

outhistory

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

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In the days after the election, I found myself profoundly numb. The stillness was only periodically punctured by waves of fear and anger. As a victim and survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault, I wept. As a queer woman of color, I wept. For two weeks, I recoiled into myself and did not write. But I knew better than to ask the question, *how could this happen?*

The ideology and political, imperialist practices of this country are deeply invested in a white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. The creation of this country was and remains contingent upon the dispossession of Native peoples and the systematic denial of their sovereignty. The American economy was built upon the backs of Black slave labor. It remains contingent upon the exploitation of people of color both here and abroad. This was *never* a place that offered recognition or protection to Black folks, Native folks, or queer folks of color. The promises of citizenship and legal recognition or protection have largely been illusory. Today, we see this legacy of violence at Standing Rock, in the state-sanctioned murders of men and women of color in our streets, in the brutality visited upon transwomen of color, and the rampant xenophobia aimed at Muslim communities and the undocumented.

For many of these communities, life will continue to be as precarious as it has always been. Perhaps we can begin the necessary work by holding ourselves accountable. I am a Ph.D. student at a Tier-One University on what was once Tongva territory. I value my work as an educator, but I am not naïve to its context. The university is, first and foremost, a business. The work I do is only valuable if it is accompanied by daily practice and I am willing to put my energy into the community outside the university grounds. We must continually ask ourselves, *how can I be of service to the community? How is the work that I am doing helping to redistribute resources to those most vulnerable?*

We cannot build radical communities or movements if we do not grapple with these realities. Many of us were not afforded the luxury and privilege of “shock” at this election’s outcome. We cannot afford to confuse progress towards social justice with neoliberal progressive politics. Here, we see the failure of single-issue politics and the need for intersectional analysis and political practice. Our political agendas should advocate for those continually and repeatedly rendered most vulnerable. To celebrate our existence is not enough, and our mobilization in the wake of a Trump regime means that coalition building is crucial.

In “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” Audre Lorde writes, “For to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call america, we have had to learn this first and most vital lesson - that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings. And neither were most of you here today, Black or not. And that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which

also is the source of our greatest strength.” Lorde delivered this paper in 1977, and, nearly forty years later, the sentiment rings true. There is a long and storied history of survival and resilience around us – in the faces and stories of our elders and in the literature of women and queers of color. This is not the first time that we are struggling against domination and injustice. We are not doing this alone; we stand on the backs of so many.