

**One Reflection on the Reconciliation of Art and Collective Hurt**

*This reflection was initially offered as a "Participant Volunteer Engagement and Final Project Epigraph"  
for FT1927: Social Transformation in Action (del Rosario)*

*I was running late - no surprise. Rosin still coated my hands from an all-too-last minute practice of my  
not-too-much-more-advanced-than-the-rudimentary "Twinkle, Twinkle" variations.*

*What was I doing anyway? Beginning violin at my age? Before the term "self-care" was popularized, I  
knew I was taking these lessons "just for me,"*

*but I had so much piled up for that day making this level of self-indulgence questionable at best.*

*Even a mere half hour lesson seemed too great of a strain when compared to all of my must-do's for the  
day. Grabbing the lovingly restored violin with which my Grandfather wooed my Grandmother, I sped  
out for my just-around-the-corner drive. Phew - the previous lesson must had gone long – thank  
goodness! Not in the auxiliary music room, my teacher and the last student's family stood transfixed in  
my teacher's home. That was strange! And what made it even more strange was that they were viewing  
on this large screen t.v. some Bruce Willis-Rambo flick at 8:30 a.m.!?!*

*And I as join the viewing,*

*fiction, the unimaginable, soon reveals itself to be true.*

*It seems I had already missed the first attack as well as the second on the Twin Towers.*

*This early morning fantasy was our new reality -  
as Katie Couric gave voice to our dismay and disbelief.*

*In shock, I headed over to my best friend's house who lived another five minutes away.*

*And we sat there – all day – just sitting on her couch - stunned and still. I had so many important to do  
that day – very important things -  
– ever so meaningless things to do....*

...

*Among the many things I had on my list was a weekend presentation with collaborator to talk about the professional development we had created to support teachers in integrating the arts into their general classrooms. Weaving our way through the tropical offerings of the beautiful Garfield Park Conservatory, we were greeted by a room of about 50 other artists and artist educators who were there, present, but shell shocked by the recent events of 9/11. The “normalcy” of name tags and coffee was met with deep questioning as to why we even dared to show up – at a workshop of all things while the world as we knew it was no more. What was happening? What were we doing? And why? Why? We were informed that our storytelling keynote had been working since Tuesday to be with us this weekend - bumming rides, locating buses and trains from North Carolina just to be with us as all airflights were halted.*

*And then following the workshop agenda as written, we began to create – breaking off into groups to share our stories, our anguish and offer up our creations to the group. And as we did, we broke down and sobbed. And the next day, our North Carolinian guest somehow made it! And together, we created and offered and broke down and sobbed. And each in our own ways was reconnected to ourselves.*

*To the point at which one of the artists said what was being revealed –  
now more than ever, we, the artists, the creators were needed and necessary.*

...

*This pandemic has broken us in other ways. It has opened old wounds and created new ones. Although exemplars exist of creativity emerging from the solitude and distance and confusion, most artists are hurting. On one Facebook page, a cherished visual artist collaborator shared how he was released after 17 years of serving as an outreach artist with a Chicago/world-renowned museum and a text still resides in my chain from a former student who has found success on and off Broadway who was confronted with his longtime addictions, feeling embarrassed and sharing that “since COVID, it’s [addiction] shown it’s ugly face again.”*

*Faced with her own creative immobility during the holidays following the re-election of George W. Bush as president, Toni Morrison was jolted by her friend's rebukes; her remembrances of artist ancestors who were persecuted for their art and art making; and, confronted by the recognition of her own "foolish[ness]." She arrived at this conclusion, "This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.*

*I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge — even wisdom. Like art."*<sup>1</sup>

*In this final project, I will focus on the creative connections offered by the artist, but my heart and soul compel the recognition of the brokenness in and of these connections, in these apocalyptic days,<sup>2</sup> as wholeness and justice are sought.*

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<sup>1</sup> No Place for Self-Pity, No Room for Fear: Toni Morrison on the Artist's Task in Troubled Times – Brain Pickings

This quote was so beautifully exemplified by Amanda Gorman at the Presidential Inauguration of Joseph R. Biden.

<sup>2</sup> "Apocalyptic" is used here as President Vasquez-Levy has referred to it in most recent PSR addresses as "revealing/revelatory."