

Wesley Foundation Students Tell of Experiences as Global Justice Mission Volunteers

This summer two Wesley Foundation students—Abigail Rios and Jessica Lopez—had the opportunity to be a part of the Global Justice Volunteers Mission program. Here are their versions of their experience.

Abigail Rios

This program is designed to allow young adults to be a part of justice-based communities around the world. “My favorite thing about the program is that it is about missions *with* people and not for people,” said Abigail Rios, 20.

Abigail was assigned to Sao Paulo, Brazil to work with “The Street Children’s Project in Sao Bernardo.” This community was originally founded by a coalition of Methodist missionaries 25 years ago. The main goal of the project is to find young children in street situations and pinpoint the root causes of their problems in order to help them. A lot of these kids are as young as 5-years-old and have found themselves in the streets either living or working. Some have escaped the home of abusive parents, while others simply work in the streets in order to provide some extra income for their families.

The unfortunate thing about these children is that they soon find themselves in adult situations that endanger their lives. Many young girls are forced into prostitution and drugs while many young men turn to crime.

It is thanks to the efforts of projects such as this one that communities have made breakthroughs within the local and national government. Less than two decades ago the government passed and officially recognized the statute for the Rights of children in Brazil—something that has made quite an impact in the lives of these children over the years.

Abigail’s role was to be a part of this community of justice and get out in the

streets with educators who tour different areas everyday to talk to the children. “The goal is to build a relationship with the child in order to find how he or she can be taken out of that situation.” she said.

“My experience at the project has taught me exactly what it means to work for justice and has put into perspective how long the process of justice really is,” added Abigail, who saw the commitment that people at the project have made in their lives to fight for the rights of children in their country and the progressive change that has occurred over the years.

“As I search for my call after college, God put this experience in my way. God spoke to me in various ways that showed me that we each have been called by name to make a difference in the world no matter how small it may seem.” she said “I thank the UMW and local churches that made this trip possible for me and encourage more of our members to invest in our youth who are the hope and future of our denomination,” she concluded.

Jessica Lopez

Jessica Lopez, 22, didn’t have the usual summer of staying home. Instead, she had the opportunity to volunteer in Nicaragua, in a rural town called Sahsa. The group consisted of three young women Jessica, Keren Talamantes and Lauren Creditt. The organization where they volunteered was Accion Medica Cristiana.

This organization was created to help unfortunate families, particularly women and children. Not only has this organization provided medical and dental care to its citizens but it also provides low-cost medicine. “To show the importance of this organization, the government asks the organization for medications,” said Jessica.

The most important part to Jessica



Jessica, Keren, and Lauren on their way to Mombacho (a non-active volcano).

was that she was able to help with a survey concerning the community’s knowledge about HIV/AIDS. She enjoyed this specific task because she not only was able to visit every community but she also got to meet the people.

Sahsa is the center of 11 communities called Tasba Pri, which in Miskito means “free land.” Miskito is an indigenous people to the region, particularly on the Atlantic side of the country. Jessica said. “I tried to learn the language but it was hard, I mainly stuck to speaking Spanish.”

“This experience has forever changed the way I view life, especially when it concerns needs vs. wants,” she continued. “My father always told me that I get the two confused, which of course he was right. It’s just inspiring to see how people live with only the essentials.

“I have learned so much this summer, not only did I get to know these people but I also got to experience what life is like in a very remote area. I would always get

dumb-founded when I would see the difference between the rich and the poor. It’s as if poverty was on one block and on the next were the wealthiest street in town. This would mostly be seen in the big cities.”

“It’s interesting how everyone truly believes in the American dream. Almost everyday the kids would ask us how much it would cost to get to the States. I would think about it and wonder why it is that these children think that they’d have a better life over here.”

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2007 Young Adult Pastors GBCS Leadership Forum

Church Leaders, please help us connect with young adult clergy who would benefit from attending this year’s General Board of Church and Society’s Young Adult Clergy Leadership Forum on Capitol Hill. Since 2004, GBCS has been able to host almost 200 Young Adult Clergy for these forums. Last year, 81 Young Adult Clergy representing 41 US Annual Conferences and two Central Conferences were hosted for this event. This year we will only be able to host 56. Each Conference is encouraged to send

two Young Adult Clergy to this event but space is limited so participants are encouraged to register early. Deadline is Feb. 16, 2007. This year’s forum will be held in conjunction with our 2007 Ecumenical Advocacy Days program. It will begin on Thursday, March 8, at 1 p.m. at the United Methodist Building, Washington DC and conclude with a visit to congressional offices on Monday, March 12. The theme of this year’s Ecumenical Advocacy Days is “...and *How are the Children?*” with a special

focus on national and international policies and their effect on Children in the United States and around the world. Nine hundred people attended last year’s EAD. See more at www.advocacydays.org. Contact The Rev. Clayton Childers, Program Director for Annual Conference Relations at cchilders@umc-gbcs.org or (202)-488-5642 for more specific information from the General Board of Church and Society.