

I want to bear witness to realities that I otherwise may not want to confront.

I find myself thinking about Loretta Ross who said at a Pacific Lutheran University Symposium, “When you use differences as strengths you enlarge the shared pools of meaning. You have many different people giving their ideas and solving our problems.” Our society has not accomplished these ideas. The ideologies of segregation and bigotry haven’t disappeared they’ve evolved.

Defined lines of perspective levy out of control. There are all kinds of guys and gals, and theys and thems, and those with names who are free of pronouns. Identity is never arrived at; it undulates in layers, like an unfolding body of tumbling laundry.

It comes out fresh and smelling.

Being free from judgments of aesthetics is important because it redirects some power and will allow for individuals to embody their own liberation. Talking about the reality of suffering at the hands of oppressors, and amplifying voices of the oppressed, will expose the reality of suffering for both victims and perpetrators of violence and discrimination. Responses are foundational to creating what will come after systems that have enslaved progressive equality.

Away always has a way of finding itself. A home is found even in a community of strangers. There are folk living and thriving in all kinds of plentitudes; they are not bound by heteronormativity or ideals that need cubbies and boxes.

Photographs can be triggering. Varying perspectives of the world are a currency that photography deals in. Through the lived experiences of historically oppressed people—and the words and images made by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual, and Ally community) artists—viewers can engage with diverse interpretations of reality. We need a commitment to learning about what makes us uncomfortable.

How are we listening to people who don’t look like us?

With these breaths we will make history. We will not be so arrogant as to think that we will always know, but together with those whom we have taken for granted we will build. The planet will never be the same, but that was always going to be true. The future will be trans! The prefix “trans-“ means across, through, beyond. And so shall we! We will be across complex intersections that traverse through different ideas that will work together to get beyond what we’ve come to expect. We will be trans in body, mind, spirit, and theory.

Acceptance to the reality of subjugated peoples’ trauma is pervasively re-traumatizing; previous willingness to accept silence threatens the being of marginalized people and the memories of those we’ve lost to trauma. We must come to see that we are not alone; we affect each other even if we can’t see it. And that is why we MUST come to see it! We can’t allow the silence of supremacy to rule us any longer. We are together in our differences and distances. You are the breath I breathe.

One way to be better is by listening more and talking less. This admission is important because it exposes the reality of supremacy’s silence. More people will join this conversation. Differences are our greatest resource. To quote Loretta Ross again, “When people with different ideas move together towards a common goal a movement will form.” We will bear witness to the world.

I would die without you here.

Witness
—Efrem Zelony-Mindell