

525 words-

Nov. 8th was a buoyant and exhilarating day in Art Produce Gallery that served as a polling site where people of all flavors stood in line to vote on a very long list of propositions and people. Everyone talking in reverent whispers with a collective sense of civic duty and pride, it was my Citizen Artist dream come true.

Like many others, after a long and anxious night, I woke up angry, fearful and distraught. I was upset that my country seemed not to reflect or respect me, my values, my attitudes, the things and people I love and cherish the most.

Was this how so many people have felt for the past eight years? Was it fear and anger at seeing a president and a perception that the direction of this country didn't look like or reflect them? Was that angry, fearful person me?

That moment helped me find the compassion I needed to get through the day and try to make sense of what had happened in this country. I needed to find a way to work, to feel ok with this process of democracy and move forward.

When I got to work and received texts and emails from fellow artists suggesting that after the tears we look for a place of love and make art, because that's what we do, and that's what heals. I also got messages from friends thanking me for opening up my space to the public to vote, to experience culture, to engage in civic action.

The results of the election had sent me backwards in grief, mourning what was to be, what could have been, but then throughout the day, I saw the faces of the people in my community.

Johan walked by and asked me how the garden was doing and if he could bring his daughter back because she needed a mentor now, and could I give him advise on starting a nonprofit art space for people from Africa. Mario, a young artist, stopped in to see the space for a meeting to support border region/artists of color.

Marianela showed up to install her art work- timely, poignant, exquisite paintings speaking to bad actions and abuses and politics and cultural disconnects. She came with my dear friends Tom and his partner Larry, a long time cultural worker, Chicano gay activist, local democratic leader and Hillary delegate! We shared hugs and commiserated, and in his wisdom and experience he smiled and said- "We have much more work to do and we will do it together".

That evening in the garden there were gay/lesbian couples and seniors and young hipster families and a mixed race couple with their beautiful twin daughters in tandem strollers all together in the same space enjoying a warm San Diego evening sharing beer and art and stories-- being IN community.

This is why I work locally, this is why I'm hopeful- it is precisely because the community I live in does NOT look just like me. It includes many voices and many stories, and they don't cancel each other out- and making art DOES bring us together and help us heal.