

Glorious Diversity

During the July 1 service, All Souls' office administrator A.B. Lugo prefaced and read one of his published poems, "I Am," as the Story for All Ages. Below is the text of his preface and his poem.

I am originally from New York City, and while I was living there, I was, for a time, a teaching artist. I would go into the public schools in upper Manhattan and the Bronx and have children write creatively on a theme. I would then cobble their writings into a performance piece that the students would then perform.

One year the theme given to me was "Diversity." At first, I rolled my eyes and thought Diversity, really? It felt like something bureaucratic, more importantly, diversity doesn't seem very theatrical at all. Also, these schools, while ethnically mixed, were predominately African American and Latino. So what do I do?

One of the assignments I gave the students was to write about themselves. They could be as creative and inventive as possible; the only limitation I gave them was that it had to start with the two words, "I am." "I am" and go on from there.

And within this predominately African American and Latino group of students I found much diversity and difference, just like I would probably find if I had asked all of you to do that assignment. One student began her essay with the sentence "I am a fabulous, glittery mess." And I learned that the more we know about ourselves and embrace who we truly are, in all of our idiosyncrasies, we can truly begin to accept the inherent worth and dignity of others and have compassion for others as well. To revel in that diversity, well, that right there is glorious.

When I gave the students this assignment, I was writing a book of poetry, which has since been published. And I thought to myself, I need to do my own assignment and write who I am. So I did and here it is.

I AM

From *Spanish Coffee: Black, No Sugar*

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– I am the foci
of the ellipse
every point that exists
and all the spaces
in between
I am the median
and the mean

The radius and diameter
Striking a chord
when I don't go
through the middle
Ever since I was little
I painted outside the lines
in multiple dimensions
Oh, and did I mention...

I am the quiet
after the ellipsis
the shout of
every exclamation point
the furrowed brows
of the question mark
and the hesitance
of the semicolon
I am that square peg
that somehow fits
into the round hole
That's just how I roll

Definitively
I diversely
divvy up
my diversity
divesting it
because it's diverting me
from my divinity
Isn't that divine?

I amuse
confuse
confound
astound
amaze
enrage
when I hit the stage

I teach
reach
rarely preach
because I'd much rather seek
and share
learn and care
Trying to figure out
where I'm going
so I can meet you there

I am the king
warrior
lover
and magician
I keep talking
until you listen
Repeating the things
you've been missing
Breaking it down
through chemical fission
What's my vision?

To bust out of the boxes
where you place me
To circle in "none of the above"
and "all of the above"
To be the superlative
of every comparative
adjective
with no extra additives
To write my own narrative

I am a threat because
I don't follow the herd
join the masses
or fall in line
I go for mine
I am that ellipsoid
that is happy
to not be a circle
as my eccentricity
is strong in my history
I don't mean to be a mystery

Where my aspirations
exceed the expectations
Rise to new elevations
becoming an inspiration
And what's more
this is not a war
I don't wanna win
nor will defeat you
Simply put
I am A.B.
Pleased to meet you