

"Project Japan" : a humanitarian mission to the Hispanic world

By Manuela Ball - Camurdan

"Only those who see the invisible can do the impossible. By increasing the power of imagination and the will to succeed, this gives humans better weapons to deal with reality and respond to the unexpected." Bernard Lown

When fulfilling a dream benefits another, it exalts the human spirit and the Creator smiles. The invisible, or rather the created hand, binds two paths, so that one may strengthen the wellbeing of those in far off places, who, in silence, are waiting for a hand of friendship and fraternal care.

Thus was born the story of Fabio Muniz and Johnna Hayward Muniz. United by their beliefs, love, passion for language and cultural diversity, they are preparing to do a volunteer humanitarian mission in Japan, to provide support to some of the hundreds of thousands of Latin American immigrants living there.

Latin Americans in Japan

Currently , immigrants from Latin America make up the second largest group of foreigners in Japan. According to the latest statistics from the Japanese Immigration Bureau , 1.7 % of the total Japanese population is foreign. Of 2,186,121 foreigners, 344,932 are from Latin America, most of whom are Brazilians, Peruvians, Bolivians, Argentineans, Colombians, Paraguayans and Mexicans.

Note that due to a migration agreement signed between Brazil and Japan in the early twentieth century, there was a great migratory movement between the two nations. Brazil - the country with the largest number of Japanese immigrants - hosted about 1.5 million Japanese and the number of Brazilians in Japanese territory is estimated at 267.456 .

Three lives and a dream

Fabio Muniz was born in the southern part of the Americas - in Sao Paulo, Brazil - and his wife Johnna Hayward Muniz, in the north - Chicago, Illinois. He earned his bachelor's degree in business administration with a master's degree in marketing. She graduated in music with a certificate in music management. Both have lived in different countries around the world, learned many languages (French, Spanish , English, Japanese , Italian and Portuguese) and had the opportunity to be exposed to multicultural experiences in ways that were both academic and professional as well as through

missions and ministries in Brazil, Spain, the United States, Belgium, Sweden, Ecuador, France, Italy, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, Canada, among others. All this, under the framework of humanitarian aspirations, has a spiritual platform based on the values and teachings of Jesus Christ. "We want to live our lives as Jesus did with immigrants: to care and advocate for them," says Johnna.

This is the epicenter of the "Japan Project" which is to be realized in 2014 once they have collected the funds and support necessary to meet their basic needs: to serve churches and work with the Hispanic and Brazilian communities in Japan as volunteers in a nonprofit organization called Covenant World Mission. This international organization that was founded more than a century ago, serves in 30 countries and has nearly 900 religious congregations in the United States.

About "Project Japan"

Johnna and Fabio, with daughter Sophia, depart to the other side of the hemisphere to be grafted into the international community of Tokyo for at least 2-3 years. From Tampa to the province of Gunma, an hour and a half from the capital, the Muniz family will devote all its time and effort in the development of this social project. Both Johnna and Fabio plan to incorporate all professional musical, business, academic and personal experience gained over several decades for the welfare of the most deprived communities and minorities in Japan. "We want to use our experience, language and knowledge to be available for these communities and help them," says Fabio.

They have the challenge of working with the Hispanic and Brazilian immigrant population, once their needs have been identified. Fabio and Johnna plan to facilitate the inclusion of these communities into Japanese society, working initially with local social programs, then implementing specific activities and projects. Some of these activities include teaching languages and creating small groups in different languages. They also plan to offer emotional, physical, and spiritual support for individuals and families, assistance with natural disasters, family counseling for people with addiction and problems with relationships; music ministry, Bible studies and serve as a link between different communities.

While talking to Fabio, Johnna and the beautiful Sophia, who is but a few months old, I had the opportunity to observe face to face a real sense that what drives these three people is a noble cause. Their faith and genuine desire is to put all their available resources together to offer a better quality of life for men, women and immigrant children in Japan. I witnessed their courage and strength to assert their spiritual values for the completion of this project.

Support this cause

If you want to support this project financially or for more information, please visit:

<http://blogs.covchurch.org/fjmuniz/>. If you want to communicate directly with the Muniz family, you can contact them via email: fabio-johnna.muniz@covchurch.org