

Growing up in a small town, surrounded by forests for miles, there was never much to entertain me, but that was how I liked it. No video games, and hardly any TV. I didn't get an iPod until I could work the bottling line at my grandparent's winery and earn the money myself. I always had to entertain myself by being outdoors and finding games to play, in the pine needle covered dirt, or in the branches of an old live oak. I spent a lot of time making battlefields for my army men, but never playing wars. I would make traps for werewolves, and make 'potions' that I would bottle and then hide somewhere in the forest; some are still out there, probably moldy and discolored, covered in pine needles. My dad owned a bike shop until I was about seven, and he would always get me bikes that fit me right. I didn't get into biking until the age of ten. At age twelve I started to build jumps and various bike tracks. I remember getting home after school and being exhausted but I would still go out to my bike track and shovel for a couple hours, until the sun set or my Mom called me in for dinner. On weekends I would spend all day working on trails or jumps. I always wanted to camp out on the build sites and every once and a while I would, with a friend or two in a tent, but never for more than one night. I have always played in the dirt and I hope that I will always be close to it because that is what freedom is to me.

I have always been very inspired by backpackers and transient livers. Hobos are always moving and live off the grid, all the while living the life they always wanted to. They carry everything they need on their back, close to the earth, not lost in some city. I haven't really gone off and done my thing, on my own. It makes me wonder. What drives this transient lifestyle that I look up to? And what is my dream state of living, my transient lifestyle? The simple life is very appealing to me, but what is my ideal simple life?

The documentary "180 degrees South," by Chris Malloy, is a story of people who all share love for the earth and adventure, and want to keep what they hold close around forever. All of the main characters in the documentary are tied into the earth more than I can imagine. Some are always traveling, whether it is for surf or rock climbing, mountaineering or being a crewmember for a sailboat that is traveling from Alaska to Rapa Nui (Easter Island.) Living spontaneously is something that drives me everyday, although it is hard because it is so easy to fall into a pattern. Patterns are forced on us everyday, like school, work, payments, etc.

Henry David Thoreau set an example of going against the system and living out in the woods for a long period of time. Thoreau's book, Walden, is one of my many inspirations. He led a simple lifestyle and tried to find the balance between his soul and the earth. He built his own house and lived off of the land, to some extent, and grew very close the natural world, so much that he felt he needed to spend a lot of his life to protect it. Although he had written about his experiences with nature and put a whole lot of thought into life and nature, Thoreau did not spend that much time living close to the earth; after he was done living in his handmade cabin he felt that he needed to share his discoveries and accomplishments with everyone. So many people read his book but hardly anyone actually takes his ideals and uses them in their own lives.

In the U.S. today, we are all about big. Big cars, big R.V.s in the big driveway, big pools, and especially big houses. There is so much unneeded space and resources being used up. Why must we have all this room in our houses, when we could all settle for a much smaller percentage of fuel and space? We have disassociated ourselves from

the world; we see dirt as a bad thing that causes sickness, and the 'wild' as something we are not a part of. Nature is barbaric and we are too civilized for it to be a part of our lives. Why can't we embrace the 'wild' as a part of us, and realize that we came from this earth? No matter what we build or mass-produce, we are still a part of the earth and we do not rule it, so we have no right to ruin it.

Thoreau taught us that we do not need a huge building to feel at home; we also don't need new cars to feel up to date or economically conscious. In my mind, the ideal car is used or old and one that you can put as many miles on as possible, fixing it up as you go until it is ready to be recycled and melted down. All of these new fuel-efficient cars need a whole lot of energy to build, and even though you don't use much gas driving them, they used a mass quantity of fuel to create the little hybrids. So why waste when one can utilize what is already there and ready to be driven? The cycle that the human world is in is a downward spiral. We are using too much, and fast. So why can't there be more people living off of the land, taking just what they need and no more?

A home is somewhere we can sleep, eat, and feel safe. There are many other things that we think we need in a home: a large place to entertain guests, and a place to entertain oneself with a large TV (bigger is better); maybe a gaming system (or a couple); multiple bathrooms so that it is convenient for everyone; a large fridge for a lot of food and other storage for all the other foods; and three or four different places to heat food. It is all too much. These luxuries are extremely unnecessary, and hold us back while wasting precious resources that won't be around forever. My opinion won't change much in this world, but one day we will *have* to make a drastic change.

Hobos and backpackers are always moving, never settling down for long, and in a moments notice they can back up all their belongings and leave. They have a tiny carbon foot print, and take up little space, all while being close to the earth. The transient lifestyle has been around since the dawn of man, and has been the best lifestyle for the earth—it could provide the change that is needed in our society today. Besides, some people just don't like to be tied down to a bunch of cement pier blocks.

The TV show Thumbs Up America!, by David Choe, is about two men traveling across the country for free. They hopped trains, hitchhiked, and even got an airplane ride, all for free. They showed how one could live off of little but gain a whole lot. They had a great time, learned a bunch, and stayed close to the earth and far from an anchored home.

Just like David Choe in Thumbs Up America!, The first people were nomads, moving with the food sources, never tied down for too long, living solely off of the land. They loved the land and treated it with respect because it graciously gave everything to them. Now we think we own this world. We all own everything, and everything is money. This attitude is what built our country, and our world, but this hard coating of cement and asphalt will crumble away with or without us on it. We must get back to the more simple way, and live on the earth and with it. My ideal home is good for the earth and close to it, so that I don't forget that I am apart of it. It is a simple home, with a place to sleep that is solid and reliable, a place to cook, store food, a bathroom, and a wood burning stove—washing machine and dryer are optional. That's it, a little extra wiggle room, but a simple single or two room home, that is my ideal home. In an even simpler form, the bare minimum of a home is solely a bed that is sheltered and solid, along with some room for belongings and food. With all this waste going on around me, I am

inspired to make a home like this that is simple, eco-friendly, and as efficient in space and mobility as possible.

At this point in my life, I am awakening to how messed up the world has become, and how I would like to live to save my soul, so to speak. Many have inspired me and I am just starting to realize what kind of world I am living in. So I am getting ready to branch off of the mainstream, this current that we are all stuck in. We all go downstream so fast, the actual facts of life going by so quickly that it is hard to see the big picture. Living a more transient lifestyle, one that is simple and close to the earth, is one way that we can throw down an anchor and work our way across this watery mess to the shore.

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