

Finding Perspective in the Gorge

I've had the opportunity to travel to many places of natural beauty in my life, but the destination that I choose to return to over and over again are the mountains of Bath and Highland counties right here in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A location close enough to travel to by car but far away enough from any large city to keep visitors to a minimum. With a low density population, these lands remain honored and unviolated and unexploited by the values of our capitalistic society.



My most memorable outdoor experience occurred in the spring of 2016 when I decided to hike with friends through a gorge that led us to and alongside a rushing mountain stream with intermittent water falls that followed the natural ascent of the mountain path we followed. Several things made this hike memorable the first being the simplicity of the season as early blooming plants began to emerge and respond to the heat of the day. The delicacy of these blooms in contrast to the powerful images of the



rocks and terrain created an indelible image and memory in my mind. The constant rush of the water brought to mind the reality that the flow has never stopped; that it has run for as long as anyone can remember and will continue to run into perpetuity regardless of eyes on site to witness it. The mountain stream is ageless, alive and immortal. Human life begins

and ends, but these waters flow on and on. When did they begin.... my mind wonders. They will never end..... my mind chooses to believe.

The steep mountain walls of the gorge, created in me a sense of being hidden and unreachable. No cell reception, traffic, congestion, disrespectful, or uninterested people there in the gorge. No eyes glued to devices. No road rage. No Kardashians. No Duck Dynasty. No trash. No daily credit card offers in the mail. No land line ringing 800 numbers with no voice on the other end or unsolicited offers for unnecessary things. The gorge offered such a study of extremes and begged questions of the choices made by society and the choices made by individuals.

That day in the gorge generated expansive thoughts about the value of having places untouched like the gorge in our world today verses the prevailing values of the society that reduces the number of places like the gorge in the name of capitalism. That day in the gorge added depth to my person and changed the way I define and value the gift of untouched nature.