

End of Summer Report

My name is Jimena Perez, and I'm a fifth year student at Albion College majoring in Art History and minoring in Spanish. During my summertime, I spent my FURSCA project conducting research on the Japanese diaspora, also known as Nikkei, in Latin America, specifically in Peru and Venezuela. Over the 8-week period, I studied the social and historical context surrounding *Nikkei*, a documentary by the Venezuelan-Japanese filmmaker Kaori Flores Yonekura. The documentary speaks on the experiences and history of Japanese immigrants and their descendants as they have been forgotten, and therefore not considered part of the overall image of Latin America. I am taking Flores Yonekura's work to further question the notions of "Latinidad," that falsehood of unity amongst Latinxs/Latin-Americans. In order to shed light onto this particular group of people, I needed to understand how racism connects to nationalisms and excludes people who are not part of traditional understandings of "*mestizaje*" (racial mixing). This, then, excludes Nikkeis from being seen as Latin Americans, consequently leaving them out of history, which can bring a lot of questions of cultural belonging and identity. My goal for this research project was to gain a better understanding of what have been the key factors in history that have created the ideology of "the other" vis-à-vis racial and ethnic identities.

I took an interest in this topic during my third year at Albion after I read the memoir *Adiós to Tears* by Seiichi Higashide in a Spanish class conducted by Dr. Elizabeth Barrios. Ever since, I have been questioning why no one before told me about the history of Nikkei communities in Latin America. Therefore, I took the opportunity to participate in FURSCA and find those answers to my questions. For eight weeks, I analyzed articles, videos, books, and the main documentary to obtain the necessary information to start drafting writing pieces for my research

essay. Through these literary works, I learned that mass Japanese migration towards Latin America started in the 19th century under contract labor. However, Nikkeis faced a series of anti-Japanese laws, such as looting of their businesses and prohibited migration. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States asked Latin American countries to send their Japanese communities to internment camps and over 2,000 Japanese-Latin Americans ended up in the camps. This history is not easily found in history textbooks, which makes it a Latin America and U.S. problem. In order to break that cycle, unfiltered history needs to be taught and exposed. That is my goal with this research project.

My aim for my FURSCA work is to instill in the consciousness of people the aspects of history that governments, institutions, and other structures with power have tried to hide. For the future, I want to attend graduate school and further my education by obtaining a Master's or Doctorate degree in Latin American Studies. But before that, I want to present what I've learned at the Elkin R. Isaac Symposium. This experience has been incredibly helpful, as I am getting research experience for the future and I have been able to immerse myself with literary texts that left me a great deal of knowledge. I hope that in the future I can become a fundamental contributor to this Latin American Studies sub-field through a career path like art curation or creating content for educational networks.

I want to thank Dr. Barrios for guiding me throughout my FURSCA project. I also want to express my gratitude to Renee Kreger and Elizabeth Palmer for creating a positive and energizing environment for me and my fellow FURSCA participants. Lastly, I want to thank the donors for all of their contributions in order to make opportunities like this one happen. FURSCA has helped me feel much more prepared for my future endeavors.