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COAS 495: Road to BIS Paper

August 30, 2012

Road to the BIS Degree

After reading and reflecting on the two poems from the Road to BIS Degree assignment, I realized that my road to the BIS is a bit of a blend of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and Portia Nelson's "Autobiography in Five Short Acts". Always a dreamer and a steadfast planner, my life's journey had been alive in my mind since a very young age. Growing up in a stereotypical middle-class family with a modest lifestyle, I yearned for what we did not have rather than celebrate what wonderful things we did have. There were no expensive vehicles in the driveway, no Caribbean vacations during spring break, few name brand clothes and no backyard swimming pool like many of my neighbors enjoyed. My plan was to head to the East Coast, graduate from a fabulous university, and find a lucrative career in science where I could make my mark and immerse myself in all the little extras in life. I saw my two "roads" before me and knew where I wanted to go.

As I set off on my chosen path, the potholes in the road began to appear immediately. First, the lack of scholarships and a small bank account forced me to take a part-time clerical job to put myself through community college. I finished an associate degree program and seemed to be on my chosen path. My next challenge (I won't call it a pothole) was meeting the man who would become my husband. My pace while traveling on my path to higher education and corporate advancement was slowed temporarily with the addition of two children. While never picturing myself behind a desk all day, again I took a clerical job to help support our family. I swore it was only while the kids were young and eventually I would return to school and refocus on the medical field. One obstacle after another, I was derailed and pushed back into the secretarial pothole that seemed to be following me on my chosen road.

A good friend of mine encouraged me to embrace my role in the office, learn all I could learn, and make the best of what life had dealt me. After all, according to her, it wasn't a bad place to be. Spoken by someone who only dreamed of being a secretary. I fought hard against becoming comfortable in the 9-5 office pothole. Life's plan for me was bigger and brighter than this. I was capable of more, I deserved more, I would have more. Several years passed and my husband was offered a new position which allowed me to quit my job and return to school full-time. Within a couple more years I planned to have my Bachelors Degree and then I knew I would be

happy. I just knew it. Another pothole opened up on my path when my husband was laid off from the position. Predictably, I found a clerical position and quickly fell back into the routine.

Day after day, year after year, I stayed working and taking college classes as finances and schedules would allow until I was handed me a packet of information about the BIS degree offered through Ferris. I scheduled an appointment with the advisor and half-heartedly sat down to talk about this program. She looked at my 100+ community college credits and immediately asked why I had wasted all this time when I still had no degree for all my hard work. She was not sympathetic, although not totally uncaring. She simply stated what my good friend had tried to point out many years before. There was nothing wrong with working in an office. Why not embrace it? Why spend my time yearning for dreams that may never be realized when I had opportunities, good opportunities, right in front of my face?

I'm not sure whether you would call it an epiphany or just a large dose of reality, but I decided that I needed to get to the end of this path sooner rather than later. The clerical pothole that kept popping up again and again throughout my long and winding path, wasn't really a pothole but maybe more like a street sign pointing me in a direction that I had been too stubborn to see. After all, my job has its perks: the hours aren't bad, the benefits are better than most, I'm appreciated by coworkers and management. I had spent 20 years falling in that hole, dusting off, and falling in again when I should have looked around, counted my blessings, and made peace with my surroundings. By completing my BIS degree, I won't necessarily change jobs, but I will see a financial reward due to the advanced degree. Although I won't find a cure for cancer or discover some missing chromosome, I will have accomplished my goal of a bachelors degree and that's something I can be proud of.