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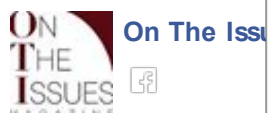
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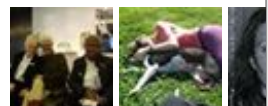
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Everyday Bravery: Reflections While Going to the 2013 March on Washington

by *Linda Stein*

Hot Topics

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What's concerning us, feminists and progressives? From the front lines to the back burners, our angle on vital matters on our minds and popping up in the news.

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I boarded the bus for the 2013 March on Washington with bravery very much on my mind. My **exhibitions** and **lectures** address courage in standing up to bullies, authenticity in fiercely living out one's gender, strength and compassion in protecting others.

My thoughts focused on the many who had faced down threats and abuse to get to the 1963 March on Washington, and I wanted to be there, 50 years later, to honor those brave souls. I would probably face no such confrontations, but as my 3:45 am taxi took me crosstown from the silent streets of Tribeca in New York City on this August 24th, I wondered if the warnings of the bus organizer to be on the lookout for any KKK interference would amount to anything. In the face of a threat would I be brave?

It was many years since I found myself going out in the wee hours of the morning and, approaching the lower East Side, was startled to see deserted avenues magically transformed with party-goers and bar-hoppers. I stepped out of the cab at Washington Middle Collegiate Church to meet my pal, Achebe Powell, a long-time activist.

Others were already there: sleepy, friendly, excited, open-hearted, and chatting softly over donuts and coffee. One woman told of taking the day off from her job at a bank to attend the 1963 March. When her boss found out the next day, she was summarily fired as "a communist." Heads nodded in recognition.

As we boarded the bus we were asked to stay with, and "never leave our buddies, to go nowhere alone, to move away from any trouble." Once seated, Achebe told the story of a group of 16-year-old boys who left the NY area to go, by foot, to the '63 March. As they walked through Baltimore, on the side of an empty road, the police followed them menacingly, taunting them to hurry their pace so as to be out of the State of Maryland post haste.

At 9 am we were walking on the south side of the reflecting pool, heading toward the Lincoln Memorial and wanting to get as close to the speaking platform as possible. We bought some posters and a sign that read "Protect Voting Rights" and held it up. Eventually, thanks to cell phone technology, we were able to meet up with our friends Charlotte Bunch and Roxanna Carillo.

All of the speeches were fiery and inspirational -- LGBT, gender and race-inclusive -- but two speakers brought tears to my eyes: John Lewis, so beloved by the crowd. And, surprisingly to me, Al Sharpton, who has come so far from his shady Tawana Brawley days. I thought the best line of his speech, paraphrased, was: When told by a young man that Civil Rights didn't write his extensive resume and that the youth had only himself to thank for his job, Sharpton replied to him: Civil Rights may not have written your resume but Civil Rights surely got someone to read your resume.

Then we marched with heads high, feeling sated. Without incident. Without the need to face down hecklers or trouble-makers. Without having to rush to anyone's defense. I was struck, in fact, with the extraordinary politeness of this group of people, the desire to offer a friendly gesture, to say a kind word, to extend eye contact and a hand.

Perhaps, for some, bravery was just in the decision to bring ourselves to that Mall on a hot day in August, to take a stand for justice, to acknowledge that this struggle continues and to reaffirm our commitment to walk alongside the everyday men and women – on the road to freedom.



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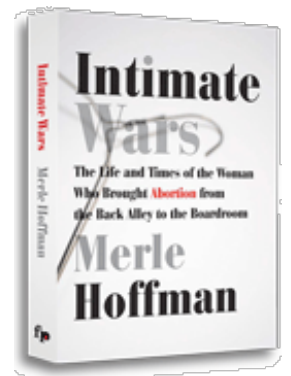
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Linda Stein is represented by [Flomenhaft Gallery](#) in Chelsea, Manhattan and currently has an exhibition called [Power and Protection: Bully Proof Vests](#) by Linda Stein at the Romany Kramoris Gallery in Sag Harbor. Her next traveling exhibition is at [St. Edwards College in Austin TX](#) Sept 5-27, 2013.

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