

Global Achievement Through Self-Realization

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Un Momento. “Quién soy yo?”

I've asked myself that question three times today, but a moment ago was the first time in Spanish. Since studying and travelling for seven-months in Chile and Argentina last year, and volunteering in Honduras during high school, my second language lingers in my thoughts. Just like the question itself though, I don't have a good answer to explain why I talk to myself bilingually. I think I switch between the two languages because it helps me sift through my sometimes-jumbled thoughts. The clock on my desk tells me that it is already well past midnight, but I let my mind wander from my homework for a moment.

Un Pensamiento.

I try to stay grounded, but I can't help but feel that the planet is spinning faster in the 21st century than ever before. Despite technological proliferation and political reformation occurring around the globe, problems ranging from dwindling natural resources to taut international relationships seem more prevalent than ever. For example, economic disparity in Brazil is tied intimately to high rates of urban poverty and crime [1]. In Chile, private education is a privilege reserved primarily for those of high-income families. The public school system, however, is itself expensive, and ineffective in providing young Chileans the tools to break from the socioeconomic cycles that suppress them [2]. Nevertheless, hindering circumstances such as the inability to obtain formal education or become involved in career-furthering projects haven't deterred today's youth. Worldwide challenges have only galvanized today's students and adolescents to become involved in topics ranging from educational inequality in Valparaiso, Chile, to deteriorating worker's union rights here in the United States. Despite our differences, something elemental is brewing among the people of my generation.

Though our surfaces may be distinct, we share a similar internal calling. As a twenty-year-old engineering student who has had the privilege to travel, study, and volunteer internationally, I have found that it is my initial question that transcends cultural boundaries and connects us all:

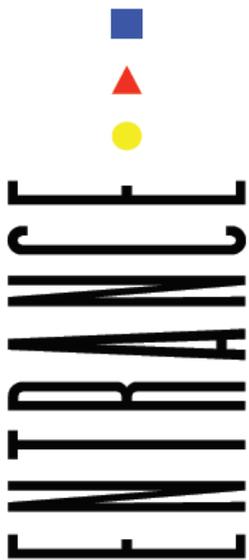
“Quién soy yo?”

Who am I, and what is my significance to other people? What can I, as one person do to positively influence the world around me? Regardless of sex, ethnicity, or nationality, youth from around the world are in search of self, and opportunities to positively change the world around them. But what tools are available for enterprising individuals to effect change?

The accessibility and connectivity offered by social media has led to its use as an instrument to effect social change. Facebook played an integral role in organizing events and protests during the Arab Spring [3]. The organizers of the Kony 2012 movement utilized the video-sharing capabilities of YouTube, social circles on Facebook, and trending on Twitter to become one of the most iconic examples [4] of social media’s ability to transmit ideas. Though current social networking sites have been used to positively effect social change, they’re often used to create and maintain superficial relationships. As we continue into the 21st century, we must utilize the connection that social media provides to channel the passion displayed by today’s youth into something deeper, something more important. A global network geared towards idea-sharing could have the potential to bolster technological innovation, produce tangible solutions for lagging economies, and increase cultural awareness. But in order to create a network that promotes global collaboration, more profound self-realization, and worldimproving projects, we must start at the foundations of social networking and begin again.

Una Respuesta.

For the last eight months I have been developing a website that is intended to utilize the connectivity of social networking to spur worldwide innovation. It is a global idea-sharing network whose goal is to promote cultural awareness and understanding, self-realization, and the importance of international connection. A network that can connect innovative individuals and their world-improving ideas has almost limitless potential. During the Italian Renaissance, printing led to fast dissemination of ideas throughout Europe. With the power of the Internet at our disposal, a similar spread of inspiration and innovation can occur throughout the world in a day. This is Renaissance:

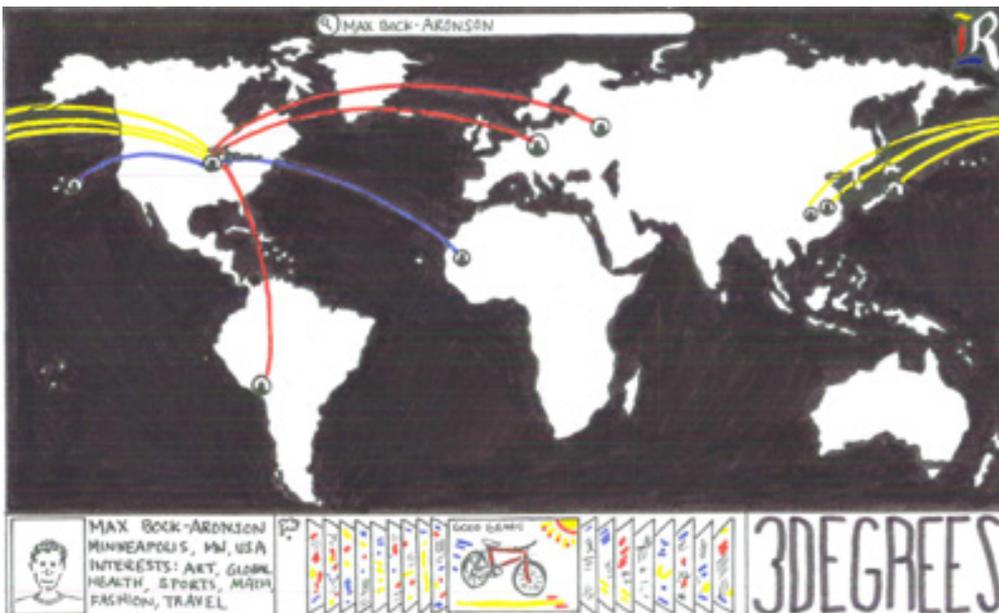


The entrance of Renaissance embodies the website. It is simple, elegant and powerful in its presentation. Like YouTube, one doesn't need to be a user to enter and browse ideas.

THINK TANK



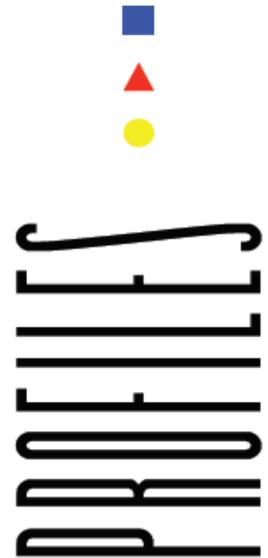
The Think Tank is an open forum dedicated to idea sharing. Users can upload pictures, videos, audio, and text, and search their interests in a revolutionary manner that can be filtered by popularity, topic, and region. By categorizing entries both geographically and by subject matter, users can visualize how ideas are spreading around the globe while learning more about the things, places, and people that interest them.



SEARCHING

By using visual maps, geographic distance is boiled down and distilled to show that we are a world more connected by our ideas than separated by our borders.

Users can build and customize focused portfolios that display their interests and provide an area for friends and collaborators to leave each other notes and make connections. The Renaissance experience however, isn't centered around a user's portfolio; each profile is tied to the Think Tank.



Renaissance will be an ode to addressing global objectives and providing individuals the opportunity to collaborate with people and businesses, internationally and locally. Users can build focused portfolios that display their interests. The revolutionary style of navigation will allow easy exploration of ideas from around the world, while simultaneously increasing cultural awareness and understanding. But what are the implications of a global network like Renaissance in South America?

South America is a continent that faces an extremely diverse range of challenges from region to region. In Bolivia, for example, only 77.8% of the population had access to electricity in 2011 [5], while Argentina exhibits one of the highest rates of CO2 emissions of Latin American countries [6]. Renaissance would give exposure to developmental projects aimed towards solving these challenges, and serve as a springboard for South American youth interested in technical fields. Renaissance could also serve as a portal to connect businesses with artists who practice skills ranging from visual art to music production. By collaborating with renowned artists within the Renaissance community, businesses could create beautiful, more effective, and socially aware advertising that would generate revenue and enhance the Renaissance experience. These are only two examples of Renaissance's ability to promote entrepreneurship. As part of a "global entrepreneurial class, an identity that transgresses borders, nationalities, and religion" [7], an idea-sharing platform such as the Think Tank would serve as a revolutionary tool to shape 21st century economies in South America and around the world. It is a website designed so that each user can use the network in a unique manner in order to accomplish their goals.

Renaissance diverges from existing networking sites in other ways that extend beyond its method of idea-sharing. As the creative developer of Renaissance, I do not plan to make any profit from this endeavor. I myself hope to use Renaissance to connect with other engineers striving to find innovative robotic solutions to improve global health. So what is the final objective? The revenue generated by Renaissance through socially aware advertising will be used for two things: supporting operational costs of the website, and funding Renaissance Projects. Between two and four times a year, Renaissance will host a worldwide project competition with a singular goal: the improvement of our world. Individuals or groups can submit projects that can focus on topics that range from building latrines in underdeveloped areas, to conducting ecological research concerning water quality. Projects will be selected by region and scope and grants will be drawn directly from Renaissance revenue to support enterprising projects and the individuals behind them. Renaissance projects will use competition and prestige to spur innovation, and allow the website to extend beyond the Internet to actually produce world-changing results.

Un Día Nuevo.

In essence, Renaissance is a network devoted to our generation establishing its existence, while building a brighter future. It is about this idea that the fate of the world is tied to each person, and each person's fate is tied to the world. The promotion of individualism through unity will allow for idea sharing and collaboration across vocations and borders. By utilizing a more profound and yet untapped power held by the Internet, Renaissance will be geared towards deeper self-realization, international collaboration between people, and improvement of the world that surrounds us.

- I. "Crime, Violence, and Economic Development in Brazil: Elements for Effective Public Policy" <http://dba.georgetown.edu/Security/citizenssecurity/brazil/documents/docworldbank.pdf>
- II. "Student Education Reform Protests Rock Chile" http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/world/july-dec11/chile_08-31.html
- III. "Facebook and Twitter key to Arab Spring Uprisings" <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/facebook-and-twitter-key-to-arab-spring-uprisings-report>
- IV. "Kony 2012 Documentary on Ugandan Warlord is Unlikely Viral Phenomenon" <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/08/kony-2012-joseph-rao-kony>
- V. "Access to Electricity (% of Population)" <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS/countries/1W?display=map>
- VI. "CO2 Emissions (Metric Tons Per Capita)" <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC/countries/AR-XJXT?display=graph>
- VII. "Rise of the Global Entrepreneurship Class" www.forbes.com/sites/scotthartley/2012/03/25/conspicuous_creation/