

To be Fully Incomplete By: Joseph Dibenedetto

Drawing from the teachings of Paulo Freire that “to be fully human is to be incomplete”¹, I weave in my internal strategic vision of cultural humility and love into my analysis of power, positionality, and privilege. As a middle class student in the 21st century, we often are challenged with navigating several different spheres and to internalize an immense pressure to perform perfectly within them all. A middle class student under the neoliberal model is socialized to learn that to survive one must internalize a constant “drive” and “perfectionism”. To slow-down, ill-perform, or mess up is an unacceptable option. Folks are taught to feel they must be the best at everything or they will fall behind, get left out, or be rendered irrelevant.

Under this model the very nature of humanity and what it means to be human becomes in question. Who are we if we never allow ourselves to be fully us if we are busy trying to be what we think other people want us to be? As a result, what we become are not humans but empty vessels simply doing what we have always been taught and know to do best, *perform*. Weaving this into my analysis of power, it is easy under this model to become robotic, mechanical, and detached. We begin to see each other competitors rather than companions. Those who would otherwise be our allies are ostracized and “othered” all in the name of self-growth. We unendingly critique each other internalizing the “responsibility to decide who is radical enough”². The end result becomes an environment that is more hostile and barren than the one we have sought to change. “In search of moral perfection, we [become] paralyzed from doing anything”².

What we need in all this to *find ourselves*. We need to find a wholesome, genuine and transformative vision within ourselves. But that catch is we cannot only *find* this vision we need to *actively live* it. This is where one's values like, cultural humility and love interweave to revive us and retrieve our mutual humanity. Instead of checking each other or stepping outside of our character when those around us do not conform to what we like or believe in, we use our values to *listen* and *act*.

“Love is an act of courage not fear”

-Paulo Freire

¹ Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Continuum.

² Baumgardner, J & Richards, A. (2005) *Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

