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As the sun rises and falls with a satisfied sigh of the farmer who tends his land, the black-throated blue warbler makes its way to New England with the ease of a well-traveled businessman, and the spring wildflowers begin to make their debut as a dancer on opening night. Life is cyclical. Life is a humming, worn wheel spinning a web. All things within this fabric, no matter how young or old, found or created, ubiquitous or rare, are connected by a common ancestor. We cannot cut off our common foot and expect to perform the same functions each day. It is essential to recognize the partnership between man and the environment as a unified body working toward the same sustainable future. Aldo Leopold rightly said, "conservation is a state of harmony between man and the land." Conservation is more than setting aside protected parcels of land. In order for society to best preserve the environment people must learn to live among nature and not simply around its borders.

I am grounded by the humming of the natural world, by the red of a cardinal catching my eye as it sweetly flies from its branch, by the yellow daffodils swaying and sauntering towards me in the wind, and by the soft, calm rain air wafting through the window and releasing my tensions worry. The natural world is what sustains me. It refreshes and improves my personal outlook, strengthens my physical body, and offers me the reassurance that people can do and study what they love. I want to attend the Monteverde - Tropical Ecology & Conservation CIEE program to experience Costa Rica's lush, vivacious, and thriving natural world. I am excited to have the privilege to study a unique collection of flora and fauna completely inaccessible in the United States and, most importantly, to experience a different rhythm and song of the natural world.

Costa Rica sings to me an unknown story from a far away paradise. This song is softly whispered but will soon be performed with a full, emphatic, reverberating voice permeating through all facets of my experience. I am eager to hear the boisterous repetitions of the howler monkeys, the thick and muffled beating of the hummingbirds pollinating exotically-striped orchids, and the mysterious, intermittent, and beloved call of the quetzal. Monteverde Cloud Forest is an exceptional opportunity to become encircled in a stronger, rekindling connection to our global ecosystems. For me, traveling to Costa Rica will lift the curtain on an ecosystem stage revealing a natural play I have never seen before.

