

**April Bello**  
**Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2010**  
**Studied Environmental Science and Peace and Justice Studies at Wellesley College**  
**Completing Boston Teacher Residency Master's Program**

When April was 13, a wildfire wiped out several acres of forest near her home. As a member of her middle school's environmental academy, she helped restore the native plants and birdlife that had been impacted by the fire. For the first time, she felt stimulated by her natural surroundings and excited about science.

Because of the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars award, instead of working odd jobs, April was able to focus on her studies and her passion for the environment. During her first two summers, she researched lead and zinc contamination in Boston soil. She met community organizers who were concerned about the quality of the water and she grew more politically active.

In her senior year, April was selected to travel with the International Honors Program: Beyond Globalization. She spent time in Tanzania, India, New Zealand, Mexico and Guatemala exploring how individuals and companies in the western world affect developing nations through their decisions. "I saw a lot of environmental degradation, I saw a lot of violence and I saw a lot of poverty," she says.

One of April's research projects on her extended global tour involved documenting plant species and their ecologies in India, New Zealand and Mexico. In New Zealand, she also looked more closely at the molecular composition of endangered plants. Still, the real lesson for April was recognizing how much individuals in the developed world impacted these tiny communities in far-flung places.

When she returned from her expedition, she says, "I could not stop asking the question, 'why and how and what now?'"

April is currently involved in a yearlong intensive classroom apprenticeship known as the Boston Teacher Residency. She teaches each day and takes courses in the evenings. When she finishes the year she will have a masters with a dual certification in elementary school education and English as a Second Language.

When she has earned her master's, April wants to implement a social justice curriculum for elementary school students that will challenge them to think in problem-solving ways.

April continues to be inspired by the example of her mother, who was recently deported. While her documentation status prevented her from achieving many of her goals, her mother kept moving forward. In the face of oppression, poverty and blatant discrimination, her mother never gave up. Knowing what her mother did with as few resources as she had motivates April to keep striving towards her own goals.