



## Poems As a Form of Powerful Activism and Barrier-breakers

### Description

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### Author'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 "tortured artist". I've been asked stereotypical questions that could perpetuate this. I am actively challenging the "tortured artist" stereotype. During a Question and Answer session following the reading of my poetry book: *Farewell Clay Dove* (UnCollected Press, 2021) I was asked: "In what state are you the most creative?". 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.

**I believe poetry can be a form of activism.**

Furthermore, my poem titled: "Besides, Raging Tiger, You Can't Just Go Asking for Mercy" after Kaveh Akbar was anthologized in *Nasty Women'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 **“National Be Nasty Day”** and **“International Women’s Day”** 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 **“nasty”** by society even though they are pushing for the rights of women. The poems were very powerful because women were actively reclaiming their voices.

**“With an open mind, poetry allows us to break down barriers in society.”**

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 for over a decade. I’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.

**“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.”**







By Trust Tru Katsande for Unsplash

## 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.

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

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 lâ??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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