



YOU TUBE LETTERS: BIRDS ON A WIRE

Hello Friends,

A decade ago, Jarbas Agnelli saw something peculiar in a photograph. The image captured what you and I might deem as normal, commonplace, or even unnoticeable. It was simply a school of birds sitting atop strings of telephone wires. But Jarbas saw something else, something invisible to the eye.

Among the birds and the wires – hidden in plain sight – Jarbas visualized a symphony. In lieu of birds he saw musical notes, and in lieu of wires he saw scales. He transformed the unnoticeable, opening up a new world of engagement and possibility. His story, and what he saw, has everything to do with our class this semester.

I have attempted to offer a variety of tools to help you see that which is not always readily visible – *inequality*. I was not able to point to a physical “inequality” and let you literally hold it or touch it. Nor could I ask you to construct an actual “inequality” to display before your peers in class. And yet... like the birds on the wires, *inequality* sat with us through each class, hidden in plain sight.

From the first day we gathered in this new Zoom graduate school reality, I attempted to illumine *inequality* through a series of readings, exercises, videos, and discussions. Using your personal stories, I attempted to draw out this hidden understanding from within each of you rather than presenting my own version for you to consume. I endeavored to cast light upon the invisible structure of *inequality* that often develops when visible people come together in various groups and social settings. Structures like elite university admissions, glass ceilings and racism persist because they often hide in plain sight. Changing the way we look at these structures can help to unlock opportunities to see the latent symphony instead of just the birds on a wire, and thus potentially enabling us the opportunity to reimagine higher education in ways that work for everyone.

Short Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoM4ZZJ2UrM>

Guggenheim Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y0kwdzejYM>

Standing with you,

Joshua Travis Brown, Ph.D.