

Healer's Legacy, Broken Bonds

Category: Trans

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It's hard to hate my father. It's harder still to love him.

When my younger sister shared with me the news that my dad was offered the opportunity to serve as Director of our local medical school, my first reaction was one of pride. I recalled the times I spent in his private office mentoring residents. Like my grandfather before him, who was also a surgeon and a teacher, my dad loves to teach, so it's not surprising that teaching loves him back.

It was only a few years ago that my grandfather passed away. Medical students across generations came to pay their respects to this man who had shaped their lives, and through them the lives of their patients, for the better. I wish I had known my grandfather as well as his students knew him. I can already imagine the pain my community will feel the day they finally pay their respects to my dad, for them a hero.

My dad hasn't spoken to me since before his father's funeral. On that day, my parents left the building as soon as I arrived. After the burial, I wasn't invited to the family gathering my aunt (also an MD) hosted in her home, until a second cousin twice removed advocated on my behalf.

I remember the days my dad would invite me to join him in the OR, hoping I would follow in his steps. This was, of course, before my transition, during my depression, while I was involved in toxic romances, and lacked any self-awareness, self-esteem or self-respect. At the time he hadn't given up on me. A part of me regrets not being able to appreciate the wisdom, experience and support he was trying to impart to his hurting child.

But after coming out as trans to them, I have no place in their life. It's difficult for me to reconcile how someone who lives so passionately for healing and teaching future generations can so easily disregard their own child. Now that I have fully embraced and embodied my most authentic self. Now that I am living a healthy, stable, generous life... As long as I am not the man they wish I was, I will remain in their eyes a villain.

My mentors have told me that I am a talented coach. My clients share how much my support has helped empower them to grow and heal. And, according to my peers, I'm a stellar teacher. I think, "just like papi, just like abu." And the pride I try so hard to cultivate melts away to reveal a thick layer of sorrow and bright streaks of anger.

I grieve the hero that he wanted, but that I couldn't be. And I cry for a generation of trans people who will be cared for by doctors taught by a coward I still want to love: my dad. He abandoned his wounded daughter when she needed him the most.

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