

*As an LGBTQIA person, where have you heard and spoken "Yes, Period" and "No, Period" on your journey of call thus far?*

There is no amount of white paper that could contain the stories of "No, Period" that my Brown body holds. For my journey of call starts way before me. My journey of call starts at the hands, feet, and bodies of my ancestors. My ancestors, the storytellers, wisdom-keepers, warriors, and healers. My ancestors who screamed "No, Period" as they fought gallantly and resisted fiercely against the Spanish colonizers for 50 years before being colonized, raped, and pilaged for 300 plus years. "No, Period's" cried out again as the Americans colonized them for another 48 years after. My body encapsulates my ancestors' bodies, stories, and history. A history that was stolen, erased, and rewritten, repackaged and retaught back to my ancestors by their colonizers. A practice that continues to disseminate lies in American classrooms and Filipinx American homes today.

As a queer Filipina American, I grew up unconsciously internalizing the acceptance of objectification as a way of life. Racist, homophobic, mysoginistic societal norms taught me to value myself by the means of my capital production and the outward physical aesthetics of my body. The White, cis-heterosexual male bodies of America teach Asian American women how to be foreigners in our own body. They teach us how to separate our very Being from our body. So as to no longer be human, merely an exotic foreign object to be objectified and used for the pleasure of the cisgender, heterosexual, White American male. "No, Period". "No. No. No." (Joel, p2)

Pre-pandemic, White American societal norms outwardly celebrated the compartmentalization of the successful Asian model minorities. The onset of the pandemic revealed the underbelly of White American societal fears. Fears that retraced their lineage to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. "Dirty, virus infected, Asian bodies need to be deported and displaced." Fears that systematically lump all bodies that looked like and identified as Asian into a singular threatening body. My body, my family's bodies, all bodies of Asian diaspora homogenized, threatened, and victimized as potential threats of Covid contagion. "No, Period". "No. No. No." (Joel, p2)

Seminary is filled with, "No, Periods." As the only person of Color in my cohort and one of a few in the entire seminary. In discussions about racism and sexism I am the only one speaking out of my own experience as a queer person of Color. I called in for more authors of Color, guest speakers of Color, "bring in youtube," I have said. Fill the room with God's holy voices of Color, so that we are no longer tokenized.

"No, Period" to institutionalized racism that forced me to have to: advocate, build out, financially fundraise, and parade myself around seminary leadership, synod(s) and church(s) so as to be formed on internship under the supervision and leadership of a Pastor of Color.

"No, Period" classmates. You do not get to decline my invitation of deeper discussion, by using your fear of safety as your shield, after I have exposed my wounds at the hands of your

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weaponized White fragility.

"No, Period" classmate, you do not get to host a worship ceremony in commemoration of the violence against Asians without communicating and trying to be in relationship with the two Asian people seminary. We will not stand for your performative allyship that self serves through colonization.

"No, Period" pastor, you do not get to use your White, cisgender, heterosexual, authority and privilege to ask me invasive questions about my sexual journey so as to, as you said, "futher educate yourself."

"No, Period" professor, you do not get to hug me as a way to alleviate your White guilt, when I have stated my touch boundaries to you over and over and over.

"No, Period." Shouts out of the very essence of my soul at times. "No, Period." Rearranges the thoughts flowing in my head, reminding me that my boundaries are safekeeping. My boundaries invite those before me how to treat those who will come after me. "No, Period" tangles the arteries of my heart, calling me to slow down, to honor the emotions rising within me. "No, Period" strangles my body, pushing me to reframe the knowledge I use, so as to access the wisdom of my body. "No, Period," taught me what I was not willing to tolerate. It taught me how to use my voice and honor my truth. "No, Periods" gave me the courage to let my voice shake and my heart tremble. "No, Periods," gave birth to what transformative reconciliation may look like within a community that was willing to do the work to journey towards "Yes, Period."

In a space with too many, "No, Periods." "Yes, Period" found me in the form of community. Community amongst Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) from different Christian denominations. Community made up of disruptively enchanting soul-filled conversations. A space for me to hear of God's daily "Yes, Periods" amidst my litany of "No, Periods." "Yes period," as our mouths overflowed with laughter. "Yes, period" as our smiles could not help themselves as the person before me recalled precious moments in their lives. I saw "Yes, period" even, as people spoke about hardships in their lives. The obstacles and challenges that transpired in almost every heart-to-heart they encountered. Some of our conversations moved slowly through breaths and tears as they recounted the times they spent suffering, grieving, and wrestling with the Spirit. Even deeper still were the pauses when hearty difficult memories arose. I listened to whispers and apologies as their voices shook and their eyes welled up. The deep breaths and pauses shared between us brought me back in time with them as they re-lived their connection to these stories and emotions bubbled within them. The momentary lapses of quietness were filled with time and space, making it God's time and place. Sometimes they fumbled for words as we tried to make sense of their journey together. Our conversations sparked intimate connections of belonging between us. Learning more about their history gave me an immeasurable perspective of how God calls us and leads us in miraculous ways

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transforming our "No, periods" into "Yes, periods."

As I listened to them share their stories, share their sufferings, share God's call in their lives. I heard, "Yes, period." Over and over. Through powerful testimonies of "the love that overflows God's heart in the world." (Joel, p2) The Holy Spirit stir up the baptismal waters flowing between us. I bathed in the sacredness of these experiences. My "Yes, period" showing up in community, in grace, and in the Holy waters between us.

*In this challenging and uncertain time of pandemic and polarization, do you see the church being called to move more fully into God's "Yes, Period" and what particular gifts do you think LGBTQIA people bring to God's people?*

I see you, I hear you, I recognize you LGBTQIA+ BIPOC siblings. Your intersecting identities that criss-cross one identity over the other identity like the enmeshed colors of a rainbow brilliantly shining God's reflection through you. Your intersecting identities portray *Imago Dei*. Not solely because of our sexuality. Not solely because you are LGBTQIA+. Not solely because you are BIPOC. But because we live fully and authentically into our whole Being. You breathe life into the overflowing love that floods from Jesus's tomb. We flourish in our ability to live life boldly. To speak proudly. We are not only Saint & Sinner, we are everything in between. Our confident swagger swings open the door as we proclaim our identity. You role model to the church what it looks like to respond to God's call with full faith. To claim our gender expression. To claim our gender identity. To claim our sexuality with a full, "Yes, Period."

God lovingly shaped and formed you exactly as you are. Even as homophobia, colonization, and systemic racism lives and breathes within our churches. God called you and you responded. You bravely pushed past the human constructed barriers of fear and listened to the Spirit moving with you. Beloved BIPOC LGBTQIA+ siblings there has never been an easy time for us in the Church.

We scare them. Our ability to love ourselves enough to be our full selves scares people. It scares them to their core. Because it calls them to do the same. It forces them to see how the Spirit is calling them to be their whole selves. Gender fluidity. Sexual fluidity. God fluidity. Our lives exemplify what it means to love ourselves enough to be our whole selves. We will not let their barriers of law and policy hold us down. Do not allow their empty words of denigration constrict who we are. We will not allow their jealous judgements filled with hate limit the values in which we bring to this world. We are called by God. The Holy Spirit dances and sings within our body spilling out into the world. We are God's perfect Beings - perfectly imperfect as we are. The cisgender, heterosexual, ablebodied, neurotypical White male standard ways of life are an abomination to God's plan. There are NO standards in God's miraculous kin-dom. We are all made exactly as God planned. Our liberated life is a testimony to God's cosmic, "Yes, Period." You are the gift. We are the gift.

What is the prophetic word that LGBTQIA people can bring to the church today?

Dear Church,

We are descendants of a lineage of Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people that breathed grace into this land pre-colonial Christianity. We are descendants of Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people that held positions of power, were revered as wisdom keepers, and were affirmed by the community for their spiritual calls. In many Indigenous communities globally, LGBTQIA+ people were shamans and religious leaders. Our descendants are healers, prophets of the future, mediators between the visible and invisible worlds, religious leaders that brought reconciliation between communities that were at war. They were people who encompassed the multiplicity of genders and partnered with whomever they choose regardless of gender.

So we will speak our truths. Though our voice shakes. Though we may not always believe fully in ourselves. Though others around us may not want to hear what we have to share. We will bravely speak nonetheless. As those who came before us spoke. We will continue to burn brightly from the inside out and love this world as it has always loved us. For our theological voice is divinely inspired and blessedly relevant. Our perspective and insight on God is no less important, no less perfect than those around us who may not identify similar to us. Not as if we are perfect, but with the wisdom that we are perfectly on Kairo's time. "Yes, period" to the hope of faith that enflames within us though everything about us may be rejected in society, everything about us is lifted, loved, and rendered by God as Holy.

- Your Beloved BIPOC LGBTQIA+ Sibling,