

Wait, Keep Going.

By Nicholas Aranda

Head down main street and keep going. Drive until you think that the road will surely end soon. Traveling down that flat Texas land at sunset you feel as though the world will abruptly come to an end and the sun will be immediately there at the end of it. Keep going. Drive past the red barn, no not the one with the cross on it, the other one with two crosses on it. Upon passing the red barn, the one with two crosses displayed proudly and critically, turn left. Drive until the sound of Texas country music steers you into the gravel lot and park. You have arrived.

Walking to the barn entrance you quickly realize that this is not the sort of event you wear a scarf to—no matter how cold it is. Take off the scarf, unlock your car, and throw it in. Don't just throw it in, hide it so that it is not visible from the car window. No, not because the scarf is valuable enough to be stolen, but because your sense of worth is. Be scared. Keep going.

Don't walk in alone. Text your friends and tell them you have arrived. Wait for them. They are coming. You've been invited, and as you know, you cannot say no to an invitation. If your mom invites you somewhere, you say yes. If your friend invites you somewhere, you say yes. If death, knocking on your door and calling your name, invites you somewhere—remember what you have been taught, “when invited, you always go.” Keep going.

Finally, you see that your friends have decided to walk you in. Did you take off the scarf? Good. George Straight floats through the air—know where you are. Wait. Stop walking like that. Wait. Don't think about how you are walking—you're thinking too hard. Think. Don't think. Think about don't thinking. Don't think about thinking. Wait. Keep going.

Once inside sit with your friends. Listen to the conversation, don't add to it. There is a gun on his hip—let him say what he wants. He is drunk, you are not. Do make the stupid choice. Listen to him, no matter the words, listen. “I just can't believe they did that. Who the fuck wants to

see a couple of faggots get married? You know, it's just wrong. They know it's wrong too." The other table denizens mutter in agreement and nod. Nod, mutter in agreement. Listen to him, "The only thing they're good for is to place a fucking bullet through their skulls." Don't flinch as he slams his pint down on the table. Nod, mutter in agreement.

It is time for you to leave. Make up an excuse. You were invited, you came. Now, you leave. Keep going.

"All reaction is inspired by and dependent on what it is reacting to."

(Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana Scholar and Queer Theorist)

It's time, sweat droplets forming on the palm of my hand condense together—my thoughts condense together. My first debate tournament of the college season is here. I'm nervous, my scholarship is renewed yearly. The topic is released. The projector flashes on and my eyes are projected forward to the white screen overhead. Overhead, characters take meaning: "This House believes that the historically oppressed groups have area for rage against historically privileged groups." A collective groan rises from the crowd, one note of relief and inspiration pierces the cacophony and forms a melody. I get assigned as first speaker. I stare into the collective eye of the crowd and scream, "The ontology of the queer body is, historically, inherently stuck in a static status! . . ." I won.

"I never understood photo albums, I store my childhood memories in the texture of the carpet, the smell of biscuits, and the sound of night passing trains."

*(**Authors Name**, aspiring scholar)*

The waiter is coming, you can wait. Be excited, you don't get to go out to eat often, your birthday marks special occasion—they tell you five is a big number. Your brother says he can count to 10, that's a bigger number. The waiter is here, "May I have a color sheet?" Accept the white sheet from her cigarette charred fingers and color. You only get three crayons. Wait. The paper

color sheet is a paint by the numbers, there are 15 numbers, that is an even bigger number. You have three crayons. Keep going.

“The worst type of quote is the one that is incomplete . . .”

*(**Author’s Name**, stressing student)*

I feel incomplete. There are so many parts of me that long to be filled in and brought to life, I have so little done so far. I have dreams of going places and doing more things than I probably will ever have time for. I want to travel to every corner of the map. I have a map on my desk, after I go somewhere, I color it in. I have so little time. I want to write and be published, I want to teach and be taught. I want to read and be read. I want to see and be seen. I have so little time. I try to cry and I realize I don’t have time to cry. This semester, I learned that Jean-Paul Sartre argues, “man makes himself . . . we cannot judge a painting until it is finished . . . we create ourselves and we will never be complete” (46). Last week I submitted a paper to the Mudd Journal of Ethics for submission for a conference. Like Woolf says, “[I] have encouraged myself to write by supposing that what [I] write will never be published” (58). They tell me I am doing so much, they’re paid to say that. I feel incomplete. Am I supposed to feel incomplete? Time is my enemy. I was taught to love my enemies. I don’t like to wait. I have to keep going.

“I want to do everything, that is my problem.”

(Joshua Bell, World Renowned Violinist)

The subway is coming. Get ready. Remember, your dad said that big cities are a dangerous place—remember where you are. Get on the subway—sit down and act like you know what you are doing. Do you see him? The man across the aisle? His arms are covered in scars. Maybe his thighs are too. Wait. Don’t stare at him. Do you see him? Smile at him. He smiles back. Good, keep going.

“Their eyes met, and in an instant, with an inexplicable, only half conscious rush of emotion, they were in perfect communion.”

(F. Scott Fitzgerald, Husband of Writer Ella Fitzgerald)

My mom is obsessed with keeping a clean house. We all have chores. One of mine when I was ten was to clean the mirror. I couldn't reach the top so my older brother would bring me a stool. I like cleaning the mirror. I look into it and I am sort of grossed out with the mess and the smears. Wiping the residue away, I see myself. It's cool every time. When I cover the mirror with the glass cleaner, the reflection becomes obstructed. I leave the glass cleaner on for a while so that the foam can eat away at the residue well enough to produce a clean image. I leave it on long enough to forget what's underneath. I'm shocked to see myself every time. I smile, I see myself smile back. There is more to clean, I keep going.

“I have a lot to clean up in life, I can't see myself yet and I want to.”

*(**Author's Name**, developing humanist)*

A boy hurt you once, he hurt you and you were not allowed to talk about it. A boy hurt you but boys do not get hurt—especially not by other boys, not boys like him anyways. You hurt inside. He kissed your lips and then used those lips to tell you that faggots burn in hell. You believed him. She found you. At first, you didn't want to burn in hell so you gave her a shot. You fell in love. You still don't understand it. It's ok, you don't have to. She kissed your lips and then used those lips to tell you that faggots burn in hell. Wait. You love her. A girl hurt you once, and you were not allowed to talk about it. A girl hurt you but boys do not get hurt—especially not by girls. Keep going.

“Do I contradict myself, very well then, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes.”

(Walt Whitman, My Hero)

I was scared to come to **Authors's University** at first. Honestly, I have always made friends very well! Well, I make some friends very well. I have been told that I am one of those people that you either love or you hate. Do I love myself or am I one of those who hate me? I won't share the answer with you. I met a boy, he is a great friend. I have never had a sleep over before. My parents did not let me sleep over at other boy's house or have boys over to sleep at my house—I was their gay son, cohabitation is bad. I sleep over every night now. Garret, my roommate is my friend. He knows I am bi, or gay, or fuck—who knows, and he likes me as his friend. That still blows my mind. There is another one too, his name is Austin. We work on homework every night. He talks to me even though I am whatever I am. That still blows my mind. I met a girl, well I met a whole hallway full of them. I love them. Every night we talk as I “make my rounds.” I know Garret loves me, I know the fourth floor DeSmet Hall loves me. Do I love me? Fine. I will tell you. I don't. But, I am learning too. People are helping me learn to love myself. I love them for that. I am my enemy. Wait. I was taught to love my enemy. I'll keep going.