

Lessons in Solidarity From Costa Rica

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Profound. Disturbing. Engaging. Beautiful. Enlightening. In 300 words, I can only begin to describe the intensity of the experience we 10 Tulane students underwent during our three-week study abroad in San Jose, Costa Rica, through the service-learning course, "Social Justice in the Americas."



Tulane student Michaela Gibboni tutors Costa Rican boys in a program to reduce school dropout rates. Gibboni was in Costa Rica this summer for a service-learning course on social justice in the Americas. (Photo from Michaela Gibboni)

In the course, taught by assistant professor Jimmy Huck of the [Tulane Stone Center for Latin American Studies](#), we learned about the conundrum of poverty and inequality and the importance of global citizenship. We applied our knowledge from the classroom to our service site, the Liceo Julio Fonseca, a public middle and high school for students from impoverished neighborhoods on the outskirts of San Jose.

We volunteered at the Liceo in conjunction with the nonprofit organization, Fundacion Accion Joven, which works to reduce dropout rates of Costa Rican students, focusing on the critical seventh and 10th grades. Fundacion Accion Joven assists students and teachers in improving the educational experience, and we provided support by offering English tutoring and performing beautification projects.

Beyond the readings and thought-provoking discussions we engaged in during class, the best part of the course was building friendships with the students at the Liceo. These students, who came from some of the most dangerous and poverty-stricken barrios in San Jose, greeted us with kindness, curiosity and resilience.

I can say honestly that in our short period of time, we learned as much from the students at the Liceo Julio Fonseca as they learned from us. The value of taking the time to truly get to know someone is unparalleled in any other type of service. Those at the Liceo Julio Fonseca represent only one group of people in the world who can benefit from this attention. The power of solidarity transcends national borders and class divides. Know this, and stand with them.

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