

A Reflection Lily D'Anna

Good morning, for those of you that don't know me very well I am a student at Simmons University, formerly Simmons College. I recently have to decided to study public health at Simmons. This area of study really excites me because it is so broad, which allows me to connect to different health communities locally and globally. Puerto Rico was a great way to dive right into public health. It was also an opportunity that both my mom and I jumped at without hesitation, after being on several youth mission trips to New Haven, Connecticut.

In the two short weeks that I have been back at school I feel like I have been able to reflect the most on the trip. In those two weeks I have learned that environmental health, climate change, and healthy housing are three of the most pressing issues in public health. Healthy housing was the most neglected in Puerto Rico.

On the first day of work we drove about an hour and a half, down many winding roads and eventually arrived to an area in the mountains. As we drove in, you could see blue tarps on the roofs of houses for miles. After the lengthy car ride we arrived at the first job site. The house was small, it had a blue tarp on the roof, but was rather cute, in my opinion. "What could possibly be wrong with the house besides the tarp on the roof," I think to myself. Although, the house was thoughtfully decorated, both on the inside and the outside, boards were rotting, and the house was not even level. The two kind women living there had mosquito nets hung above their beds, their roof was bent from the hurricane and had holes in it causing water leakage into their home. As I currently sit in the library and write this I realize that this is not at all healthy housing.

Despite all of the needs of this quaint home, the homeowners were so kind. I was struck by the way they welcomed a group of white, english speaking strangers into their home without any worry. They even offered me a passion fruit, it was a new and interesting taste.

I am sorry that I can't be at church this morning, but I felt it was still important to share my reflections on the Puerto Rico trip. I also wanted to stress that there is still work to be done, a lot of it. There is work to be done in many many places, not just Puerto Rico. However, this trip alone sparked a new passion for me. I hope that I can go back to Puerto Rico in the near future and continue to work towards something great.