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# Oh, The Places You'll Go... When You Don't Have A Job

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# Oh, The Places You'll Go... When You Don't Have A Job

## **Abstract**

Tis the season of graduation. Of moving up in the world. Of taking life by the horns and riding it into the magical sunset of your future. And it is often accompanied by three or four copies of Dr. Suess's Oh, the Places You'll Go, received from relatives who didn't talk to each other to make sure no one was getting you the same graduation gift. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, college, graduation, job search, unemployment

## **Disciplines**

Education | Educational Sociology | Higher Education | Liberal Studies

## **Comments**

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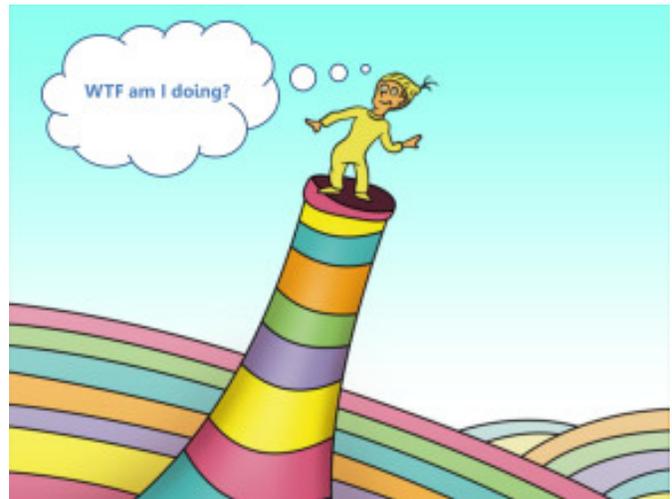
# SURGE

[ VERB ] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

## OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO...WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB

May 8, 2013

*"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go..."*



Tis the season of graduation. Of moving up in the world. Of taking life by the horns and riding it into the magical sunset of your future. And it is often accompanied by three or four copies of Dr. Seuss's *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, received from relatives who didn't talk to each other to make sure no one was getting you the same graduation gift.

*"There are points to be scored. There are games to be won. And the magical things you can do with that ball will make you the winning-est winner of all. Fame! You'll be as famous as famous can be, with the whole wide world watching you win on TV."*

You are told all of the fun is in front of you. Success is hiding, and waiting for you to seek. Fame actually has a crush on you and is just too shy to make the first move. And, yes, there are so many PLACES YOU'LL GO.

But what about home?

*"When you're in a Slump, you're not in for much fun. Un-slumping yourself is not easily done."*

There is no sentence that receives more looks of confusion and concern than when I tell people I'm going home after graduation. Furthermore, there is no sentence that requires more of a *justification* to assure the person I'm speaking with that I'm doing everything I can to *un-slump* myself.

**"I'm going home to start my training as a Red Cross volunteer so I can finally get the credentials I need to work abroad" // "I'm going home to study for my GRE's so I can apply to REALLY GOOD masters in Public**

**Health programs this fall" // "I'm going home because that's where I'm secretly a superhero and the millions of 'success mountains' I used to climb there miss me."**

But why the justification? Why is going home such a taboo thing? And why does it inspire looks of disappointment mixed with pity paired suggestions I didn't ask for on what I can do with my time spent at home?

*"Out there things can happen, and frequently do, to people as brainy and footsy as you. And when things start to happen, don't worry, don't stew. Just go right along, you'll start happening too!"*

It's because we as Americans define ourselves by what we do. We're a nation of hard *workers*. A nation of people *doing things*. A nation that has taught us that dinner party etiquette involves asking someone's name followed up immediately with "and what do you do?"

It's a nation where our job not only expresses what we do, but also who we are.

"In a rootless culture with no obvious class markers, the job defines the person and the pecking order. You are what you do" reports the Huffington Post in their [article](#) about the normalized process of using a job to reflect not only a function we perform in society, but also our personality, interest, and values.

For instance, should I feel embarrassed to tell people I've applied to work on cruise ships as event coordination staff? No! But I do, because I'm afraid people will think it's not social-justice-y enough for the social-justice-y me. I know the same is true with some of my recent graduate friends who have actually FOUND jobs, but because they weren't jobs that were necessarily relevant to what they majored in (or ones that were not 100% in line with their values and identity), the immediate reaction from others is "congrats!" but as soon as they leave, the whispers start up about how they "sold out" or that they "forgot who they were" at college.

But seriously? Come on. It's time we recognize that not everyone can follow their heart and go immediately from a Peace & Justice studies minor to working as the Director of the World Health Organization, and that sometimes financial constraints dictate what we need to do to get by. We also need to realize that going home isn't at all something to feel bad about. In fact, it's a major PRIVILEGE to have the ability to go home after college—some people are facing the all too real anxieties of NOT being able to go home, and desperately searching for a job, *any* job, to help get them through the next few years.

A job is a function. It's an activity you participate in. It's not who you are. And it's not the places you go which define you. It's how you do whatever you do and what you do with it that is important. This is the beginning of the next round of life choices, and while some will be made by us, some will also be made *for* us.

*"Your mountain is waiting! So... get on your way!"*

In my case? My choice to move home was made *for* me. I applied to about 20 jobs on the east coast, and nothing came through. So I'll go home and try again. And the mountains I'll climb will be those around Minneapolis, Minnesota.

So follow me over the next few months. See what happens. But don't judge me. You don't know what I'll do with this next stage of my life, and you don't get to tell me if I "sold out" by taking a job that doesn't directly relate to my Sociology major. This is my journey, I've got some places to go, and hopefully one of them will offer a salary and some benefits. They may not have been the places I had originally intended to go after college, but that's life.

**And I'm still going places.**

Now watch the [best commencement speech ever](#).

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<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/oh-the-places-youll-go-when-you-dont-have-a-job/>