

Puerto Rico

2022



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Leadership Questions

Traveling reminds me that our world is big and we haven't even left the U.S. It makes me hungry for more, to see other cultures, geology, climates, and food. I have friends and family that have no desire to travel outside their own town and it frustrates me that they will never see the diversity of our world.

What is my next step in leadership?
What can I do? How can I make a meaningful impact?

I will be looking for opportunities during the next two weeks to help me be a better leader.

To better understand perspectives of those who may not necessarily want to be "lead".

What one thing will I do differently because of what I experienced in Puerto Rico?

Leadership Questions

Given the relationship with the United States, what is the impact of that on Puerto Rico's culture, society, economy, and policy?
Is it positive or negative?

History has a big influence on why things are the way they are.

To better understand our role as servant leaders.

How does the history of colonialism in the U.S. influence how you think about being a leader that embraces diversity and inclusion?

What did you see or hear today that caused you to stop and ponder?

"A TREE CAN LIVE WITHOUT FLOWERS BUT IT CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT ROOTS."

-ELISA ALICEA, FINCA MI DIANA.

Kyle Curtis

Our international trip to Puerto Rico has been transformational, eye-opening, and enriching. No photos will do the trip justice but will just show a glimpse of the various farms, communities and programs we had the privilege of visiting. We engaged with local farmers and learned about reigniting efforts to build food sovereignty. Over 85% of all food in Puerto Rico is imported. We heard first hand on the different federal programs and resources that are available to local Ag Producers. Puerto Rico continues to rebuild from the 2017 Hurricane Maria and we were able to see the impact it had on the forests, agriculture production, community and infrastructure. We spent a day visiting with a Mayor of a local municipal and learned of how their services are funded and the challenges they face as a rural municipal such as infrastructure, domestic violence, and being overlooked by the more urban municipalities. We saw a lot of similarities in the challenges they faced to our challenges across Washington State. Overall, these two weeks provided us with the opportunity to emerge into a community and really dig deep into their underlying history, continued struggles and their hope for the future.



Colton Cooley



The most impactful part of the trip was the people of Puerto Rico. The last 5 years in Puerto Rico have been Hell. It started 2017, they had two hurricanes hit the Island within two weeks of each other. One of those was Hurricane Maria, which sat over the island for nearly 24 hours and left much of the Island without power and basic amenities for up to a year. In January of 2020, they were hit by a 5.8 magnitude earthquake, followed by a 6.4 the next day. Soon after the earthquakes, COVID-19 showed up.

It was inspiring to hear the stories of resilience and to see the pride the Puerto Rican people have for their culture, history, and their country. Everywhere you looked there was the Puerto Rican flag flying or painted in a beautiful mural.

Kelly Dougherty



During our visit to Puerto Rico, I was surprised to learn that over 80% of the food consumed in Puerto Rico is imported. This was mentioned many times throughout the trip and was evident during several of our meals given the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables, when many edible plants, fruits etc. were growing wild on the roadsides. It was very encouraging to see the hard work that communities and non-profit organizations were doing to help increase Puerto Rico's food security. During our travels we visited several small farms and learned how the environment in Puerto Rico is ideal for growing considerable amounts of food that could help reduce their reliance on imported food. During these visits we also had the pleasure of sharing some wonderful meals and conversations with our phenomenal Puerto Rican hosts. Having the opportunity to share the experiences in Puerto Rico with members of Class 42 was definitely the most meaningful aspect of the trip!



Andrew Engell

The most impactful part of the trip was the time we spent talking to the local farmers, entrepreneurs, and leaders and learning just how similar their struggles are to those we face in the region I live in.



*"IT TOOK MOST OF THE ISLAND NINE MONTHS
TO REGAIN POWER AND SOME NEVER GO IT
BACK AT ALL", SHOWING HOW DAMAGING
HURRICANE MARIA TRULY WAS.*

Cameron Eskeberg



Going to Puerto Rico was an amazing experience. It was incredible opportunity to learn more about the effect of colonialism in the past, and hurricane Maria's effect on the current issues in the present Puerto Rico. Going with Class 42 after all the struggles and ups and downs we've been through was so beneficial to be able to reflect on all that we have accomplished and how far we have all come. I will remember this trip forever in the experiences that I had and the deeper friendships that where created.



Sara Higgins

I don't think I was alone in feeling a slight sense of disappointment when it was announced that, due to COVID, the Class 42 "international" trip would be to Puerto Rico. Nor do I think I was the only one who became somewhat incurious as the trip was repeatedly delayed, also due to COVID. I went through the preparatory motions out of obligation, not excitement, and the reality of the trip didn't really hit until we were on the plane. In hindsight, that actually freed me from a number of preconceived expectations. While it meant I was less attentive to our agenda than I might normally be, I was also less concerned with the minutia of our plans, and I was more open to going with the flow of what each experience presented. We visited numerous farms and forests; I can't name them all. We met some inspiring individuals and learned about some incredible projects; I can't receipt them all. Our bonding escapades were numerous; most are a blur, now. But I kept showing up for the sake of the experience and the take-aways I might glean. I gained new knowledge about Puerto Rico. I also learned about myself, my patience, my triggers, and what I really care about.

Perhaps most notably, I was blindsided by the impact some specific encounters with polution had on me. I doubt that impact was among AgForestry's top learning objectives for our trip, but those encounters—one more globally attributed than locally caused—have motivated change in my life choices. An unexpected source for a leadership lesson, a first-hand experience with everyday life can be all that is needed to inspire change.



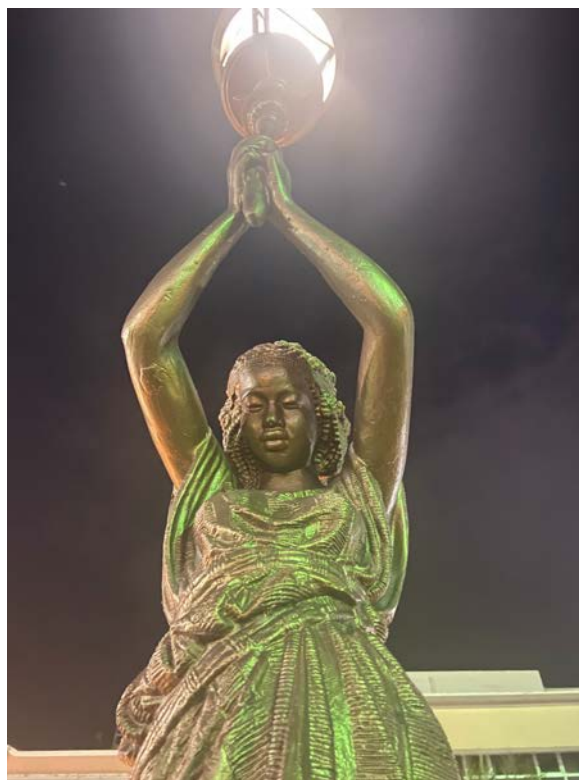
Lauren Magalska



The thing that strikes me the most about Puerto Rico is the passion that everyone has for their country and their communities. The most impactful example that we saw is the Cano Martin Peña project. The community has really pulled together to support the people living there and to protect the environment.

"WE WANT OUR AGRICULTURE IN HARMONY
WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT" - UNKNOWN.

Amanda Sandhop



I am still in awe of how beautiful every single place was. Puerto Ricans have so much pride in their towns and their history. Their narrative is painted on every free wall. They are not ashamed of their past, colonialism, or their heritage but instead embrace and learn from it. I enjoyed learning about the culture and how they are changing for the future.



Jason Walter



One thing that struck me over and over during our time in Puerto Rico was the pride that the people there have in their country, their culture, and their identity. Almost everyone that we met with, to a person, conveyed this... sharing stories of famous Puerto Ricans and their accomplishments, bragging (for lack of a better term) about their home, and/or sharing the basic idea that they would never want to live anywhere else. This was so striking because Puerto Rico struggles with so many challenges; poverty, natural disasters like Hurricane Maria and recent earthquakes, natural resource issues, trade issues, food insecurity, etc., yet through all that the people there persist. It was truly inspiring. I took the photo below on the first morning of our trip in Puerto Rico, and for me its significance only became clear after understanding what I outlined above.

Class 42 Puerto Rico Timeline

MAY 10 - MAY 23, 2022 .

DAY 1 TRAVEL

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- ### DAY 2
- Old San Juan
 - Welcome Dinner

-
- ### DAY 3
- US Forest Service
 - Puerto Rico Hardwoods
 - Cocoa Farm
 - Festival

-
- ### DAY 4
- Pura Parcha
 - Finca Plenitud
 - Rio Hondo Community Forest

-
- ### DAY 5
- Las Salinas (Salt Flats)
 - Historic Lighthouse



Class 42 Puerto Rico Timeline

MAY 10 - MAY 23, 2022 .

-
- DAY 6*
- Hike around Hacienda Jaunita
 - Mayor of Maricao

-
- DAY 7*
- Finca Mi Diana
 - Farm Tour

-
- DAY 8*
- Cooking Class at Finca el Remanso
 - Waterfall

-
- DAY 9*
- Long Drive to Culebra
 - Flamenco Beach

-
- DAY 10*
- Snorkeling with turtles and reef restoration



Puerto Rico Timeline

MAY 10 - MAY 23, 2022 .

DAY 11

- Hacienda Choclat
- Eye on the Rainforest, Patillas

DAY 12

- Guided Hikes in El Yunque
- Bio Bay Kayaking
- Tour at night

DAY 13

- Artisan Rum Distillery
- Army Corps of Engineer

DAY 14

- Return Home
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Thank you for the experiences.

*CLASS 42
PUERTO RICO*

The logo for AqForestry Leadership features a stylized green and yellow wave graphic to the left of the text 'AqForestry' in a bold, green, sans-serif font. Below 'AqForestry' is the word 'LEADERSHIP' in a smaller, green, sans-serif font.