

# Beyond the Classroom: International Service Learning

This spring, I received the Mosse Undergraduate Research and Service Fellowship which, encourages the extension of classroom learning with support for service-learning opportunities. With this generous help, I had the opportunity to participate in Fair Trade University (FTU) through a service-learning, solidarity-based trip to Guatemala.

Fair Trade University hosted a test delegation of students from the UW with the prospect of creating long lasting relationships between UW students and two small fair-trade organic coffee-growing communities in rural Guatemala. While in Guatemala, we spent time in Santa Anita la Union, about an hour and a half outside of Xela, a community with a long-standing relationship to Madison. Santa Anita exports the majority of its coffee to Just Coffee, a 100 percent fair-trade coffee roaster in Madison. The second community, Montellano, is located in the municipality of San Pedro Yepocapa. Both communities shared their histories, struggles, and optimism with us.



*Basil Weiner with farmer Don Melrecio Chum in Montellano, Guatemala.*

The intent of the trip was to delineate a broad understanding of fair trade, and to examine how trade relationships relate to inequality, exploitation, and postcolonial legacies. FTU focused on creating dialogue around issues of social, economic, and environmental justice in a context of international solidarity. We had the opportunity to learn firsthand about Guatemalan history, the consolidation of capitalism, and how free trade, globalization, and neoliberalism affect small producers, as well as how these communities are resisting. We met with students, community leaders, families, as well as the women's organization of Santa Anita. Everyone we met with provided a unique insight into Guatemalan history, each with a different lens into the past that cannot be found in a classroom.

SUSAN LEVY (BA '07)



*A view of the fair-trade coffee plantation in Montellano, Guatemala.*