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Anna Bernstein

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Those We Remember, Those We Forget

By Anna Bernstein

When they look around and see the suffering of others,
more often than not, people say nothing.

More often than not, they keep their heads down.

More often than not,
they will not be inconvenienced by the misfortunes of others.

They will do nothing, say nothing.

They fear conflict.

They fear difficulty.

They bury their conscience.

They swallow their voice.

They sew their mouths shut.

And as times goes on, as the voice remains buried,
the voice begins to die,

festering in the depths of the soul.

Suffering, crying to be released, it begs to be heard.

To speak.

It wants to sing out against evil and injustice.

It wants to speak up for righteousness and equality.

Writhing and thrashing it struggles against the rot that creeps into its flesh.

But the mouth of its host is sealed shut,

impenetrable, steadfast, unwavering,

like iron bars that line a cell, or a cage.

The host is too afraid to let the voice be free.

And the voice cannot escape.

The voice is trapped in its cage.

And silently it sobs as the dark and the rot of disuse envelopes it.

It cannot be free.

It cannot sing.

It cannot be heard.

The names of these people are unknown to us,

forgotten in the infinite expanse of our history.

Those who say nothing, who stand by,

who swallow their voices,

cause no change,

make no difference,

leave no mark.

They do not better our world.

It is the name of the person who faces their fears,

for their reputation,

for their safety,

for their lives.

That is remembered.

The person who uses their voice.

Who opens their mouth to let their voice sing out

against what is wrong,

against injustice,

against the evil of this world.

Who is extraordinary.

The voice of this person thrives.

It dances through the air

filling the heads of the people,

filling the voids of hate,

filling the world with the power

of what is right.

Of what is good.

Of change.

This voice is not stuck,

is not caged,

is not dying.

For its host has not buried it,

has not hidden it away.

Has not caged their voice.

Has not confined it to the darkest, dankest, depths of their soul.

This host has opened the gates,

and released their beautiful, thriving voice:

strong,

flourishing,

radiant,

from the power of use.

This person, their name, their voice,

is remembered,

is cherished,

is respected.

They better our world.

When we speak out,

when we face our fears,

when we release our beautiful, pure voices

that sing out for justice

for respect,

for equality,

we become a greater being.

We become a beacon

of goodness,

of righteousness,

of strength.

Our voice reaches out,

intertwining with others voices,

creating a glorious, golden, unignorable force

that envelopes the world,

that changes the world,

that brings goodness to the world.

And we are remembered.