

DAY 4 | Motif: Bust
TITLE | "Conversion Therapy"
MEDIA | Canson Cold Press, Watercolor
SIZE | 8 x 10
By Kim Anderson
#FEBCHALLENGE19

As a Deaf child in an audistic environment with no Deaf role models or peers, I was indirectly conditioned with these devices over and over to believe that I was not good enough as nature intended me to be - Deaf. I was systematically conditioned to change (fix) my Deaf humanness to that of "hearing" humanness. I inherently knew it was not realistic for me to achieve the "hearing" humanness. It was not natural. No one said it was okay to be a Deaf human being. My future looked bleak. I had suicidal thoughts. The years of systematic conditioning was slowly annihilating my Deaf humanness. What no one thought to do was to change the environment (system) to accommodate and accept me as Deaf. Instead the system tried to alter my Deaf humanness and expected me to accommodate the system. My earliest experience of conversion therapy was the hearing aid box with wires to my ears and then later transitioned to the hearing aids without the wires. I also experienced the slap of a ruler on my hands that itched to sign. I promptly discarded all conversion tools during my first year of college – which was when I finally met my first group of Deaf peers, Deaf role models and my best friend (now husband who happens to be hearing) who asked me "why do you bother wearing hearing aids?" That was a profound question coming from a hearing person – who was I wearing it for? In the trash they went and been there ever since. These devices belong in a museum of conversion therapy relics.

Interpretations of the bust and on how the devices caused the deprivation of:

LANGUAGE (eyes, arms and hands missing from the bust) – The system gave me no access to acquire a language that was natural to me. I was forced to try the impossible – acquire a language with devices through my ears. It was futile, as my ears were intentionally designed by nature to not process any sounds of a spoken language.

KNOWLEDGE (brain missing from the bust)– I was removed from science classes for years from elementary school to middle school to attend speech therapy. I lost critical periods of opportunity to gain knowledge in the field of science. The system valued my correct pronunciations more than it did of expanding my knowledge.

HUMANNESS (torso with the inner Deaf spirit, colors not as bright – but still there, struggling to exist) – The system persistently conditioned me with devices to believe my Deaf humanness was not acceptable, I was to act, behave and speak like a hearing human being and earn praises, rewards and privileges for achieving any likeness to that of a hearing human being. No love for being a Deaf human being. Hence this lead to the slow, methodical, persistent annihilation of my Deaf humanness and to suicidal ideations.