Xocolat: Community and Cacao

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Xocolat: Community and Cacao

by

Ryan Hubbard

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Graphic Design

Program of Study Committee:
Alex Braidwood, Major Professor
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2016

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CHAPTER 1
ABOUT XOCOLAT
'Xocolat: Community and Cacao’ was a project built around Central American culture, everyday life in the Cacao fields of Nicaragua and personal experiences collected, through photos and journal entries, over the course of five years. I wanted my written component to reflect my time in Nicaragua, which at the time, was the poorest country in the Americas and sat just behind Haiti as being the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Technology has not reached the rural towns where I spent several years of my life. Just as the furniture, farm equipment and homes are built by hand, so were the written documents, which were often written on scraps of recycled paper found in the home. Full letters and work documents were written within the margins of existing pamphlets and books, avoiding any chance of household items going to waste.

I decided to compile a series of journal entries to accompany the chocolate shop that I designed, built and assembled, telling the story of how they came to be and illustrating some of the experiences that inspired this space. From the lighting and benches, to the journal entries and package design, everything was built by hand and modeled after the lives of people in rural Nicaragua. If you have visited that part of the world, you will find it to be instantly familiar. The benches reflect church pews in their design and assembly. The colors and typography of the light installations fall into the bright color scheme of the artesian markets of Masaya. Journal entries are written carefully by hand, slowly constructed to be passed on, while leaving gaps to be filled in the future by school children and mothers in search of a free page margin to practice their arithmetic or jot down an important bible verse.
My hope for this installation was to build a space and an experience that were enjoyable and sustainable; using only what I could find and leaving any scrap of wood or margin of space that I could for future use.

These are my stories.
CHAPTER 2
MOMENTS BEFORE DEPARTURE
IF CRAMMING A LOT OF CRAP INTO A SMALL BACKPACK WAS AN OLYMPIC EVENT, I'D BE A GOLD MEDAL CONTENDER.

THE TIME HAS COME TO JUMP ON A PLANE. I'LL BE IN DC ON MONDAY AFTERNOON AND PLAN TO CHECK INTO MY HOTEL ROOM, DROP OFF MY LUGGAGE AND EXPLORE UNTIL I CAN'T EXPLORE NO MO. TUESDAY, I'LL BE ATTENDING A STAGING EVENT TO GET A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE PC; MEET SOME OTHER VOLUNTEERS THAT WILL ALSO BE LEAVING FOR NICARAGUA AND MAKING SURE THAT ALL OF MY PAPERWORK, VISA AND PASSPORT ARE IN ORDER.

I'VE NEVER BEEN TO DC, SO I HOPE TO SEE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WITH MY FREE TIME. I'LL BE STAYING ON 15TH STREET, AROUND 6 BLOCKS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE, SO I COULDN'T HAVE HOPE FOR A BETTER HOME BASE. ONCE IN NICARAGUA, I'LL BE BOUNCING AROUND A LOT BUT YOU CAN FIND ME HERE:

RYAN HUBBARD, PCT
APARTADO POSTAL 8256
MANAGUA, NICARAGUA
AMERICA CENTRAL
CHAPTER 3
STEPPING OUT
WELL... AS MOST OF YOU ALREADY KNOW, I’M LEAVING ON MONDAY, MAY 9TH TO START A NEW CHAPTER. AFTER COMPLETING STAGING EVENTS IN WASHINGTON D.C., I’LL BE LOADING MYSELF AND A BACKPACK ONTO A PLANE AND DEPARTING TO MY NEW HOME; NICARAGUA. AS AN AGRICULTURE VOLUNTEER, I WILL BE WORKING MOSTLY IN THE FIELDS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND IMPROVED FOOD SECURITIES AND PRESERVATION. I WILL BE SPENDING THE NEXT TWO YEARS SERVING MY COUNTRY AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER, HOPEFULLY IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS OF RURAL NICA.
I've experienced the entire spectrum of emotions over the past few months. But now that the time has come to go abroad, I'm feeling cool, collected, and prepared. After attending a 'Bon Voyage' party on Sunday and speaking with past volunteers (one of which was stationed in Nicaragua!), there is no doubt that this is what I was born to do. I know that the next two and a half years will be difficult, physically and emotionally. But for the first time, I feel like I'm making the right life decision. It's a wonderful and liberating feeling.
Below, I have included a very small section of my first Peace Corps application essay to better explain why I’m leaving home. Thank you all for your love and support. I feel truly blessed to have each of you in my life.
CHAPTER 4
UN CAMPESINO, SIEMPRE
This week, I experienced my first real trip to the Nicaraguan countryside. Although my heart has been content during my travels and in the Nicaraguan towns, this week confirmed what I’ve always known; my soul lives in ‘El Campo’.

Yesterday was Mother’s Day throughout Central America and the holiday is wildly important to the Nicaraguan people (as it should be). In every house, this is a full, day-long event full of festivities, quality time spent with the women you love, and paying respect to ones that have passed away. I’ve learned to appreciate and embrace most rituals and daily activities here but the love and attention given to all moms on this day has been my favorite cultural aspect of Nicaragua so far.
We left the house around 5 am to visit extended family in León, around three hours from Diriamba. The drive was beautiful; mile after mile of emerald-green farmland and forest scattered with houses and corner stores. We pulled into the city of León and my host dad, Ramiro, gave us the Grand Tour. We stopped first at one of the larger markets to buy flowers for his deceased mother. After buying three bouquets, we continued on to the main cathedral in the heart of the city.
THE CATHEDRAL WAS HUGE, FILLING UP AN ENTIRE CITY BLOCK. MY HOST FAMILY IS CATHOLIC AS IS THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE THAT I'VE MET HERE, SO THEY WERE ABLE TO EXPLAIN ALL OF THE ARTWORK TO ME ALONG WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE INSIDE THIS GIANT, WHITE CHURCH. INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL WERE THE REMAINS OF THE FAMOUS NICA POET, RUBEN DARÍO. HIS BODY IS GUARDED BY A LARGE, MARBLE LION. I DON'T OFTEN FEEL MUCH OF A CONNECTION TO CHURCHES, BUT THIS CATHEDRAL BLEW ME AWAY WITH ITS BEAUTY.
WE WALKED OUTSIDE AND BOUGHT SHAVED ICE FROM A VENDOR IN THE PARK. MY HOST DAD AND I SNACKED ON OURS WHILE WE WALKED THROUGH THE CITY STREETS, ADMIRING THE MEMORIALS AND MURALS OF PAST REVOLUTIONS AND THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED AND DIED FOR NICARAGUA.

WE LOADED BACK INTO THE BED OF THE TRUCK AND BEGAN OUR JOURNEY INTO THE ‘CAMPO’. ON OUR WAY OUT OF TOWN, WE STOPPED AGAIN FOR A POST-BAPTISM LUNCH FOR A NEPHEW/COUSIN OF THE FAMILY. I HAD A CHANCE TO SIT AND SPEAK WITH TWENTY OR SO FAMILY MEMBERS, ALL VERY CURIOUS ABOUT THE PALE-SKINNED STRANGER THAT SHOWED UP TO LUNCH WITH THE GRANERA FAMILY. THE ONE THAT I SPENT THE MOST TIME WITH WAS MY DAD’S 89 YEAR-OLD FATHER. WE SAT AND ATE TOGETHER, HIS LEGS CROSSED INTO HIS PLASTIC CHAIR, BLUE SHIRT UNBUTTONED AND HIS WEATHERED FACE PROTECTED FROM THE SUN BY THE BRIM OF A LARGE BLACK COWBOY HAT. WE SPOKE FOR OVER AN HOUR ABOUT VENOMOUS SNAKES. I STILL DON’T KNOW HOW WE GOT ON THE TOPIC.
WE DROVE ANOTHER 20 KM INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE, STOPPING AT A SMALL CATHOLIC CHURCH WHERE MY HOST DAD AND OLDEST SISTER WERE RAISED. WE WALKED DOWN TO A SMALL, BRIGHTLY-COLORED CEMETARY WHERE WE SAT TO PAY OUR RESPECTS TO MY HOST GRANDMOTHER. WE TIED FLOWERS TO HER HEADSTONE.

The ranch house wasn’t too much further down the road. Protected by fields of bright green yucca and sugarcane, cattle, horses, wild dogs and more chickens than I cared to count, this wooden-beamed farmhouse was amazing. Very modest and perfect in every way. I met some new family members and walked to the edge of the property to stare out into the expanses of rolling green. The only sounds came from insects, hungry birds and the booms of an approaching storm, pushing black clouds from inland. I soaked in all of the sounds and smells of that field for quite some time. It felt like home.
At sunset, I walked with a small army of women and little girls through the fields to buy treats from a small shop. The darkness and heat lightening chased us home and with the exception of a few major tragedies (spilled chips and candy, which each triggered an explosion of tears) we made it home safely. By 8 pm, the sun had been gone for hours and replaced with fireflies. The sky opened up into one of the most intense and active electrical storms I’ve ever seen. I watched it all night from my hammock.
I rolled out of bed around 4:30am, winked by the 80 stirring bodies that slept in hammocks all around me, the packs of barking dogs and the calls of screaming roosters (don’t even get me started on roosters, they will absolutely be my undoing). By 5, the sun had fully risen and a cousin asked me if I could ride a horse. He seemed genuinely happy when I replied “si hombre, claro”. We saddled up two horses, opened a few gates and chutes and drove a head of around thirty cattle through the countryside, up to another pasture to graze for the day. The ride was beyond gorgeous; ever shade of green imaginable. Vibrant birds sat above us and five volcanos ahead of us on the horizon. I focused hard to snap as many mental pictures as possible.
MY COMPANION WAS VERY INTERESTED IN WOOING LOCAL GIRLS IN ENGLISH AND HE LAUGHED WHILE I SHARED AND TRANSLATED A FEW PICKUP LINES. "HOW MUCH DOES A POLAR BEAR WEIGH? JUST ENOUGH TO BREAK THE ICE. HI, I'M HORIZO." THE SKY OPENED BACK UP OVER US ON OUR RIDE HOME AND THE RAIN CAME DOWN IN SHORT, HEAVY WAVES.

AFTER LUNCH, A GROUP OF US DROVE TO CERRO NEGRO (THE BLACK HILL), ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS VOLCANOES IN THE COUNTRY. WE HIRED TO THE TOP. THE BLACK, VOLCANIC SOIL BAKED BENEATH OUR FEET AS WE ASCENDED. WE LOOKED DOWN FROM THE CREST AND COLLECTIVELY DECIDED TO RUN DOWN THE FACE. WE RAN, JUMPED AND TUMBLED AT FULL SPEED, LAUGHING AND YELLING THE WHOLE WAY DOWN. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS, I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE AN OUTSIDER. RACING DOWN THAT HILL TOGETHER, LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES DIDN'T MATTER. WE WERE JUST KIDS HAVING FUN TOGETHER.
We headed home around 9 PM, exhausted. We ate dinner and gave my mom her gifts. I'd gotten her a set of six lotions and made her a card. I had spent a full day last week in a panic because I couldn't find her a proper gift. All I knew was: she likes floral-smelling lotions and has little decorations throughout the house. I was lucky enough to stumble across an unmarked perfume shop in town. The sad part of this is the fact that I brought an entire bag of gifts with me from the U.S. But that the gift bag was filled with all men's gifts. So I'm ending my day the happiest I've been all month, laying in bed tired and sunburnt, relieved that I was able to find a gift for my wonderful host mom and wondering how I moved with a bag full of men's gifts to a country run by women.
CHAPTER 5
MOMENT OF TRUTH
Seated directly across the living room from my PC Nicaragua site coordinator, Bayardo, I chose my words carefully. We started our conversation in Spanish and guiltily, I asked if we could continue in English. This was the day that I had been waiting patiently for, preparing for, and secretly dreading for months now and I didn’t want my future to be decided by a misspoken word. This was the moment of truth and my conversation with this soft-spoken man would determine my home for the next two years. My preferences for my future site were vague but I had two simple requests: “Bayardo... put me in the jungle and put me deep.”
I had been sick for at least three weeks when I arrived to Estelí, in and out of bed, trying to pull it together for Spanish and Ag classes. I had only been in Nicaragua for two months and had already been on antibiotics three times for bacterial infections and parasites. We were all meeting up in a hotel for a couple days to meet and spend time with our Nicaraguan and INTA (Instituto Nicaragüense de Tecnología Agropecuaria) counterparts. Mine turned out to be one of my host brothers, Elmer. He was a shy 20-year-old who was nice enough to travel by bus and stay for two days with a gringo who he'd be sharing his space with for an unknown amount of time. After introductions, we left together that afternoon to make our way to Jucuapa, my new home. We traveled, packed into a loud, crowded bus with almost no conversation between us, me being sick, and him being silently shy.
All of the Aggies had a meeting together a week later and seated together, one-by-one, we learned where we had each been placed. We were given our site, a packet with a brief description and a thumb tack to pin into a large map at the front of the room, allowing us to all see where we'd each be and how isolated or connected we would be to the world as we knew it. My site (as was the case with most of the volunteers) was my first choice; Juchapa Occidental in the municipality of Matagalpa, Nic. The material that I was given for my site was minimal at best but what stood out to me was the possibility for watershed and agro forestry projects. I had never been to this region and knew very little about it. What was clear, though, was that I would be living in a very remote community and the prospect of these environmental projects was exactly what I had always hoped for.
WE MADE IT TO THE CITY OF MATAGALPA AROUND 3 PM AFTER A QUICK, TWO-HOUR BUS RIDE FROM ESTELÍ. WALKING THROUGH THE NOISY, DUSTY MARKET, ELMER REMINDED ME THAT TRANSPORT IS VERY LIMITED TO HIS HOUSE. WE HAD MISSED THE ONLY BUS FOR THE DAY BY THREE HOURS, SO WE HAD A COUPLE OPTIONS: STAY WITH HIS SISTER IN THE CITY FOR THE NIGHT AND TAKE THE NEXT BUS UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS THE FOLLOWING DAY AT NOON OR HIKE THE 11 MILES OF ROAD THAT SNAKES AT HIGH (BY NICARAGUAN STANDARDS) ALTITUDES THROUGH THE JUNGLE.

— "I DON'T KNOW, MAN. IT'S UP TO YOU. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I WASN'T HERE? WOULD YOU HIKE OR WAIT?" I ASKED.

— "WELL," HE SAID WITH A CHALLENGING GLEAM IN HIS EYE "I'D HIKE IT. BUT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DO IT WITH YOUR BACKPACK?"

I'D GOTTEN THE ANSWER THAT I HAD HOPED FOR AND WITH A NOD IN THE DIRECTION OF THE HOUSE, WE STARTED OUR JOURNEY HOME.
When we started the hike, I knew that I was jumping in arrogantly. I kept reminding myself that it was only 11 miles in. I could picture Luke, my past forest service partner and wilderness BFF, smiling and shaking his head in disgust. We used to hike twice this distance every day with 100 pounds on our backs, our arms filled with crosscut saws, usually ending the hike with a footrace. Sure, we'd hiked more distance over steeper terrain. But never sick and never in the tropics.
THE HEAT STARTED TO
BEAT DOWN ON US AND
MY BODY BEGGED FOR
CLOUDS. MY STOMACH
AND INTESTINES
THROBBED WITH PAIN.
INFECTED AND VERY
SWOLLEN, AND AS I
FELT THE MOISTURE
ZAPPED FROM MY
BODY, I WAS SO
GLAD THAT I HAD
FILLED MY WATER
BOTTLE BEFORE WE
LEFT ESTELÍ.
THE ROAD WAS ROCKY AND CLEARLY UNTouched BY ANYTHING WITH RUBBER TIRES. THE FLAT FRONT COUNTRY GAVE WAY TO STEEP, WINDING ROADS. THOUSANDS OF PERFECTLY-MANICURED ROWS OF CORN FILLED GAPING SCARS OF CLEAR-CUT HARDWOOD TREES ON NEARLY EVERY HILLSIDE. WE WALKED ALONE FOR MILES, EVENTUALLY PASSING A PILE OF HORSE DUNG WHICH, AT THIS POINT, WAS THE ONLY SIGN WE'D SEEN OF ANYONE OR ANYTHING TRAVELING UP THIS ROAD.

I ASKED ELMER IF HE EVER HITCHHIKED TO LIGHTEN HIS LOAD UP THE HILL AND HIS RESPONSE WAS AN OBVIOUS ONE:

"NO, HOMBRE. VEHICLES NEVER COME UP HERE."

WE CONTINUED ON IN COMPLETE SILENCE.
Looking back on that day, the hike was not that bad at all and I'm really glad that the introduction to my new home happened on foot. The elevation continued to increase and after crossing two large rivers, the valley exploded with life. Hardwood forests blanketed steep hillsides, so thick that there was no sign of earth beneath the canopy. Vines spiraled down from these giant, twisting giants all along the road. Finally, for the first time in Nicaragua, there were no radios blaring, there was no echo of horns and engines of motorcycle taxis, honking liberally to let their presence be known to others on lawless city streets. Just birds. Only insects and the sound of gravel under our feet as we pushed forward. Daydreaming, I was back home in the pasture and hiking the Sierras with Luke. I was thousands of miles from home but the sounds of home were all around me and for the first time in months, my heart was at ease.
AFTER A COUPLE HOURS OF HIKING, WE SAW THE HOUSE. IT SAT CRADLED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A STEEP RIDGE, SURROUNDED BY A RUSHING, CLEAR RIVER AND COUNTLESS ACRES OF CORN AND BEANS. I WAS GREETED WARMLY BY MY HOST MOTHER, MARGARITA. SHE HAD A WARM SMILE AND A FREE-SPIRITED, DEEP CALM ABOUT HER AND I COULD PICTURE HER JUST AS EASILY IN A LITTLE SURF HOME IN SANTA CRUZ OR LIVING DEEP IN THE HUMBOLDT REDWOODS. THE SUN SLOW BENDING THE HILLS SOON AFTER WE ARRIVED AND I WAS OFFERED A PLATE OF GALLO PINTO (NICARAGUA'S DEFINING STAPLE; A MIXTURE OF RED BEANS AND RICE FRIED TOGETHER) AND A TORTILLA. I ATE AS MUCH AS I COULD DESPITE MY INSIDES STILL FEELING TORN; SCOPING SMALL SPOONFULS ALONE IN A ROOM, EXCEPT FOR THE CHICKENS AND DUCKS AT MY FEET AND THE CATS PERCHED ON THE SHELF ABOVE ME, PRAYING FOR A PIECE OF TORTILLA TO FALL. AFTER EATING, I RECEIVED A TOUR OF THE SMALL TOWN FROM TWO SMALL CHILDREN, ALL OF MY BEST TOURS IN NICARAGUA WERE LED BY KIDS 3 TO 9 YEARS OLD.
WE WALKED TO GRANDMA'S HOUSE AND CROSSED THE RIVER (WHICH IS COMPLETELY NON-PASSABLE AFTER HEAVY RAINS. PEACE CORPS BRIDGE PROJECT? CHECK!) AND I MET AS MANY LOCAL PEOPLE AS I COULD BEFORE DARK. I SAT ON AROUND A DOZEN PORCHES, CHATTING MOSTLY WITH MONSES AND GRANDMAS AND SIPPING SUGARY COFFEE UNTIL MY BLOOD SANG. RETURNING HOME, I FELT MY BUZZ COME DOWN WHILE I SHUCKED BEANS WITH MARGARITA, AGAIN, MOSTLY IN SILENCE. SHE SMILED AND SANG OCCASIONALLY BREAKING MID-SONG TO SCOLD THE CATS WHEN THEY'D OVERSTAY THEIR WELCOME IN THE KITCHEN. ONCE WE HAD TWO BUCKETS FILLED WITH BEANS, WE PARTED WAYS AND WENT TO BED.
IT'S HARD TO FORGET HOW FAR AWAY FROM HOME I AM WHEN I LOOK DOWN THE LUSH, GREEN VALLEYS AND BATHE IN THE RIVER. BUT HOME WILL ALWAYS BE RIGHT WHERE I LEFT IT. THIS IS MY COMMUNITY NOW AND ITS PEOPLE MY FAMILY. IN SO MANY WAYS, THIS IS WHAT I'VE CRAVED FOR YEARS, TUCKED AWAY IN THE WOODS, SWEATING THROUGH MY SHIRT AND SPEAKING A LANGUAGE THAT, A FEW MONTHS AGO, WAS NOT MY OWN. THE NEXT TWO YEARS ARE GOING TO BE THE MOST DEFINING YEARS OF MY LIFE. THIS TIME IS MINE TO DO WITH IT AS I PLEASE. I WAS GIFTED THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND I AM GOING TO WORK VERY HARD TO MAKE THE MOST OF MY TIME IN THIS TINY NICARAGUAN COMMUNITY.
CHAPTER 6
TIME TRAVELING IN NICARAGUA
Stepping off of the plane onto Nicaraguan soil, I was wrapped up in the familiar blanket of heat and humidity and the shift between airconditioned cabin and tropical air sucked the breath out of my lungs. Taxis honked wildly all around me, luring freshly-landed passengers under the belief that he who creates the most noise gets the most business. Only a few years ago, all of this was foreign and exciting. Now it feels as much like home as anything that I've ever known.
I made my way immediately from the capital city of Managua to a rural fishing village in the Department of Carazo to meet up with some of the current agriculture volunteers that were weeks away from ending their service, and meeting up to celebrate their time together. The partying was the same as it always has been and always will be; the sort of wild, loud happiness that only exists when immigrants are able to come together.
THE TRANSPORTATION OUT TO THIS LITTLE FISHING VILLAGE WAS JUST AS I REMEMBERED AND EXPECTED IT TO BE; A SERIES OF BUSES AND TAXIS CONNECTING CITY TO ISOLATED COASTLINE. BUSES IN NICARAGUA ARE FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH PEOPLE, LIVESTOCK AND CARGO. CRUISING THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE, THE CONDUCTOR LEANS OUT A WINDOW, SCREAMING THE NAME OF THE FINAL DESTINATION ON RAPID-FIRE REPEAT TO EVERY PASSERBY. IF AN ARM GOES UP OR A HEAD NODS, THE BUS STOPS AND THE PERSON LOADS ON, OFTEN HOLDING THEIR BABY UP TO THE DOOR OR AN OPEN WINDOW TO BE TAKEN BY A COMPLETE STRANGER WHILE THEY PUSH THROUGH THE MASSES OF HUMAN BODIES TO FIND A SMALL OPENING TO SIT OR STAND. EVERY TIME THE BUS STOPS, YOU THINK TO YOURSELF "THERE IS NO WAY THEY'RE GOING TO FIT ANOTHER PERSON ON THIS BUS. BUT THEY ALWAYS DO. AND ONCE LOADED, THE BUS CREEPS FORWARD AGAIN, SOMETIMES ONLY A COUPLE HUNDRED FEET BEFORE ANOTHER HAND GOES UP ALONG THE ROADSIDE.
LIFE HERE IS SLOW AND VERY HOT. YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE VERY SWEATY AND FEELING VERY CLAUSTROPHOBIC. BODIES ARE ALWAYS PRESSED INTO OTHER BODIES. IT'S INEVITABLE. YOUR SWEAT-DRIPPING ARM AND CHEST WILL BE PRESSED INTO A GRANDMA AS SHE SINGS TO HERSELF QUIETLY OR ONTO A NEW MOTHER WHILE SHE BREASTFEEDS HER BABY WHILE HER OTHER TWO CHILDREN SIT ON EACH OF YOUR LEGS, LOOKING IN CONFUSION AND INTRIGUE INTO YOUR BLUE EYES, THEIR LITTLE FINGERS RUNNING THROUGH YOUR BEARD AND STRETCHING THE BLONDE, SUNBLEACHED CURLS IN YOUR HAIR. OFTEN TIMES, YOU ARE THE ONLY WHITE PERSON THAT THESE SMALL KIDS HAVE EVER SEEN, MUCH LESS INTERACTED WITH, AND THESE HIGHLY INTIMATE INTERACTIONS HAPPEN EVERY DAY THAT YOU TRAVEL. YOU LEARN QUICKLY TO BE SOCIAL AND COMFORTABLE WITH PEOPLE IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY. YOU HAVE TO, OTHERWISE YOU'LL GO CRAZY, HAVING SACRIFICED ANY HOPE OF MAINTAINING A PERSONAL BUBBLE WITH PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES.
CHAPTER 6
LOOKING BACK
These journal entries were meant to tell the story of how Xocolat came to be. To see more about the chocolate shop that was inspired by my experience abroad, please visit the link below.

https://vimeo.com/174696287

Paz y amor.

I would like to thank the people that helped make this experience possible. To everyone that supported my research, came to the chocolate shop and stuck with me each step of the way, I am forever grateful.