

ART IS JUSTICE

Robin Coste Lewis on how art creates access

Poet Robin Coste Lewis shares an intimate story about how poetry changed her life, "I didn't know we had permission as oppressed peoples to adore our own bodies."

This video is part of the #ArtIsJustice series. Throughout U.S. history, artists and cultural leaders have been at the forefront of social change. Today, in the face of growing intolerance and widening inequality, artists stand up to these injustices, reminding us all that Art IS Justice.

Transcript begins.

[The words "Art is" appear, followed by scrolling words...Empathy, Political, Hope, Powerful, Change...it stops at Access. Art Is Access.]

Robin Coste Lewis, poet: When I was a little girl we didn't get to read books by people of color ever in my school. So, my parents supplemented my very skewed curriculum with books by black poets and Latino poets. And when I saw Margaret Walker's poem, "For My People," turning English into a tool of resistance, and beauty, most of all beauty, it changed my whole world.

[Robin reading.]

"For my people walking blindly spreading joy..."

[A close-up view of Robin's book "Voyage of the Sable Venus".]

I began to look at English and my body as an aesthetic tool and a political tool. And I didn't know ... we had permission as oppressed peoples to adore our own bodies.

Poetry taught me how to do that.

[The words "Art is" appear, followed by scrolling words...Access, Expression, Change, Creativity, Healing...it stops at Justice. Hashtag Art Is Justice. Agree? Share this video.]

[Ford Foundation logo: a globe made up of a series of small, varied circles.]

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End of transcript.