

On Rebels and Revolutions

Pixilated Products

According to the cliché:
a picture is worth
a thousand words.
But we take them without saying anything:
duck lips and peace signs.

How original.

I'll like this, post this, pin this,
tag this, share this, blast this.
To leave my mark upon this world,
I see it through a camera lens
more intent on documenting
than experiencing.
At the end of the day, I'll count the
ways my face appears.
Forget Big Ben behind me,
is that a zit on my face?
is that a hair out of place?

How typical.

If this generation is trying
to make a statement
it's that we look but we don't see;
it's that we're willing to sacrifice some liberties
for a great selfie;
it's that the digital reproduction
is all we know of ourselves.

How two-dimensional.

We're just pixilated products
of a paperless age.

Facebook helped build a wall
between us and the world
and on it we reinvent ourselves
showing only what we want
others to see.
We tweet so eloquently about
enacting change;
about free college for all
and raising the minimum wage.

How honorable.

But while the seeds of revolution
can be planted on a screen,
for a movement to multiply
we need to pull ourselves away
and testify,

We are not pixilated programmed people
preoccupied with our appearances.

We've learned that an image
can bring an empire to its knees
If only we'd take pictures with a purpose;
if only we'd take a stand;
if only we'd declare:
no longer shall we hide behind a monitor
or blind ourselves with screens.
The world is in a fix
can't you hear the screams?

How desperate.

We are not pixilated, programmed people.

We are not pixilated, programmed people.

We are not pixilated, programmed people
preoccupied with our appearances.
We stand for something bigger,
larger than ourselves.

The Assimilation That's Sweeping the Nation

Blessed are those who can fill in the bubbles
With undying accuracy. Who treat the flimsy book of
Questions as the New Age Gospels – the Messiah has come!
Come to a world where success is measured in letters and
Words like Advanced and Proficient and Unsatisfactory. It's
No longer good enough to be simply average. Our school
System carries along our children in the gutters beside
Busy sidewalks. They get surrounded by dirt and grime
And bloodstains and it all just gets carried along with
Them. Sometimes they pick up beer bottles and
Cigarette butts and others just slip through the cracks.

We've armed the future with number two pencils and
Little cut out protractors. The foundation of our empire is
Supported by thousands of bubbled sheets and carbon-
Sensitive machines. When I get their results back, the
Know-it-all Cassie who sits in the front row and acts like she's
Got all of the answers is number 17 and I bet that her friends
Would never guess that she's only Proficient when it comes
To Geometry. And Joe who sits at the back of the class
And never does anything is number 397. He doesn't do
His homework, but I know he's got potential but I
Guess that just wasn't the P-word they were looking for
Because when he looked at the test and said, "fuck this shit,"
They labeled him Unsatisfactory. He didn't conform; he didn't
Get swept up in the current, and now he's one of those who
Slipped outta my fingers and right through the cracks.

When they're young and just in grade school we take a snapshot
Of their lives and their intelligence and then we let that follow
Them for all eternity. We convince them that there's
Something to despair if they don't understand the difference
Between a rhombus and square, like it's going to
Keep them from getting a job somewhere. Parents are scared
Why wouldn't they be? They don't want to be the only
Ones with a dummy. So they drill in their children's brains
Arbitrary facts and dates as though knowing the date of
The Spanish American War is all that's keeping us all
From the fiery depths of some eternal damnation. It's
Just lucky that some of us know the difference between
Robert E. and Richard H. Lee because otherwise we'd stand
At the brink of total annihilation. I just thank God for that.

They want the children to conform, to standardize and to
Compromise that very thing that sets each of us free. My
Scientists can't theorize or hypothesize about the nature
Of you and me. My poets can't compose with only letters
A, B, C, and D. My artists can't shade without using pencils
One and three. We call this freedom, hell we say it's a
Democracy. They've spent all of their adolescent lives feeling
Empowered and free and in the end, it comes down to
One day and that trusted number two pencil. And I'm sure
This is exactly what our founding fathers had in mind:
Voters with sharp pencil points and very large erasers.

So You Want a Revolution?

You talk of social justice; you speak of reaching out to the poor.
You're mending their broken legs while their stomach's an open sore.
We throw them a dollar and some spare change so it looks like we care
But really how's a dollar going to get anyone anywhere?
You want to start a revolution, but you'll only do it if I go first.
You tell me to stand and you'll follow but what if the roles were reversed?
I'll be honest with you; I'm not strong enough to see this revolution through.
I need guidance, encouragement, and someone to tell me what to do.
Oh it sounds noble when you talk of reform and say not to conform.
You stand on your platform and speak to those you're trying to inform
Without ever doing anything. You stage a protest against the exploitation
Of farmers and immigrants and children across the nation
And yet those are empty words and meaningless picket signs
Unless you work constructively towards changing society's designs.
You feed the hungry and starving once a year around a holiday
And for the rest of the time think they'll fend for themselves but there's no way.
You see invalids and the mentally handicapped on the streets and feel "moved"
Yet you sit around and do nothing but talk as if there's something to be proved.
Some want to help out, we say their heart is "in the right place,"
Yet place has nothing to do with it unless someone is willing to face
The problems and actual solutions rather than some band-aid fix.
We can't throw them a dollar; we can't feed them just once or even six
Times in a year. It takes commitment, leadership, and action;
We can't keep talking and getting caught up in all the distraction.
You really want revolution? You stand up first and don't wait for me;
You advocate change and you'll see what a glorious change it will be.