

On Being a Part of City Life

When was the first time you felt connected to the life of a city?

When I was younger, I could see the busy-ness of the world around me - the high office buildings, the businesses, the traffic, the construction, the people rushing off to do things. But it all felt foreign and unrelatable.

These were things that *other* people did and the places that other people went. I had no inkling of what it was like *inside* those things. As a child and as a teenager, I was a net consumer, taking what was given to me and (let's be honest) not contributing all that much. So I didn't really notice, and I didn't understand.

I had to get a job before I started to realize the beauty of a city skyline, or even a busy interstate. The high office buildings, the businesses, the traffic, the construction, the people rushing off to do things - I'm a part of that flow now. I know what these places and things and activities are like. I know (some of) what it takes to create value in the world.

And that's a wonderful thing.

When I create things, I become connected to every other creator, whether they're fixing cars or stringing guitars or building spreadsheets. We're all trying to improve our lives by trading the value we have for the value someone else has. That puts us into a virtuous flow of exchange. That flow ultimately improves the lives of all the other people in all the other cars rushing toward the city skyline.

Seen that way, everyone I pass by on the interstate now is a fellow laborer, or (better yet) a fellow player in a symphony. And every building, every helicopter or plane, every train, every imposing landmark of city life becomes familiar. Instead of finding a city that feels frightening, imposing, or foreign, I feel at home and engaged. I belong here, in the middle of the activity of life.

Get a job as soon as possible. Become a part of the flow. Contribute. Build. As long as it is good, be a part of it.