

If We All Rose
[performative essay]

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I. Then

New York, 2013. I am 29. An actress and model, I'm seated on a pleather couch in the waiting room of a production studio. I am but one body in an assembly line of bodies, each here to audition for the coveted role of "Hot Girl in Front of Luxury Car". I'm wearing my requisite tight, short black dress and five-inch stilettos, my hair coiffed in Bond bombshell curls. The air is saturated with the scent of perfume, desperation, and nearly extinguished hope.

In this small waiting room, about 50 girls are tightly sardined. For each commercial and modeling audition, the number of girls vying to be chosen runs into the hundreds, while in film, TV, and theater auditions, the number is far less – personality and training matter little when choosing the ideal body to silently slip into a stereotype. Here in this room, the staggering number of young women confirms that in our carnivorous world, pretty faces are produced and consumed in masses, by masses.

No one knows our utter insignificance and lack of originality better than we peddlers of beauty ourselves. We know we are easily replaceable, hence the desperation. Daily we feel our value depreciate as time melts our tightness, sheen, and symmetry of skin, muscle, hair, and feature. We know in a season we will be swapped with a new shinier batch. Our many eyes sweep the room like crimson lasers in a museum hunting for thieves, measuring each other to see how we compare from one sculpture to the next.

Most women have been raised to believe that the two most pressing priorities in order to be an adequate woman are the procurement of the "ideal" man, and the pursuit and maintenance of physical beauty. Thus, so many female goals, pastimes, and social hobbies honor one or both these preoccupations. So, when that one lucky girl is chosen for a dazzling job in a magazine spread, it means she has "arrived" – she has succeeded at being the right kind of girl. Her image will now be cut and taped onto vision boards and refrigerator doors to remind other women that they are not yet enough.

This past year, as I've moved closer to 30, I've been haunted by the thought that I am contributing nothing good to this world. Rather, I'm hired to perpetuate stereotypes. I help breed self-loathing in other women. I help keep us small.

I scoot to make space for another girl as she squeezes in to sit beside me, our skin squeaking against the pleather. She pinches her mouth into a small apologetic smile.

"It's all right," I whisper. "You're absolutely fine." Words I wish to ventriloquize into every starved limb, heart, and mind there.

I feel my brain atrophying with every minute spent in these rooms, competing for one vapid, dehumanizing role after another. We women stand, sit, crouch, packed to the brim like refugees or those sold into sex trafficking. Except we are here by choice, muzzling our voices, stifling our potential.

But what else are you good for? hisses Anorexia, my host siren of fear and loathing, snaking through my mind: *All you are is just another pretty face.*

I blink once, twice to clear my head. Suddenly, my phone vibrates with an incoming text. It's the man I've been dating for about a year, who in society's eyes appears very much the "ideal" man. But behind closed doors.

"Hey girl. Free tonight?"

"Hi there. Sorry. Working."

"No prob. I'll try the next honey in line ;)"

He isn't joking. I pocket my phone.

My near-empty belly rumbles, mimicking I'm sure the other girls'. Today, like on most days, I've chosen to survive on black coffee and a banana. Thanks to hunger, my eyes focus then lose focus on the room, women, lights. We spin.

These are my daily preoccupations. In the last few years, a conversation that has rightly risen in volume is equal pay, opportunities, and respect for women in the workplace. A cause added to our many other longstanding plights. We have long explored and continue to investigate the many external infrastructures systematically harming and disrespecting us.

But we have ownership in our oppression.

We girls have been conditioned to fit, desire, and commit to priorities and personalities that do not result in our greatest potential. We have been raised to befit and remain loyal to sexist men, relationships, and industries. We have been trained to focus enormous energy on our appearance, weight, age, and compared value to other women, to be in constant battle with our selves and each other, divided within and among. We have been raised to believe this is what we deserve, that this is all we are good for. All these preoccupations and patterns work to keep us small, obedient, and in line. With our energy focused so deeply on such behaviors, we have little left to devote to ideas, qualities, professions, causes, and pastimes that challenge and shape the world and our role in it for the better.

Our smallness persists, and can only persist, with our complicit complacency and loyal participation – for patriarchy to thrive it requires our covert and overt betrayals against our integrity, each other, and our highest potential. Why do we participate and remain? Because we allow ourselves to believe this is what we are worth. Because we covet and accept the rewards.

But mainly, because the cost of change, of leaving the known, can feel so high.

I have lived and believed this way for so long. I look around at our many faces, each a different hue. What if we all rose? What if we all rose in unity, held ourselves accountable for the decisions that led us here, and walked, lived, and worked

beyond our assigned and chosen walls?

“Grace?” the casting assistant steps out of the audition room and reads from her clipboard. “You’re up. Kate you’ll be next.”

Grace, two girls down from my spot on the couch, rises and walks into the audition. Perched on a couch arm, Kate inhales a deep, shaky breath, readying herself to be soon measured acceptable or unacceptable, thin or fat, attractive or heinous, profitable or unmarketable by strangers. As the door to the casting room slides shut, I catch a glimpse of our judging panel. Across our divide, my mind reaches for Grace.

I ask her the same questions I ask myself: What more could you be? What more could you do?

I leave before they call my name.

II. Now

Oregon, 2017. I am 33. In the elevator down from that final audition, I bought a one-way ticket away from New York. Since then, I’ve replaced acting with writing. Reciting with speaking. Modeling with being. Since that final audition, I’ve held myself to a new level of accountability, to do work and create a life I can be proud of.

Today I ponder the assignment at hand, to write about where we are now in feminism, in our global society, where we are headed especially in light of Trump’s presidency, rape culture, locker room talk, and neoliberal globalization. I’ve been asked to discuss whether “wave” is an appropriate, still relevant metaphor for feminism. I’ve been asked to address the questions, How do we combat white male supremacy? and most importantly, Where do we go from here? As I sift through the assignment’s various threads, my mind keeps replaying images from that last waiting room of women. Their many faces unfurl in front of me like an origami fan made from a single sheet of paper persistently folded, then undone.

I remember us women in that room, each there because our beliefs, values, and sense of self had led us to that moment. I remember the feeling of desperation, competition, separateness, and fear. I remember that fear and conditioning kept us loyal to behaviors and systems that did not support our highest potential. I remember that so many stayed for they felt the cost of change was too high. I wonder today like I have on many days, what would have happened if we had collectively risen and left that room, if we *all* decided to no longer be accomplice to the daily and larger concessions that kept us small, and instead, banded together to create a new, empowered normalcy?

I think of that room and those girls when I ask now, What would, could we accomplish as feminists, as advocates, as human beings were we all to rise, walk, and work in focused alliance for an improved future?

Whether you identify yourself as a feminist, an advocate, an activist, or simply, a

decent, socially conscious and responsible human being, politically, the 2016 rise of Donald Trump and his term thus far as President suggests we have “hit rock bottom”. I choose to believe this is an exciting opportunity. Usually, it is only after hitting rock bottom that one feels the pivotal inertia to shift and build an entirely new normalcy. What I hear all around me is incredibly encouraging and *useful*. Previously, only those who identified themselves as politically passionate were involved in conversations concerning social responsibility and progress. But now, people of all politics, education, ages, races, genders, classes, religions, and vocations seem engaged. Engaged and speaking *to each other*.

Like any addict, the part of America that is misogynistic, racist, classist, xenophobic, homophobic, and closed-minded has been operating with high levels of fear and loathing for a long, long time. Trump is the manifestation of decades of doctored and perpetuated fear and loathing toward any kind of otherness. We the family have finally gathered to stage an intervention. We have gathered, we are engaged, and we are, at last, using our voices.

Thus our exhilarating chance for potential growth. But, to truly activate positive change, we cannot repeat past methods; history repeats itself only with our obedience and apathy.

We need to hold ourselves to an altogether new standard of awareness, togetherness, and action. Right now, many are feeling helpless, defeated, battered, shaken, or enraged to the point of feeling paralyzed. In truth though, we each have far more influence and effect than we may realize. We transcend helplessness, anger, and willful ignorance by behaving with empathy and accountability, by taking action on service, progress, and love. The micro invariably influences the macro. As parents, partners, colleagues, employers, citizens, we need to daily ask ourselves the tough questions, to consider are our personal and larger choices adding to the devolution or evolution of society?

As we have all been raised in this one world, we have all been privy to closed-minded, sexist, racist, classist, xenophobic, and homophobic messages, sliding along a spectrum of exposure, intensity, adaptation, and result. Remember, patriarchy is a system that uses divisiveness, oppression, and diminishment as ways to keep its stronghold. We need now to own the covert or overt ways we unwittingly harm ourselves or others through our personal subtle or deep fear, prejudice, and patriarchal behavior.

Let us ask, What are my loyalties? How have I shaped my personality, alliances, relationships, and lifestyle? How do I behave as a parent, partner, sibling, colleague, employer? Am I guilty of socializing with or hiring only those who share my race, religion, class, sexual orientation, or gender? Am I guilty of degrading, objectifying, sexist, classist, racist, or homophobic messages or jokes, shared with my partner or friends, overheard by our children? Am I guilty of locker room talk, on the sly? Am I guilty of making gross generalizations about others based on their appearance, background, biology, or experiences, do I judge and divide fellow humans into groups of faceless bodies in an assembly line? What are my consumer choices, what products and companies do I support, what sexist, classist, racist, homophobic, or objectifying media, messages, stories, or characters have I carelessly given my time,

affection, and money to?

Revelations spark revolutions. What improvements can I make? How can I serve?

As ever, the present paradigm exists and can only exist with our complicit complacency and loyal participation. Can any person claim to have never committed a closed-minded act? Show me someone who makes that claim; I'll show you someone raised in a bubble. Every day of the year leading to his election, and every day of his less-than-a-year-old presidency, Trump has been at the forefront of conversation. That is because of what he and his supporters symbolize – a harsh awakening of continued relevance. A wake up call and for some, a scathing mirror of their worst acts, gathered and amplified.

Wake up calls are incredibly fertile opportunities for enormous change, beginning with one's *own* beliefs, words, actions, and influence. The blunt truth is that in Trump, we see our own “cheat moments”, those moments when we behave against our integrity and best self, only heightened and flaunted. In him, we see society's pettiness and cruelty accumulated, multiplied, and celebrated. Such is why, to challenge the present climate and galvanize progress, we need now our own radical accountability. What would, could happen if we all rose and finally shed our past ills, if we each owned our influence and used it for good? If we all stopped dividing, bickering, or blaming and instead, focused on allying and doing?

While covert prejudice and patriarchal behavior is one way we undermine our progress as members of a conscious global community, another way we sabotage our efforts is by dividing ourselves into separate groups and causes. Black activists championing for civic rights. Gays working for queer and trans rights. Women fighting for women's rights. Social feminists, cultural feminists, liberal feminists, radical feminists, eco-feminists. In a less formalized fashion, we also see divisiveness on social media, in angry Facebook posts that feed and continue otherness, fear, shame, blame, and hatred.

In my time on this planet, being placed or placing myself in a category has only done harm. Categorization and divisiveness belong to patriarchal thinking. Divisiveness is how, politically, we've arrived to this state to begin with. Divisiveness breeds otherness and false superiority as well as inferiority. When divided, we begin to feel insignificant, separate, less than, incapable. We feel we haven't very much power or that we have inordinate power. We begin to compare and compete versus align and support. When organized into demographics, we run the risk of tokenization, assumption, stereotype, stigma, and hierarchy. Yet who can successfully argue that one group or cause is more important than another?

No one can. Furthermore, by dividing, we lose our strongest resource: each other. And by dividing ourselves by group or cause, it feeds the falsehood that one needs a minority prerequisite to be socially aware, responsible, and active. This falsehood is a strong reason why so many straight, white men feel they are excused or unwelcome from being socially aware, responsible, and active, especially in causes and areas that appear to not effect them, like rape culture, trans rights, immigrant rights, and refugee rights.

We are all humans, unique but equal, all deserving of equal rights, representation,

and each other's acknowledgment and respect. Every single voice is powerful and necessary. Technically, Trump isn't even my president – I am a citizen of Bangladesh. Some may think America's health, future, or feminism are foreign or irrelevant issues for me. They are not. Some may think that as an immigrant woman, or a survivor of rape, I have vested interest in using my voice loudly for causes pertaining to such experiences. Yes, but I will speak regardless of personal association or prerequisite. A voice is a privilege. I will speak because as a global citizen, my responsibility is that of any person, anywhere, any time, which is to use my voice, resources, and other privileges in harmonious symphony with yours, to help others, especially the voiceless and marginalized, to rise in life.

A truth that hit particularly hard was that the majority of white American women voted for Trump. This may be because they desire a (violently) patriarchal, alpha-figure as their leader. Or, the reason may be because the feminism Hillary Clinton represents felt, feels, too elitist, exclusive, and uninviting for those voters. Or perhaps feminism itself, in entirety, has been misrepresented and misunderstood, to feel elitist, exclusive, and uninviting for anyone who is not of a certain class, race, religion, or gender.

Whatever the case, it is time for solidarity, for intersectional inclusion and action. To that end, perhaps feminism needs both an authentic remixing and rebranding, to sincerely become and be perceived as universally inviting, inclusive, sensitive, and representative. We need a feminism that isn't just intelligent but intelligently aware of the many nuances of human experience, adversity, trauma, privilege, marginalization, and voicelessness. We need feminist leaders who are book, street, and world smart.

So often, despite an activist's well-meaning intentions, their work fails to achieve true, positive, sustainable results. For theory and desire alone will not accomplish change, connection, or solidarity. Perspective and empathy are the bridge between theory and praxis. We lose perspective when working and conversing only with those who agree with us, share the same biology or experiences, or speak the same language. Whether the word "wave" remains feminism's metaphor, what gives any metaphor its value is its resonance and the actions it results. What if we called ourselves not third, fourth, or fifth wave but one wave? Now more than ever we need intersectional harmony, to work for one common cause using one common language. The cause, our universal health, dignity, opportunities, and resources. The language, universal love, awareness, and respect.

To effectively challenge white male supremacy, why not use its opposite?

Radical empathy, accountability, and unity. In every moment, no matter how dark, we have agency in how we act and react in the world. We, female, male, gay, trans, non-gender, old, young, American, foreign, human, stand inside what can be a historical turning point; the mindset and intentions we adopt will deeply influence our results. The beliefs and words we choose will empower, segregate, connect, alienate, limit, or liberate.

Ultimately, as feminists, as advocates, as human beings, it doesn't matter what we are, where we are, who we are, or who we feel we are different from. What matters

is what we do. Strength lives in numbers. Were we to divorce our loyalty from our covert and overt harms, were we to speak in harmony than in argument, every toxic system of fear, patriarchy, and prejudice would shake from our combined commitment. Were we to rise and leave behind life's visible and invisible waiting rooms, the structures keeping us small would collapse. Unburdened from our chosen and assigned shackles, we would then be free to love each other and get things done.

III. Moving Forward – America's Role in the Global Theater

Daily, we witness Trump and those like him commit yet another injustice.

Daily, we experience as well our response.

Since Trump's inauguration, we have witnessed him try to place a "Muslim-ban". He has tried to instate laws that would rob women of our hard-won reproductive rights. We have seen his attempts to drastically decrease the number of refugees welcomed into America for safe haven and a future. All these actions have directly opposed the founding principles of the United States, the promise of freedom, dignity, and compassion.

In response, Americans have risen with enhanced and newfound empathy, accountability, and solidarity. Let us recall and honor the lawyers who gave their time to Muslim foreigners at JFK, working to uphold America's promised welcome, to counteract America's failed leader. Let us recognize and celebrate the numerous local, civic, and creative strategies we have initiated to give dignity, voice, and protection to those under threat, from immigrants to our transgender kinfolk. A fact I love most of all is that an unprecedented number of women are now running for office, locally and nationally. It seems we are all indeed done with waiting for change. We are aligning and rising in response to a common enemy.

To that end, let us remember as well [Charlottesville, Virginia, August 12, 2017](#). On Friday, August the 11th, 2017, white nationalists headed by alt-right leader Richard Spencer gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia to protest the taking down of a Robert E. Lee's statue in University of Virginia, bearing signs declaring "Make America White Again", wearing baseball hats with Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again", chanting "You will not replace us," and "Jews will not replace us". Peaceful counter-protestors gathered to sing hymns and bear witness. On Saturday morning, white nationalists gathered for a "Unite the Right" march in downtown Charlottesville. At around 1:45pm, a car driven by James Alex Fields Jr., 20, mowed down a group of peaceful protestors, injuring 19 and killing Heather D. Heyer, 32.

In total, from Friday through Saturday, 34 were injured, 1 murdered. The planned rally for "Unite the Right" was, in both critics and organizers' words, expected to be one of the largest gatherings of recent times, drawing groups like the Ku Klux Klan, neo-nazis, and alt-right movement leaders like Richard Spencer and David Duke.

In the days following the atrocities in Charlottesville, we saw the entire breadth of human empathy, ignorance, and apathy, of accountability and lack thereof, of

horrifying divisiveness and heartening solidarity. We heard comedians make heinous remarks. We witnessed the ACLU assert that the white nationalists had every right to march and speak, all in the name of freedom of speech, despite the fact that the explicit goal behind the march and such speech was not self-expression but violence.

We witnessed as well [Trump's staggering ineptitude](#), of him being given yet another chance to behave as a leader and falling painfully, characteristically short. His response to these acts of white supremacy, domestic terrorism, and murder was only to say that the “hatred, bigotry, and violence on many sides” were “an egregious display”. His words rang untrue for they are – he has been a conscious catalyst for the inevitable eruption of domestic terrorism.

These events are evidence of the encouragement and result of Trump's racist, xenophobic, and white supremacist agenda. Through personal example, through his campaign, through his choices in cabinet, administration, and daily actions in the White House and beyond, he has given alt-right groups their ideal permission to act violently, gleefully, confidently. [They have declared as much](#). Duke told reporters on August 12th that the protesters were “going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump” to “take our country back.” The Daily Stormer, a neo-Nazi publication, wrote of Trump's post-Charlottesville's news conference that “When asked to condemn, (Trump) just walked out of the room. Really, really good. God bless him.”

It only makes sense. They saw, listened, responded.

We watched, are listening, are responding.

So is the larger world.

Something that has been rather unexpected with Trump's presidency is the loud, frank, involved responses from the rest of the planet. From the moment he was elected, country leaders and citizens worldwide began to send their heartfelt support, condolences, and empathic outrage and sorrow for the American people. They sent as well as their vows to uphold and defend civic and global values that they predicted the 45th President of the United States would compromise daily.

It has been poignant and humbling to feel such global support and involvement. Humbling for we living in America can often forget that whatever we do and experience, the rest of the world will note and experiences as well.

Meaning too that whatever Trump's and his administration's actions, the rest of the world will note and experience. And however we as citizens choose to respond, that too will have stunning impact.

Americans and America have always been central players in the world theater. Now more so than ever, because the planet itself is in such poor health, because the person who sits on the most powerful political seat on the planet is staggeringly ill equipped to lead, it is time we, as citizens and a country, are being called to rise, to lead, to act ourselves.

To say the American footprint on the planet is profound is not hyperbolic. Nor is our impact reserved strictly to the political, for the political invariably informs the

ecological, personal, societal, cultural, economical, and academic. More than half the world's poorest citizens live in the most resource rich countries, but have no access to that wealth. [The world's richest 16% consumes 80 percent of the resources.](#) Even more perplexing is that [Americans make up 4% of the global population and consume 30% of the planet's resources](#), from fossil fuels to grain to livestock to oil.

This is privilege. Similar parallels can be made with other American privileges, globally and locally: safety, safe harbor, dignity, respect, education, income, jobs, peace of mind, and the luxury of ignorance are all privileges that only the smallest, whitest, and richest populations are afforded, while the rest of us are denied these resources to different degrees based on race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexuality, location, and birth country.

Willingly and unwillingly, consciously and unconsciously, historically and presently, the world has taken its cue from America. Globally, the dissemination and incorporation of media, art, literature, fashion, beauty ideals, gender ideals, roles, behaviors, and social conditioning are all rooted in American ideology, family systems, traditions, politics, business, and ethos.

Furthermore, when it comes to trade, agriculture, commerce, and environment, all the cues in terms of resource creation, extrication, exportation, and planetary depletion or repletion are spearheaded and impacted by the U.S. belief system, economy, and political agenda. Lobbyists in Washington determine whether and what my cousins in Bangladesh are allowed to eat. Lobbyists in Washington ensure tobacco's profitability through making it appear cool, resulting in generations of teenagers smoking worldwide, walking prophecies of accelerated mortality. Lobbyists in Washington determine [the rate of massive deforestation of the Amazon rainforest](#), in order to raise the volume of grain grown in South America to feed the livestock being raised for American consumption, and this rate of deforestation impacts the melting of polar ice caps which in turn results in extreme flooding, rising death tolls, and droves of climate change refugees in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and other water neighboring nations.

And so on.

Americans have shaped the earth in their image. It is all connected and if as an American you're choosing not to accept how all roads trace back to the United States, and how the nation and citizens thus hold pivotal responsibility and capability to fundamentally effect the world's future, that too is indicative of the privilege of unawareness that can come from being a central or leading character in a larger narrative. It can be difficult to examine yourself if you're standing on a raised stage, performing for a rapt audience seated in a darkened theater, the stage-lights glaring into your eyes.

However we phrase it, whatever micro pinhole through which we choose to comprehend the macro, Americans determine the fate of the planet. American imperialism has been for the world what white supremacy has been for America. To assert otherwise is like saying global warming doesn't exist.

In his tenure thus far, Trump has made decisions that will profoundly compromise the larger world. For the 2018 fiscal budget, he proposed budget cuts to reduce

American financial support for the United Nations, including its peacekeeping operations and national aid programs. The United States is the UN's biggest single donor. These budget cuts would ["simply make it impossible"](#) for the United Nations to maintain essential operations. Trump's proposed 2018 budget would also [cut foreign assistance by about 29%](#), and to merge the State Department with USAID. Doing so would mean abandoning or drastically compromising numerous existing projects that deal with disease prevention and food security for many developing countries where US presence is key. Trump chose as well to [withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement](#), a decision that will greatly weaken the world's efforts to combat global warming.

These are but a few of his decisions thus far. This wouldn't be the first time an American president has behaved dangerously. Johnson and Vietnam. [Nixon, Bangladesh, and Pakistan](#). George W., Iraq, and Afghanistan. The difference between those times and present is that due to the internet, social media, and our hyper-connection, we have grown into a far more discerning global audience. Leaders are scrutinized and held to a new level of accountability. And our personal ignorance and inaction towards the world's and its leader's happenings is a choice harder achieved. Are we merely going to wait to see what further violence Trump incites?

When an elected leader and government fail to lead, the responsibility to counteract their actions falls upon the citizens. We need not only to counteract the inept; we need essentially to become our own leaders. We each need to lead in small, large, quiet, visible, and creative ways.

4% of the population, consuming 30 % of the resources. The United States has long reaped the benefits of being the most powerful nation in the world. Its stronghold is also reason to be responsible. The US hasn't always behaved accordingly. But due to the severity of Trump's personality and decisions, our integrity in the global theater is under the sharpest audit yet – let us embrace this as impetus for growth. Just as how our present political situation can act as a mirror for each citizen to gauge our personal and civic accountability, empathy, and unity, may we as a nation use it as well to check our accountability, empathy and solidarity, *globally*. Our every action and inaction hold significant resonance. Moving forward, how will Americans choose to behave, knowing our mighty footprint, power, and responsibility?

As these pages illustrate, the personal is the political is the global. Arrogance and nearsighted vision are why we are here; the rise of Trump and the presence of Trump are the result of ego. People were arrogant and nearsighted enough to believe he wouldn't, couldn't win. Or those voting for him were arrogant and nearsighted enough to believe he should.

Ego and myopia lead to false security. We cannot afford either quality, or debilitating anger or fear, or apathy or cynicism, not anymore. Moving forward, for our country, for the larger human race, for our collective, sustainable, improved future, we have to shed ego, look beyond ourselves, own our footprint, lead and tread with decisive personal, civic, and global maturity, intelligence, courage, and integrity. Renegade lawyers. Running for office. We have started our efforts for personal leadership in numerous innovative and traditional ways. We must persist

with continued commitment and enhanced zeal knowing that our actions will affect our country, our planet, our collective future.

Time, like age, like the orbit of the Earth around the Sun, like violence, is a thing that happens without our permission. Time doesn't wait for us to grow comfortable with the notion of self-awareness, transparency, action, and progress. The continual forward gait of time is itself the only encouragement and permission we will ever be granted to take ownership. Let us therefore ask ourselves, Have I truly accepted my part in the larger story? What would, could, happen were I to rise and leave my rooms of privilege, willful ignorance, apathy, fear, non-confrontation, or inaction?

Moreover, once I stand, how will I lead?