

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

My Identity Found in Argentina

Kyana Morgan · Wednesday, November 30th, 2016

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Cats, dogs, parrots, hamsters, and many other animals are put in cages when their owner leaves their home. Various advantages can be seen through this act. The cages keep the animals from danger, offer a secure territory, lessen the stress of the animal, and prevent them from destroying their surroundings. However, there is one disadvantage that outweighs all of the benefits. Animals who are enclosed do not get to live naturally and are forced to live in a small place for a long time, averting them from exploring the outside areas. Humans are very similar to these caged animals. Many people in the world today live and pass away within the same state or even small town. In other words, they never leave their cage. Millions of people stay inside their cage voluntarily in fear of the world and venturing out of their comfort zone. Humans have even created boundaries that separate state from state, country from country, and continent from continent.

Nevertheless, there are a select few who venture outside these boundaries and expand their horizons past what is visible to the human eye as they dig into their bodies in search of their true identity. Amongst the group of the few who have been courageous enough to do so, there's me. I have ventured outside of my safe-zone, all the way into the unknown Argentina.

My Early Childhood


Growing up in a diverse household, I was exposed to different cultures at a very young age. My mother, Myriam, is an Argentine who loves to drink her mate and eat empanadas. On the other hand, there's my father, Kelly, a native of Idaho. Myriam and Kelly's sharing of a household was short lived, divorcing just two years after my birth. Throughout my childhood, my home was quite different compared to others. Most children identify their home as a single house that contains all their belongings and where their parents and siblings reside. However, my home consisted of one house and one apartment, the apartment belonging to my mother and the house in possession of my father.

My mother's house was where the majority of my things remained and where my sister and I would plan out our future careers as professional volleyball players. It was a small and comfortable space in which bright beams of sunlight would shine through the windows to awake you from your sleep. The large, red couch stretched across the living room. It was the spot where I would read *Thirteen Reasons Why* over and over again, the book I was so deeply in love with.

Then came my father's house. Within the large premises, my father and stepmother would plan out their day, and sometimes wait upon my arrival. My sister and I would visit them on weekends, taking short trips to the park and selling lemonade on the corner. Both locations were full of

beautiful memories and stories to be shared. My one home, made up of two houses, was a loving one, despite the separation between my mother and father.

Into the Unknown

Since the age of 7, I recall my mother saying we would one day move far away to the silver  country, Argentina. Yet she only made these claims when she seemed to be falling into despair so I rendered them false. In 2010, my mother was diagnosed with Hepatitis C, a devastating revelation for my family. Throughout the process of her treatment, she slept for what seemed like days as her hair grew thinner. During this time, my mother began to repeat the phrase that resonates with me even today: "I want to go home."

I then realized her perception of home was greatly different than mine. Born and raised in the United States up to that time in my life made me believe that other parts of the world were the same, or at least similar. But her perception of the world was exotic to my mind. She was familiar with the human cages that surrounded most people, and she was able to break out of her own. She adored living in the United States, yet she became homesick and longed to see her family. In September of 2011, her aching grew so strong that she made a final decision for herself, my sister, and me. She decided to relocate all of our belongings to a house in the Republic of Argentina, and two of the items she definitely did not forget, were her two daughters.

My body was sore from the lack of movement on November 2nd, 2011. In normal circumstances, I would have walked throughout my town or even played volleyball if I felt this way. But this time, I couldn't. I was seated for hours on a plane with a final destination in Foz Do Iguaçu, Brazil. Luckily, I was able to sleep the reality away, and finally woke up upon our arrival, stretching my muscles and bringing myself back to my reality. Everything that met my vision was already so different from what I was used to. The runway was surrounded by tall trees and what seemed like millions of green plants, while the buildings were built with what seemed like a lack of structure. After waiting in the slow line of customs to enter the country, I was greeted by my uncle and cousin. I tried to communicate with them, but my lack of Spanish skills did not help me at all.

We crossed the border of the two countries, entering Puerto Iguazu, Argentina, my new home. My resting days only lasted about 72 hours until I was placed in a school called Instituto Privado Crecer. People seemed to be very interested in me, while I was fascinated with all of them. Our communication methods consisted of hand motions, and sometimes of them trying to say a few words in English, yet our conversations were brief. Even without speaking to my teachers and classmates, I began to fall in love with each and every one of them because they represented something different in my life.



Being thrown into a foreign place was difficult, especially for an 11 year old, but it soon became the best thing that would ever happen to me. It was an experience in which I was able to live outside of my cage, removing my thick layers of skin and peering into my inner self to uncover my true identity. I began from zero. It was a fresh place for me to start everything over. My relationships were new, my mind was expanding, and my ability to speak was barely forming. It was as if I was a baby, just learning how to walk. The mixture of cultures that I was now exposed to forced me to reevaluate what I had previously known.

Reevaluating What I Once Knew

My reevaluations began within the physical realm of our existence. Everything I was now subjected to was the opposite of what I had ever seen. In the United States, streets were wide and paved over, while in Argentina, they were narrow and made of dirt and rocks. People fixed

families of four or five onto small motorcycles because they couldn't afford to purchase secure cars. Others would walk miles to reach their work destination or school. Teenagers would stay out until dawn and then attend school as if they had slept a full eight hours. Dinner was served at ten or eleven at night, and lunch was uniformly served at one in the afternoon. All of the residents of the community were accustomed to this living, yet I was a newcomer in their customs.

The second roadblock I encountered was that of the reevaluation of my spirit. Previously, I had been so caught up in who possessed the greatest amount of fortune, even though I was not fully aware of it. My life in the United States was a constant subconscious engrossment in money and wealth. But when I moved away from this ideology of technological advancements and industrialization, I came to the realization that it held no importance. What is truly salient to our being is our spirituality and connection with humility and love.

This revelation brought me to truly love Argentina, despite its flaws.

Beginning to Live A Minimalist Life

While living in the United States, I thought of minimalism as a state of life in which you do not own a home, car, or many other things. I'm sure that I shared this thought process with many other people in our modern society. However, while living in Argentina, I had a realization. Minimalism became something very different to me. Instead of a focus on not owning anything at all, I realized that minimalism was a way to truly become free. My mother demonstrated that it's not about the amount of things we possess, it's the unnecessary importance we give them. Today, many people think that the loss of a possession would be a life or death situation. The most blatant example: a phone. Without a phone, people feel disconnected from the world and trapped. However, for me, it's the opposite.

Throughout the first year or two in my new habitat, I was never given a phone, computer, or any electronics that would keep me from my objective: to live a free life. At the time, I was unaware that these things could even affect my life at all. I never thought having any electronics would benefit me in any way. Therefore, I never even asked my mother for any. My mother also began giving to those who were in need, despite our own needs. She gave away clothes, food, and many other supplies to those who had less than us.

My mother told me that life is not about the materials you have or the objects you want. She said that life is about giving to others, not only in the material sense, but in the loving sense too. She began to recycle bottles, boxes, cans, and wooden crates. My mattress, for example, was held up by four wooden panels, mimicking a bed frame. She did not do this because she was cheap, rather she wanted to show her two daughters a different style of life that would open our eyes. After the years of moving myself away from the objects that humans hold so close to their hearts, I found freedom and peace. Without so many material distractions, I was able to begin to live in the moment, allow myself to grow as an individual, discover my true purpose, and realize that life is not about what you have, it's about what you give.



Moving Back to the United States

After three, almost four years of living in another continent, I returned to my place of origin. I moved back to the United States in order to pursue a high school and college education. In the beginning, I felt overwhelmed. Although I had lived in the US once before, I didn't have such deep connections with the country when I left, as opposed to when I left Argentina.

My world began slowly crashing down as I began to feel as if I did not fit in at school, and I started to miss my mother tremendously. However, I returned to analyze what I had learned from my

mother in Argentina. I needed to be grateful for what I had then, and instead of spreading my anger and misery, I could be enjoying what I already have. I began to cherish all the things I didn't have access to while in Argentina. Even though my US high school experience at the time was not at all like I saw in movies, I came to the realization that what held the most importance was the education I was receiving.

My mind was expanding as I began to learn about biology, math, and most importantly, my love for writing. I was so grateful to have the opportunity to learn things that I never thought possible, while others would complain about it not being good enough. Also, I began to treasure every moment I had with my family that remained in the US, most importantly, my father. It was as if my father did not fully know my true personality anymore, as I had developed into another person over the years. So I made up for all the lost times, and built a strong bond between us two. I was even grateful to be able to live in a beautiful area where I was not exposed to harm, while so many people in other places fear the darkness of night.

After realizing that I had so much to be grateful for and had nothing to complain about, I began to return to my original goal to live a life of freedom. Although my return to the United States was very tough for me, I realized that life is what you make it. So I made it beautiful.

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