



Photograph by Tamara

All You Need is Love Tamara

Visiting a foreign country is challenging. You are exposed to new people, a new culture, and it can be uncomfortable. At the same time, it is exciting and most often an amazing experience. When I visited Mexico, I felt out of place. Don't get me wrong, I had a great time; but I wasn't on vacation. I did things that most tourists would never even consider doing. I visited the poorest place in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico: the dump. It is a place where impoverished Mexicans spend their entire lives sorting through the city's trash and waste. Because of the bacteria and disease, most don't live to be 35. Think of a place that smells of everything nasty and dirty; now take that smells times five. That is the smell of the dump. I spent three unforgettable days at the dump playing with the children, and the experience has changed my life in more ways than one.

Spending time with the children at the dump, I searched anxiously for a way to somehow make a difference in their lives. Staring into the warm, yet desperate brown eyes of a little girl, I found myself frustrated. These children seemed to be so content with what they had, even if what they had was hardly anything at all. This was the only life they knew, and it was enough for them. It made me realize that those fortunate enough to have more take everything for granted, including me. I knew that I was blessed to have a family that loved me, three meals a day, and a roof over my head, and that many people in the world spent their lives homeless and starving; but I never experienced first hand the poverty in Puerto Vallarta.

I knew I was missing something. The language barrier between Spanish and English was a challenge that overwhelmed me like poverty overwhelmed them. I felt so helpless. So instead, I just smiled and made funny faces, just to hear them laugh.

I spent the three days wishing I could do more for the kids, then it hit me: The little things you do in life sometimes have the most impact. I was trying too hard to change the entire world! I had figured the kids needed something I couldn't give them, when I had what they needed all along: love. That's all it was! They needed tickle fights and "tag." They needed hugs, high fives, and hide-and-go-seek. They needed a lap to sit on, or a hand to hold. They needed to be loved. I left my mission's

trip a little less frustrated. So maybe I didn't change the world, but I might have made a difference in a child's life. Sometimes, all you need is love.