



EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

Embody - Where my hope is rooted

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

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What do we do now? This question, in at least 100 different forms, has crossed my feed and led the conversation in every gathering I've been to since the election. It haunts dreams, rattles composure, intersects and interrupts every single day.

This question is, of course, made up of a myriad of other questions.

How do we survive? How do we support each other? How do we push back? What do I have to give?
How can I get what I need? Who has my back? Who needs my help? Where is it safe to be myself?
What will become of us?

There are so many more answers than there are questions, and yet they can still be hard to find.

People are feeling more isolated and unsafe; are reaching way outside their comfort zones; are struggling with the overlap of scarcity and urgency. They are coming up with great ideas, simultaneously but disconnected, so that energy spins out in a hundred tiny momentary spirals. They are finding each other and creating collaborative momentum that carries a multitude. They are trying.

This effort is where my hope is rooted. That there are many voices naming and rejecting the bigotry and greed being presented as leadership and patriotism. That they include the voices of youth and elders and women, of queers and trans folks and people of color, of prisoners and sex workers and folks with disabilities. That privilege and discomfort are being recognized as signposts along a path that can lead to change and growth. That we want to do better.

Wanting to is the start, but it goes nowhere fast unless it is sustainable, and mindful. The best of intentions might seem to lead to joining the camp at Standing Rock, but if you are non-Native and bring no resources or skills, are you really helping? If you haven't researched the needs of the group you are trying to lift up, you could find yourself part of the weight on their shoulders. Thoughtful support, sustainable activism, and an awareness of our various levels of privilege—this is what is needed.

America is built on ideas of ego, assumptions, and pride. The glory of the individual and the hoarding of resources. Might is right. Sell the sin, hate the sinner. Laws come in different colors, and are bought at high prices. These are all concepts we have to not only reject, but actively undo. Not just in the world, but in ourselves.

The world doesn't need saviors and heroes. It needs comrades and protectors.

If you want to make a difference, take a moment to assess not only your skills and resources, but your agenda and your privileges. Name them, own them, and keep them in mind when you decide to add to a conversation or project. Find a need and get involved without trying to take over, or to shine.

Practice the art of being humble, and in service, from a place of love.

Love is not all we need, but it is part of it.

Hate is what they are selling, and how they arm themselves. Hate is what turns different into dangerous. Hate makes thugs out of children, terrorists out of neighbors, enemies of the state out of teachers. Hate says wombs are more important than women, and oil is more important than water. Hate rigged the election, and blusters on Twitter.

Love might save us yet, if we combine it with elbow grease, and common sense, and practical application. If we can get out of our own way long enough to work together. If we can accept that none of us is right about everything, and most of us have been sold a barrel of lies about our worth, and hierarchy, and power, and justice. If we can respect that love alone is not enough to undo racism, or classism, or sexism.

If you're going to do work in your own community, make sure you're addressing the issues in that community, not just applying your resources to things you call problems. If you're white, what are you doing to unlearn racism, and combat it in your communities, workplaces, and social groups? If you're able bodied, how are you assessing venues, schools and homes for accessibility? If you have more money than your daily comfort and savings needs, how are you sharing that wealth?

I've seen beautiful, courageous, sustainable examples in the last month—from the all ages, free, legal ID paperwork clinic that served over 200 people in one night, including fees for all in need, to the friend who has allocated a portion of her comfortable salary into covering the utility and medical needs of people in her community every month, to the group of friends who bought mace by the case for low income trans and queer folks and people of color.

Find a need, and meet it sustainably, and consistently. Take the time to search for others doing the same thing, and if it makes sense, combine your efforts and help more people with less work. If you're creating groups or events, be sure to think about things like transportation, income, and child care. Pay attention to the space you take up, and the power you wield.

Listen. Learn. Share.

If you're intrigued by the topics and ideas in this piece, but aren't sure where to start, check the list below for a few ideas. Be sure to do self care, and to reserve enough time and resources for your own needs too. We don't need martyrs anymore than we need heroes. We need people, paying attention. We need each other.

showingupforracialjustice.org

injusticeboycott.com

transassistance.org

nodaplsolidarity.org

muslimadvocates.org

adapt.org

hrw.org

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