
The power of stories, wrenching or festive

By Vanessa Hua | May 3, 2018 | Updated: May 3, 2018 11:42am

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Photo: Jay Yamada

Actress Kendra Arimoto-Maselli in "Untold."

The pregnant woman stood alone on the bare stage, telling the audience her story. Five months pregnant, she was at the beach with her husband when her hands and feet swelled and her blood pressure skyrocketed — the life-threatening condition known as preeclampsia, which put her at extremely high risk of a stroke.

Doctors told her she had only one safe option: immediate dilation and evacuation of the baby, too young and too small to survive outside her womb. During World War II, her Japanese American mother had been evacuated in a different way, one of the many forced from their homes into internment camps.

“Evacuation: It’s a clean, neutral word for something terrible,” said the character, movingly portrayed by actress Kendra Arimoto-Maselli.

Hers was among the many heart-wrenching tales of reproductive experiences, skillfully woven together in a theatrical adaptation of the anthology “Untold,” curated by the Sea Change Project.

Last weekend, I sat spellbound in a workshop presentation at the Brava Theater Center in San

Francisco, the show a culmination of more than 2½ years of collaboration between the playwrights Lisa Marie Rollins and Susan Ito.

Directed by Lauren Spencer, the talented cast portrayed stories including that of a young Latina student who gives her baby up for adoption, an African American nurse who is childless by choice, an intersex man reclaiming his identity and sexuality, an African American lesbian trying to get pregnant, a Filipina mother devastated by her abortion, a white woman who kept her long-ago abortion a secret from her family, and more.

With reproductive rights under attack by the Trump administration, bringing forth these stories is more important than ever, helping engender empathy and understanding.

Ito said they're exploring how to deepen and share the show with a wider audience. "It felt like the stories had to be embodied and living," she said, explaining her inspiration.

I'm looking forward to hearing more diverse stories on Sunday, May 6, at San Francisco's Asian Art Museum, which kicks off Asian Pacific American Heritage Month with free admission; an artist's talk about the upcoming "Tender" aerial dance on the facade of the Cadillac Hotel; readings by She Who Has No Master(s), a collective of female and gender-nonconforming writers of the Vietnamese diaspora; and an interactive 11-foot sculpture, "Sari Dress Tent." The party continues outside the museum, where the roads will be closed for Sunday Streets for an Asian heritage celebration, among the many events around the Bay Area this month.

And now for a pair of little stories of my own that both speak to the power of strangers.

Recently, I had to get my driver's license renewed and replaced. Almost as soon as I got it, I misplaced it. I remember slipping it into the pocket of my jumpsuit and

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Happily trying to cover plenty of book events

running out the door to catch BART.

I searched the bedroom, getting on my hands and knees to peer under the dresser and the bed, looked around the car, and then asked my husband to do the same; he's patient and thorough and can turn up what I've given up for lost.



Training alone won't end implicit bias



What's in your slow cooker?

Maybe someone will find it and mail it to you, he said.

I wasn't counting on it, but a week later, an envelope arrived stamped with the return address of Dianda's Bakery in San Francisco's Mission District, where many times, I've ordered cakes and picked up pounds of its Italian cookies. Inside, I discovered my license. Thank you, to whoever took the time to send it back to me — it makes the world feel closer and friendlier.

Then I received a surprise of a different sort. The next day at the BART station, I squeezed into a spot beside a van. It was tight, but the other driver, who was sitting at the wheel, assured me he could pull out. If I tried to repark, I might scratch the other vehicle. I left, even though I felt guilty about the end of my car sticking out of the space.

When I drove home that night, something flapped on my windshield. A flyer? A parking ticket? I discovered a novelty parking citation, which stated, "It seems you've had some trouble not parking like an idiot. Next time, please imagine how a responsible grown-up would park. Then do that."

The possible violations included "misuse of compact-car spot," "parking over the lines," "double-parking," "occupying a space forever" and "driving an ego machine."

In very neat cursive, the citation noted, "bad parking job — your butt sticks way out." I couldn't deny it, and I couldn't help but laugh. Thank you, to whoever wrote the note, for

having the foresight to purchase the pad of citations, ensuring that no parking misdeed would go unacknowledged.

In its own way, the note made the world feel a bit more connected, too.

Vanessa Hua's column appears Fridays in Datebook. Email: datebook@sfgate.com



Vanessa Hua

Columnist



Hernandez Castillo

2:52 PM

**State
Lines: A
poem by
Marcelo**



**In 'Disobedience,' a
powerful...**

2:31 PM

**Rachel
Weisz,
Rachel
McAdams**

1:46 PM

**'Lives Well Lived': a sunny
look at old age**