

# Broken Barriers: Three Days in Valle de las Palmas, Mexico

## 衝破阻礙：墨西哥三日行



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The difficulties of everyday life seem much smaller when viewing the hard-up mountain valley communities or the crude, treated cow farms that can be found in Baja California. Troubles aren't as testing when I think of the smile on "Chino", a five-year-old, curly-haired boy I played with during my Spring Break trip to Mexico. I instantly feel grateful when I think of the women who cooked us breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and allowed me to experience genuine Mexican burritos. A wave of euphoria washes over me when I think of the family we built the room addition for and the bright futures awaiting their children. (Note: Baja California is the northernmost state of Mexico. Its northern limit is the U.S. state of [California](#).)

During my Spring Break this year, I went to Mexico with my school, hoping to make a positive impact. However, the reality is, the people I met there ended up being the ones affecting me. Although the chance to work with an underprivileged and marginalized civilization can transform almost anybody, never will I forget the emotions I felt those three days I was in Valle. Never before have I felt so fulfilled, so satisfied, so happy. Nothing can describe the sense of accomplishment when I finally saw our completed room for the family. And, in no way, can I dictate how grateful I am for my time with the children of Valle.

當看到下加利福尼亞貧困山區中的村莊和簡陋的牛場時，我們每日所遇到的困難顯得微不足道；當我想到春假時在墨西哥遇見的一位五歲捲髮男孩奇諾的微笑時，一切的憂慮和煩惱頓時煙消雲散；當腦海浮現出那些為我們準備伙食，讓我有機會品嚐地道的墨西哥捲餅(Burrito)的阿姨們時，心中便充滿了感激之情；而當我想起幫助那一家人建造房屋和孩子們所擁有的光明未來時，更是喜不自禁。(注：下加利福尼亞是墨西哥最北部的州。北面與美國加州接壤。)

今年春假，我和老師，校友們一同踏上墨西哥之旅，希望自己能為那裏帶去一些正面的影響。然而事後發現，是那裏的人影響了我。雖然我知道與文明落後且貧困的人們一起生活的經歷可以改變任何人，我永遠不會忘記在瓦萊的三日所體驗到的那些情感。我感受到了前所未有的快樂，充實和滿足。當我們為那一家人建造的房屋完工時，我心中的滿足感是無法形容的。我也非常感激自己有機會能和村裏的孩子們一起渡過歡樂的時光。

My perspective on life changed immensely those few days. In a way, these people brought out the child in me – the innocence and naivety I had lost growing up in an affluent metropolitan. It didn't matter that we couldn't understand each other's languages. It didn't matter that I came from America, “the land of the opportunity and promise”, and that all they knew was life in a quiet shantytown. We had soccer balls and paper hearts and smiles on our faces. And, by the end of our stay, we were tearing inside. Part of this was delight, part of this was distress, but all of this was from our hearts.

Barriers were broken in Valle that week. In only three days, people of diverse tongues and backgrounds overcame cultural barriers and formed incredible friendships. In America, people are often judged by the amount of material wealth they possess or the clothes they wear. In Valle, I made friends based on my genuine smile and eagerness to interact with the children. Despite my limited Spanish knowledge, I still worked hard that week to communicate verbally, often with the help of fellow students and adults. Most of the time, however, I had to resort to hand motions and facial expressions for interaction—which, to our amusement, often resembled charades.

Looking back at my experiences during Spring Break, I can genuinely say, I miss Valle very much. I miss the people, the food, the slow pace of life; I miss the opportunity for different cultures to unite, and I miss the chance to share and celebrate those differences. In America, as I always have access to internet and email, write this essay on a modern computer, and sit in a fully enclosed room with a beautifully tiled floor under my feet, I cannot help but remember that just one week ago, I had the occasion to live a very different lifestyle. I played with the children of Valle, who lived in houses of cement flooring and a meager wooden roof over their heads. Computers and Internet had to be the last thing on their minds, and I find that innocence to be refreshing.

This well-off, Asian kid from the Bay Area, California suburbs needed a humbling experience like that trip to Mexico. I needed to be propelled from my comfort zone. I needed to be immersed in another culture. I needed to work with the underprivileged for a week, and through interaction, I realized their sorrows and joys, their hopes and dreams.

Barriers were broken in Valle that week. Fifteen students and six adults worked together to make a small, yet incredibly positive difference in the world. In the process, we formed genuine friendships that I trust will last in my heart for as long as I live.

Barriers were broken in Valle that week, and that power inspires me forward. Valle de las Palmas allowed me to realize so many more beautiful truths about people and life – although the people I have met in Valle may be poor in material measures, all of them are rich

那幾天當中，我對生活的看法發生了極大的轉變。某方面來說，那裏的人喚醒了我內心沉睡的小孩——因為在繁華都市中長大，而迷失了的天真與無邪。儘管我們無法理解對方的語言；儘管我來自美國，一個「充滿機會與潛力的國土」，而當地人所瞭解的只是貧困小鎮的生活；但這些都不是問題。我們一起玩足球，折紙愛心，臉上總掛著燦爛的笑容。臨走時，我們都在心中默默地流淚——一部分是快樂的淚水，一部分是傷感的淚水，這些都是發自內心的。

在那裏的一個星期，我們衝破了阻礙。短短的三天中，不同語言和背景的人克服了文化的隔閡，建立了一段非比尋常的友誼。在美國，人們常以外在的財富與所穿的衣著來評價一個人。但在這個村莊，我用真實的笑容與對孩子的熱情，認識了許多的朋友。儘管對西班牙語的認知有限，我依然在其他同學和老師的幫助下，盡最大的努力和當地人對話交流。但是大部分時候，我還是得借助手勢和臉部表情來溝通，這就很像我們愛玩的「比手畫腳」遊戲。

回顧這個春假的經歷，坦白講我真的很想念那個村莊。想念那裏的人、食物和悠閒的生活節奏，想念各種文化融合在一起的機會，更想念那些分享欣賞彼此差異的時光。回到美國，當我熟悉地使用著網路和電子郵件，在一台現代化的電腦上寫著這篇文章，待在密閉的房裏，腳踩著光亮的瓷磚地板，此時情不自禁地想起一個星期以前，我還過著一種迥然不同的生活方式。那時我和瓦萊的孩子們一起玩耍，他們的房子是水泥地和簡陋的屋頂。電腦和網路，會是他們最後才會想到的東西；他們的這種天真，令人感覺清新。

一個出生富裕、在加州灣區長大的亞裔小孩，需要一個像這次墨西哥之旅令人變得謙遜的體驗。我必須走出自己的舒適區，沉浸在另一種文化，和生活落後的人們一起工作一個星期；透過這些互動與交流，我才瞭解他們的悲傷與歡樂，希望和夢想。

在瓦萊的一個星期，我們衝破了阻礙：十五個學生和六個大人，攜手為這個世界創造了一個微小卻極為正面的改變。在這個過程中，我們建立了一生難忘的純真友誼。

在瓦萊的一個星期，我們衝破了阻礙：這股力量激勵著我向前邁進。瓦萊德拉帕瑪（Valle de las Palmas）讓我認識到很多關於人和人生的美麗真理





VALLE DE LAS PALMAS

# MEXICO

in spirit and bursting with  
kindness.

Thank you, Corazon and  
Developing Virtue Girls'  
School, for this opportunity. ❀

——雖然在瓦萊遇到的人  
們在物質上很貧窮，但在  
精神上卻極為富裕，而且他們  
都很善良。

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