



"I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." - Voltaire

Ecuadorian Students Going Home Soon – Thanks and Farewell

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In less than a month the Ecuadorian students, in the SAPC/ Universidad de Cuenca Exchange Program will be returning home. They say thanks and farewell with mixed feelings. On the one hand they are happy to return to their country with their families and friends, and on the other hand they are sad because they have cultivated close friendships here and soon they must say "good bye."

Some weeks ago during a dinner at the residence of professor Howard Reichner, director of the Ecuador Program, I had a conversation with this fun group of six young people, one male and five female students. They came to SA accompanied by their guide professor Licenciada Blanca Durán.

During the dinner, which was just one of many generous gestures of hospitality toward the Ecuadorians by our St. Andrews professors, I wanted to take a little time to do an interview with them, but the time available was very short. The only thing I could do was ask one question to each of them. This was the question: What is the main difference that you see between St. Andrews and the Universidad de Cuenca?

Marco: "The main difference for me is the Educational System. In Cuenca we have more school hours and less work, while here we have fewer hours and much more work. The school hours here are used to speak about what have learnt in the previous one".

Daniela: "Basically the only difference for me is that the friendships that I have in my city are long-time friendships. The few friendships that I have made here are very good. People are difficult to get to know, until you get their confidence, but once you have made friends here, you know they are friends for all your life. People here are very good, they do not hold back themselves and they are sure of their feelings. They are very nice people".

Tania: "The main difference is the culture. Latinos are more expressive than Americans. We want to embrace them, shake their hands or give them a kiss on the cheek, but here it is different. For me it is good to know another culture because this experience made me realized that I was in a closed world before. Now I have opened my mind toward other possibilities. This experience also made me value things in Ecuador and helped me appreciate better the American culture. In general it has been a wonderful experience."

Juanita: "Flavors and foods are very different. Food here is very spicy-hot. I miss Latin seasoning. People and their ways to express their feelings are also very different. There is not that "Latin warmth." This is what affected more my emotional side. As far as food is concerned, I can skip it for a while, but not being able to give and receive affection is something that I cannot disregard. I am a very expressive person. I like to be with people all the time. I like to share experiences and be close to people, but finding coldness here really affected me at the beginning. But I am adapting myself to it little by little and I respect very much the American culture. I have understood that it is natural for these two cultures to be different. Another difference that I have found is the independence of the young people to do their things individually. In Cuenca most of the time we work in groups and we are more united".

Carlina: "The principal difference for me is not to be with my parents. I have always lived with them and not being able to be with them for so long has affected me. Of course here I have much more independence, but that is not all I need. Also I think that classmates here are a little indifferent; they care mostly about themselves and do not always see the problems that others could have. But I have adapted to all of this. What I like most here is the tranquility in which people live."

---This short interview was made about a month ago. From that time until now things have changed very much for the Cuencanos and many people here have been witnessed the adjustment and integration

of the young Ecuadorians into the community of St. Andrews. The Ecuadorians have created real friendships with students and teachers. Now that the hour of departure approaches, many of them are sad because they do not know if someday they will return to see to their friends and to the campus community that has accepted them with open arms for more than three months.



"Understudy" - Audience participation is key to the opening night of "30 Plays in 60 Minutes" from "Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind."



Guest lecturer Rev. Dr. Joanna W. H. Bos on Nov. 7 at an event at Laurinburg Presbyterian Church. Bos is an activist of justice for women and disadvantaged groups both locally and internationally.