
Lucho, a grateful Bolivian man

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I met him one morning at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM). He is small, thin, and his hair shows specific traits that clearly denote his indigenous roots.

The introduction was brief as we barely exchanged some words. But he said he came from a very humble family, which I already knew.

He came from a very distant place in Bolivia named Canton de Huacanapi, in Oruro, where his father and some of his siblings herded goats and other animals. Lucho was quiet, a country boy, distant to the usual city customs.

Right after he told me about his relatives and how much he missed them, he confessed he would not be able to end his studies even though his dream was to becoming a doctor in medicine and return home to assist his people.

And so it began a friendship that lasted while he was here in Cuba. While most of his schoolmates went back to their homeland at the end of every school year, he could not do it as his family could not afford the round-trip tickets.

Lucho regrets it, but he knew his duty was to finish what he started in Cuba. He liked to dream of his definitive return, the doctor's office he would open at the feet of the mountain, the smile of his neighbors and friends who never had the chance to visit a doctor. In Canton de Huacanapi —where he lived back then—, people healed with plants and beverages, traditions and

knowledge that were passed on from generation to generation.

Few years passed before I met him in his doctor coat. He was not that quiet, shy, country boy anymore. He had definitely changed. He had not only graduated as a doctor, but he was also training to become a cardiologist at the Calixto Garcia Hospital.

We met in a bus stop at the heart of El Vedado neighborhood. He tried to tell me the whole story in few minutes: he had overcome his fears. He got used to the Cubans' way of life and he even liked the food!

The grateful Bolivian man stumbled over words. But he found time to thank his President. "Lady, had it not been for my President Evo Morales, I would have been herding goats all my life in my beloved Canton de Huacanapi along with my parents and siblings! I am doctor thanks to him. He gave us the opportunity to study. It has been really a dream. Who would have thought my parents will say one day with pride their son is a doctor?"

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