

Monday, February 12, 2018

Today we heard from former students, current professors, and guest experts on needs in the area. The UBL president, Dr. Elizabeth Cook, joined us for lunch followed by a long question and answer period. During the afternoon we learned more about church-sponsored assistance programs, and a professor gave us the overview and foundation we will need for work we will do on Friday.

Maria Obregon works with Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica through the Lutheran Church. Two thirds of these one million migrants who come to Costa Rica for work on the pineapple and banana plantations are undocumented. Sra Obregon and her group help these people get their documents, find health care, and understand their rights in the labor force.

Franklin Perry spoke about the Black experience in Costa Rica that began when the Conquistadores brought their slaves with them from Spain. Another group of British subjects from Jamaica was sent to help build the Panama Canal and the railroad across Costa Rica. These African-Costa Ricans were not granted citizenship until 1949.

Dr. Cook joined us for lunch and stayed to answer the group's many questions about UBL. What is now a full university was begun in 1922 by British Missionaries as an Interdenominational protestant presence in largely-Catholic Costa Rica. In 1997, UBL became a fully-accredited university with twelve professors, five of whom, like Karla, are funded as mission co-workers. The university focusses its courses on the lives and challenges of churches and faith-based communities in Latin America, encouraging students and faculty to circulate throughout Latin America.

In the afternoon Rebecca Cascantes, director of Women's Ministries in Costa Rica spoke about issues of discrimination and abuse against women in Latin America. Before we broke for dinner, Professor David Carrillo gave us the socio-academic framework we will need for the work we will do on Friday.

Our heads and hearts are full of information and ideas. Most of us crashed soon after dinner. The bus leaves at 7 in the morning. We're off on a clean-water crusade tomorrow.