

"How Will An International Education Help Me Make A Difference In The World?"

On December 26th, 2004, the same day that I left my family and home back in Sri Lanka, to come to the United States in pursuit of higher studies, the Sumatra tsunami shattered the majority of South Asia. I was speechless and crushed to hear that Sri Lanka was one of the worst affected countries, that over 35,000 lives were lost, and over 400,000 were displaced including the lives of family and friends known to me. I felt lost and hopeless not knowing what I could do living thousands of miles away. My immediate family was safe, but I can't even begin to say how I felt, it was almost like I had lost a piece of me. I couldn't help thinking of everything I could have done *only* if I had been home at least one more day. My only sense of relief came from volunteering in fundraising organizations, here in the US which were helping all the Tsunami affected countries.

My parents sent me to the US as a way of following my dreams, to get a better education, one that many of us don't even have the power to think about. Even during this difficult time, they were further encouraging me to continue with my dream and to make a difference in the world, even in the smallest way. My parents were never financially "rich", but in education and intellect they were the wealthiest in the world. They've set the best examples, and have always persuaded me to follow my dreams and never give up. Nevertheless, it is easier said than done, especially when one faces so many financial burdens as an international student. Even a dollar can go a long way for someone like me, back home it can give me three square meals a day. With this scholarship I know I won't be able to change the world, but I know it will take me one step further in achieving my dreams.

My intention is to become a Nurse, and pursue graduate studies in Medical Anthropology and become a public health advocate in developing countries such as mine. I want to give back to my country, what she has given me; a good education, a great cultural heritage and the courage and determination to be who I have become today. I want to educate, enrich and be an example to those who have similar dreams like mine. To give relief to anyone who is suffering, in pain and feels helpless; which I couldn't do during the tsunami.

I will make a difference in the world, with this great international education to back me up, the countless opportunities that come my way to follow my goals and dreams, and the courage, determination and perseverance to achieve the highest. *I can't change the direction of the wind, but I know I can set the sails to reach my destination.*

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