

Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Walk a mile in my shoes and pay your dues
for wearing a transgender hat, imagine that.
Yes, imagine that you get that side long stare
like you're not really there
where they have every right to exist.
But you don't.

You don't get to say to the world,
"Hey, I'm a girl!"
if that world is your parent's house
and they douse you with "you'll go to hell" or
"For God's sake don't tell your brother" or
use another means of getting through
and just plain beat the crap out of you.

You don't get that job that would keep you off the street,
buy you food to eat, keep you warm and dry
instead of questioning why the hell the only way to make it
is to rent your body.

You don't get that apartment lease 'cause the peace
would be disturbed by a guy dressed as a girl
(the plural of the binary is just too scary)
and besides, "What would the neighbors think!"

You don't get to pee in the only restroom that makes sense.
I mean, what is the offense just because
the powers that be can't see beyond their own perversions,
the versions of which end up being laws that let them feel righteous and . . .
Guess what - they really don't want you in either bathroom.

You don't get the security that
while you recover from surgery, your body and
your core identity are respected, not rejected by
a nurse who would rather curse than address you as "she".

You don't get a chance to romance a guy
who caught your eye and, try as you might,
the sight of you makes him turn away or
say he's gay, which would be ok, except that he's
really straight and can't wait to vacate the premises.

(over)

Had enough? Getting rough? But, hey,
we're walking that mile in style.
Head held high, you can't deny
that there's power in the feeling that you own your own space
in the face of the disgrace of all that nonsense.
Your defense is standing proud,
standing up to the crowd,
well-endowed with your self-awareness.
Girl, you own it. You own the right to fight for your identity,
your serenity, your seat at the table 'cause you're able
to see that you can be free from gender prison.

You get to step outside of the box
that locks the guys to their rocks.
You get to clock their world with your banner unfurled
saying "I'm out of *my* closet" and then posit,
"How about you?"

You get to amuse yourself with
the tenth or twelfth time
someone you don't even know chimes in with
"So, have you, ah... you know, had the operation".

You get to smile as you watch the wheels turn,
as the brain starts to burn, of a passerby
who, try as he might,
can't reconcile the sight of your graceful presence.

You get to walk with all the people of color,
the women, the poor, the gay
who fight the same battles you're fighting today
against old white men and their duped recruits
in their blood-stained suits of armor
protecting themselves from "the other".

You get to learn your true worth
'cause you're giving birth to your authentic self,
no puppet on a shelf.
You're out there swinging, showing the world
this girl ain't singing the blues, 'cause she's got nothing to lose
that hasn't got lost already.

So, take it from me – some free advice.
Don't think twice, just roll the dice and pay the price.
Put your life on trial, then put on a smile
'cause you've just walked a mile in my shoes.

by Erika Joyner