

Joshua Aprile

Summer in Mexico City

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During the summer of 2013, I worked for México Contra la Delincuencia (MUCD), a civil organization in the Polanco district of México City. MUCD is an organization dedicated to promoting the rule of law in Mexico and has been doing so for more than fifteen years. The organization's work is fascinating and diverse, ranging from programs designed to educate schoolchildren about respecting the rule of law to "watch-dog" functions that monitor government authorities in the criminal justice system. The work of MUCD has been a tremendous help for many Mexicans who have found themselves the victims of government abuse and corruption, as well as a uniting force among different segments of the Mexican population.

At MUCD, I was privileged to have had the opportunity to work on several critical issues currently facing Mexican society. More specifically, I was placed in a program known as *La Cultura de Legalidad* (The Culture of Lawfulness). The over-arching mission of this program is to promote a culture that respects the rule of law by conducting community outreach programs and holding seminars that teach ordinary citizens to empower their own communities when their government fails to. In this program, I performed in-depth research of issues regarding government and business corruption, community empowerment, and the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practice Act, as well as wrote advocacy articles on behalf of the organization.

This is not to say that all of my work was confined to an office. Throughout my nine-week fellowship abroad, I found myself in a variety of settings. At times, I would accompany my director to government ceremonies, where I was given an excellent opportunity to network with prominent leaders of Mexican society; at other times, I would accompany my colleagues to elementary schools and community centers, where we would conduct community workshops geared toward teaching about concepts like the rule of law and community empowerment. I was also lucky to have the help of Mexican attorneys, who taught me invaluable insight to the Mexican legal system and the current issues facing it.

Of course, my experience in Mexico was not all work. During the two and a half months that I was in Mexico City, I visited many of Mexico's famous attractions. I gazed upon the beautiful artwork of Diego Rivera at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, enjoyed the trails of *Bosque de Chapultepec*, and, of course, enjoyed the vibrant nightlife of one of the world's largest cities. As amazing as all of this was, none of it prepared me for the breath-taking pyramids of *Teotihuacan*. Believed by the Aztecs to be the location where the gods created the universe, the pyramids of *Teotihuacan* are a majestic sight and amazing experience to climb for anyone like me who loves history. My fellowship experience in Mexico City was not only an amazing work and cultural experience, but also a life experience that has taught me about myself.