

THE VALUE OF A PERSON

AN AFRICAN FOLKTALE FROM THE ANIKE FOUNDATION REWORKED BY MR. RINKEVICH

Once upon a time, members of the human body council met to choose a leader. Each member introduced himself to explain the role he played in the entire human body.

The Hand announced, ‘I want to be the leader because it is I who helps the man. If provoked, I can defend the human body by throwing punches.

The members said to the Hand, ‘You cannot be our leader because you slap people, you hit people and you touch everything. Therefore, we do not give you the power.’

The Eyes spoke up, asking for power. He said, ‘We make it possible for people to move around, read, and see the light of day.’

The members replied to the Eyes, ‘Look, you are hungry, you are thieves, you look at the neighbor's wife and other people’s money. You put your desires first. You cannot be a leader,’ so the members refused.

The Foot in turn told the members, ‘I want to be the leader because I move people from one place to another.’

The members said to the Foot, ‘Foot, you kick people, you run away when scared and you are always hidden in the shoe. You do not deserve to be our leader.’

The Knee said, ‘I want to be the leader because, if someone wants to pray, he kneels. I am the pathway to the Orishas.’

The members said to the Knee, ‘You are hidden under people’s clothing, and you bend under the weight over pressure. You cannot be our leader.’

The Mouth said, 'I want to be the leader because, I am the one who already speaks for us.'

The members said to the Mouth, 'You, Mouth, are provocative. You do not have self-control. You insult people, you accuse people falsely. You speak our words, but you do not speak for us. You cannot be our leader.'

'Without me, you would have no power because I provide energy for the group by digesting the food we eat. Leading is about power, so it is only natural that the one who provides the power is the one who should lead,' boasted the Stomach

The council replied that the Stomach can only provide power as long as he is supplied by the Mouth and Hands with help from the Eyes and Feet. Also, the Stomach was very selective on what food he would accept.

Now Brain finally spoke. He said, 'All of you take action, but none of you think. I do thinking, and more than anything else, a leader should be able to think. I think I shall lead.'

The member replied, 'True, you do our thinking, but your thinking is not always wise, nor is it just and often you only think about yourself. We think you shall not be leading.'

As it stood, the members could not agree on who should lead, because each one thought that he was the most important because he thought that his function was the most important and thus he should lead the lesser parts.

There remained only one member of the council, and that was the Buttocks. The Buttocks was only on the council to represent those who either did not want to be or who were not welcomed due to the lesser function they performed. All were shocked when he spoke.

He told the members that he did not speak earlier because he did not want to lead, but if the others will not work together, he offered to lead until they were able to do so.

The members became very angry and told the Buttocks that he would never lead because they could all agree that he performed the lowest function of all. So low was his function, that his job was to deal with what the body did not even want which made them question if he was even needed in the first place.

‘Perhaps I am not as important as you, or even as important as those who perform “lesser functions” in your eyes, but I do provide a function, so I do have value whether you see it or not. I will go home until you need me, if time shall ever come.’ With that the Buttocks went home and closed his door.

Although they could not agree on who should lead, they all agreed that making Buttocks understand his place was necessary and satisfying. They decided to continue negotiations at another time and continue to enjoy the moment they were all having.

With that decided the Brain decided upon the tastiest food which the Eyes located. The Hand took the food that the Eyes found appealing and gave it to the Mouth. The very happy Mouth ate joyfully. She sent it to the Stomach and the Stomach was happy to receive the food. Man walked around without any problem. The Feet moved smoothly. All were pleased.

The first day passed, the man was well. The second day, things still went well, as well as the third day. However, on the fourth day, oh was the man's Stomach bloated. His Eyes were puffy, his Hands and Feet were shaking. The Mouth bite hard into the Lip causing it to bleed. All this happened while the Brain thought thoughts of agony. The man was unable to move.

On the fifth day, the members decided to seek the Buttocks at his house. When they arrived at Buttock’s house, they said to him, ‘Buttocks, it is you who should be our leader, we came to hand power over to you.’ Therefore, Buttocks accepted the offer.

‘All of you perform a function that many if not all would glorify over mine, but to say I am not as important in regards to the whole is untrue. Unlike the Feet, Hands and Knees I cannot rest for many days at a time. Unlike the Mouth and Stomach I cannot be selective on when I decide to perform my function, and unlike the Eyes and Brain, I can never put myself first, and must function for all of us,’ pointed out the Buttocks.

‘I do not have the talent to stand out as all of you do, but I make up for that by performing a function that no one else wants, but still benefits all,’ he explained.

Having said his piece, the Buttocks pulled the first lever and the man let out some gas. Buttocks then pulled the second lever, and the man was able to empty his bowel and felt comfortable again while the council stood humbled.

Moral:

All members of the body are important. Each member plays an important role in the life of a person. The foot cannot say to the eye, ‘You are not important.’ The hand cannot say to the head, ‘That does not matter.’ All members perform useful functions and often the prestigious functions are often built upon the work of the less prestigious ones.