

99 WRITING

Finding Myself in Desire and History

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Orleans

TYPE
NARRATIVE

My name is Raheem Johnson. The city of my residence is New Orleans. I was born and raised in New Orleans. This is my city. I love my city. Now, many would say: “How could you love this city? It’s riddled with crime and it looks like a dump.” And I would reply: “Well, I love this city because this city and I are...the same. We are the same. Not by blood, but through overlapping realities in this very world. My life and the life of my city are entwined through our similarities and individuated through our differences.”

Now, many could say: “Are you crazy? How is a seventeen-year-old boy in any way similar to a 250-year-old city?” And I would reply: “Well, just like me, my city is an outsider. Not fitting in anywhere, and unique in our own ways. We love this. We love to feel...different. We may look weird to people, we may disgust people, and you may only want to spend a short time here for Mardi Gras, when people come to enjoy themselves, get drunk, and party like there’s no tomorrow. But there is a tomorrow. Tomorrows with repercussions. Tomorrows with rewards. Or

even tomorrows with nothing, as if nothing ever happened the day before. That's what my city and I look for. The tomorrows. The tomorrows of hope. Of promise. Of...whatever may come."

Because there was a time when a tomorrow wasn't promised. For me or my city. In 2005, my city was killed. Killed. Killed by the forces of the Heavenly Father himself. Why he did it, only Jesus himself may know.

In 2005, I suffered the same fate. I drowned. I loved the water but didn't know how to swim. Consumed by water and pulled under by my own weight. Swallowed whole by a clear, cool darkness. My city and I were dead.

And when the waters receded and we were pulled from the depths of our murderers, all the others could do was stand in shock and grievance, fearing the worst had prevailed.

My city was killed by a Category Five, and I by a mere hotel pool.

But miracles happen. In many shapes and forms. Whether we notice them or not. Now, judging from the way I'm writing this and how New Orleans is a thriving city from which I bring this story to you, you can infer that miracles were given out that day.

Having recovered from disaster, I watch as my city's recovery continues. New Orleans will always be my city, and I its citizen. Similar from the scars we share, both physical and mental, and from the past we can never disown. So we fear not death because we've seen its ways and it has nothing new to show us.

Now death is poised to strike America, because just like my city and me, America's past can never be disowned. Through atrocities, progress was born. From the cracked backs and broken hands of my ancestors who built this very nation, to the death and near extinction of the natives whose blood cries out from the land that is now this United States, to the discrimination and conquest of millions worldwide that has given America its wealth and power.

Now with America's 45th president, he wants to make America great again. He wants the progress America used to have back. As we've seen with the history of this nation, prosperity comes at the expense of others.

I'm glad he was elected because as long as we settle or come to terms with our current state we will never be moved or agitated enough to ask for better. This will be the decade of Death and Awakening. "How so?" you may ask. Well, now the ignorance, the people of this nation have had to the issues of inequality race and discrimination and the willingness to turn our backs and act as if nothing has happened will be put to death and in its place awakening will be installed as all those who didn't believe discrimination was a problem in America will be awoken from a hypnotic sleep to realize it is a time for action. That's why I'm glad Donald Trump is our president because now we can't

just sweep this under the rug and wait another four years for the next man to take office, to see if it is time to tackle the problem. Now we have a big problem on our hands and a big mess to clean up and we now can't approach this as a whole or submit to it apart.

This will be the decade of Death and Awakening. This is the decade of Death and Awakening. The Decade of Death and Awakening has begun. And even if this worst occurs, miracles are prominent.