

## Mexico 2010 Journals

### Day 2: San Miguel de Allende y el Dia de los Locos

The day started off like any other, birds chirping and Marcus showering. At 8 AM, we all met down in the Quinto Loreto restaurant for breakfast. Some of us, myself included, made it down around 8:15. Afterwards, we met up with Dali, or local tour guide, for a walking tour of San Miguel. We saw “el jardin”, the garden, where the locals and tourist gather to eat and people watch. We noticed groups of people sitting alongside the streets and saving spots, anticipating the extravagant parade for el dia de los locos. We saw the Parroquia, or the Parish of the Arch Angel Michael. Dali explained to us the history of San Miguel and the Mexican Revolution as we sat and stared in wonder at the breathtaking Gothic façade. From there, we journeyed to the nunnery where we witnessed a mass in session and caught a glimpse of the cloister nuns behind their wall. It was unreal to think that these cloister nuns dedicate their life so much to God that they never leave their sanctuary or interact with society. From there, we visited another portion of the nunnery, which had in the past housed the army of the revolution. Now days it is an art school run by the government. On our tour, we also got to walk by the house of the man who was said to have started the revolution, Ignacio Allende. We were released shortly after to roam the city on our very own. We each split into groups and began our excursions. Our group’s, consisting of Ryan, Jamey, Shila, and Issa (me), excursion took us to a “pizza” place that only served tacos. There we had to fight our own revolution against the local bees! We had them in our food, our drinks, and our shirts. In the end, the bees won and we were sent on our way...to watch the parade. At about 1pm, the parade, which was scheduled for 12, began. The parade consisted of crazy people, los locos, who were dressed in full costumes and masks. This was crazy since it was easily over 200 degrees Celsius outside. We could literally feel our skin baking in the sun. We were again under attack, only this time by flying candy. We barely survived this last attack. As we were retreating, we found ourselves in front of the infamous Mama Mia restaurant and bar. We sat on top of the building in their terrace. Here we enjoyed a few “sodas” to help us cool down and hydrate from the heat. After this short break, we decided to test our luck and bargaining skills at the market. We all picked up a few things and made it back to our rooms happy with our purchases. After a quick nap and shower, we rejoined the group for the evening’s events. We were taken to a bar where we learned Traditional Spanish songs. With the help of the complementary tequila, we all danced and sang. After a few shots, and few songs, we made it back to the hotel for some fun plate painting. We were each given our own plate and paintbrush and were told to use our creativity. Some of ours were obviously better than Ryan’s, I mean, others. When we finished our plates, a few of the groups, including ours, headed back to Mama Mia’s for a late dinner. After a fantastic dinner we frolicked happily, with bellies full, back to our hotel. After a long and very hot day, we made it back to our rooms to get ready for bed. Like children on Christmas Eve, we all went to bed anxiously awaiting the wonders that tomorrow might bring. Buenas Noches familia!



Day 3 San Miguel de Allende

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The wonders of today brought us joy and excitement even at 7:30 in the morning. WE ate breakfast together at the hotel and discussed the day's activities as we would be broken up into individual groups according to our major's; criminal justice and education. Criminal justice left at 8:30 to Las Biblioteca. As students walked behind fearless leader Dr. Houston and his wonderful sense of direction we found the wrong door to La Biblioteca. As we made our way

inside we noticed the heat, there was no air conditioning. Dr. Houston along with Dr. Price told us what to expect for the day and we found our coordinator, Santiago, and he redirected us to a theater with plush seating and air conditioning, only to find out there would be no popcorn! Our first speaker, Pablo Gonzalez, a professor at a law school and prosecutor, and a very handsome man, lectured to us about Mexican law.

At a crime scene, Police usually arrive first, then the District attorney (DA) and a medical examiner as well as a crime specialist. From there the DA takes pictures, video, and notes. Whatever the DA examines of the crime scene is considered the absolute truth. Once the crime scene is broken down, all other evidence brought to the case is dismissed if it has not been recorded by the DA. The DA then has ten days to present to the judge, in writing, the details of the crime. The judge then has up to thirty days to read and decide and send the case to the defense attorney. From there the defense attorney has ten to fifteen days to read and prepare the defense. The case then goes back to the judge in written format, and then awaits judgment. There is no jury! As of 2008, Mexico has begun vying for oral testimony.

Our second lecturer, a current criminal judge in San Miguel, spoke to us about his procedure when handling criminal cases, including homicide, rape, kidnapping and fraud. His secretary handles less attentive cases including, burglary and other petty crimes. The secretary is also a current attorney.

Ex-mayor and politician, Harris Martinez, then lectured about districts, House of Representatives, the Senate and political parties. Within these chambers there are twelve women and twenty four men. Mexican parties are pushing for more political involvement from women. Suffrage for women came in the 1950's and the legal voting age is eighteen from the previous twenty one years old.

After convening for the day, criminal justice students were awarded the afternoon to use at their own disposal.

## EDUCATION

After breakfast, education students loaded a bus headed for fun! Our first destination was to Charco del Ingenio, a local botanical garden. We were amazed to see agave plants over six feet tall (TEQUILA!), we saw a beautiful river surrounded by trees and bugs. From there we went to a la Aurora, an expansive art gallery that hosted a sushi bar and small outdoor café. A few students decided to get lunch and others explored. The gallery was formally a textile plant that has since been converted into a studio for local artist as well as a place to sell their work. There were many wonderful works of art to admire as well as purchase; there was also a small book store inside with a host of wonderful readings. We excitedly headed for our next adventure to a church at Atotonilco; this church is known as the sixteenth chapel of the Americas. It is called this for the beautiful hand painted ceilings that depict the events of Jesus' life particularly the end. Outside, one could view modest stucco walls and simply rustic wooded doors. Upon

entering the church it was hard not to be memorized by the intense beauty and character of the church. Everything from the hand painted ceiling to the warm wooden floors characterized devotion of its parishners. There were beautiful chaplets dedicated to saints and other religious figures, many of the chaplets hosted beautiful and ornate alters as well as intricately decorated housing for the religious statues. One particular chaplet housed a shrine to the Virgin Mary. This particular chaplet contained an alter gilded in silver, the statue of the Virgin Mary casing was adorned with gorgeous gold and silver intricate framing, within this framing were scattered mirrors that one could only imagine what it would look like during a mass illuminated by candles. Once we left the church we headed to Santa Julia (a home for abandoned, abused, or cannot be supported by their families). Our guide, Robin Loving, a retired American who has taken it upon herself to assume the care and responsibility of the facility. She guided us through the home showing us where the girls studied, ate, and slept. There have been a considerable amount of donations including washing machines, dryers and school bus. Someone volunteered and painted a mural of the girls amongst other paintings to help encourage and stimulate their self esteem. The girls quickly got attached to their new 'amigos' and many hugs and high fives were returned. The most popular member of our group was a 6 foot gentle giant, Ryan, to the girls. He was scouted out by one in particular girl that wouldn't allow him to put her down for the rest of the tour. After many hugs and goodbyes from the girls the education students made their way back to the home away from home for the week. After a short break we met up with our criminal justice friends and warmly discussed our adventures for the day.

Dianna Gonzales, Alicia Candelario and Jennifer Trook



## Day 4 San Miguel de Allende

### **Education**

The education students loaded into five taxis this morning after eating a wonderful breakfast at our hotel's desayuno, or café. We headed to the escuela "Independencia", where we partnered and split into the various classrooms to observe the educational process in San Miguel. My partner and I were assigned to a fourth grade classroom. As we entered, 38 pairs of eyes stared at us in complete silence; we definitely had their attention. The teacher was in the middle of a vocabulary lesson, which consisted of students looking up various words in the dictionary. We noticed right away that the classroom resources were limited. For example, there was one dictionary for every four to five children; the classroom was overcrowded, and the furniture was old. The environment we saw was somewhat disorganized, perhaps due to overcrowding or lack of resources. The students were very rambunctious, walking up and down the aisles. The teacher seemed to be encouraging the students to complete their work in a timely manner, which was difficult with so many students.

Shortly after our classroom observation ended, we joined the children during recess. I volunteered to join the boys who were playing soccer, since I played for many years. They seemed surprised, but receptive to my suggestion. Once they found out I could play and wanted to interact, they enthusiastically welcomed me to their game. After the game ended, the children gathered around me and started asking questions. Once word spread throughout the playground that I spoke English, more children came over, and soon I had a group of twenty students or so surrounding me and shouting out questions. The thing they were most curious about was the English language. They were particularly interested in the English version of their names. As I responded to each one there was laughter and excitement as they began firing words at me to translate. I was overwhelmed with the feeling that I was helping them and making a difference in their lives. I was touched by their enthusiasm and interest in learning more about our language and culture.

Our second adventure of the day was a visit to Mexicito, a local home for boys. The home is run by nuns who are called Madres. There are approximately 25 boys who live in this home, which includes a large courtyard area in the center. The ages of the boys ranged from two to fourteen years old. Since today was an icebreaker day, we wanted to make the boys feel comfortable so we could all get to know each other. We wanted them to enjoy this learning experience with us. We had planned a variety of fun activities for them, including a very active game of soccer, followed by quieter time reading and getting to know each other. It was such a neat thing to see the boys sitting on the steps with our student teachers as they read the books we had brought. I think they enjoyed the attention they were given, as well as the activities during the time we were there. I loved the interaction with the boys as we played and ran through the courtyard. By the

end of our visit, they were quite comfortable and affectionate with us. As we concluded our visit, we explained we would be returning for more activities, including math, science, language arts and more games, the following day. I think we are all looking forward to spending more time together.

## **Criminal Justice**

Our group loaded into two vans at 8:30 this morning and headed to Guanajuato. Our first destination was the Supreme Court of the state. We met with one of the magistrates and gathered in their meeting room for a relatively brief lecture on the court systems of Mexico. There are some notable differences – e.g. in the United States, magistrates are below district judges, but in Mexico, district judges are below magistrates – but there are also a lot of similarities. After the lecture we toured the building, and got back in the vans to head over the prison administration building. We met with three of the staff members for a brief lecture on the Mexican prison system. We learned some really interesting things during the lectures. After some questions on the lecture, we stopped at a convenience store to get drinks or a snack before driving over to the state’s Congress building. One of the congressmen took us up to one of the meeting rooms and told us about how Mexico’s elections and lawmaking processes work; in Mexico, you may only be re-elected for a congressional office once, though they are trying to reform that so that people may continue to be in office for longer. We learned about several other reforms that lawmakers are trying to pass, as well, and that you don’t have to have a professional degree in order to run for office in Mexico – some of the current members of Guanajuato’s congress are engineers, physicians, or non-professionally-degreed people. After the talk, we toured the building, which was very interesting. We went into the main meeting room, where we saw the Guanajuato state coat of arms (in Mexico, states don’t have individual flags, but coats of arms instead), and then on through the green room and to the congressional library. In the library, we learned a bit about whom most commonly visits the library and had the opportunity to see some of the written minutes from congressional meetings from as long ago as 1824. Naturally, we couldn’t actually touch them, but we were permitted to take photographs through the entire building, which was a nice difference from touring the congressional buildings and documents in the United States. After the tour, we had a late lunch in Guanajuato and returned to San Miguel.



## Go Global Mexico 2010 – Day 5

### Education

Today was almost just like yesterday. This morning we ate breakfast together with the Criminal Justice group. After that we met the taxis at 8:30am and headed to the primary school (Independencia). My partner from yesterday and I observed a second grade classroom today. When we arrived the students were working on a math activity involving making scales out of jar lids, cups, sticks and hangers to compare the weight of items. Since I have a very limited understand of Spanish I was at a loss for understanding the lesson in its entirety. After learning today that the teachers must pay for their own classroom materials other than the textbooks, I understand why the teacher was having the students make the scales from household materials. There were 43 students in the classroom that was set up like a typical American classroom and the teacher did a phenomenal job managing the student's noise level and behavior. The students worked in groups of between two and four, with their desks facing each other and did hands on work which was very similar to what I have observed an American classroom. A few completed this activity early and sat quietly at their desks and talked to their friends.

After all the students were finished the teacher transitioned well into mathematics. For their math lesson they were working on multiplication and division word problems. While the students were working individually on their problems the teacher walked around the classroom and asked questions of the entire class about specific problems. The student would call out the answers and she would ask them if they were sure about their answers if they were wrong and confirm if they were correct. Around 10:30am the students were dismissed for their morning breakfast and recess. There were a few girls from the girls' children's home that we had visited on Monday that were eager to say hello. Other student s approached attempting to communicate with us with the small amount of English they know and the small amount of Spanish we know.

After that we returned to our hotel in the taxis and had about a four hour break for free time including lunch and shopping. For our afternoon activity we returned to the boys' orphanage (Mexiquito) for more educational activities. Today was substantially more organized because the children understood that they were going to get to do every activity and how they were going to be rotating as groups. We also spread out the groups into completely separate areas outside so the children would not be distracted by the other groups. In my group, we made a simulated volcano explosion out of a bottle using water, baking soda, vinegar and coloring. Because of our lack of the ability to read Spanish we bought green (verde) instead of red (rojo) coloring. When we made the first eruption it didn't work correctly so Amanda decided to shake the bottle and open the lid which proceeded to explode all over her and the children. The boys laughed when she was covered in green dye. The boys were also super excited and became very engaged in drawing pictures of volcanoes with crayons afterwards. Because we finished our activities early today we played ball and jump-rope and read books to the children until it was time to leave. I

really felt like the boys were bonding with us today and are now ready to learn from us when we return tomorrow.

This evening's activity was learning Salsa dancing that we learned as a group. We went to a local restaurant called Mama Mia's that actually serves Italian food and offers the free lessons. Both groups were all having a great time interacting with each other, laughing and talking outside of a serious educational setting. It was very entertaining watching our professors attempt to learn to Salsa dance!

Charity Castaneda and Amanda Jacobs

### Criminal Justice

This morning after breakfast the criminal justice group met at 930 and left to go to the San Miguel prison. On our way there we stopped at the scenic overlook of the city and took pictures. The view was beautiful and you could see for miles. We had an amazing aerial view of the main church and saw the town's original settlement and the lake. We didn't stay long as we had to be at the prison and meet with the director. We loaded onto the bus and took about a 10 minutes ride to the prison. The prison was very small and had one armed guard at the front gate. Yesterday we were told that we were not able to bring anything valuable to the prison and only to bring our passports or official ID. We unloaded and met at the front and went through the check point. Every person gave their ID's to Dr. Hueston and walked through a metal detector. We were then pointed to different rooms to be patted down to make sure we had nothing illegal. We all met in a room and had a question and answer lecture with the Director of the prison, the head of security and the head of all services. We learned about how the prison is run and what their main goals are. They try to rehabilitate the inmates and help them turn their lives around so they don't commit more crimes. We learned that the prison has hired staff to do all of the cleaning, gardening and food prepping. We learned that this particular prison offers education up to high school and nothing else. They have 2 full time psychiatrists on staff and meet with the inmates every morning to check on them and make sure that they are mentally stable. We learned that they do not believe in solitary confinement and have a very low suicide rate. The guards doing 6 months of training and the Warden was surprised during this time because his guards in Texas only have 5 weeks of training. After meeting with them they gave us a tour of the prison. We weren't allowed to go and see the jail cells or dormitory areas that the inmates reside. We were taken to the administrative area and shown the doctor's office, the main records area and where the only electronic files area was, the registration area of the inmates. The inmates got their pictures taken and were fingerprinted. In every office that we went to, each person there was so happy to show us their new computers and what they all had. We then made our way to the main holding area. There we learned that this prison is both a municipal jail and a state prison. This is what we learned about the past 2 days where the people who are accused for a crime are held and then if they are found guilty they will just get transferred within the complex to the main prison. We were shown the underground passage from the prison to the courts and learned that the

inmates would just go to the judge's chambers. We then went down to the bottom of the prison and observed the commissary and the inmates working. The inmates are allowed to work and make items to sell so that they can provide for themselves and for their family. We spoke with an inmate who was born in Mexico and lived most of his life in California. He said that he has been in prison for 2 and a half years and doesn't know how much longer he has left. He said that he is still waiting on his sentence. Afterwards we were shown the conjugal visit area and learned that they allow these visits once a week where an inmate's wife or common law wife is allowed to stay from 6 pm to 9 am the next day. We finished our tour and had a drink with the director.

We then had the rest of the day off and met with the professors at 5 that afternoon to discuss what we learned and thought about the prison system and it gave us a chance to ask the warden about the differences he saw. As stated above the guards only have 5 weeks of training, all the inmates are mandated to work around the prison grounds doing all of the jobs. The systems in Texas are more electronically advanced than Mexico as well. We also learned that the biggest problem that the US and Texas prisons are having are inmates committing suicide because of the solitary confinement. The warden who is with us and is in charge of the Clemen's Unit was very adamant that the things that occurred in the prison here in Mexico, like families roaming the prison and the food that was brought in, would never happen in the states. For the most part everyone in the group enjoyed the visit and felt that they got a lot of information out of it. Everyone was very proud that this was once in a lifetime opportunity because no foreigner has ever been given the access to tour a Mexican prison.

As stated above we then as a group went Salsa dancing at Mama Mia's and everyone appeared have had a blast.

Ryan Calvert



Go Global Mexico - Day 6

Education

June 17, 2010

Today was very much the same at breakfast as it has been this week. The educational and Criminal Justice group all met in the restaurant together and had our daily **wonderful** breakfast and discussed the activities for the day. We left for the public school (Independencia) at 8:30a.m. by taxi and arrived eager to meet with the class that we were assigned. A young girl,

Maria Juana from Casa Hogar, (girl's children home), we had met wanted us to come to her room today. Maria Juana wants to become an English teacher and go to West Texas A&M. Our group consisted of Breatiz Cruz, Melinda Wells, and Janette Zamora. We did manage to get in Maria Juana's classroom and she was beaming! When we arrived, Maestra Micaela had her 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (all 36) reading in their Spanish textbooks and every student took turns reading. Maestra Micaela called on students for comprehension of what they read. Maestra Micaela passed out a worksheet for students to work on and they also did spelling vocabulary words. The students worked really diligent and were very well behaved. A smooth transition from reading to math took place by having the students take out a piece of paper and fold it to make a perfect square, which they then cut off the excess paper and unfolded to the perfect square of paper. They were learning the formula for the area of a square and triangle, which was very interesting and brought back 4th grade memories. After each lesson, Maestra Micaela had the students stand up and do hand exercises and stretching to rejuvenate and have some fun. This teacher was excellent as she used visual, hearing, and kinesthetic to engage the students in math and reading. Class was released to lunch/recess (30 minutes) and we visited with other students and took pictures. We left at 11:00 and returned to our motel La Quinta Loreto.

We had free time until 3:30. So the three little pigs went to market to shop. We were back in our rooms by 1:30 to watch Mexico vs. France in World Cup. Mexico won 2 to 0 against France!!!!!!!!!!!!!! After the game the streets were crowded with people celebrating, and we also heard fireworks. We had to rush because we had to be at the Mexiquito (boys home) from 4:00 to 5:30 to teach our activities and have lots of fun with the boys. Next we went to Casa de la Cuesta which is a seven room bed and breakfast and mask museum. The Casa de la Cuesta folk art gallery and mask museum, **The Other Face of Mexico**, is a showplace for Mexican artists and craftpersons. Owners, Heidi and Bill LeVasseur, represent an exclusive group of Mexican artists and artisans and Bill is a long-time collector of Mexican ceremonial dance masks which are displayed in their own separate showroom. The Casa de la Cuesta gallery offers a truly unique look at Mexican culture through its craft. Items for sale include paintings, indigenous textiles, hand made paper, masks, handcrafted toys, milagros and more. This was the most amazing place ever!!! We were served the most exquisite Mexican food and a variety authentic drinks and desserts. We were also serenaded by the Estudiantina la Tuna. They sang a lot of famous songs by Mexican authors. We toured the home which was absolutely breath taking! We learned a lot about the mask history. There are thousands of masks in this museum and the owner offers it as an educational teaching museum.

Janette Zamora and Melinda Wells

Criminal Justice

June 17, 2010

Meeting for breakfast in the morning has become routine by now but never gets old. In between being served hot cakes and oatmeal we were briefed on the day's events. The criminal

justice group met outside about 8:15 a.m. and walked over to the Jardin to meet the mayor and the city counsel members at San Miguel City Hall. We were immediately taken in by the beauty of the architecture that the City Hall's historic features had to offer. The secretary to the mayor welcomed us to City Hall and gave us a brief tour around the facility. We were escorted to the court yard area where we were told that the City Hall used to hold prisoners in a jail located below the building. The secretary pointed out the guard tower and other areas of interest that have been there for an extended period of time. The secretary proudly took us over to the meeting area where the counsel meets to make important decisions. We had just been seated when the counsel members arrived and took their seats around their very prestigious looking table set up with microphones. The artwork, craftsmanship, and architecture took a while to digest. It was absolutely breathtaking. We all took our seats and were introduced into the mayor, the attorney for the counsel, and a few other counsel members that were present. The mayor then welcomed everyone, in Spanish and English, to her beautiful city. She then explained what the city counsel members rolls where and what they all did for the city. She did explained to us about the history of the counsel and the exact room we were sitting in at that time. On September 17, 1810, the first city counsel meeting took place in the same exact room that we were all sitting in at this time. Then it was Dr. Hueston's turn to speak. The mayor handed him the floor and the mic and Hueston was in lecture mode. He thanked the mayor and all the counsel members for their hospitality and then explained that he would like some police officers from San Miguel to come to Amarillo to see how they do things. We all got together for a group photo with the mayor and then got to go take a quick tour of her office. She has one of the best views of the Jardin in San Miguel. Then we left the city counsel building and went right next door to the tourist police building to have coffee and pastries. A lady from the Human Rights Department in San Miguel came to speak to us and to give us a small presentation, along with the police cadets. Before the presentation started, the police cadets wanted to know about the police officers role within a crime in the United States. So office Bohanon of the Amarillo Police Department spoke to them about everything. Then Margarita, the Human Rights lady, started the presentation over the history, legal and ethics of the Mexican government. She had everyone go around the room to introduce ourselves and tell one human right that we knew. She then spoke about the history of human rights and how it began in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Hammurabi's code and then went into how the civil rights and human rights became a major factor in all government constitutions.

After the Human Rights lecture, we spoke to one of the heads of the local tourists office. He gave a brief lecture about the history of San Miguel and then was shown a professionally done video showing aerial views of the city and churches. Afterwards the city served us lunch. During our fabulous lunch of homemade authentic Mexica food, it started to rain. Everyone started to get up and take shelter while Jocelyn just pulled out her emergency poncho and stayed seated to finish her fabulous meal and drink. After the rain stopped and everyone finished their lunch, the teachers let the students go enjoy a few hours off for some much needed r & r. But with Mexico playing France in the World Cup, no one was going to get some rest. Walking around the town

around 1:30pm in San Miguel all you saw was green and white jerseys. There wasn't a person around who wasn't sporting some sort of Mexico jersey. So part of the CJ group went to the awesome Mama Mia's to watch the game, while others went around the town to pick up some local artifacts. Every place in San Miguel, that had a TV, had the game on and was packed full. Mama Mia's was no exception. People had their beers in hand and were ready to watch some soccer. When Mexico scored their first match, a cannon went off and fireworks showed in the distance. People were screaming in the streets and all chanting. Then when Mexico won the game 2-0, there were people going crazy in the streets. Driving around yelling and chanting, while drinking beer. It was an awesome experience to see a city support their country in so many awesome ways. Who else can say that they were in Mexico to watch Mexico in the World Cup. After watching a fantastic game everyone wondered back to the hotel to rest a little before going to the Casa de Cuesta where we got to see many different indigenous tribal masks. Casa de Cuesta was up on a hill and everyone got to see San Miguel from an amazing view. The house was decorated with numerous varieties of cultural artwork. Every spot had an original piece of art. Even the candy bowl was unique. We went into the Mask Museum where we were instructed to not take any pictures, but it was so memorable that the images will be with us for a long time. After the Mask Museum viewing we lined up for a Mexican buffet. The food was delicious and we were not shy about going back for seconds and thirds. As we ate, a local musical band played in the background. One of the musicians would randomly grab a girl and dance with her. We took many pictures and posed for the camera with the musicians. Our class soon started to gather outside of the house and set off for the walk back to the hotel as the sun set in front of us. This was an opportunity that does not come by very often and will be with each one of us for a long time to come.

Jocelyn Whitefield

Jessica Palacios

Ryan Calvert

Mexico Journal 2010 – Day 7

Friday June 18, 2010

The day started as usual with breakfast at 7:30 a.m. But we had to be done eating and ready to go by 8 which was earlier than the other days. So with me and my luck my breakfast wasn't ready until we were already walking out. My classmates were giving me their leftovers so I could eat something. The thing is they have been giving me leftovers all week. I'm their human garbage disposal. We were about to get in the taxis when the waitress comes running out with a Styrofoam box with the omelet I had ordered. Let's just say that the day started off horrible, because I love my breakfast!! The taxis took us to the police department for our tour of their facilities. Our first area to visit was the jail and the booking area. The first thing you see when you walk in the door is the wall where they take the mug shots and measure height. They showed us

the jail where they temporarily keep the inmates. They put those who committed misdemeanors in the lower level and felonies on the upper level. The smell of the jail was what a jail is supposed to smell like... awful!!! They showed us the different offices that dealt with crime mapping, the armory, the academy instructor offices, human resources, and we were giving the opportunity to interact with the cadets. I was actually used in a demonstration on hand to hand takedowns. The officer demonstrated how to subdue a suspect with the use of takedowns and put me in a rear naked choke. Although he wasn't able to completely put the choke in, I was unable to get out of it!! The armory was interesting because their weapons are similar to ours. They use AR-15s and 9 mm Glock, as well as MP5s. And there was also this kind of creepy short person that I guess worked there that freaked me out a bit! After the police station, we went to the offices of the Ministerio Publico, or the equivalent of a District Attorney and spoke to a DA about the investigation process. It was a short visit because the Mayor wanted to say goodbye to us and so much about what was talked about with the DA was relatively short. The mayor's staff were the ones to thank us for our visit on behalf of the mayor because she was unable to be there. Later on in the day we joined the education group and went to the boys home to interact and feed the boys. We taught them about tornadoes and how to make water bottle tornadoes. They were so intrigued by it and the looks on their faces was priceless. They loved the chicken that we fed them from Pollo Feliz. It's like the Mexican version of KFC. Unfortunately we were unable to go back outside and play with the kids because it began to rain hard and it didn't let up until we left. All of the people that were involved with our experience were very grateful and humble about everything. I can easily say that this will not be my one and only time to come to San Miguel. It was an experience that I will never forget and will definitely tell family and friends about for years to come.

Robert Cisneros

## Education

Day seven started out as normal. We woke up and were at breakfast by 7:30. We got to relax a little bit today because we were going on a walking tour instead of going to the public schools like we had been doing all week. We met the professors around 9 and went for a walking tour of San Miguel. Our first stop was Yglesia Nasade La Salud a church that was close by. Second stop by that church was a statue dedicated to San Miguel de Allende where we took a group education tour. Issa was enlightened by the fact that birds drink water. Ryan wanted to drink out of the "fountain of youth," we were able to stop him just in time. Next we stopped at a bigger church, still within walking distance of the hotel. This church was dedicated to San Antonio, where we met a friend from folktale singing she was able to join our group and get us a tour of the convent next to the church. The convent was not used by 3 friars and 1 priest. Our short walking tour was extended into a long walking tour and walked to the first community wash basin of San Miguel, which is still used today. After that we went to community education center and saw statues of Diego. We were set free after we saw the statues.

Issa and I headed straight for a spa we had seen on the long walk up to the wash basin. We made appointments for full body massages for only 500 pesos. It was a great deal that we couldn't pass up ☺ While we waited for our appointment time we ate at a little café down the street. We were excited when 12:30 rolled around and got to the spa. I had the first full body

massage with hot stones. It was very interesting and was made more interesting by the language barrier. I had no idea what was going on most of the time, but I enjoyed....most of it. After we got done being pampered we had to hurry down to catch the Taxi's to go to the Mexiquito.

Around 3:30 both groups loaded up into 9 cabs and we were on our way to the Mexiquito. When we got to the Mexiquito all of the boys were so excited to see us and our new friends. We got to play ball with them, build tornado bottles, read books, and work on their own books. At about 5:30 Dr. Capt and Dr. Houston showed up with the Pollo Feliz which was just in time because about 5 mins later it started to down pour and we got all the boys into the cafeteria to feed them. All the boys were so excited, especially Andres who was announcing to everyone that we had food and to come eat. After all the children were fed and happy it was still raining cats and dogs which put a kink in lesson plans we had so we changed it up a bit and tried to sing songs and play games to help with English language learning. The time flew by and at 6:30 it was time to go. It was really sad saying "Adios" to all of the boys, but we did get to leave all of our supplies behind for them to enjoy. Ryan felt better because his cabby showed up and we got to have a fiesta in the cab on the way back to the hotel. ORALE!!!

The streets were flooded from all of the rain when we got back so Issa, Ryan and I all tried to find a place close. We ended up eating at Café Colon. It was an interesting cultural experience. Issa ordered Aztec Soup, and had to ask the professors if Aztec soup was supposed to have bugs in it...because hers did! After that me and Issa were a little hesitant to eat anything else, so we left to go find more sanitary places to eat. We found somewhere else that had Aztec soup...minus the bugs! After a few adult sodas and some yummy Aztec soup we headed back to the hotel across the miniature river that had formed across the street.

Jamey Holmes

Mexico Journal 2010 – Day 8

When the alarm went off at 6:45am, I was thankful it was going to be the last time waking up in San Miguel. While I love being here and am so grateful for the experience, I miss my husband and my little girl and am ready to be home. I've heard others in the group express similar feelings. Making a decision for breakfast this morning was difficult; I've had so many great things but it's the last day! After breakfast we were dismissed until 9am. We only had to return to the same place we've had breakfast in the morning for our entire day's activities.

Lila was the first speaker. She talked about the history of women in Mexico, including their impact, their rights, and the challenges they still face today. Things have changed so much over the past few centuries but are still not where they need to be. As women have gained more rights, it has had a negative impact on their culture, just as it has in the U.S. The divorce rate skyrocketed (mostly in the border towns) as well as the abortion rate. Women are also becoming head of the household because their husbands go to the U.S. for work.

Lila's housekeeper, Rosa, came to answer questions about her experience as a woman who has lived her entire life in San Miguel. I think most of us were shocked at her way of life. She told us about her experience of having her first child at age 14 and her daughters having the same experience of having their children before the age of 14 as well. None of her five children had beyond a 6<sup>th</sup> grade education and one stopped at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

After Lila and Rosa, we reconvened in the courtyard to meet our next speaker: an Aztec dancer. She gave a brief history of the Aztec culture, while Lila translated, and told us we could look the rest up on Wikipedia. Then she lead us to a large open area where we gathered around her and her son so they could hand out ceremonial drums, rattles and horns for us to use. She lit a small bowl of incense and explained that we would be taking part in a traditional Aztec ritualistic dance. A couple of students wore headdresses and others wore colorful headbands; I chose not to wear either. She handed Dr. Houston a large wooden snake shaker and he stood there with a look of disgust. Apparently Dr. Houston and snakes "do not get along". It took Dr. Capt multiple attempts to make the conk shell horn make the correct sound. After our 10 minute dance, all of us were complaining of being exhausted. She told us at ceremonies, they dance for 12 hours straight.

We had our last lunch together as a group, that the university paid for which is always a bonus since most of us are down to the last of our pesos. Then we were dismissed for an afternoon of shopping and relaxing before our journey home beginning at 3am!

**SEE Y'ALL SOON!**

Charity Davis, Charlene Cheek, Amanda Jacobs

