

## Rat Race

I grew up in the suburbs, in both Roxborough and Andorra here in Philadelphia. Growing up in the suburbs was great. I remember exploring in the woods and forests, climbing trees, riding bikes, exploring caves, climbing hills, building bridges with stones, building forts with sticks, knocking on my neighbor's door, and just going out there to explore. **While it may be good for childhood, as I get older, I can appreciate the city more.**

## In Praise of Philadelphia

I started living in the city well over a decade ago and absolutely love Philadelphia. The reason I love Philadelphia is because we have lots of natural spaces, green spaces, parks, and trails, but also lots of people, sidewalks, wide sidewalks, events, beautiful architecture, shops, and so much more. **We have beautiful museums, historic sites, great food, markets, and endless things to do in general.** The greatest thing about Philadelphia is how walkable it is.

I am currently 28 years old and I can tell you that I've only driven a handful of times. **I've never owned a car, and I've never had the need to own a car.** While most people say that having a car provides you with more freedom, I believe that these possessions wind up owning you. There really is no need to own a car in the city, as I can walk everywhere or, with my new e-bike, enjoy the trails and the parks.

*I personally thrive alone, and in nature, but also find peace amongst the chaos of the urban streets.*

This past weekend, the streets closed down for pedestrians only, as there was a block party on Broad Street. **The architecture on Broad Street is my favorite in the city,** as we have a view of City Hall and the Ritz Carlton, which is essentially a miniature Pantheon. There was a large stage with live performances, food trucks, dancing, these cool guys doing basketball tricks and dunks with a trampoline,

rollerbladers, free food, and lots more. I love when there are events in the city like this past weekend's block party. It makes me appreciate the city more when I see more people on the streets than vehicles.

I don't have anything against car ownership or people driving around, but I can't help but contemplate how they disconnect us more than ever.

When William Penn made a peace treaty with the Lenape tribe, who originally inhabited the Philadelphia area, he created the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is responsible for creating the grid system here in the streets of Philadelphia. **When William Penn laid out the streets, he made sure that many of them were wide, like Broad Street and Market Street, for the maximum amount of pedestrian use possible,** while also keeping lots of green spaces. When I see a block party or event on the street, it reminds me of why William Penn designed the city this way, for the maximum amount of pedestrian uses possible.

*Also, check out this cool archive of photographs and browse through the history of Philadelphia.*

## **My Critique of Cars**

My thought about cars is that, first and foremost, **it seems that we strive to purchase fancy cars and aspire to augment ourselves through the things that we own.** The car becomes an extension of your body and your soul, as you typically have to drive from the suburbs to the city to work each day. Because of this, most people take great care in the cars that they purchase, drive, and use on a daily basis. But what if you don't need a car? What if this is not something that you desire?

I think that cars just enslave you. **You wind up sitting down on your butt for an hour or half an hour or however long it takes you to get from point A to point B, which is no place that I desire to be.** I can't stand sitting down, and I've always hated driving. I do not desire to.

*You see a lot of people with these tinted windows, hiding their faces, and to me, it just looks really silly. Cars just disconnect people from the outdoors and society as a whole.*

Just imagine how most people live their lives. They wake up in the morning, get straight in a vehicle, drive for an hour, go into an office, get out of the office, get into their car, and drive home. **There's something about this way of life that sounds so unnatural and not something I want to participate in.**

I love living in the city because I can walk everywhere and feel connected to a community. **I mostly walk alone, but I still say hi to the security guards each day, chat with certain janitors that I know, shop owners, etc.**

*You become connected to your neighborhood when you walk. You're disconnected when you drive.*

### **Do We Own Anything?**

I actually just spoke with this lady who was visiting Philadelphia from North Carolina. **She lives in a log cabin in a very small community with a church, farm, etc.** While the community is small, there's still an HOA that interferes with their lives. For instance, she was describing how one neighbor decided to paint her door blue, and how another neighbor complained and reported her to the HOA, which made her paint her door back to the same old color as everyone else. She lives around 30 minutes from the highway, basically off the grid in a small community, but the neighbors sound more of a nuisance than anything. **Do people own anything anymore, or is it the HOA?**

Also, when people rent in cities, they don't have ownership over the land itself. **Most people in cities own condos, which is a small cube within a building on a block.** Because of this, we become more disconnected from the land itself. When there's a disconnect from the land, and no sense of pride or ownership, you will see more people littering, doing donuts in their cars on the streets, defecating in public, and just treating the environment poorly in general.

## We Prefer Prison

Malls just feel like a big prison. **The little shops are the cells, and the man behind the counter is the prisoner.**

After driving into the city, sitting on your butt, and entering the office to sit on your butt some more, you're stationary for 75% of the day, if not even more. I'd say around 90% of the day, most people are sitting still. **I think this is the biggest problem that we face in modern society.** Our stationary lifestyle is making us weak and anemic, unable to tolerate the sun, preferring air conditioning, and becoming weaker both physically and mentally.

## How to Escape the Matrix

My antidote to this lifestyle is to just not play the game. **Let's see life as an RPG open-world adventure game.** It's up to you how you want to build your character and go on your adventure. Nobody is forcing you to do anything. Similarly to how there are infinite choices to make in these open-world video games, you can decide how you want to live in your everyday real life. There's not a gun to your head making you do the things that you do. **Most people voluntarily go to the club on the weekends because their loser friends invite them, and they just tag along, without really thinking about it.**

*If someone offered you \$1 million to be a slave, sitting in front of a computer for eight hours per day, would you say yes?*

The things that we work for and the money that we earn are typically squandered on useless junk that we purchase. **So now what, if you don't want the car, if you don't desire the fancy things, if you don't want to purchase anything, what to do with money?** The only logical answer I have, and the reason to make the sacrifice to work, is to make children and form families. To create your own tribe.

When Odysseus was making his journey back to Ithaca, he found himself trapped in a cave guarded by a cyclops. **While the cyclops is a giant and could certainly squash and kill Odysseus, his cunning nature helped him deceive the cyclops and escape.** Odysseus gave the cyclops some wine, making the cyclops very drunk.

When the cyclops asked Odysseus for his name, he replied, "nobody." He then sharpened a spear and blinded the cyclops by poking him in his single eye. When the other cyclopes heard him crying from pain, they asked him who was attacking him, and he replied, "nobody is attacking me," and they left him alone. **The next morning, Odysseus hung onto the bottom of the cyclops' sheep, and as the cyclops, now blinded, felt their fur to count them, he could not see Odysseus underneath, and he escaped freely from the cave.** Odysseus and his men were able to escape freely from the cave and make their way back to Ithaca due to his clever and strategic thinking.

*So, if you are stuck in the cave right now, how do you plan to make your escape? It does not need to be as complicated as Odysseus and his journey, as you can simply get up and walk away.*

There is no giant holding you hostage, trying to eat you. However, maybe most people have been enslaved in their minds, and societal norms are determining the way that people behave. **Perhaps the true way to escape and to become free is to simply free your mind.** If you can free your mind, you can free your body and escape the rat race.