

Enough! What is to be done in these trying times?

"In a sense we all already know What Is To Be Done, and the real problem is navigating the grief and fear and selfishness that prevents us from ever actually putting what we all know to be true into practice."

This quote is from author Gerry Canavan's review of K.S. Robinson's latest book, "The Ministry of the Future," a sci-fi nonfiction which outlines humans' options given occurrences worldwide. "You know what I am. I am History. Now make me good," writes Robinson.

But how? All the tragedies, the social, environmental and economic problems—it's enough. Too much heavy lifting.

To help navigate all this, I offer a favorite note-to-self. When there are problems aplenty, don't drive with your high beams on...you see too much of the road ahead. Keep your lights on low. If ever there was a time for low beams, this is it...as well as for taking a breath, for stopping, listening and not to the news. Instead, seek the counsel of nature, books, friends. It's also a time to take time to sit, stock-still, every day. Call it prayer, meditation, staring off into space. When I do, unexpected revelations show up as a result.

And here they came. Starting on May 27, the first ah-ha was reading about the video Ben Beers posted online. The former Marine, who spent four years in Iraq and now is the father of two, explains why, in the aftermath of the Uvalde shooting, "...I'm turning in my weapons to the Hillsboro Police Department in Oregon. Both my AR-15 and my 9 mm handgun. I no longer want them. I know this will not change legislation or anything to do with gun culture in America, but, hopefully, it will be a form of symbolism. Hopefully America can wake up. Because no other country has the problems that we do with gun culture and ideation and gun violence that we do. Amend the Constitution. Amend the legislation. Amend the statutes." A day later his video had been viewed 200,000 times. Ben Beers is a cat to copy.

Next, an email from Oregon's former poet laureate, Kim Stafford, with the gift of a poem attached. A call to words, if you will:

Poems for a Cause

by Kim Stafford

What's your calling?

What's your cause?

If it's justice, then pen a few just words into a chant or song that can call us all upright to witness and to testify.

If you believe education is the key, then compose a winsome proclamation for a child to recite, standing small but tall in the hall of power.

If it's Earth that tugs your heart, or immigrant children who haunt your dreams, or people by bad luck cast out to camp under the overpass, then find a way to sing your sorrows into remedy, your hurt into help, syllables to gather others, so words can guide our work, and your pain be our refrain for change.

A neighbor then thought to forward me the link to Lift Every Voice Oregon, where signatures are being gathered for the "Reduction of Gun Violence Act" petition, due July 1. 140,000 names and it's on the November ballot. A few days later a college classmate sent links to MVP to facilitate voter registration. And then a sibling, who earlier watched a Great Blue heron land and settle by a marsh, told me beholding that moment of elegance and beauty made him realize, "Our task is to love the cherishable, to love the world back to health."

And last, for now, Garrison Keillor. Before I describe the miracle he produced at the Tower Theatre last week, please note the average age of the above-mentioned individuals is 70. So, no, elders do not go quietly into the night. We go thoughtfully, doing what we can and what time allows.

Back to Garrison Keillor. He led a two-plus-hour refresher course in being curious and goofy and open and human and caring. He reminded us that in a scarier world we need our own family and community stories (not television's or YouTube's or movie theaters') more than ever. He happens to know a few. We laughed out loud, mostly at ourselves, such is his skill. We shed tears. We sang "Let Him Have Your Burden Now," and other beautiful spirituals, belted out patriotic songs we haven't stood up and sung with others in a long time. Strangers no more, we were united in laughter, song and hope.

Canavan ends his review by underscoring Robinson's point that there is in fact enough for all, and there are solutions to worldwide problems if we but have the will to enact them. "Enough is as good as a feast — or better," he says. So, OK, I'm changing my tune from enough already to enough for all.