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Spelman College
Georgia

BENJAMIN A.

GILMAN

INTERNATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIP



I had the great fortune of studying abroad in Brazil with the support of a Gilman Scholarship. While there, I was able to conduct research and study Portuguese. My research was related to issues surrounding social justice and sustainable development. Through a range of experiences, I was exposed to the social, political, economical, and cultural realities of northeastern Brazil. The knowledge I gained from the School of International Training (SIT), my wonderful host family and the organizations I was working with, has influenced and further defined my academic and professional goals in innumerable ways.

One of the most gratifying experiences of my time in Brazil

was the opportunity to participate in a Social Synergy project; an emerging and innovative idea that seeks to stimulate networking and relationships between all sectors and actors in society. The academic, social and cultural project in Leadership in Synergy and Social Justice was a multicultural, multiethnic, international, interdisciplinary, and inter-sectorial experience designed to build friendships, academic and professional relationships across a spectrum of cultures, disciplines, sectors and social issues. In addition to this project, I taught English classes to Afro- Brazilian domestic workers and helped raise governmental funds for EDISCA, (Spanish name of the School of Dance and Social Integration for Children and Adolescents) which is a school that uses the discipline of ballet and dance as a means to children off the streets and away from drugs, prostitution and violence while directing their focus to education and empowerment.

Upon graduating with my bachelor's degree in International Studies and Sociology, I volunteered as a teacher at Meilin

Primary School in Shenzhen, China. I was able to easily adapt to a new culture and even practice my Portuguese in Macau; all of which I wouldn't have been able to

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do without my study abroad experience in Brazil.

I am so grateful for the opportunities that the Gilman Scholarship has opened for me, and am so proud to be an alumna of a program that invests so much in their scholars. Studying abroad changed the trajectory of my life and allowed me to set up a realistic plan for my future career goal as an aspiring professor of the African Diaspora and activist for women and girls. I believe the Gilman Scholarship contributed significantly to my decision to pursue a path in academia.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

My Follow-on Service Project involved being a liaison between the study abroad office and students interested in studying and interning abroad. I held visa requirement tutorials to help students follow the often strict

guidelines. I additionally presented the research project I conducted in Salvador da Bahia entitled African Esthetic Violence and Performing Beauty in Salvador: Cosmetic Citizenship, Afro-Brazilian Beauty as a Public Health

Concern at Spelman College's annual research day. I believe that through my research and experience the audience was inspired to study or intern abroad to develop their own academics and carry out research plans.