

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

ART AGAINST ANGER

Adam Leipzig · Wednesday, April 6th, 2016

Trump is the symptom. We are the cure.

It doesn't matter if Donald Trump becomes the Republican presidential nominee, takes a third-party run, or retires from politics and uses his increased brand recognition to inflate his net worth. His candidacy has unleashed a nativist anger, an anger that has always existed in America but, until Trump, had not found a mass-market spokesman in this generation. It will not go away even if Trump leaves the scene.

Trump is part of a long, tragic lineage of American hatred. In a recent interview with the New York Times, Trump said, "I'm not isolationist, but I am 'America First.' We have been disrespected, mocked, and ripped off for many, many years by people that were smarter, shrewder, tougher."

Is it just me, or do you hear a reference to the America Firsters, the pro-Third Reich group led by Charles Lindbergh before the US entry into WWII? In Trump's vilification of people who are "smarter, shrewder," do you detect anti-Semitic jargon? That's the idiom of dog-whistle politics. You can hear it if your ears select the right frequency.

But Trump is just the vessel; these new America Firsters now have an organization and they will continue to mobilize it. The implicit violence he advocates – against Mexicans, Muslims, blacks, women, the poor, anyone who opposes him or stands in his way – is not new, it is just magnified. We're witnessing the creation of an American National Front, with Trump as our Jean-Marie Le Pen, and, likely at some point, Ivanka as our Marine.

The anger of artists is not the anger of the mob.

It's a time of cultural transformation, and not the good kind. As always, artists will be on the front lines. Artists will be targets even more than we are now. And artists, as always, will be prophetic in showing a path out of the mire.

Artists are angry too. All good art has anger in it. Art is the reaction to seeing the world as it is and the desire to shape it in a different way.

But, as artists, our anger is different.

Artists' anger is borne from love. Real love. Not the pretense of love that's cloaked in violence, which you'll hear from some fundamentalist groups – the people who say they "love the sinner but hate the sin" as a veiled threat to women's rights or the LGBTQ community.

Artists' anger comes from the love that wants to make the world a better place. Our anger is not prone to physical violence because we seek constructive change instead of destruction.

We're scared of violence and have every reason to be. It takes years to create and seconds to destroy.

That's why, now, it is imperative to support artists of all kinds, and especially artists at the margins, whose creative spirit moves in the direction of change. Their work, our work, is to move

culture away from the destructive anger of nativist politics and toward a better world. Given the rise of the new America Firsters, this work will occupy the rest of our lives.

Image modified from Doanld Trump's official website, photo by Gage Skidmore.

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