

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Alexis Espinoza: "Tragedies"

Alexis Espinoza · Wednesday, May 11th, 2016

("Tomorrow's Voices Today" is a new series curated by poet and educator Mike Sonksen.)

Tragedies

After Walt Whitman

WHY! Who makes much of a tragedy?
 As to me, I know nothing else but tragedies,
 Whether I walk the streets of Los Angeles,
 Or peer upon caprice projects and ghettos, kids up to no good hustling up and down their neighborhood,
 Or wade with naked feet along broken glass, cuts leaving my feet red in pain,
 Or walk around by day, pistol in my waistband-or attempt to sleep at night holding on tight to my only safety,
 Or sit in front of the glass with my older brother on the other side, locked up in men's central,
 Or the constant calls for 1-8-7, a code that everyone by now knows,
 Or watch as a car drives by toting guns and knives, looking for any excuse to use them,
 Or see the polluted streets and alleys on the walk home,
 Or smell the distant gunpowder and smoke – Or hear the pops of gunshots with the blare of sirens quickly following,
 Or the rugged, torn down ego of those gangsters that hang out in front of my apartment complex,
 Or the purple and black conjured up from "falling down" as I had told my mother,
 Or behold the lives swallowed up by greed and drugs,
 Or the rancid smell of illicit drugs-Or the hustle of dealing and doping,
 Or stand a long while watching out at the noisy concoction of a freeway,
 Or the men in blue who force their power unto others, a desperate attempt to protect us,
 Or the gangs that mere boys join, in hopes of finding who they are-Or in hopes to buy time to find who they are,
 Or the lives swallowed up on Skid Row, thrown away and wasted,
 Or the struggle of a single mom trying to raise a decent living for a just a boy, attempting to shield him of the reality surrounding them,
 Or the pain I see in the reflection of my eyes;
 These, with the rest, one and all, are to me tragedies,

Each one different-yet connected, and in its place.
To me, every day of the week is a tragedy,
Every confined street of this city is a tragedy,
Every neighborhood, whether it's Crips or Bloods, White Fence or 18th street-they're all filled
with the same,
Every household is cursed with the same;
Every street, home, inmate, gang, kid, men and women, and all that unites them,
All these to me are unspeakably atrocious tragedies.
To me this city is a continual tragedy;
The hustle and bustle of busy city life-the kids growing up-the gangs, with lost boys in them,
Could there be anything more tragic?

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