

Hear now these words from Kamaal Majeed in “Being Content with Myself,” an essay for NPR’s *This I Believe II*:

I believe in being myself. I believe that I—not any stereotype—should define who I am and what actions I take in life. The only other option is to sacrifice my individuality for the satisfaction and approval of others. Sure, this can be appealing, since choosing to keep my self-respect intact has made me unpopular and disliked at times, with no end to that in sight. But others’ being content with me is not nearly as important as my being content with myself.

Radical Acceptance

Being in Div School means I need a LOT of therapy.

If you seek counseling (and I think EVERYONE should be in counseling), you might learn about one adaptive strategy called “Radical Acceptance.”

One psychologist describes it like this: “Radical acceptance is about accepting life on life’s terms and not resisting what you cannot or choose not to change.”

In other words, radical acceptance is about acknowledging that the past is the past, some things are the way they are. We can’t change those things.

But we CAN change our RESPONSES to these things. We can despair at what we cannot change, or we can change what is in our power to change.

We can even look differently at what we don’t like that we can’t change.

Kamaal Majeed learned from his peers that his personality wasn’t quite “right.” He wasn’t being black the “right way.” Instead of changing his personality and interests—something he couldn’t do without sacrificing his individuality—he ACCEPTED who he was and became GRATEFUL for his nerdiness.

When people reclaim identities that others have tried to suppress, they realize their unique gifts and callings. I see this pattern again and again in my schoolwork. Feminist theologians celebrate their womanhood. People with

disabilities find that they, too, have been made in the image of God. They have realized their so-called “defects” are actually gifts.

Pastor Lia charged me with preaching on the idea of gratitude as resistance. And I can't think of anything more revolutionary than gratitude for those parts of ourselves the world shames.

But let me be clear. Revolutionary gratefulness is NOT complacency. On the contrary. It is a new perspective. It helps us to realize that the pain and the injustice we see around us fall short of God's plan for humanity. It gives us energy to continue the righteous struggle to make that plan a reality—for ourselves as well as for others.

I still struggle to radically accept my trans-ness, my queerness, my stutter. Shame is hard to unlearn. But I can see glimpses of the gifts they provide.

Where do you carry shame?

What have you been taught to hide instead of feel grateful for?

How can you acknowledge the pain it's caused? Reorient your perspective?

In closing, pray with me please, aloud if you know it, the Serenity Prayer.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.