

EL CLIMA

PEACE CORPS ECUADOR

DECEMBER 2012



EDITOR'S NOTE

2012 felt like a heartbeat. Life happens faster in a new country, full of new surroundings and new street corners to explore. Sure, there were weeks and months that went slowly, when exciting things were happening stateside, when our president won four more years and all of it seeming so far away.

Some of us went home, some of us explored other countries, all of us worked really hard to maintain something wonderful in our neighborhoods.

Soon enough, the 105's will be finished with their two years and the 106's will become the veterans, despite still feeling a little bit like rookies. 109's will enter into the country and the process will start all over again.

Cherish what you have here. Eat lunch with your host mother instead of eating an apartment PB&J in your boxers while you watch old episodes of Parks and Recreation. Go away with your host dad on the weekends when he invites you. Check out those waterfalls nearby your place that you have yet to explore. Plan a party with friends close by. Take less naps. When you are old and reflecting on a long life, what will you remember most about your two years in Ecuador? Let's hope it is something fantastic.

Have a great holiday season, everyone, be it Peace Corps Volunteers, staff, or family members. Be kind to those around you and be aware of your surroundings. Lastly, do as the Ecuadorians do for New Year's: Purchase a large paper-mache doll and scribble your resolutions, your hopes, dreams, and wishes on pieces of the doll. Write down things that you would like to leave behind in 2012, faults we all have. And when you burn the doll to the ground, welcoming the world of 2013, be sure to dance and sing and hug your loved ones. Cheers.

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WORLD AIDS DAY 2012

HOW ARE YOU ALL RECOGNIZING THIS DAY IN YOUR SITES?

Rebekah Clark, omnibus 106 Community Health Volunteer in Colimas, Guayas and her counterparts are holding a weekend full of amazing events. Starting with giving *charlas* around the community focused on HIV prevention and topping it off with a children's parade, a dance, and a talent show! Wow, how incredibly exciting! Maybe someone will mix in "The Dougie" with bachata.

Ngabo Nzigira, omnibus 108 Community Health Volunteer in San Juan, Los Rios and his counterparts are holding a free Rapid AIDS test event along with theatrical skits presented by the high school kids and government in his town. How dramatically awesome.

Sean Maloney, omnibus 106, is another great Community Health/HIV volunteer in Los Rios. He and his counterparts are also hosting a weekend of HIV prevention *charlas* and administering rapid AIDS test. The more we teach, the more we reach.

At the Red Cross of Ibarra, we are heading down to the old jail house where we are holding an open house focusing on prevention and general HIV education with the inmates. The big *jefes* in the city are invited and we expect them to take part in all the fun and festivities.

December 1, 2012 marks the 25th observance of World AIDS Day since its inauguration by the World Health Organization (WHO) back in 1988. Their theme of "Getting to zero: zero new HIV cases, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths" has the world buzzing even more with HIV education and general human rights. Another theme from federal website www.aids.gov highlights,

I USUALLY ENGAGE IN ALL THINGS FOOD AND NUTRITION, BUT I HAVE FOUND A NEW PASSION IN SPREADING KNOWLEDGE ON A TOPIC THAT WAS ONCE SO TABOO.

"Working together for an AIDS free generation." This energy

BY PORTIA BOYKIN

is penetrating all around the world. Whatever the theme may be, we all know that we have one common goal: to stop the spread of HIV.

Recently, I was invited to participate in a tech exchange in Guayaquil with Chelsea Rienks (Omnibus 108) and her counterpart agency Fundación VIHDA. I was initially invited because I wanted to learn more about pregnancy and HIV, and since Fundación VIHDA has an office in the local maternity hospital, they educated me really well. (Side note: I seriously urge you to take advantage of the tech exchange possibilities. It's a brilliant concept and I learned way more than I would have if I stayed back in site and received manuals and emails.)

I learned so much. I took a tour of the hospital, observed patient HIV *charlas*, lab procedures, and received hands-on experience with pregnant women in the program. They were so generous and helpful with all the information they had to offer. They even shared information on how to effectively communicate with clients and people in general. This is one of the warmest group of co-workers that I've ever dealt with, despite the fact that they could possibly have one of the most emotionally draining professions to date. I almost cried while sitting in on a non-reactive post-counseling session. They do this all day, every day.

The work that Fundación VIHDA is doing is incredible. They not only service the women in the maternity hospital, but they also service their

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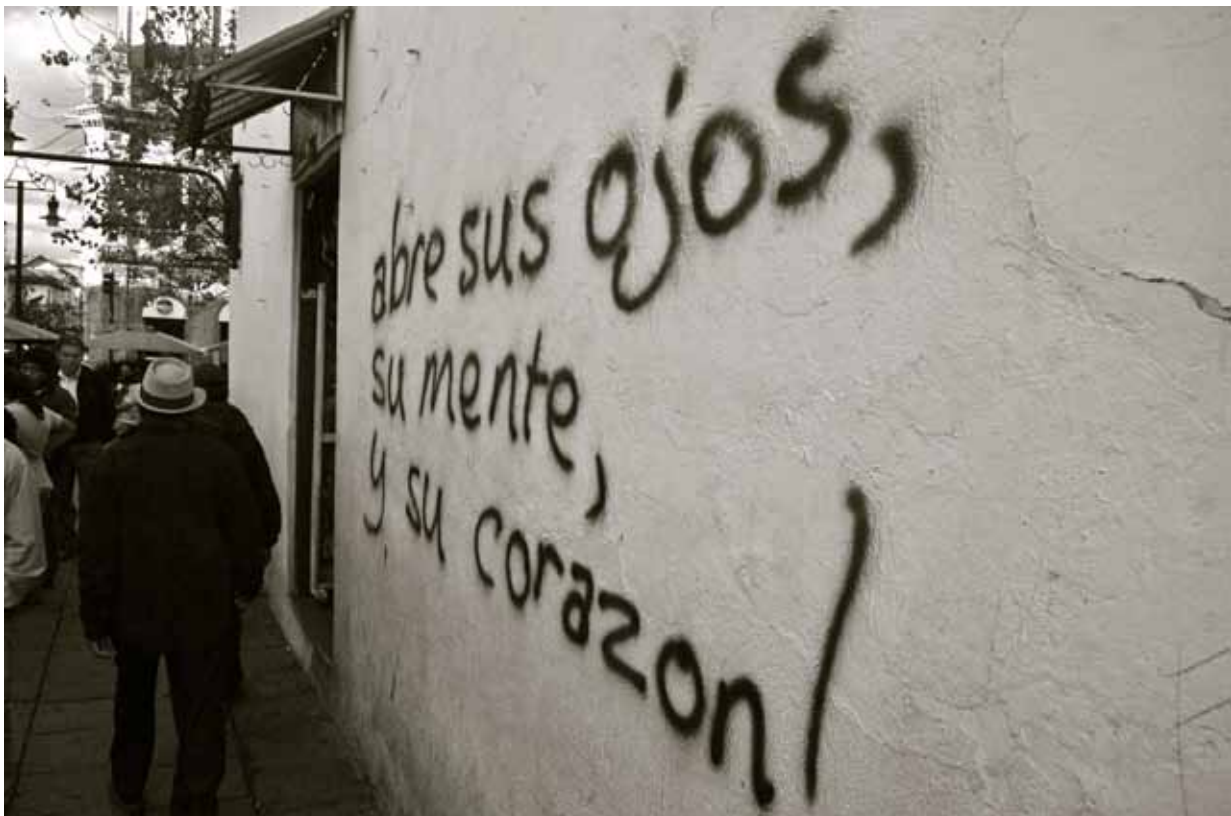
community. They have their main office in Guayaquil's downtown area, where they provide free rapid HIV testing and pre/post-counseling services. Their slogan of "*Lo mejor prueba de amor*" resonates well. Their program of testing every pregnant mother for the prevention of the possibility passing HIV to her child is, in fact, the best test of love. A free, quick, selfless test can aid in the wellness of a growing child. If I was in their shoes, I'd quickly say, "Sign me up!"

Coming back from my tech-exchange, I have found myself engaging in more things HIV. I even gave an HIV charla to the young Red Cross volunteers. I usually engage in all things food and nutrition, but I have found a new



passion in spreading knowledge on a topic that was once so taboo. Fundación VIHDA taught me more than I expected. I feel as if I will always be a part of the HIV prevention movement because of them. I hope you catch that passion too, whether you are a TEFL, Y&F, or Health volunteer, we all have the ability to spread knowledge to the next citizen on something that can preserve our lives. As I said before: the more we teach, the more we reach.

PORTIA BOYKIN, OMN 106, is a volunteer living in the highlands of Ibarra, spending her time (working with inmates) in prison.



BROIN' ABROAD DURING THE HOLIDAYS

BY WILLIAM WEPSALA

FOR MY FRIENDS AND ME, THIS IS A MAGICAL TIME THAT BEGINS AT THE BAR AND LEADS TO AN ONSLAUGHT OF BROSTRUCTION.

The holiday season is upon us. Like many of you, I long to be back in the States at this time of year. But, for financial reasons (read: abysmal Peace Corps *sueldo*), I am left doing just that: Longing. I long to be with my family, exchanging gifts, drinking coffee on a frosty morning, and many other wonderful things. But, most of all, I long to “bro out” with my bros. The holidays are a time when people converge on their hometowns to be with family and friends they have known forever. For my friends and me, this is a magical time that begins at the bar and leads to an onslaught of brostruction. Activities include, but are not limited to: Beer drinking, ice fishing, hockey playing, and not a small amount of hell raising. I understand that many people are in the same situation as me, so I am willing to impart more wisdom in order to help you maximize the brotential of your holiday season spent in-country.

1. Get to the beach. This is a perfect opportunity to strip down, oil up, and let these Brocuadorians know what you have been getting into in your free time. If you are anything like our *compañeros* in Guaranda and me, you have been hitting the weights and getting swollen. Let Ecuadorians know that their next idol is right here in Ecuador. Be the next John Cena and watch the *nenas* flock. Beach time is also the perfect opportunity to perfect GTP: gym, tan, *piedra*.

2. Watch football. Duh. If you are not already looking at the schedule, scheming ways to catch the action, you are wrong. Seeing hulking brohemoths collide for three hours straight should help erase

A CHRISTMAS STORY AND IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE ARE GOOD, BUT NOTHING BEATS THE BRAH POWER OF ARNOLD'S BICEPS OR A VAN DAMME ROUNDHOUSE TO THE CRANIUM.

all the prancing soccer you have been stomaching all these long months. Soak it up and take some mental photos for when you have to grind your teeth through yet another Barcelona—*de Ecuador, pero—parade*.

3. Action movie marathon. This one is a two-bro stone. You will likely be sitting through one on your bus ride to the beach anyways, so you might as well make it a tradition. A Christmas Story and It's a Wonderful Life are good, but nothing beats the brah power of Arnold's biceps or a Van Damme roundhouse to the cranium.

4. Go to church. Now hear me out on this one. Christmas service is a one-off chance to wipe the slate clean of any bro-related slips that may have transpired over the previous year. You will walk out with a clear conscience just waiting to get muddled and marred by broventures to come in the new year. Plus, you get to put on a suit and let the world know that although you like to play hard, this bro also means business.

5. New Year's resolutions. These yearly self-help lists are very easily adaptable to methods of brofection. Acceptable resolutions include: more weights, deeper tan, increased creatine intake, and P90X sessions with Sean Henry. Have you seen those *yuccas*? Unstoppable.

Obviously it is not the same as being back with the bros in the land of brahppportunity, but following these tips, you will be all right. Enjoy yourself and get ready for a whole new year filled with all new chances to bro.

WILLIAM WEPSALA, OMN 106, is a bro living in Zamora, home of the alleged world's largest clock.

BUS DREAMS

BY BENJAMIN NIESPODZIANY

Public transportation is one of the necessary layers of Ecuadorian culture. Compressed yellow cans taking children to school. Unmarked taxis (a.k.a. hardworking car owners looking for dinner money), driving people refusing to walk. Pick-up trucks through mountains full of sleeping families or chilled foreigners, the wind strong enough to make you speechless. Jungle canoes to enormous, well-preserved waterfalls. But, despite the options and the categorical preferences, the buses of Ecuador allow the dream.

A bus for a quarter will take you through a city. You can walk out of your apartment, hop on a Number Six, and be in the center of your town eating empanadas in 20 minutes, only you being able to hear the music pushed into your ears. 50 cents gone, miles and hunger gained.

A bus for one dollar an hour, more or less, will take you to the outside world. Deep in the brush, on top of a mountain, alongside a beach. Regardless of where you live, three hours on a bus will change that postcard. Watch giant boulders on dead hills transform to infinite green, sparkling wet forest, gaze at the world through the bus windows. Sometimes tinted, sometimes draped with a privacy curtain. Without the proper wind angle, sweat is certain.

Over two hours? Anticipate a film. Excessive violence, slapstick humor, or inspirational animal, family-friendly box office disasters. But be alert: one bus's *Bad Boys II* is another bus's *Shawshank Redemption*. Think the movie is too loud when you're trying to sleep at 3 a.m.? Neither does the bus

driver. If you ask me, *Battleship* could have been a bit louder.

In between films, and sometimes during, the bus music absorbs us all. Heartbreak sob stories intertwine with soccer games and dance parties. Not a fan? Invest in headphones. Sway regardless.

A bus can take you anywhere. Islands do not count. Visit one of Ecuador's numerous large bus terminals and search through a sea of hard-working vocalists, trying their damndest for you to join their company for a few hours. Gaze at the ocean of rainbow-colored monsters going in all different directions through your South American country, some extending *norte* to Colombia, *sur* to Peru.

Embrace the bus vendor. A six hour bus ride that sounded *facilito* on paper does not feel like stopping and you finished your 50 cent *cola* before your 50 cent popcorn and you have been craving *agua sin gas* for the last hour and the apartment full of ice in Mr. Popper's *Penguins* is not helping.

Because of the bus vendor, you can buy ice cream as you enter the sweaty coast, you can sip *morocho* while lightning strikes the rice patties. One time, I went from the coast to the *Sierra* unprepared, in need of a jacket. Luckily, a bus vendor was selling \$2 shawls. I bought two.

THAT WOMAN WALKING SIX SHEEP, EIGHT ALPACAS, AND TWO COWS, WHAT DOES SHE DREAM? THAT ENGINE WITH THE ROOF UP AND THE OWNER INVESTIGATING THROUGH TEARS, WILL THEY MAKE IT?

Movies, walking/shouting vending machines, music, drive-by scenery, adorable babies, full recline, and oftentimes the occasional complimentary soda. Plus, we often get frisked before entering the "lounge pad" (see also: "lazy mobile"), which, as all Peace Corps Volunteers know, is a great addition to our constant desires for

HEARTBREAK SOB STORIES INTERTWINE WITH SOCCER GAMES AND DANCE PARTIES. NOT A FAN? INVEST IN HEADPHONES.

more human contact.

Appreciate the bus. Allow yourself to become a couch potato, an observer. If it is all normal to you by now, you are not looking hard enough. The movie playing is not the only film on the bus. Sit back, relax, enjoy your Yogoso, and drift, the busses of Ecuador will allow you to dream if you let them.

The things that you see outside of a bus window, are they real? Can you reach out and touch them? Perhaps with the right wind and the perfect reach from within, but that is obviously beside the point.

When you are on a bus, the outside world seems unreachable, at times unreal. You are stationary in an assigned seat, and you have options: Rest, read, write (very difficult, very rare to see), chat, watch a provided film, or watch the passing world through a piece of glass. Pick your poison. Most rest.

But to gaze! To see hundreds of street stories, comers and goers, loud food vendors, zig-zagging motorcycles on a mission, bored toll booth assistants wearing face masks, almost always women. Each person you get to watch for ten seconds, 20 seconds if you encounter a speed bump. These people are nothing and everything to you, people you will never see again: A missing yearbook photo, a five second channel switch, a blink. The oddest part is that you will almost never be spotted, be it the tinted windows or the uninterested passerby who is more focused on their newspaper, their newborn.

You will never learn to hear the story of the high schooler peeing on the side of the road on the way home from school. You will not learn the secrets of

the flower vendor with a daily smile that is difficult with customer service. That woman walking six sheep, eight alpacas, and two cows, what does she dream? That engine with the roof up and the owner investigating through tears, will they make it? Who will put out that forest fire in the distance? Where do the ice cream vendors take their breaks? Do they trade food with salesman friends? With the bread lady and the coconut juice man?

This life really is a movie. On the bus, you can make up the stories of those you see. You can make up your own story. "I am from France and am currently selling fishing supplies around the world. I have no gear with me, of course not, for it is my off day and I am visiting a friend in the mountains."

That man that just slowly got off the buss, perhaps he is going to the grocery store to buy two eggs and bread for himself, for his lonely dinner. Maybe he is going to visit his lovely mother, who always has a hot soup ready in case he visits. Maybe he is going to the local DVD store, not to buy anything, but to browse blindly, gazing at all times at the beautiful woman watching movies behind the counter, smoothing out her nails. Maybe today he will finally ask her for a film recommendation, maybe today he will see if she knows of any good romance films. Yeah, I like that.

BENJAMIN NIESPODZIANY, OMN 106, is a left-handed volunteer living in Machala, where he eats shrimp more than chicken.

JOIN THE CLUB

BY PETER AREM CONSTANTIAN

Club *Roja* is a welcome addition to the lineup of easily accessible beers, but nothing to gush over.

On September 26, 2012, Veronika Pardo and the rest of the Club Premium executive team celebrated the release of Club *Roja*, a limited edition amber lager to complement the standard Club Premium. According to *El Comercio*, the new beer's reception will be evaluated at the end of December and it will become either a permanent edition or a collector's item.

If the bottle left you hoping Club *Roja* was a red ale like Smithwick's, the website of Cerveceria Nacional clarifies that the beer's red color comes only from a longer roasting period for the barley. Shorthand: This is just a lager beer like Pilsener, Club, Budweiser, etc. The difference in roasting period ought to imbue a darker color (check) and a sweeter flavor (check).

Upon closer inspection of the ingredients (does not everyone closely inspect the ingredients after drinking a few beers?), the extra sweetness and color could just come from the added malt extract. Shorthand: It is just Club *Verde* with added natural coloring and flavor.

ACCORDING TO EL COMERCIO, THE NEW BEER'S RECEPTION WILL BE EVALUATED AT THE END OF DECEMBER AND IT WILL BECOME EITHER A PERMANENT EDITION OR A COLLECTOR'S ITEM.

Beer connoisseurs are predictably disappointed; veteran user Rodriguez of RateBeer gives Club's new look and feel a low 1.5 out of 5. He describes it as, "Another disgusting beer for the ignorant masses."

Peace Corps' own Omnibus 105 had mixed (mostly negative) opinions of the new arrival ranging from, "I was overcome with disbelief to drink a beer that didn't resemble piss, but I swear it tasted good..." to, "I just tried that crap and bleh!" Several were impressed, but not enough to pay the premium extra 25 cents a second time.

We all can use a little variety in our lives, but if you are planning on Club *Roja* being your reason not to ET, you have already forgotten what good beer tastes like.

PETER CONSTANTIAN is a 105 agriculture volunteer living in San Francisco del Congo, Guayas, who briefly considered brewing his own beer before he accepted the fact that hops grow best with 14 hours of sunlight.





BY NATHANIEL BALDER DONKEY BLOOD

You love your coastal site. You would not change it for anywhere else in Ecuador. The people are incredibly friendly, you can live off of the \$1.25 *ceviche* at the market, and you have even come to realize that outside of the inferno of the hottest few months, the weather varies between tolerable and awesome. Yet, you can't help but feel that you've landed in the cultural void of Ecuador. If there is one thing missing from your Peace Corps service it is the "authentic cultural experience." All those visions that you had when you applied to Peace Corps? You know, the incredibly patronizing ones in which you sit around in an indigenous drum circle, adorned in the fur of an obscure local mammal, your face dyed with berries? Yeah, nothing remotely close to that has come to fruition. Your *Sierran* comrades have regaled you with accounts of *Inti Rami* and celebrations replete with feasts, *cuy*, and indigenous dancing. You have heard all about contests in blowgun marksmanship and *chicha* drinking from your friends in the oriente. You love a good *vaca loca*, and you can *dar vueltas* with the best of them, but you have to admit that you have nothing to compete. Heck, at this point, you would settle for being stationed along the route of the *El Cisne* pilgrimage, or bearing witness to some other Catholic tradition. *Costeños*, does this sound familiar?

I used to bemoan the lack of culture here in paradise Arenillas. Even the events deemed cultural left me wanting. Watching folks dress up and perform dances from other parts of Ecuador was fine, but to me it lacked legitimacy. People still eat many of the same foods, but outside of a couple of *veteranos*

that still cook in the traditional way, it does not feel authentic. *Caña* has given way to concrete, *techos de hoja* to tin. If it were not for the banana fields isolating Arenillas from the surrounding cities, I would have recognized it much sooner: I am living in the place where culture goes to die. I am living in a suburb.

"*Te invito, el sábado vamos a pelar un chancho,*" my friend Christian told me one day. At least, I swear that was what he said in that *costeño* mumble of his. Excellent, I'll finally be able to cross "slaughter a farm animal" off of my Peace Corps checklist, I

thought. Plus, it is close enough to cultural that I will count it.

Saturday came around and Christian picked me up to do some last minute shopping. I have never seen animals on his family's farm, so I

inquire as to where the pig is coming from. "*Chancho? No, vamos a pelar un burro.*" Sure we are, I think. I have seen maybe two burros in my year and three months in Arenillas, and I have not heard of anyone here eating it. "*Y hay que tomar la sangre,*" he kids.

We got to the farm to drop off the supplies and, sure enough, there was a donkey tied up to a banana tree. Christian explained that the *Lojano* branch of his family raises burros and that they always butcher one at their annual family reunion. We headed back into town to pick up the rest of the crew and run into my site mate Renee. I asked her if she wants to come eat some donkey. Obviously, she hopped in the car.

On the way back to the farm, they kept joking with us about drinking the blood. It was time to play every Ecuadorian's favorite game: Mess With the

MY SECOND THOUGHT WAS THAT
WHATEVER HAPPENS, DO NOT THROW
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WHO KNEW?"

I ASKED HER IF SHE WANTS TO COME EAT SOME DONKEY. OBVIOUSLY, SHE HOPPED IN THE CAR.

Gringos. They told us that it is good for the lungs and the joints. Of course it is, and if it is so great, why do they not sell it as a medicine, I countered? Silly *gringo*, you cannot do that. It has to be fresh. Once it cools, it becomes like *gelatina*. Oh, *claro*. Ha. Ha. ha.

Back on the farm and the moment had arrived; time to *pelar the burro*. Everyone gathered around as they started by tying the donkey's legs and laying it on its side. After a minute or so, the donkey stopped squirming and thrashing and accepted that it could not get up. That was the moment that the axe came down, square in the middle of its forehead, and the donkey was out cold. All in all, I was impressed by how humane the whole process was. One whack and it did not feel a thing. It was a fleeting thought, though, for it was hard to think about humaneness while in the next moment someone plunged a knife into its throat. I presumed that they were cutting the windpipe.

Chaos ensued. Everyone rushed forward to get a better view, for some reason, needing to watch the last twitches of life escape from our future lunch. Renee and I lost sight of the donkey amongst the mass of humanity, but that was fine, we could imagine how it went from there. Suddenly, someone popped up from the center of the scrum and held a cup of something red over his head. What the hell is that? By the time it registered, he had already chugged the entire *vaso of sangre*. Wait, they were serious?

Every few seconds someone else stood up and downed another cup of blood. After about fifteen people had satiated their thirst, we could once again see the burro. The front of its chest was stained crimson and someone was holding a cup to collect the blood, which was still spurting out of the severed artery. Incredibly, the heart was still pumping, and continued to do so for at least a couple minutes after the throat had been pierced. Renee and I are transfixed, trying to wrap our minds around what we had just witnessed. It dawned on someone that the *gringos* have not yet had their

vaso, and he brought one over to us. I looked at Renee. She looked back at me. We decided that we would share the cup. One big gulp and Renee handed me the cup. I took mine and it was empty. My first thought was that it was not so bad. A little bit thick and slimy, but it could have been worse. My second thought was that whatever happens, do not throw up. Apparently, I have a delayed gag reflex when it comes to blood. Who knew?

The sound of a toddler crying re-alerted me to the scene around me. The child was upset, you see, because his mother was currently smearing blood all over his nearly naked body. Apparently in the two minutes that my attention was diverted, the activity du jour had evolved from drinking blood to body painting. Half of the family members' faces, torsos, and legs were now stained red. The heart had apparently given out, so they were performing chest compressions to extract the remaining blood before it coagulated inside of the carcass. We were handed a fresh cup and proceeded to coat ourselves in red. It was explained to us that this was the part that was good for the joints. No one could explain the benefit of painting your face and torso, but I will say that after being prohibited from washing it off for hours, my skin was well exfoliated.

On the one hand, based on my previous definition, my day of fun at the farm does not really qualify as the "authentic" cultural experience. There was no ceremony, traditional dress, dancing, music, etc. On the other, who cares? None of my favorite "only in Ecuador" memories have had much to do with traditional culture. Cultural experiences do not have to be static; they can evolve with the times. Shockingly, they can even be found in the suburbs. Since I have come to this realization, I have embraced Arenillas as the hidden paradise that it truly is.

NATHANIEL BALDER is a 105 Natural Resources Volunteer living in the enriching paradise of Arenillas, not too far from Peru.



ECUA-THOUGHTS BY LORI BLACK

It is really weird when you start to ignore the beggars in the street and the homeless at your feet. You know, the city looks like stars at night, even though you can not see past *El Panecilla*.

She has turned her back on us in the South.

I am used to being called a *gringa* and the hissing in the street.

It is a different world here. The kids are precious. And I hate kids.

Five dollars and they cannot afford their rent. No roof over their heads.

I cannot come home. If only money did fall from the sky.

Four months living with my mom and then back to tests and grades.

So many who have money but do not think twice about the commercials they see on TV.

I remember when I saw them. I thought they were fake. I did not think that anyone could ever be that poor.

I thought I had it tough when I was little. Now, I realize that I live like a queen. I should not smoke. I get enough pollution from the buses and cars that buzz around in the hot, dry day. There is always a fire in the mountains here. There is always the man sitting in the store,

and the dog laying on the street. It is funny this is my comfort zone. Home seems scary to me now. Cocktails for a dollar and kids waiting outside to rob the drunken fools. I have been a fool once or twice here in Quito.

Home still seems scary to me now. The beach is only a couple hours away. One of the most dangerous places in Ecuador, they say.

A taxi driver once said, "You know you guys live in the Bronx of Quito?"

The lady on the corner shop with hands covered in meat says, "You shouldn't go to the beach anymore, you've had bad luck."

This is the only place in the world that while lying on the beach, you can say,
"We're going to be road kill by a fruit stand."

The jungle is not all that it is let out to be. Only a few monkeys, piranhas, and gigantic spiders crawling around your room at night, rubbing yourself with leaves until 2:00 a.m.

because they say it is a miracle. We will see about that.

It is so colorful here. Everything. The people, the streets, the buses. Oh, the buses.

A Quito, a Quito, a Quito.

You can never get used to the sounds of the night. Dogs killing each other. Breaking into cars to hide the body. A rooster every morning at 6 a.m. Damn rooster, I need my sleep.

Oh, Otavlo, I know I'm not Ecuadorian, but please give me the right price.

I know you will give me a discount, but why not the right one in the first place? And the men, oh the men.
Every day.

I know I am blonde, but haven't you seen one before?

LORI BLACK is a 106 TEFL Volunteer living in the chills of Riobamba. I hear they opened a Carls JR. recently.



BY BUCKSHOT & DUBSTEP MADUROS V. PAPAS ROOM FOR DEBATE:

Dubstep: Hey Buckshot! Guess what? I am finally visiting the grandest State in the union. I have not set foot in *mi linda tierra* in almost two years. I am going to stuff my face with the foods I have missed and drink my weight in wine that does not come from a box. But, I have become such a *Guayaca* I think I might actually miss some things from my home away from home during my visit.

Buckshot: Do not tell me you got *conquistared* and have an *ecuanovio*...

D: Ha! My heart remains stone cold. I think I will miss some of my friends, my senile host mom, my adorable host dad, the dogs, of course, and, call me crazy, but I will miss eating *platanos* every morning. I wake up craving them.

B: *Platanos, en serio?* How can you even be thinking about *platanos* when you are heading back to great, home-style American cooking? I know that Texas is no SoDak, but I would assume that you guys at least have some decent home fries?

D: Sure, ol' Texas has some delicious fries but... boring. *Platanos* are where it is at. And, they are a staple here and exotic back home, which makes them special.

B: They are just so monotonous. Think of all the wonderful things you can do with potatoes. You

can fry them, you can bake them, you can grill them, you can mash them, you can make hash browns... and there is like over 4000 varieties of them. Whereas *platanos* come in two forms: *verde o maduro... me aburre*.

D: Uh, I know you have spent the better half, and I do mean better half, of your service in *Pelucon Paccha* where they may think *platanos* are for the commoners, but this fruit is versatile. You can fry them, mash them, bake them even 'hash' them if you so desire. And the amazing part is you can indeed eat them 'green' and if you do not eat them in time you have delicious *maduros*. *Maduros* are the only food in the entire world where even the squeakiest of *queso frescos* are given a nod as a good accompaniment. Yes, *papas* are versatile but in Ecu cuisine? Not in the least bit. The fanciest *papa* I have been given was covered in chicken grease and mayonnaise. *Platanos*, however, are given a pedestal in coastal *platos tipicos*.

B: Okay, I will give you that *costeños* much more capable that I am at making *platanos* palatable and even I will admit to preferring *patacones* to complement my Club over the flaccid *papas fritas* of the *calle*. However, *papas*, my dear, are a true South American *cultivo*, unlike *platanos*, which, like, originated somewhere in Asia. Rumor has it that the great Sir Francis Drake commandeered the potato

THE *PAPA* THEN PULLED EUROPE THROUGH FAMINE AND WAR, ALLOWED THE RUSSIANS TO CREATE VODKA, BROUGHT THE IRISH TO AMERICA, AND HAS EVEN BEEN CITED AS A SOURCE OF POPULATION GROWTH IN 18TH CENTURY.

from the Spanish while they were murdering and pillaging the Incas here in Ecuador. The *papa* then pulled Europe through famine and war, allowed the Russians to create vodka, brought the Irish to America,

and has even been cited as a source of population growth in 18th century.

D: Nerd. Who the 'eff knows the history of potatoes? Oh wait, you ARE from South Dakota... of course you would be knowledgeable in something BORING! Who cares where *platanos* originated? They are a gem in Latin American cuisine and are a perfect vehicle for all the various Latin American flavors. Not just *patacones* my dear, what about *camarones en salsa de sambo*? *Bolones*? *Tortillas (verde y maduro)*? And so many dishes just are not the same without *platanos*. *ceviche* or *encebollado* without *chifles*? I think not. *Menestra* without *patacones*? Think again.

B: Just because I know the details of the Colombian Exchange does not make me a nerd. I bet you could find a potato substitute for any of those dishes that you just named. There is a reason that potato chips are more popular than *chifles*. And do not even get me started on *lefse* and *latkes*. *Platanos* might be a staple of Latin America, but *papas* encompass Andean, Scandinavian, Jewish, Russian, British, Irish, American cuisine... the list goes on and on. They are like the true globalized starch.

D: Exactly my point. Potatoes are all over the place. I love a good baked tater with my steak but been there, done that. *Platanos* are exotic. You just proved that. And for the simple reason that they are not as easy to come by in the U.S. makes them all the more alluring and perhaps why I appreciate them so much. I am tearing up right now thinking about not waking up at 6:30 in the morning to make *molido de verde* or *maduro asado* for my host family and myself. And *tortillas de papas* are not a substitute. I ate one of those '*papas rellenas*' colored orange from the obscene amount of *aceite de achiote*, bleh! I'm going to *regalar* something to you though. *Llapingauchos*... 'nuff said.

B: Why thank you, I was just about to get to those. Obviously you have not had the joy of experiencing homemade *lefse*. Now those are some *tortillas* worth missing. If there was one dish from SoDak

that every one should experience in their life, it would be my Swedish grandmother's *lefse* at Christmas time, rolled up with melted butter, cinnamon, and sugar. All made possible thanks to the potato, which never would have made it to Sweden if it was not for the impressive Inca agricultural expertise coupled with greed of the Conquistadores. It is like a history lesson in every bite. Maybe I am a nerd, but things like that just make me giddy. Although, I might go as far as to concede to you that the majority of Ecuador's finer dishes involve *platanos*, when you look at the big picture, *papas* dominate, hands down.

D: Oh I am sorry, did I doze off? Potatoes, been there done that. I am on to bigger and better things. I am tired of the potato. Who cares what is going on up north and what they are still doing with the potato? I am interested in plantains. What are the Asians doing? Africans? Now that gets me giddy! I think we have come to a stale mate as usual. You can continue eating your tired *papa* and I'll continue my infatuation with the alluring plantain.

B: Look, one of these days you just need to come up and experience the *belleza de Paccha* and while she is wooing you with her vistas, I will hypnotize your taste buds with the best spicy home fries that even Texas would be proud of. And for the record, I think that Asia is still stuck on rice, the other boring carbohydrate, while Africa is chowing down on your plantains.

D: Oh lord, rice is boring (whispers: just like *papas*). Well Buckshot, I'm accepting your invitation to visit Paccha and singe my taste buds a bit. So long as I have a cold Club Verde to cool me off!

B: Speaking of Club Verde, what would a girl have to do to have you bring me back a real beer while you are stateside? I have been jonesin' for an IPA ever since Club Roja came out. It is such a tease...

BUCKSHOT is a 105 agriculture volunteer in Paccha, dreaming of SoDak and good beer. DUBSTEP is in the middle of nowhere coastal and is enjoying the States as you read this.



BOSTON KATIE ADVICE COLUMN

BY KATIE HARANAS

DRINK MORE COFFEE AND QUIT ACTING LIKE A
WORLD TEACH VOLUNTEER.

Boston Katie, I hear that you are quitting smoking, why is that?

Absolutely not. That was a publicity stunt.

Boston Katie, I am having problems at work, how do I cure this?

Drink more coffee and quit acting like a World Teach volunteer.

Boston Katie, I hear you went home for three weeks, was that too much time or too little?

Way too much. Never go home for that long. Never.

Boston Katie, what is been happening recently in Machala?

Fires every night. And rain. More sun. We built a ramp.

Boston Katie, what is your favorite dinosaur?

Triceratops could ruin lives.

Boston Katie, if you were a man, how big would you be?

Big enough to get the job done.

Boston Katie, have we really been to the moon?

What the hell are these questions?

Boston Katie, I have a significant other in the United States and we are either fighting or talk-

ing about getting married. Is this normal?

It is normal if you are okay with an abusive relationship, so go for it!

Boston Katie, what is your favorite country to say out loud?

Madagascar.

Boston Katie, what is your favorite television show?

The Walking Dead. Zombies, guns, hot and smelly guys. If Daryl dies, I am done.

Boston Katie, who inspires you?

Certainly not you.

Boston Katie, what is cooler, a giraffe or a lion?

A giraffe. No, a lion. That is a difficult question. I can not answer it correctly. I refuse. No! Tiger shark.

Boston Katie Sidebar: In regards to a question in the last issue, I would like to talk more about rainbows. Unicorns puke glitter and crap rainbows. Fact.

KATIE HARANAS is a 106 TEFL'er in Machala, who has recently been studying the basics of mathematics.

TRICERATOPS COULD
RUIN LIVES.

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LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO RUNNING IN ECUADOR

BY WHITNI CIOFALO

Two years ago, if you were to have asked me if I enjoyed running, I would have scoffed at you and called you crazy. After years of competitive horseback riding and spending eight-hour days in the saddle, running was my trainer's ultimate punishment for a horrible ride. So, it would be all too cliché to say that I came to love running while finding myself serving in a developing country.

Instead, it happened during the three months prior to coming to Ecuador. I was dating a guy who was training for a marathon, working a part-time job as a sales clerk, and had nothing better to do with my time than drink beer while worrying how

I was going to survive the next two years of my life without IPAs. (My horse was injured and it was hellishly cold—bars are a great substitute for the barn.) Plus, one of my equestrian friends, who was serving in Senegal, had warned me that riding would not be an option while in Peace Corps. She suggested expanding my yoga practices, the boy advocated for running. For some reason, the boy won.

By the time I made it to training in Tumbaco, my need to be obsessively involved in something had prevailed and I was hooked. As in, I have stopped printing off Eventing Nation riding forms and I now subscribe to Runner's World emails. However, all of you who do run know that running in Ecuador is completely different than running in the States. Thus, I present you with the Layman's Anecdotal Guide to Running in Ecuador.

1. Start slow... if you are new to the masochism that is running, it is best to ease your way into things. Not only will your body thank you, the likelihood of it becoming a habit instead of a whim are much higher. Coaches recommend that you only

up your mileage by 10% every week. It

is also worth remembering that walk breaks, especially when starting out, can be worth taking. After too many years of living to the mantra "pain is weakness leaving the body," I tended to be a bit thick-headed when it comes to such advice. So, let me save you the hassle of figuring this out the hard way—they really do help. It took me until mile nine of a half marathon and the prodding of an Ecuadorian track coach, who had taken pity on me, to convince me that some times it is better to walk and recover than to plod along at a snail's pace.

IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE GENERAL RULE OF THUMB IS TO RUN AGAINST TRAFFIC. I GUESS IT IS BETTER TO SEE THE BUS THAT IS GOING TO HIT YOU THAN HAVE IT TAKE YOU OUT FROM BEHIND.

2. Know Your Routes... it is kind of like knowing your consolidation point. People always ask me if I have ever felt unsafe while running in this country and the truth is no. But that is largely due to the fact that I have never ran anywhere that I did not know was safe for me to run. Whether it is in the *campo* of Guayas, the river walk of Cuenca, *ciclo-vía* of Tumbaco, or the cow trails surrounding my site, I always have a clear idea of where I am going. Now, I am not saying that you should only have one route that you always run because a. boredom is the quickest way to kill your running mojo and b. if you know your routine, it is easy for someone else to learn your routine. Plan how are you are going to mix things up. How is that for an oxymoron?

3. There will be unforeseen hazards... like dogs, cows, buses, drunk men, washed out roads, etc. I have found that a well-aimed rock is useful against at least three of those. Although, I know one PCV that preferred a homemade concoction of *aji y ajo*. As far as the sidewalk/road situation in this country, I like to think of it as a type of urban hiking. Therefore, the corollary would be urban trail running. Basically, embrace the unexpected terrain, unanticipated obstacles, and the random stranger that is going to stop and chat with you for fifteen minutes while completely unaware that at one point you had a pace goal. It is worth noting that the general rule of thumb is to run against traffic. I guess it is better to see the bus that is going to hit you than have it take you out from behind. The obvious exception to that would be blind curves, at which point you should move to the outside.

4. Cross train... okay, let's be honest, a part of all of us runs to avoid the dreaded Peace Corps fifteen. Well, the quickest way to lose fat is to build muscle while increasing your cardiorespiratory endurance. Or to steal an axiom from the Great Cult of Crossfit, "strong is the new sexy/skinny/slutty." *Lo que sea*. My weapons of choice are pushups, sun salutations, and headstands. Mostly I just have mad *ganas* for Michelle Obama's arms and a combination of pushups and headstands provide a fairly complete upper body workout. Sun salutations are a great kinesthetic form of stretching and also tone the entire body. (There is a lot of new research promoting this active stretching over passive stretching to prevent injuries, but that is a whole other can of worms.)

5. Do not get hung up on petty, first world pre-occupations... the right kind of shoes, yoga pants, tempo track shorts, headphones, etc. After having some great Ecuadorian work out buddies, the one thing I have learned from them, aside from the idea that working out in a garbage bag is a great weight loss method, is that what you wear to get sweaty in does not matter. If Americans spent a little less

time worrying about our arch support, compression shorts, and the wicking capacity of our t-shirts and more time actual doing the activities those things were intended for, perhaps we would not have the reputation of the "Fast Food Nation." I would rather run in a pair of Ecu-shoes than Asics any day. But I am also one of those weird barefoot running people, so if you ever want to talk about your phobia of flat feet and passion for natural arch support, I am here for you. As for the headphones/music/iPod dilemma, my only comment is that Julieta will have no sympathy if you call and tell her that your iPod was stolen while you were running through the local *bananero*. Oh, and please do not try the garbage bag idea unless you have *ganas* to see Nurse Kelley due to extreme dehydration.

6. Set reasonable goals... to keep yourself motivated, but be sensible about them. Races are a great bench march to work towards and there are plenty of them to do in Ecuador, but do not tell yourself that you are going to run a marathon with only a month to prepare. You either had no intention of actual doing so, are going to be very disappointed, or end up injured. Unless you are a superhuman, in which case, please proceed.

Instead, keep the goals small: running five days a week, working up to 25 miles per week, or "mile" PR are all really great ones to keep you on target without defeating yourself in the process.

7. Listen to your body... there is a fine line between pain that you should work through and pain that you should rest for. The only way to really be able to distinguish between the two is to have an intimate understanding of your body and its limitations. For example, I know that there is a very big difference between the soreness in my gluts while running hills and the soreness in my ankle at mile five. Running through the first one is beneficial. Running through the second one will have me out of commission for the next week as old injuries die hard. One of the best things my riding trainer

MOSTLY I JUST HAVE MAD
GANAS FOR MICHELLE
OBAMA'S ARMS AND A
COMBINATION OF PUSHUPS
AND HEADSTANDS PROVIDE A
FAIRLY COMPLETE UPPER BODY
WORKOUT.



taught me was to remember your rest days, as they are some of the most important days in your training routine. Without them, your body does not have time to fully recover and without recovery, there is no improvement.

8. Running buddies are your friend... granted some days they may offset your pace, but others you may offset theirs. However, they provide great accountability, a little added security, and there is some communal aspect in collective suffering. Not to mention that I felt a new sense of accomplishment when I could hold a conversation in Spanish while struggling to breath. It is a great way to integrate, share a piece of your weird *gringo* lifestyle, and I am sure it applies to one of the community health program goals. Within Peace Corps, I believe there was once a volunteer running club, but it seems to have fizzled with the "Lost Omnibus." That being said, if there is any one interested in starting up a Hash House Harriers running club, *me avisas porfa*.

9. Remember this... do not ask yourself, "Will I run today?" but, "When will I run today?" *Quesoso*, I know. But the point is that 75% of the time, there are options that are going to be more appealing than running. It takes some gumption to drag oneself out day after day to go running. But if you play the mind game with yourself that not running is not an option, suddenly the decision comes down to a scheduling one. At which point, the outcome is always the satisfaction of finishing that final mile.

10. Make it your own... we all know that Peace Corps can be extremely stressful at times and, consequently, we all find our own ways to cope with that stress. For me, my coping mechanism during the most difficult times of my service has been running. It is the only moment that I have had every day that has been completely mine. It did not matter if my counterpart failed to show up, the meeting did not happen, every thing in my garden died, or my host family continued to feed me *chancho*. Running was the hour-long escape that I had to sort my thoughts and clear my head before round two of what tended to be an emotional ass kicking. Yet, some days the only thing that motivates me is the memory of the plateful of *empanadas* I had the night before.

But then there are the exhilarating moments when you find yourself running above cloud-filled valleys of saturated greens with the flowers splashing flecks of colors into the scenery. You are racing the bus to mile seven, trying to make your target distance before your ride up the mountain passes you by. At that moment, there are no guides or pointers, no motivation or deterrents. Just the soft, rhythmic sound of your footfall on gravel and a focused clarity. That is, after all, what it really is all about.

WHITNI CIOFALO is a 105 agricultural volunteer in Pacha. When she isn't teaching the world about self-sustainability, she is telling people about bluegrass albums involving Yo-Yo Ma.

NO ONE WANTS TO GET EATEN IN A TRAFFIC JAM.

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE AMATEUR TACTICS

BY BENJAMIN

NIESPODZIANY



Most of you are thinking, "I'll just call Julieta, she's a badass." I am not disagreeing, but unless she is an hour or two away, or unless she is coming to get you in a zombie-proof chopper, do not bother. No one wants to get eaten in a traffic jam. Plus, did Peace Corps teach you nothing about independence? You can do this on your own, champ.

Take to the jungle. Zombies hate

snakes.

Are you aware of Ecuador's excessive supply of fireworks? Raid a *tienda de pirotécnicos*. The lights and noises might attract the monsters, but tilt those flames horizontally and destroy the dead all over again.

In the event of a zombie apocalypse, do not worry about Peace Corps rules. Snag a *moto* and swerve past the walking dead. Go to Baños and surround yourself in a lava fortress. Your consolidation point has probably been run over. Hotel Zeus is crawling, meet at Carls Jr. instead. Malaria pills are the least of your worries. You probably still should not go to Guayaquil at night, though.

I hate to cut it short, but you will have to excuse me; I need to stock up on box cutters, batteries, and *nenas*. Good luck to you all. Stay strong. If you need me, I will be holed up on Jambeli, chugging Clos and writing by candlelight, six zombie horses guarding my *caña* castle. Godspeed.

BENJAMIN NIESPODZIANY is a Youth and Families Volunteer in Machala, where he is currently crafting the world's worst World Map, complete with glitter and sharks, where Australia does not exist.

December 21, 2012 will not be the end of the world. Simply the beginning of the end. Day one of year one. The genius Mayan rulers will rise from their graves, their bones of dust turning into something horrible. Something hungry. Something that will never stop chasing, never stop craving more.

Where will you be when the zombies eat Ecuador?

Say a prayer. Rosaries line the walls of this country; grab one the next time you buy a bag of milk.

Grab a solar flashlight. Lighters, candles, matches. It gets dark early on the equator and if the films have told us anything, it is that the supernatural are more active at night. Stock up on Yogosos, Rockstar Energy drinks to keep moving. Grab plenty of Manichos. After all, the zombies will probably take your limbs before the diabetes.

Go where you know. Somewhere comfortable. Do not follow strangers into the unknown because of whispers in *el viento de la sierra*. If you spend a great deal of time writing about zombies on a relaxing island, run to it. We do not even know if this breed of zombies will be capable of water activities. Take the risk. Take to the mountains; frozen zombies are less motivated.

BETTER KNOW A STAFF MEMBER: MARCO SARZOSA

What is your current position with Peace Corps Ecuador?

Safety and Security Assistant.

What were you doing before you started working with Peace Corps?

I was working at Wells Fargo National Bank in Des Moines, Iowa, as a customer and fraud specialist.

What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Responsible, committed, and friendly.

What is your favorite English phrase?

"The race isn't won by the swift or the strong, but the one who endures to the end."

Your favorite Spanish phrase?

"Llegar a la meta no es vencer, lo importante es el camino y en el caer levantarse, insistir y aprender."

What was the best thing that happened to you during the time you lived in the United States?

There are so many good things that happened and marked my life while I was in the US, but I will say becoming an active member of a fraternity called Alpha Nu Omega. It opened a bunch of doors for me.

What are your three worst pet peeves?

Cleaning my car. I love to see it clean and nice. Second, sometimes I like to spend too much time dressing up. And finally, I guess I am always looking for perfection.

Would you rather spend another winter in Iowa, or spend one year glued to someone who does all three of the pet peeves you answered in the question above?

I would unquestionably spend another winter in Iowa. Winter is not that bad; you can always find another coat or blanket, or someone else to warm you up.

What is your favorite book?

"El Principito," which is a classic in my family. It is a book for kids and adults and has different meanings depending on the moment of your life that you are reading it.

Favorite music?

I have no favorite music, I listen to all kinds of music.

What Ecuadorian food did you miss the most in the States?

All of them. I have been waiting five years to eat/drink *colada morada*, and also I love *mangos de chupar*, which are only available in December and are the tastiest fruit on the planet.



BY JORDAN SHULER

Now that you are back in Ecuador, is there anything you miss from the United States?

I miss the routine. In Iowa, there was not much to do, so you always keep focusing on what your goals are. Here in Ecuador, it is more difficult to put all your attention on only one goal.

Favorite place you have ever lived or visited?

A small waterfall in Cozumel, Mexico.

Where would you like to be in five years?

I have always believed that your studies are the most important thing a person can have, because that is something that no one could ever take from you. That is why, five years from now, I would like to have at least two master's degrees.

If you could have a superpower, what superpower would you choose?

Be able to fly all over the world and to know all the places on earth.

If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

The scarcity of resources.

If you could meet one person from history (they can be dead or alive) and ask them one question, who would you meet and what would you

ask them?

I would like to meet any Greek philosopher, such as Plato, and ask them Shakespeare's question, "To be or not to be?"

What was the last movie you saw in theaters?

Skyfall, 007 James Bond.

Do you have any particular hobbies or skills that you are proud of? What are they?

Well I like many sports, but I usually like to play paintball on weekends.

Do you have a nickname?

My fraternity name in college was Ace Man. Other than that, my sister calls me "Agu."

Who are your idols or people you look up to?

My mother and father.

Where were you when you found out you'd be working with Peace Corps?

At my grandmother's house.

JORDAN SHULER is a 104 Volunteer living in Guayaquil. As the former head honcho of El Clima, we send her all the best once she returns to the States. Keep being a boss, girl.



MILDLY SMILING

BY MANUEL MELENDEZ

AND MOLDY SHEETS
AND TATTERED SPIDER-
WEBS GIVE NOTHING
BACK TO YOU, SAVING
ONLY THE PROOF OF
LOVE YOU HAVE FOR
YOURSELF

How to be
Asking how to do it
And change
A temporary movement
Sweating even through the cracks
Fissures in the idea of you

And how to be
When it no longer transforms the day
And keeps you locked
Battered and unwilling to matter
Because it tears the years
You saved
Saved up your worth and battles
To remind always the others of bravery
And championed lives
That never were, in fact, what succeeded fate

Here in the sticky veins of the rooted choice
You chose too kindly and too sweetly to pretend
And whirred away the engine of regret
To forsake another chance to turn back
And picked the grains from the damaged soil
To bring back a feeling of mercy
And rejoiced, rejoiced
That all's well even in the night-light
And moldy sheets and tattered spider-webs
Give nothing back to you
Saving only the proof of Love
You have for yourself

And you
Who feel at home in the memory of people you've never met
Of breakfasts you've never touched
Turning the unknown over
Till it turns the color of the familiar
Till it tastes how you never imagined it'd finish
Till in memory waking
The sleepless part inside deigns to breathe
And you let yourself take toll
Forgiving yourself for being honest
Gifting your heart these mortal wounds

OVERCOMING THE OB-
STACLES AND ILLUSIONS
TO SEE CLEAREST WHAT
CLOUDS YOU SEEK, TO
CRYSTALLIZE THE VOLUN-
TARY IGNORANCE OF ALL
THE STORMS YOU CLOSET
AWAY

Thinking back now
Always back in memory-time
Overcoming the obstacles and illusions
To see clearest what clouds you seek
To crystallize the voluntary ignorance
Of all the storms you closet away

Thinking back now
And perhaps it was, then, the better years
But now you savor the juices of nostalgia
Shutting the omelet-scented corridors
Painted midnight blue
And it's in these colors of your life
Where sickness spreads
And you wholly give in to the madness of mildly smiling
In the face of all you'll never admit

Thinking back now
But it never seemed so worthless
To adjust the plans you cooked
And weave a new tapestry
If in a moment's logic
All it took was the moment
And all mended



Breaks again
Always breaking
Always again

Thinking back now
Recognizing the calendar week was easy
And you made to do it how it's always been done
And followed the hour
And the hour
Down the rabbit holes
Down the countless instances of memory
Down the infinite ladder of conversations unheard and unspoken
Down to the bone of the sinewy, tangible carcass
Your living tissue teething, feral, manic
Demanding its feast

MANUEL MELENDEZ is a 106 TEFL'er living in the depths of the jungle, where his love for electronic music allows him to dance his way through seclusion.

COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S CORNER

BY PARMER HEACOX

WHERE ELSE WILL YOU EVER BE ABLE TO BE SO INDIVIDUALLY CREATIVE? TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY AND IT WILL SERVE YOU FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

Dear Volunteers,

I promised Benjamin I would keep this short, so I mostly just wanted to say hello. I have heard from a lot of you in the last few weeks and have had many drop-by's. It has been really nice. If you are in the office, please just drop by for a few minutes to say hello and if you have things you want to chat about, we can usually do so or we can make an appointment later in the day. I do really believe you can teach an old dog new tricks. So, I am a very willing learner and eager to hear about what is happening in development in the field from your perspective – or for that matter, any suggestions you may have. I also may have a few tricks up my sleeve that may be useful. You never know until we have a chance to talk.

I also want to recognize some of the amazing work you are all doing as 2012 comes to a close. I just reviewed and approved Peace Corps Partnership Project that will be taking place in Manglares where there is so much opportunity and need and, at the same time, I have no doubt it took Leah and Kristin countless hours and days to finally get to this point with their women's group. And really, that is the way it should be. Congratulations to both of you and I wish you so much luck in this project.

In nearby Sta. Elena, Paul and Marisa have labored with another women's artisanal group, building solidly on a project started by another Volunteer. These women are making money now, and they have aspirations that could not have been imagined just a few years ago. But it is hard to replace a Volunteer. You must "re-win" the hearts and minds of the community while re-living the experience of the last Volunteer day after day through the community's memory. I remember really hating the Volunteer I replaced. But then one day the tides

changed and I had my chance. And much of what he had accomplished before me paved the way.

In short, it takes tremendous patience, creativity, humor, love, and willingness to let go and be vulnerable until you really have your foot in the door.

Sustainable development work is so challenging because we have to be able to let go of our expectations (and our egos) while we adapt and become accepted. It can take months or even years, but it does pay off. All the while, we keep our eyes on an often unidentifiable target, that chance to be there to help a person or people makes a difference. That is when you pull out your bag of tools and can really get to work. By the way, we can and do provide you with some of those tools and we have more if you just ask. But most of you have so much knowledge and skills, some you may not even realize you have until the opportunity knocks.

What a great job, isn't it? Where else will you ever be able to be so individually creative? Take advantage of this opportunity and it will serve you for the rest of your life. And don't think for a moment you are not having an impact.

I'll end by wishing you all the best for the holidays and for 2013. You make my job enjoyable everyday. Thank you so much.

Parmer

YOU MUST 'RE-WIN' THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE COMMUNITY WHILE RELIVING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LAST VOLUNTEER DAY AFTER DAY THROUGH THE COMMUNITY'S MEMORY

SOMETIMES IN THIS KITCHEN

BY WHITNI CIOFALO

Disclaimer: As a chemistry student from a family of stellar cooks, my parents have always had the hardest time understanding my resentment towards and inability to follow basic recipes. But the best dishes, in my opinion, are the result of a little experimentation and improvisation. That is to say, these following recipes are best when tweaked, modified, and altered. Think of them as more of guidelines *y sigue adelante... ¡buen provecho!*

HUMMUS A LA ESTACIE

Lets be honest, you would not be a good PCV if you did not appreciate some hummus once and a while. Unfortunately, SuperMaxi does not carry pre-made hummus and Paccha seems to lack a Trader Joe's. Nor is tahini readily available or affordable in this country. Yet with a little experimentation and some insight from a fellow PCV, this recipe manages to get the job done and quell any serious cravings you may have. Alas, we are still *falta* pita bread.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1 cup of dried chickpeas, soaked, boiled, and peals
- ¼ cup of *maní molido*
- juice from 1-2 limes
- 2-3 cloves of garlic (or 2 tsp of garlic paste)
- ½ tsp cumin
- salt *a tu gusto*

DIRECTIONS:

- For the best results, soak the chickpeas for nearly 24 hours before hand. After boiling them, save the water to add back into the hummus while blending.
- Blend the *maní molido*, limejuice, garlic, cumin and salt.
- Add in the chickpeas and enough water to cover about half of them.
- Blend until the desired consistency is reached.
- Feel free to add a bit more water if you want a thinner, smoother hummus. Remember that hummus will thicken as it sets.

COOKIE-DOUGH FROZEN YOGURT

Once again, credit for this amazing recipe goes to another PCV who found the perfect fro-yo creation to beat the wintertime Guayaquil heat. Plus, it's ridiculously easy.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup plain or vanilla yogurt
- 120 g chocolate, crumbled
- ½ cup butter
- ½ sugar (I used panela)

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix all of the ingredients together and freeze.

OREO-TRUFFLES

These are my host sister's newest favorite cooking attempt of mine. They are probably not the healthiest thing, but I figure since all of America is indulging in Christmas goodies right now, we might as well join in.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 40 Oreos or 1 big pack
- 8oz of cream cheese
- 240g of chocolate

DIRECTIONS:

- Crush all of the Oreos and mix with the cream cheese. Set aside in the refrigerator to cool.
- Roll the Oreo/cream cheese mixture into small

bite size balls.

- Melt the chocolate. I find that the best method to do this is by double boiling it. To do that, you need a larger pot and small pot or saucepan that fits inside of the large one. Fill the large one with water and place it on the stove to boil. Place the crumbled chocolate in the smaller pot or saucepan and place it on top of the boiling water. When melting chocolate, it is important to remember that if the melted chocolate comes into contact with water, it will seize. Also, it is easy to overheat the chocolate and “burn” which will cause it to seize as well.

- Once the chocolate is melted, dip or roll the Oreo balls in it. Set them aside to cool in the refrigerator.

- You can substitute the peanut butter for the cream cheese.

BASIL LIME SORBET

Apparently I am on a dessert kick—blame it on the holiday season—and I had this at a rancher friend

of my mother’s New Years Eve dinner the last year I was in the States. It was served as the cleanser between various bison dishes (including the leg bone and marrow) but I prefer it as a standalone.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup limejuice (about 15-20 limes)
- 20 fresh basil leaves, minced

DIRECTIONS:

- Boil the sugar and the water together to make a simple syrup.
- Blend the simple syrup, limejuice, and basil together in the blender.
- Pour into a container and freeze completely.
- Once frozen, break into pieces, and blend again until smooth. Re-freeze.



