

Hey there!

Que ondan hermanos!?! How are y'all doing? What's new...did anybody become famous?? Ok so where do I start? So much has happened since I came to Miami. For instance, I learned that men can read smaller letters than women but that women can generally hear better than men...How fun to know. It's called un-useful knowledge :)

I've been in Miami for a month now. Time goes by quickly. I must be getting old. So here's for you:

The Adventures of "La Vieille" (the old lady)

It's been a great first month. Love the city, love the people, love my job. I live with five other interns, in a neighborhood called "Little Havana", an almost all Latino neighborhood. Never before, have I lived in a neighborhood where I kind of look like everyone. It's funny.

My roommates are fantastic people. The only problem we've had as a household is that nobody knows how to cook! I'm determined not to eat Kraft Dinner all year long so I'm learning how to cook and actually enjoy it. Of course, it's not always super good...ok, maybe pop tarts and avocado salad wasn't the best idea...but I like to try new stuff. Then, I test it on my roommates :) Pff...it can't be that bad, they're still healthy.

I work with Touching Miami with Love, a non-profit faith-based organization that works with individuals and families in Overtown as they respond to life's challenges. My official title is volunteer coordinator. But I'll be doing many different things. It just sounded pretty :) In the next few months, I'll be involved in community development/organizing type of stuff but for the time being, I read and attend various workshops. I need to understand the social delivery system in Florida in order to better help the people I'll be working with.

I really like Overtown. The more I read and learn about its history, the more excited I am to be here. Overtown is home to approximately 11, 000 residents, almost all African-American. It used to be a beautiful and vibrant city. But today, Overtown faces many problems that are directly related to systemic racism. The neighborhood remains sadly segregated in 2005.

On Sundays, I go to the Downtown Mission. Most of the people who attend the service live on the streets. I'm slowly starting to build relationships with the people at my church but it's hard to go beyond: "Hey! How are you? It's pretty hot today, ay?". Ok, I'm the only one that says "ay" at the end but for real, it's hard to have deeper conversations than that. WHY? I think it's because it's hard to build relationships with people who are very different from us. Someone once said: " A lot of people want to help poor people, but not many want to be their friends". Isn't it sad? But I think it's true. Young people tend to hang out with other young people, homeless with homeless, Latinos with Latinos, rich with rich, Caucasians with Caucasians, etc. This is not always the case, but most of the time it definitely takes a conscious effort to build friendships with people who are different or have different backgrounds than us.

On Sunday mornings, I see these differences and the barriers we create...Isn't it weird that a different skin color frightens humans? Let me tell you, on Sunday mornings, I flash in the crowd and it's not because I want to. Like my brothers and sisters at the Downtown Mission, I feel uncomfortable sometimes. It's a bit like in the movies when there's like 2 white people in a school and they try to fit in some crowd...or like a poor person in a rich high school...:) You know, an outsider. But it's ok. I came here to experience that. So I pray and make efforts to start conversations with my brothers...even if we're only going to talk about the weather:) We worship the same God. We are all in need of Him and we need each other. Really, it's a beautiful thing...

Here are a few prayer requests:

- 1) My relationship with God. That I may stay focused on Him.
- 2) For the staff at TML and for the Overtown community. Pray for friendships to be formed...and for fear and injustice to come to an end.
- 3) For adaptation. Things are going well but continue to pray for that. Especially for the language. I'm getting more comfortable speaking English and Spanish all the time so that's good.
- 4) I love you! I leave you here. Thanks for your prayers, e-mails, and recipes. You are a blessings to me even in the distance. May God bless you with all that He's got on reserve for you,

Dalia aka B.I.G. D xox