

Convocation Speech

Yesika Bravo

It all began with a simple gesture...giving.

Being of Cuban-Dominican descent, I would travel every year with my grandparents to the Dominican Republic from a very young age. My grandmother would collect donations throughout the course of the year leading up to our annual trip and ship it over. Once we were there we would load up a truck and drive to nearby underprivileged towns. My grandparents had been doing this for years and people would already know we were coming so we would have a crowd of people waiting for us to arrive. Being very young, about 4 years old when I started, I was in charge of handing out toys to the young children that came up to the truck. I can still remember their smiling faces and laughter to this day.

And so began my ongoing quest to give to those who were in need, whether it would be through a simple act of kindness or bringing medical supplies to a third world country, I felt it was my responsibility to help whenever possible.

Since then I have had the opportunity of working with homeless women and children right in my own back yard in Florida's only homeless woman's day shelter where I spent about twelve years of my life starting from a very young age. I have traveled to Ecuador to serve an orphanage/boarding school in the small town of Mindo for the past 6 years and I cannot imagine my life without having experienced such a beautiful place. I will be going on my third ASB trip along with many other Merrimack students this year as a Leader on the Eastern Shore Virginia trip.

I was asked to talk about an experience that has made me want to be active in serving others and what makes me want to continue. But to be honest, I can't think of just one. Rather it is every individual experience over the years that constantly keeps my eyes open to all the need there is in the world and why there is no reason to stop. My mother once told me, "Service is what we are here to do, we are here to help others, to help each other." I have kept that in the back of my mind and when I see an opportunity arise to give someone a hand I do it because it IS our purpose.

I know that not everyone has a desire to be involved in community service. But just think about it for one second. We all have some talent or skill that may be unique to us or we are just simply good at. It is the positive things that we do with these skills and talents that allow us to continue to improve our community; our home community, our Merrimack College community, our global community.

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