

Declenimo



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## INTRODUCTION

*In May 2016, during our last evening spent in New York a strange, confused man in Times Square inspired me and my friends to ask him a question which we believed was the most interesting one to ask. After he got kicked out of the Starbucks because of his loud and wild conspiracy rants, we decided to approach him and have a conversation with him. He annoyed people and wasn't taken seriously, but he did have a story to tell. This individual had thoughts that made perfect sense in his head, but sounded like nonsense to others. He was probably considered mentally incapacitated, but to himself he was a sophisticated man. This individual was a book, constantly judged by its cover. So we decided to ask him the question:*

***"What do you seek in life?"***

*After quite some stubbornness (and repeated questioning on whether we worked for the cops or not) he revealed his ideas and thoughts in life. He wanted liberation. He wanted a free system and did not want to be imprisoned by the rules set by those who controlled the system. He explained his answer using mice, science and New York as examples. His answer was a bit odd to be honest, but truly interesting. He showed me a different book than what I'd expect from the cover. Having learned from this situation, on Times Square I continued to ask people what they sought in life, together with my friends.*

*We got the most interesting answers that night from one of the most diverse cities in the world and I decided to keep on going with it. I brought the concept home and wanted to explore the thoughts and ideas of random*

*people in one of the most open-minded, culturally diverse and crazy cities in the world: **Amsterdam**. I set a goal and started a personal project to ask 101 people in Amsterdam what they sought in life: Project Declenimo. The name Declenimo derives from the old-fashioned Gaelic word 'Declan', which means 'Full of Goodness'. 101 strangers to interview. 101 different perspectives and views on life. 101 different people to get inspired by. There is so much to learn from the people that pass by you every day. Never judge a book by its cover.*

*All answers are answers to the question: **What do you seek in life?** At the end there is a separate section of answers I collected from abroad during some of my travels. Thank you for joining me on my journey, and enjoy!*

## ANSWER 1

### TO DISCOVER

*"Not so long ago, I went on Umrah (pilgrimage to Mecca). And something then changed about me. Before, I had only been from here to Morocco through Belgium, France and Spain and already thought I had seen a lot. Not even fully experiencing those countries in between, just driving through it. But when I went to Mecca, I experienced something else. I truly discovered the beauty of going somewhere else, seeing something new. I met new people from different countries, I've heard beautiful stories and I visited new stunning places. I want to see more, to discover more. And I don't think I'll travel to another place that is more beautiful than Mecca but nevertheless, the world is scattered with countless amazing destinations and secrets to discover."*

*– The very first answer I got back home. Initially, his answer was "I seek to learn from what life will teach me". But we met again and he came back to his answer. He believed that the first answer indicated a rather passive behaviour. As if he waits for life to guide him rather than going after it yourself. The answer comes from a young man who is studying in Amsterdam, now 18 years old. Answer 1 of 101.*

## ANSWER 2

### ADMIRATION

*"I want to be a grandfather one day."*

*- Inspired by the deeds and greatness of his own grandfather, this 7-year old kid wishes to follow his footsteps and also build a family with value the same way his grandfather did.*



### ANSWER 3

#### CLUELESS

*"I seek happiness. But I'd say that's what we all seek. And how does one define happiness? Now that I think about it, I'm actually clueless about what I seek in life..."*

*- Someone who tried to come up with an answer while thinking about the question. He realized that you cannot formulate an answer to the question: 'What do you seek in life?' on the spot. It's thorough self-reflection. Takes more than just improvisation to answer the question.*

## ANSWER 4

### CONNECTION

*"I seek religious connection with the Almighty. Give the life that has been given to us some meaning and praise God for the blessings he gave me. Life on earth is temporary, the hereafter is not. We must not forget why we are here. Time is precious."*

*- Muslim man who appreciates what he has and has his mind set on the hereafter. I also found it interesting that he points out the element of time. Living with the idea that time is precious and limited makes you realize how scarce time is. As he advised me: "We often forget how fast time flies by and how much time we waste. Don't lose track of time, God doesn't either."*

## ANSWER 5

### ME AND THE UNIVERSE

*"Connection to the universe. I seek to achieve those moments where I feel connected to the universe. How? Through meditation. Breathing exercises and absolute silence is what I usually do."*

*- A calm and relaxed Dutch guy, in love with the Asian culture and finds peace in calmness. Not extremely talkative but very interesting to listen to.*

## ANSWER 6

### RELIGIOUS GROWTH

*"I seek growth towards God and connection to Him. I wish to use and live my life to the detail exact as we were supposed to. We are given a duty and must live up to this with full responsibility."*

*- Muslim entrepreneur, living life with the idea that values grow deeper than desire. "One shouldn't focus on what satisfies in the moment, but on what will be beneficial for his/her life... and afterlife."*

## ANSWER 7

### A HAPPY FAMILY

*"A happy family. And I think I got what I am seeking for after 80 years. I've been retired for 16 years and I have traveled with my beautiful wife ever since."*

*- Retired tourist from England. Joy and happiness on his face as if the question pleased him so much. While answering the question his wife came standing next to him. It makes me happy seeing people taking it easy, doing what they like to do and enjoying life.*

## ANSWER 8

### ENLIGHTENMENT

*"Enlightenment. I am a Buddhist and I seek an enlightened life. How I enlighten myself? Through meditation, calmness and relaxation. I value such things."*

*- A Dutch lady who became a Buddhist because she wanted to change her life. She found peace and strength in Buddhism and she believed that this spiritual twist is what she needed in her life. She didn't look like a Buddhist at all in my opinion so this was quite a surprising answer for me. Makes it more interesting I guess.*

## ANSWER 9

### HOPE

*"I want to make money here in Amsterdam so that I can take that in 6/7 years back to Romania to start something there. You see, life and salary is different there. Here, I make 2500/3000 a month, in Romania 350. There is a good life and future in Romania, **but it doesn't start there for me.**"*

*- A young Romanian, who works almost every day in the Grim Reaper suit on Dam Square. His voice was cracking while telling me about the circumstances in Romania and how life in Amsterdam offers hope and a perspective. "I work hard now but it doesn't matter, because in the end it'll pay off."*

## ANSWER 10

### SIMPLICITY

*"A healthy life. And happiness. I don't need money or possession. If I'm healthy and happy, I'm satisfied. Whether I'm happy now? Yeah, why not?"*

*- Someone I just spontaneously stopped on Dam Square. A very simple man who doesn't worry himself too much about everyday problems.*