



The Program

Based on successful initiatives from the New Orleans Public Schools Africana and Multicultural Studies Unit, including the 20 Africana and 3 Vietnamese Studies Resource Centers and the **Kids-to-Afrika** program, the Latin American Immersion Project (LAIP) is an innovative, critical effort to educate the students of New Orleans about the life, culture, and history of Latin America. Now in its third year, the project is organized in collaboration with the Latin American Resource Center, part of the Stone Center for Latin American Studies at Tulane University. LAIP is the only program of its kind in the entire state of Louisiana and one of very few programs in the country dedicated to teaching Latin America at the K-12 level.

The project includes a high school component based this year out of Eleanor McMMain Secondary School and a middle school initiative, which will begin in the spring of 2005 at Thurgood Marshall Middle School. At Marshall, we will be choosing advanced-level novels on different topics related to Latin America to be taught in week-long sessions through the school's language arts program. Tulane University will be funding the purchase of the books to be used in the classroom, and the LAIP coordinator will work in conjunction with Marshall teachers to bring in guest speakers, musicians and authors, and to establish lesson plans related to the literature chosen.

The high school program, which just recently moved to McMMain after two years at Warren Easton High School, consists of three major components:

The Class

A different Latin American country will be the focus each year. This year, the course will be a comparative look at Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The 15 students for the class are chosen on a competitive basis by the principal and teachers each year. This year's class is made up of advanced placement Spanish students. They will meet four times a week beginning in January and will be taught in Spanish and English.

The curriculum for the course and the primary teaching is done each year by a "**Country Expert**" from Tulane's Latin American Studies graduate program. This person holds the primary responsibility for teaching each session, designing the curriculum and lesson plans for the entire course, helping to plan and lead the travel portion of the experience, and recommending annual additions to the Resource Center. This year's "Country Expert" is Xelaju Korda, a Ph.D. Candidate whose extensive travel experience and expertise on the French speaking Caribbean, as well as Latin American urban issues, makes her an ideal candidate.

The Country Expert is working in conjunction with a "Head Teacher" from McMMain who is chosen each year by the principal from a Social Studies, History or Spanish background. This Head

Teacher works closely with the Country Expert and is assured flexibility by the principal to attend extra Latin America-related professional development activities throughout the school year and in the summers in return for his/her service. This year's "Head Teacher" is Ms. Mercedes Elizalde, a native of Mexico who teaches Spanish at McMain.

Resources

The Latin American Resource Center, consisting of curriculum and educational materials about Latin America, is housed in the McMain library under the expert care of the school's librarians. Each year new videos, maps, books, and other curriculum materials will be chosen about the new country, added to the collection and purchased with funds from Tulane's Latin American Resource Center.

The Country Expert and Head Teacher also have access to Tulane's on campus Latin American Resource Center Lending Library - one of the largest centers of its kind nationwide - which houses over 3,000 curriculum materials about Latin America for teachers.

Travel

The travel component allows the students to visit the country they have been studying and add an experiential dimension to their learning. Already, LAIP has taken groups to Peru (May-June 2003) and Brazil (May-June 2004). If fundraising is successful as in past years, students, teachers and chaperones will travel to the Dominican Republic.

Here are some highlights from our trips to Peru and Brazil:

Peru 2002-2003

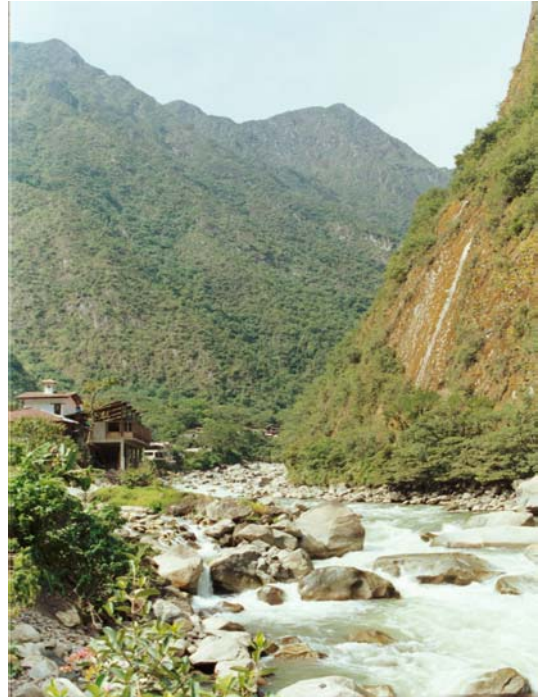
In June of 2003, nine LAIP students and three chaperones traveled to the capital city of Lima for three days, followed by a five-night visit to the city of Cuzco, nestled in the Andes mountains, and Machu Picchu, an ancient Inca stronghold outside of Cuzco.

In the photo to the right, the group stands in front of the Jesuit Cathedral in Cuzco's central plaza. Below, the group witnesses the wonders of Inca architecture at Saqsayhuaman.





Carlos, a Warren Easton student who participated in LAIP's Peru program, rests on the early morning train from Cuzco to Machu Picchu (left). Below, a view from the train.



Outside of the formal classroom training on the history and culture of Peru throughout the year and in-country excursions to Machu Picchu, folkloric dance shows, city tours, and an archeological dig outside of Cuzco, students visited an inner city high school in Lima. Later, students were invited to have dinner at a home for homeless youth with some of the Peruvian teenagers they met while attending ESL, Andean literature and math classes at the high school. In Cuzco, students also confronted the realities of Peru's struggling economy when President Alejandro Toledo declared a state of emergency due to teacher and government worker strikes.

Upon returning, graduating seniors moved on to greater opportunities, including full scholarships at Southern University of New Orleans and Louisiana State University. Several students have expressed interests in pursuing degrees in Spanish, International Relations and Education because of their experiences in Peru.



At left, Ricardo crowns his Inca princess at an archeological dig outside of Cuzco.

Brazil 2003-2004

Course Highlights

Using Brazil as our country case study allowed the program to tap into creative resources from the local New Orleans community and from Tulane University's Spanish and Portuguese department. The result of utilizing the greater Brazilian community was a rich array of workshops and guest lectures, rather than traditional classroom learning. Below we have mentioned a few:

Guest Lectures

Mr. Aaron Walker, Loyola University Spanish and Portuguese Instructor and Fulbright Scholar, used primary documents, discussion questions, historical comparisons with the US, his own experiences as a biracial individual, and probing questions about the students' own racial and ethnic identity to introduce issues of race in Brazil. He also spoke about his experiences living in Salvador da Bahia.

As we neared the 2004 carnival season, Fred Goes, Brazilian songwriter and Tulane University Rockefeller Fellow, opened students' eyes to the fact that just like in New Orleans, carnival traditions throughout the Americas share similar symbols and performative aspects that critique "official carnival culture". After a brief slideshow and music listening session, students attended the exhibition, "Carnival in the Americas," in the Tulane Latin American Library.

Workshops

In addition to our guest lectures, students (and parents) took advantage of our Saturday workshop series that included an Afro Brazilian dance class (see photos at right and below), conducted by Carolyn Barber Pierre from Tulane's Office of Multicultural Affairs and Department of Dance.



Students were also given two master classes on capoeira – a Brazilian martial art - taught by Curtis Pierre, Director of Casa Samba and Aaron Lorenz, PhD Candidate in Latin American Studies at Tulane (below).



A Student's Thoughts on His LAIP Travels in Brazil

Flavio Castillo, a senior at Warren Easton High School, participated in the LAIP trip to Brazil during the 2004-2005 school year. Below is an article written by Flavio about his experience in Brazil that was published in Tulane University's Latin American Resource Center fall newsletter.

Hi, my name is Flavio Castillo. I'm a student at Warren Easton High School, and I was one of the lucky chosen ones to go on the Brazil trip with the Latin American Immersion Project. When one of my teachers told me that I was going on the trip I was so excited, and so were the others. The process that we went through to go on this trip was long - from fundraising, to passports and visas - but it was all worth it, trust me.

When we arrived in Brazil, it was all that I was expecting. Our first stop was in the city of Salvador da Bahia, where we all stayed with a Brazilian family. My family was very welcoming and nice, the only problem that we all had was that we could not communicate in their language, Portuguese. Each house had someone that could speak English or Spanish, which didn't help much. But somehow we communicated, they understood, and for that we can give thanks to the patient teachers from the Dialago Language School in Bahia.

Our stay in Bahia was beautiful. We saw a lot of the city, went to a couple of beaches and even went to a soccer game. The Pelourinho in Bahia, the historic district, has lots to see since it's the location where slaves were bought and sold. The word "Pelourinho" means "a whipping post". Bahia's beaches extend as far as the eye can see. Too bad that we couldn't go when the beaches were more crowded with people - that would have been even more fun - but it was a beautiful day and the food smelled as good as it tasted. Brazil is known internationally for its talents in the sport of soccer, and we all had the privilege to go and witness a soccer game. For me, a soccer player, to see a game that I love was the most exciting part of the trip.

Our second stop on the trip was in the amazing city of Rio de Janeiro. During our stay there, we had the chance to go up to Pão de Açucar by cable cars connected by two mountains, and the view that these cars gave us was just breathtaking. We could see the entire city and if we focused well enough we could see the Cristo de Corcovado. (Two days later, we actually went to the Cristo, which is a giant statue of Jesus looking over the city.) And I think that our timing could have not been better, because we even saw the Olympic torch being carried through Brazil by Brazil's most famous athletes and celebrities. One of those famous people was one of Brazil's most talented soccer players, Ronaldo.

Our stay in Brazil was one of the most incredible experiences that I have ever had, and I think that we took advantage of every second that we could. I would like to thank everyone that made it possible for me and my friends to go on this unforgettable trip. It will stay in our memories forever...thanks.

At right, Flavio (front row, left) and his classmates on the steps of the Senhor de Bonfim church outside of Salvador da Bahia.



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LAIP

The Latin American Immersion Project



Impact

Education cannot survive in isolation, nor succeed without a diverse web of perspective. The pursuit of any knowledge is only richly understood by exploring the backdrop of our individual cultural history. This strategy ensures the excitement and active participation of students and adults of the community in their own educational process, and will ultimately ensure the efficacy of the New Orleans Public School District as an academic and social force.

The Latin American Immersion Project is an innovative effort to educate the students of New Orleans Public Schools about the life, culture, and history of Latin America, including the indigenous, African, European, and Asian heritage that make the region dynamic and exciting.

It is a unique and important experience that will encourage understanding, inspire exploration, and bring the world to the New Orleans Public Schools and local community.

Understanding

We believe any successful modern education requires an accurate understanding of the places we come from and an awareness of the global world that exists around us. The Latin American Immersion Project ensures our youth will be active, thoughtful participants in world society.

Contribute

This year, our course on Haiti and the Dominican Republic is well underway. Students have already begun their own grassroots fundraisers, but as in past years, the generous contribution from the New Orleans Public School district will not be enough to fund all students. Below, we have included an itemized budget for this year's proposed trip to the Dominican Republic.

Proposed Budget

Program Costs for Student Travel

Transportation:

International airfare	\$500.00
In country (transportation to Santiago and beach stay)	\$175.00

Santo Domingo (6 nights):

Package rate for language study abroad, including Room & Board (with Dominican family) Spanish language class (4 hours a day)	\$400
Transportation in the city \$5/day x 3 =	\$15.00
Excursions (tour guide and entrance fees) Tour of Colonial Zone, city tour, sugar cane museum, high school Visit, baseball game	\$60.00

Santiago (2 nights):

Package Rate (all inclusive)	
Hotel \$30/night x 2=	\$60.00
Meals \$10/day x 2=	\$20.00
Excursions Dance class, Haitian batey, cigar factory visit	\$30

Boca Chica (2 nights):

Hotel & Meals \$50 per day x 2 =	\$100.00
Excursions Beach trip, Jewish historical museum, etc.	\$20.00

Other fees:

Passport	\$85.00
International Travel Insurance	\$40.00
International Student Identity Card	\$25.00
Departure fee from DR	\$10.00

Total Per Student: \$1,540.00 (x 15 students) = \$23, 100

Direct Program Expenses

Pre-departure communication costs	\$ 200
Orientation	\$ 150
Student Contingency Fund	\$ 500

Total Direct Program Expenses: \$850

GRAND TOTAL TRIP EXPENSES: \$23,100 + \$850 = \$23, 950

Benefits of Sponsorship

Because of the unique and innovative nature of the Latin American Immersion Project, the benefits of Corporate Sponsorship are comprehensive, varied, and significant. In addition to opening the world to 15 African-American and Hispanic New Orleans Public School students, sponsors enjoy:

- Placement of name and/or logo in project's print promotional and student materials, including fundraising materials, sent to hundreds of local and national businesses. The program is also being promoted through email, print mail lists, and newsletters maintained by Tulane's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and its Latin American Resource Center.
- Mention of sponsorship in press releases, radio, newspaper and television interviews as a sponsor of the program. Please see attached coverage of our trips published in local newspapers.
- Placement of company/organization name on our website (www.latinamericanimmersionproject.org) in the "sponsors" section, and mention of the nature and extent of company/organization participation in the text of the "sponsors" page.
- Tax Deduction. The program, although run by the Public School District, does have 501C3 status.

Contact Us

Whether you are a business, a student, a local educator, or an interested community member, contact us now to share your expertise, resources, and to learn more about the program.

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