



EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

Embody - When politics are thicker than blood

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

November, 2016

I went to my father with my heart in my hands. Told him how terrified I was. Reminded him of the beautiful black and brown people in our family. Of all the kinds of diversity we contain. Asked him to step up and stand beside me against hate.

He failed.

His failure was one of complacency, of an aversion to conflict, of the illusion of safety that comes with following a lead that seems stronger than your own. I am certain there was no intention of harm in his choice, but he aligned himself with hate, like so many people who confuse status quo with immanent domain. Like the ones that founded this country, and thought trees and water and land and bodies were theirs to use and sell and discard.

That vote helped to give the reins of power to a man currently pending trial for the rape of an underage girl, and a man that wants to electroshock me into compliance and control my body. Those men are being emulated all across the country this week as women's bodies are assaulted and queer and trans bodies are assaulted and people of color become, horrifically, even more of a target.

I spend my days working at a Trans and Queer clinic, and I can tell you without a single doubt that since those polls spiked into red, people have been terrified. Are considering suicide, or fleeing the country. Are sure that they will lose their medication, their reproductive choices, and the chance to live as themselves. We are racing to find answers to anguished questions while wiping tears from our own frightened faces.

My father chose the party line over my well being. I cannot escape that knowledge. It crawls up the back of my neck to nest at the base of my skull, next to the fear of being raped and the knowledge that my body is not as strong or as fast as it used to be. It keeps pulling my hands into fists and my stomach into knots until I'm shaking and pacing and trying to remember how to breathe. Looking up self defense classes. Keeping my back to the wall.

This is only the second day.

I keep reminding myself that this is not new; that this kind of virulent hatred has spread for centuries and terrorizes people with less privilege than me every day. That I was never really safe, just less obviously at risk. That at least white people know now the true extent of our collective dysfunction, and how motivating that could be to come together to finally undo the damage and unlearn the bigotry. I am committed to that fight.

I am also fighting to stay present in my body like I haven't for decades. I have also fully assessed my willingness to go down fighting, and not just for sake of my own skin. I'm afraid for my friends and family who are people of color, who are Jewish, who are queer, and trans, s and disabled. I'm afraid for my people in Arizona, but I don't fool myself that Oregon is any less dangerous. The sirens have been

screaming all day and my news feed is full of stories of brazen daylight assaults.

With the usual American arrogance, we have done this to ourselves. Land of the free, we say, and then turn people into prison labor, deport families, and bomb the country they barely escaped from. Home of the brave, we say, using our national guard to protect corporate interests and attack American citizens, ignoring the veterans on the streets, the children dying of hunger and disease and abuse, holy when a fetus but not after.

We are liars.

We lie to ourselves all the time. We buy and sell the lies. We agree to them, wear them, torture our bodies for them, fight for them, pray to them. Even elect them.

So here we are. No more comforting facade of safety or fairness. Public permission given to hate with both hands. Dividing lines like fractures, with some family on the other side. Rage and fear like molten rock between, but they try to say the burn is incidental. That they aren't splashing the magma, they just agree with some of it's melting points. That the ash we're choking on isn't personal.

My father chose something else over my safety. Knowing full well the dangers of men drunk on violence and unchecked by rules, he cast that vote. Knowing almost nothing about what I've already survived because he never asked, he cast that vote. Knowing the views of his church and how deadly they can be with law behind them, he cast that vote.

I came to my father with my heart in my hands, and he didn't pause to consider it. Didn't note how fragile the ribs that guard it, or the seams running every which way. Didn't ask about numb spots, or the stutters in the beat. Didn't offer his hand to curl around it, helping me keep it safe. Just gave me some platitudes, a side step or two, and an empty space where the hate could creep through.

I will grieve for my lost father while I try to survive this patriarchy. Is that irony, or just a damn shame?

He will likely never know the ferocious beauty that is my community striving to hold each other up; to build treasure out of scraps and determination; to keep each other alive. He will likely never know the best parts of me, or understand my sacred, or see me clearly. He is on the far side of that fractured foundation, and we may never meet again.

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Reprint: This essay was published in *Not My President*, Thoughtcrime Press Anthology, 2017