Joy and Creation

While on my way down I-95 this morning I heard about a new book that excited me, called A Short History of Black Craft in 10 Objects, by artist and scholar Robell Awake. In an interview, the author talked about creativity and ingenuity thriving in settings of violence and oppression.

I thought about the musicians who played in concentration camps; the vibrant self-portraits Friday Kahlo painted while living with pain and abuse; Vincent Van Gogh's creative energy during periods intense personal anguish; James Baldwin's essays and novels about being Black and gay when either could land a man in prison. Some make art as a therapeutic means to process pain.

Some make art as a means of bearing witness to suffering. Of course, it's a harmful trope that great art only comes from suffering, but Awake's comments reminded me that great art often arises out of persecution, because the joy of creation is energizing and sometimes even lifesaving.

I arrived at UUCSC just in time for the meeting of the artists who've accepted responsibility for making art at the front of the sanctuary. We energetically discussed the possibilities for the months ahead, related to the topics of Trust and Joy, Imagination and Freedom, acknowledging that these days, everything we do is a response to the discord that is affecting all of us. Because we live in this world and are affected by everything around us. And our creative energy keeps us alive.

Art is not an expendable luxury. It challenges us, sustains us, and sparks conversation among us. All of us.

In Peace,

Rev Denis