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Preserving Ancient Cultures through Medicinal Narratives

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PRESERVING ANCIENT CULTURES THROUGH MEDICINAL NARRATIVES
ACCOMPANIED BY *THE HEALTHY SIDE OF HEALING: A DOCUMENTARY*

MCKENZIE J. MOSS

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College
at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS MAY 2020

Francisco Cabanillas, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Advisor
Laura Sanchez, Department of Sociology, Advisor

Artist's Statement

"Preserving Ancient Cultures through Medicinal Narratives" is a comprehensive project that takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the effects that culture has on health. The project as a whole includes the initial work and readings I performed to better understand differences in healing between the cultures found throughout South America, where Inca culture is still prevalent, and that of the United States, as well as an independent documentary. The documentary contains my own personal commentary complemented by video clips of interviews I performed with individuals living in South America. As my readings and research continued, I became increasingly aware of the exploitation that the medicinal system in the United States is guilty of. I found that the United States operates under one of the most expensive health care systems in the world and is still one of the unhealthiest countries; an injustice that needed to be revealed. I was curious as to whether this exploitation was a result of our individualistic, corporatized culture and decided to compare the medicinal system here in the US with that of the culture passed down from the Incas in South America.

The documentary alternates between my own views regarding the criminal exploitation of Big Pharma and interviews with individuals from all over the world using healing techniques from South America. In addition to exploring what methods are available for healing, the project also focuses on giving people a voice and a chance to tell their stories. Common themes discussed in the interviews include the focus on ancestors, medicinal plants, empowerment, and holistic healing through diet and behavior. I conducted more than twenty interviews and included footage from fourteen of them in the final documentary. I interviewed individuals native to South America as well as individuals that had migrated to South America in search of a healthier lifestyle than their home country provided.

The documentary takes a somewhat cynical approach when discussing the medicinal practices of the United States. The project is in no way, though, meant to say that one country is better than another, but rather point out that certain aspects of one culture may be stronger than certain aspects of another and perhaps we should not continue promoting these weak aspects of our culture simply because of a fear of breaking from the status quo. *The Healthy Side of Healing* is intended for an audience from Western cultures whose medicinal systems are guilty of exploitation like that of the United States. The idea is to show individuals from Western cultures that there are other options regarding healthcare that may be more effective than utilizing exploitive pharmaceutical companies. I also do not intend to say that the healing methods discussed during the interviews are the only methods that should be used, but rather we should engage in critical thinking the next time our health is on the line.

I hope to develop this project in the future by conducting data analysis comparing health aspects of countries from all over the world and what may affect them. For example, I aim to determine what cultural aspects may affect health by comparing cancer rates from country to country as well as what percent of the country has access to health care. Other aspects of a country I would examine could include the countries' individualism, happiness, and wealth inequality ratings along with mortality and morbidity rates.

This project is the result of two summers spent traveling throughout 16,000 miles in South America. I visited five countries, spoke with individuals from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Spain, France, Germany, Australia, Malaysia, Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela. This work would not have been possible without the support from my friends, encouragement from Simon Morgan-Russell, Chrissy Shaal, Monica Hartzler, Katrina Heilmeier, Kacee Ferrell Snyder, and Laura Sanchez, time, cooperation, and resources from Francisco Cabanillas, funding from the Hoskins Scholarship and BGSU CURS program, and relationships with my new friends I met while traveling. To find the documentary, visit the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ik2rjPJch6k>

I dedicate this project to the life I created and lost in the final months of making this project; she has returned to Mother Earth.

Peace, Love, and Sunflowers,

Kenzie Moss