

Poems As a Form of Powerful Activism and Barrier-breakers

Description

The AutoEthnographer

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Authorâ??s Memo

I believe poetry can be a form of activism. With an open mind, poetry also allows us to break down barriers in society. When we dive deep into the realm of poetry, this allows for a deeper understanding of the human condition, and an exploration of human emotions. Here we can learn from different life stories and perspectives from unique voices to further foster compassion and empathy. This intersectionality of me identifying as a poet, mental health advocate, and also as a gay woman living with an invisible disability of bipolar disorder 1, can bring forth harmful labels that I refute. For example, people could perceive me as the stereotype â??tortured artistâ?•. Iâ??ve been asked stereotypical questions that could perpetuate this. I am actively challenging the â??tortured artistâ?• stereotype. During a Question and Answer session following the reading of my poetry book: *Farewell Clay Dove* (UnCollected Press, 2021) I was asked: â??In what state are you the most creative?â?•. This question had the undertones of suggesting that in a stable state, generating great poems is not possible, with which I disagree. In addition, this question deemphasizes the fact I work very hard at the craft of writing. Moods do not grant me poems. I am much more than just this illness; it does not define me.

â??I believe poetry can be a form of activism.

Furthermore, my poem titled: â??Besides, Raging Tiger, You Canâ??t Just Go Asking for Mercyâ?• after Kaveh Akbar was anthologized in *Nasty Womenâ??s Day Anthology,* created by Moonstone Arts Center. They hosted a reading of poets they published, including myself. The title of the anthology is

actively taking power back by combining both â??National Be Nasty Dayâ?• and â??International Womenâ??s Dayâ?• that coincided on March 8th. Taking power back was demonstrated not only by means of irony but also by being innovative and fierce. Outspoken women can be deemed â??nastyâ?• by society even though they are pushing for the rights of women. The poems were very powerful because women were actively reclaiming their voices.

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Poetry is what grounds me. I also believe that in this realm of poetry I have complete control. This is ever so important to me, as an individual affected by bipolar disorder 1 for over a decade. Iâ??m a dedicated volunteer blogger for The International Bipolar Foundation since April 2020 to the present. With poetry, I have not only control over my pen and paper, control over my word choice and direction of my poems, control over this sacred space of creativity, but also control over my complex mind. My poetry unites my body with my mind and soul, and cannot be taken away from me. Writing poetry frees me from some suffering. Poetry lets me liberate my troubling emotions, including fear. I can turn these emotions into something tangible. Words on paper are seemingly simple, but in reality very profound. Poetry is my world, and poetry means the world to me. Time and time again poetry has given me purpose and also has given me something to hold on to.

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The AutoEthnographer
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Spectator

The era of simplicity no longer
stands as I am in the stands
merely a spectator watching
myself dressed and undressed.

Trying to decipher in the mirror
if I somewhat resemble a man;
wearing my flannel deemed
â??lumberjack shirtâ?• as a joke.

As a power move, but owning
no dresses, and as I dress myself,
I think maybe my face; yet I
donâ??t want to admit confusion.

But when my gender gets
questioned, the dominos fall,
the past falls forward, not spring
backwards, never feminine enough.

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Yet feeling powerless. I would
rather have the power a man does, but
would never want to be one while
women are so beautiful; their breasts.

My breasts, wishing to consensually
touch another womanâ??s breasts
whereas my chest holds fear, too
my lungs less air as anxiety rises.

I dislike mirrors. I hate seeing
myself in photographs, and as I
stand there, there is more than
the physical, but distance.

Upon distance guarded upon
guarded. The shield was too fierce
it cracked under its own weight.
This body feels too heavy.

While this mind is trying to
withstand the test of time or the
wall. Thereâ??s a mirror, mirrors are
man-made, and I didnâ??t make it a point.

To ponder the binaries the blurring
the defining. The undefining when all
I want is to embody a woman, and be
with a woman saluting and unsaluting.

The mirrorâ??*check yourself before you wreck yourself* a man would say versus
the *lemon test*, however the test lies
before my very own eyes.

Poetry Is My Prayer

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I was the one who got away from myself
running and running worn down countless
pairs of running shoes, all colors over
the years, if lined up this would create a rainbow
running from the rainbow, too, even though
â??Somewhere Over The Rainbowâ?• rang true
in childhood, running myself into the ground
self-hatred deemed the self as weak, laying
stomach down head to the side on the red
brick patio with the sun beating down on
my back, beads of sweat dripping down
while sheâ??d rather want me to wear necklaces of
pretty beads, but not the rainbow, no and that day,
all alone the weight of the world too much
to hold up the sky trying not to die if I wasnâ??t
a poet, I dare not want to think of what wouldâ??ve
happened to me, cannot be a self-fulfilling prophecy,
my moral duty to live, to survive, not up to being
another poet who falls, falls off the face of the
planet, expectations, I donâ??t have the answers or
a beacon of light itâ??s been bleak on and off like
the lighthouse flashing lights for over a decade
feeling weak, weeks keep going by people deem me
inspirational whereas I am sometimes scared of
these hands that can also work magic, a double-edged
sword, my purple pen is no sword a sword is not
a pen, and this leads me back to when.

â??
Birthday Blues

I hear you, wishing to fight for
you to see the â??weâ?• in welding,
I wish to weld you a shield of any
type tangible or intangible, we need
each other not just a lone individual
with that magnificent shining sword.
I have fallen for you, I wish to gift
you an endless ladder to climb out
from this place headspace this strife
this life to the top of the world yet
the world is a like a sphere, but
still not quite.

The universal language you speak of,
perhaps is the ocean the water yet
to some the desert the sand dunes,
to me, universality is seeing past
someoneâ??s faÃ§ade into their heartspace
their essence their art another trip
around the sun, and Iâ??m blessed to have
met you, wish I could bedazzle your
spirit with glitter to let your spirit shine,
let your spirit breathe deeply, let the
rainbow prevail instead of sorrow
raining down your cheek like sweat
dripping like the wax of a dying candle.

The light and dark and dark and
light those shadows, birthday blues
I hear you, nowhere near in your shoes,
yes we do need that ladder to reach
for the stars yet your eyes, when they
twinkle with that shine, for poetry,
they are stars to me.

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Credits

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