

When I was growing up, we girls were told that if we were ever in the unfortunate situation of being attacked, assaulted, raped by a man that we should NOT yell RAPE, we should yell FIRE instead because it would cause panic and people would react.

If I had more time, I'd let you sit with that for a minute.

But... That little piece of advice said to me that a woman being assaulted falls on deaf ears, so in order for her to be heard, she had to induce PANIC in OTHERS so that they would sit up and pay attention and maybe...ACT.

And...as fucked up as that is, PANIC IS, in fact, what we HAVE to do to make people sit up and listen and ACT.

Panic is what moves us to protest and riot. Dr. King said, "A riot is the language of the unheard." It is the language of people tired of being oppressed, mocked, belittled, stripped of their rights, intimidated. It is the language of a people who realize that yelling anything other than FIRE won't get them heard, so they yell FIRE, they riot, and create panic because "I said, no," is not enough. Because "Mama, Mama, I want my mama," is not enough. Because "I can't breathe" is not enough.

It's the unheard who panic when they realize Oh, shit, they mean to keep me enslaved, ignorant, underrepresented, underpaid, servile, and submissive. It's the panicked, voiceless ones of us who travel under cloak of night to lead people to freedom; to lead rebellions; to set figurative and literal fires under people because CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

It's those of us who dare to walk to the beat of our own rainbow colored drum who panic when a stone wall has been placed in front of us to block our brilliance and tell us our beauty is bad ... so we throw the first brick and bring that wall to the ground.

Panic crawls up to our throat so much so that we can't breathe so we take to the streets against this new era of Jim Crow and lynching black people for being black people.

It was panic that inspired those of us around the world brave enough to put pink pussy on our heads as the new fashion trend.

CAN YOU HEAR US NOW? Panic inspires us to ACT.

Don't fall for the things they're giving us to lull us into quiet submission:

Keep calm, I'm a fill in the blank

When they go low, we go high.

Commercials with "Easy" buttons: "Oh, that was simple."

The re-emergence of Namaste and Kumbaya, sisters holding hands in peace, taking deep lion's breaths ... of ash and soot because the world is burning and so are our BOOKS. They SHOULD be yelling FIRE!!

So, instead of keep calm...Keep kicking ass. Malcolm X said BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY and I know reductionists will say, "That's why MLK is my favorite because he was NONviolent and Malcolm X just wanted to incite violence," and to that I say, you clearly don't know your MLK or your Malcolm X. Do your homework.

But I would also say, YES AND, because I'm an actor, Malcolm X DID want to incite violence **if that's what it took, AND** he wanted to make sure that our freedom was secured not only physically, but also economically, academically, politically, and spiritually, so if you can't hear us when we march peacefully to Washington, if you can't hear us when we raise a silent black fist or when we take a knee, if you can't hear us when we paint rainbows or sport a pink pussy hat, then maybe you'll hear us when we PANIC.

I say, When they go low...We get the shovel 'cause we got work to do. Our CHILDREN are being assaulted physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Our freedoms are being attacked, and the best HE-who-shall-remain-nameless has to offer in a FORMAL presidential debate is, "I heard she puts out or whatever..."

And her response was...You know what HER response was NOT? What her response was NOT was, YOU OWE MONEY TO A WOMAN WHO YOU WERE FUCKING WHILE YOUR WIFE WAS PREGNANT, YOU GRIMY, NARCISSISTIC, PIECE OF SHIT CRIMINAL. That's what her response was not.

Her response was NOT: YOU are a TRAITOR who instigated an insurrection in your own country. Check that.

January 6: An insurrection. People panicking because THEY thought their votes weren't being counted and they weren't being heard. And the CALM version of US sat and shook our heads in disbelief while we watched the news and penned our most patriotic social media posts with

An overwhelming amount of, "This is not who we are."

Yeah, okay.

I'm wondering if you hear THEM now. The racist jeers. The homophobic threats. The misogynistic taunts. DO YOU HEAR THEM NOW?

No more Easy button...Full Size Angry Panic button. So let's take our marching orders from Macy Gray:

...Get up, get out

And do somethin'

Because your oppressor will never hand you the keys to your freedom; you have to TAKE your freedom

from Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Our world's light is dimming. This is not the time to remain calm.

from Prince

And if de-elevator tries to bring you down

Go crazy (Punch a higher floor)

Or punch a racist in the mouth

And from Lesley Gore

You don't own me

I'm not just one of your many toys

This is my body. Keep your commentary, your judgement, your religion, and your hands to yourself.

Namaste?... Nah, I'm a stay over here on high alert

Maybe we need

Harriet Tubman's – gun to our head

Marsha P. Johnson's – brick through a window

We need

The likes of Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi to remind us who and what matters

We need

Tarana Burke to shout WE, TOO, are TIRED of living in an abusive relationship with this country that boasts democracy, freedom, equality and justice for all only to give them to a select few. If “this is not who we are” is to EVER be true in this country, we need to pull the fire alarm NOW.

It's time to PANIC and VOTE like your life depends on it because so many of our lives DO.