



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Peru: Pre-Columbian Civilizations, Spanish Conquest, and Independence  
**Name:** Jaclyn Spencer

**Other Team Members:**

**Program:** New York City Program

**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001

**Location Visited:** Peru

**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** Many students of global history have a hard time connecting to events that happened so long ago, and see history instead as abstract names and dates, devoid of the color and the nuance that in reality makes up its intricate stories. Yet I have discovered that when I share stories and pictures from my own personal travels with my students, they are much better able to grasp the significance of whichever topic we are discussing. I traveled to Peru for the month of July so that I would be able to share photographs, artifacts, and stories to use in my classroom, and allow students to become more intimate with the many fascinating cultures that have called this area home. My travels to Peru served another purpose as well. I enrolled in intensive Spanish lessons so that I could better communicate and connect with many of the students in my classes and I am now in a position to begin to reach out to the significant portion of parents of those students who do not speak English.

I spent my first two weeks in Cusco, attending Spanish classes and exploring the city that served as the capital of the Inca Empire. Korikancha, a sun temple, Q'enqo, a site of ceremonial rituals, and Sacsayhuaman, a hilltop fortress, all were within walking distance of Cusco. Just a bit further from the city were the sites of the Sacred Valley, including the ceremonial baths at Ollantaytambo and the legendary "lost city of the Incas," Machu Picchu. The Inca Empire left such a lasting legacy because they built upon the accomplishments of those cultures they conquered, such as the Wari and the Aymara peoples. I traveled south to Puno, the closest city to Lake Titicaca, to discover more about the Aymara people and their culture. The city of Arequipa offered a look at colonial era convents, churches, and art. Near to Arequipa is the Colca Canyon, one of the world's deepest, and a three-day trek gave me a greater appreciation of the challenges of empire building in such an extreme environment. Lima, the nation's capital and the last stop on my trip, offered a deeper understanding of Peru's history through visits to the national museums and a chance to watch Peruvians celebrate their independence day.

Peru truly has an incredible mixture of cultures and stories that offer much for a history teacher (and her students) to be excited about.

**Career Impact:** I feel incredibly fortunate to have had this opportunity. I am so eager to share what I learned this summer with my students, and I know that my enthusiasm will be contagious. As I enter my 8th year of teaching, I feel excited and re-energized.

Prior to this trip I had only a basic understanding of the Inca Empire and very little knowledge about the other cultures that existed before the Incas. I now have a much deeper understanding of Pre-Columbian peoples in Peru. I also saw first hand the changes that colonialism brought, and the cultural mix that has remained since independence.

In addition, I was able to gain some basic Spanish skills. Though I cannot yet hold a full conversation in Spanish, I can at least conduct a portion of my conferences in Spanish. The experience of moving outside of my comfort zone, of being unable to communicate and conduct daily affairs with ease because of the language barrier, was a positive one. Though I have experienced this before, it is good to be reminded of these challenges and better appreciate students (and parents) whose native language is not English and who must face these obstacles every day.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** My school and my community will benefit from my travels as well. I have a number of authentic artifacts and stories to enrich students' study of history. I have a deepened sensitivity for ESL students and those students who find history particularly challenging. I will have an increased credibility with students and families from different cultures. They will learn history through the images and stories that I can share from my trip, and this knowledge can help foster pride in Latino history and culture. I also have plans to work with the Earth Science teacher and build lessons together about the Andes Mountains and the Colca Canyon.

It is an explicit goal of my high school to encourage students to broaden their horizons beyond the South Bronx neighborhood where many of them have spent most of their lives. In sharing my own travel stories, I am encouraging the students themselves to see more of the world. It exposes them to cultures, ideas, and places that they may have never envisioned before, and piques their curiosity so that they, too, seek out opportunities to travel and see the world.

**Open Response:** I teach in a high school that is organized into six "houses" of students and teacher-leaders (an organization that is based loosely off of the house system in the Harry Potter books). I am a member of Thomas House, which celebrates the life and works of poet and author Piri Thomas. An annual celebration by each house celebrates the life and times of the person for whom the house was named. Piri Thomas was a New Yorker originally from Puerto Rico, and the Thomas House event honors Mr. Thomas and includes a celebration of Latino culture in general. My experiences in Peru will contribute to next year's Founder's Day assembly in late October. I will share photos, stories, and some of the history I learned on my travels in Peru with the entire school.

My students can also contribute with knowledge they have learned through my lessons and through the research they conduct in order to complete the unit project I have created to accompany our study of the history of Peru.

**Quote:** For many students, history is just a list of abstract names and dates, devoid of the color and the nuance that in reality makes up its intricate stories. The photos, artifacts, & stories I gathered in Peru will give students the chance to truly connect to the history of this amazing place.

Photos:



Machu Picchu



Plaza de Armas, Cusco



Parade with Inca flag in Plaza de Armas, Cusco



Children in traditional clothing



My Spanish class



Plaza de Armas, Arequipa



After the Colca Canyon trek



Ceremonial knife and bowl