

## Mario Ramirez Reyes – Class 0809

Sometimes there is nothing more trying to ones believes than a radical shift in surroundings. So, in that spirit, let's trade in, at least for a couple of paragraphs, the ever-iconic canals of Dutch cities as Breda and Amsterdam (and Utrecht in my personal case) for the symphony of multiple languages and warm fall weather of Pretoria, South Africa.

Imagineering, that elusive and allusive concept that has encompassed our academic year would now be ours to flaunt in this new place, and in doing so, convince others of it's value and ourselves of our acquired knowledge.

But, be forewarned, all the academic articles, the books, the lectures and videos we could ever see before entering the plane at Schiphol were nothing more than the knowledge equivalent of mind wallpaper in this beautiful house of South African reality that will serve as home for the weeks to come.

As we, the 20 students and 3 lecturers, shared our time between wilderness safaris, the lovely University of Pretoria, our "resting" headquarters at the Hatfield Village and the multiple wonderful sights of the Pretoria-Johannesburg area, we began to witness the sheer magnitude of the reality that was surrounding us.

A frightening question hovered over all of us in moments of silence... could we have underestimated our goal of capturing the magic of South Africa and do it justice through an Imagineering concept?

But, doubtful as we may have been, there was always a bright light at the end of the tunnel that guided us along through this, at times, daunting path: the people. Whether they be white, black, young, old, male and female, through their openness, hospitality, candidness, knowledge and courage we began to understand that it is the people, just like us, that have risen above amazing situations that makes this country earn it's unique space in the world. We were not in Mandela's South Africa (alone), but we were also invited into Pretoria University student Peter's South Africa, tour bus drivers Amos, Walter and Ben's South Africa, among many others.

Armed with these profound insights and deep connections, we set out on the 31st of March to expose our offer for Imagineering concepts that could help project these images of South Africa that entered our hearts, using the World Cup 2010 as a platform, through the knowledge accumulated in our Master's Program during the past 7 months.

I sat with great satisfaction that afternoon seeing that which my fellow students created, caring much for the human dimension that made our trip unforgettable and applying an acutely informed perspective so finely tuned that the concepts that lay in front of me were alive and impassioning.

It was the golden seal of a fantastic two weeks of exploring, studying, talking, living and being inspired.

But in my perspective, the triumph above it all was, that even as I have now traded back Pretoria for the spring covered Utrecht, I can confidently own the belief in that which I travelled all the way from Venezuela to study, Imagineering, and with out a doubt in my mind, through it I experienced and began to understand so much more than I could ever imagine about a fantastic and amazing land, Africa.

