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The Spring 2005 education abroad program at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) was unquestionably one of the best decisions I could have made. It was absolutely an eye-opener to a world of new knowledge, a world I thought I was familiar with but was pleasantly surprised to find otherwise. I learned a new culture, picked up Cantonese, and became very close with a group of great friends, with whom I still keep contact.

Upon my return to the United States, I visited Mrs. Mo, the 8th grade teacher at Durfee Elementary School in my hometown, El Monte, to complete my follow-on service project. Throughout my presentation to her classes, I addressed four basic questions: what is education abroad, who can go, where you can go, how you can pay, and why should you go. Many students after the presentation were very excited and said they want to study abroad too. When I proposed and presented this project, I did not expect to perform miracles; I did not expect every child to suddenly become very serious students and turn their lives completely around. I simply wanted to show them that the possibilities are out there, that they, too, can achieve all this and more, and that there are numerous support services such as the Gilman Scholarship to help make their dream a reality. I targeted this group of students because most children in my community, including myself, are from an immigrant background whose parents did not have access to higher education, let alone having the opportunity to study abroad.

As I did my presentation, I was reliving every moment that has inevitably etched a warm memory in my heart. My only regret was that it was too short. My education abroad was definitely a learning experience of a lifetime. It has opened my eyes to the other side of the world that I had been oblivious to. During my education in Hong Kong, I took the opportunity visit Beijing, Guilin/Yangshuo, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and Vietnam, and each was beautifully unique but at times disheartening. The overall experience was that it made me realize how fortunate I am to be in America and to have the opportunity to explore another world. Furthermore, it has solidified my interests to pursue medicine, because one day I would like to re-visit the developing regions of these countries and lend a helping hand to these impoverished communities that are just begging for help. There would otherwise be no point in learning and exploring a new world if one is not willing to use that knowledge and make something good out of it.