Sometimes I sit and wonder if I was somehow born a few decades after my actual time. I pontificate what would life be like if I was able to share the streets of Harlem with Harry Belafonte, Ella Fitzgerald, Sara Vaughn, Nina Simone, Sidney Poitier, James Baldwin, Countee Culleen, Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, Eartha Kitt and the likes. Share these streets when in their prime they were focused on the equality of black people and their art was reflective of the social political experience of their time and space.

Sometimes I wonder if my soul was catapulted from that time and space only to end up in the now, where my visceral reaction to the current state of artistry is seemingly detached and plagued by that which Reinhold Neihbur said in his book moral man/ Immoral society, “Humans by nature will never desire to relinquish privilege. For privilege is only shifted through some act of force.”

Sometimes I wonder, who are truly *our* artist? Who is brave enough to sing Mississippi Goddamn today and really mean it? Who is bold enough to sing of the strange fruit and feel the conviction that strange fruit are still hanging from southern trees while concurrently lying on bloodied streets. Where are our artists?

I find myself disenfranchised by this notion that our contemporary artistic activism is only as rooted and connected to the access it allows us to the next Broadway gig or television show, so then I find myself in a quandary to ask, “Is it really activism or is it self-promotion under the guise of fighting for humanity?”

It is this weird song that I sing and dance that I do with my artistic intellectualism, desiring to work but also desiring to tell the stories of those that are systemically voiceless in a social political context that is plagued with immutable noises of distraction. What has art become? Especially, the art of the oppressed. Has its purpose been minimized to snapchat and instagram takeovers? Would you be willing to say no in order to ensure that the voice of that which is truly oppressed is made known?

Who are we, as artists if in the end we have nothing to say but a resume of work that has no political impact on the greater good of the sociality of the cosmos? Are we artist at all? Then I’m brought back to the question, what is art at all? What is its purpose? Does it always have to invoke change? Does it always have to speak truth to power?

I’d say for some, YES. For some, art has been the only social political voice to address nationalistic systems of covert forms of genocide. So, yes art must be both/and for some. The artist that is an artist at all with anything of substance to contribute is not afforded the opportunity to sit on the seats of privilege silent about the times. This then is no artist this then is one who is solely commodity. Property to be bought and sold for the good of a system that knows that you, commodity, have a shelf life of at most 15 years until the next hot commodity is thus revealed.

So, why then do we do what we do? Why? I ponder if it is to gain wealth, sense of privilege, some sort of self-aggrandizing ego? The liminal space of tension that I dwell in is yes, I’ve done the latter but knowing that the purpose of MY art form is in living the blue prints of the greats that were okay with saying no, in order to achieve a systemic….YES!!

Oh the woe of commodification has its slithering way of sterilizing that, which is as fertile as the womb of Oshun. Oh divine God bring back that fertility and birth a nation of artist that truly construct monuments with the blueprints of our predecessors instead of those whom print self portraits on these blue prints disguising it as artistry that reflects the times, when in essence its commodification reflecting self-promotion.