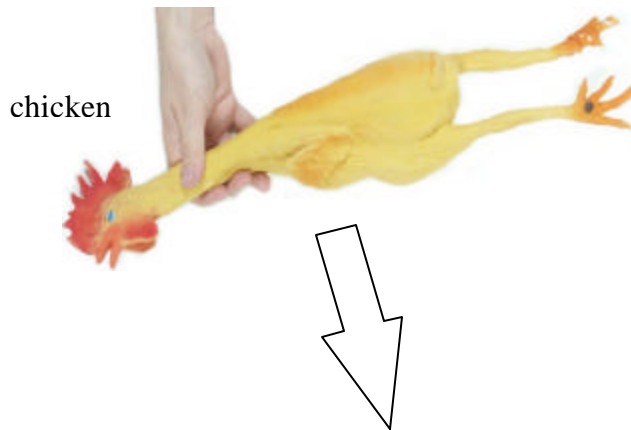


# Animal Production: Where There's Smoked Meat, There's Desire.

--Jason Jones (Animal Production, O'87)

A meat smoker, or *humeador*, is a simple and cheap metal drum oven structure designed to infuse rich smoky flavors into raw or steamed meat. The end product is an excellent and profitable value-added product. The benefits for your community's meat producers include sidestepping the middleman and offering an original product for sale in restaurants or straight off the street. Ultimately, the technique described below gives the community's meat suppliers an extra edge in a highly competitive market.

This brief tutorial details how to build a meat smoker and describes the steps and materials necessary to smoke meat.



chicken

## Meat Smoker Construction:

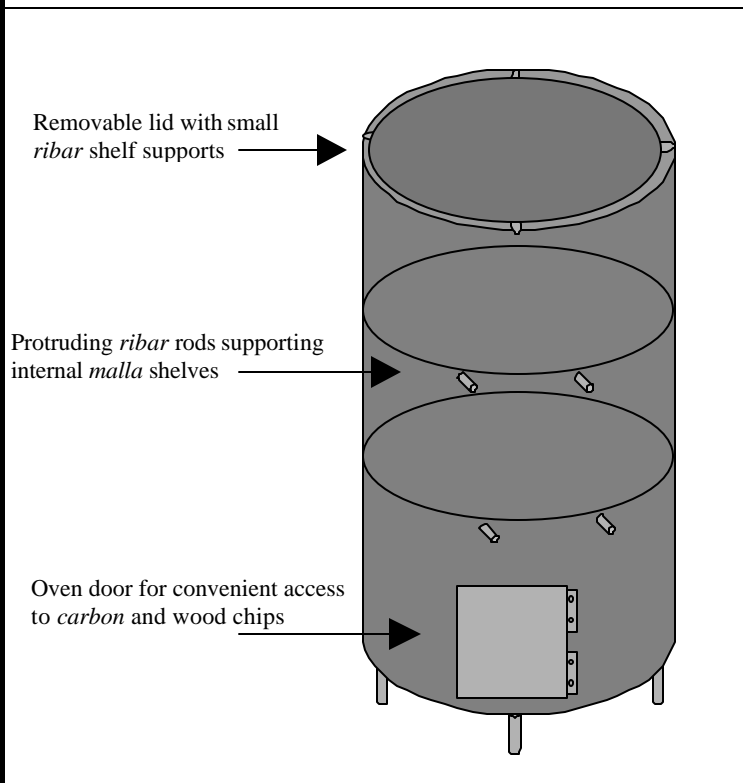
### Materials and Approx. Costs:

Large metal drum/barrel	\$5.00
Roughly 6 feet of <i>ribar</i>	\$2.00
Stiff, strong wire mesh ( <i>malla</i> )	\$0.50
Labor for welding assistance	\$3.00
Two small metal hinges	\$0.60

### Building the meat smoker:

The meat smoker is roughly a five-foot tall and a foot and a half wide metal barrel equipped with internal wire mesh shelves, a removable upper lid and a bottom-level oven door (see figure). To construct the meat smoker, the PCV will need the aid of a metal welder. The actual design is simple and can be followed to completion in an hour and a half of leisurely paced work.

- **Step 1: Removable Lid Construction.** Use a hammer and chisel to cut the internal top off the barrel (like opening a soup can with a knife). Afterward, the edges of the inner barrel-rim will be jagged and sharp from the chisel work, so beat them downward and flat with the hammer. The edges of the excised metal disk will also need to be hammered flat. Do this by first hammering the outer two centimeters of the disc upward. Then hammer them inward toward the center of the disc so they lie flat and harmless. The resultant two products (barrel and metal disc) should enable the disc to be used as a lid for the barrel. The diameter of the lid will be smaller than that of the barrel so the welder will need to weld small bits of *ribar* on the inner rim of the barrel to provide small but stable shelf-like protrusions for the lid. This set-up is not expected to be airtight.
- **Step 2: Internal Shelf Construction.** The two internal shelves consist of fitted circular sections of *malla* placed securely on *ribar* cross supports that span the diameter of the barrel. For each *malla* shelf there will need to be two parallel cross supports. The first shelf should be situated one foot lower than the removable lid. The second shelf should be one foot below the first shelf. About two to three feet will thus separate the lower shelf from the bottom of the metal drum, which is where the carbon and wood



chips will be placed for burning. Begin making the first shelf by hammering holes in the side of the barrel to slide the *ribar* rods through and across the barrel. This can be done using a hammer and a large metal spike. Slide the *ribar* rods into place. No further attachment or welding is required if the *ribar* rods overlap the outer barrel by an inch or two. Do the same for the second shelf. The fitted cut circles of stiff *malla* can now be placed inside on their *ribar* cross supports.

- **Step 3: Oven Door Assembly.** A small square door will need to be situated at the bottom of the barrel to provide a place for the carbon and woodchips to enter. There is no one perfect size for the area of the door, but it should be around 7 to 8 inches for ease of maintenance and cleaning of the meat smoker. Begin making the door by cutting a square out of the side of the barrel with the chisel and hammer method described above (the sharper the chisel, the better). The excised square should be cut or hammered smooth at the edges and then welded to the small hinges that have first been welded to one side of the door.
- **Step 4: Attaching Base Supports.** As a final step, five-inch *ribar* legs should be welded onto the bottom of the barrel to keep the base of the oven off the ground. Your meat smoker is now ready for use.

## The Smoking Process:

- **Details concerning smoke and fire:** In Ecuador, wood chips available for use in the smoking process are those originating from the wood of *laurel*, *cedro*, *nogal*, and *candela*. These wood chips can be specially bought from places like Supermaxi, or they can be collected for free from the *tablon* shavings made by carpenters who use those particular types of wood. The chips/shavings should be water-soaked beforehand so that they smoke slowly, not burn, over a moderately hot pile of *carbon* embers. Chip quantity is inexact and varies according to the meat and wood type in question. I recommend that you experiment with your own recipes by first spreading a handful of chips over a few handfuls of carbon as an initial try (you can change chip quantity and meat type in subsequent efforts). When the chips cease to smoke well, add another handful of chips onto the carefully maintained fire/embers.
- **Smoking duration is dependent on preparation:** The smoking process requires a different length of time depending on the size of the meat portions and whether the meat is raw or previously cooked. Raw meat should be smoked for about twelve hours to cook it through completely. Periodic inspection of the meat will indicate when the meat is sufficiently cooked for consumption. To shorten the smoking process, meat can be steamed for one hour beforehand and then smoked for three to four hours more. Smaller portions of meat will finish cooking before larger portions, but due to differences in the consistency and strength of the heat from the smoke and *carbon* it is best to base cooking duration on personal observations.



- **Optional Special Preparations:** For the sake of increased profits, the smoking process aims to increase meat flavor in a fashion different from common market practices. But a prior marinating of the meat in what is called a brine solution can enhance the smoking process. This brine solution is a mixture of *salmuera* (a commercial brackish solution) and a commercial flavoring product, "Liquid Smoke." Both of these ingredients can be bought at the larger scale supermarkets, like Supermaxi. Using a disposable hyperdermic needle (*jeringuilla*), thoroughly inject the marinade into the meat (total weight should go up by roughly 10%) and let sit overnight. You will find the smoked flavor complimented exceptionally well by these additional flavors.

*Please take advantage of the fact that I have experimented extensively with the meat smoking process. Call or e-mail me if you have problems, questions or if you would like to chat in more detail about this easy, accessible and potentially very profitable process.*

**Jason Jones**  
[seniorjones@hotmail.com](mailto:seniorjones@hotmail.com),  
(09) 867-9260

# Yoga 101: Body and Mind

—Nicole Black (*Youth And Families, O'89*)

## WHAT IS YOGA?

Many people think of yoga as just another form of exercise. The word “yoga” is actually based on a Sanskrit word meaning “yoke” or “union”, and refers to the union of body, mind, and spirit. As such, yoga is not merely a physical exercise but also a philosophy of life and a way of living. This 5,000-year-old philosophy is outlined in the text, “8 Limbs of Yoga,” which describes each of the Limbs: attitude toward your environment (Yama), attitude toward yourself (Niyama), postures (Asanas), liberation of the mind from the senses (Pratyahara), concentration (Dharana), Meditation (Dhyana), and absorption (Samadhi). The practice of these 8 Limbs of Yoga leads to the ultimate goal of enlightenment and self-realization, whereby you achieve the union of body, mind and spirit.

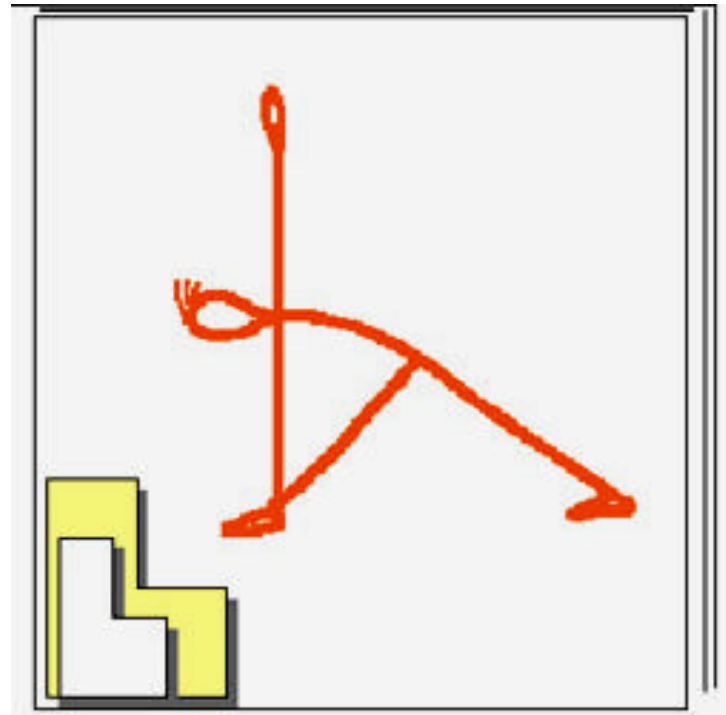
## TYPES OF YOGA

Yoga comes in many forms, which means you have a plethora of styles to choose from, based on your personal interests. Each of the various types of yoga focus on different modes of reaching the goal of enlightenment. Most of us in the West are more familiar with one or more forms of Hatha yoga, all of which focus on the practice of breathing exercises and physical postures (Asanas). Hatha yoga itself offers a wide range of options, ranging from Bikram yoga’s flowing set of 26 poses done in a room heated to 100-105 degrees to the passivity and restiveness of the longer-held (usually 5 minutes each) poses of Yin yoga.

You should select a class and a type of yoga that suits you and your body. I have found that I practice different styles of yoga, based on how I feel physically and mentally when I am ready to practice.

## EFFECTS OF YOGA PRACTICE

Regardless of the type of yoga you practice, you will reap similar benefits. As you move your body into the different postures of yoga, you will experience physical benefits in the form of increased strength, flexibility, relaxation, and energy. Focusing your practice on particular areas of the body that are tight or painful, helping them to relax and release tension. While little medical research has been done to confirm the benefits of yoga, every practitioner has stories of how yoga has benefited them, ranging from alleviating symptoms of arthritis to helping with back problems; from relieving chronic headaches to easing menstrual difficulties. Overall, it’s safe to say that for most people, yoga increases their sense of health and well-being.



## COMPONENTS OF YOGA PRACTICE

While every type or “school” of yoga is different, yoga itself is composed of a number of different components, and the various schools of yoga combine 2 or more of these components in their own way, to suit their specific focus. When developing your own personal practice, outside of the influence of a particular school, class, or instructor, you are free to experiment with these different components, to discover how best to incorporate them in your practice. It’s all about exploring, playing and deciding for yourself what feels good and achieves the results you desire. Below is list of yoga components:

*Asanas* are the physical postures, also called poses, that move the body in all different directions. The Asanas involve, and therefore help develop, flexibility, balance, strength, and good energy flow within the body. Types of Asanas include inversions, standing, setting, forward bending, backward bending, twisting, and supine postures. Every pose has a different physical (and also mental) affect, and can be modified to accommodate different levels of physical ability.



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**Pranayama** refers to the breathing exercises used to control (yama) the life energy (prana) within the body. For example, left nostril breathing creates a feeling of relaxation and peace, while right nostril breathing serves to energize and invigorate. When one practices alternate nostril breathing (inhale left, exhale right, inhale right, exhale left, and repeat cycle), the energies of the body are placed in balance. "Breath of Fire" focuses the energy at the navel point, through a rapid, rhythmic, bellows-like breath. This pranayama cleanses the blood, releasing toxins from the lungs, mucous lining, blood vessels, and cells.

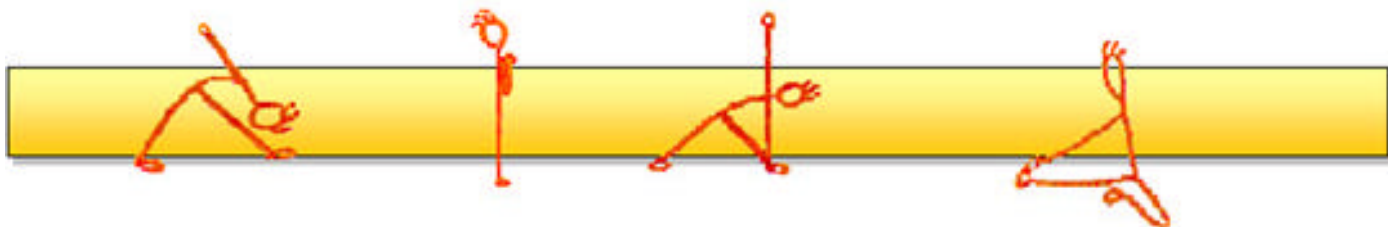
**Mudras** are hand positions that send messages to different parts of the body. They work by activating the nerves in the hands, which are associated with certain areas of the body and brain. Placing the tips of the thumb and forefinger together, in "Gyan Mudra," stimulates knowledge and ability, and is also known as the mudra of consciousness. "Buddhi Mudra," where the tips of the thumb and little finger are placed together, stimulates one's capacity to communicate intuitively and with clarity. "Prayer Pose (Pranam Mudra)" places the palms of the hands flat together in front of the chest, balancing the positive (male) and negative (female) sides of the body, creating a neutral state of mind.

**Mantras** (MAN = Mind and TRA = to tune the vibration) are sounds that affect the mind and consciousness, focusing the mind. A common mantra in Kundalini Yoga is the Sat Nam mantra, composed of the syllables SAT (truth) and NAM (identity), which translates to "truth is your identity" or "God's name is truth." Chanting this mantra reinforces your divine consciousness. The sounds of the Adi Mantra, ONG (the Creator) NAMO (reverent greetings) GURU (spiritual teacher) DEV (transparent) NAMO, serve to connect you with the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Teacher that resides within you. Physically, these sounds resonate within and activate the three chambers of the body (head, chest, and abdomen), which

contain the glands and organs governing body functions and blood chemistry.

**Meditation**, while not essential to a yoga practice, is a perfect complement to yoga. Through yoga you increase your ability to concentrate and relax, and these are precisely the qualities you need to begin a successful meditation practice. Meditation refers to a practice of contemplation of a religious or philosophical nature. This is a devotional exercise for the practitioner, the intention being to experience the interconnectedness, the union, of all living things. As with yoga itself, there are a variety of ways in which to meditate. One of the easier types of meditation asks you to concentrate on a particular object or point of focus. A candle, flower, or photo are all good points of focus. Visualization is another common form of meditation, and can be of a chosen deity, a natural object, or the charkas (physical energy centers). Focusing on the breathing for your meditation allows you to work on both Pranayama and Meditation at the same time. You focus on how the breath moves within the body, and the nuances it creates within the body, without judgment or attachment, simply noticing and being with the breath during your meditation. The recommended position for meditation is sitting upright in a simple cross-legged position, either on the floor or on a cushion.

**Relaxation** is an essential part of any yoga practice. At the end of a yoga practice, you should always give yourself at least five minutes of deep, complete relaxation. This period of relaxation allows you to simply be in harmony with your body and mind for a short period of time, without movement or thought. In this way, the body has the opportunity to absorb and integrate the effects of the physical work you did during your yoga practice. The ideal position for relaxation is in Shavasana, or Corpse



Pose, lying flat on your back, feet slightly apart, arms lying at your sides with palms up, with your eyes close. Breathing normally, clear the mind of thoughts and worries, and enjoy the delicious sensation of not having to do anything whatsoever for a few moments. If you have a silent, tranquil space for yoga, you may

## **RESOURCES**

Given the ever-growing popularity of yoga, resources for practicing yoga abound.

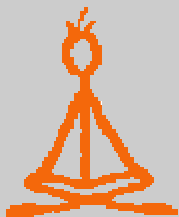
**Internet** - For most of us, as PCVs, the Internet is our main source of information. During my time in Ecuador, I've accessed a number of sites that I've found to be helpful and highly informative:

[www.yogajournal.com](http://www.yogajournal.com) is a site replete with articles, interviews, a good listing of Asanas with photos and strong descriptions, and Asana sequences for beginners and beyond. You can search for Asanas that target specific areas of the body, or specific physical conditions.

[www.yogasite.com](http://www.yogasite.com) is a good site for basic Asanas and descriptions, illustrated with cute but useful drawings. Also includes several Vinyasas, which are sequences of poses, forming a flow that works the body and breath.

[www.yogabasics.com](http://www.yogabasics.com) has a great listing of Asanas with photos and descriptions, Vinyasa sequences, a section on Pranayama that includes 7 specific Pranayama exercises and a section on Meditation. The downside for this site is that parts of it are only accessible to paying members.

### **Sit/Easy Position**



A starting position that helps focus awareness on breathing and the body; helps strengthen lower back and open the groin and hips.



Sit cross-legged with hands on knees. Focus on your breath. Keep your spine straight and push the sit bones down into the floor. Allow the knees to gently lower. If the knees rise above your hips, sit on a cushion or block. This will help support your back and hips. Take 5-10 slow, deep breaths. On the next inhale, raise your arms over your head. Exhale and bring your arms down slowly. Repeat 5-7 times.

<http://www.yogasite.com>

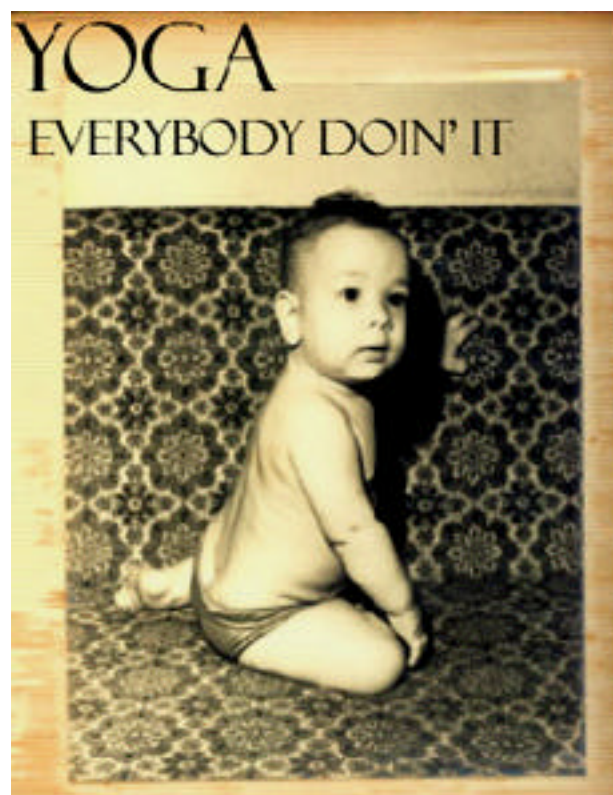
wish to bask in the silence during your relaxation. For those of us whose physical environments are rather more lively, playing soft music in the background can help enhance your relaxation.

### **KEYS TO A HEALTHY PRACTICE**

**Take it easy.** In other words, have patience with yourself, your practice, and your progress. You may not be able to do certain poses right away. In fact, some poses you may never be able to do. However, you CAN increase your flexibility over time. Just start where you are and work from there.

**It's NOT a competition.** Remember, every body is different, and people are flexible in different ways. The pretzel-person in the picture, or on the mat next to you, has a different body than yours. The mantra you should use to remind yourself of this, and to prevent injuries is "Do what you can do, don't do what you can't do."

**Be with yourself, fully present.** By focusing fully on what you are doing in your practice, and being in the moment, you will be able to feel your body and it's emotions, and allow them to guide you.





**Books** - If you prefer your information in comprehensive book form, I own the following books (plus a few more!), and have found them to have greatly enriched my practice:

How To Use Yoga, by Mira Mehta. A solid introduction to Iyengar yoga practice, with wonderful Asana photos and descriptions, a 10-week course sequence, and a section with yoga postures for specific physical issues (headaches, backaches, etc.)

Kundalini Yoga, by Shakta Kaur Khalsa. If you're looking for an introduction to Kundalini yoga, look no further. This book shows you how to structure your Kundalini practice, with beginning and intermediate Kriyas (posture sequences) and meditations for different purposes, as well as information on Pranayama, Mudra, Mantra and more. The photos and descriptions are easy to understand and follow.

Yin Yoga: Outline of a Quiet Practice, by Paul Grilley. A beautiful book for people looking for a practice that focuses on flexibility, through stretching the connective tissues that keep the joints healthy and prevent injury. The key is in holding the poses for longer periods of time, with the muscles relaxed. Lovely photos and posture descriptions, and 3 Sample Routines make this volume extremely useful.

Yoga: The Spirit and Practice of Moving Into Stillness, by Erich Schiffmann. When it comes to Hatha yoga, this book takes you through the what, why, and how of it all. In addition to several hundreds pages of Asana photos and descriptions, there are yoga routines for beginning, intermediate, and advanced students. For a taste of what this book has to offer, check out the author's website at [www.movingintostillness.com](http://www.movingintostillness.com).

**Videos** - If you have access to a VCR, videos can be a great guide to your personal practice. In my limited experience with yoga videos (I prefer live classes), Yoga Journal's Yoga Practice series is a wonderful way to go, delivering very balanced routines and descriptive instruction. Their titles include:

- Yoga Practice for Beginners
- Yoga Practice for Flexibility
- Yoga Practice for Strength
- Yoga Practice for Relaxation
- Yoga Practice for Intermediates

**Studios and Classes** - I'm able to recommend two yoga studios in Quito, both of which have well-trained and helpful instructors, and friendly student communities:

Eka Yoga – This is the place to go for Hatha yoga. They also offer Kundalini yoga. Individual classes cost \$4.50, and are taught Monday-Saturday. They are located at Avenida Republica del Salvador 995 y Naciones Unidas, in front of Metropolitan Touring. Contact them at [ekaunidad@hotmail.com](mailto:ekaunidad@hotmail.com) tel. 2230 539, cel, 09 8563 641.

Centro Kundalini Yoga – As the name implies, this center is dedicated to Kundalini Yoga. Individual classes cost \$3.00, and are taught Monday-Saturday. They are located at Tamayo N 24-518 y Cordero (close to Swiss Hotel). Contact them at 2555 716 or [kundaliniyogaquito@yahoo.com](mailto:kundaliniyogaquito@yahoo.com)

#### AUTHOR INFORMATION

I have been practicing yoga seriously for 5 years now. During this time, I have discovered the pleasure of various yoga styles, including Hatha, Vini, Yin, Iyengar, Kundalini, and Bikram's. It wasn't until I came to Ecuador as a PCV for the Youth and Families at Risk program, that I began teaching yoga. Teaching yoga is my way of sharing my passion for yoga with my community, as well as deepening my own practice. In this way, I've been teaching groups of women and seniors in Santo Domingo de Los Colorados, as well as to PCTs during the final training health fair. Last month, I began a Kundalini Teacher Training, which will end in October, resulting in an internationally-recognized teaching certificate. If you have any questions about yoga, please let me know. I can be contacted at [quitodancer@hotmail.com](mailto:quitodancer@hotmail.com) or (02) 2761 222.

# Animal Production: Amber Evanson Answers All...

Amber Evanson (O'91) w/ El Clima Staff

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Amber Evanson is an Animal Production volunteer in the northern province of Imbabura. Continuing the work begun by RPCV Angela Snell (O'87), Amber is participating in a successful, small-scale sausage production enterprise led by young indigenous women. In an attempt to disperse the technology, El Clima caught up with Amber to ask her a few questions....

## Please cite your specialty area and how you became involved in this project.

I have no specialty area...the only reason I am in the animal production program is because I raised sheep and rabbits in 4-H when I was 12. Most of my animal knowledge was gained during training. I became involved with this project when I replaced PCV Angela Snell (Animal Production; O'87). She did all the planning. I got there just in time to help start the implementation of the project. If all goes well, we will begin the second half of the project in August.

## Describe your community, touching on their culture and economic means briefly, as well as their motives for beginning the sausage project.

I live in San Francisco de la Rinconada. It is a mostly indigenous community about 15 minutes outside of Otavalo, Imbabura. The majority of the people are farmers and the main crop is corn. I asked the girls why they started the project and they said it was "*progresar, salir adelante, continuar de estudiar, aprender, inspirar y motivar a otros jovenes, tener confianza, ser responsables, ponerse independiente e ayudar a sus padres.*"

## Describe the execution of the sausage project from the beginning to its present state.

The sausage project began about a year ago when Angela Snell had a young girl's day camp in the community. Some of the girls decided that they wanted to continue meeting after the camp was over. Angela took one of the girls to an in-service training event where they learned about meat processing and sausage production. They came back to the group and decided to begin a business. Angela and the girls wrote some grants and once they were approved, began the series of *negocios exitosos charlas* with Cathy Fedak. Then they began looking for a place to rent in Otavalo where they could start the restaurant. They opened the restaurant a week before I got there and have since then begun selling sausage by the pound, *almuerzos, choripan, pinchos*, and banana bread. They are in the process of getting their health permit and finalizing plans for the second part of the project, which is the construction of a *chanchera* and a chicken coop to begin raising their own meat.

## Describe the gains and losses your community encountered through sales and implementation of the sausage product.

When I asked the girls what their gains and losses had been since the beginning of the project until now, they said that they had "gained cooking skills, *experiencia en hacer chorizos, saben como trabajar en grupo, tienen nuevos amigos, tienen mucho mas confianza en sus mismas, saben manejar su tiempo, han perdido la timidez y adquirido el valor.*" They couldn't think of any negative losses. They are very satisfied with the project and amazed at how far they have come. They say they are determined to fight for what they have achieved and to continue to move forward. Their only concerns are the group dynamics and personality differences between some of the girls. This happens in every group and I think they will be able to work through it and continue to progress and learn skills that will help them now and in the future.

## What are the materials (w/ approximate quantities and prices) necessary to make a typical batch of sausages?

The basic materials needed for making sausage are:

- Meat grinder-used \$450 (I have heard that you can make them by chopping up the meat with a knife but it is not as attractive and is a lot more labor intensive)
- A large funnel-\$2. The meat grinders have attachments to *embutir* ("to stuff or pack tight") but we haven't bought them and the funnel works just fine.
- And a campo oven.
- The raw materials are meat (we use pork), potatoes, intestines (natural or artificial), and any spices you want to add for flavor.

Our recipe is for approximately 5 pounds of sausage. We use 4.5 pounds of fresh pork. Pork is always sold with the bone and so we buy 5 pounds and de-bone it, leaving us with approximately 4.5 pounds of meat. Pork is generally \$1 per pound. After de-boning the pork, we use the bone for our pea soup and put the meat in the refrigerator to chill. Meat grinds better if it is cold, otherwise it ends up looking like a pasty glob of shredded meat and doesn't fill out the sausages well. While the meat is chilling, we get the other ingredients ready. The ingredients needed depend on your personal taste or the tastes of your customers. Our basic ingredients include onions, garlic, and peppers. All together they total less than \$0.50. The spices depend on taste, but there are two ingredients that I recommend no matter what else you put in the sausage: Shredded potato and a small amount of vinegar. The starch in the potato (we use one medium sized potato for 5 pounds of sausage) helps to hold everything together inside the intestine. The vinegar helps to preserve the sausage and give it a longer life. Once all the ingredients are ready, mix them with the ground meat and you are ready to *embutir*.

We use natural pig intestines for our sausage. First you need to turn them inside out and make sure they are very clean. Next attach the funnel to one end of the intestine and push the meat through the funnel so it fills the intestine. When the intestine is full, tie the end with string and tie off the sausages so they are equal lengths. Now you have a string of sausages. We bake our sausages...it is safer and more sanitary. It also shrinks the intestines and they hold the meat in better. We put the sausages in a pan with water and bake them in a campo oven for about an hour. Then you can fry them, boil them, grill them...*lo que desees*.

**Is prior training necessary? Is it terribly skilled labor?**

I would recommend seeing the process done before starting the whole project by yourself, but it is not very hard and doesn't take much skill. I would say any community can make sausages, but if it is going to be more than just a skill building workshop and they actually want sell the sausage I would recommend that they be near a larger city. Sausage is not the cheapest meat around and the clientele is more likely to be a bit wealthier and you don't find that much in the campo.

**Please add any suggestions or important remarks you might like to make for someone implementing this project.**

The most important thing aside from having the skills to make this project work is marketing. A lot of Ecuadorians don't know what sausage is...they know hot dogs. Be sure to have enough money to promote your product and get the word out. Everyone who has tried the sausages (and is not a vegetarian) has said that they really liked them and continues to come back to buy more.

***Small Business Development in Ecuador***

—Cathy Fedak

*Did you know that in Ecuador 34 percent of the economically active population is self-employed and small businesses contribute approximately 15 percent of the GNP? This, combined with increased poverty and the strong interest for improving one's economic situation, continues to provide numerous opportunities for volunteers to introduce small business development and income-generating programs at the community and family level.*

There is a variety of Small Business support available to volunteers. These include:

- Six complete, packaged, easy to give, easy to understand **Small Business Charlas** available to you on the themes of Feasibility Study, Organization, Production, Bookkeeping, Marketing and Leadership.
- An **“Income Generation Manual”** which is a great resource on current and past income generating projects done by PCVs. The manual also includes other relevant business information.
- A **web page** for promoting educational and income generating projects in communities throughout Ecuador. Check out the web site at [www.projectsforpeace.org](http://www.projectsforpeace.org).
- **Community Banking** CDs and Videos (in Spanish and English) explaining the PAC community banking program. Regional PAC training seminars are currently being planned also.
- A **“Small Business Working Group”** made up of PC/E staff and volunteers who work on business program and material development.
- Also, **Cathy Fedak**, a small business development volunteer, can work with you and your community on business issues, give business *charlas* to community groups, help locate resource material, guide you in regards to funding and more.

*If you are interested in any materials, business help or participating on the web page, contact Cathy Fedak at [cfedak@ec.peacecorps.gov](mailto:cfedak@ec.peacecorps.gov).*

*The six business charlas “Negocios Exitosos” and the “Income generation Manual” are also available on the volunteer computers under Volunteer Files - @files – Income Generation. Û*



**“Ode To My Nalgene Bottle”**

— RPCV Debi Kerner (O'86)

<i>Oh Nalgene bottle</i>	<i>Always by my side</i>	
<i>Oh Nalgene bottle</i>	<i>To help me through my day</i>	
<i>How lovely you are</i>	<i>You give me strength</i>	
	<i>You give me energy</i>	<i>Oh Nalgene bottle</i>
	<i>And if I accidentally drop you</i>	<i>Oh Nalgene bottle</i>
	<i>You never break</i>	<i>How lovely you are</i>



# commentary & observation

## Some good months ahead for Ecu-PCVs, according to the Stars...

—Matt Smith (O'89)



PCV (and Sage) Matt Smith, pondering the secrets to life's mysterycitos.

What does it matter that no one may see you for an awfully long time? Time is not what matters. Become a sun, and then everyone will see you. A sun must first and foremost be a sun.

*Crime and Punishment*  
-Dostoyevsky

### **Aries:** (March 21-April 19)

Despite your many valid points on how gender roles prevent half of the population from fully contributing to the betterment of society, you will never be taken seriously as long as you keep calling yourself a masculinist.

### **Taurus:** (April 20-May 20)

You will try to console yourself with the old volunteer's tale that uncontrollable diarrhea never strikes twice in the same pants, only to remember that you were sleeping in the nude.

### **Gemini:** (May 21-June 21)

Although heterosexual, going to the Gay Pride Parade will give you a few official days out of your site and give the members of your community an easy "answer-all" to all of your strange behavior.

### **Cancer:** (June 22-July 22)

In your two years of Peace Corps service, you will accomplish a lot ... of reading.

### **Leo:** (July 23-Aug.22)

Do not lose faith in a higher power simply because it has not yet revealed itself to you. It just might take an extremely long period of time to formulate a satisfactorily thorough yet easy to understand answer to your incredibly abstract question of "why?"

### **Virgo:** (Aug. 23-Sept.22)

The feeling that you had during adolescence that nobody truly understands you will make an ugly comeback as you repeatedly scream "PILS-E-NER!" at the old woman in the tienda.

### **Libra:** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

Despite the fact that *you* know violence is not the answer, the person whom you piss off with your holier-than-thou diatribe will have no such notions.

### **Scorpio:** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

You will know that you have successfully integrated into your site when you overcome a major, ethical dilemma with the justification, "Si hay hierba en el campo, juega pelota." But, then again, it was never that much of a dilemma, now was it?

### **Sagittarius:** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You will come to the conclusion that the only role your counterpart serves is that of an excuse as to why you are getting nothing done in your site.

### **Capricorn:** (Dec. 22-Jan.19)

You will find yourself looking forward to COSing so that you can once again be tolerant and open-minded to other cultures now that you will no longer be living in one of them.

### **Aquarius:** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

The stars would love to tell you the future, but they cannot wait to see the expression on your face when ... well, you will find out soon enough.

### **Pisces:** (Feb. 19-March 20)

After pondering many theories as to exactly what is wrong with them, you will wisely begin asking, "What is wrong with *me*?" After all, it is not likely that there is a community-wide conspiracy to insure that all of your project ideas fail miserably, now is it?

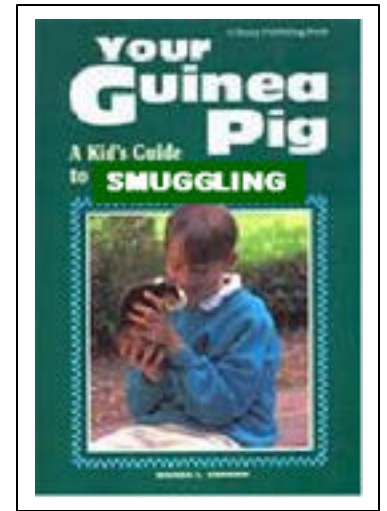


## Cuy Smuggling — Matt Koerner (O'91)

One Saturday I found myself in the Cuenca bus station waiting for the 10 pm night bus to Ambato. Charlie's Angels was on the TV in Spanish but I wasn't complaining. Bill Murray, what a hottie! Next to me, snoring away was my community contact, a.k.a. "business opportunity mastermind." At the end of the six-hour bus ride ahead there is a trunk of benjamins waiting for our community and it's all legal (I hope!). The gist: cuyes big and strong cost from \$3 - \$5 depending on their age in Ambato. In Cuenca, prices range from \$8 - \$10. My contact's plan: Buy 120 cuyes, wait till they get huge and then sell them on behalf of the community

association. A lot of people have the same idea and they are all swimming in the "bling bling" because, for some reason, the price never rises in Ambato and never falls in Cuenca. Now, I am not an economics genius but this seems like easy money to me. The only cost is the roller coaster bus ride sitting next to a smelly fatty that keeps drooling on my shoulder and burping in my . . . Sorry, back to the scam. There hasn't been a better chance to double your money since the chain letter or the pyramid scheme! The trick is finding a place that will sell lots of cuyes for the lowest price in Ambato. I could tell you about a few places but my contact, a.k.a. Cash Money Millionaire, might have some cement *zapatos* for me if I do. *Entonces*, for all you people in

the Dirty South into Bentleys and Rolexes, I suggest you make a trip North for some cuy smuggling of your own. My community wants to build a nightclub and community for the campo so I believe that someone will make this trip at least once a month. If you see me late night on the bus to Ambato with my counterpart (wearing Phat Farm, sunglasses and gold on his fingers and around his neck) just walk on by and keep it on the down low.



## Gay Volunteers Form "Straight-Only Support Group"

--Sean Kulkarni (O'88)

Several gay Peace Corps volunteers, decidedly fed up with the ever-increasing presence of heterosexual volunteers at the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender outreach meetings, are banding to form a "straight-only support group" in hopes of re-establishing their authentic membership base. Said Lance Bishop, founder of the gay outreach network and now the leading advocate for an exclusively straight group, "At first we were thrilled to see a few of the straight volunteers attending, eager to share their perspectives and offer their support. But now it's just getting out of hand. They come in droves, dressed in their tightest outfits and humming Indigo Girls tunes, just plying us for fashion advice. It's really overbearing. Some perhaps do gain strength from our group and are

sincere in their intentions. But I can't help but sense that some are just in it to mold their burgeoning metro-sexuality, others as a way to overtly publicize their political correctness, and others, fearing a lack of something edgy and distinct to present to the outside world, just see it as a bonus on their résumé. For example, when we go out to a gay club, it literally becomes a straight club, with all of these volunteers here for 'support.' They start drinking and trying to house members of our group on the dance floor, and those of us who are genuinely gay feel very awkward and begin to think, 'so how did *this* happen?'

So we decided to charter a 'straight-only support group,' anticipating that most heterosexual volunteers will find

the idea so antiquated, chauvinistic and morally repugnant that they would just stay home and let us do our thing."



Do you Want these thumbs where I do?

# A House Caught Fire

-Lupe Staigers (O'89)

*community is better.....*

I am sitting in my site, a *tranquilo* town in Northern Ecuador. Not much happens here, until today. As I am sitting reading the latest novel I hear yelling. “¡Traigan las mangueras! ¡Traigan las mangueras!” I hear little kids shouting and wonder if maybe they are just playing. Is there a holiday that I missed? I wait and in a few more minutes, four adults come running through the yard, carrying buckets running for the *lavandería*. “Traigan agua. ¡Está quemando!” , they shout as they run past me in a panic. I am confused for a second at the chaos, until my landlord tells me, “Está quemando una casa, vaya a coger agua.” And then I know; this is not just a game for a holiday that I overlooked. A house is burning down. Fire trucks are not going to come roaring in to save the day. I hear no sirens and for a moment I wonder, what is going to happen? All of the houses in this town are side by side on one main road. How many will burn before it is put out?

I run outside with my trash can full of water and look at the scene down the hill. There is a crowd of people, all trying to help put out the fire. The hoses that people were shouting for have all been hooked up together and run from the *lavanderías* of the neighbors to the burning house, where men are trying to douse the flames as best they can. Also, leaning against the house are ladders leading up to the windows of the top floor, which seems to be where the fire started. Assembly lines have been formed so that water can be passed up the ladder, into the house, onto the fire. Everyone brings water in buckets, and even in small pots, to help put out the flames. Then they run to get more. It is not just the men that are helping with the hoses, but kids as well as old people running to contribute

what they can. The smoke slowly begins to fade and the damage is starting to become apparent.

The bottom floorboards of the second floor have charred and dropped to the ground below. The burnt mattress is flung out of the window, followed by blackened hand knitted blankets and sheets. Next, pile after pile of clothes, first burned, then soaked through with water, get thrown out of the house as well. The fire is out, but I can now see how much this family has lost. And unlike in the United States, I am sure that insurance is not going to cover these losses.

However, as I stood there, taking this all in, I was not watching the fire as much as I was watching the people work together. It reminded me of one of the things I have always respected about Latin American culture. There is a strong sense of community here in Ecuador and in most small towns throughout Latin America. Sure, there are also lots of problems because of this small town atmosphere, but nevertheless, the community remains.

What exactly is this community you ask? To me it is a number of things, simple things. For example, when I need a hammer (or any other random object I may have forgotten to buy when I first moved here) I can go to my neighbors and ask to borrow theirs for the day. If they don't have what I am looking for they tell me who does, so that I can go ask them. Also, I really appreciate just being able to drop in on someone for a visit and I am always welcomed. People do it all the time here. Finally, one of the things that never fails to get my attention as far as the community is concerned is the town *baile*.

Yes, the *baile*. I know I have overheard many people complain about the *technocumbia*, the non-stop *campo* shuffle, and of course, the drunks. But have you ever looked at who goes to these? It is amazing to see how people of all ages go to these dances. There are not only the littlest kids, but teenagers, their parents, and even their grandparents, all dancing and having fun. Most teenagers in the United States would not be caught dead dancing anywhere near their parents, especially not in public, which brings me to my point I guess.

In the United States I feel that in many ways we have lost this sense of community and sharing that is here in these small Latin American *pueblos*. As suburbs expand and small towns fade into the past, so does our sense of community. In the United States, I don't know my neighbors and I don't really care that I don't. If I need something, I go buy it. I always call before I stop by to make sure that it is okay. I wouldn't want to impose. And most of us have probably never been out dancing with our parents; probably never will (weddings don't count).

As our sense of community in the United States starts to dwindle, I am going to make sure to enjoy it while I am here. Even if my appreciation only comes in rare moments like these, when I am watching the people work together for a common cause. I will not have this community when I get back to the cities of the United States, where people keep their distance. So, here in Ecuador, I have learned to appreciate my community.

*Starsky and Hutch say:*



*“Be yourself... that’s what’s really cool.”*

# Former WID/GAD Committee Adopts Yet Another Name Change

—Sean Kulkarni (O'88)

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Creating even larger headaches for the office, confusion on the part of committee members, and outright disbelief on the part of volunteers, the committee originally founded as WID/GAD registered their seventh name change in just the last five weeks. The first change was from WID/GAD to just plain GAD, reflecting a streamlining approach and an attempt to incorporate a more equal emphasis on the male and female components of gender. Then within days, the committee assembled in Quito and voted for another name change, this time to GID, or Gender In Development. “What GAD says to me,” announced Co-Chair Caitlin Gerdts, “is that gender is an issue we address on the one hand, and development is our strategy on the other hand. But really, gender and development are not two separate entities, as the name Gender *and* Development suggests. Rather, our objective is to strengthen the notion of gender as an indispensable component residing within the realm of what the United Nations defines as development. Thus I feel that GID, or Gender *in* Development, is a far more appropriate title and will represent us better.”

Then in what became known in the P.C. office as the committee’s Britney Spears moment, the new name was declared null and void roughly the same time frame as the pop star’s January nuptials. Members of the committee, already back in their sites, made yet another trip to Quito and voted to change the name to “GSID,” or Gender & Sex in Development. Gerdts piped up again,

“By exclusively relying on the word Gender in our title, our committee runs the risk of implying that we believe that gender and sex are one and the same, which they are not. The former, of course, is a biological trait, whereas the latter is a broader term reflecting the social connotations of who we are as people in a community.”

Exhausted by the changes, GSID committee members thought they were finished. Yet within a week, again they were all sent e-mails suggesting that another change might soon be on the horizon. This e-mail did not originate at the top of the group’s highly touted organizational pyramid, however, but rather came from the deputy ranking assistant member for Subcommittee 3-F to the General Committee. The member wrote, “Hey guys, how do we even pronounce GSID? The only pronunciation I can think of makes it sound as though somebody just emptied their seminal fluid, and that’s not an image we want to project. I suggest we change our name to G-SIDE, or Gender & Sex in Development in Ecuador.” The change was unanimously approved through the committee’s private E-Decision channel, a revolutionary concept where every member e-mails what they think to one or both of the co-chairs, who then tally the votes and announce the results through a mass e-mail to the committee. CC’d to Ruben and Michael. Then only days later, yet another member complained, “This new name might have the right idea, but it just contains too many articles. Saying

“and,” then “in” not just once, but twice in the name. Can’t we come up with something smoother?”

The name shenanigans continued until one volunteer, proud to be completely removed from what she labeled almost derisively as “the “WID/GAD scene,” suggested a new and final name that best captured the essence of the committee and won wide acclaim from the rest of volunteers. The acronym, “PWTWTS,” stands for People Who Take Themselves Way Too Seriously, and was approved by Ruben Hernandez. Reached in her site for comment, the volunteer who suggested the final name, Alysia Ross, said casually over a cigarette, “Dude just look at who’s on that committee! I mean, I get chills just thinking about being in the same room as all of them! People just need to chill out some times, that’s all I’m saying.”

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They’ll take suggestion  
as a cat laps milk.

-Shakespeare  
*The Tempest*



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## *An Unforgettable Journey into the Heart of Morona-Santiago* —Andre Villasenor (O’89)



The Amazon rainforest is in danger of extinction. The world’s epicenter of biodiversity and oxygen generation is at great risk due to the breakneck speed of new cattle ranches, roads, logging and oil drilling. Having recently returned from an incredible journey deep into the heart of Morona-Santiago, I came to this realization after comparing that part of the Amazon with Zamora-Chichipe, where I live. In order to reach our destination San Jose de Morona, my counterpart’s son and I traveled for 26 hours on a narrow dirt road, into the heart of Shuar Indigenous territory. There we saw mile after mile of unspoiled virgin rainforest, waterfalls, rivers, and traditional Shuar huts, with thatched roofs. As we made our way out of the transitional mountainous zone, into the actual Amazon Basin, my breath was taken away by the view of the rainforest laid out before me. All I could see for thousands of miles was a sea of unspoiled virgin rainforest, just like in the movies! But my intuition warned me of the fragile nature of this vast expanse. Something in me said, “This won’t be around for much longer!” Something that logging companies and oil corporations would be licking their lips at if they could see it, just dying to decimate one of the world’s last remaining hotspots, all in their heated worship of the almighty dollar bill.

We spent 3 days in the tiny village of San Jose de Morona at the very end of an Amazon “highway” in Eastern Ecuador. The highway into San Jose de

Morona was built only 10 years ago, but “progress” in the area is making inroads quickly. Colonies are arriving fast; they are clearing thousands of hectares of rainforest and replacing it with cow pastures and crop plantations. And, of course, the Christian Evangelists and Catholics have successfully “saved” the Shuar Indigenous tribes by installing a myriad of churches in the area, ensuring that the Shuars’ original culture and religious tradition remain

*“the Ecuadorian government is currently working on a long-term plan with Brazil and Peru to install a massive network of highways that will link the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific...”*

forever extinct. The vast majority of the inhabitants in this part of the Amazon, use the many tributaries to canoe their way back and forth, and many of the Shuars in the river-access-only villages still lead semi-traditional indigenous lives. No one has electricity, and everyone obtains their water from underground wells and the rivers. There is still plenty of virgin rainforest left here. My friend and I stayed in the village’s only hotel, a \$3.00/night joint, which featured monkey, wild rodents, and armadillo on the menu. The hotel owner mentioned that years ago a

Peace Corps Volunteer had served in the village. By day, we travelled through virgin rainforest, where we saw a huge *laguna* with crocodiles, toucans and many other wild birds and monkeys in the trees. We saw the monkeys hopping around in the branches and as we walked along they would peer down at us with curiosity. We also saw startlingly huge trees, hundreds of years old, with trunks and roots that would stretch out for several hundred feet. On our way back home, as we crossed a large Amazonian tributary by boat, we came across a Shuar village, where the inhabitants walked around with their mascots, which included two species of monkeys, parrots, toucans, and other animals of interest. Of course, they were also illegally selling wild animals and their meat.

During our stay, many locals told us that they want more highways in the area, so that they can install more cattle ranches and banana plantations. And the Ecuadorian government is currently working on a long-term plan with Brazil and Peru to install a massive network of highways that will link the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific, in order to facilitate the cattle trade, oil drilling, mining, and the construction of cities. And that will be the beginning of the end for the planet’s only Amazon Rainforest.

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# El Regreso

—Carol Badran

An RPCV returns to Ecuador with Crisis Corps

April 19<sup>th</sup> 2004. Today I officially began my assignment with INNFA, which is located in the center of old Quito and not far from the government buildings. There has been a call from a political party for President Lucio Gutierrez to step down, so when we go for lunch there is an inordinate number of police around. There is also a feeling in the air that something will happen, most likely while I am here during these six months. What it will be and where I will be when it happens, I have yet to learn. However, a lesson learned from my former PCV days is that if I am anywhere near tear gas I need to cover my face, preferably with a wet cloth. Inhaling tear gas is no fun and the effects can last for hours. The memory lasts years.

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One of the great things about being a PCV is that many of our memories don't just last for years but for a lifetime. To take two years of one's life and completely change one's surroundings and live in a radically different way isn't for everyone. But for those of us who do it and are able to make the adjustments, the benefits, in addition to the memories, are invaluable.

It has been half a lifetime and I've come full circle...back to Ecuador, the country that changed the course of my life in so many ways as a PCV 25 years ago. So much has changed... or has it? Is it just the face of things that have changed? Somehow I am coming to believe that, after all these years, Ecuador is still the same at its core. The spirit of its people remains intact.

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Being back here, this time as a Crisis Corps Volunteer, feels so right, in spite of the tremendous amounts of

exhaust, the seriously insane driving and the inequities I observe constantly all around me. In some ways it feels as if Ecuador has stood still in the quarter century since I first arrived. Yet, in addition to the Burger Kings, I see Cinnabon and Baskin Robbins everywhere.

Somehow in the midst of the questionable progress and lack of progress Ecuador survives. I am delighted when I go to the market to see the wonderful *artesanía* and the new art forms the *indigenas* have expanded to create, while maintaining their more traditional arts as well. However, I am disappointed when I see "Ecuador" written on just about everything. Of course it's from Ecuador...isn't that obvious simply by what it is and how it is made? But I guess for many tourists who stop here along their way to or from wherever, it is just one more country with some nice things. So having the name written directly on it helps them remember where it came from. Sad to me...

Ecuador is such a special place. I have been to many countries since my initial arrival here, but few can come close to the diversity of this country. Having lived on the coast in Esmeraldas my first time around I am well aware of just how diverse it can be from one province to another. This time I am in Quito, which has become much more diverse as well since my days as a PCV.

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As I walk to the Peace Corps office on my first Monday morning I am struck by how different my walk is from when I came in on the weekend. *Calle Brazil* is packed with vehicles, so many that as I get closer to *Avenida America* I find myself walking much faster than



the vehicles are moving. Of course this gives me a bit of satisfaction that I'm doing the "right thing." But at the same time I fear I am breathing in so much of the thick black exhaust that surrounds me that, what would normally be a healthy activity is actually probably something I shouldn't be doing. I could get in a vehicle and risk my life that way. Which is best, or worst?

Something that has always struck me about Ecuador, and I assume it is the same in most of the developing world, is the role of modern technology. When I was here before, I occasionally saw people in my community with nice stereo systems. The irony to me, however, was that they had this great system but didn't know how to take care of their records. The result was that you could clearly hear all of the scratches while they played. Yet the people were happy, as long as they could hear the music. The music was what *really* counted. I guess what struck me were the gaps in the development of technology. Things would arrive here for those who could afford them, but there was no "in-between" process of learning the in's and out's of whatever it was. Today I am surprised to see so many people with cell phones. I didn't even have one in the states, so they are way ahead of me with that technology!

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My task during my six months here is to assist INNFA in developing a national HIV prevention education strategy for youth. This is interesting to me as I began working in HIV/AIDS in San Francisco in 1984. Although that was 20 years ago, in some ways I feel that Ecuador is just now arriving at where San Francisco was related to HIV 20 years ago, so this feels like a perfect

match. From what I have learned so far, the numbers aren't too bad yet, but I fear for this wonderful country. The lack of information and motivation to practice safer sex could allow the number of HIV infections to spiral out of control.

During my whirlwind orientation I was told about a survey done here four or five years ago where people were asked what they thought SIDA meant. Over 30% responded that they thought it was the name of a song to dance to. Even today in the paper there are stories about rural communities where people don't believe AIDS exists. Learning these things makes me feel like I really have my work cut out for me.

At the same time, I have heard a few success stories, such as what was done with sex workers in Machala. FEDAEPS, a progressive AIDS organization, worked with them over time on issues of self-esteem, values, and appreciating their bodies. As a result, these workers will no longer

have sex without a condom, no matter how much a customer is willing to pay them to not use one.

Last year a total of 800 cases of HIV/AIDS were reported to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Public Health. However, there is no good surveillance system in place and estimates of how many are infected go as high as 45,000. Those who learn they are infected have no motivation to self-report to the Ministry because there isn't anything available to them, like affordable treatments, support groups, health care, etc. Another issue that prevents people from self-reporting their positive HIV status is questionable confidentiality measures. So at this point people infected with HIV have more to lose than to gain by sharing their status.

Yes, my task seems large, but at the same time I have been impressed in the short time I have been back with what I have learned about what other PCVs are doing related to HIV, gender and other

issues. I will be here in Quito until mid-October and would be more than happy to talk with anyone about what they're doing related to HIV, youth or other health issues. I would love to brainstorm with any of you if you ever feel "stuck" or frustrated in any of these areas. (I would also be happy to talk with anyone about anything else, as well!) I am back here to share anything and everything I can. I know I can't stop globalization and its negative impact on Ecuador, nor can I do anything to change the driving habits of the people or the exhaust that I must continually breathe. But HIV/AIDS has been my issue of focus for so long, along with youth, and Ecuador is a country with a very special place in my heart. So I hope to combine my passions and experience to help move Ecuador to a safer place related to HIV.

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## travel :



Girls will be girls. And girls will wander. A small expedition of Omnibus 88 madams recently trekked through the mountains of Peru towards Machu Picchu and a greater understanding of their own mysterious, ancient and obstinate femininity. The group included Betty Blacklow, Catalina Gerdts, Tine Bix, Sam Brenner, Vegas Wilson, Angelina Sue and Mols

Fleck. The girls spent about US\$ 300 on a flight to Lima and another US\$ 300 on the four-day hike to the ancient Incan ruin (including: transportation to and from Cusco, park entrance, food, guide and tenting). The girls report that SAS Tours runs an excellent trip. Their guide, Jose Luis, or J-Lu, was knowledgeable, laid back and not at all intrusive.

## Wild Women, Ancient Ruins

"He would disappear every night with some barbiturates and a donkey and we wouldn't see him until morning." To get in touch with SAS Tours, one should first contact Catalina Gerdts, she reportedly knows a great deal about everything. The hike is not easy, Miss Fleck relates. "It is a treacherous pass. And I felt less air... I haven't been that lightheaded since college." Indeed, the girls have the following suggestions for anyone interested in making the trip:

### Spend about 3 days in Cusco acclimating...

#### Things to do while you wait:

- Buy coca
- Run a tid bit
- Dance at Israeli line-dancing club till 3 am
- Eat at Jack's Pisco Sours at Los Perros

#### Things to do on the trail:

- Drink coca
- Suck coca
- Sing show tunes
- Dig Peru

#### Things to do afterwards:

- Buy coca
- Get a full frontal massage from Jesus.

#### A Highlight:

"We got [to Machu Picchu] at dawn as the clouds receded...the sun was shooting through the nubes onto the jaded mountains, we sat in awe as the sacred city became clear

#### On Paganism:

"The Incan spirits showed themselves in the rocks and sun towers. Love, work, worship. The Incan belief system is impressive:  
Serpent=wisdom.  
Puma=power.  
Condor=spirit."

*Pics from the Peru trip...*



PCV Angie Hunter riding ass-backwards.



We should die  
of that roar which lies  
on the other side of  
silence.

-George Eliot  
*Middlemarch*

*Uncanny similarities between two El Clima  
staffers inspired the following spontaneous  
dialogue...*

Daniel Lapidus  
Age: 26

Hometown: Reston, VA  
Education: University of Virginia  
Occupation: Peace Corps Volunteer

Daniel De Deo  
Age: 23

Hometown: Reston, VA  
Education: University of Virginia  
Occupation: Peace Corps Volunteer



DL: Why are you following me?  
DD: Perhaps you should ask yourself that question?  
DL: Leave me alone.  
DD: You've made mistakes Danno, I'm a prototype sent back from the future to correct them.  
DL: Impossible, I'm flawless.  
DD: Remember Jenny Addie? Girl you always wanted to kiss on the playground but never had the gumption.  
DL: Yeah, so what droid?

DD: Her little sister was my 1<sup>st</sup> grade love slave.  
DL: Whatever, that was a long time ago.  
DD: And in college, you always wanted to blow off class entirely and stagnate in leisure.  
DL: Yeah and I did. Just like that.  
DD: Not like I did amigo. I was a motionless wit.  
DL: You're short.  
DD: Your days are numbered. Soon I will overtake you.

DL: I can make you disappear. I wrestled in high school.  
DD: As did I.  
DL: I am stronger. Also I mask pretension better than you.  
DD: It is true. I am not ready for outright confrontation and struggle. But one day...  
DL: Get lost drone, I'm a unique individual.  
DD: We shall see.



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# The Workingman's guide to Guayas

--Daniel DeDeo (O'90)

*The first in a series of articles on the province....*

Traveling down the coast of Ecuador- if one has the good fortune to find themselves in such a predicament- one might begin to notice a verve in the landscape that surrounds them and start to experience a certain wistfulness or lightness of thought. The highway steals closer and closer to the coast until it is flush with the Pacific, fishermen, shrimp farmers and the occasional transvestite scurry along the roadside and it becomes pleasantly apparent that you have reached the province of Guayas. The province is home to the country's financial and commercial center as well some of its most popular beach resorts. Although it is well known, Guayas is often seen merely as the sum total of these parts- in the same way Pichincha is nothing more to many of us than the territory surrounding Quito and the namesake of Banco de Pichincha- the petulant custodian of our poverty. But Guayas is a great deal more than a big city and a few beach towns and it begs to be described as such.

So, I submit to you, the inquisitive and discerning Cuerpo readership, the first in a series of articles that attempt to lay a finger over the proverbial pulse of this hot, hot region. I will avoid generalizing about the province and the people of Guayas. Despite its simplicity and startling effectiveness, generalization is an unpopular endeavor except in those cases where a subject is fortunate in all things socio-economic or has been denounced universally as the root of all evil. Examples might include soccer moms and Fascism. This essay will touch on neither but will observe the example. More dangerous even still are conclusions- they will be avoided entirely. Rather, I wish only to describe the social topography of one province. The various ways in which the working men and women of Guayas get up and get down day in and day out.

Before we can move on to engaging scenes of coastal life in Guayas, we have to dispense with the urban realities of Guayaquil. Follow the Guayas River in from the coast long enough and you will drift into the Forbidden City. Guayaquil is a sprawling old commercial port town infused with the money, infrastructure and attitude of a financial capital. It is a collection of wide avenues lined with boxy, severe architecture, punctuated by lazy lunch counters and unkempt newsstands. My knowledge of the city is not intimate of course. Everything I know of Guayaquil is second-hand or has been deduced from fleeting sidelong observations made as I was whisked through the city in taxis *en route* to the airport or bus terminal. Now taxis in Guayaquil, and all over Guayas for that matter, are gutted, meter-less animals that sound like go-karts and leave one smelling like a lawnmower; but the taxi drivers are extraordinarily accommodating. With any reason to suspect that you are just passing through, a Guayaquil driver will try to engage you in one of the city's favorite leisurely pursuits: "Would the gentleman not care to stroll among the pond lilies and wild orchids of the *malecon*?" "Would the gentleman not care to visit one of our numerous, expansive malls?"

The malls and boardwalk of Guayaquil are indeed impressive if one digs on such things. In fact, the boardwalk is impressive even if for some reason you do not dig on boardwalks. One hears stories of idyllic, manicured ponds and gardens; restaurants; flags; statues; a confusing, semi-erotic, limestone effigy of Mephistopheles and a maiden; a drooling pewter warthog gifted to the city many years ago by the Chinese mission; an Imax; and an art house theatre. All of which, it is said, conspire to make the *malecon* a genuine cultural experience. Although the same cannot and will not be said of the malls they are easily the most popular attractions in the city and are impressive if only for their size and stature and the precision with which they respond to the palpable popular demand. That malls are much loved by urban folk in Guayas is undeniable. Especially malls of the absurdly high-end variety in Guayaquil, where only the exceedingly wealthy could possibly shop regularly but where much of the city nonetheless wanders on the weekends, people watching and sharing three-liters in the food court. The malls offer an escape; a well air-conditioned oasis of *haute couture* for the consumer and the would-be-consumer. A place to wear your best clothes, look cool and feel, if only for a few hours, as if you are part of the whole parade. Of course, there are those among the crowds who really are part of the parade. They stride about, dressed as if the queue at Burger King were the waiting line for a runway in Milan or a casino in Dubai. These walking high priests and priestesses of fashion are not shunned or scoffed at, far from it. Envy and loathing are more often laterally oriented feelings and the presence of the absurdly wealthy among the absurdly high-end does little more than lend the whole strange scene a bit of authenticity.

Where then is the real Guayaquil? Where are the dodgy old boat captains with stories of tenacious but ultimately bested Peruvian gun ships, the ancient chop houses and fish markets, the lacquer and leather haunts of banking barons or any other vestige indicative of the city's great importance as a port town since at least the time Spanish settlement? Given my limited knowledge of the city itself, it would be careless to say such things are not out there, I will only say that they hide themselves well. I can, however, pass along a story I heard from a good friend. A leisure traveler of the most inquisitive kind, this gentleman found himself, as is quite common, at the behest of his taxi driver: "Thou must be thirsty from all of this heat," the driver began. "How does a gin and tonic or a cold pilsner appear to thee? I know a very old bar near the *malecon* thou wilt surely enjoy." Our leisure traveler was thus carried off to a side street immediately perpendicular to the *malecon* where he was left in front of what appeared to be a small bar although it bore no sign or advertisement.

Inside, the place was intimate and seemed as if it had been artfully carved out of the old building it occupied. The walls were covered in framed sepia photographs of tiny fishing skiffs, gigantic cargo ships, hot air balloons and men in three-piece suits smoking cigars. All sorts of people wandered around the dimly lit bar: students, businessmen, cross-dressers and wiry old professors. It was early in the evening and there was only quiet Cuban jazz in the background but

*“Thou must be thirsty from all of this heat,’ the driver began. ‘How does a gin and tonic or a cold pilsner appear to thee?’”*

numerous people were dancing and almost everyone appeared strangely engaged for the hour. An art professor from a city university sat at the bar carrying on about how Guayasamin was a talented copycat at best and sold his paintings for prices unbecoming of such a strident socialist. In the corner, two young businessmen were discussing, in English, the fulfillment one derives from exporting bananas. And behind the bar, a bartender was reluctantly and rather disdainfully discussing the name of the place. The name of the bar is apparently withheld even from paying customers. The bartender would say only that the name was a synonym for the tongue muscle. He insisted that the whole “idea” (that of the tongue muscle I suppose) was fully elucidated in “The Birth of Tragedy,” produced a copy of the book from behind the bar, brandished it in the faces of a group of frightened students for a moment and then stormed off to prepare to a cocktail. Our lone traveler ordered a drink and sometime later began a conversation with the two young banana exporters. The majority of this conversation is imaginable but unknown to me and probably irrelevant. At some point, the uniqueness of the bar was discussed and when someone wondered aloud why there were not more bars and restaurants of the sort around the city one of the semi-intoxicated entrepreneurs erupted, “*No boogewazeeee in Guayaquil! No boogewazeeee!*”

The exporter exaggerates, of course, as one is wont to do in a bar. He also ignores the notion that nightlife is a culturally relative, if not personal, affair and some people, regardless of class, might have as little use for a nameless, artsy, brood bar as I, for example, have for a karaoke machine. Nevertheless, there can be no question that a vast, sparsely populated, gap exists between the lower and upper classes in Guayaquil. The small percentage of the national population where the country's wealth clots is well represented in the city as is the less fortunate majority. Extraordinarily wealthy private neighborhoods can be found around the city but most of them are concentrated on an island across the river from downtown Guayaquil called *La*



*Puntilla*. As you fly over this island, descending towards Simon Bolivar International Airport, it looks remarkably like the insulated, posh, Miami neighborhoods you might have glimpsed at the start of the flight. But there is no comparison between this part of Guayaquil, visible at high altitude, and Guayaquil at ground level. Without excessive qualification of bad conditions, it should suffice to say that poverty in many areas around the city is extreme. People who work in these barrios describe the heat, the lack of water, even the lack of clothing. In short, bulges at the top and bottom of the class structure in Guayaquil leave the entire city, not just the bar scene, a bit off balance.

El Universo recently published statistics on the number of “cybers” - an odd term, indubitably coined by a pioneering member of the enthusiastic Ecuadorian digerati - in Pichincha and in Guayas. In Pichincha there are more than 200 cybers. In Guayas there are 29. Part of this disparity might be accounted for by the fact that Quito caters generously to the foreign tourist while Guayaquil strives to accommodate the foreign businessperson. For example, in order to check e-mail, a dreadlocked Scandinavian backpacker in Quito will undoubtedly require a cyber - preferably one that blends smoothies and pumps electronica. A German businessman in

Guayaquil, on the other hand, will most likely have the Internet in his hotel, his place of business, or on some portable piece of digi-tackle. But a city is defined by its own realities not the whims of its visitors and a large part of the disparity might also be accounted for by the simple fact that there just aren't as many people in Guayaquil and Guayas in general who have the ganas, the time and the means to look at the Internet. When asked why there are not more cybers in Guayas, a cyber owner in downtown Guayaquil responded simply, "No hay interes, no hay como."

Volunteers who work in Guayaquil have said that there is a huge need for more assistance in the city. As to

whether the city should be opened up to all volunteers, it is hard to say that the city is any more dangerous than Quito and even more difficult to say that it is less safe for volunteers than Esmeraldas. But more importantly, there are not a lot of reasons to visit Guayaquil or a lot of things to do once you get there, except visit the volunteers that work there. If the city were opened, it might benefit the people who work there a great deal more than it would put visitors at risk. Despite the financial influx, (and all the hype) Guayaquil is mainly a subdued, hardworking, port/business town where hotels lower their rates on the weekends. There are the exclusive clubs in Urdesa for those who can afford them, beautiful

malls and well-managed new tourist attractions alongside impressive old ones. There are even glassy installments of contemporary architecture popping up all over the city. But for the most part the city works constantly and strains under its economic realities. When people in Guayaquil want to let loose, when they want to go out and throw it down, they go out to the coast...

*Next issue: The Fishing Villages and the Fiesta of Colonche.*

## Logic Game

"Studying for the LSAT is like taking stool samples. Sometimes it's difficult, sometimes it's easy. But it's never fun. It stinks like doo."

-Kaplan Instructor

you can't have everything but you can have regrets.

-Parisian shopkeeper  
*national geographic*

Ruben has six trophies to place on an empty three-shelf display case. The six trophies are "volley" trophies F, G, and H and "indor" trophies J, K, and L. The three shelves of the display case are labeled 1 to 3 from top to bottom. Any of the shelves can remain empty. Ruben's placement of trophies must conform to the following conditions:

- J and L cannot be on the same shelf.
- F must be on the shelf immediately above the shelf that L is on.
- No single shelf can hold all three "volley" trophies
- K cannot be on Shelf 2.

1. If G and H are on Shelf 2, which of the following must be true?
  - A. K is on Shelf 1.
  - B. L is on Shelf 2.
  - C. J is on Shelf 3.
  - D. G and J are on the same shelf.
  - E. F and K are on the same shelf.
2. If no "indor" trophies are on Shelf 3, which pair must be on the same shelf?
  - A. F and G
  - B. L and H
  - C. L and G
  - D. K and J
  - E. G and H
3. If J is on shelf 2, which of the following must also be on Shelf 2?
  - A. K
  - B. G
  - C. F
  - D. L
  - E. H

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# Nirvana — *Nevermind what they think...*

David Lewis (O'89)

All of us volunteers face issues in our respective communities that cause us to feel down. In my case, the lack of appreciation from the community for my service was, and still is, a major depression-causing factor. From my point of view, I am making a large sacrifice giving 2 years of my life to help a small Ecuadorian community. My community saw things otherwise. They were not content with the work that I did and always wanted more from me. I regularly heard from my neighbors about how lazy I was, how stupid my ideas were, or how much better neighboring volunteers' projects were. Naturally, these comments hurt me. After months of hearing these things, despite my best efforts to impress the community with bigger and better projects, I began to resent many people in my community. I lost my motivation for work and spent more and more time outside of my site. Eventually, I decided to get a site change.

A site change, however, will not solve all of my problems. From what I've heard from other volunteers, not being appreciated is a common problem in many sites. I'm sure that I will face this same issue on some level or another in my new community. The real cure to my emotional suffering should come from within. Is it not possible that I have caused myself to suffer needlessly over perfectly natural reactions from the Ecuadorians?

Suffering. It is an intrinsic characteristic of life. Life is full of suffering. That suffering is born from our desires. Only by releasing our desires, can we release ourselves from the cycles of suffering. So go the basic tenets of the Buddha's 4-Noble Truths. Suffering is caused by desire and thus can only be minimized by the elimination of desire. In my case, I desired that my community appreciate me and when that desire was not fulfilled, I suffered. Is wanting to be

appreciated really that bad? I would say that it is good to be appreciated and one should be thankful for any appreciation that comes their way; however, to be motivated purely by the approval of others is self-destructive. For example, I wanted to be my town's hero. I wanted the town to think that I was a good person, and so I would do whatever I could to impress them. People took advantage of me. They would tell me that I was lazy when they wanted me to work harder. They would make me feel guilty for being a wealthy American when they wanted money from me. I



*"I will let their actions pass before me like thoughts in my mind and I will not judge them, but simply let them fade away with time."*

think I actually caused more people to gossip about me by being so affected by their rumors. I was affected by their rumors because I desired to be my town's savior. When my plans started to crumble, I caused myself a lot of unnecessary stress.

The solution would then have to be eliminating my desire for appreciation, my desire for success. I would have to be a Yogi and meditate my way through my wants enough to serve my community. To help without expecting anything in return is the best way to

serve. We must graciously accept that which comes to us and give purely with the end of helping. It really is so simple, but living like this is a constant struggle. We are deeply entangled in the illusions created by our wants. The actions of others and the obstacles that we confront are all interpreted through our desires. Thus, a small rumor that denounces a volunteer becomes for that volunteer a blade stabbing their heart instead of what it really is: a few words carelessly spoken that had little real meaning for the speaker.

I will end here without advising a method for ending the inner battle that Buddhism describes, for every individual has his or her own methods for silencing the mind. I just hope that more of us do try to understand the people we are trying to help, by taking responsibility for our own feelings. Blaming the Ecuadorians never helped anyone. We are, in fact, here to help these people because they need our help. Their actions often seem unfair to us, but we must not expect American behavior from people who have grown up in so different a culture. I will let their actions pass before me like thoughts in my mind and I will not judge them, but simply let them fade away with time. I will be as the stone that watches the river and the tree that lets itself be cut down only to sprout up new shoots the following year. That, my friends, is nirvana.

**If you keep quiet  
you'll be happier  
in yourself.**

**-Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard***

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# Dogs Bark at Gringos

love and culture...

— Karla Campbell *editor-in-chief*

Dogs bark at gringos. It's a scientifically proven, statistically quantified fact. Ok, so I didn't run a regression analysis based on the past ten years of volunteer experience, and when I say, "statistically quantified" I was counting the number of times that I personally have had to pick a rock up off the street to defend myself. I could be walking down the street with a group of fifty Ecuadorians and that mangy dog on the corner would go for me nine times out of ten. I could be walking behind an Ecuadorian who had just bathed in cat pheromones and the dog would patiently wait for him to go by then take a chunk out of my *traseo*. The fact is that we stand out. Once I was walking down the street in my barrio after dark, and there was a dog lying on the sidewalk a little farther up. I couldn't see it very well, and I imagine it couldn't see me either. As I passed by it, the dog never so much as growled or moved a muscle. About a block farther up the street there was a streetlamp, and as I passed under the light I swear I heard that dog mumble, "She's a gringa!" and take off running. You guessed it- it bit me from behind.

The differences between Americans and Ecuadorians are obvious. They are so obvious that even dogs, who have on average 8 IQ points, can tell us apart. I have often wondered what that central characteristic is that sets us apart. Is it the way we look, the way we walk, or do we give off a distinguishing scent that's like a gringo perfume? Whatever the defining ethos that binds us may be, it's also a lamentable barrier between the people we meet in our sites and ourselves.

When I say barrier I don't mean it in a physical sense, like a wall. That would imply that the differences between the two groups would be insurmountable without breaking down what it means to be American or Ecuadorian. The distinction is more like a barrier-to-entry in economics. A barrier-to-entry is a situational factor in a certain business sector that makes it difficult for new firms to enter that particular industry. For example, the diamond industry would be difficult to enter because of the scarcity of new mines. That's not so much a physical barrier as it is a product of historical evolution. In the case of diamonds, a few entrepreneurial families took advantage of colonialism to buy up all the known diamond mines (which created a monopoly, by the way). So too is the difference between two cultures. What is an individual's way of thinking but a product of the billions of seconds that have passed and the accumulation of experiences contained in them since the day that person was born to the present. Just as economic barriers-to-entry can be overcome, by technological advances, discovery of new inputs, and failure of established firms, by comparison cultural differences between two people can also be surmounted.

The practical thinker may be skeptical. Is it really possible for two people with completely disparate mindsets to arrive at a point of mutual understanding? Can two people with incongruent forms of living cohabitate in a functional way? For a volunteer in a serious cross-cultural relationship, the question is not just a curiosity but a point of contention and a cause for concern.

I myself spend a significant amount of time mulling over these questions as my boyfriend and I are talking about his coming back with me to the US. I go over them in my mind every time we can't seem to understand each other on something as simple as who makes the bed. I plead with myself to reanalyze them on the rare occasions his *machismo* shows. I ask myself these questions again when my southern hospitality and his Latin *celos* collide.

Many volunteers date Ecuadorians, not to mention those that become engaged or marry their significant other, so cultural questions are polemic for a number of volunteers. There are a hundred ways in which cultural disparities manifest themselves, from something as little as who picks what's for dinner that night, to something as significant as gender roles and expectations. PCV Katie Windle, who has a live-in boyfriend, for example, says, "I find myself constantly struggling with the issue of punctuality, Paulo and I don't see eye to eye on this issue. Maybe it's a cultural thing, maybe it's an individual thing. I'm just hoping that one day he'll realize the importance of arriving on time!!!"

So the real question is: can cross-cultural marriages work? Can cultural misunderstandings every really be resolved? "Living here you'll never really resolve those, because they'll never understand your culture", says PCMO (and former PCV) Sarah Dettman. As Sarah says, you have to just accept the differences and find ways around them rather than trying to resolve them. People change and grow together when they are accepting of each other, she says, and being aware that there are cultural differences between the two makes you both more tolerant.

When I think about culture in relation to what it is that fundamentally makes a relationship work, I think of a certain former volunteer that I know fairly well. He was a volunteer probably 25 years ago, and has been living here with his Ecuadorian wife and children since the close of his service. I asked him once how he felt about cross-cultural marriages upon reflecting on his own experience,

and he swore to me that any volunteer who marries an Ecuadorian is a glutton for punishment. I listen to him harp on insignificant nuances about his wife that he chalks up to her cultural defects, and I see how poorly they interact with each other. The first time it happened I left completely devastated, convinced that cross-cultural marriages were impossible. But, I went home and thought it over, and it occurred to me that a person with that attitude towards his partner could never have a successful relationship anyway. Plenty of marriages between similarly educated people with the same upbringing fail because they can't compromise and meet each other in the middle. There are many factors that affect a marriage. If the two people in a relationship are happy with their own personal and professional lives and they are both accepting of each other, then a marriage can work independent of culture.

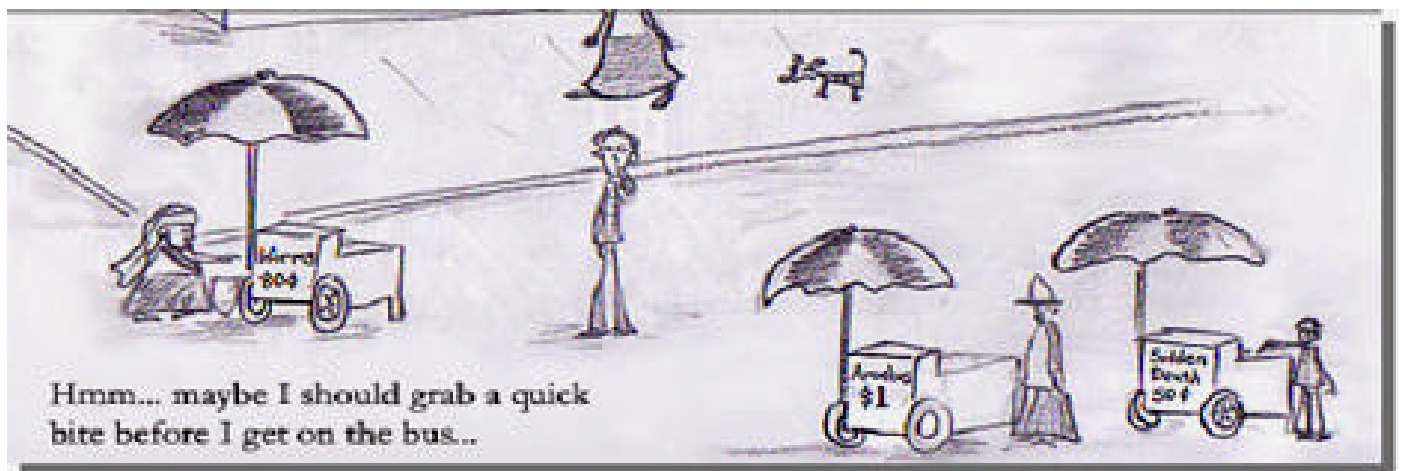


In my two years here in Ecuador I have come to believe one thing with 100% certainty: the human psyche is the same all over, it's just the human response that differs. There are some emotions that are characteristic of all people that walk the earth, such as fear, jealousy, sadness, love, and most importantly, understanding. How two people react to a certain situation depends a lot on culture, but all people are capable, with a little effort, of comprehending another's point of view. Whether or not someone is willing to make the effort to understand another person's viewpoint depends on the person, not the culture.

Something happened just a few days ago that solidified this sentiment for me. My boyfriend is a wrestler (Olympic, not WWF), and he called me the other day to come to his house and drain his ear. Wrestlers get hit in the ear often, and blood fills up the inside the ear and it swells up, which is nascent cauliflower ear. So, we went and got a syringe at the pharmacy and I suctioned the blood out of his ear. Now, I have never been a baby around blood, and with diabetic friends and a mother who has periodic seizures, I have seen my fair share of needles before. But, this time, after I suctioned his ear, I cried hysterically and vomited. It was so uncharacteristic of me that I thought a lot about it, and I realized that it wasn't the syringe full of blood in my hand that made me woozy. It was the pain that I saw in my boyfriend's eyes and the realization that I had done that to him that made me lose it. It was a reaction that had nothing to do with culture, and everything to do with love.

*“the human psyche is the same all over, it's just the human response that differs.”*

So to all of you volunteers contemplating tying the knot, my conclusion is that love is a universal emotion, and though culture can complicate a relationship, understanding and open-mindedness can overcome those cultural obstacles. And, like nurse Sarah says, “If you don't take the risk, you'll never know”.



# Letters to the Editor

I find that the effort of PCV John Varrieur (previously recounted in his “A PCV In Search Of God?” El Clima articles) to infiltrate a missionary group brings up interesting issues. In a February 2004 *Vistazo* article entitled “*La fe divide a los indios,*” many examples are given to show how evangelical indigenous communities are progressing at a much faster rate than Catholic indigenous communities. In one of the more memorable examples, a community that had a jail cell for the men who became drunk and fought has now been converted into a community workshop to teach occupational skills because there are no longer drunks to put in the jail cell. As I have witnessed in my site, a great deal of money is spent each year on fiestas and alcohol; however, in the evangelical communities cited, this money is used for development and families. The only drawback of evangelism that the article alluded to was that it has possibly weakened the national political front of the indigenous population by serving as a dividing factor within the population itself.

Yet, in Peace Corps, an organization that concerns itself with international development, there exists a certain animosity towards religious missionaries. Perhaps this is because we volunteers are often assumed to be missionaries. However, we are *cultural* missionaries, preaching the great gospel of progress and how we do things “allá.” This, in fact, is defined as a Peace Corps goal.

Eminem, 50 Cent, and Britney Spears are much more dangerous to Ecuador than the nicely dressed missionary talking about love, fellowship, not being drunk and a good family environment in which there is no spousal or child abuse. But this does not mean that I welcome the missionaries.

- PCV Matthew Smith (O’89)

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*If you have comments about a piece printed in this edition of El Clima,, please send your letter to the editor over email, [elclimapc@yahoo.com](mailto:elclimapc@yahoo.com). Letters may be edited for space and clarity.*

## APPLICATION FOR EL CLIMA STAFF

The El Clima Staff is currently seeking interested volunteers to fill 2-3 spaces for the upcoming meeting which would take place sometime in September or October. Being a staff member means spending a lot of time writing and soliciting articles from other volunteers and members of the PC community in the months prior to the session. Each session is three days of intensive writing, formatting, editing, and general hair-pulling. But, the good news is that there is pizza that follows and a cute little picture of yourself that gets put in each and every edition (moms love to see that). Please answer the following questions, attach to them a sample article of your own hand (either creative or technical), and leave them in the El Clima box in the office, or send it to us over email, [elclimapc@yahoo.com](mailto:elclimapc@yahoo.com). See you all in September!

1. Please briefly list any past experiences with journalistic writing, design, or editing.
2. What are the characteristics that you would bring to the staff and how do you see them contributing to the quality of the publication?
3. Please also include this information: site location, omnibus, specialty area (e.g., Ag/Health/etc) and COS date.