

The Latest from Quito, Ecuador

June 2013 Edition

A brief reflection:

Since returning to Quito after being in the U.S. during the month of December, I've quickly settled back into the quick and busy rhythm of life here. There was much work to be done after being away for a time, but I managed to get caught up on the cases of refugee families that had arrived while I was gone and help host three consecutive groups from the US/Colombia, among other things. These last six months have been characterized by somewhat of a new approach to my work with refugees after having been away for a time. A key issue that came up numerous times while I was in the states was my own well-being and mental health in the face of being over-absorbed by accompanying refugees as they overcome accumulated trauma and continue to live in vulnerable situations. I began to realize that I have been profoundly affected by all that I have experienced in Quito during the past two and a half years; and that I need to find ways to cope with what I have experienced. During the past six months, I've been more conscious of this delicate balance that I have to learn to manage in my current setting. I've starting respecting my day-off (most of the time), sometimes I give myself the right not to answer my phone, sometimes I take mini-vacations (little 5 min. breaks), I talk with others about my experiences in order to release stress, I try not to overload my schedule so that I'm constantly running from task to task, and I'm more aware that I have limits. That last point about limits has been a very important one. Faced with tough situations, I think I'm finally learning about the balance between the value of my own strength/work while at the same time recognizing that I am incapable of many things...things that I must leave in God's hands. Perhaps some of my initial naïve feelings of being able to solve people's problems are wearing off and I've realized the complexities of the situations that I'm dealing with and the larger systems that they belong to. This doesn't mean that I've given up, nor does it mean that I'll stop struggling alongside those who are hurting. I have every intention to continue to struggle, work, sweat, talk, think and grapple on behalf of the vulnerable refugee population that God loves and cares for. I believe that is what I'm called to do as a follower of Christ. But I also know that true restoration, love, reconciliation, justice and peace come from God. I can do my part and God will do God's part.

Please pray for...

...my discernment process for staying in Quito (there should be a public decision announced very soon)
...my upcoming appointment with a psychologist in Quito (the pastors recommended an appointment so that I can keep my own health in check and have a space to express the weight that I carry).
...continued strength and wisdom to take on challenging situations with refugees and know my limits
...the situations of so many refugees in Quito and many other places in the world.
...the current peace process in Colombia and those who continue to be displaced during the peace talks

Please give thanks with me for...

...the arrival of a new MMN volunteer, Alyssa Rodriguez, who is supporting the church with different projects during the next two years
...Wendy Palencia, a YAMEN volunteer who will be arriving in August to help out with the refugee project for one year through MCC
...so many people who have been supporting me, especially during this recent discernment process
...Quito Mennonite church and its outreach programs that touch many people's lives



Work group that we hosted in late February



Group that traveled to Colombia for Partnership meetings and the Mennonite assembly in March



A refugee man that I am accompanying who currently is in a very tedious medical situation (I hope to tell you his whole story sometime)



Mother's Day celebration at church



Our 4th Annual Anabaptist retreat during May



Another refugee man facing a very difficult situation due to a severe loss of vision (I also hope to tell you his story)