
Walking the Simple Pathway: College Admission Essay Sample

I had thought of living in simplicity and happiness before, but I never understood its significance until I heard this sentence. "I will not allow you to come to my house. I am poor." I stared and looked at him as my eyes filled with tears, because I didn't understand what there was to be ashamed of. I began to ask myself: what are the most important things in life? And what makes a person successful? Is it money? Is it the things that we have? Is it the type of stone with which our houses are made? Is it weather we have a roof? Or a floor made of dirt?

It was August, 5th 2007 when I arrived in Monteverde, Costa Rica to start a new life, gain a new life experience, and attend a Quaker friends school. When I walked in the door of my new home and met my home stay family, it was raining. I had arrived in rainy season, a time when it was almost always raining or at least always a bit foggy. I felt sad watching the rain fall with such power from the sky. The rain seemed like an unstoppable force, and easily made me forget about the sun. Clouds seeped into my room and surrounded my body. Time seemed to stop, and I was enclosed by grey. I was left by myself in a foreign country without my parents, without my home, my friends, and without anything that was familiar to me. It was the decision of my parents to send me to Costa Rica to study; they said it would be a life-changing experience for me. I didn't really come to understand what they meant until later when I made the people who surrounded me my family and Monteverde my home.

My first day at Monteverde Friends School was eye opening. I had never thought that in the midst of such green mountains would be such a fruitful community. I saw children from all different cultures and backgrounds playing together, parents mingling in the school garden, families walking home, and students running around in the dirt roads. It always astonished me how natural it was for the children to get soaked in the rain or get dirty, and not even care. Within a couple of weeks I really began to feel the amount of love that the community held for one another, and to feel loved by many people that I had recently just met.

The adjustment was difficult for me, because there were many things that took me out of my comfort level, and at the time I felt as if my home was with my previous high school, my mother, my friends, and my dogs. The first time I took a shower the water was cold. I struggled with the faucet everyday to try and get the water just a tad bit warmer, but it never worked. It was frustrating to me because I absolutely hated cold water. I remember one night waking up because I felt something crawling around on my blanket. I jumped out of my bed, turned on the light, and found a tarantula on my bed. I shook my sheets vigorously to get it off and out of my

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room. It was challenging to live in a rustic house with wooden planks as walls, a tin roof, no hot water, and holes in the walls. When I realized that most of the people in Monteverde lived the same way, I began to really think about where I was from. I never got used to it until I learned how to accept, and become one with nature. After bathing in cold water many times, I realized that I didn't need hot water to live and get clean, and after seeing many tarantulas I realized that they as us are a part of nature and don't have the intentions to hurt anyone, but are just in their own environment.

I slowly began to feel the peace of the community, and understand the beauty of simplicity and happiness. When I walk on the dirt paths through the thick forests, or through the main town I observe people helping others, elders in their wheelchairs sewing on the front porch, the cabarelleros riding their horses, and people pray sincerely to God, even though they have only a small house with a tin roof and cement floor to hold their gatherings. These are the small details that showed me how beautiful the world can be when people are able to live in simplicity. Without fancy materialistic things, a car, or a showerhead that always has hot water with the perfect water pressure, people can be happy. It was never like this in any environment that I can remember.

The last year I lived in Monteverde I would walk home on the dirt path with a focus of getting home, taking a shower and finishing my homework. Thoughts of what had to be done would always fill my mind, and I would always feel behind time or late. Now, when I walk on the dirt path back to my little house, I take the time to think. I begin to watch my feet, stepping in unison with each other against the rocks broken off of the wild mountain. I often stop and realize how beautiful nature is. I observe the wild sunflowers and white lilies growing on the sides of the road, and even feel grateful when I can gather guayaba fruits off of its tree when I'm hungry. As I walk I feel as if I am meditating. I have learned to live in the present because I've begun to understand true peace. Walking through nature, conversing with people, and yoga has taught me what it means to live in the present, and so I followed.

What does it mean to be a successful person? Before coming to live in Monteverde, before I spoke Spanish, understood simplicity, or the beauty of nature success was about who you became. It was about being a perfect person, who ended up making a lot of money, and making their family proud. This was the image of success I had implanted into my mind. It meant you had to grow up to be a doctor, or an engineer; and the pressure would make me think I wasn't good enough for my family, or my expectations. I would stress myself out and work extensively to fulfill the image of being perfect, with perfect grades, and a perfect reputation.

After living in Monteverde for a while, I realized that I was surrounded by many successful people, but not necessarily in the form of a doctor who makes a lot of money. I realized that in a lifetime people have different measures of success, and it wasn't necessarily who you became,

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I realized it was also about who you are already. One of my best friends here in Monteverde has a father who owns a dairy farm land in Guanacaste, and her only dream is to be able to own the dairy farm and keep it running as a family business, and raise her family there. This really opened up my eyes to the amount of success I was surrounded by, and I began to appreciate the success of the smaller farmers, the little yoga studios, the cow farms, the dairy farms, and the small local coffee shops. Now when I think about success, I begin to think about happiness and love, and the most important things in life. Happiness and love is for one another, for family, and for my own well being, and being a successful person in your own eyes. My definition of success has changed. It is what an individual thinks is success for him or herself, but not to impress anyone else.

Being here has generated and changed many hopes and dreams I have for my future. The Monteverde community has created my dream of living in simplicity.

When I heard the words “I am poor” I looked at him and said, “What makes you poor? Because, in my eyes you are so rich, full of love and such a special person”. Of course he was talking about money, and the condition of the house he was living in, but these things weren’t important to me, and definitely did not change the way I looked at him as a person. He was a happy person, and I could see it, and he didn’t have everything in the world. He has a family with beautiful and healthy brothers and sisters, and he has all the love in the world for them. That’s everything that one needs.

I begin to walk again on the dirt path on the way home from school, this time more slowly, and with patience. It is raining, but I don’t feel sadness this time, I feel happiness. I feel glad and thankful to be alive, to be able to feel the drops of rain falling on my head and trickling down my skin, and to know that when I get home I will be nourished with love, because Maritza is waiting to give me a hug. It is this that I crave my life, the warmth of love, and care that people are able to give you. Again I see the fog surrounding my body, but I embrace it. I let it go all around my body, and watch as the bright colors of green turn to pure white, and observe its beauty not its dull grey colors. All the people who surround me as I leave Monteverde Friends School, as I walk home, and when I arrive at my house, have become my family. They surround me with their love, and give me a sense of security. With the people around me I feel my hopes and dreams taking form into a reality, and the environment I’m surrounded by showing me who I am and who I’m becoming as a person.

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