**The essence of discovery**

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French Novelist Marcel Proust wrote that the essence of discovery is not in seeing new landscapes but in having new eyes. I feel that for many college graduates the essence of discovery is lost. They face a graduate’s dilemma, the realization that for the first time in their lives the world is truly theirs. There is nothing stopping them from accomplishing their dreams, yet the pressures of society tell them that their reality is one of a 9-5 job, and that it’s better to play it safe than risk it all in pursuit of an Ideal.

Five years ago I faced the graduate’s dilemma, fresh out of college, colored green, with a whole world ahead of me. Yet, there I sat looking at map with no directions, with everyone telling me I need to get a job and start life. The question in my mind, however, was whose life? So as college graduates do, I bought into the noise, and began to go through the motions, applying to one Job after another. It was during this same time that a colleague suggested that I look into the United States Peace Corps, an organization I knew very little about, and furthermore something that most people told me was a waste of time. Nevertheless, I applied and was accepted. I received an invitation to serve in Mongolia. Matt and Mongolia just did not seem to fit together in a single sentence. To my dismay, I declined, and still listening to the naysayers, I continued to search for answers to my current dilemma.

My last real job interview was for an entry-level position at a staffing agency in Houston, and as I had been doing for the past 5 months, I was going through the motions. By this point, it was obvious to all parties involved that I didn’t want to work for this company, that I was just looking for something. And so it was, my interviewer stopped me, mid-interview, and asked me the question no one had yet to ask me, “what do you want to do?” It was obvious to him that I was searching. When I couldn’t answer his question, he told me that the job was not mine and that until I could answer his question, I would continue to live my life ”Just going through the motions”. As a man of faith; I believe that everyone has a path, and that was the day I was set on mine.

The following morning, I phoned my Peace Corps recruiter in hopes that they would grant me a reprieve. Much to my surprise they did, and a few days later, I had an invitation to serve as a volunteer on the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Saint Vincent and Matt did have a nice ring. I knew nothing of the Peace Corps other than the information they provided on their website; it was their logo that sold me “Life is calling, how far you will go?”. To me this was a fresh message, a chance for a new start. Up until this point, I had been doing what was expected of me. It was time for me to start living.

It’s been five years since I started on this path of self enlightenment, and with my graduate education all but complete, I find that I have come full circle. My decision to challenge the status quo and embark on a journey into the unknown has presented me with opportunities that otherwise would have remained hidden, such as working with coffee producers in Rwanda, educators from Iraq, and organic farmers in Trinidad. So for those undergraduates and graduates alike who are wondering what’s next, I would tell you to be bold, “Listen to yourself. Your road is the open road. See it with new eyes”.