

GA2014 Graduation Remarks Lucy Newlin
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The online encyclopedia known as Wikipedia has an article on culture shock. The introductory paragraphs are as follows: *"Culture shock is the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply travel to another type of life. One of the most common causes of culture shock involves individuals in a foreign environment. Culture shock can be described as consisting of at least one of four distinct phases: Honeymoon, Negotiation, Adjustment, and Mastery. ¶ The most common problems include: information overload, language barrier, generation gap, technology gap, skill interdependence, formulation dependency, homesickness (cultural), infinite regress (homesickness), boredom (job dependency), response ability (cultural skill set). There is no true way to entirely prevent culture shock, as individuals in any society are personally affected by cultural contrasts differently. "*

Around 20 or so weeks ago a group of individuals (many of them strangers to each other) got together to go exploring. Only instead of backpacking around Europe, our journey took us through the culture of poverty. And we each got culture shock along the way. Each of the stages and problems listed were there in one form or another. But we also gained new insight into each other and into ourselves, as we laughed, prayed, cried, groused, and explored together, growing closer along the way. Some of the information we already knew, some we only suspected, such as the hidden rules between economic classes. We each learned much about ourselves as individuals and the choices we make and the influences that brought us our present circumstances (for better or worse), and also this particular point in time participating in *Getting Ahead*. Some of our personal revelations were to our chagrin, but also liberating, because by identifying and owning up to shortcomings and "extra baggage," we were able to map our way through this previously undiscovered country.

It is our hope that we will continue this journey after our graduation tonight, and be able to help others that want to begin it. It was not an easy one, but was definitely worthwhile, because the struggles we had gave way to knowledge, and liberation, and yes, restored joy and hope, because I think the biggest shock of all for us was that each of us had given up hope in one or more areas, and had allowed circumstances to rob us of our joy. Having each of those restored is the best souvenir we can display to others to entice them to take this journey themselves.

Thank you for your support, and thank you for celebrating with us tonight.