

Absurd & surprising describes 2014 in review for me

2014 Resolutions: some achieved, some re-purposed

Consistent with my usual New Year's goals last January, I thought that I'd find gainful employment in 2014, lose those seven pounds that forever torment me, become mentally healthier, become physically stronger, improve the lives of my kids, increase my happiness, discover the meaning of life, continue to find worthy Netflix series. You know, realistic stuff. Screw SMART goals! I didn't exactly hit all those milestones (my bathroom scale is evil, and "having a job" seems stupidly confined to people who "want things" and are already employed). I did address my mental and physical health in productive and dedicated ways that I will continue in 2015. Overall, I feel better going into 2015 than I did 2014, so I will count that in the "win" column. Looking around me, though, most everyone agrees 2014 blew.

One thing I never envisioned from a year 2014 in review was to add "activist" to the list of adjectives I use to describe myself. I'm notably not a millennial, though I identify with that generation more than any other. I think I've always known I had the heart of an activist, I just couldn't figure out how to insert myself on account of not being suppressed in society or growing up without. (Also, threatened employment, family responsibilities, mental weakness and an aversion to extreme temperatures and tear gas didn't help). I have spoken to many friends who want to contribute to making the world a more just place, but can't wrap their head around how to do that. I've also learned the hearts of people who lack empathy but I don't dwell on that lest I want to be driven insane.

St. Louis, my city, which includes Ferguson, will never be the same after Officer Darren Wilson killed unarmed Michael Brown on August 9th, 2014. That killing, and the sometimes violent protests since then, have started to define a new reality in my community for many citizens. I would argue not enough citizens, but we seek progress, not perfection. In an already segregated city, the "us" versus "them" mentality percolates just below the surface.

Having several close friends who are gay made it easy to champion marriage equality in the past. Supporting my LGBT friends and teaching my children tolerance was hardly outside my wheelhouse. It also didn't potentially pit me against anyone I

otherwise wanted to associate with. Conversely, the movement for racial equality, is depressingly divisive in the white community. Though I have an array of friends in terms of age, race, and ethnicity, my friends all tend to be highly educated, which is to say, not overly diverse. I don't want to co-opt the identity of being an activist in a way that aggrandizes me in the slightest. To be an activist is to advocate for others, not to tout your activism. Yet, here I am, some thirty protests and counting.

For me, 2014 yielded the following life lessons:

- I feel much more socially conscious than I was, and it feels humbling and right.
- Protests are better than any dating site to find people with like minds, even if the external confines of society would never tether you together otherwise. They are also fraught with bat shit crazy people on both sides of the divide.
- I may spend my entire life looking for "my people", and maybe that's just the point.
- Police don't have as much of a sense of humor as you might think. I don't recommend accidentally running into the riot shield of a Ferguson police officer in the middle of a nighttime neighborhood stand-off. They can be a little prickly.
- Despite being in the vicinity of both on numerous occasions, I still don't know the difference between pepper spray and mace. Must consult google.
- Upside down police riot shields are still intimidating, if not momentarily amusing.
- It's not an insult to be put on hold on the phone when Jesse Jackson is calling on the other line.
- #shittiestparentoftheyear is really a compliment on Twitter.
- People drop a lot of belongings when they are being thrown to the pavement during an arrest so packing light has an even more immediate upside.
- Tying your gloves together with a ribbon and running it through your jacket is an excellent way to keep your gloves when approaching a line of riot police.
- Don't make the string for your gloves too short or you'll walk around with your shoulders hunched up and that defeats the purpose of trying to be nimble.
- The St. Louis City Justice Center is ironically named.
- Arrest me once, shame on you. Arrest me twice, shame on me. (I didn't get arrested in 2014, but the year isn't quite over).
- If you give an interview to a journalist, try not to give it to a whacko Communist publication. Admitting you are an idiot may be less humorous to a potential employer.
- Highways are really not pedestrian friendly and trampling through highway

medians at night is not as fun as it sounds.

As usual, high hopes for a good year override my natural cynicism. I look forward to meeting up with you all in 2015!