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Madison Perla
Linfield College

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Madison Perla

Quito, Ecuador

April 16th, 2018

All About Ecuador

I knew before coming to Ecuador that life would be a lot different than the life I live in the States and especially the life I live at Linfield. A big cultural difference between the States and Ecuador and a lot of other Latin American countries is the university life. For me, I go to a school that is four hours away from my home in Sammamish, Washington. I also live on campus like most other students and have the opportunity to wake up in the mornings and walk 5 to 10 minutes to class. People also have the opportunity to work at Linfield with work-study jobs or just work off-campus at other locations. I believe that living alone and the choice to have a job gives students and especially me the opportunity to see what it is like to live alone without parents taking care of us and also become more independent. I've been living alone for the past 3 and a half years and at first it was very hard for me to live on my own and not have anyone to take care of me except for me. But over time I learned how to take care of myself and I became a very strong, independent individual. Over the past 3 years I have learned how to cook for myself, do my own laundry, and how to become a disciplined person on my own without my parents telling me when and where to do my homework as well as when to go to bed.

Before I tell you about my friend, Washington, let me tell you a little bit about the University of San Francisco, Quito (USFQ), where I have been attending school for the past four months. This school is located in Cumbayá, Ecuador, which is also close to a city called Tumbaco, Ecuador. These two cities are about 20-30 minutes away from Quito, Ecuador. Where I live versus where I go to school is like saying that I live in the heart of Portland and go to

school in the south waterfront because Cumbayá and Tumbaco are probably two of the most affluent cities in Ecuador. There is also no doubt that most of the students that attend USFQ are very well off and either live in Cumbayá or Tumbaco.

With that said, the university lifestyle that my friend Washington lives in is completely different than the one I live in at home in the States. He is 20 years old and he still lives at home with his family, which is very common for people at the university. People usually live with their families until after they graduate and have a job. He also told me that even though he knows how to drive, he doesn't have his own car and instead he has his family's personal driver drive and pick him up from school most of the time— which I find extremely strange, but to him and other students at USFQ it is very common. His family also has someone that comes over every single day to do the everyday chores, which include cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry, which is super common for the people who go to USFQ. While he has someone come every day, there are people that just have someone come every other day of the week. When I asked him about jobs he told me that people that are in college really don't have jobs like college kids do in the States; their job is to study and get an education. Washington is also heavily involved in school activities like being an ecuabuddy and being a part of student government as well.

I was really surprised about how school is considered the most important thing in their lives right now. While school is very important in my life, I am also told that I need to get a job in order to pay for extra expenses like clothes, food, and other random things I may want. However, since it is abnormal to get a summer/college/work-study job here, Washington for instance got involved in a lot of after-school activities. Culturally, my living situation versus Washington's living situation is very different. It is a cultural norm to live at home while in college here, while at home in the States if you don't move away for college and live on your

own in a dorm, apartment, or any other living situation not with your family, it tends to make you different from everyone else. However, since it is my third (almost fourth) year into college, that is pretty smart and cost effective to live at home because it saves money! While Washington doesn't mind living at home because it is free room and board and he still gets taken care of by his parents, I prefer living in the situation that I do at Linfield. I have been able to grow as a person and really learn about who I am as a person because I don't have my parents influencing my thoughts, opinions, and the decisions that I make.

Washington and I both share the common interest of politics. I am majoring in history and international relations and he is majoring in political science, so we kind of think the same because what we study disciplines us to think in very similar ways. We both have very high work ethics and school is very important to us. What is a little different is that he doesn't like to procrastinate, like a lot of other students at USFQ. For instance, I might be assigned a group project that is due in a week-and-a-half but a lot of the Ecuadorians want to finish the project in the first three days that it was assigned (while I, on the other hand, am a huge procrastinator and I wait until the last minute to get everything done). Culturally, it is also really "cool" when people go to the States. Another cultural similarity that Washington and I have is the concept of drinking. I believe that we share this cultural belief since I am half South American myself and I was taught and have observed people my age in Perú and saw that they don't drink to just get drunk like a lot of people my age do in the States, but more commonly they do it to socialize. In Ecuador it is the same way as well. Sometimes people will go out during the week after class to grab a drink just to talk about how their week has been going. While it is no secret that people do get drunk sometimes, it is not always the end goal, like most of the people my age in the United States.

I also decided to ask him about how he felt about the United States and the first statement was, “Your president is crazy.” Which is nothing out of the ordinary for me because I know that most countries and people hate the United States right now and our president. It is also very interesting because he went to a private school where he learned English, and a good amount of United States history. He even learned the United States’ national anthem. Nevertheless, as much as he knows about the United States, it was weird hearing him talk about why he hates the US and actually having good reasons to back up his claims. However, as much as he hates the United States, he likes the US. He likes the US because it was different than what he is used to in terms of culture and pace of life. Here in Ecuador it is way slower and relaxed, while in the States it is very fast paced and go, go, go. He also told me that while a lot of people hate the States, a lot of people go there to shop for clothes because clothes are sometimes cheaper in the States due to importing tax, but also because it shows that you are *able* to go to the states, which is a sign of wealth. And while this may sound a little racist, a lot of Latin Americans have a perception that if you have lighter skin you are more European or “white,” which is more desired. It is definitely true because my dad is full Peruvian and when he was younger he and his brother would play outside in the sun and they would get tan and their mom would get mad at them for being “too tan.” So, while a lot of people in the United States, including me, like to be tan, a lot of Latin Americans desire to not have a tan.

I had a pretty good perception of Ecuador in terms of the similarities and differences with the United States before coming down to Ecuador because I have been to another South American country, Perú, before and have experienced the way of life. While there are differences between Perú and Ecuador, there definitely have many similarities, which helped me acclimate to Ecuador faster. I love the way that the culture here is way more “intimate.” What I

mean is that places such as houses are not built as big and grand as in the United States, which means that the space here is way more intimate, which I really like. The way of life down in Ecuador is also way more relaxed, which I anticipated but did not realize how much more relaxed it is here than in the US. Also, it was very funny because when I told Washington that I lived in on-campus housing in an apartment with three other girls before I came here, he wanted to know all about it because that it is very uncommon to not live with your family in college. =

It was very interesting in terms of my perception of most Ecuadorians hating the United States. While it is true other countries really do not like the US, with Washington telling me about how people like going to the US to buy clothes and then bring them back to wear it got me thinking. While the United States has a very negative connotation, people wanting to go to the US just to buy clothes to bring back and wear shows how a lot of countries may hate the United States but still want to be like the United States. Maybe not in terms of having a president like ours right now, but when I think about globalization and how different food, culture, and politics spread, I see that the US has influenced Ecuador especially with their culture in terms of US movies, music, and US fashion. For example, at my school, people are rich and when they go to the US they buy clothes, bring them back, and wear them. It shows a sign of wealth and it shows that they have been to the United States. Another example of globalization is Amazon/ Amazon Prime. Amazon is a world-known business, but Amazon is not in Ecuador. However, when people find out that friends or family are going to the United States, they find out where the family/ friends are staying and then order things from Amazon to their hotels or the homes in order to bring the Amazon products back to Ecuador for them. It is interesting to see how hated the US can be but at the same time how people constantly want products from the United States. I interviewed my ecuabuddy Washington Quinchuela on April 12th.