

# Kitty Hall College Essay,

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The world we live in is one in which Americans have the opportunity to see the whole picture. You hear it everywhere: global warming, global economy, global poverty. It's an unavoidable fact; we are all in this together. This point was never driven home to me so vividly as in the summer after my junior year. I was one of fifteen students selected based on essays we had submitted for a service project in Costa Rica. I expected to see poverty, to experience a world far different from mine, yet somehow I honestly didn't expect to learn from the experience. We lived in a rural, coffee-growing village on Mount Chirripo and assisted the townspeople in restoring their crumbling elementary school. I stayed with a family who did not speak English, with whom I was barely able to communicate, and who knew nothing of "my world." I was anxious, but curiosity and the chance to help others overcame this.

Soon after my adventure began, I was continuously reminded that nothing exists in a vacuum. The physical and social environment of this village was clearly a manifestation of their moral and cultural world, and while no society is inherently superior, I came to see great beauty in my surroundings. I was struck by clear moral differences between the lavish and privileged Western world of my own and the poverty-stricken village in which I found myself. The Ticos live by their motto, "Pura Vida" ("Pure Life"), and it's truly an accurate portrayal of their lifestyle. They focus on what is necessary, not only for life, but for spirit. They care about what is important, what is truly valued — no electronic gadgets, no imported luxuries, no "keeping up with the Joneses." They eschew excess and superfluity; it makes them richer in spirit. They value cooperation over competition, utilizing over consumption, a sense of community over individual materialism. Their lives struck me as a beautiful, need-based existence; a culture based on God, family, and the soil.

These lessons came to me through my daily interactions with the community, and especially, my host mother, Margarita and her daughters. Learning to connect with nature and her people, even my own lifestyle, based on fair trade and social consciousness, suddenly felt very extravagant. Never had I been touched by something so simple as family, so uncomplicated as generosity. I learned how the most basic, unembellished, and shared values can bridge gaps in language to bring people together. Something as easy as playing "Go Fish" could be a difficult exercise if one relied solely on cold, lifeless rules. Patience, excitement, and encouragement, however, are universal. Most importantly, laughter is the same in every language.

The challenge in coming home was taking all I had learned and bringing it into action. I asked myself, "What can I do?"

I can join the long-lived and honorable profession of nursing, whose members are in constantly increasing demand. I can satisfy my search for personal value by giving the most intimate and immediate help to those who need it. I can go anywhere in the world where I am needed, and I can further employ the same life-lessons, as they will be constantly honed by the ever-changing surroundings through which I will discover them. I can learn new things. I can touch people's lives, and in turn be touched by them. I can provide what is truly needed. I can help lessen the stress and pain of ill health, allowing others to move forward with minds freer from pain, and thus clearer and better prepared to absorb their own life lessons. In a thousand small ways, I can better understand the inescapable conclusion that everything and everyone is connected, that we are all in this together.

University of San Francisco's mission statement and Nursing Program is exactly what I am looking for to live out my goals of working and helping people globally. The Guatemala service learning expedition is an experience that will help me realize a long-term aspiration of working for Doctors Without Borders or a similar organization.

One person CAN make a difference. I want to live my life as an example to others and come ever closer to my goal of "Pura Vida" and in doing so, strengthen and improve not only myself, but my world.

