Poor College Essay Sample

Unlike other teenagers, I’m not concerned about money, or partying, or what others think of me. Unlike other eighteen year-olds, I think about my future, and haven't become totally materialistic and acquisitive. My whole outlook on life changed after I realized that my life was just being handed to me on a silver spoon, and yet there were those in the world who didn’t have enough food to eat or place to live. I realized that the one thing that this world needed more than anything was compassion; compassion for those less fortunate than us.

During the summer of 2006, I went on a community service trip to rural Peru to help build an elementary school for kids there. I expected harsh conditions, but what I encountered was far worse. It was one thing to watch commercials asking for donations to help the unfortunate people in less developed countries, yet it was a whole different story to actually live it. Even after all this time, I can still hear babies crying from hunger; I can still see the filthy rags that they wore; I can still smell the stench of misery and hopelessness. But my most vivid memory was the moment I first got to the farming town. The conditions of it hit me by surprise; it looked much worse in real life than compared to the what our group leader had told us. Poverty to me and everyone else I knew was a foreign concept that people hear about on the news or see in documentaries. But this abject poverty was their life, their reality. And for the brief ten days I was there, it would be mine too. As all of this realization came at once, I felt overwhelmed by the weight of what was to come. Would I be able to live in the same conditions as these people? Would I catch a disease that no longer existed in the first world, or maybe die from drinking contaminated water? As these questions rolled around my already dazed mind, I heard a soft voice asking me in Spanish, “Are you okay? Is there anything I can do to make you feel better?”  I looked down to see a small boy, around nine years of age, who looked starved, and cold, wearing tattered clothing, comforting me. These people who have so little were able to forget their own needs, and put those much more fortunate ahead of themselves. It was at that moment that I saw how selfish I had been. How many people suffered like this in the world, while I went about life concerned about nothing at all?

Thinking back on the trip, maybe I made a difference, maybe not. But I gained something much more important. I gained the desire to make the world a better place for others. It was in a small, poverty-stricken village in Peru that I finally realized that there was more to life than just being alive.