

**2019-2020**

**Common Read**

***Never Stop Walking:***

***A Memoir of Finding Home Across the World***









On January 2, a select group of 15 Texas A&M International University students traveled to Brazil as part of the University's "Reading the Globe Program."

Students participating in the program include: Cynthia Aradillas, Rebecca Canales, Chelsea Fuentes, Cristina García, Maritza García, Edith Garza, Samantha Lara, Hannah Loring, Lourdes Marqués, Anaiz Martínez, Daniela Palacios, Mary Patricio, Juan Manuel Sánchez, Jorge De Los Santos, and Aleyda Sarabia.

Their time in Brazil was highly structured with academic classes, guest lectures, related tours and a service-learning opportunity.

Take a look at pictures and and blog entries from the RTG Ambassadors during their trip. Visit [www.instagram.com/tamiureadingtheglobe](https://www.instagram.com/tamiureadingtheglobe) for more blog entries.





Our first full day in Diamantina, Minas Gerais, was adventurous albeit a little wet! We went by bus to Christina's cave; it took about half an hour to arrive at our destination because of the unpaved roads. Many rocks created an uneven terrain which resulted in a roller-coaster of a bus ride. Lush green vegetation surrounded us. Along the way, Thiago, our tour guide, and Christina, the author, lectured us about the diverse wildlife such as giant rodents and felines, snakes, bats, and spiders.



Once we arrived near the site of her first home, we prepped our sunscreen, bug spray, and shoe covers. We hiked through large boulders, rough and tall plants, and wet surfaces. The bond between all of us strengthened as we lent each other's hands to climb. It was intriguing to see Christina's dauntless behavior in the outdoors come to life rather than reading it from her memoir, "Never Stop Walking". While some of us were frightened to fall, Christina and Thiago, encouraged us to keep going. We also passed by Christina's second cave which she used as a guide to find her way back home. We visited a beautiful waterfall where we all swam. The water was freezing, the floor shallow, but it was an amazing experience. The day ended with a late lunch at Biri-Biri. We ate freshly picked mangos and pastels. On the bus ride back to the hotel, we discussed social responsibility and our essays. Obrigado! Ciao!

**Mary Joy Patricio**  
RTG Ambassador





We had the privilege of spending the day with Christina Rickardsson, the author of "Never Stop Walking." It was special to be able to visit the locations that were mentioned in the book and have Christina explain her personal stories, rather than just reading about them.

First, we visited the church where Christina and her mother attended, and she shared her memories with us. After a short walk we ended up at a bus station where she and her mother sat and tried to sell things or beg for money. She explained how so many people ignored them or said evil things, and at that age, she could not understand why. At the bus stop she introduced us to a small shop owner who used to help her and her mother, and even ended up befriending her mother. We all bought a small snack from the shop owner and then took a bus ride to the cave where Christina and her mother once lived.

The whole bus ride, we were in awe of how far it was from the bus stop. Christina had explained to us that she walked barefoot from her cave to the bus stop to sell things or beg. The distance, along with the the fact that she was so young, was unbelievable to us. Once at the cave, we were very surprised because it was not at all what we expected. It was surreal to see something like that with our own eyes after hearing and reading about it so much. Our experiences today will definitely be something we will never forget, and we are so thankful to have had Christina spend the day with us!

**Hannah Loring**  
RTG Ambassador



After a few days of touring Diamantina and having the opportunity to see Christina's book come to life, we hit the road and made our way to Belo Horizonte. A little over five hours later, we arrived at Belo; we had a delectable lunch at Filé and a flavorful dessert at Frutos De Goiás. With a satiated appetite, we then visited the Lago De Pampulha, a man-made lagoon built in 1914.

At the time of its creation, it was a very clean lagoon; however, due to pollution, it is now not very safe to swim in. Juscelino Kubitscheck, the then mayor of Belo Horizonte, is responsible for ordering the construction of this lake. Lining the outskirts of this lake is a beautiful garden designed by Roberto Burle Marx.

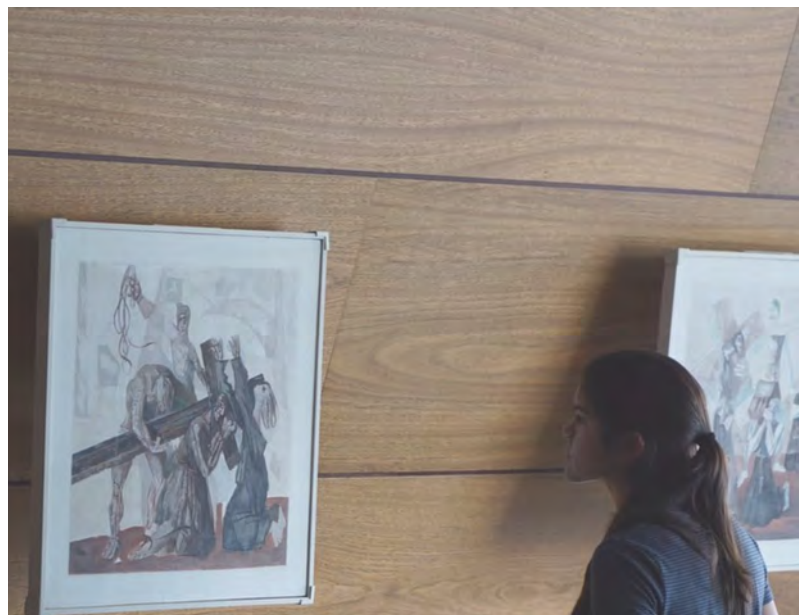






Near it, there is a church called the Capela São Francis De Assis, designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer. A well-known communist, Niemeyer ingeniously implemented the symbol of communism into the architecture of the church. With two columns perpendicularly perched, and the curve of the building itself, it was easy to see the political reference. Inside the church, we studied various artworks by Cândido Portinari, one of the most famous Brazilian painters, and Alfredo Ceschiatti

Portinari's artistic ability along with his use of blue paint contrasted beautifully with the white tiles of the church. Ceschiatti's Biblical paintings possessed exquisite hues of blue, red, brown, and white, forming an intricate display of congruence. Once we finished looking at the inside of the church, we boarded the bus for a short tour of the buildings around the lagoon, which included former Casino Pampulha Art Museum and the Yacht Tennis Club. Finally, we drove to the airport for the flight to São Paulo and checked into our hotel, eager to shower, sleep, and see what will be in store for us the next day.





“Capoeira é amoroso, não é perversa. É um hábito cortês que criamos dentro de nós, uma comida vagabunda” -Mestre Pastinha.

This man was a master practitioner of the Brazilian martial art Capoeira, a traditional cultural practice in Brazil that focuses on the inner spirituality of a person and expression. It consists of a series of collective movements pertaining to acrobatics, dancing, and music. The RTG Ambassadors and I were fortunate enough to participate in a Capoeira Angola experience with a group in São Paulo called Nzinga.

This experience allowed us to practice some of the traditional movements and activities that proved to be not only physically challenging and unusual to any who hasn't experienced it, but also deeply spiritual and unique for each individual.



Shortly after Capoeira, we grabbed a quick bite to eat at Komy's Self Service restaurant and attended a lecture with Carmen Lopes, a well known social worker in São Paulo who works to provide personalized self care services such as beauty supplies and clothing for women in at risk social situations due to homelessness or drug issues.

**Anaiz Martínez**  
RTG Ambassador





Colorful street music and noisy traffic, the perfect alarm to our first morning in Belo Horizonte.

We had the privilege of learning from a Brazilian sociologist, Dr. Jorge Neves, who gave an intriguing lecture of Social Inequalities in Brazil. Various topics were covered such as the roots of Brazil's authoritative government which were set in 1808, the change that came following the renovation of the Brazilian Constitution in 1988, the importance of status rather than class within the Brazilian society, and the differences between Brazil and other countries according to their tax revenue and Gini Coefficients. We now know the human development within Brazil has had a dramatic increase between 1990-2014 but is now stagnant and, according to Dr. Jorge Neves, will most likely remain stagnant throughout the incoming years.

The initial splash of Brazilian culture could be felt right past the doors of the hotel. Graffiti art littering the street walls, mosaic stone covering the pavement, and the ease of Portuguese words slipping through the mouths of the native people was overpowering. The energy walking through the city was enlightening with new faces and unfamiliar sounds.



**Chelsea Fuentes**

RTG Ambassador



