

Diego Gomez

Blog 1 - Departure:

The journey to Kenya started about a month ago. Soon after our third orientation for the study abroad trip I googled the county traveler's clinic in the area to get my vaccinations, bought my hiking boots (which I've worn daily in order to break them in) and, being a recipient to the President's Award here at De Anza College, and, having been asked to be the commencement speaker for this year's graduation, I began brainstorming for what I'd say for the speech.

With Kenya on the horizon, and my journey at De Anza coming to an end, writing this speech served as a great platform to write down and reflect all the feelings I have towards this trip to Africa and on my transition from community college to a four-year institution. What causes more nervous feelings than giving the speech to a couple thousand people on a hot June day, is the idea of traveling twenty plus hours to the other side of the earth and immerse myself in a completely different environment. It's both exciting and terrifying. The physical dangers of such a trip have caused all the normal nervousness in my mind but what really scares me (not the kind of scare that paralyzes but the scare that excites) is the person I will return as. I don't know who he is yet, but I am eager to be him.

The thought that I will be traveling to the cradle of Humanity at the exact moment I am living through a very important transition in my life, in full pursuit of an education, feels like an experience I can only truly appreciate once it's already happened. It will be an event with so much richness that I can only really begin to appreciate it through reflection. That being said, I take each day before I leave as part of the Kenya experience and try to fully experience each moment as best as I can. I plan to bring very special books with me to read for the downtime we'll have in Kenya. During the day we have breaks to escape the sun. *Another Country*, by James Baldwin, and *Old Path White Clouds*, By Thich Nhat Hanh, are two that I plan on enjoying the most. Both books offer perspectives on life that share a profound understanding of our reality. I believe this trip will impact me in such a profound way. By being exposed to a reality thousands of miles away from the daily reality I have grown so accustomed to, makes me feel like a seed is being planted in me. A seed that will rapidly grow into a massive tree of curiosity with travel, community, and insight as the delicious fruit it will one day bare. I start at San Francisco State University in the fall as a Philosophy Major with a Race Resistance Studies Minor, and I feel honored and blessed to have the opportunity to travel to Kenya before I do.

It is a humbling experience to realize the vastness of our planet. It is an inspiration to experience its beauty. As I prepare for my final days as a part of the student body here at De Anza Community College, by finishing up classes and preparing my commencement speech, I find myself admitting that De Anza has a special place in my heart for allowing me to embark on a journey halfway across the world to Kenya. Most importantly, however, as I contrast this idea with the notion of how far academia and hard work can get you. I find myself reflecting on the reality that I am on a path to fulfill my passions; teaching, writing and traveling! As I end this entry I end it with a pause, a deep breathe; a true expression of my gratitude for all this.