

PERSPECTIVE: Falling Short — Not An Untold Story
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For the past five years, in lovely Los Angeles, I have felt and thought and — being empowered by those thoughts and feelings — found myself losing the race of winning first place in my artistic life.

This is not an untold story. We have heard from far more talented souls than I about the struggle in loneliness, self-doubt and survival of those destined to do great things and influence great people.

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And after all, I was fine. Doing what I did best. Up until a few weeks ago. Until a gritty glimpse of an honest moment in my past broke through the ground burying my soul.

Through my practice, I unraveled one of the secrets to my passage into freedom and prosperity just by remembering and earnestly seeking to evict forever the bad tenant occupying my house of despair.

It was Winston Churchill who said, “The farther you look back, the further you have to go forward.”

Believing in this advice, I went there again.

In seventh grade, I was a champion in short-distance running for track and field for my school. I won a great deal of races in the 50- and 100-yard dashes. When the interscholastic event was approaching, I was favored to win these events.

When the anticipated day finally arrived, my confidence for victory was in full gear. Friends, family and classmates were eagerly assuring me as if I were already the winner of my designated event. Through every preliminary race, I ran my best and qualified for the finals. I was up against the fastest runners from all over the state. I felt wonderful, privileged, to occupy this place.

During the day, I remained focused on the goal in front of me. The prize of winning first place in all of the speed races was practically resting in my hands. The runners were at the line-up for the first of the finals in the 100-yard dash.

It was customary to not scrutinize your opponents, each coach carefully distracting and grooming his horse for the race.

With curiosity I now know as fear, I disobeyed my orders and glanced over to my left. There, in thoroughbred power, a young, sleek, muscular, athlete from another town was preparing for her race. Spit and fire and hunger of another competitor breathed down my neck, and my finish line stretched out before me in a distortion of what seemed a thousand yards rather than a hundred.

We took our marks, positioned our small frames of will, and all was quiet. The judge drew his gun in the air and fired, and we were off with the pit-sinking feeling of anticipation and fear and anxiety mixed in one’s blood — and I was safely in the lead. All I could see was the blurring of bodies toward the end. I knew I would be there first.

In seconds, though, I felt the race-horse strength of my competitor challenging mine, and although my inner voice told me to thrust forward with everything I had, I glanced once more, over my shoulder, and caught her in view, leveling with my lead.

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Before I knew it, my steel legs of stamina and panther speed toppled underneath me, and I found myself crumpled on the ground, picking cinders of blood out of my knees, hearing the moans of my fans in the crowd in despair. I looked ahead of me, the tears of anguish forming on my face, and saw her svelte black form crossing effortlessly over my finish line.

I had almost forgotten this seemingly small event until I had the will to go deep within to find the answers to why I have not found my happiness. To why I have not found my new groove. To why I have fallen short of even placing myself in my own dreams.

If, as I am learning, we are responsible for all our joys and sorrows, and if our thoughts are powerful tools that take us to our present circumstances, and if our actions speak louder than our words, then the yearning to reveal the blocks of my own mind through my Buddhist practice gave me the courage to use these tools to discover that the small, simple metaphor of the race was the unfinished race of my whole life. And that now, with the conviction of love of myself, as well as compassion toward others and the grittiest urge to win all that I have ever imagined, I can start the race all over again and not look back, not take my eyes off my finish line, not give up at the sight of forceful competition, not think less of myself in the presence or glory of others, not judge myself unworthy to accept the prize, and not fall short of finishing first in my race for my own distinguished life.

I know you are expecting to hear that I have achieved abundant wealth, found the greatest relationship on earth, bought a new villa in Tuscany, published my book, stumbled onto some unbelievable best-supporting role in Wim Wenders' next film, and learned to pilot my new aircraft on the side, while horseback riding on weekends and drinking the rich red wines from my vineyard.

But the silent strength of this story comes from finding strength in having not yet achieved any of these prizes at all. With rekindled vigor, and only after having learned how to walk, the runner is ready — and her new race is about to start.

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