

Title: Reconciliation Through the Culture and Photography in Nicaragua

Country: Nicaragua

Sponsoring Institution: International House of New York

Project Leader Name: Carlos Junco Anós - Spain - Fordham School of Law (New York)

NARRATIVE:

A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project

Bring students to rural zones make them realize how difficult is life in rural zones and open a window of communication between students and rural people. The Project is a professional and entrepreneurship opportunity for the students.

Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?

No, I didn't receive any help from other institutions or foundations, however I'm seeking new finance in order to continue with the project. I will continue working on the Project because there are a lot of beautiful people and places to cover in the guide I am working on.

I hope to raise more funds and use that money for organizing more trips and more photojournalism reports of the students in the rural communities in order to complete the guide that we will do in the future and to get more pictures for the exhibitions we are organizing. In these trips, the students, in addition to share their time with people of rural communities and make pictures and reports about this topic, they will have an additional mission: They must give a talk in the schools of the communities promoting the goals of the Project and teaching the students basics techniques of photography. We have already one trip of this second phase of the Project and the kids of the school were very happy listening the experience of the students with the project and using a photography camera for first time.

During the Project I worked for three week with 30 students of the UCA University (Universidad Centroamerica de Nicaragua) and they visited 10 different communities in Solentiname, las Isletas, Diriomo, Chinandega, Ometepe, Matagalpa, Estelí, San Juan del Sur, León and Granada. They were divided into groups. During the 3 weeks I spent in Nicaragua I drove more than 2.000 miles to visit and drive the students to the communities where the students were going to work. We want to cover even more communities in order to do a complete guide of Nicaragua. At the beginning of the Project the students received a 4 days Photojournalism course with Carlos Herrera, who is a famous photojournalist in Nicaragua

Once we finish the second phase of trips and reports I will seek new finances to print and distribute the guides. I create an Association under the Spanish Law in order to operate and get the finance in a formal way. The name of the Association is "Casa Abierta".

I wrote an article in a Spanish Newspaper telling my experience and after that I received several emails from readers interested in supporting the Project.

I attached below the links of the article I wrote in the Newspaper "El Pais":

https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/08/05/planeta_futuro/1565004297_251700.html

https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/08/06/album/1565087527_410269.html

How did you come up with the idea for your project?

I love photography and books about photography. I have been to Nicaragua several times and I am in love with the country. I realized that there are not too many books about photography in Nicaragua which explain how people, work and life is in the rural zones, so I decided to work on the idea. Students don't have too many opportunities to develop their professional skills so I think this Project was a good opportunity for them under a social and professional perspective. I was

very interested in the idea to unify two different groups as rural people and students are. Through this Project I had the opportunity to put them together.

e. Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists?

This experience has been one of the best of my life. After this Project I think I am wiser and I experienced something that cannot be experienced in my daily life. I also think that the project was very useful for the students who participated in the Project. And hope to make this a long-term project and work together over the years.

f. Why did you choose your host site to work in?

Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamerica (IHNCA) is a cultural center which belongs to UCA University. IHNCA is a reference in the country as a cultural place. The University, as a place and institution, was the center of the conflict during the protests of 2018 (even now there are still demonstrations and police repression). It was the best place to work on the reconstruction and reconciliation of the country. University's students have the right to believe again in the future and in opportunities. This project was a way to say to them: "Look, there are interesting things to do at the University".

What was it like to work in your host site?

People at the University were very kind and collaborative with me and the Project. They have been the key for the good performance of the Project. From 2018, once the demonstrations started in Nicaragua, nobody is doing anything for helping the university and the students due to the police and government control in Nicaragua and they were very happy to receive my proposal. Very important people have worked for the IHNCA and it was an honor to me to be able to collaborate with them.

Students asked for a certificate which certifies the work they did during the project (including the course of photography they did at the beginning of the project). The University kindly accepted to issue a certificate for the students certifying the course and the work done by students during the Project. This certificate will be useful for them and they will incorporate in their resume in the future.

The IHNCA freely gives its building for exhibiting the best pictures of the students. We organize the awards ceremony in its building. I bought 6 cameras for the Projects: 3 were granted to IHNCA for being used by the Institute and by the students of the University and the other 3 were granted as an award for the best pictures of the Project.

Moreover, we organized a second exhibition during August in Granada (Nicaragua) at "La Casa de los 3 Mundos", which a very famous cultural center in Nicaragua.

Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways?

Yes, sometimes. At the beginning, most people told me that it was very dangerous go to Nicaragua due to the political crisis. A lot of NGO's were persecuted and illegalized by the Government. The idea to carry photography's camera from Spain to Nicaragua could be considered as a threat for the Government. The fact of working with a group of students in these days in Nicaragua could be seen a threat for the government too. Police is always around the campus and the students are afraid to be in big groups near the campus.

When I arrived the country, I had problems with the Custom authorities because of carrying 6 cameras with me. They asked me for a special permit and for paying a high amount of taxes. After 3 days working on recuperate the cameras, I got the cameras after paying a tax.

Managua and Leon were the most dangerous places. The night we spent in Leon during the execution of the Project, there were a fight between the police and the opposites of the government, 1 young was killed and 2 others were seriously wounded.

What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people?

Communication was not very difficult because we speak the same language (Spanish). However, in rural zones it was more difficult to understand people. The vocabulary is very similar but the accent, expressions and the way to speak and communicate is very different between Spain and Nicaragua. Spanish people are more direct and Nicaraguan people are sweeter.

People in Nicaragua is very open and hospitable. They were very proud to receive me and help me for anything I need. There are not too many foreign people now in Nicaragua due to the crisis in the country, so they were very happy when they saw foreign people coming.

How do you define peace?

There are 3 principle to reach peace: Empathy, Communication and Respect.

How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?

Most of rural people is closer to the current government and the student are opposite to the Government. The goal of the project was to make the students spend time with the rural people and share experience with them (work with them, sleep in their houses, eat together, etc.) at the same time they took picture of their way of life. Both parties, rural people and students could share thoughts and ideas together. Even if they are different, they belong to the same country and they must work together for the peace and best of the country. During the week they spent together they develop the principles of peace: Communication, empathy and respect.

In short-term I think it is important to see the students and rural people mixed, doing and sharing things together. These 2 social groups have historically worked together for the best of the country. In 1979, the literacy crusades initiated by the students in the rural zones were seen by the world as an example of fraternity. At the same time it is important for the students to know how their country is beyond Managua and the big city in order to understand the necessities and the way to think of the humblest people of their country.

In long term, the students will be the next leaders of the country. So they need to have a wide knowledge about the culture and society of their country. At the university they won't learn how to work the land, how difficult is go to the school when you live in an isolated community and how limitations in communication you have when you live out of the city. With this Project they learned all of these things on first hand from the stories told by the rural people they met.

Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?

Now I am more optimistic about humanity and about the future of the world. Even if Nicaragua is in one of the worst crisis of its history, I found poor people full of hope and enthusiasm in working, in going ahead and in developing. There will be difficult, but people of Nicaragua will overcome this situation and will be stronger than ever after that.

Please provide a 1-2 personal statement sentence, suitable for use as a quotation, addressing how and why this project was valuable and what was the most important thing you learned as a result. Indicate the student's name (yours or your teammate's) for quote attribution.

"Now, I'm more aware than ever that the only way to get peace and reconciliation is through communication, respect and empathy. Davis Project For Peace gave me the opportunity to realize how lucky we are to help people. Solidarity is the best gift you can offer to the world".



Picture of the group of students at the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica, after finishing the initial photojournalism course at the beginning of the Project.



A picture taken by one of student which was selected by the Jury as one of the best pictures of the Project. The author of the picture, Ian Anaru, was awarded with a camera as a prize.



Two of the students who participated in the Project (Cristina Casaya and Luisa Torrez) with children of the school of San Nicolas Community in Matagalpa after giving a talk about basic techniques of photography and about the goals of the Project.