

The Path Traveled

The mountain air refreshes me. The uneven gray rocks, green grass, and mountain dew provides nourishment of the mind. The smell of recent rains emulates all around me. I walk, I hike, I climb the mountain side. I breathe in the country air, and it gives me purpose! It gives me energy! That smell is nature's perfume, if cannot be bottled, it needs to be fresh and experienced. As I walk, I climb each step and it takes me forward, onward. Always encouraging me to move forward.

This path is not made by man, but a trail made by the passage of time, rains cascading and running down eroding and building at the same time. The lines of weathered time is made evident on the face of the mountainside. Stopping to take a breath, I pondered the moment and was reminded of my roots. You see, I have always been climbing. I was born in the mountains of Puerto Rico; it was pure country. Not a single straight line in sight. I used to think that my family roots went back to the Taino Indians. I fantasized that when Christopher Columbus or Ponce de Leon landed on the aisle, my family said hello (they really did not know what they were getting into). That was my ancestral path, fisherman and farmers. Living the life in the mountains, toiling and living off the land.

In my youth, I was also always climbing. In school, I climbed the academic path, always striving for good grades; a "B" was unacceptable, always striving for the top, honors, essays, studying, writing. Why? Because society engrains those goals and traits in you and once achieved there will be more goals, more levels to achieve. It is how society programs you and all too willingly we fall into that path in life. Not the Path of natural instinct.

It is funny, because in my adulthood (I lived in New York City) there was not a single natural line, all you see are straight lines. steel and glass mountain tops. All too new and manmade, nothing natural. But Nature always called to me. You see, my hobby is Art, and in a world full of buildings I was always drawings flowers and landscapes. I realized, while starting my hike again, that as an adult I strive for a more professional career, promotion after promotion, again metaphorically, a climb to the top. Never stopping, never noticing, never relishing the moment. We work, we strive, we move onward. Why? Why can we not take a moment to relish our surroundings, our present and be at peace with ourselves. Should we always be climbing? I sure did; and still do, except now I am entering my twilight years...and the pace slows down.

Because the pace slows down, whether due to age, or just routine, I now relish the new slower pace. I notice more things...and actually visit the country. Like now, hiking the mountain, taking in the scent of the natural environment around me. When I get to the top, I will sit, I will take out my pad and I will draw it. Using the colors given by God and Light. But whatever I draw, will not come close to the picture and memory of my heart and mind...Because I took the time to notice!!! In my twilight years, I will relish the path taken. Look around, notice things and remember the moments that matter. We all must take that time and relish the path traveled.

We hiked all our lives. In youth it was school. In middle age it was profession. In the twilight years, I hope to hike Nature's path of life and cherish our surroundings, cherish the moment, appreciate the life traveled.