BCA 2018 Intern Weekly Summary

Week 4

Our 4th week started at a really special place called Santa Fe Ranch. This ranch’s mission is to connect nature to people. They have an occupational therapy program focused on the connection between people and animals. This organization partners with the University of Arizona and with other local schools. They provide a space for students to learn about agriculture, water, and the different plants and animals that live in the area. After visiting the Santa Fe Ranch we had the opportunity to drive to a border ranch called Carmensita Ranch and have a first hand look at the positive and negative effects that the border fence has in this desert terrain. We walked around, asked questions and head out to visit Las Lagunas. On our way there we were stopped by border patrol. We pulled to the side and waited for the officers to come to our window. Of course my heart is racing, but Caleb and Patrick could not have been more relaxed. I had never been stopped by an officer in the United States before, but clearly Caleb and Patrick knew what they were doing. The first question; are you an american citizen? Patrick affirmed his citizenship. The officers asked for a drivers licence and some other information but Patrick decided to use his rights and kept responding he is a citizen. At this point my heart is probably going at 200 mph; I am not a US citizen. The officer keeps trying to get information about our whereabouts in the borderlines, but Patrick keeps exercising his right to remain silent. The border patrol agent leaves and talks with the other five agents that stopped us, he comes back to our vehicle and asks Caleb about his citizenship; Caleb affirms that he is a US citizen. It is my turn now; the officer asks me if I am a citizen, I respond: I am ….. (long pause) not, I am Colombian. I had my passport and my visa ready, so I hand in my documentation. After a couple of minutes the officer comes back, returns my documents and says; have a good day young lady! That was probably the most scared I have been during my experience in Nogales.

That day we had lunch at the best taco place on this side of the border, tacos la ley. Our first time in this place, Caleb, Danko and I had two tacos each, but Robyn and Patrick had none because they claimed to be vegetarians. But after 4 weeks in Nogales, there are no vegetarians left, this time we all had over 3 tacos, Danko even had 6. Later that day we attended Jose Antonio’s memorial.

On Wednesday we learned about the history and goals of Kino Border Initiative. This binational organization emerged in 2009 focusing of the needs of the community of Nogales. They noticed that the city was a big center of deportation and there was more need than help being provided; women and children were very vulnerable and humanitarian aid was not really organized. Kino Border Initiative has two main humanitarian projects that are the comedor and the women and children shelters. They work with other organizations and hope to humanitarize the deportation/migration issue.

Thursday was our day at court; we had the opportunity to see first had the work that Operation Streamline does with people charged with illegal entry, or with the felony of re-entry. Personally it was one of the hardest experiences I have had at the border, but it was eye opening see the consequences that individuals face after crossing the border without documentation through the desert. Later that day, Patrick and I met with young entrepreneurs and members of Universidad Ciudadana in Nogales Sonora. We learned about college life in Nogales and the different ways these young adults are helping the wellbeing of their city working with different organizations.

Friday and Saturday were our first two consecutive days off. We mainly tried to avoid the rain by going to the movies and watching different documentaries in our apartment about the drug war. Saturday night we decided to go out and dance in Mexico, but when we got to the club they told us we were too early so we headed to a nice little restaurant nearby and waited for the time to pass. There was a live band in this restaurant and the music they were playing was amazing. A couple of minutes after we got there, the singer of the band announces that if someone knows the lyrics to the next song they are going to play they should go on stage with them and start singing for a price. As soon as they played the first few notes I knew what song it was and I ran to the stage, took the microphone and started singing. I could not tell if Danko, Patrick, and Caleb were embarrassed or just really confused, but I enjoyed singing one of my favorite Mexican rock songs.

On Sunday we had an amazing bbq with the BCA board members and some of the BCA friends. We enjoyed our time visiting the ranch and learning more about the history of the Arizona-Sonora region.