

REFLECTION ON A RESIDENT

Luis, Luis, what am I missing? We should be allies and friends. We should be on the same page here. We care about the same things – social justice, equality for the oppressed. We want the same things for our clinic patients – easy access not care denied, good quality treatment, respect dignity. So why don't I like you? Why do you rub me the wrong way? I always worry I will say the politically incorrect thing when I am around you. I worry you are judging me – a middle-aged white woman, what does she know about my people? The funny thing is, I am so troubled by the way you interact with “your people.” It seems patronizing, harsh, judgmental, condescending. What am I missing? You talk so eloquently about La Raza, and the rights of minorities (soon to become the majority in our fair state, as you are fond of pointing out) but when I observe you with patients all I see is the condescension, the black and white thinking, the eagerness with which you blame the patient. “I've told her a hundred times she needs to monitor her blood sugar – what more can I do?” What am I missing? I feel like I'm on the outside of the window looking in. Is everybody happy in there? How can I open that door? Maybe if I were on the inside it would feel like a warm cozy place. So how do I get inside to find out? I don't know. When we talk, you seem guarded. You tolerate my suggestions about patients, but I know you're not really listening. You think you know what's right and that's how you are. One thing is for sure – if we are ever going to dissolve this wall, I'm going to have to get to know you a lot better than I do. Maybe I need to spend less time talking with you about cultural competence, and more time talking about that one year old son who's just started to walk.