

Colombian Quest

This short story tells about how a volunteering experience constructs a person's perspectives and ideas toward volunteering and help her to know herself better.

'Preparing for landing' The pilot's voice buzzed.

I fastened my seat belt. Closed my eyes. This is it. A brand new beginning, in the very strange part of the world that I never expected would go to. I was scared. Leaving my comfort zone was never easy for me. But right now, I ran out of options, I cannot run back home.

Bogota was hot. Slowly I pushed my big dark purple luggage against me. This is my home for the whole month. My eyes looked around to a bunch of people standing behind a short fence, each of them holding a paper in front of their chest. I squinted my eyes, hoping

to immediately find my name written in one of those papers. Spent nearly 24 hours inside the plane made me just want to take a shower and take a long sleep.

"Hey, are you the ICYE volunteer?" a voice brought me back from my imagination of poured cold water on my body. That voice came from a girl with a curly hair. "I'm Maria, your coordinator during your stay here" She smiled.

I woke up at 6 AM, ended up sitting by the window of my apartment staring at the sunrise for half an hour. The early morning breeze blew away my hair and my anxiety of how things can actually go wrong. The next hour my backpack was packed and I was ready to

go. Maria said she will pick me up and together we will go to an elementary school where I will be teaching for about a month. I sat on the stairs waiting Maria to show up while writing my journal. *Dear Colombia, what kind of quest do you have for me?*

Three weeks quickly passed by and I felt just like home. There was something that sparked inside me even just to witness the slightest improvement; a student who finally able to spelled his name in English alphabet or when a student dared herself to speak up and lead the discussion in the class. It was the same feeling when I made new friends, the same

feeling when I finally able to communicate with the locals even in the lowest level of Spanish, the same feeling when I got a friendly invitation to go to a family dinner from a friend. A

bunch of feelings I might not able to experience if I stayed on my comfort zone. And that thing that sparked inside me was joy.

I was sitting on my seat inside the flying plane. Thinking about the students back in Colombia. One who once didn't like me sent me a letter that I was one of the best teachers she met or another one who once cannot looked me in the eye while talking won a speech competition. I felt like my chest swelled filled by pride. Now I know why some people choose to be a lifetime volunteer, and in that moment I knew I finished the quest.