

During my junior year here at the University of Maryland, I joined the Social Entrepreneur Corps program for the opportunity to study abroad in Latin America while also engaging in development work to create real impact. Sponsored by the Smith Business Minor program and the Smith Center for Social Value Creation, students spend 8-weeks on the ground in one of the three following countries of their own choosing; Ecuador, Nicaragua, or the Dominican Republic. As a Spanish major coming from the College of Arts & Humanities, I had already spent time in various courses learning about Ecuadorean history and culture so the decision for which country to travel to came easier for me than most. During June and July of last year, I found myself traveling throughout various cities in Ecuador and living with numerous different families in populated urban cities and rural indigenous communities. What struck me as the most thought-provoking was the disparity between the communities that I visited and the ways in which life is represented differently in each one, and that question of representation and identity is what led me to this research topic.

While in country, some of the projects we were tasked with as Social Entrepreneur Corps interns involved interacting with community members extensively in order to learn about the issues that they felt were impacting their community the most. Through interviews and surveys, I was able to establish some of the foundation for what would shape my participant observations as the initial source for my research into Ecuadorean Indigeneity. Upon my return to the University of Maryland in the fall, I continued to expand on my research in the Latin American Studies Senior Capstone Course. When I wasn't searching for sources through online databases, I found the McKeldin Library to be great resource for finding both digital as well as print materials that were relevant to my topic and research. One of the most pivotal parts of my

research was compiling sources for the literature review in order to show where my own research fits into the broader scope of this topic. The numerous databases that are available to students here at the university made the process seamless.

As part of the Latin American Studies Certificate Senior Capstone Course, a University Libraries online course guide was created by Latino/a Studies Librarian Patricia Herron to assist with facilitating the location of resources for research. During the semester, we spent one class session in the McKeldin Library with Patricia Herron to share our research ideas and do some preliminary investigation using the course guide as a useful starting point. Having the chance to meet with Patricia Herron in the library not only provided us with helpful approaches to getting started but also allowed us to use our time in the library to seek out some of the materials that we encountered from the online searches provided by the databases she listed for use online. In advising us on how we as students could hone in on the most concise topic she recommended that we direct our focus not just on a specific group or issue, but also a specific period in time. This is what motivated me to specifically explore indigenous populations in Ecuador in a contemporary setting.

In evaluating the sources I found, there were certain criterion that I aimed to keep in mind in order to find material that would provide me with the most in-depth analysis of this specific topic while also concretizing my own argument. Overall, the easiest indicators of relevant sources were signified by regional and chronological relevance. While there are numerous other countries in Latin America with prominent Indigenous populations, the histories of these populations vary greatly from country to country which is why I tried to limit my research to explicitly Ecuador and the rest of the Andes region. On the other hand however, even within this

subset of Indigeneity I had to continue to be selective in order to ensure I was choosing sources that expressed an expansive breadth and profound depth in its understanding of Indigeneity. With Ecuador being the increasingly plurinational state that it is, there is no one way to characterize the states of Indigeneity that exists within it. I naturally realized that Ecuador boasts great ethnic diversity and the numerous indigenous populations that coexist within this country can not and should not be diminished.

During the research process, I believe that I was exposed to the immense intersectionality and multifacetedness of issues like these from both sides. From one viewpoint, this research allowed me to gain a broader insight on how the issues that Ecuador's indigenous populations have faced from past to present impact not just the indigenous groups that are part of the conflict but numerous other populations and communities as well including women and the economically disadvantaged. From an academic standpoint, conducting this research required me to pull from knowledge bases stemming from multiple different fields of study in order to create a well-rounded interdisciplinary thesis. In the future, I believe there will be numerous ways that I can apply what I have learned as a worldwide professional seeking to continue to be engaged in sustainable development projects throughout Latin America.

The only thing that I would have liked to change for my research experience would have been to somehow have more library sessions dedicated to compiling and exploring research with the help of Librarians like Patricia Herron. I felt the class session we had with her was extremely beneficial and I believe that extending the frequency of opportunities like that would be a great idea.