

DECONSTRUCTING FAILURE

The very prospect of failure haunts the nature of humankind, and the fear of it is embedded deep within our very shadow; consciously or subconsciously. For all of my academic life, it has loomed within the very wake of every single assignment, test, exam or application. Whilst this is something we all relate to, because to fail is in fact, to be human, I have come to realize that not many of us are able, or even ready to sit and postulate on how failure constructs and reconfigures our lives and our humanity; blending together every reclusive element within ourselves that we keep hidden from both the world and our own awareness, and forging our identities that are most authentic to our higher selves through trials of fire, but only to those who heed its calling. We struggle to understand failure and all of its multi-dimensionality because seeking to understand its true cosmological meaning and how deeply interwoven it is within the fabric of the human condition juxtaposes how we have been socialized into examining it, especially within the capitalistic colonial construct. This is evident in how failure has been commercialized and sold to us as an inevitability to becoming the best version of you; a bump in the road that is there to help you realize your true power by gaining the strength to get back up again and again. We've seen this in every self-help book possible, every inspirational story by artists, actors, politicians, authors and of course, billionaires. You might've heard about Mark Zuckerberg dropping out of college to stake his entire life and career on Facebook, or how Diddy being fired from Uptown Records was the leeway to his establishment of Bad Boy Entertainment, which made him a hip-hop mogul and billionaire. This is because it is a cliché that has been sold to us time and time again; that if they can make something out of themselves

from nothing, and the threat of failure kicking them down time and time again, what is stopping you from doing the same?

The truth is, commodifying failure as just another stop along the way on the journey to achieving your dreams is a capitalist construct. It detaches humanity from failure by pegging it as simply an excuse; because the entity of capitalism itself detaches our own humanity by perceiving us as labor. In this regard, the true lessons that we gain from failure become lost in the hopeless search for delusions obfuscated as dreams and destiny, and we resent who we are in the present moment. The reality is, failure is present in every aspect of our lived experiences, because to fail is to be human. As a Kenyan woman studying in Canada, when examining my life through the lens of Kikuyu customs and socio-culture, my womanhood is already delegitimized by my not being circumcised, and I have failed as a daughter and a woman by not being married with children by my current age of 23. There is not one set way to understand failure, and I believe that grasping this concept will help us fear it less and gain a healthier relationship with this fundamental aspect of our psyche rather than run from it.

Fundamentally, I want us to ask ourselves what the antithesis of failure would be in this current age. Would studying all the way up to PhD level quantify success? Opening a huge business? Selling a million records? Signing a multi-million dollar sports deal? Being able to afford all the diamonds and jewels you could ask for? Becoming a successful model? Everyone has their individual measures of what success entails; and all these examples hinge on the exploitation of others. Becoming a staple in the fashion industry means not only succumbing to, but also aiding in the cultivation of the harmful beauty constructs that have contributed to the destruction of multiple forms of womanhood. Succeeding in the sports industry also means participating in the exploitation of underpaid workers in the Global South, as most athletes often

become sponsors for companies such as Nike and Adidas. The reality is, much of our ideations of success can only be attainable at the cost of the greater collective. As a result, the colonial structures in place are further solidified. In this regard, if our ideals of success somehow cannot be attained without the suffering of others, does this not also account for failure? Not just of our own internalized moral compasses, but also of our sense of community that has been heavily compromised by our hyper-capitalistic landscape?

I say all that to get at this: At the end of the day, your life is yours to define. It is your choice to use the failures of your life as one step in your constant pursuit of self-improvement. It is also your choice to seek deeper understanding through them, and how each failed moment places us at a crossroad, no matter how insignificant or life defining. There is nothing wrong with using failure as an excuse, because not everybody's path is the same. Rather, it is imperative that we reconstruct our perceptions of failure; this would draw us closer to true discovery and understanding of self, as well as how we connect with nature and each other.