How Was Your Trip?

Reflections from Montclair State University students on their June delegation to Nicaragua

Evelyn Milagros Sipiran

So many people in this country are so unaware that there are people that are so poor that they rely on garbage to be their shelter and source of food. It just made me realize even more how much people take things for granted…To simply know that a main cause of death is diarrhea was amazing for me to hear.

I chose to go on a delegation because I am Latin America. I was born in Peru, and I wanted to be able to learn not only about my culture but another culture. I loved it. I learned so much about myself—to be more patient, to be more grateful, and to always, no matter what situation I am in, be open-minded.

Jessica Bergman

Now that we're back in the US, we're planning on doing SO much. Our group is putting together a movie and presentations about our experience and what we learned. We are working with Montclair State to make it a Fair Trade campus, and we are talking about future delegations with WfP in Nicaragua and other Latin American countries.

Charlene Clarke

Going to Nicaragua has been one of the best decisions that I have made in life. It's amazing how many memories and impacting moments a person can have within only 10 days. The moment on the delegation that impacted me the most was when I met the beautiful Yamileth Perez. She is a hero to me. She has practically nothing yet gives everything to others. After meeting Yamileth, one of my fears was that I would not be able to do for others in years what this one woman has done for me in hours. If you are considering going on a Witness For Peace delegation to Nicaragua, be prepared for your life to change. Place all of your fears to the side and go there with an open mind, open arms and open heart, because that's how you will be greeted and embraced.

Kimberly Tanella

There was one moment in particular that touched me tremendously: The group and I were visiting the pediatric wing of a public hospital in Nicaragua where a doctor explained the illnesses of a group of children with observably swollen heads. As I listened, I saw a little boy maybe six or seven years old with an enlarged skull playing with a red balloon out of the corner of my eye. Suddenly, the balloon came floating in my direction and I immediately reacted by hitting the balloon back to him with a smile on my face. Pretty soon the two of us were smiling and trying to keep this little red balloon afloat.

I do not speak Spanish, and this little boy did not know English, but we did not need words because joy and laughter are universal. This little boy with his humble balloon game reminded me that we are all human beings--male, female; tall, small; brown, white; 20 years old or 6 years old--we are the same. After I signaled my goodbye and turned to walk away, an enormous lump swelled in the back of my throat as I tried to understand my emotions. I couldn't fight it; tears began to stream down my cheeks. At the end of the hallway, I turned to look back once more and saw a little boy's silhouette looking back at me with a little red balloon under his arm. I will never forget him.