Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Starting Over

Chiwan Choi · Wednesday, January 15th, 2014

Today, I met with author, activist, and friend Traci Akemi. We are working on an edit of her powerful new collection of poetry. It's a book that's going to break hearts and uplift at the same time. We talked about a lot of things. There was the book, of course, what it needs, the holes that need to be filled. But there was as much of the other stuff. You know, personal shit about life and death and love and race and depression. The stuff that makes us make art.

Yesterday, I met with Mike the Poet and talked a little bit about *his* manuscript, but not much. Instead, it became a time of catching up, talking about his school, my dark December, about old homies, about our families. We shared drinks and laughed, thinking about how long we'd been friends.

Mike the Poet Sonksen, Chiwan Choi

After that I met with Jo Scott-Coe, who drove up from Riverside to have beers with me, laughing about how a magazine that was going to publish her work kept referring to Jo as *he* in the bio, because women aren't supposed to write about such heavy topics as lone gunmen and mass murderers. We really didn't talk much about her writing either, instead going over ideas on how to get *Muse*, the literary journal at Riverside City College, the attention it deserves.

I don't know why I'm writing all this. I swear I sat down to promote Kristina Wong's event at the Grand Star Jazz Club during the last week of February and a little bit about our book festival at Grand Park at the end of March.

But instead, I just wanted to think of our friends. Why? I don't know. Just wanted to.

There are so many moments when none of *this*, this being publishing (and the business of books), makes any sense. One night last summer, while walking through a parking lot in Yellowstone under all that dark sky with bright stars, Judy and I couldn't stop thinking about how *none* of this matters, how books are possibly nothing more than clutter we're creating. Because nothing changes, you see.

We live. We die. Repeat with new actors.

Toward the end of 2013, with The Last Bookstore bullshit, and more so with a handful of reactions to it that I didn't see coming (although I should have), with the neverending racist crap that

writers/publishers of color have to deal with, with opportunists who exploit their community for fame (like these dicks from Mellow Pages because this shit is not just in LA), I think I lost perspective.

No. That's not true. It wasn't perspective that I lost.

I lost the joy in this. And I'm trying to get it back.

Today, walking to Little Tokyo to meet Traci at our usual spot, I felt the sun on my skin and became afraid. It felt like my first day in the world. And beginnings are terrifying.

And Writ Large Press is not the same as we were a month, two months ago. I don't even know what that means. I only know that we're approaching it as a beginning again, starting over.

Heading…somewhere.

Featured image of Franny Choi, Traci Akemi Kato-Kiriyama, Ed Lin, Chiwan Choi

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