

"Shine On" The Story Behind the Song

It is autumn 2018, and JD and I are playing around with the beginning ideas of a lovely and lyrical piano riff he had started writing a couple of years before. It almost sounded like a classical piano piece, sort of Bach-like, and we loved the way the melody and chords fit together. But when it came to actually turning it into a song, we had no concrete ideas about what direction to go lyrically.

In the meantime, and on a totally different wave length, I had been watching some in-depth news shows about American history and the state of our national politics. (Big mistake in terms of retaining a sense of calm and innocent trust.) I was getting increasingly alarmed by what was looking more and more like the systematic dismantling of our American democracy.

Into my mind came snippets of quotes from my 9th grade Civics class, like this one from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

And..."When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have blah blah blah..., etc"

And yes, I had even memorized the entire preamble to the constitution, which begins, "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility..." And on and on. I was a bit of a dork in the 9th grade, and I can't believe I still remember this stuff, but once you get it in your head, I guess you can't really un-learn it.

So, I was fuming around the house, feeling superior and indignant, and I heard myself say, "When in the course of human...." And at that point, the song angels bustled in and said, "Kindness." And I was like, what? What do you mean, Kindness? And they said, "Yes. When in the course of human *kindness*, it becomes clear the time has come to willingly set aside our blindness, and see the world as One." And I said, "Really?" And they said, "Yeah, go with that."

So we did.

Here's a beautiful quote from Terry Tempest Williams that inspired more ideas for the lyrics of "Shine On:"

"The eyes of the future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time. They are kneeling with hands clasped that we might act with restraint, that we might leave room for the life that is destined to come. To protect what is wild....to protect what is gentle.

Perhaps the wildness we fear is the pause between our own heartbeats, the silent space that says we live only by grace. Wilderness lives by this same grace. Wild mercy is in our hands."