

The World Through My Eyes

by Levi Kim

I've come to accept my identity as a transgender individual. That doesn't mean I love it but I accept it. There's a certain freedom in discovering that there's more to you than you thought. That what you always felt may be the truth, your fear has no power over you anymore.

Then the feeling of elation, the undeniable freedom that you've just found is gone in an instant. Replaced by the realization that the hurdle you've overcome is the first of many. Truth and fear, tested, your spirit bested, your eyes are now open to the real world.

See the truth gives us away, see the fear holds us down, see the pain I feel living a lie for others.

See our hands show our weakness, shaking, our unknown future as we carry the weight of expectations, carry the weight of stereotypes, carry the weight of fear.

Fear is forceful in its glare, a glance, a double take, thoughts, thousands of thoughts, if one of them is my last, if one of theirs is my end.

If fear turns to hate turns to violence turns to silence

And yet you ignore, you turn your backs, eyes dart away, hands fold, a perfect society, paint yourself a picture where we don't exist.

Where is the fear of being found out but in only our hearts, where is the fear of not being out but in only our closets, can you say you fear getting up every morning knowing it could be your last?

And yet you can ignore us because our joy, our sorrow, our love makes you uncomfortable.

I have a dream. To say my name, not like its a secret or a curse, but like if I was the same person in different skin.

To be able to breath easy without a binder, dress without consideration of how feminine I look, sing my truth with a voice that finally feels my own.

I'm barely out to myself and this is my life. My identity to me, my alter ego to most, watching as medias smear my truth beneath their feet, watching as politicians play games with my life.

Watching, waiting, wondering what can be done.

The news thinks I'm dangerous, delusional, crazy, sick, attention-seeking, messed-up, disgusting, I'm just a kid. I'm just a kid with fragile skin, eyes that are tired of crying, hands that are tired of holding onto myself, and a heart that's tired of pretending to be okay.

So to all the politicians, the transphobes, the people who condemn me for a life I didn't choose:

Who are you to say I cannot rename myself.

Who are you to say I should suffocate in a closet that slowly kills me inside to make you feel more comfortable.

Who are you to think you can put a label to my identity, fragile like the dissolving confidence I've newly found, exploit the fear I feel, and guilt-trip me till I can't care about your stares because what else can I do but hold on, grasp at the the illusion of a choice for my own life, hang on to any good news, and keep trying till it gets easier.

This is who I am. I may be broken and bruised and a little worn out but it's my life. And who am I if you take that away from me?

Thank you