

A Musing

Podcast Transcript

011 ▸ Xeno

Sameness is safe. Sameness is familiar. But it can also be limiting and myopic. What can we gain from "otherness"? Let's dig into that question.

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00:00:00.280 - 00:00:04.200

Welcome to the season one finale of A Musing.

00:00:04.200 - 00:00:04.780

I'm Diego.

00:00:15.982 - 00:00:18.522

Today's episode, Xeno.

00:00:30.126 - 00:00:37.806

I just experienced the most turbulent US presidential election, possibly since the country's birth.

00:00:37.806 - 00:00:46.806

I've seen my kids more aware and interested in what's happening politically than I've ever seen before in any generation, hands down.

00:00:46.806 - 00:01:01.166

My 8-year-old son and my 12-year-old daughter have asked questions such as, Daddy, why is it that most of the blue states are in the right and the left of the country, and most of the red ones are in the middle?

00:01:02.206 - 00:01:07.146

And don't worry, this is not an episode about politics, I promise.

00:01:10.606 - 00:01:21.026

But the way that I found myself answering their question made me think of one of the most important aspects of human existence, tribalism.

00:01:25.686 - 00:01:31.966

Whether we want to or not, humanity's evolution on this planet has been characterized by tribes.

00:01:33.246 - 00:01:36.666

For millennia, the tribes formed indigenously.

00:01:36.666 - 00:01:44.146

Survival instinct grouped us to become stronger as a small community than as individuals.

00:01:44.146 - 00:01:57.766

Social engineering, belief systems, ideologies, political convictions, races, so many factors have grouped us into tribes or have been used by those in power to group us into tribes.

00:02:00.286 - 00:02:08.086

After all, it's easier to control and manage a society in small groupings than it is as one mass.

00:02:18.233 - 00:02:24.893

What this dynamic drives us towards is the sad truth of echo chambers.

00:02:25.933 - 00:02:43.793

We hear the same message, see the same faces, receive the same explanations over and over and over again until in our minds, which seek order, consistency, and pattern, the echo becomes the truth with a capital T.

00:02:49.113 - 00:03:06.633

Even social media and internet communications, which you would imagine would be a window into the world outside of our own, is rigged via algorithms and data collection to keep us confined to the same palette of humor, news, and information that's already our norm.

00:03:13.655 - 00:03:16.395

Are you conservative or liberal?

00:03:16.395 - 00:03:17.975

Are you gay or straight?

00:03:17.975 - 00:03:18.875

Rich or poor?

00:03:18.875 - 00:03:21.135

A believer or non-believer?

00:03:21.135 - 00:03:25.715

Pick your boxes so we know what truth to present you.

00:03:25.715 - 00:03:29.375

There's no room for difference.

00:03:31.435 - 00:03:34.455

Other is alien.

00:03:34.455 - 00:03:36.475

Other is strange.

00:03:36.475 - 00:03:37.815

It's Zeno.

00:03:40.795 - 00:03:42.255

We don't like Zeno.

00:03:48.369 - 00:03:57.249

Zeno is a Greek prefix that more or less means foreign, alien, unknown.

00:03:59.389 - 00:04:09.729

And everything from politics to science fiction trains us to reject things that are Zeno as a threat to our normal.

00:04:12.409 - 00:04:19.209

The deeper you are inside of a landmass as large as the United States, the less diversity you'll find.

00:04:21.869 - 00:04:31.769

It's no coincidence that port cities tend to be the melting pots of racist ethnicities, beliefs, cuisines, customs, holidays, and overall diversity.

00:04:34.209 - 00:04:38.049

It's at the port where exchange happens.

00:04:44.193 - 00:04:50.513

Far more than just exchange of goods, but exchange of ideas and thoughts and customs.

00:04:54.653 - 00:05:01.833

It's very difficult to grow up in these areas and not have an embracing point of view on diversity.

00:05:04.353 - 00:05:14.373

But, not all of us live in port cities or cities that attract diverse crowds.

00:05:14.373 - 00:05:22.573

For many of us, beating the xenophobia has to be a matter of choice.

00:05:22.573 - 00:05:26.833

That night, I encouraged my kids to never stop seeking out the different.

00:05:31.813 - 00:05:44.333

Whether through friendships, through travel, reading, learning, and sure, even through delicious foreign food.

00:05:44.333 - 00:05:47.433

As human beings, we're part of a massive tribe.

00:05:57.293 - 00:06:03.753

we miss out on feeling ourselves as part of that worldwide tribe.

00:06:03.753 - 00:06:08.653

And that's a sad way to live.

00:06:08.653 - 00:06:12.593

I'd even venture to say that it's an incomplete way to live.

00:06:18.853 - 00:06:21.253

So try this when you can.

00:06:23.515 - 00:06:25.155

Take a trip.

00:06:25.155 - 00:06:29.635

If not a literal, physical trip, take one in your mind.

00:06:29.635 - 00:06:38.455

Break the convention of what you read, and sneak in a book that will transport you somewhere else in the world that you know nothing of.

00:06:38.455 - 00:06:43.475

Watch a documentary about a place or culture that's utterly foreign to you.

00:06:43.475 - 00:06:47.595

Delight your taste buds in a cuisine that you've never tasted before.

00:06:48.695 - 00:06:52.695

Make a new friend that comes from a background different from yours.

00:06:52.695 - 00:06:57.595

Listen to music from a different part of the world in a different language even.

00:06:57.595 - 00:07:01.075

Expose your five senses to the different.

00:07:01.075 - 00:07:08.815

Break the convention of seeing the same, hearing the same, feeling the same, tasting the same, smelling the same.

00:07:08.815 - 00:07:14.575

You have no idea what doors can open in your thinking, your tastes, your goals.

00:07:18.895 - 00:07:25.555

You belong to a beautiful, diverse, infinitely varied worldwide family.

00:07:28.335 - 00:07:34.755

Don't lose out on the privilege of feeling, truly feeling, a part of the human race.

00:07:38.235 - 00:07:39.955

They are not the others.

00:07:40.895 - 00:07:52.095

They are us, imperfect, complicated, fascinating, human, just like you.

00:08:00.840 - 00:08:02.400

Let me know how it goes.

00:08:02.400 - 00:08:04.840

You can write me at contactamusingatgmail.com.

00:08:10.180 - 00:08:15.400

Thank you so much to all of you who stuck around during this first season of A Musing.

00:08:16.620 - 00:08:18.940

A new season will come around, I promise.

00:08:18.940 - 00:08:25.000

And with new topics, also new ways of discussing those topics, so stay tuned for all of it.

00:08:27.440 - 00:08:31.740

In the meantime, please tell someone in your life about these episodes.

00:08:33.160 - 00:08:40.080

There's something in here for everybody to pause, contemplate, learn, and apply.

00:08:43.980 - 00:08:47.340

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00:08:48.800 - 00:08:58.120

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00:09:02.300 - 00:09:03.320

Catch you in the next season.