



Law School Dominican Republic Immersion Trips

A Brief History

The Law School's Dominican Republic Trips, initiated in 2002 and 2003 by Professor Larry Raful, were conducted under the auspices of Creighton's Institute for Latin American Concern ("ILAC"), and took place over spring break week.

When Professor Raful left Creighton Law in 2004, Professor Ron Volkmer, who accompanied Professor Raful on his trips in 2002 and 2003, sought to re-institute the Law School's connection to ILAC, with a specific goal in mind.

Professor Volkmer had been inspired by the words of Fr. Kolvenbach, Superior-General of the Society of Jesus, who, in his landmark Santa Clara speech to Jesuit educators, challenged the teachers at Jesuit institutions in declaring that:

Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection. . . Students . . . must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its sufferings and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.

Professor Volkmer felt that an immersion experience to a developing country such as the Dominican Republic could lead students to moral reflection in an Ignatian Spirituality context if the students were properly selected, motivated, and prepared.



The Program

The Law School program has always included a wide variety of experiences that make it unique.

The foremost goal of the experience is to have students exposed to all aspects of Dominican culture. This is accomplished by field trips to and around Santiago, that includes the barrio of Cienfuegos, an office combating domestic violence, the cultural center, and the local Catholic university (PUCCM).

Trips are also taken to the border of Haiti (Dajabón), bateyes near Santiago, and to the north shore. The trip has usually concluded with a visit to the capital of Santo Domingo where students have had the opportunity to meet with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Attorney General.

Students have visited three different Dominican jails as well as visits to three campesino communities where the students have participated in service projects.

The Goals

The Law School immersion trips are based upon the underlying goals for which the ILAC program was founded: "to promote the integral well-being and spiritual growth of all of its participants."

The ILAC Center in Santiago, which serves as the students' home for one week, is best described by a sign that directs travelers to "MISION ILAC."

Because the core of the experience is about "spiritual growth," the students spend time in reflection and prayer in the St. Omer Chapel at "MISION ILAC."

The Jesuits in residence at "MISION ILAC" have led the students in reflection and prayer, asking them to reflect on their shared experiences and to discern how they might be, in their professional careers, in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

From 2006 to 2011 some fifty students have made this amazing "journey of faith" and, for some, it has been, in their words, a "life changing experience." These are students who have let the "gritty reality of this world" into their lives with the result that they, in the best tradition of the Jesuit Volunteers Corps, have become "ruined for life."

