

Esse quam videri

Sociology



There is a distinct connection between listening to candidates spout platitudes and seeming as if they care about helping people and those who wear T-shirts with pithy political slogans, but do not help the world. A walk around any college campus will reveal that political action in most cases means attacking the surface quality; it is easier to seem as though you are politically involved than to be politically involved. Helping people is not political, however; it is a necessity for making the world a better place.

I arrived at the decision to quit seeming as though I cared about the surface politics of helping people and actually become someone who helped. Too many people in this country feel they have done enough to help the environment by signing petitions calling for cleaner air standards or opposing drilling in the Alaskan wilderness. Those are great things, to be sure, but to do so is merely to seem as if you care about the environment unless you back it up with action. If you want to really be someone who cares about the environment then you need to make changes in your lifestyle. The steps I have taken to cast off the shackles of seeming to be concerned about the environment and transform into being concerned may not win me media time like people who pretend to care, but they are important. These steps include everything from walking instead of using a car to recycling.

The thing about being more environmentally active rather than just wearing trendy T-shirts and signing petitions and seeming to appear aware is that in any case, it requires effort and sacrifice. But what I have learned from refusing to be satisfied with being a poseur instead of expending my energies on actual action is that it is you get a sense of well-being and your confidence is increased. Maybe you would rather drive to a club or a store

than walk to it or just not go altogether, but when you make that sacrifice and feel that small but important sense of accomplishment it comes with another, perhaps petty but equally inspiring feeling. Knowing that you are acting while others are pretending lends a feeling something like superiority, but maybe not that harsh. It is more of a feeling of authority. By being someone who really takes an active part in what is a multi-million part effort, you can confer on yourself a sense of having control that simply cannot be gotten merely by acting the role.

To be is far more satisfying than being content with merely to seem. The good feeling gets transformed into an effort to undertake other changes where you recognize that you are merely seeming to be one way rather than honestly being that way.