



GAYAN GREGORY LONG  
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This is not a share to appease guilt or to receive words of sympathy. It is a statement of fact: my actions have not been commensurate to the influence and privilege that I have been granted (as a white male musician and teacher) to address specific chronic and acute injustice towards individuals and groups of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Moreover, my actions have not been commensurate with what I feel inside...so many ways to soothe one's feelings rather than relate with them directly and responsibly. This is one small step (of other steps that I will take today) to listen, learn, and make some things right.

In the past I've spoken words and sang songs - which have at times been uncomfortable, edgy, or unpopular - at events and gigs about the importance of understanding the roles and terrain that marginalization, privilege, power differentials, and violence/micro aggression play as well as of the importance of inclusion, curiosity, and of a commitment to effective action. And, based on my position of privilege and the amount of care, compassion and action that is possible, I am not doing NEARLY enough.

My words and actions have often been from a position and role of power: with a drum in my hand whose lineage traces back to Yoruba, Ibo, and other Indigenous African slavery roots; while leading college students on a service learning project planting fruit trees with Diné (Navajo) friends in Canyon del Muerto as reparations for murder and pillage at the hands of Kit Carson's crew; leading songs and Dances (often in groups where people who identify as 'her' are the vast majority group in attendance) that espouse the bravery of people like Youssou N'Dour (Senegal) for bringing concern for women's human rights and the inclusion of sacred religious phrases to popular music; and for "inconveniently" not shying away from taking women's and GLBTQ advocacy actions amongst Indigenous groups where I have been a welcomed guest and where norms of unconscious power differentials and gender diversity have been slow to be addressed. Perhaps those past actions have reflected effective use of influence and privilege in the moment. Perhaps. And, apart from the roles I've played I am not doing NEARLY enough.

The examples I've shared are intended to punctuate the point that what might look impressive in a bio or press release doesn't mean squat if I am not effectively actioned in moments of harm and injustice. This is not the time for self-plaudits for past actions by an over-privileged white male... including THIS one. (1)

Consider listening and learning more today. Speak, if you feel the quickening, of how you are motivated, stuck, hurting, overwhelmed, effective. Join me in using your gifts, talents, and privilege to feel, heal, become more usefully educated and informed today. Engage in important and challenging conversations (including with me) to become more effectively actioned.

Connect with the specific. Starting with the specific cultivates an atmosphere of directly connecting with feelings/sensations and of taking effective specific action. George Floyd's life matters. His family and friend's lives matter. Just because everyone at a dinner table is hungry doesn't mean that one should dismiss the acute immediate need of the one starving person at the table by saying "well, we're all hungry." (2)

In this moment I bow to three people of privilege: Bryn Morgan, kitty mom and student of Asha Greer in Portland, OR; Melissa LaFlamme, M.A., Jungian Psychotherapist in Denver, CO; and Karta Elise, artist and activist in Boulder, CO for waking-me-the-hell-up through their ACTIONS. My caring, compassion, even my prayers, practices, music, and teaching, are not NEARLY enough.

Footnotes:

(1) Past President Harry S. Truman is credited with originating the phrase "It's amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit." I suspect he grokked much of this understanding from the example and actions of the women in his life.

(2) When one is engaged with the process of real-making and right-making, the impulse may naturally arise to include marginalized children, women, GLBTQ, people who are literally starving to death as these words are written and read, and other unnamed individuals and marginalized populations as well as other-than-human-beings (Mother Earth for example) that are also otherwise bullied. Yes. The capacity for compassion knows no bounds.

Sheikh Gayan Gregory Long, Boulder, CO