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Failure/Success through the Eyes of a Dancer Who Gave Up

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For the past nine months, the Junior Committee has organized several events from The Bessies After Party, our professional development series, and most recently, the Dance/NYC Symposium After Party. Even after a string of success, it is interesting that our next major topic of discussion is *failure*.

Failure.

It's a word that has touched a nerve with many of us. And while we may seem young as a group between 21 and 30 years old, most members of the Junior Committee have experienced failure. With "failure" on our minds, I couldn't help but think of "success." To succeed means to not fail, and to fail means to not succeed. They seem to be polar opposites, one is not the other, but really is there any true difference? Sometimes, much like "beauty," "success" and "failure" is in the eye of the beholder.

Through my eyes, failure meant giving up on my dreams, and if that's the case, I failed long ago. I gave up on dance when I was a teenager and would end up having a love-hate-love relationship with it for years to come. I gave up on my dreams of becoming a dancer.

Still I loved to dance, and even while I graduated college with a business degree, I ended up landing a gig as a performer with one of the biggest entertainment companies in the world. I felt like it finally happened – I didn't give up on my dreams of becoming a dancer, and therefore, I didn't fail. So why did I give all that up anyway?

I loved my time with Disney Cruise Line, but I dreamt for something more. And when you're working for a company like Disney, you can't help but want to follow your dreams. So I went on to pursue my next dream- dance for World Youth Day and start a life dancing sacred dance. For me, there would be nothing more fulfilling in the world. After trials, tribulations, financial troubles, unemployment, and last-minute saving grace by the generosity of family, close friends, and mentors, I made it to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to pursue my dream. But something more came about – I found my calling.



It was both terrifying and exhilarating. I was full of confusion and full of clarity. I knew my life's mission was calling me to do something more with my life, and it was specifically asking me to use my talent and passion for dance to take a chance on fulfilling that mission. I came home from Rio, ready to take on the challenge, and yet, I had to face reality – I was unemployed and about to pursue my calling through sacred dance.

And throughout that initial journey, I was always on the fence of what was happening – was I succeeding? Was I failing? Should I really feel so blessed for following my passions when I didn't have the financial means to support myself? Was I really a dancer even though I only danced in churches and basement auditoriums? Is wanting to promote dance as a means of bettering people and bettering the world even achievable?

And in the midst of all that overthinking, I came across a blogpost that would change my perspective on my life [Am I a Dancer Who Gave Up?](#)

Through the reflection of self-proclaimed social practice dance artist Shawn Renee Lent, I saw someone who was just like me – passionate for dance but also what we could do with dance to better the world. Through her voice, I found my voice, and so I had a realization –

Yes, I am a dancer who gave up. I gave up long ago. I gave up wanting to study dance. I gave up wanting to perform on stage. I gave up a dream job. I gave up security. I gave up on traditional forms and popular careers. I gave up. But ... I did not fail. I gave up but I gained more. I gained clarity. I gained perspective. I gained passions in things I would otherwise have never discovered. I gained knowledge in many new things. And even though I gave up on some dreams, I gained something even better – my calling. I was succeeding.

There are still times when I still question whether I am failing or succeeding, especially with certain obstacles in the way. And yet I always find a way to focus in on *my* perspective. So long as I live, no matter what obstacles stand in the way or what detours distract me, if I remain steadfast in fulfilling my calling, I will always be successful. Even if I gave up on some dreams or failed in achieving others, as long as I was on the path of fulfilling my calling, through my eyes, I would always be successful.

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