

Neil Borland

November 8, 2012

**Statement - The Mountain Institute, Huaraz, Ancash, Peru**

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the board of the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation for supporting me during my 6 months working with The Mountain Institute in Huaraz, Ancash, Peru. It is difficult to sum up what this stage of my life meant to me in a short statement, but it was a mind-opening experience on many levels. As I tell my friends back home when I speak to them, I can say without any doubt that I have learned more in 6 months here than I have in 4 years of college. In a technical and professional sense, I learned firsthand about the inner workings of an international NGO, and about the rewards and many challenges of doing development work. In my work creating my final report for TMI I learned a huge amount about the science of bioremediation and passive treatment. With an academic background in economics and political science, the scientific component of my work at TMI - learning how bioremediation works and how systems are designed - was entirely new to me, and my first few months at the TMI offices were a crash course in chemistry and environmental engineering. In completing the social aspects of the report, I interacted in person with both members of the Campesino Community themselves and members of local, regional, and federal government on a regular basis. This work gave me real look into the everyday lives of those in the region and instilled an appreciation for the challenges they must deal with as result of climate change and the significant marginalization they endure under the current federal administration. This work also exposed me to the (often frustrating) world of local politics in Latin America and the huge obstacles that bureaucracy and corruption create for those doing development work.

Throughout my time in Peru I have gained an entirely new perspective on the costs and benefits of globalization, and witnessed firsthand how the great benefits it brings to many of us in the first world are mirrored exactly by the costs it inflicts on those in the developing world. Most importantly, I was able to experience firsthand the way that almost two-thirds of the planet lives on a day to day basis. Not only was I able to see the life of the developing world, I was able to live it and forge friendships with people for whom the third world is not a foreign concept but a daily reality. I have no doubt that this experience will drastically change the lens through which I see the world, evaluate my own priorities and problems, and how I treat other people. It will change these things for the better.

Thank you very much for your support. I have just moved to Colombia where I am currently teaching English, while looking for opportunities to get back into the NGO sector. I haven't gotten enough of Latin America quite yet!

Sincerely,

Neil Borland