



HEAL

Humanism Evolving through Arts and Literature

April 2011 Newsletter

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Babycatching in Cartagena

*Diana Janopaul,
Licensed Midwife*

As a midwifery student, I had the opportunity to travel with three other students to Cartagena, Colombia to spend ten days in a maternity clinic delivering babies. We rotated through eleven-hour shifts, day and night, covering twenty-two hours every day. One of our patients was Rosa, a dark-skinned beauty, very young and sweet. She was being induced for pre-eclampsia, even though she had not one sign or symptom of being pre-eclamptic. Her labor was long and hard, and the doctors were beginning to talk of a C-section. She was the last woman laboring at the

Maria, a small woman of Indian descent, was laboring with her fourth baby. She was the "old woman" on the ward, giving encouragement to the younger girls around her. After many hours of slow, painful labor, the doctor decided to perform a C-section. The section couldn't happen, however, until her family was located outside the clinic so that they could pay for the surgery. She was hysterical from the pain and cold--operating rooms are kept at near-arctic temperatures. She was especially mortified that she was naked-- there were no such things as

hospital gowns there-- and the cloth they had tried to cover her with kept slipping off. I will never forget holding her in my arms while the anesthesiologist, finally, administered the epidural. She looked up and kissed me on the forehead and said "Gracias." I kissed her back, through the surgical mask I was wearing. "De nada."

On our last day, we delivered a seventeen-year-old sweetie named Tanya. Tanya's last name was "Valiente," which means "brave" in Spanish. And brave she was. She would grab Harmony's long braid and pull her head back with each contraction, then kiss her and apologize afterwards! During the hardest part of her labor, she began to beg-- not for pain relief, which was not even an

option in the clinic-- but for a "gaseosa"-- a soda. At first, I tried to convince her that water was a much better choice, but as I watched that young girl make her journey into womanhood, I decided that she darn well deserved a soda. I sent someone to buy her an orange drink, which she sipped out of a plastic bag with a straw. It was soon after her last sip that her little boy was born. He was tiny like his mama and born with a clubbed foot. We covered them both in flowers -- marigolds for healing.

Woman am I.
Spirit am I.
I am the infinite within my soul.
I have no beginning and I have no end.
All this I am.



Photograph by Michael Dender, Class of 2014

end of our first shift. Harmony went to her, put her arms around her and began to dance. They swayed together and Harmony began to sing.

Woman am I.
Spirit am I.
I am the infinite within my soul.
I have no beginning and I have no end.
All this I am.

I joined in, putting my arms around them both. We sang to her and swayed our hips in time. It was such a victory to welcome that beautiful baby into the world, not long before our first shift ended.

“¡En la sombra!”

Ann Sheddan, Class of 2014

As someone who speaks “un poco español,” traveling to a country where very little English is spoken was quite intimidating at first. However, even with the language barriers, I found I was able to communicate “mucho con los niños de Nicaragua.” For some reason, the children understood what I was saying, and spoke slowly enough so that I could understand them. My theory: the kids were used to hearing their baby siblings learning to speak and I probably sounded similar...más o menos.

At one of our clinics, I was working “crowd control” outdoors, and I was trying to have the kids move into the shade to play a game. It was stifling hot. I’m practically albino, and I didn’t know how much more SPF 50 my skin could absorb on top of all of the sweat. I was trying my best. I didn’t know the actual word “shade”, so I described it as best I could: “Donde el sol no es. Aquí.” Blank stares. The kids looked up, saw the sun, looked at each other and smiled like I was losing it. I kept going, trying to motion and act out “shade”. Really fun, try it. Finally a little girl who appeared to be about nine years old bellowed:

“¡EN LA SOMBRA!”

All of the kids ran into the shade and laughed. “¡Muchas gracias!” The little girl just gave a knowing smile and started playing the game with us. It was amazing to witness and participate in communication without sharing a language. I learned that even though my Spanish was full of errors, the children and the adults appreciated the fact that I was trying my best to speak the language.



Service Learning in Nicaragua

José E. Rodríguez, M.D.

Hundreds of patients
Essential primary care
Million-pede

Pool dueling monkeys
Tortillas and beans
Running

Mis priced missed flights
Direct to Miami
Welcome home



Photographs by
Michael Dender, Class of
2014

Returning to Kings County Hospital

Arthur Ginsberg, M.D.

Dr. Ginsberg is a neurosurgeon who practices in Seattle.

The compassionate gaze
on Sir William Osler's face
follows me from the cupola of his library.
In these sprawling wards, on beds

sheathed in coarse linen,
I learned to interrogate the heart,
to know the opening and closing
valves, hold an ear to the lungs

for rales and rhonchi, the signature
sounds of a drowning chest, to palpate
with my fingertip, a knobby liver
beneath the ribs, hard as a hickory gall.

To spelunk the body's caves
by headlamp and touch, to see beyond
the eye's pinhole, serpentine rivers running
and the ivory cable carrying the world

into the brain's rutted ridges.
On that journey I became a warrior
armed with Asclepias' staff, bound
by Hippocrate's oath, the serpent growing

new skin entwined around my feet.
I took with me to New York:
the prying ear of a stethoscope,
a white jacket and name tag, the child

inside me who died on the fever's
battlefield. I carried my ashes in an urn,
and joined one-hundred and ten interns
in the contagious corridors of the old

Kings County Hospital that stands
in Brooklyn's blazing desert. Graffiti crawls

its walls like kelp, and the wagons arrive
screaming with their cargo of wounded men.

Once, my feet scuffed these wards,
my hands measured blood pressure
and pulse, compressed the flailing chests
until the flat-lines sang no more.

On Flatbush Avenue the sick pile up
on steel gurneys stacked like boxcars
in a stockyard. *We are cattle*,
they cry. *Help us to die*. And I press

against the nursery glass,
drinking in the puckered, red faces
inhaling life, the bubbles on tiny lips.
A lifetime ago, I drove through Brownsville,

a graveyard of fractured walls,
pitted asphalt and shattered windows.
I ran red lights, looked away
from dark figures warming their hands

over can fires. Their faces vibrate
before my eyes, black as coal miners
pulled from a pit. Misery gathers
this world's dead weight on their backs.

Each night, more babies with cigarette
burns, the elderly, gaunt and cold.
The Lindens' leaves on the boulevard
have turned from gold to red.

My mother arrived in a hard snow
to scour my room in the dentist's office
where I lived, and brought freshly
laundered clothes. In this wasteland

she shone like a beacon, left a spotless
windowsill, this tidied room,
the orchestral bedsprings, anatomy books,
a goose necked lamp and vitamin pills.

No sleek, black monument honors the dead
on Flatbush Avenue where the old men
in the park are fed by the pigeons.
You forget you work in a place

where human life has no meaning,
the hopes of the hopeless are launched
and cast adrift. Lowell said,
the elected who promise to care,

*come here bright as dimes,
and die disheveled and soft.*

In the autumn I wander Kings County's
corridors again, searching for Miss Sardi,

the Sicilian nurse who tested my mettle,
blocked my exit from intensive care,
with mellifluous voice demanding the name
and dose of a drug for Pedro Martinez,

a dying man assigned to me on my first day.
I relive a chorus of respirators sucking air, red
diaphragms rising and falling in glass cylinders.
The usual, I blurted out, bolting through the
door.

An orderly informs me that she passed away.
From the deck of the Staten Island ferry,
my life leans toward a kinder season,
Ellis Island fading in the mist.

Still Life Revisited

José E. Rodríguez, M.D.



Photography by
Angie Elkins,
Music Therapist



Ana: A Story of Human Trafficking

Adapted from a story by
Wendi Adelson, J.D.

I'm so embarrassed that I was really jealous at first. I even remember a few nights when I woke up and saw that Ana wasn't sleeping next to me. I looked at the clock on the wall and waited ten minutes for her to come back from the bathroom. When she didn't come back, I explored the house to find her. I didn't want to wake the Cuencas, so I tiptoed as quietly as possible. After checking a few doors, I entered Martin's room. He had Ana in his bed, and she sounded like the stray dogs in our old neighborhood, when the mean little boys would corner them and pelt them with rocks. I called her name, and she told me to go away.

I waited up for her, and heard her when she crawled into bed. Our sleeping bags were pressed next to each other, but I moved mine closer to the wall. She had already made such a large space between us, putting

Martin in the middle. I felt betrayed.

I can see now why that was silly, but I didn't understand then. I didn't know that she didn't want to be with him. I only started to figure it out later that night, early in the morning, actually, when Ana went to take a shower, and Martin came to my bed, took out his switchblade, and held it tight against my neck.

"One word about Ana, and I will slit your throat." He pulled so hard on my long, jet-black hair that a few strands came loose and a little blood appeared at the scalp, and then he let go with one last tug, and I curled into a ball, too stunned to cry, too scared to move.

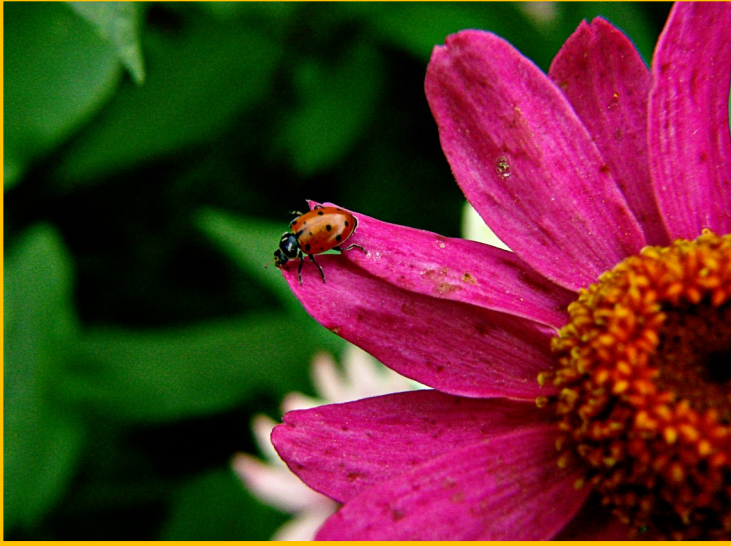
I was too scared even to talk to Ana about it. I didn't know what to do. I spent the next few days in a daze, going through the motions of work and sleep without feeling truly awake. I had thought that Ana was a virgin, like me. We were only thirteen and fourteen, and we had been told to save ourselves for marriage. It is a sin to have sex before marriage and Ana was not a sinner. She was a good girl from Jujuy, like me.

Ana never told me about everything that happened with Martin, and we spoke less and less every day. Several months passed; I lost track. I wondered if maybe she blamed me for helping her win the contest that brought her to the United States. It didn't seem like such a great prize now.

I woke up when she left our room every night for Martin, and on the nights that she did not leave herself, he came to get her, roughly grabbing her by the arm, and dragging her with him. I would wake up when Ana came back in, too, and she would crumble into bed. I knew something was wrong, but I was scared to talk to her about anything anymore. I felt so lonely in that house, and the loneliness sat there like a sneaky cat in the room at night, when Ana wasn't there to be my friend and confidant any more.

A few months later, Ana got sick into the sink while we were making breakfast. I told her that maybe she wouldn't have to work if she felt bad. She asked Señora Cuenca when she got up, but she refused. She told us that we weren't paid to be sick. Ana asked her,

(continued...)



We laid down in silence, snuggled in our sleeping bags, palms touching each other, and we both wept quietly. I cried for many reasons. I missed *mami* and even Maria. I missed school and our friends and my home and everything. Touching her hand I realized how much I had been missing Ana.

The door opened a crack and we sped apart, knowing it was Martin and not wanting him to see us interact. She groaned to her feet and I heard her steps on the floor as she walked toward his room. Just like that, she was gone.

I fell asleep and at some point I remember hearing a muffled scream, but I could have been dreaming. At 5 AM that morning, just like every other day, I woke up to our alarm.

Ana didn't get up.

I called her name. I nudged her. I coaxed her into the day. That didn't work. I knelt down next to her and squeezed her hand. It was cold.

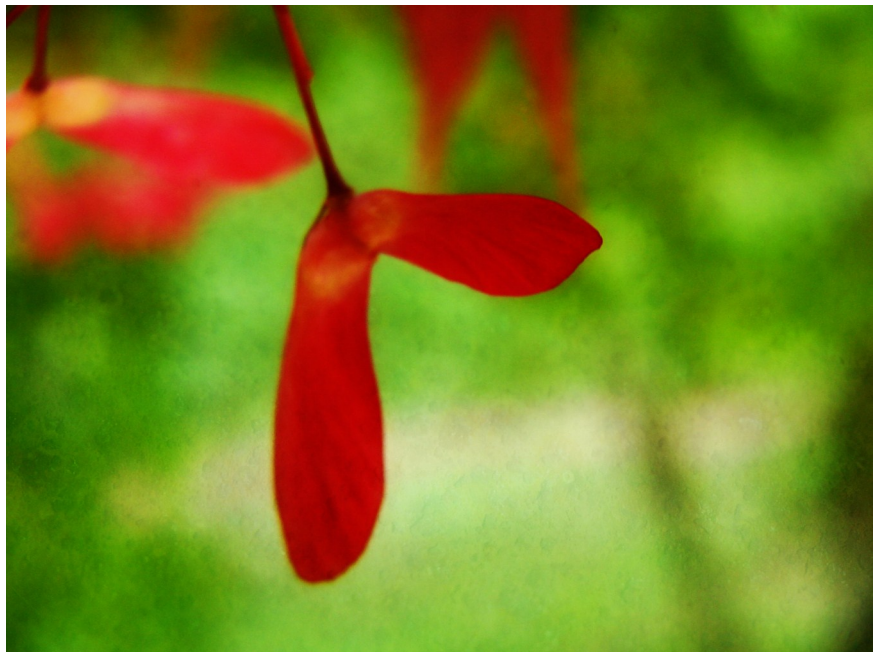
To learn more about Ana and Rosa, please contact Wendi Adelson at wadelson@admin.fsu.edu

"are we getting paid?" I remember that moment perfectly, painfully. Señora Cuenca slapped Ana in the mouth, and told her that we are costing her a good bit of money, and that we are paid every day as we work off our debt. Señora Cuenca said that every day with our eating lots of food, and using the electricity and the shower, we were costing her more money.

One night, when we were getting ready for bed, I saw Ana's naked body as she slipped into her nightgown. She was always thin, and her arms and legs were thinner than ever. Her belly, on the other hand, curved outward like she had swallowed a pumpkin. How I missed those pumpkin empanadas, straight from the oven, so much tastier than the fried ones Maria preferred. Her stomach looked just like one of those delicious treats, and I almost went to her then. She was pregnant, I had no idea how far along. She saw me looking then, and immediately turned away.

"Ana," I said, unable to form the words to say anything more.

"Don't, Rosa, you'll just make it worse." She spoke to the floor when she did speak, always this way now. I hadn't heard her laugh in longer than I could remember.



Progress Note

Elena Reyes, PhD

You can hardly talk,
eyes cast down,
tears streaming down your cheeks...
Silently

The pain so deep
the history of abuse so long,
that the memories torment you...
Silently

You walk to the edge of the dock
you think about your son,
a hand taps your shoulder; you turn
back...
Silently

You are not ready yet
but you have to leave,
you shyly smile good-bye looking hopefully down the road
Silently

I watch you go
proud of you...afraid for you
sending a prayer on your behalf,
Silently



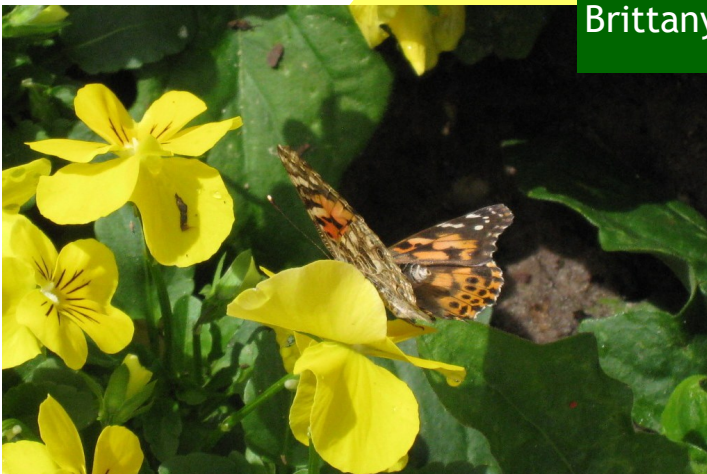
Photographs by

Brittany Jackson, Class of 2013

Breathe

Angela Green,
Class of 2014

I'm sitting in a room struggling to breathe.
Anxiety building
Self-perpetuating thoughts of failure and weakness grab hold of my mind forcing me to
Stop dead in my tracks
I can't breathe ...
Using a paper bag.. I..
Breathe in... and out...and then in again...
Hoping that the gases exchange and facilitate
the restoration of blood to my core...
Somewhere in my brain
I convinced myself that I'm not supposed to be
here...yet I long to be nowhere else
Breathe
In confidence so that it may radiate from your
skin
Breathe
In acceptance of self-limitations and self-affirmations of success
Breathe...
In self-love and let it pulsate through your veins
Breathe...
Don't forget to...Breathe...
Every time that you struggle to stand
Just...
Breathe in and walk again...
So now I breathe
Life back into self
I breathe...
Longevity and mental prosperity
Elevating thee...
I breathe and speak life back into your
broken vessel
Now you are ready return to the sea
again...
So...
Just...
Breathe...
And I be encouraged



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Thank you and we look forward to your excellent
submissions.