



POETRY, ART & ILLO

Taté and Ohíya Walker
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my pronouns are
super/nova

someone draws a line between the words
masculine— — — — —feminine
i'm told to balance a solitary somewhere along this lackluster
constellation

 someone else shows me a gingerbread person
 labeled with the few words that might describe exactly what's in
 the unexplored reaches of my brain and my heart and my pants

many someones tell me
no god will recognize the kind of black hole love
i seek and offer the world

you're trying to tell me i don't fit
into your middle seat narrow narrative
like i haven't lived my whole life threatened by total colonial eclipse

 these spectrums
 these cookies
 these myths

these mind-numbingly basic settler sexpectations
are desperate to enshadow everything
this fat Indigequeer has dragged into the sunshine over 20-some years

 you could neither appreciate nor appropriate
 the galactic possibilities of
 my heart

i am Wínyan Witkó
the love i carry is medicine and responsibility
for my people and the next seven generations

i have sang and cried and danced at the sacred tree
my sweat and blood given in prayer

Inípi and Wiwányang Wacípi

and from these sacrifices i became a dying star
a Two Spirit storyteller full of light and matter
imagining a future where more stars grow and shine

ask me what my gender is
and i'll tell you of the revolutions
i've experienced with all kinds of moons and planets

i am not defined by 1s and 0s
but the beautiful nonbinary
of limitless change

the universe is my blueprint
and my plans don't include closets
or pigeonholes

our Lakota ancestors tell us to abandon
the colonial urge to overmanage the complexities
of love and relationships



we are not social constructs
we are solar systems forever dancing
each the other's gravity
moving away
always pulled back
bound by rela-sun-ships
to our families and non-human relatives
to lands and languages and time and space
Mitákuye Oyásīŋ

Lakota history and science says
we come from the stars
and to stars we return
know that i have crossed great prairies
and thickets of bigots and Catholic conversions
and i have passed through Wanági Tacáŋku
to clear pathways free of settler trash
to remove the pollution of phobics and haters and TERFs
so that our young people may make whatever orbits they choose

one day this dying star will explode
gassy stardust love finding space to rest within the DNA
of the stories and of the medicines and of the generations to come

we are unmappable
undefined by boxes and boundaries
ask me what my gender is
and i'll tell you my rainbow boasts colors and textures
your senses can't even comprehend
and my pronouns are super/nova

* * *

Taté Walker: This poem is inspired by Bindiya Rana's quote: "Sometimes I console myself: The thorns that pricked our feet, that we painstakingly removed and set aside, at least our future generations won't have to suffer those..."

In Lakota we have a philosophy that helps direct our ethics and decision-making: Mitákuye Oyásinġ. It roughly translates in English to "all my relations" or "we are all related." It's an understanding that I am related to all living things, including people, non-human animals, place/land, time, and space. In every action I must consider how all my relations will be impacted for the next seven generations. It is both a gift and a responsibility. Like Rana, I welcome injured feet if it means an easier path for those coming after me.

“This is the image that remains: Bindiya in the autumn of her full life, devout and determined; Bindiya, madar-e-khwaja sira, racing between two sacred mounds in memory of another mother, outrunning women and men and the categories that continue to shackle us all; Bindiya, whose feet will swell to twice their size as soon as she returns home to Pakistan, but who would do it all over again.”

Read the feature that inspired this poem, [The Guru Who Said No](#)

I am recognized by my people as Two Spirit (there are many ways to translate this idea and its long backstory, and I was given Wíŋyaŋ Witkó in ceremony), a concept more about accountability than about who I want to have sex with, and my responsibilities include the sharing of my medicine. Essentially, being queer and being a storyteller are one and the same. Traditionally, the Lakota — and many other Indigenous nations — understood queerness as a gift and revered and uplifted these folks. As with Pakistan’s khwaja sirah, my people and our beliefs around gender and sexuality were ravaged by colonialism and genocide. We are slowly picking up the pieces through language, culture, and land reclamations, among other decolonial initiatives. In this poem, I wanted to convey how I would gladly re-experience it all if it meant an easier path for the queer Indigenous youth coming after me.

Ohíya Walker, 14: The digital artwork I created started with a sketch of the sacred. In our house we smudge (pray) with sage (not white sage but prairie sage from our homelands) every day. It really helps me center my heart and mind, so sage is the first thing I thought about when my mom asked me to collaborate with them on a visual poetry project about being Two Spirit and the path we walk as Indigenous queer people. Though there have been struggles, I’ve had really good support in my journey as a trans/nonbinary young person, and the image I created is filled with a universe of prayer for anyone who needs it along their path.



Taté Walker (they/them) is a Lakota citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. They are an award-winning Two Spirit storyteller for outlets like *The Nation*, *Apartment Therapy*, *Everyday Feminism*, *Native Peoples* magazine, *Indian Country Today*, and *ANMLY*. They are also featured in several anthologies: *FIERCE: Essays by and about Dauntless Women*, *South Dakota in Poems*, and *W.W. Norton's Everyone's an Author*. Their first full-length poetry book, *The Trickster Riots*, was published in 2022. Taté uses their 15+ years of experience working for daily newspapers, social justice organizations, and tribal education systems to organize students and professionals around issues of critical cultural competency, anti-racism/anti-bias, and inclusive community building.

Ohíya Walker (they/them) is a Lakota citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and is also Red Lake Ojibwe and Mvskoke Creek. They are an award-winning trans/nonbinary painter and graphic artist combining contemporary and traditional imagery and mediums.