



G E O G R A P H Y

ALUMNI

Mike Orellana

Geographically speaking, where do you come from?

I was born in East Los Angeles at Children's hospital and raised in Los Angeles and Hawthorne, the latter being for the majority of my childhood. Both my parents migrated from Guatemala to the United States in the mid nineteen-seventies.

How did you become interested in Geography?

What got me interested in Geogrpahy was my father. He was a volcanologist in Guatemala prior to his migration to the United States. Every other summer we would visit Guatemala, where he would take me to visit volcanic sites or Mayan pyramids. He would explain to me how people where connected with their environment and how we were part of a ecosystem that was interconnected and interdependent with people. My interest in Geography grew as I got older. After High school I joined the Marines and got to see many aspects of both the interconnected and interdependent nature of geography.

What type of Geography are you studying now? Do you have a specialty? Any research experience? If so, tell us about it.

While here at Berkeley, I have done both independent research and research with a program in the Environmental Science department. My independent research focused on studying geomorphological processes involved in a landslide in Mendocino county following the atmospheric rivers that hit northern California in the winter season of 2016-2017, and presenting a report and a 3D map using Arcmap GIS software to a group of my peers and professors.

What would you tell a student at Cerritos College interested in potentially majoring in Geography?

Geography is a great major because of its interdisciplinary approach. The best explanation of why Geography is a great major was told to me by one of my professors here at Berkeley. If we look at disciplines like doors geographers have the luxury to be able to walk through many doors.

What do you hope to do professionally once you have your Geography degree?

My goal professionally is to work with a federal organization such as the USGS, Forest Service, or NRCS (Natural Resources Conservancy Service). With an emphasis in land use as a Biogeographer.

