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Anthropology

Mid-term Essay #1

The film *Motorcylce Diaries* tells the story of a young Ernesto Guevara who, along with his friend Alberto Granado, travel across Latin America and witness the poor conditions that many people were forced to live in during the 1950s. His experiences on this journey and through the rest of his life led Guevara to become the iconic revolutionary ‘Che’, whose image still today represents the power of the people in Latin America. The film depicts underlying aspects of Latin America culture and society that were affected by the political and societal atmosphere of the time.

Because this film is as much about these two men discovering themselves as it is about discovering the Latin American identity, the notion of a home to go back to is often stressed throughout the movie. Within the first few minutes of the film, the close ties between all the members of Guevara’s family are incredibly apparent. Throughout the entire movie Ernesto writes letters to his mother and he misses her dearly. Guevara sees this strong bond with family during his travels with Granado. They both meet many people who are homeless within their own countries; people who have been kicked off their land or forced to leave. They notice the barriers that are created by living in a rural setting as opposed to in the city. The economic disparities often led Guevara and Granado to feel closer to the poor. They also realize how geography plays an incredible role in diversifying the populations of Latin America and how it divides people. During their stay at a leprosy treatment camp in Peru, the river divides the sick from the healthy; this is something that Guevara deeply detests. Despite all this, there was an underlying sense of family within all the people that Granado and Guevara met on their travels. The people they met worked hard so that they could support their families and groups of people with similar plights worked together. There is a sense of community among people who have the same problems. Historically examining the politics of the region and how policy affected society shows that political and economic inequality was the reason these people were being ignored. After witnessing and helping these people Ernesto would become Che Guevara and help get rid of the some of the injustices inflicted on the people of Latin America.

Che Guevara is not only an iconic figure in Latin America but around the world as well; many Latin Americans believe him to be a large part of the contemporary Latin American identity. Latin American identity is still being studied today. During a speech Guevara gives at the end of the movie, he talks about all of Latin America being a unified people; he crossed many borders but wherever he went he saw and met similar people with similar plights. Each state has its own individuality yet there still is a Latin American identity and much of it can be seen in the individual people in each country.