



***From Theory to Practice:
Building a Shared Commitment to Intercultural Agility***

Exercise #1

Two students, one male and one female are involved with a local feminist NGO. Because of their great level of Spanish, they are co-organizing workshops, lecture series and participate in theater events alongside the collective. During one event, female student goes to the restroom and notices there is no toilet paper. She asks male student to go to the nearest Oxxo (convenient store) to get toilet paper. He gets a roll for every stall. In class, the next day, he presents this as "the perfect example of the machista society in which we live. Where small things, like having no TP in the restroom at the feminist collective, demonstrates how un-important women are."

Group discussion:

- a) Were these students interculturally agile?
- b) Why or why not?
- c) What did they do? What was missing?

Some factors to consider:

- ✓ The group had a very advanced level of Spanish
- ✓ They were very involved in social justice
- ✓ Most considered themselves "feminists"
- ✓ Experience occurred toward end of program

Exercise #2

Entire group goes to Chiapas. There is a road blockade, organized by local people. This means instead of arriving at our destination in 4 hours, we would arrive at an uncertain time. This will definitely affect all activities planned for the entire week. We have two options: (a) stay and wait until blockade is off of the road; (b) find a different road and venture to the destination.

Students are starting to get hungry, tired, cold, and cranky. To kill time we started playing Spanish charades; had a Mexican version of "The Voice" and invited others in the blockade to be the judges; approached the organizers and interviewed them about their reasons. When students learned more information, they decided to support organizers. Later, we found a hole-in-the-wall restaurant and ate all the food they had (even had a vegetarian option). We all shared food, toilet paper, snacks, water, and finally –8 hours later—we got to our destination. Although we were beat, they did not want to change anything in the programming. "If those people who had been protesting all this time are able to go to work the next day, we can make the same effort." The next day we had a lovely breakfast and talked about this experience for the remaining of the semester.

Group discussion:

- d) Were these students interculturally agile?
- e) Why or why not?
- f) What did they do? What was missing?

Some factors to consider:

- ✓ This group had different levels of Spanish skills
- ✓ Only a few were involved in social justice issues
- ✓ There were 5 heritage speakers
- ✓ Experience occurred half-way into program