

Welcome back Aletia!

I came to Ashley Community Housing last summer as a Marketing & Communications intern and I left in the autumn to volunteer with Progressio in El Salvador for 3 months. El Salvador is Central America's smallest country and because of this, it can sadly be left off the map when it comes to representation at a global level. Working alongside young Salvadorans was a unique and valuable opportunity to gain insight into the realities of living in the country – from understanding the challenges young people face, to witnessing the rich diversity of the natural environment and the processes putting increasing pressure on the country's natural resources. The placement was an immersive and thought-provoking experience. With the cogs in my brain whirring furiously, I wondered about what to do next upon returning to the UK.

Working at Ashley Community Housing sparked my interest in refugee and migrant matters. Perhaps because of my background in geography, I have always been interested in how migration shapes the world we live in, but working at ACH was my first experience of how the world we live in shapes migration and affects the lives of refugees. Working for a dynamic organisation founded by and for refugees gave me a glimpse into the challenges and opportunities displaced people face, and got me asking questions – what does resettlement look like, and how can organisations and individuals support this process?

In El Salvador, I visited a community that was uprooted during the country's Civil War. The whole village fled to Honduras across the Lempa River in search of safety. Years later, they returned to the place they call home and rebuilt their community from scratch. It was remarkable to be stood on the same soil that was a battleground just 24 years earlier - the same number of years I have been alive. Had my parents been from this village, I would probably have been born in a Honduran refugee camp. Hearing the stories of individuals affected by war woke me up to the reality of how many displaced people there are worldwide. I've heard the statistics. We've all seen the ongoing 'migrant/refugee crisis' on the news. But being in a village with this history reminded me of the desires and capabilities of displaced peoples in rebuilding their lives and creating flourishing communities.

I was delighted when Ashley Community Housing asked me back to work for Himilo Training Centre as a Training Support Administrator, because I value the way in which the organisation builds on people's existing capabilities to provide new opportunities and to help people move forwards with their lives. I feel like I am joining at an exciting time, when the training department is growing in size and significance. The courses on offer are having a real impact upon people's lives and the wider community, and it is great to be a part of this work.

Thanks for having me back!