

QUIET

JULIENNE KALETA



At Living Cities, we talk a lot about people and our roles within systems. I recognize that my existence places me in a role within a system. This does not delegitimize the value of my experience; rather, the systems I exist within help shape my story. Featured on the next page is a series of journal entries I have written throughout the last two years. Introducing each journal entry is a news article headline that aired on the same date that I wrote my entry. Some entries are in response to the news and the world being broadcast around me. Other entries felt personal and isolated to my own experience. I see now they were connected to an emerging national dialogue as much as an individual one.

*"There are years that
ask questions and
years that answer."
Zora Neale Hurston*



I have been comfortable in silent spaces as an observer, a listener, an artist, a nature-lover, a friend. I have often found peace in quiet. In classrooms, teachers would tell my parents they did not know the sound of my voice. Listening is my best trait. Part of being a good listener is openly receiving the stories of others around me. The experiences people have trusted me with have shaped my perspective, my anger, my passions. The last few years, I have carried more stories and feelings than I knew how to hold on my own. In response, I turned to my writing. I found that quiet is not always peaceful; it can be dangerous. It perpetuates harmful systems. Sometimes to speak is to disturb a silence that needs to be broken.

This is where I break my own silence. I am still getting used to the sound of my voice.

THE ECONOMIST, October 24, 2016

GAY CAKES AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

I am watching a group of people I feel separate from as they talk about the differences and nuances of their religion. "If I have a son who is gay, I would probably make him talk to our pastor," one says. The others smile and nod. I feel a pit in my stomach. I listen. I watch.

TIME, October 17, 2017

HOW MEN ARE RESPONDING TO THE 'ME TOO' CAMPAIGN ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

The boy who raped one of my friends is sitting across from me in the library. He smiled at me as he pulled his chair out.

THE WASHINGTON POST, March 9, 2018

'CAN YOU PLAY DEAD?' NEW DETAILS ABOUT THE CHAOS AND FEAR THAT SURROUNDED THE PARKLAND MASSACRE

Reminder: You can't expect yourself to be able to help the world on your own. Your school's cinder-block walls do not represent being trapped. Your home is not a cage. Your body is not a cage. You can pick yourself back up. Pick yourself up... Help me get back on my feet. Help me remember I need to have strength to support others. Help me be patient. Help me be kind. Have grace.

BUSTLE, March 16, 2018

DEANDRE HARRIS IS CLEARED OF ASSAULT CHARGES AFTER HE WAS BRUTALLY BEATEN AT CHARLOTTESVILLE

My teacher turns to a class full of empty faces and says, "We are going to watch it, and it is going to be hard but we are going to watch it." He turns out the lights, and I am attentive in the front row. The screen shows images of a boy about my age having his humanity literally beaten out of him, and I can hardly bear to watch the horror of it. I look down and I can see the reflection of my face on my computer screen wincing as I listen to the screams of a person in pain. I grit my teeth. When I look around after class ends, everyone continues on with their lives and their conversations as though all is well. But all is not well; these injustices are alive. I am alive with all the feeling I have building inside me like a fire.

FORBES, May 1, 2018

WHAT WOULD YOUR CAREER BE LIKE IF YOU WEREN'T AFRAID?

There is a person that I agree with on almost exactly nothing. Regardless, I nod as I listen to him speak. He spills his thoughts onto the table in front of us, and I struggle to gather my words and thoughts from so deep inside me that I had forgotten where I buried them. I uncover my ideas. I plant my words and they grow into a forest around us. It is beautiful.