

any continuous stretch of time including the moment of speech

## **I. THE TIGERS**

Today I drove my daughter's soccer team, the Tigers, around town in the back of our 1997 Ford pick-up in the San Rafael Soccer Parade.

All the 7-year-old girls' faces were painted like tigers with smudged eye pencil whiskers and dark triangle noses. They all had new blue uniforms with long matching soccer socks and were singing, "Girls just wanna have fun."

From the driver's seat, I could hear their cleats along with the radio in between parent-pressured photo ops.

The one Latina girl on our team decided against make-up and pop rock and she and her dad rode together in another truck with her brother's team.

Before they left I heard him say, "Ponlo," about the make-up whiskers. The little girl said "no" and backed away.

He looked into her eyes, "Yo dije hacerlo y tienes que hacerlo."

I did not see either of them the rest of the day. Not even for The Shooting Stars team photo session.

The parade started and police held morning Marin traffic back as we passed city hall and gourmet coffee shops, all the families and pedestrians waving, *Man on*

Wire on the marquee.

All of a sudden I was crying.

But the scene was at once toxic with all the red balloons and the rah rah preparing another generation to compete, the healthy competition.

The narrative of healthy competition.

I was tired too from teaching four classes at two universities, teaching poetry on contract in public schools, and serving as the director of a literary nonprofit.

You could see why people love to hear the difference between a hockey mom and a pitbull.

It's how they spend their lives.

And I was there driving the team and watching how excited and openly full of love all the faces of the parents were.

And how proud the kids were riding in the back of the truck with no seatbelts or car seats, beaming. We were all proud.

## II. EXCEPTIONALIZING

I met Myung in 1994 at San Francisco State University and studied with her for four years.

I can't help but find the following (incomplete!) list of poets/writers in the program at that time extraordinary:

Nicole Brodsky  
David Buuck  
Sarah Anne Cox  
Matthew Davison  
Elise Ficarra  
Jennifer Firestone  
Paul S. Flores  
Traci Gourdine  
Sarah Mangold  
Yedda Morrison

Rose Najia  
Sarah Rosenthal  
Jocelyn Saidenberg  
Lauren Schiffman  
Mark Latiner  
Truong Tran  
Elizabeth Treadwell  
Hung Tu  
Erin Wilson  
Christina Wodtke

Early in our intellectual adulthoods, many of those on this list worked with Myung to write from our innermost and outermost urgencies. Poetry (the work of Oppen, Cha, Jabes, Olsen, Dahlen, and so many others) became a way not to just fuel our love of language but also hone it to our own greater personal and communal understandings and purposes.

To welcome error, to embrace uncertainty, to hear silence, to fight decorum, to disrupt hierarchies, to examine erasure, to acknowledge rupture, to attend loss, to destabilize language, to inhabit time, to rally together, to love.

Writing became our survival guide, addressing our most simple and profound human needs.

It is difficult to explain the ways Myung mirrored and deeply affected her students. Her example as a writer, thinker, and kind and loving woman/mother in academia—in the world—raised the standard for what the act of making poetry could mean and do.

Myung encouraged us to fold all parts of our experience into our writing. For many of us, it was the first charge to do so. Her striking intellect and the place her thinking/feeling comes from is so real, the only choice was to bring the whole of our existence to the table. She challenged us with difficult poetry and new models of thinking. And she led by example in exploring new understandings. Her workshops became highly intimate meetings where everyone's experiences took on a most remarkable weight. In my daily interactions, some of the questions I first considered in Myung's workshops still arise: Whose rules? Who's left out? What's being asked of us? Under what terms? For the benefit of whom?

I have had the inclination to exceptionalize the time I spent with Myung and the friendship we've developed, but I am certain that wherever she teaches, she acts as a catalyst, firing up writers to look at their material realities, at what's true for them and the power structures they live in and under.

At a post-reading party last year, a group of us were referred to as Myungians. We all laughed and yet it struck me later that I couldn't and wouldn't want to deny the palpable impact Myung has had and continues to have on how I see and occupy this life, the present moment—