



Grupo Gay da Bahia: Agents of Change And Possibility



Salvador Bahia, Brazil

Salvador is located in northeast Brazil; one of Brazil's more economically challenged regions, but one of the country's most culturally rich and racially diverse, as

Bahia is the state with the highest number of individuals of African descent. The state has an extremely high rate of HIV infection among men who have sex with men (MSM) and among the trans population. In a recent study, it was reported that 36% MSM do use condoms. (Avert, 2018)

Placement/Project Information

Field placement: Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB) is Brazil's the oldest association for the defense of gay and lesbians in Brazil. It was established in 1980 by Luiz Mott (in center photo). In 1983, it was one of the first organizations in Brazil to report about and inform the public about HIV/AIDS. This was an incredible feat because Brazil was still under a military dictatorship. Four months after Time magazine reported about "Sarcoma Kapsi" in the USA, GGB reported and disseminated information about this "mysterious disease", making GGB one of the first to talk about ways to protect against the disease.

Outcomes

During my time at GGB, I translated document from Portuguese to English. The material will eventually be disseminated to English-speaking populations. I am also had an opportunity to interview Luiz Mott, the former president and founder of GGB, about health and HIV rates in Brazil. Lastly, I am completing a paper with my advisor document my experience and future plans.

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Skills Utilized/Developed

At GGB, I truly saw how diversity and difference can bring people together. As an organization, it was apparent that they build relationships within the community as well with policymakers and government officials

Classroom + Career Connections

Before departure, I worked closely with my advisor. A few classes that prepared me for the global independent study were: SW 560 and SW 611. These courses helped me understand how policy works and the possibilities of change.

Advice

Have another project on the back burner. Sometimes your hosting institution is small and the supervisors are overwhelmed because they are doing important things and putting out a lot of little fires. Be flexible and don't get stuck with thinking about the end product – enjoy the process.



Lessons Learned

Take time to enjoy the city. I played tennis with Pedro Silva (he is 73!!). He has been teaching tennis for more than 40 years. I saw a theatre performance with colleagues and had great Brazilian food after the show. Part of understanding the the organization is understanding the culture and the country!

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