

A Priceless Lesson in Humility

Felipe Morales

Introduction

This is a radio segment titled "A Priceless Lesson in Humility," first broadcast on This I Believe, which aired on National Public Radio's All Things Considered on Dec. 15, 2008.

A few years ago, I took a sightseeing trip to Washington, D.C. I saw many of our nation's treasures, and I also saw a lot of our fellow citizens on the street—unfortunate ones, like panhandlers and homeless folks.

Standing outside the Ronald Reagan Center, I heard a voice say, "Can you help me?" When I turned around, I saw an elderly, blind woman with her hand extended. In a natural reflex, I reached into my pocket, pulled out all my loose change, and placed it on her hand without even looking at her. I was annoyed at being bothered by a beggar.

But the blind woman smiled and said, "I don't want your money. I just need help finding the post office."

In an instant, I realized what I had done. I acted with prejudice—I judged another person simply for what I assumed she had to be

I hated what I saw in myself. This incident reawakened my core belief. It reaffirmed that I believe in humility, even though I'd lost it for a moment.

The thing I had forgotten about myself is that I am an immigrant. I left Honduras and arrived in the United States at the age of fifteen. I started my new life with two suitcases, my brother and sister, and a strong, no-nonsense mother. Through the years I have been a dishwasher, a roofer, a cashier, a mechanic, and a pizza delivery driver, among many other humble jobs, and eventually I became a network engineer.

In my own life, I have experienced many open acts of prejudice. I remember a time at age seventeen, I was a busboy and I heard a father tell his little boy that if he did not do well in school, he would end up like me. I have also witnessed the same kind of treatment toward family and friends, so I know what it's like, and I should have known better when I encountered the blind woman.

But now, living in my American middle-class lifestyle, it is too easy to forget my past, to forget who I am and where I have been, and to lose sight of where I want to be going. That blind woman on the

streets of Washington, D.C., cured me of my self-induced blindness. She reminded me of my belief in humility and to always keep my eyes and heart open.

By the way, I helped that lady to the post office. And in writing this essay, I hope to thank her for the priceless lesson.

Felipe Morales was born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in 1974, and immigrated with his family to Tampa, Florida, in 1990. He now lives with his wife and children in Rowlett, Texas, where he enjoys spending time with his family and friends.

Source

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