



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: In the Shadow of the Zocalo - A Mesoamerican Journey
Name: Katie Lyons

Other Team Members:

Program: Chicago Program
Trip Dates: 07/11/2011 - 07/25/2011
Location Visited: Mexico City, Mexico

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: The story of my trip begins years ago when I first encountered Inga Clendinnen's slim but powerful work *Ambivalent Conquests*. Her historical anthropology of the early encounter between the Spanish and Indians in the Yucatan inspired me to look critically at the meeting of cultures in the Atlantic World. This summer thanks to a grant from Fund for Teachers I was able to travel to many ancient Indian archaeological sites as well as a number of colonial cities across Mexico. My goal on this trip was to attempt to find out how the encounter between Europeans, the indigenous peoples of the Americas, and Africans transformed the Atlantic World and to bring my experiences back to the classroom through an interactive video blog. As I interacted with my students across the web from places like the jungles of Palenque, I could see their fascination and appreciation for the rich blend of cultures that constitute contemporary Mexico coming across the screen. As I retraced the conquistador Hernan Cortez' route of conquest from Veracruz to Mexico City, I tried to show the students the transformative effects that colonialism had on indigenous culture. Moreover, I wanted them to also understand that despite the destructive power of colonialism, Mexican culture exists as the result of the meetings between Spanish, Indians, and Africans in the sixteenth century. As I moved from the modern bustle of Mexico City to the peaceful calm of the zocalo in Campeche, Mexico constantly inspired me to make history come alive for my students and to document the amazing experience I had in Mesoamerica.

Career Impact: *Gained an accurate historical perspective of the ancient civilizations of the Nahua, Olmec, Toltec, Maya, and Aztecs.
*Observed historic sites, traveled to colonial cities, and interacted with artifacts and primary sources that transformed my perspective about contemporary and historic Mexico.
*Developed confidence in delivering instruction that conveys the Latin American colonial experience in an authentic and culturally responsive manner.
*Created an interactive blog documenting each historic site, museum, and city that I visited which has transformed how I present content to students.

Classroom/Community Impact:*Created a unit on ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica integrated with a literacy unit which includes trade books that highlight Hispanic American experiences.
*Provided students with an historical and cultural background to understand Hispanic American experiences in the United States.
*Developed an interactive video blog that allows students, teachers, and parents to view my travels and reflections and engage in dialogue about my reflections.
*Acquired authentic artifacts from Mexico for students to handle and analyze as primary source material.

Open Response: *Art integration project with art teacher which will focus on analyzing Dia de los Muertos practices in Mexico and creating a traditional ofrenda to display for entire school and families.
*Host an Hispanic Heritage Family Night featuring student performances of Ballet folklorico, mariachi music, and marimba demonstrations.
*Field trip to National Museum of Mexican Art.
*Ethnographic student fieldwork in Pilsen, Hispanic American neighborhood of Chicago.

Quote: A teacher is just a life long learner anxious to make sense of the world around her which is only accomplished through traveling and interacting with diverse cultures.

Photos:



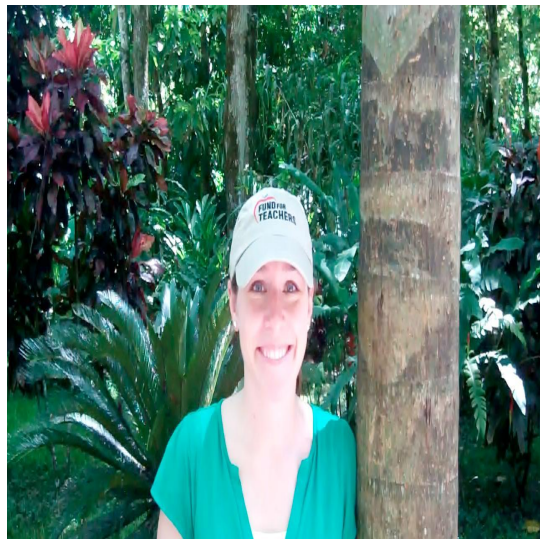
Teotihuacan, atop the Pyramid of the Moon with the Pyramid of the Sun behind me



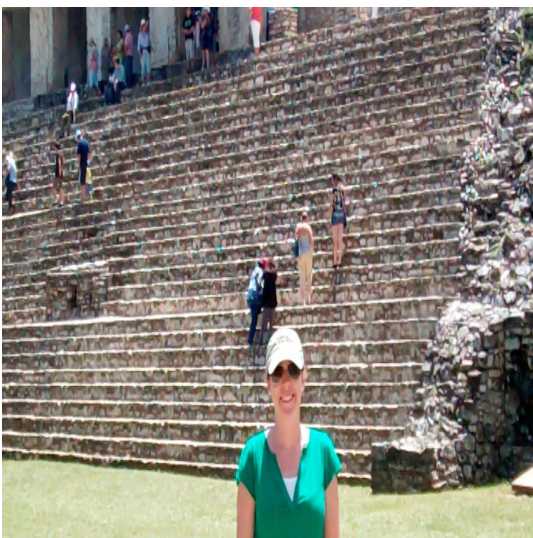
Plaza de la Constitucion, El Zocalo, Mexico City



Olmec Head in La Venta Park, Villahermosa, Mexico



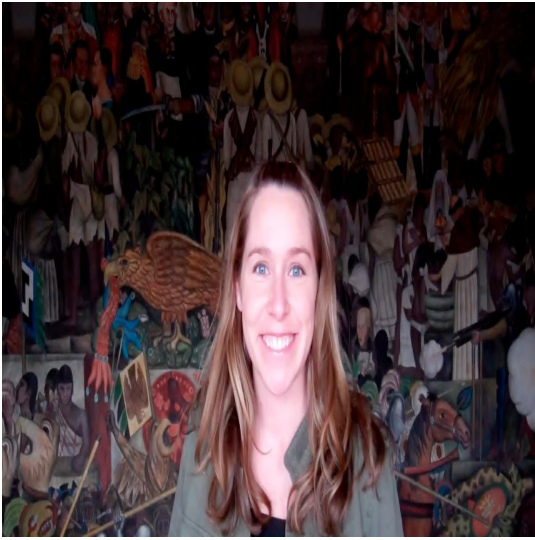
In the jungle in Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico



Near Pakal's Tomb in Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico



Jaguar Palace, Teotihuacan, Mexico



Palacio Nacional, Diego Rivera Mural, The History of Mexico



One of the New Seven Wonders of the World, The Pyramid at Chichen Itza, Mexico