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Expanding Perspectives

Throughout my 2.5 weeks here in “Ambos Nogales” (as they call it here), I have challenged myself and expanded my perspective. I was able to set aside my implicit biases. I have learned through our weekly immersive and educational excursions and service learning placements how to expand your perspective. I was able to broaden my perspective of the realities of the borderlands and just how, in doing so, it brings many benefits to individuals and societies.

Before this internship, I had never lived in a borderland community. I had only ever crossed from San Diego, CA, to Tijuana, MX. And that was an experience in itself. It was almost like dipping my toe into the water to test the temperature. But living in this environment, at the borderlands, has allowed me to expand my perspective on the realities of the borderland communities. That felt like jumping fully into the water without knowing what to expect. The reality is it is not all as dangerous as the media likes to portray it to be. It is not all “cartel land” nor all “crime-ridden.” Those are the stereotypes that I partially believed before coming here. My perspective and knowledge of the borderlands were limited because I had not only been getting my info from the news alone but also because I had never even been to a borderland community. I learned that the borderlands are not as you read and see in the media alone. Everyone here has been nothing but pleasant to me and welcoming. The border communities genuinely have that sense of community and shared comradery. It often feels like family.

I was able to experience that sense of community between the borderlands firsthand when I visited Ajo, AZ (another borderland community) this past weekend. The people living in Ajo are among the most connected and unionized people I have ever met. They are driven by the values of community and welcomeness. They have so many murals around the city that show the harmonious nature of the borderland communities. Many of the people there that I have met are guided by the task of helping migrants and making sure that they can have the life they deserve to have. And they are passionate about helping them in any way they can. As an example, during the trip to Ajo, we were able to do one of the most impactful experiences I’ve ever done in my life. We were able to experience doing a water drop with Ajo Samaritans and provide food and water for migrants who were on their journeys in the unforgiving desert.

After doing the water drop, I could see just how much it was needed, and it was something before I came here I didn’t know was being done (I didn’t even know water drops were a thing!). I could see their tracks that were previously walked upon and how much water and food were so necessary for them. It expanded my perspective about how grueling and exhausting their journeys genuinely are. I quickly learned their journeys consist of challenges from scorching temperatures during the day and freezing temperatures at night to jumping cacti, wildlife, la migra, vigilantes, thirst and hunger, and fear of being left behind. My perspective on

who is really crossing over has changed. These are human beings trying to travel to have a better life for themselves, their families, and their spouses.

Another time my perspective would be expanded was during our trip while in Ajo. We were able to cross over to the Mexican side and visit Centro de Esperanza and play volleyball with the migrants there who were waiting on their asylum case appointments. We could engage and interact with the youth there, which was special for me. Before this trip, I had never seen a migrant shelter, nor could I have ever imagined what one would look like. It expanded my perspective on these places and how they benefit migrants. It opened my eyes to the fact that shelters and detention centers are different. It showed me the wonderful and hardworking people who run the shelters and make them what they are today. It showed me how truly amazing the migrants are, and it showed me that these are people simply looking for a better life and wanting what's best for them.

Expanding perspectives is an essential aspect of personal development and societal growth. This past week has allowed me to expand my perspective on the reality of the borderlands. And most importantly, it has taught me that to know the truth, you must live it and see it for yourself firsthand. You cannot just believe everything you see on the news or social media. Because it may not be the whole truth, as I have learned. At the end of the day, these are human beings who must continue to be treated as such no matter their status, where they came from, or their backgrounds. My perspective expanded because I learned through this program thus far that by actively seeking out diverse experiences, engaging in cultural exchange, and embracing education and media that reflect the richness of human diversity, we foster empathy, understanding, and a more inclusive society. A world where human beings can be seen and treated as human beings.

