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It is illegal for porters on the Inca Trail to carry more than 25 kg. My trip to the weigh station at the start of the trail in 2016 proves that this rule is consistently unenforced.

The Inca Trail is a popular four day trek to Machu Picchu. Many hire porters, indigenous men, to carry their equipment on the trek. This past summer, I explored my interest in the way globalized tourism impacts indigenous communities in Peru by interviewing porters, donkey

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INDIGENOUS LABOR RIGHTS IN PERU

drivers, and mountain guides about their lives, work experience, and political ideology. My research focused both on the economic implications tourism, and how the commoditization of a culture, influences perceptions of cultural identity.

I began my journey in Peru's capital, Lima. By becoming familiar with Peru's indigenous history and working with a human rights group called Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos APRODEH, I was able

contextualize my research and practice my Spanish. I spent my days reading about historical marginalization of indigenous communities, ethnic hierarchies, and some current-day legal battles in mostly indigenous communities. This part of my project was indispensable because it gave me a foundational understanding of the complexities of indigenous communities in Peru. Andino



communities make up a large part of the indigenous population in Peru, but there are many communities, particularly in the Amazon region, that are ethnically and culturally distinct. Although I study Spanish at Carolina, spending time in

Lima allowed me to adjust to using Spanish exclusively and mostly with native speakers.

After two weeks in Lima, I headed to Huaraz where I began interviewing porters, guides and arrieros. This made up the majority of the work I did throughout the summer. I wrote and conducted a systematic interview that lasted anywhere between 15 and 45 minutes. I collected and filmed 30 interviews throughout the summer in which I talked to campesinos who worked in tourist



industry about their experiences, struggles, and political preferences. In my interviews I found that most of the people working in this industry do so because they lack

opportunities elsewhere. Nearly all of them are from rural villages that lack sufficient education, job opportunities, and oftentimes basic infrastructure, such as potable water. I continued this research in Cusco where I found many people in similar situations despite Cusco being the gateway for one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world. Machu Picchu symbolizes the height of pre-Columbian culture and power for indigenous peoples throughout the Andes. Ironically enough descendants of that empire are now working under harsh conditions to show it to foreigners. Although tourism has extremely positive effects on parts of the community, other parts continue to



suffer. Despite the benefits of tourism there is persistent poverty, lack of opportunity in other fields, and cultural exploitation.

During my Burch summer I improved my language skills, contemplated the ramifications of a further globalizing economy, analyzed the dynamic nature of cultural and ethnic identity in connection to a market system, analyzed failed methods for collective bargaining, and thought critically about how to portray these experiences to the world that would most effectively create some kind of positive change. I was exposed to careers in fields in which I'm interested such as international law, investigative journalism, and academics. I learned practical research methods, and how to deal with IRB logistics. Most of all I was humbled to experience for a time, a reality so fundamentally different from my own.

I want to thank Mr. Burch and all of the people at Honors Carolina for making this experience possible for me.

