

Why I Write

By Terry Tempest Williams

It is just after 4:00 A.M. I was dreaming about Moab, Brooke and I walking around the block just before dawn. I threw a red silk scarf around my shoulders and then I began reciting in my sleep why I write:

I write to make peace with things I cannot control. I write to create fabric in a world that often appears black and white. I write to discover. I write to uncover. I write to meet my ghosts. I write to begin a dialogue. I write to imagine things differently and in imagining things differently perhaps the world will change. I write to honor beauty. I write to correspond with my friends. I write as a daily act of improvisation. I write because it creates my composure. I write against power and for democracy. I write myself out of my nightmares and into my dreams. I write in a solitude born out of community. I write to the questions that shatter my sleep. I write to the answers that keep me complacent. I write to remember. I write to forget. I write to the music that opens my heart. I write to quell the pain. I write to migrating birds with the hubris of language. I write as a form of translation. I write with the patience of melancholy in winter. I write because it allows me to confront what I do not know. I write as an act of faith. I write as an act of slowness. I write to record what I love in the face of loss. I write because it makes me less fearful of death. I write as an exercise in pure joy. I write as one who walks on the surface of a frozen river beginning to melt. I write out of my anger and into my passion. I write from the stillness of night anticipating-always anticipating. I write

to listen. I write out of silence. I write to soothe the voices shouting inside me, outside me, all around. I write because of the humor of our condition as humans. I write because I believe in words. I write because I do not believe in words. I write because it is a dance with paradox. I write because you can play on the page like a child left alone in the sand. I write because it belongs to the force of the moon: high tide, low tide. I write because it is the way I take long walks. I write as a bow to wilderness. I write because I believe it can create a path in darkness. I write because as a child I spoke a different language. I write with a knife carving each word through the generosity of trees. I write as ritual. I write because I am not employable. I write out of inconsistencies. I write because then I do not have to speak. I write with the colors of memory. I write as a witness to what I have seen. I write as a witness to what I imagine. I write by grace and grit. I write out of indigestion. I write when I am starving. I write when I am full. I write to the dead. I write out of the body. I write to put food on the table. I write on the other side of procrastination. I write for the children we never had. I write for the love of ideas. I write for the surprise of a sentence. I write with the belief of alchemists. I write knowing I will always fail. I write knowing words fall short. I write knowing I can be killed by my own words, stabbed by syntax, crucified by both understanding and misunderstanding. I write out of ignorance. I write by accident. I write past the embarrassment of exposure. I keep writing and suddenly, I am overcome by the sheer indulgence, (the madness,) the meaninglessness, the ridiculousness of this list. I trust nothing especially myself and slide head first into the familiar abyss of doubt and humiliation and threaten to push the delete button on my way down, or

madly erase each line, pick up the paper and rip it to shreds-and then I realize, it doesn't matter, words are always a gamble, words are splinters from cut glass. I write because it is dangerous, a bloody risk, like love, to form words, to say the words, to touch the source, to be touched, to reveal how vulnerable we are, how transient.

I write as though I am whispering in the ear of the one I love.