

Crossing Borders

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Guarenas, twenty years ago, was a small town located in a valley guarded by green mountains near the capital of my country, Venezuela. I used to go up a hill where I could see the whole town: red roofs and side streets surrounded the school, the Cathedral and the Town Council. Seated on a stone, thinking as a boy who is able to reflect and to contemplate the landscape, I wondered many times what I could find beyond those mountains and if people in other places would be like the inhabitants of my village. Those thoughts, united to the decisions I have made in life, have led me to different countries in America and Europe. As a tourist, I had the opportunity to briefly visit countries such as Argentina, Colombia, France, Germany, Monaco and Switzerland. However, nothing has been as enriching as living in a foreign country and trying to be part of its culture.

Monterrey, México, was my home town for two years. There, I enhanced my capacity to adapt to different environments. Being the first time out of home, I missed very much my family, but I had already undertaken the way and I didn't want to go back. I was full of enthusiasm and willing to work hard. However, at the very beginning I had a foreign accent and people looked at me with a nice interest, but with a kind of distrust. Sometimes, being a stranger didn't place me in the best position at work. Trying my best, listening and observing carefully, I became one of them. Keeping my own perception of work affairs, I had to learn how they analyzed problems; thus, I was self-trained in how to present my thoughts in a Mexican manner. My work ended being successful and I left in Monterrey some of my best friends.

After that time in México, I was transferred to Europe where I lived two years. Salamanca, Spain and Rome, Italy were my home cities, where I studied and worked. History, Art and Philosophy were my subjects of study. Who would have thought? I was studying humanism after receiving a major in Computing Engineering. These two years changed my life. Seeing the magnificent works of art, I realized the great things men are able to do. Moreover, behind those works, I found a revelation: men throughout history, knowing that life is limited by the borders of the death, have desired to remain, to transcend. Those churches, paintings, sculptures are still there after hundreds or even thousands of years perpetuating feelings, beliefs and hopes. I am not an artist; actually, I'm a dreadful draftsman. Nevertheless, I want to give to this world something that can encourage people to live with a sense of transcendence. My experience has taught me that trying my best in each one of the things I do, I am leaving a mark in the people that surround me. Moreover, with this attitude, I tempt people to try their best in their lives. Perhaps, I shall never paint as Leonardo da Vinci could. Yet, I can offer a witness of life in my daily journey to inspire people to cross the border of their own possibilities.

I have to acknowledge that, during my stay in Rome, I was strongly influenced by the life, words and witness of a man. Catholics called him the Pope John Paul II and for the rest of the world his name was Karol Wojtyła. I followed his travels, his public interventions and his health state throughout the year I stayed in Rome. I became amazed because of the integrity of his person. He was a business man, a government man, a faithful man. He crossed the limits of his country, his religion, and moreover, at the end of his life he exceeded the borders of his own strength trying to build a better world. Speaking more than thirteen languages, he could welcome into his work people from all races, religions and cultures. The

work of art of his life is worthy of transcending our days and being replicated for many others throughout centuries. For me, living near this sort of person has been a transforming experience.

I came back to America. This time Santiago de Chile was home for me. How friendly and affectionate Chilean people are! I enjoyed my two years of life in Santiago. As in Mexico and Europe, I repeated similar experiences. My ability to adapt was tested. As a result, my capacity for listening, observing, being patient and judging was improved beyond my expectations. I developed the skill of analyzing situations from different points of view, in order to somehow consider everybody's opinion and come up with the best approach to make right decisions.

Finally, I have lived in the United States for almost a year. I spent the first five months as an intern in a telecommunication company, where I could apply my analytical skills and systems expertise to implement information technology solutions. Now, I am improving my English as the first step to be part of this culture. I'm trying my best! I hope that my experiences abroad can support me in becoming a good asset to this society. I am currently applying for an MBA program at the UNC at Charlotte. I want to provide the business field with a more human sense.

I never thought that wanting to know what was beyond the mountains of the *Guarenas'* valley would lead me to all these experiences and finally bring me to the United States. Crossing the borders of my town, my country, and my thoughts has enriched my life in so many ways. It has given me new languages, the ability to be adaptable, maintain an open mind and be tolerant of others; and has increased my self-confidence, creativity and

independence. Overall, it has given me the habit of trying my best in everything I do, not only for my own benefit, but to encourage people to do the same.