I (Still) Believe That We Will Win

Positive Women's Network USA comments on Donald Trump winning the 2016 presidential election.

November 15, 2016

Today, we grieve. Tomorrow, we fight.

Resistance in the face of terror is nothing new for our communities.

Our bodies are transgressive: Black, brown, and otherwise pigmented; queer; HIV-containing; border-crossing.

Our bodies and those of our ancestors have mostly migrated – some by choice but many by force – to a country that does not love us. 60 million people told us that last week. But our ancestors have been organizing in the face of hate, bigotry, terror, and loss for hundreds of years. We will not stop now.

Combatting racism, misogyny, xenophobia, transphobia, and patriarchy is an everyday reality for women living with HIV in the US. We are not strangers to living in fear or to having our rights violated. We know full well that justice has always been a fantasy for many of our members because Lady Justice's blindfold is just for show; the heavy fingers of bigotry and resentment have weighed on the scales of justice throughout American history.

Regardless of the election's outcome, we would have had to continue to fight vociferously for the safety, health, dignity and equality of ourselves and our loved ones. With a different outcome, our work likely would have been defined by an offensive strategy: pushing for progress and accountability to campaign promises. What transpired with last week's election sets us back on the defensive, threatening decades of progress for women, people of color, those of us living with chronic health conditions and disabilities, queer and trans people—that is, just about everyone in this country who is not a white male.

For now, we commit to encircle and uplift those who will be increasingly targeted in the face of a Trump administration – for being brown, Black, queer, Muslim, immigrant, indigenous, non-English-speaking, womyn, and trans and gender non-conforming. Our next steps cannot be a reform agenda. Our tactics must be radical, revolutionary, and intersectional – building and centering leadership and strategic investment where it is most needed. Civil rights were not granted through an election; they were won in the streets.

Still, it is not enough to protest in the streets while we allow the institutions we work for and that purport to serve us to perpetuate the same oppressions we are fighting in our governmental institutions. We must actively work to combat racist, misogynistic and patriarchal practices within institutions and organizations, while we fight state-sanctioned violence.

And at the same time, we commit to radical self-care, because our preservation, health and dignity itself is revolutionary. As the great Audre Lorde said: “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”

Elections have consequences, and we fear the worst from this one; but that only means we must fight harder, smarter and more relentlessly than ever before. In the coming weeks, months, and years, we must work intersectionally and in solidarity. We cannot work narrowly on one issue; more than ever, we need to fight for a broad progressive agenda, inclusive of ensuring that our very rights to healthcare, food, housing, land, movement, migration, and even to participate in democracy are protected. Our fates are intertwined. Only through fierce solidarity will we be strong enough to withstand the attacks on our communities and our very right to exist.

We will fight as if our life depends on it, because it does. In the meantime, love each other fiercely and hold each other tight.

See you in the streets and in the halls of Congress.

In sisterhood and solidarity ~
Positive Women’s Network – USA

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