A society is recognized as “the aggregate of people living together in an organized community.” What seems so simple in theory is vastly more complicated in actuality. A society reflects the whole of its human population — a grand design with thousands of different reflections, a diverse tapestry of color. Like humans, societies can be difficult to understand. Marc Lamont Hill’s book “Nobody” proves the dangers of dismissing and avoiding certain events within our own society.

By exemplifying the Franciscan values of discovery, community, and individual worth, “Nobody” sheds light on the errors of America’s society and what it takes to create a better one.

Throughout the book, the Franciscan value of discovery is heavily present as the driving force to unearth the injustice that has been inflicted on our nation’s vulnerable. In the basic sense of discovery, this novel is rich with examples of well-documented research and data. Through a Franciscan lens, however, the evidence is just as strong. Intellectual, spiritual, and personal growth are present in the true accounts Marc Lamont Hill documents. Through the tragedies of individuals such as Michael Brown and Sandra Bland, intellectual discovery is noticed through the use of social media and modern technology to record and share the harsh reality of our country’s injustice. As more people tuned in to the suffering around them, and as these people began to talk and demand attention, the knowledge of ideas spread and became discovered by others.
This intellectual discovery began to probe into people’s thoughts, touching upon their spiritual beliefs as a basis for reaction to the intellectual discovery.

From these two aspects of discovery, one arrives at the crucial point of personal growth through discovery.

In the context of the book “Nobody,” this entails the acknowledgement of an individual’s experiences that may shade or cloud the truths that are presented to them. Often, we are victims to isolation within society. Whether it is by our own conscious choosing or factors larger than ourselves, our views within society hold a multitude of differences. The Franciscan value of discovery encourages seeking new knowledge with an open mind and an open heart, and allowing these findings to influence our motivation to improve our society.

The Franciscan value of community promotes a society that finds its power in the communality of the human experience. Differences in race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, geographic location, gender, and others do not serve to divide people of a society, but to unite them in a strength that finds its roots in the acceptance of diversity. As described in “Nobody,” there is a lack of community in the present society of America. The aforementioned differences are starkly visible as factors that serve to isolate and discriminate people, not to include and respect them. If we are to continue the increasingly important conversation about America’s vulnerable people, it needs to come from within a community of one nation. This is not a “them” problem. This is an “us” problem. We need to recognize the imperative need for a community of Franciscan values in order to work toward solving this crisis. That means every American recognizes his place within our one community of citizens, and actively works to improve the conditions of others.

As we discover new ideas and begin to identify the community that is for all people, we are reminded of the Franciscan value of individual worth. This is an idea within the bedrock of our country, although it is something less visible in practice. It is the most difficult of the three Franciscan values to implicate. As basic as it is, it is the most important. In “Nobody,” explicit detail is given of individuals who were not regarded with God-given worth and goodness. From this error comes violence, oppression, and an unjust sway of power. To have this conversation —
to begin the betterment of our society — we must understand the equal worth of every person. No matter what difference in opinion or idea, respect must be maintained. To turn the tables on others using the same violence and oppression once inflicted upon the suffering class will not right any wrongs — it only makes the problem bigger. It starts with respect.

This is not an easy fix, but it is not a hopeless fight. Through the example of Franciscan values, we can change our society and end the war on the vulnerable, guaranteeing for every American the tomorrow that has always been promised.

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