

Miranda's Newsletter – January 2025

We worked with an organization from El Salvador called Seeds of a New Creation or Semillas. They do amazing work in ministry in El Salvador and have a model of ministry that I think should be adopted by a lot more organizations. They run some of their own ministries with support groups and programming as well as educating communities in agriculture of many different kinds. But they also find groups already working in ministries they're interested in and then support those groups and enable them to keep working instead of starting their own group.

While I was there I learnt a lot from Semillas about sustainable, environmentally friendly, affordable agriculture. We learned how to make fertilizers and pesticides that don't negatively impact any of the surrounding environment. Two of the fertilizers we made were a concentrate based off molasses and rotten fruit, which I found really cool despite it also being a bit gross. The pesticide we made was a concentrate made of onions, cilantro and jalapeño peppers, which I thought was super cool because it's an effective pesticide that doesn't hurt any creatures. We also made feed for chickens and goats with a community that showed us an insane level of hospitality.

I met amazing people while I was there. I had an hour long conversation, through an English/Spanish interpreter, with an environmental engineer from Peru. We spoke about things I'd seen in El Salvador, the animals from our own hometowns and countries and about biodiversity and its effects on society. I really enjoyed that conversation.

I also met an older lady named Gladys who we eventually called Grandma Gladys. One morning as I was waiting for a meeting to start I was dancing. Gladys saw me and said she liked it. Eventually I sat down to chat with her and she and I danced in our chairs together. She then told me that she loved my dancing and that her church doesn't support dancing because they think it's from the devil. But she thinks dancing is a way of worshiping God with joy and God wants joy in His house so she dances anyway. In typical Miranda fashion I was wearing a pair of cargo pants. Gladys said she really liked them and that she thinks pockets are great. Apparently her church also doesn't like women wearing pants. But then Gladys told me "I been there forty years, I wear pants anyway. I'm a rebel," which was absolutely hilarious.

We also spent some time in El Salvador learning how to break dance from a guy named Luis. His church also doesn't support dancing but saw that in his community people needed to come together, so he started a break dancing ministry at 15. His community came together through a mutual love of breakdancing and hiphop. He teaches them the gospel after having connected with them and also teaches them graffiti art (and where graffiti is okay). Three of the people currently working with Luis are young men who at one point were little kids so beneficially affected by Luis and his ministry that they joined him. It was a crazily impactful experience for me.

Along with learning from and working with Semillas, we also had some fun. We tried and even learned how to make the national food of El Salvador, pupusas, which are possibly one of my favourite foods ever. We spent some time doing fun things like swimming in pools and on beaches (where I saw so many sand dollars it was insane) and painting a million things.

But one of the things I'll remember most is what we learned about how to be actually helpful. Having a desire to help is the first step, but it gets nowhere if the way you help is actually harmful. Teaching a community how to make food is much more beneficial than giving them food and this is something that Semillas has really mastered.

God is working in El Salvador. He is working so hard there because there are so many people who have dedicated their lives to Him and because He is really needed. Please, take a minute and pray for the people and creatures in El Salvador. They all need it. But there is also incredible and indescribable beauty in that place that I wish I could better share.

As I come to the conclusion of this newsletter I would like to say some thank yous and an encouragement. My encouragement is for anyone who reads this is to take time to really pay attention to the kind of help people actually need. And also to Google Motmots because they're an adorable bird.

Thank you to everyone who donated for me to go on this trip, and for your support for my time at Act Five. It wouldn't have happened without you and this experience has really impacted how I see the world in amazing ways. Thank you to Delaney, our amazing translator, Rebeca, our hostess and soccer mom and Josue who drove us around everywhere.