

Continued...

I expect Nicaragua to be a beautiful place. I also expect to be overwhelmed and heart broken by some of the poverty we will see there. I have become a Google expert over the last few months preparing for this trip and I have found beautiful pictures like this one...



This is a carving that a hermit named Alberto did into the side of a mountain. His beautiful sculptures are just one of the many beautiful things I look forward to seeing in Nicaragua.



On the opposite end of the spectrum I expect to see heart wrenching poverty. We will be visiting this neighborhood called La Chureca where these homes are built out of the trash that comes from the landfill that surrounds this area.

We will be visiting both of these places during our trip along with several other places that will show the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of Nicaragua. I have such a tidal wave of emotions about this trip because I am excited in so many new ways. Excited to experience the great things, and excited to experience the things that will be hard for me to stomach but that I know will change my perspective in a way that wouldn't be possible without this trip. Several people have asked why I'm going. I don't have the exact answer to that question yet, but I'm sure I will when I return. What I know right now is that I want to expand my mind, I want to appreciate what I have and where I live more than I have in the last

22 years, and I want to have an experience of a lifetime. Those are the things I want out of this trip, but I think I will discover that I also need this trip. Something called me to this experience. I really can't explain it except to say that when Mr. Spicer talked about this trip to my class my arm pits burned with anticipation. For those of you who don't know this about me, my arm pits usually serve as my conscience as well as my indicator of extreme excitement (i.e. I don't follow my gut, I follow my arm pits). I suppose I will find out along the way why my arm pits found this trip to be so necessary.

I expect to feel overwhelmed by the difference in our cultures and I believe during the first few days I will feel like everything is so foreign. I hope to become well acclimated to the people there even though I can't speak a lick of Spanish. I have heard from other people who have traveled that all people are people wherever you go. That's almost like saying, "It's a proven fact that those who have more birthdays live longer." Well duh people are people anywhere you go! But aren't they extremely different? I expect to discover that, in fact, they are not. Their cultures are indeed very different, but what is at the root of humanity pulses through us all. The love for family, the urge to succeed, loyalty, honesty, morals, and virtues--those are the things that all humans have, or at least I hope so. These things are the characteristics that make us alike. Not skin color, religion, or language. What is at the intangible heart and soul of individuals is what is at the heart and soul of humanity.

I also expect to see communities or neighborhoods in major need of assistance, and other communities with an overwhelming amount of American assistance. I don't know just how I feel about it at this point, I suppose that is something I will learn along the way. On the one hand, I know there are people in need and I have friends who have gone to Nicaragua recently to do great things through mission work. On the other hand, one of our major endeavors during this trip is to focus on sustainable development. Sustainable development, as I best understand it, means to help those in need while also teaching them how to take care of themselves so that after a period of time those that helped in the first place can take a hands free approach in continuing the education but not interfering. A few years ago I may have argued more to one side or the other, but since gaining a smidgen of college knowledge and real world experience I have learned that most every endeavor requires some of the left and some of the right, a little salt and a little pepper, or a little religion and a little government.

I expect some answers to my questions. I expect to have many questions unanswered. I expect to be happy. I expect to be sad. I expect to be appreciative for what I have, more so than ever. I expect to feel guilty for everything I appreciate. I expect for this trip to be the summit of all contradictions.