



ALPHA CHI OMEGA

NEWS, PHILANTHROPY, TRAVEL

Spring Break Service

March 28, 2018

Spring Break. It's a prayer, a blessing, and above all, a rallying cry for college students across the country. The week of refuge comes halfway through the spring semester, at a time when students seem to need it most, with exams, essays, and group projects flying in at lightning speed. At Alpha Chi Omega, spring break travels took our members all the way from the sunny tropics of the Bahamas to the chilly slopes of Colorado. Dorsey Shamblin, a junior Alpha Chi, spent her spring break on a mission trip to Cuba, a rather unconventional destination, and a country that only recently opened back up to the United States for travel.

Cuba, a communist nation, highly frowns upon Christianity. Just recently, several women were beaten and arrested while protesting the government and attempting to attend church on Palm Sunday. I sat down with Dorsey to talk about why she chose to spread the Gospel in Cuba, some close encounters she had with government officials, and why she wants to go back. Read on below to see the highlights of our conversation.

Who headed the trip, and how did you get involved with the program?

I did it through Real Life International. My uncle actually led this trip last year to Cuba. The year before that he led a trip to the Dominican, but he just fell in love with Cuba and the people. So that's how I found out about it and got involved. This is my second time, and I'm definitely going back.

What was your favorite moment from the trip?

The whole time I was there I just felt completely humbled by the people. I'll never forget, the last day, we walked into a ladies house who was at least 80 years old, and she had a bone disorder where her joints didn't match up right. She was so excited, it took her a minute to come to the door but she was so excited. She had these chairs for us, and the chairs were missing a seat, and so she went to her closet and pulled out cardboard boxes and squished them into a little seat for us to sit on. I ended up telling her how humbled I was that I was accepted into her country and I read to her from the Beatitudes. It says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall receive the kingdom of God.' I looked at her and I told her when I was little I thought blessed are the poor in spirit meant that the poor would receive a lot in heaven. But it means blessed are those who see their sins. I went off to tell her how much they have humbled me, and they might not have a lot here, but they're going to gain a lot in heaven. She looked at me and said "I think I'm a millionaire". And I'll just never forget that moment of her looking at me and so positively saying that she believes she's a millionaire, even in this communist country where she doesn't get to make a lot of money.



What did a day by day look like during the trip?

We stayed in the little city of Havana, and the first three days we woke up and drove an hour out, I'm not sure of the city we went to. We were connected with this pastor who was our tour guide, and he was also an interpreter so went to his church. We would meet with a lady of the church and she would have appointments set up for us to go from house to house in the little community surrounding the church. I didn't know this, but it was because they know the community so well, so they know which houses are safe for us to go and wouldn't turn us in. They knew which ones we could go into and share the gospel. That was really cool and kind of crazy. We'd stay there until the afternoon, and then we would go back to Havana and go to markets because we were there as a tour. We came in as a student cultural exchange, so we had to do tours and go to markets. I loved it, it was so fun. We could buy paintings and mugs, and then at night we would go back to a church that was in the city of Habana so we didn't have to drive to far. We would meet with a pastor there and we would just sing worship and someone would preach, then head back at 11. Then we'd wake up at 7 and do the whole thing over again.





Was there anything you were nervous about going into the trip?

Yes. There was one day, we were walking around; it was one of our first days that we visited the church. My interpreter was taking us to a house and, I'll never forget this, she turns around, looks at the house and tells us that they have family here, y'all know what to do. Family is what they call government workers. So we all had to get our cameras out and start taking pictures because we were there on a tourist visa. We couldn't figure out if they had figured out that we were there for missions. They might have wondered why we were there in such a small city.

Are mission trips not allowed in Cuba?

No.

You're not allowed to go up to someone and tell them about the gospel. You have to be accepted into their house. If they allow you to come in, you can do that. Our interpreter told us not to go up to kids and give them stuff; there was a school right around where we were. So, if a little boy or little girl was coming up to me I couldn't give them anything. We had made little dolls; one side was before you were a Christian and the other was after, so it had a happy and a sad face. She said don't give them dolls in the streets, don't give them anything from your backpack, if they come up to you just kind of ignore them. That was kind of scary because we were trying to figure out if someone in the community had told them that we were there and doing missions. That was a little scary, but they ended up leaving us alone. I actually ended up taking pictures of the government workers, which you're not allowed to do, while I was taking pictures of the school.



Is Christianity illegal in Cuba?

It's not illegal, but because Cuba is a communist country, it's looked down upon. But if I went up to someone and started preaching the Gospel, that would be illegal. As long as they invite us in their homes and then we share, it's legal. Any other religion they kind of let you do what you want, but Christianity is just so new there. The pastors really want to keep Christianity pure, so they're very, very conservative. Everyone else who is a different religion is more crazy and outgoing.

Who went on the trip with you?

I didn't know anyone going into the trip. There were two guys from Alabama going, but I didn't know them before. The rest were from Auburn and Samford, some Ole Miss kids, and some from UAB. It was just kind of a melting pot. I would say that was one of the things I was most nervous about, not knowing anybody. At the end, one of the best parts was building relationships with people I had never met before.

Do you have any funny stories from the trip?

Oh, gosh. I ended up with so many bruises from falling. One time I fell when I was bringing my friend water, because she was getting dehydrated, and I fell walking out of the house. This little man who spoke no English was trying to help me but I still fell. Then one time I ran into a cactus. I would go to bed at night and find more bruises all over my legs. I remember, we were playing ball with the kids because we did a type of VBS (Vacation Bible School) one day and someone hit me in the head. I started bleeding and I said I was fine but I had blood dripping down my face. The scar is kind of gone now. Since I've been back I think I've set a record for the number of days I've gone without a bruise!



In 10 years from now, when you look back, what will you remember most from your trip?

Meeting my friend Lisset. She was our interpreter, and she's my age. It was funny, she was writing her name down for me and I thought she was writing down her address. Meeting her was the greatest part of the trip. I've never met anyone that was so proud of who they were and proud of the things they owned. The first day, she ran up to me with a Dove bar and was so excited that she got a Dove bar for her birthday. [I loved] just getting to talk to her and getting to hear her stories of how she was persecuted a lot growing up by the government and by her teachers. She was the only Christian at her college. The last night we were there, I asked her what's your biggest fear in life. She looked at me and said 'not sharing the Gospel everyday with someone.' I will just never forget that because I come back here (the US) , and I think about people being Christians and doing the right thing, when there, they're actually living it out. They might be getting looked down on and persecuted by their friends and family, but they still desire to be with God no matter what the cost is. She's had to suffer a lot. She got a Visa to come to America, but they found out she was coming to work for a church, and they didn't allow her to go. She was going to do this (interpreting) for an internship for her major, but when they found out what it was through they decided to not give her any school credit. She taught me how to love everyone and to be grateful for everyday and every opportunity you get, because you never know when it's going to be your last. She's so cool, I miss her.

Written By: Hannah Taylor

By Alphachi

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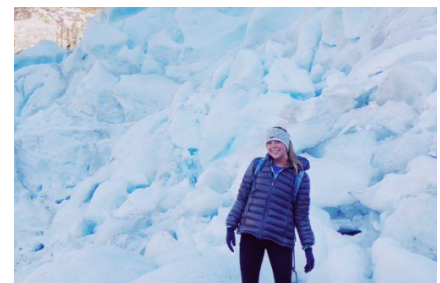
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