A quick overview of the trip:

After two days of travel, a 12 hour layover in Amsterdam, and not much sleep, I arrived in the tiny airport in Malawi. Waiting to greet me was the rest of my team, a collection of beautiful souls from all over the USA, and one from Brazil. None of us knew each other, but by the end, we were family. We had a team dinner, took part in a church service the next day, and were off to our village.

We were welcomed into our village in Salima by traditional song and dance from the women of the village. How beautiful to see such tradition alive. The chiefs welcomed us. We were introduced to the two women who we'd be building the homes for. Then we got to work. We split into two teams, were taught how to build the traditional brick and mortar (matope!) homes, with these very basic, home-made tools. And we were off. Within three days, we had one home almost complete. By the end of 5 days, we had them both done. How beautiful to see them stand, and to share the first meal in the home with our one family, that they prepared for us. Such a sacred experience.

We spent our lunches playing with the children. The children were pure innocence. They would run right up to you and want to hold your hand. Or play with you. Or in my case, sing "Oh Na Na" with me (it became our song and my honorary nickname by the end of the trip, thank you Trey Songz). Check out my video HERE. It was such pure, unconditional love, and I realized it came from a place of lack of fear. This village was about 2,000 people, so everyone knows each other, everyone is family. There is no fear, only love. Their lives were pure, simple joy.

How much do we pay for that "simple" joy now? Somehow, we have taken everything good and pure and complicated it.

To wrap it up, I'm not saying we can overhaul our current lives. We can't change America back to what it used to be. We can't all quit our jobs and go live by our families in huts and farm. Our country is too far gone. But we can take elements and integrate them back into our life. And with that, I'll leave you with what I took away. I try everyday to keep these practices up, and maybe, just maybe someone else will pick them up too. And soon, we will have a Global Village, as it was always intended to be.

1. Donate your time.

2. Smile. Say Hello.

3. Socialize in Real Life.

4. Support Clean Food & Local Farmers

5. Family Time & Neighbors

6. Be Grateful

7. Simplify

8. Be that One Person

"The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" - Mark 12:31

Peace & Love-

Ashley Noel

For more info on Habitat for Humanity and Global Village, please visit: www.habitat.org

I serve in the Los Angeles chapter of Habitat. To join me, visit: www.habitatla.org