

Carolina Rudge

Greater Richmond Relocation Council: 2012 Scholarship Essay

In the past seventeen years of my life I have moved seven times, learned the dynamics of five different schools, made acquaintances with hundreds of different people, and I have transported my stuffed animal dog, cookie, to seven different rooms. I have moved from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to Boca Raton, then to Hallandale Beach, next to Miami Lakes, then to two different houses in Jacksonville, and finally to Richmond. I have perfected my answers to the endless questions that each new place brings such as "Where are you from?", "You have an accent, are you Puerto Rican?", and my all-time favorite "Were you born in South or North Carolina?" In addition, I have learned to pick my friends very wisely. I have never been a bad sport about the relocations, and always reflected on the positive side of any situation. My positive attitude and gregarious personality always resulted with a quick adjustment to any new environment. That is, until the move to Richmond, Virginia.

Ever since I was born my family has always been fervent to live in a place approximately 15 minutes away from the beach. The salt water and fresh air became a little part of me that I always needed to have close by. Considering that this was the common ground I could rely on in any new city that my family would relocate to, it became my safe haven. If I ever felt alone, all I needed was a good book and a quick trip to the beach to perk me up. When I first heard of the move my family would be making from Jacksonville, Florida, to Richmond, Virginia, the first concern that came to mind was the city's distance from a beach. It sounds like such a trivial thing to be worried about, but this was the place I escaped to when times got rough. Herman Melville states in Moby Dick that "whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off--then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can". The beach was my runaway place when I felt like knocking hats off; laying down on the beach with a book while being calmed by the familiar texture of the sand on my back and noises

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of the waves crashing on to shore. The prospects of being deprived this personal form of therapy frightened me. Of course, I also considered other things like the fact I would be moving my senior year of high school to a place where it snows. All in all, I was a nervous wreck for the new move, but I kept my usual positive attitude, and hoped for the best.

Since my birthday would be falling around the same day as the move to Richmond, my parents gave me an early birthday/pity present and allowed me to stay in Miami for a month with my cousin and aunt. After the four weeks were up, I boarded the airplane and arrived in Richmond on August 17th 2011. My mother picked me up from the airport and drove us home as I sat in the passenger seat in silence. I was in utter shock at the dramatic change of environments. Everything felt so foreign and alien to me. I looked around for my beloved palm-trees in attempts to rest my eyes on anything but the red bricks that seemed to cover the entire city, and was utterly disappointed. For the first time, I was completely and unequivocally out of my comfort zone. It took only a mere three days of being in the new city until I begged and pleaded for my mother to drive us the two hours to Virginia Beach.

However, I still held on tight to my positive attitude. Being a person who can't stand to waste her time, I applied and got hired for a job, which would keep me occupied for the rest of my summer. Finally, school started 2 weeks later and the new experience began. I became involved in the theatrics departments, and French club to help buffer the blow of being the new girl in a foreign state. Little by little I befriended the people who were also a part of short pump players, the schools drama club, and began to assimilate. Finally four months later, I had participated in the school play along with the Virginia Theatre Association and had learned to appreciate Richmond and the things it had to offer. I didn't look for the palm trees anymore and I had stopped noticing the abundance of red brick buildings. With other common grounds such as libraries and local parks, I settled down and everything became much less alien. In addition, the prospects of so many prestigious colleges to choose from, I grew more excited about my senior year and finally became happy again. I have even grown fond of the place I once

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detested, and have chosen to stay in the area and attend University of Richmond for college. I believe I have truly grown as a person with this experience and gained new found knowledge. No matter the situation one is placed in, one will always get out of it what they put in. My advice to any teenager or person in general that has to go through a dramatic change, or several, in their life-span, is to remember that having a positive outlook will help you through the worst of storms. Even when you can't immediately overcome life's bitter obstacles, it is imperative that we find its silver lining. Find that silver lining and hold on to it until the sun comes out again. Throughout a person's life they are going to end up in different places with different people and different situations. Some they might enjoy and others they might hate, but if they can learn to be happy in the worst of conditions, it's smooth sailing from there.