

Where the fear comes from

By JuCoby Johnson

I am trying to love myself more & it's harder than I thought.

There are people in my life who tell me I'm worthy of love. & I believe them. Up to a point. The point where I look in the mirror. Or make a joke nobody laughs at. Or make a mess of the love I've been given. Those moments amplify & replay in my mind like B-roll of a bad film.

But, I'm trying to love myself more.

Because I love the world. Even when I hate the world & the world hates me. I love the world. & because I am a part of the world I am trying to love myself more. Because I have been loved in my life. Lovers have whispered in my ear.

"I love you"

In the night

They have held my hand

In the dark

They have kissed my lips

In the rain

And I have thought to myself

"I wish I loved me the way you love me"

I'm trying to love myself more.

So that I can love someone else. Without fear that their love might fade. Without fear that someone will love them more. Without fear that my love isn't big enough. Or deep enough. Or real enough. I want to love all the way. Without half-measures. Or conditions. Or lies so big that the wall between us can never be broken down. Or leapt over.

I'm trying to love myself more.

Because my country does not & my people do, but with conditions & my family does, but we don't discuss it & God does, but there are too many to pin down which one

& I want my thoughts to be my own & I want to *want* things & I want to dream in color & I want to feel real & I want to stand tall & I want to hear "I love you" & believe it.

Fully.

& I want my soul to burst open & I want to show you what's inside & know that I exist.

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