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Diversity Statement
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There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinary sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born.

-Frantz Fanon

To understand one's relationship to diversity one must undergo a constant process of self-effacement. Accomplishing this in light of the invisible ideological and structural influences on our experiential realities can take a lifetime of difficult practice. Through this framework we might come to appreciate and define diversity as not something to be achieved but a type of method with which to address our personal and professional orientation. As I seek to displace myself in relation to my own worldview, to discover a zone of nonbeing that repeatedly subverts the beliefs that I come to take for granted, I recognize the importance of extending this practice into every aspect of my life.

In this I recognize that few enjoy the privilege of seeking out an abstracted view of oneself, what can also be a very violent stripping of one's identity. Being raised in a mostly homogenous, rural white American environment where I was only rarely singled out has allowed me to develop a sense of myself unrestricted by oppressive contextual factors. In other words, I came to diversity on my own terms; it did not come to me. This is not to say that there is a right way to reach a self-critical diversity of thought, but rather that we must frame even our own pathway to self-reflection. Mine was paved through time spent teaching ESL in Japan and Turkey, where, for the first time, I became not only a stranger to others on cultural level but also a stranger to myself. This sense of abstraction followed me wherever I went – from home, to the street, to the gym, and, crucially, to the classroom where most often than not I stood as the sole figure of diversity. For all I may have studied and believed in the project of diversity, nothing had prepared me for the moment I was able to see myself through the lens of a dominant culture that I was alien to.

This experience of looking into the mirror of society and not recognizing my reflection manifests itself in my research and teaching. Challenging fixed notions of intersubjective understanding has defined my approach to media and culture, reflecting the ever-changing contexts in which we live and the need to situate definitions of diversity within evolving systems of control. Bringing the diversity *method* into the classroom, by emphasizing the rhetorical nature of human knowledge production and flow, can be an act of mutual self-exploration shared between teacher and student alike.

As Fanon writes, it is both a curse and blessing to be thrust into a zone of nonbeing, a place where you look through other eyes to see only a shadow of yourself. On the one hand, being ripped from the world in the name of diversity can be a violent act of ontological erasure. Yet on the other, when diversity displaces our thinking and forces us to take a new view of ourselves, when it becomes a method by which we conduct our personal and professional development, it has the power to evoke a justified upheaval of structural inequality and persecution.