

Hope and a Mourning Dove¹

Alexander Doe

Abstract

This excerpt from *Our Voices Heard: A Youth Led Zine* contains work from Alexander Doe (he/him) an 18-year-old trans man who spends his time reading, writing, and listening to experimental music, and creating various kinds of art.

As the editor of *Our Voices Hear* Vol. 1, Alexander hopes to open conversations on the complicated lives we live and the feelings that come along with that complexity through writing and art.

Founded in 2015 by a passionate mom, Stand With Trans helps trans youth between the ages of 12 and 22 in Michigan build resilience, gain confidence, and find hope in a future filled with joy. This zine was created by youth affiliated with the organization and its programming.

Keywords: transgender youth, zine, creative expression, joy, resilience, hope

*****Warning for mentions of reproductive illnesses, suicidal thoughts, the overturn of Roe v. Wade in the US, and feelings of hopelessness. Links to programs and services that can help are at the end of the article.**



By Alexander Doe, Originally published in *Our Voices Heard: A Youth Led Zine* By Stand with Trans



| Hope and a Mourning Dove

Winter's fingers creep and crawl
across the ground, soon to envelop the world in its icy
grasp. For now, the sky is a stark, cloudy gray. However,
today the sun stands unobstructed, alone, in a brilliant
azure sky. Dry fields are a dry, dying gold, as barren trees
reach for the heavens. Among these things, I sit.

Why do we hope? Why does the rising sun promise a new
tomorrow? It is easy to forget, to leave it all behind.

In all honesty, I used to despise hope. It taunted me from
afar. Some say there is a light at the end of the tunnel, but sometimes
it's an oncoming train barreling down the tracks.

There was a mourning dove outside my window when
I was bed bound with endometriosis, and it sang to me with
a trilling coo. It stood as a stark reminder of time passing,
another small death with each day gone by. How I hated
it, though I never saw it behind my slanting blinds. I was
alone in my room, day after day, with a mourner by my
sickbed, singing hymnal tunes.

I slept long and often to escape the pain and loneliness. I
had long given up praying to a loving god, instead turned
to begging for an end to it all. Still, that bird stayed put, a
dirty angel standing guard, over what I do not know.

I lost track of time; my head swam in a haze that never
stopped the cutting pain. All I had was the rising and
setting of the sun, and a dove that I never saw. I could also
hear the world moving on without me through the glass.
Cars and trains, and children continuing on their business,
growing up while I stayed the same.

I was told not to give up hope, though the future seemed
rather drear. My waking hours and dreams faded together
till I no longer cared which I found myself in. It never
mattered because the pain always stayed the same. The
way I knew I was awake was when I heard the mourning
dove coo for no dreams could conjure what I felt when I
heard it.

Why did it stir in me a feeling like no other with its
common song?

My hair grew greasy and long, longer than I had had it in years, while my nails were chewed down to the quick. Fewer doctors were willing to see me, fewer people visited my side.

My mother cried, my father screamed, I hated everything there was to see, and those things I could not. Why hope when it hurts so much?

The sun rose and the mourning dove cooed. It was cold, but I smelled of sweat and salt. I gathered my strength for a final visit from a doctor that would poke and prod. I bid farewell to my dove through the fogged-up glass, as my mother wheeled me away, my body limp with disuse.

I hadn't been out for a long time. Fall had passed and winter gone by, it now was spring though leaves had yet to unfurl. The sky was a brilliant blue and the sun was just starting its climb. It cast a chilling warmth through my aching bones. Like the trees I wished to stretch my fingers up to grasp it. Like the dove I wished to sing and leave my body in a flutter of wings. I took a breath and dared to hope.

The woman I met had hair the color of a mourning dove's wings, and she told it to me straight. I may not ever be cured, but she may be able to slow the pain. The injections I took would purge me of my estrogen, and the endometriosis cells would cease to grow. That was the hope.

"Hope", there it was again, trailing behind me like a lost child.

My bones could weaken. My body might still feel pain. Much was up to chance, but I called out to that hope, to carry me out of hell. I didn't wish for much, but still, I was scared.

It took a few weeks to get the first injection, and then a few more to see if it worked.

It was early summer when I woke up to a flurry of feathers as my little dove took off into the sky. I took my first steps in God knows how long and opened the blinds, but no bird was there. For some reason, I cried.

Now I sit here in the chilly winter cold, it nips at my nose. On the electrical wires sit the mourning doves, puffed up and round. I do not know which, if any, could have been the one who, for so long, sat outside the window, just behind the blinds

A letter from the writer

Hello dear reader,

My name is Alexander Doe. I am a queer, trans man with an under researched kind of endometriosis. In middle school my fallopian tube swelled with blood and nearly ruptured, needing emergency surgery, though doctors originally didn't find anything wrong when scanning my body. During my first year as a high schooler, I was bed bound by pain and lost all ability to walk and take care of myself. Again doctors didn't find much and I was refused the care I needed. After nearly a year of desperation, I found a doctor who was willing to try to help. It wasn't certain I could be helped but four years later I am a walking man. I still deal with much of the trauma that I went through but I hold out hope, because without it I wouldn't be here today.



In the wake of the revoking of women's right to abortion in the US, I was afraid like many. It set up the path to revoking so much that I had fought for such as the right to reproductive health and lgbtqi+ care. Although things are still shaky all around the US, I stress the importance of hope. Don't give it up yet. To silently suffer in the shadows of oppression is a living kind of death, one that leaves you to watch your own funeral from the front most pew.

About the process and Emily Dickinson

Every month I take a piece of poetry from a writer or myself and write about my and others experiences as LGBTQIA+ folks. The poet today is Emily Dickinson, a woman born in the mid 1800's who many believe to be either a lesbian, bisexual, or asexual. She didn't publish much of her work while alive, but after her death nearly 1,800 poems were found in her room, which she had nearly completely confined herself to in the later years of her life. She often wrote about death and her religious struggles, famously using slant rhymes and unorthodox capitalization and punctuation. She has been a great influence on many of today's writers and poets, including myself. Despite her work revolving around such dark topics, this one always seemed to be a burning beacon of light in her repertoire, inspiring many to dare to hope, something that can be very hard to do for people like me. Writing for me became a big part of my life during and after my illness. It allowed for me to find freedom outside of my body, much like Dickinson did as well. — Alexander Doe.

Resources

Endometriosis Links:

[Mayo Clinic](#)

[Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)

[Cleveland Clinic](#)

[The World Health Organization](#)

[Office on Women's Health](#)

Roe v. Wade Information:

[How the reversal of Roe v. Wade could impact the transgender community](#)

[Abuse, discrimination, exclusion: Transgender men explain domino effect of losing reproductive care post-Roe](#)

Endnotes

¹ In the original printing of *Our Voices Heard* Vol. 1, this poem was juxtaposed with Emily Dickinson's poem, "Hope' is the thing with feathers."