

Interview with Professor Alonso Zamora

Professor Alonso Zamora lives in Mexico and is currently teaching international affairs and African studies, it was difficult for me to find someone who works within sub Saharan Africa but thankfully a class mate who was in my group this semester in current affairs had professor Alonso in her contact and was nice enough to share this with me and ask him if he would not mind being a part of it. Thankfully the Professor was more than happy to help.

On a Saturday evening, I had the opportunity to interview professor Alonso Zamora, after countless emails and reschedules we finally managed to make it happen. It was decided that we will hold the interview through skype at 8pm Spanish time, to my dismay we were experiencing technical issues, around 9pm the sound was fixed and we could now begin the interview.

“Hello I’m Haleema!” I shouted nervously as if technology wasn’t strong enough for him to hear my greeting. The Professor replied much more quietly “Hi Haleema” and Before I could give any more information about who I am and how grateful I am that he agreed to take some time out of his busy work and life schedule to have this interview with me.

Professor Alonso began to ask me questions. It was almost as if I was catching up with an old friend which definitely helped in easing my nerves to the idea that it would be more of a educational conversation than an awkward formal interview. “How long are you in Spain for?” The professor asked and then it began as I told him about my year in Spain and how long I have left before I am back in my home country...

“So, can you explain to me what your role is?” As I felt it was best to start this with a more generic question, the professor then went on to tell me about his role as a professor in international affairs and African studies, it was interesting to find out that he went to college in Mexico and then went on to do a master’s degree from 2004 to 2006. It was amazing to hear someone who is not from the continent speak so passionately about Sub Saharan Africa.

He continued in telling me about how he has studied Africa for now over 13 years which I found to be amazing. He was mostly familiar with eastern Africa, places such as Kenya and Tanzania which he studied pastoral society and their confrontation with the state and having their own land. The idea that he may even know more about Sub Saharan Africa than those that descend from the continent was a thought that played in my head and got me thinking of the importance of educating those on where they come from.

I was very intrigued to know what made a man who had no relations with Africa so passionate about the state of the continent and to my surprise. Professor Alonso replied to me that he was concerned about the images that are shown of Africa in Mass Media and sees it as important to teach people more than just the negative images we see of Africa “These societies are shown to be barbaric in western society “The Professor said to me as I took notes, intrigued by his opinion and knowledge.

It might seem like a question that may not have been needed to ask but I was interested to know what kind of people of people are prone to attend the classes and, I was surprised to hear that it wasn’t just people of the African society in Mexico but also Mexicans (like my classmate) students studying abroad and some students from the Caribbean and Africa.

Professor Alonso informed me with his bad luck when trying to visit Africa, His first time in 2008 where he tried to make a visit to Kenya in 2008 however due to work commitment in Mexico. He was not able to make the journey. Five years late in 2013 the same journey was planned however

this time the professor messed up his knee, the professor told me that he has plans to book another trip and I hope that this time the professor makes it to his destination.

The Government was a topic that we had to touch on and my question for the professor was “What would you say to nations to Government and political leaders in Africa on what they should be doing more and less of?” And to this he told me that people are tired of their political class. They are tired of seeing the same politicians, The Government need to make way for the younger politicians for there to truly be a change. His words were “Fight promotion and not promote it, I believe in the young people of Africa being able to make the change that is needed.”

Written By

Haleema Lagundoye