



YOUTUBE LETTER: CONVERGENCE

Hello Friends,

I recall the moment when a graduate professor of mine returned a short paper. She slid a copy across her desk that had been bloodied with red ink and almost entirely rewritten. I felt numb, having already convinced myself that my writing abilities were grossly inadequate and that I was not even good enough to belong. From the opposite side of her desk I offered a witty reply to combat the awkwardness, thinking a little levity might help assuage my overwhelming feeling of incompetence. Silence followed. She did not laugh.

I looked down at the paper to avoid eye contact. My original words seemed eclipsed by her brilliance. I felt like a shadow, and I wanted to hide somewhere dark where shadows remain unseen, often forgotten. To this day, I remember when the silence broke. She said, “Josh, you are my student and I am committed to you. If we are to work together, you must understand that my corrections are intended to strengthen and develop you. This is how I invest in people. This is what mentoring looks like for me.”

There have been many instances where a person or an experience has helped me to see the world in a new way. This moment was a clear point of demarcation in my seeing, a before and an after. My professor helped me to see the steadfast commitment inherent in a mentor. She was not leaving; definitely not over an assignment. I also saw constructive criticism anew—one with intentions to develop rather than to destroy. She held both mentoring and criticism together in a positive balance I had not previously experienced. In a single moment I went from feeling estranged to empowered.

How do we create transformative possibilities for persons? How do we create opportunities for someone to see the world in a new way? One approach is to converge different ideas, worlds that are often disparate from one another. Breaking down siloes between these forked realms – connecting dark and light, wealthy and poor, strong and weak – has the power to open new possibilities. Holding these dichotomies requires commitment and an innovative mind.

I’ve discovered that innovation often comes when a person feels either a freedom to “play” with blending ideas or an inspired courage to converge worlds. In doing so, the ordinary is given the opportunity to become extraordinary. As you look to lead, educate, and mentor others in the future, my hope is that you converge ordinary ideas, objects, and experiences in ways that create opportunities for those around you to see the world in new ways. I leave you with two examples of how this has previously been accomplished:

Converging Stairs + Keys: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IXh2n0aPyw>

Converging Driveway + Chalk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xj-J0NUuk8>

Standing with you,

Joshua Travis Brown, Ph.D.