

Generation Peace Academy Peru Update: Kingdom of Heaven on Earth

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¡Bienvenidos!

Monday was spent fulfilling our "GPA serves overseas" mission. We were again in the dirt helping Mother Nature as we helped to restore a community park in the district Surquillo, the neighboring district to Miraflores where the CARP (collegiate association research principles) center is located. We woke up early and excited, eating our breakfast of caramel sandwiches and tuna sandwiches on the drive so we'd be ready to go.



Upon arrival we split into two teams. The first was tasked with removing all the garbage from a massive leaf compost pile. To beat the heat and make the experience more enjoyable, we imagined we were archeologists digging in an ancient Incan ruins site to find what was left behind. Interestingly lots of plastic bottles, food scraps, wood, and a singular rain boot was discovered. The other team also cleaned trash from another nearby pile for a while and then was sent to rake leaves underneath a grove of trees and move it into a compost pile. Many slugs and roly-polies were found and played with. After being in the hot sun for hours, the shade was a refreshing relief, and all felt rejuvenated while doing the raking.

The second half of the day was spent visiting the Huaca Pucllana ruins. Amazingly the CARP house is only a few minutes' walk away from ruins that were made by the civilization around the 4th century. Not all of it has been discovered yet and about 30% are recreation bricks to help support the ruins. The entire building was a temple where they would have different rituals and sacrifices. Interestingly when creating new rooms or redecorating the temple the people would sacrifice something important or special depending on how important the room was. Sometimes they'd smash a good pottery piece and put in in the foundation, or just slip some jewelry or food in a special pocket in the wall for another room. The most valuable room would have the most difficult sacrifice, a human usually a woman. They would be mummified and placed within the walls of the temple in special pockets. It was amazing to learn about the time and how different it is from today. In many ways we were able to be grateful that we live on the foundation of our ancestors and don't have to lead the life they had to, even God can work more thoroughly in our lives because of what our ancestors had laid for us. Near the end of the tour we also got to see some of orejitas food supply and plants they would have used including brown cotton, Lucuma, and of course llamas and alpacas! After the tour we met with CIG (Cheon Il Guk) members at the 4D cafe for some much needed ice cream. Some of us took the advice of the tour guide and tried Lucuma and chocolate mixed ice cream, and some stayed with safer options.



Later in the week we had a special outing with our CIG (Cheon Il Guk) members. We took about a four hour bus ride to a city called Lunahuana, situated at the base of the Andes mountains. Driving out of Lima we were able to see some of the slums on the outskirts and how much of Lima really is in a desert. It was one thing to hear that we were in a desert, but in Lima with all the trees it was easy to forget. Seeing the dust swirl in the air and the sand dunes all around, we could see that it truly is a dry desert. Coming to Lunahuana we took in the sights by climbing up to a little shrine temple thingy. The view was incredible. We could see the entire city nestled in a valley, a river flowing through it. The stark difference between the lush green trees and dark dusty mountains was an amazing view to experience. While we ate lunch some elderly ladies began fundraising with their homemade chocolates, in memory of all the times we had been rejected, many of us ended up purchasing some chocolates to try. They were so much better than Hershey's ever could be.

Finally we got to the main event: whitewater rafting! After gearing up in our helmets and life jackets we piled into vans to be driven down to the river. We heard the instructions that would be called for paddling, it was off to the river! The rapids were high and fast, the ideal for an exciting rafting experience. The bumping of the boat against each rapid caused water to be flung high in the air, and right on top of us, soaking us through instantly. Those sitting in the front of the boat bore the most of the hit from water, sacrificing themselves for the team. While paddling we learned how important unity was with each other and a central figure as we had to also pay attention to the guide's instructions for our safety. Each boat had a different experience riding down the river, one went nearly vertical over a particularly large rapid. A trip that normally took 40 minutes only took 15 because of how crazy the river was. All enjoyed the trip and wished that it had been much longer.

The bus ride back gave the most beautiful view of a desert sunset over the Pacific Ocean coastline. The

sun was bright red casting a reddish glow over everything. It was unlike any other sunset we had ever seen. Sadly, most of the bus had passed our my asleep so it was a special experience only some were able to see.

Friday was our final day of witnessing in Peru! We were determined to make it the best day ever especially in preparation for our Saturday event. We had been preparing for by doing our condition every morning and evening, everyone's spirits were high and focused that day. We had been able to give over thirty lectures either in the CARP house or on the street in just the first half of the day!



Saturday was the event we had all been praying and working for. We had a last hour long witnessing run as a surprise in order to truly have a sincere heart in inviting people the event. It showed many people were loved by our heart as even some guests from that run had ended up staying after to attend the event! We had ice breaker games to play such as "musical chairs" and "amoeba" in order to get to know everyone. People of all different ages came to see what was going on from ages 7 to over 30. Nobody was left alone on the side, GPA and CARP as a whole really made an effort to include everyone we could into some sort of conversation. Even the differences in languages weren't a difficulty as even so we found ways to communicate and laugh together. We were able to reap the benefits of our efforts earlier in the trip by performing our dance we had prepared for Peru on the completed stage in the backyard of the house! There was so much joy in being able to bring joy through dance and movement even if it wasn't something that we normally would do or enjoy. Being able to talk with a lot of the guests that came and seeing how much fun everyone was having it was a small slice of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth today in Lima. The atmosphere was so light and happy and full of love, it was felt by everyone. It was a marvelous experience to understand how much the language of love is the thing that will connect people as even some guests were distracted or sleepy during the lectures but still mentioned how much fun they had and their intentions to come again soon and visit to learn more. "I was able to see the culmination of all our sincere efforts. And I feel like I've really been able to learn that God and spirit world really do see my efforts and they are never wasted." Pauline G., 1st Year Participant.

The past three weeks have been some of the greatest experiences of our lives. God was able to share with us the full range of his heart, his sadness and hope, happiness and excitement through every activity and interaction that we had. Visiting Peru was a once in a lifetime experience for many of us, and we never would have been able to experience the beauty of the culture and nature of this country and its people without going to GPA. Each one of us has gained so many interesting stories that we are all very excited to share with our friends and family, and excited to show just how much we've grown in our understanding of who God is and what living a principled life looks and feels like.

As our time here comes to a close our last few days will be spent enjoying our final moment with the CARP and community members. As well as we will be digesting and sharing everything we've learned with each other in a testimony night, and then packing up and flying back to Texas on a 1:30 am flight on the 28th.