

Winds of Justice

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When I look around I see an era resting on top of a mountain, with equality for all on one side, and fearful hatred on the other. The world is sitting on this tipping point, waiting for the slightest wind to knock it in one direction or the other. For me, freedom songs are a wind pushing our era towards the side of love for all people, fighting the gusts of intolerance.

“We Shall Overcome” has always embodied this fight for me, and the fight I feel in myself. When I walk through the halls of my high school I see the beauty of the diversity that has been overcome in time, but also the remnants of world divided. I see interracial couples “walk hand in hand” in the halls, but I also see how our cafeteria seems harshly split on racial lines, and how people shout “fag!” at their own friends. I see a place where people can be who they want to be, but they then live in a state of fear. I don’t wish to blame the people around me, I know I have plenty of faults of my own, but it’s time to take the next steps towards freedom.

The day has come when we must not be afraid, and when we must build the bridges that the early civil rights workers drew plans for. I believe in equality for all people, but my heart is most specifically vested in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights. This year teenagers and even middle school students have taken their own lives as a result of bullying from their fellow students. It is time to take a serious look at what words we use, and how we live our lives. I ask the leaders in schools to not let students use nasty slurs in the classroom or hallways, so that schools can be a place of safety for all people. I ask students themselves to look at the assumptions they make about other people, and question their own fears and anger. I ask parents to try to love their children no matter what, even if they can’t agree upon everything. I’m not asking for perfection, only that we go one step at a time, towards a world where “we are not alone.”

This song is filled with hope, but also sorrow at the pain each person feels. It does not say that the world will become perfect tomorrow, or even in a few years, just “some day.” It lets each man and woman see their own fight, their own story, but also to see the struggle of those around them. The lyrics acknowledge that love may get buried deep in our hearts, with anger and resentment rising to the top, but at our core we remain hopeful for a better future. It is this truth that hope will always remain in our hearts that will sustain the fight for justice until hatred is blown away.