

Why College is Important to Me  
by Caroline Meyerson

Twelve thirty. A typical day. Forty-two kids. As young as two, as old as sixteen, were gathered at my feet listening to me read Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* for the hundredth time. The routine was always the same – first in Spanish, then in English, and then in Spanish again.

No matter how many times I read it, I could see the hunger in their eyes as they stared back at me mesmerized. For most of these children, it was the first book that had ever been read to them because this book was the only children's book in their village.

Life without running water, electricity, or books in Asiento Viejo, Nicaragua, where I volunteered with the Amigos de las Americas program, opened my eyes to another world and to the people who live in it: a world without "formal" education. It taught me that intellectually stimulating or academically challenging does not have to come from an encyclopedia or the Internet. Nor does it have to come from a scientist or philosopher. It can come from a simple 64-page children's book and most important, an open, curious mind.

This moving experience along with living in Mexico every summer since I was six has instilled in me a passion for the Spanish language and the Latin American culture. My "formal" college education will culminate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree with concentrations in Spanish and Communications. And just like in Asiento Viejo, I want to be intellectually stimulated everyday by professors and surround myself with curious students with an insatiable desire to learn.

But, college is not just about a "formal" education. It is not just about attending class and then going home. I plan to step out of the classroom and be academically challenged in other ways. Having been active in my high school newspaper, I want to continue writing and editing for my college newspaper. This will allow me to be an integral part of student and campus life. As an officer on my

school's hip-hop dance team, I choreograph our competition and performance routines. No one should be surprised when they see me wandering down the path towards the fine arts department to learn other forms of dance. And to mirror my experience of creating CRA-Z dance team at a local community center in Houston, I hope to begin a similar program in my college town. Community service was not a requirement at my high school, but it is a personal commitment of mine to help create a better world and a better me.

A college degree will lead me to my ultimate goal of being chosen to participate in the Teach for America program. And I plan to take the first step towards that goal with an open, curious mind.