadorian culture, such as the more caring and welcoming aspect of the people. The close, familial culture made it a lot easier to adjust and become comfortable making new friends. I've loved Ecuador so far and exploring a new culture has really opened my eyes as to how valuable other customs and ways of life can be.

Martin Flores, Student-USFQ, 04/02/18