



EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

Embody - The truth of many parts

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

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I'm crying on this keyboard. I've tried to start this column at least fifteen times in the last two weeks, and the words are snarled in my head into knots of pain and hope and frustration and resolution. I'm going to share them anyhow, because I don't know what else to do except be visible, and maybe an example.

I'm trying to write about resistance. About coming together to push back, to make enough room for us all to survive. I'm trying to shine a bright light inside my own head, so I don't trip over my privilege, or make assumptions that will turn my intentions into so much white noise. This world is full of white noise. Full of white voices and white priorities and white traditions and white bias and white violence.

I know it's important that I use my white voice to acknowledge and illustrate these problems. I know that I have access and attention that others don't, and I know how unjust that is. I am wrestling with

the horrible, sorrowful truths of our country, and how they have shaped me, even while I fight against that conditioning. I am trying to find the balance of the ways I don't have privilege, and the many ways I do, and speak clearly to them.

One part of the truth is that I am disabled. That I am well over forty and still living paycheck to paycheck. That I am an outspoken queer outlaw who is surely listed in government files. That I am femme, and face misogyny every day, and spend most of my emotional reserves on other people's needs. That I am uninsured, and have as of yet undiagnosed medical conditions that I probably couldn't afford to address even if they weren't a mystery. That my second hand coat is held together with safety pins and bravado, and my second hand wardrobe is stretched thin around my fat body. That the education I was told would be a ladder is instead a crushing debt.

Another part of the truth is that I have an education that is out of reach for many. That I am employed, and face no discrimination due to any of those factors in my job. That I have a warm house, and food in the fridge, and a room of my own full of mementos of a life lived mostly on my own terms. That I live in a city where none of those things can be taken away simply because I'm queer. That nobody in my family has the authority, or the desire, to put me in an asylum or a conversion program because of it. That I have a community that supports me emotionally, artistically, and sometimes even financially. That my gender expression and skin color are not likely to get me murdered. That I don't face racism or religious persecution or transphobia on a daily basis.

Another part of the truth is that I am sometimes able to use my privilege for good. To turn my access into activism, and speak in words that are too familiar to folks who share that privilege to easily dismiss. That I can use it to strive to be in alliance with the greater good, and the people most in need.

Another part of the truth is that sometimes I get it wrong. That I wound with a word or a gesture or an oversight. That I will never really understand what it is like to not have the privileges I have, and will sometimes misuse them. That racism is part of my heritage, and that I must examine it relentlessly.

I'm crying on this keyboard because our country, which was only ever barely a democracy, is teetering on the edge of blatant fascism. Because we've already started the 2017 death count for people of color and transgender folks and we're only a week in. Because even our good president bombed countries and broke treaties with Native Americans and brokered ugly deals for uglier reasons. Because our new president is the worst of our country, unchecked by empathy or reason.

Like a million feminine voices before me, let me state clearly that tears do not equal weakness. I am releasing my fear into something larger than myself. I am watering my rage into action. I am gathering salt to lay down circles of protection.

I am also mindful of who I ask to hold those tears, and to never try and use them as currency, or proof of my goodness. Solidarity is a verb, and I am seeking out ways to walk my talk in the world.

Sometimes this means stepping back, being quiet, and lifting up experiences and voices with less privilege than mine. Sometimes this means stepping into harm's way, using my privilege as a shield for those who don't share it and are fighting on the front line just the same.

There is no more time to linger in our comfort zones. Hate is rising up in jagged spikes, fractures are forming in communities and polar ice alike, and complacency is no longer an option. Get involved, however you can. Have the hard conversations. Don't derail dialog with hurt feelings, or demands that rightfully angry people be nicer about it. Sit with your discomfort. Be willing to give up some of what you have so everyone can have some. Act as if lives depend on it, because they do.

If you aren't sure where to start, check the list below for a few ideas.

showingupforracialjustice.org

injusticeboycott.com

transassistance.org

nodaplsolidarity.org

muslimadvocates.org

adapt.org

hrw.org

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