Dear Diary,

**MY HEAD IS BUZZING SO MUCH.** This was a *crazy* morning!

I feel like I have taken in so much interesting information that I just need to like word vomit here for a little bit to get some of it down before I forget anything!

Some stuff :

* First, went to a meeting with DAGMA, the environmental group that exists under the umbrella of the Alcaldía. They were very defensive at first because they didn’t want to be criticized for having inaccurate data collection. Once they warmed up to us and the women from the transparency office though, we were able to get some real figures from them. They want to make all of their data open, finally, and are very close to doing so - but they have one last technical problem that they have to fix before that is possible. On top of that, there are a **ton** of other technical problems (like a ‘black box’ at the center of the city that would be able to collect a TON more data if it worked, but unfortunately an overpriced Englishman created it and the people at DAGMA don’t know how to fix it, or like the fact that they don’t have a database administrator to help them with their data to make an API to make it open sourced, nor did they even think to work with the office of transparency to make their data public through the existing entity, and instead they’ve been trying to make their own version of the information on a map, but it doesn’t work…) so they’ve been working with Oracle to help with their database stuff, but they don’t know how to use any of it, so they have to hire people to help and it costs a lot of money. On top of that, they have just recently switched everything in their office to Google products, and they are worried that with the election coming up, one of the first places to cut funding will be on services like their Google applications, which will put the entire office back like a decade…
  + Either way, they were REALLY interested in my project (duh - free work for them) and they are going to send me a list of prioritized things that they need help with as well as the skill sets required for each of those projects
* Second, on the way to the DAGMA meeting I was candid with John about the time that I have to work on stuff while I’m here in Cali and also my interest in creating a network of people here more so than some small technical project. He totally agreed and gave me some great advice to fill out some sort of solicitation sheet (maybe even through the Alcaldía?) that basically advertises this program to government entities, startups, NGOs, etc. and allows them to reach out to me (instead of me just trying to go out and meet as many people as possible). Then he suggested that I make a google form for those who are interested, and it would basically be my way of filling out the spreadsheet that I’ve started (with project ideas, skills needed for the projects, priorities, values, organizations, etc.) I think that is such a great idea and I am feeling *so* much better about my time here and what I am setting out to accomplish!
* To go off of that idea, this week has been kind of a crazy up and down ride. I feel like I’ve been really stressed and confused about what I should or shouldn’t be doing, and I’ve been basing my actions off of what I assume others want from me. I keep trying to remind myself that I am ultimately in charge, but I was struggling to truly believe that.
  + Today, I believe it. I believe that I am in charge and I am going to make sure that I make the best use of my time here.

I am actually so fucking ecstatic about how I am using my time here. After this morning, I’m feeling high from my interactions. I have literally gotten myself to the point of travel where I am having meetings with government officials and entrepreneurs in a city in Colombia who are interested in my business plan. My business plan is to bring skills and education to help with social impact projects here in a city in Colombia. I’m hearing about the deep guarded secrets and realities of poverty, education, information, and corruption. I’m hearing about what the public’s perception of the government is from the *people*. I’m hearing what the perception of the government is from people who work for the government. I’m hearing what the perception is from people who work *with* the government.

I’m learning about the sketchy places, I’m learning about the rich and privileged places. I’m learning about how that gap is being bridged. I’m learning about how many people think it isn’t. I’m learning about conspiracies, truths, lies, and falsehoods. I’m going to go to the ‘boonies’ of the city and see for myself what the non-privilege looks like. I’m going to meet a woman who tried to start a foundation to help other women but was threatened with her life to stop. I’m going to learn about what NGOs are trying to do to help with problems like this… from the source.

I did all of this myself. I got myself here. I created this opportunity and I am following it.

* Continuing on… so after the DAGMA meeting and after I got a pastry and coffee with John, we went to lunch with Germán and talked more. I got some clarity about the 80% to 20% information that my Spanish teacher was talking to me about. So here’s the background:
  + My spanish teacher told me that in most of Colombia (especially in Cali, but honestly everywhere in Latin America) there is this 20% to 80% ratio where 20% of the population has all of the money and opportunity and education, and 80% has close to nothing. The government says that they are interested in helping the 80%, but in reality they aren’t because if the majority of the population becomes educated, they will become aware of the corruption that exists in the government and they won’t let the president or the rest of the party stay in power. Because of this, the government continues to make promises to feed and educate the 80%, but in reality nothing actually happens because they can’t afford to have the public become educated about what is actually going on. The people who are in power are only interested in money and everything is so corrupt (including money from the USA that is sent here to ‘stop drug trafficking’ but is actually just pocketed by the government officials) so in the end, the actions of government officials are just to do whatever it takes to get as much money as possible…
  + Then I talked about this with Germán and John at lunch, and they told me that pieces of that are correct, but it’s not quite that extreme. The public has a perception that things aren’t getting better. The Colombians and especially Caleños like to complain about things, and they *really* like to have strong opinions about things. Because of this, a lot of people make the government sound like it is a super corrupt money making machine, and it gets to the point of almost sounding like a conspiracy to keep the uneducated uneducated and to keep the poor poor. I’m interested in looking further into this… and I’m really excited for my meetings on Monday to get a deeper look into the reality of the 80%.
* Germán wants to create a business that focuses on social impact projects in Cali, but one that is monetizable. He wants to partner with John. He wants to use Hay Dia to help bring information to the public and to change people’s opinions about things… I want to get involved but I didn’t say anything because I think I’ll let it come to fruition and then get involved when it makes more sense. Also, John wants to create a non profit that takes people’s stories (women) to encourage and inspire young women to follow their dreams and that they can do anything.. I want to get involved in that too, but I will also wait until the right time.

So yeah. I’m sure there’s more that I’m missing. But it’s been a big day.

I just got off the phone with Sam. He’s driving back to San Diego from SLO to be home for the summer (or at least for the next month). We talked about corruption, we talked about politics, we talked about data science and ML, we talked about questioning people’s opinions and open-mindedness. We talked about tripping on acid. We talked about making sure that Sam doesn’t grow up to be boring…

I am really grateful to have Sam in my life. I’m more grateful now than ever to have people in my life who I connect with on a close and personal level. Even today I’m realizing that I miss Yoni. It’s funny because when he was here I kept thinking about how I just wanted him to be gone, but now that he is gone I am appreciating having had someone to connect with on a personal level.

In general, I feel myself changing so much while I’m here. If I have an idea or I feel like connecting with someone, I’ll call them. Or I’ll meet with them in person. I don’t feel fear for that anymore. I want to get connected with as many people as possible. I want to build a network that is wide but also one that is *deep*. The connections that I make with people are not superficial anymore. Even though my Spanish abilities limit me sometimes from feeling deep connections with people, I’m doing my best to be real with everyone. I’m asking about their lives and being genuine when I talk about my own life. No matter what anyone’s age is, we are all humans going through the same hardships and the same realizations in life. We all need to be here for each other. I feel open. I feel grateful. This life is crazy.