

Green banana



PART An American college was on a trip in South America. As he was exploring the area in his jeep, the vehicle's radiator sprung a leak, forcing him to stop at a nearby village. Much to his surprise, the villagers knew of a way to fix the leak. It turns out that when a green banana is sliced in half and pressed to the radiator, it forms a temporary seal. This solution allowed the American to drive to the nearest town where the radiator was fixed by a mechanic. While the professor was in the village, one of the natives commented on a high rock that rose in the distance. The native pointed it out to the American, explaining that the rock is the center of the world. The American professor was politely noncommittal. The mechanic who repaired the jeep's radiator noticed the green banana "fix" and asked the American where he had learned it. Upon hearing the traveler's reply, the mechanic also pointed out the rock that was the center of the world. Reflecting upon this experience, the American experienced a sort of epiphany as he realized that there are "green bananas" everywhere, and that the "center of the world" is unique to everyone because it is a reference to a personal comfort zone.

(215 words)

PART 2

The story of the green banana is ripe with symbolism (pun intended). A simple piece of fruit is used to make the reader realize that sometimes what he or she is looking for has been there all along. We may see a green banana in the grocery store and dismiss it, reaching instead for a selection of yellow ones. Being brought up that bananas should be yellow, and that unripe fruit causes uncomfortable intestinal distress, it is logical that the green ones should be passed over. As the writer attests, being a "product of American

higher education” he thought of the banana only as a food source. Had he not been stranded, he surely would have scoffed at the suggestion by a villager that a green banana could be used to plug a leak in a radiator. Prior to this event, he had no incentive to explore the various uses of all kinds of bananas, much like most of us remain ignorant to the contributions possible by others because we have no need to change our ways. This perspective is detrimental to our development as a society in that it prevents collaboration and the free exchange of different thoughts and ideas.

This self-centeredness keeps us ignorant of the many gifts to be offered by other cultures. Such is the case for the American stranded in the village. He was bemused when the child showed up with the green bananas. Then he was shocked when the remedy actually worked. His paradigm had shifted giving credibility to what previously would have been considered ridiculous. Being receptive to new ideas and different ways of doing even routine tasks can bring an awareness of the variety of options that exist to us. It becomes obvious that what is being sought need not be looked for, but merely seen with an open mind.

So often we limit ourselves to our own comfort zones, unable or unwilling to explore the “ danger zones” of processes and ideas foreign to our life experience thus far. In this way we are confined to our own world, revolving around a self-imposed center of that world. The American scholar in the story had difficulty believing in the villagers’ center of the world because he was certain of his own belief that the center of the world is in New England. “ After all,” he reasoned, “ my grandfather had come from there.” Once he acknowledged that other worlds existed, he became able to accept the ideas of those worlds and benefit from expanded knowledge and new experiences.

So is it for all of us that, put in a precarious situation, we open our minds to ideas that would not have previously been entertained. To accomplish this without necessity, but out of say, curiosity, would change the world we all live in. This in itself is a thought not considered until a desperate situation arises, and so the cycle continues. What will it take for us to realize the potential of other societies' knowledge and experience to improve our own worlds?

(507 words)