

To: George L Mosse Program in History

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**Fair Trade University:
Mosse Distinguished Research and Service Fellowship Report**

With the generous support of the Mosse Program, I had the opportunity to participate in Fair Trade University, a service learning, solidarity-based trip to Guatemala. This spring, I received the Mosse Distinguished Research and Service Fellowship for my project, US-Latin American Solidarity: From Sanctuary to Fair Trade. The project focused on looking at different modes of solidarity activism through history and into the present.

Fair Trade University served as a test delegation of students from the UW, with the hopes of creating long lasting relationships between students and small fair trade, organic, coffee-growing communities in rural Guatemala. While in Guatemala, we spent time in two different communities. The first, Santa Anita la Union, located in the department of Quetzaltenango about an hour and a half outside of Xela, is a community with a longstanding relationship to Madison. Santa Anita exports the majority of their coffee to Just Coffee, 100% fair trade coffee roaster in Madison. The second community, Montellano, is located in the municipality of San Pedro Yepocapa in the department of Chimaltenango. Both communities shared their histories, struggles, and optimism with us.

The trip focused on creating a broad understanding of Fair Trade and how trade relationships relate to inequality, exploitation, and postcolonial legacies. FTU focused on creating dialogue around issues of social, economic, and environmental justice in a context of international solidarity. We had the opportunity to learn first hand about Guatemalan history, the consolidation of capitalism, and how free trade and neoliberal economic policies affect small producers and how these communities are resisting the oppressive forces of the neoliberal system. We met with students, community leaders, families, and even the women's organization of Santa Anita. Everyone we met with

provided a unique view into Guatemalan history, each with a different lens into the past that cannot be found in a traditional classroom.

My experience in Guatemala has also influenced my decision to return this January to study Spanish and attend a language school just down the road from Santa Anita la Union. I am hoping to work on my Spanish skills in order to work for immigrant rights in the US. I hope to help challenge people's misconceptions about immigration and educate people on the connections between immigration and economic exploitation in Latin America. I am also hoping to spend more time in these communities while I work on my Spanish. FTU, in conjunction with my Latin American history background, have provided me with a framework to begin to understand the social and economic struggle of communities in Latin America. I am hoping to travel south to Peru and Bolivia later in the spring to learn about how indigenous movements are similar and different in those countries, and how that relates to their own histories of civil war and colonialism.

As a history student, this trip helped create direct connections between the past and the hope for social and economic justice in the world. My trip to Guatemala has reinforced my belief that in order to work on issues of social change in the US and abroad we must have an understanding of how histories of struggle and social movements create different frameworks for change. By visiting small coffee-producing collectives, each with unique histories, I can understand the importance of both bottom-up social movements and also the importance of re-writing history from below.

I am so lucky to have had the experience that I did on FTU. I am looking forward to returning to Guatemala in the coming months, to continue to learn and grow even more. I hope to come home with more tangible ways of working in solidarity with the struggles of economically exploited communities at home and abroad.