

GRACIE'S UPDATE

L I F E I N P E R U

On Saturday I celebrated Thanksgiving with a group of Peruvian friends that work with me in Paz y Esperanza.

It was awesome, and the first time since I've gotten here that I really felt a strong sense of community. Having friends over at my apartment (which I share with my wonderful housemate Anna) and cooking thanksgiving dinner for them (without an oven!) was an adventure and a joy, and as the night moved along we found ourselves laughing and singing spanish praise songs, the kind of joyful moments in community that drew me to Peru in the first place. I have now officially been in Lima longer than any of my previous visits. It's nice to feel like I am starting to build a life here as I get settled into my work, get to know the markets in my neighborhood, and learn my way all around the city. One of the hardest things is that at least 3 days a week I commute out to the district of San Juan de Lurigancho, which is the marginalized area of Lima where we focus our work. It's a long bus ride, and it has made me question a lot why I am not living in San Juan de Lurigancho and being more "incarnational," but at this point in time the housing that God has provided for me is in a different section of the city, and I am happy there. **Please pray that God would give me patience with my commute.**

My second weekend here I helped with a training retreat that Paz y Esperanza put on for church leaders on how to address the issue of domestic and sexual abuse of women and children. Several young people attended the retreat, including Lucy (age 28) and Martha (age 21). These two ladies have become my friends and I am excited to make connections with young people, since much of my ministry in the coming months is going to focus on training youth to be agents of holistic transformation in their communities. (In Peru the category of "youth" refers to people between the ages of 16-30). Since the retreat I have been following up on the churches and attending the workshops they have been putting on for their members and their communities. This Friday we are hosting a movie night to watch the film Amazing Grace and have a conversation about the role of Christians in addressing societal injustice. **Please pray for that committed youth will come to this event and that out of that group we can start to form a core group of young people committed to serving their communities.**

I ask for your prayers as I continue to settle into my life and ministry here. Please pray in particular that God would guide me in my direct ministry with the community of Mariategui, one of the sectors we work in. I would like to spend more time in this community visiting people to encourage and pray with them and get to know them, but I have found this to be a challenge because I don't have other people to go visit with, and I often lack the courage and will to go out on my own. **Pray that God would provide partnership for me in this ministry in Mariategui.**

A lesson from Obama

I've been able to visit the comedor (community lunch program) that we served at this past summer several times since I've been back. This is one of my favorite places to spend time as it is really an excellent place for the kids to come and grow and learn. One afternoon I was hanging out with the kids and one of them touched my hair and asked me, "Do you color your hair?"

I replied, "No, it's natural."

"Oh, I thought everyone from the United States was blonde," he said. That made me laugh.

"No, in the US we have all different types of people, and in fact the next president of the US is a black man."

"Really?" he responded wide-eyed.

This opened up the door for a great conversation about how God created all different kinds of people and how God values everyone equally, all different cultures, languages, colorings, etc. I pray that these little moments help reinforce the kids self-esteem and, along with our actions, demonstrate how much God loves them.



Right: The view from my bedroom window on the first sunny morning since I arrived in Lima. It's cloudy most mornings and I am learning not let the gray get me down. I wake up each day and say is "This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it."



Above: Two baby pigeons were born in the windowbox under my bedroom window. The security guard at my apartment building asked me to take them home to cook them and serve them in a soup for his kids, because they are very nutritious. I was sad to see the little birds go but couldn't say no to a man who wanted them to give his children a good meal. Bottom Right: Rocio shares her team's ideas about how to address domestic and sexual abuse in their churches and in their communities with other participants at the retreat. Bottom Left: Commitment cards with hand prints demonstrate the different commitments people are making to address violence and abuse in their community.

