

NOT ALL AT ONCE

AN AUDIO-THEATRICAL MEDITATION

Rebecca S'manga Frank, Avi Amon, and Kendell Pinkney

Introduction by Kendell Pinkney

For so many of us, our eyes have been especially trained on justice over this past year-and-a-half. We look out onto our world, note the many systems of dysfunction intersecting in ruinous ways, and wonder to ourselves, “What can be done?” I’ve been moved by many of my friends and colleagues who have taken bold, direct, collective action to confront some of the ills of society - racial injustice, voter suppression, the dehumanizing treatment of undocumented individuals, to name a few. But in addition to being heartened by these actions, I have often wondered to myself “Where is the spiritual grounding beneath said action?” Sure, I have often heard various Jewish leaders and organizations name “Jewish values” as the motivating factor for mobilizing around certain issues, but values are things that get tested. And that which gets tested too frequently can get exhausted. As such, I find that (Jewish) values, while necessary, are rarely a thing that can “refill the well” of repairing the world when confronted with so many incessant, overlapping forms of injustice.

For me, art is the only thing that can consistently bring me in touch with my humanity and my understanding of the Divine and provide a never-ending wellspring of energy that can replenish my desire to do more good in the world.

A couple of months ago, I and a couple of my fellow JOC + Sephardic theatre friends began to collaborate regularly via zoom as a means of creating despite the fact that theaters were closed and work was anything but certain. As we considered what to make, we realized that we needed to address what we saw in the world: Plague. Racism. Poverty. Hunger. *Ad nauseum*. But simply making something about what we were seeing around us wasn’t unique; reporters do that (essential work!) every day. What could we offer that would both name our experiences of the world, offer a distinct perspective, and be artistically “craftworthy”? What we landed on and ultimately created was our piece, *not all at once* - [a striking, 7-minute, audio experience that blends personal storytelling, introspective meditation on justice, sonic soundscape, and, most surprisingly to us, the interweaving of Jewish text](#). (Apropos of the *chagim*, if you listen closely, you can hear segments of the haftarah for Yom Kippur chanted throughout).

It is our hope that [this monologue](#) can be a useful tool for reflection as we head deeper into the month of Elul and the *chagim*.



Note

We’d recommend that you listen to our offering with headphones in order to get the full sonic experience.

PROMPT: PRIOR TO LISTENING

1. Sit comfortably in a way that promotes relaxation. Feel free to sit in your favorite chair, or lie on the ground.
2. Take 4 deep “box breaths” - (i.e., 1 “box breath” = breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, out for 4 counts, and hold for 4 counts.)
3. Consider at least one of the following questions:

How do we:

- Pay attention to the voices we hear crying out?
- Hold ourselves responsible for what we’ve done and accountable for what we’ve learned?
- Honor our losses and create true space for grief?

4. [Press play.](#)
5. Close your eyes.

PROMPT: AFTER LISTENING

6. Take 4 deep “box breaths” - (i.e., 1 “box breath” = breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, out for 4 counts, and hold for 4 counts.)
7. Journal about a) your experience of the monologue, and b) the question(s) that you considered above. Bonus points if you do this with a friend.



Credits for monologue:

Rebecca S'manga Frank - narrator, words, music
Avi Amon - music, sound designer
Kendell Pinkney - words, music, rabbinic dramaturgy