

When Gloria asked me to speak, I agreed even though I am at a loss for words to describe the scale of the destruction all around us. But silence is surrender and I do not consent.

When I was a kindergartener in Taipei, I witnessed a woman in our neighborhood get hauled away in a military police Jeep. People whispered that no one would see her for a long time, if ever again. Taiwan endured 38 continuous years of Martial Law.

When I moved to the US, I thought that I was moving from an autocratic to a free country. I didn't imagine then, that the US would become the pariah nation and Putin puppet state that we are today. A nation that destroys itself and all the progress we made in the last 100 years in a few weeks.

Except it didn't all happen in a few weeks. Change happens slowly, and then all at once. The Federalist Society has been playing the long game for decades until they seeded the federal judiciary with their partisans. That set the stage for Roe v Wade to be reversed by the Dobbs Decision. Oberfell, the freedom to marry the person of your choice, will likely also be reversed.

The long slide towards authoritarianism happened gradually, while most people weren't paying attention. Some of us sounded the alarm when men of Arab descent with no involvement in September 11th were rounded up and sent to secret prisons. For years, their families had no idea what happened to their loved ones. Today, we have two German tourists in detention in Otay, at the US-Mexico border, for no reason either.

The lesson is clear. When dealing with bullies, if we stay silent, the abuses escalate.

This applies to local politics as well. For decades, our coastal cities have blocked housing, pushing our family and friends to move far away in search of housing.

Our daughters pushed out to red states could hemorrhage to death in a hospital parking lot if they miscarry. Even if they don't, we won't be close enough to help them with childcare. Finally, we will have no family nearby as we age.

Transportation is a climate and feminist issue. CA DMV data shows that women will spend twice as many years aged out of driving as men. Yet, our cities have not built infrastructure for people who don't drive.

Transportation makes up about half the greenhouse gas emissions for LA County. Global CO₂ was 392 ppm when we passed the South Bay Bicycle Master Plan in 2011. Our cities pledged to install bike lanes on each road in the plan the next time they were repaved. Over 14 years later, global CO₂ is 424 ppm and there is still no bike or bus lane on PCH.

Car dependency is not just ruinously expensive, but it's destroying the planet, and preventing nondrivers from fully participating in society. Women, as primary caregivers, are paying the time tax of chauffeuring people around. Protected bike lanes are mobility lanes, suitable for children on bicycles and seniors on mobility scooters alike.

Local government decisions have kept us isolated and stressed.

Our problems are multi-faceted and great. But do not suffer and despair alone. Find community as we are doing here today.

Throw a potluck. Make a date with a new or old friend to go to city council or a LA County or regional meeting. Call and write your state and federal representatives together.

Let's take care of one another. Get vaccinated before the FDA pulls approval for vaccines. Wear masks in indoor places.

You are not alone.
Truth still matters.
Find joy.