



## Op-Ed: 2020, What 'Soul' Teaches Us About Deconstructing Purpose And Being Present

Posted by Murjani Rawls | Dec 27, 2020 | Editorial | 0 | ★★★★★



### There are spoilers ahead for Soul if you haven't seen the movie yet!

Near the end of *Soul*, Joe Gardner (**Jamie Foxx**) gets the gig he's been seeking for most of his life. He literally fights the afterlife to get back to playing piano for Dorothea Williams (**Angela Bassett**). After the show, he feels empty – wondering if that's it. Joe had finally achieved that one thing, and it didn't fill him with the euphoria that he hoped. Dorothea tells him a story about two young fish, young and old.

*"I heard this story about a fish. He swims up to an older fish and says: "I'm trying to find this thing they call the ocean." "The ocean?" the older fish says, "that's what you're in right now." "This", says the young fish, "this is water. What I want is the ocean!"*

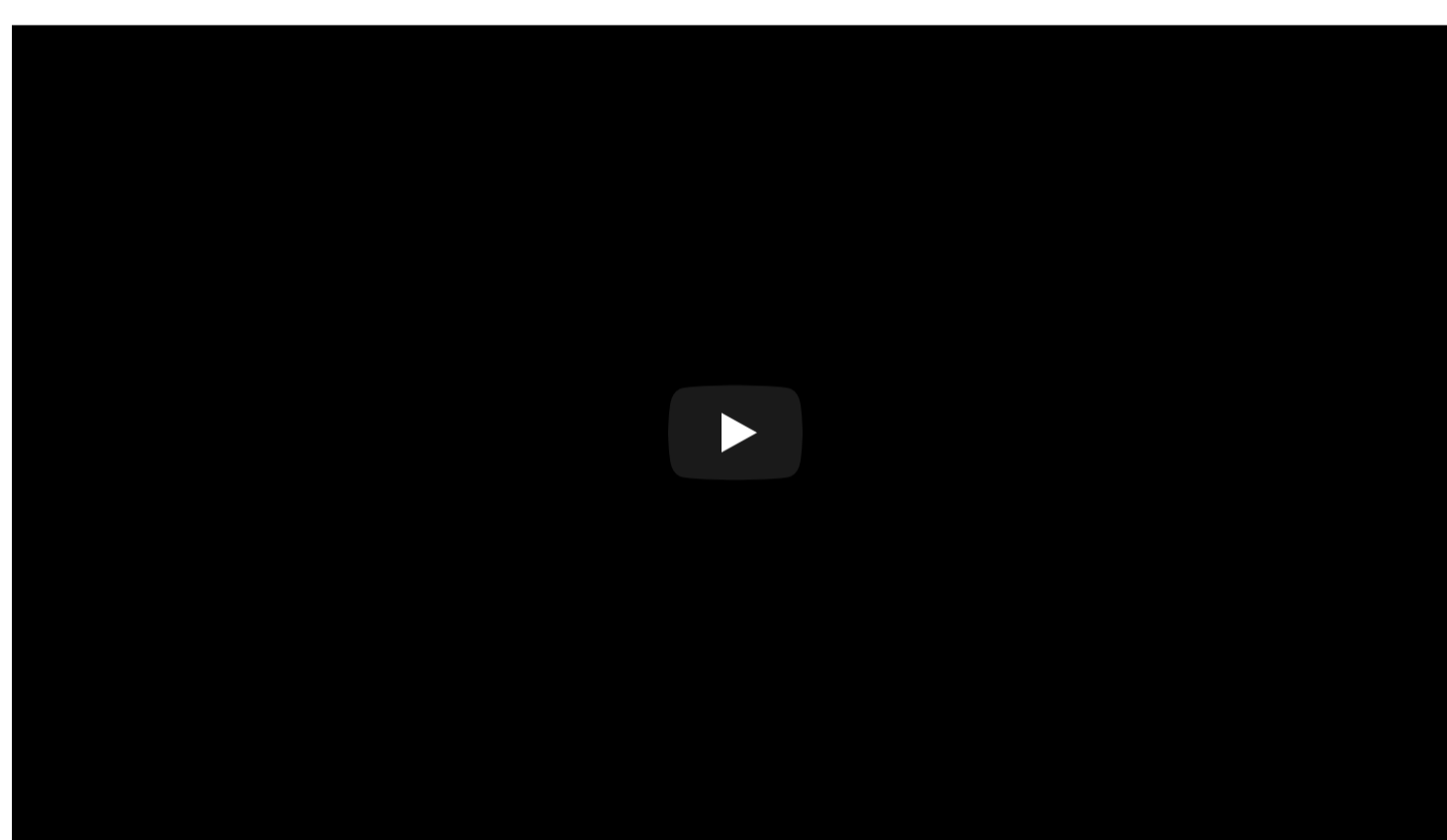
2020 has been a year that has shaken our normal like a category five hurricane. This holiday season has been harder on people in particular. Things like gathering, hugs, kisses are discouraged because of the virus. We're used to the hustle and bustle of the world. Busy streets, subways, filled planners, and goal sheets. Long hours and the drive to succeed – then succeed some more. Sometimes, at the sacrifice of time with our loved ones and solitude with ourselves. We always think if we get that one big break that only then we'll start living. We'll have enough to have time to be present. I can't blame anybody for that line of thinking. Society demands so much from us and almost gives crumbs back. However, we realize that time is only a currency that depreciates when it's too late. When Joe speaks to his mother in her shop, he tells her that with him not reaching his goal, he's afraid that his life wouldn't have amounted to anything without it. Their relationship is key because it represents the conflict between stability and lofty goals. It's a love-hate relationship that most of us walk with every day.

Hence, as this interaction plays out in the story, it makes you question how we view our self-worth. Has life conditioned us to be these hard nosed achieving machines as opposed to people who find serenity in just being? Are we that less important because our passions may be walking or stargazing? Are our lives less impactful because we aren't on a big stage, or we feel that our acts need a grandiose platform to feel relevant? I couldn't help to think about how many times I was the young fish? Where I was always seeking the next goal and not taking a second to appreciate what I had just achieved. Or the beautiful moments in between. The connections to people or just the view. Sometimes the reward is the view. It's not a trophy or a plaque. Sometimes it's having a second to be present in the current moment.

Joe was so hyper-focused that he had lost sight of so much beauty in front of him. Those potential interactions he could have had that weren't based just on music. So much that he ignored that he helped 22 (**Tina Fey**) realize what made her light up. It's not lost on me that the epiphany scene happens when he's sitting in silence in front of his piano. Looking at the leaf that 22 picked up and recalling all the small moments in his life that brought him joy. While Joe's father's appearances pop up sparingly throughout the film, you see their relationship has a conduit for his love of jazz. In that way, playing music brings him closer to keeping his memory alive. Often, we focus on the passion itself and not the reason the passion came to be.

Legacy – that word holds weight, but don't forget that the building blocks to make one lives in what we do right now. Don't have a search party for the future when you can find yourself in all the minutes right before you. To be curious, attentive, and present every day is a life worth living. We all want to climb our personal mountains, and that's ok. Arrows need a target. A focus. However, instead of scaling down to immediately fixate your next climb, look around. Take in the scenery. The trees, the sunset or sunrise, and the horizon have been begging you to.

Photo Credit: Disney/Pixar



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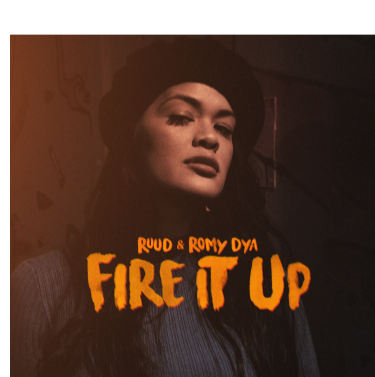


#### Murjani Rawls

Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host of The War Report and The Deadscreen Podcast, and photographer since 2014, Murjani "MJ" Rawls has been stretching his capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 700 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

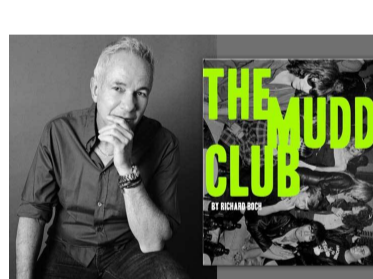
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