

Not that I always make excuses for not blogging as a way to start a blog entry (ok, fine, so maybe I do), but I haven't had much time or spoons for blogging this past month or so, because I've been so busy going to various community events. Over President's Day weekend our family went to DunDraCon (a gaming con with lots of roleplaying games that we've been going to pretty consistently since 2009), and then the week after that I went to Pantasia (a handpan gathering that I went to for the first time last year). Then a couple weeks after that I went out to Stinson Beach for a writing retreat and then to FOGcon (a writer's con that I've also been going to since its inception in 2010, with the exception of last year during my chemo treatments). Going to three different big events which correspond to three different identities for me (and which represent three different communities I belong to) has gotten me thinking about how being a member of multiple communities has been a constant refrain in my life. And since this is my solipsistic playground, it made me want to write a blog post about it. So here are some thoughts about being multi-communal (is that even a word? It is now.)

Without going into too much analysis of what makes a community (a group of people organized around similar interest and/or activity) or what counts as community involvement (going to events, participating together in activities, talking about said activities, getting to know people in some amount of depth even outside the shared activities), I'll say that I participate in and feel like a member of the following communities:

- SFF writers/readers
- Burners (and specifically my Pink Heart "PFamily")
- Handpan players
- Dickens Faire participants (and specifically Paddy West)
- Rodef Sholom congregants (and these days, specifically the Chevra Kadisha and the Board of Directors)
- Dixie District parents

(There are other events I regularly participate in; in addition to regular friends and family events and holidays, there are gaming cons, Maker Faire, Edwardian Ball—this one is kind of a mashup of the Faire and Burner communities for me—book group, etc. There are also groups I am loosely a member of: high school/college alumnae, Appleberry/Marinwood neighborhood, Marin School parents, etc, but these aren't quite at the level of community for me yet. I feel fondness for the people who participate in those activities or are members of those same groups, but I don't feel like they are "family" in the same way as I feel the others are. And yes, "family" is a whole other round of definition that I'm going to dodge here.)

Most of these communities have specific events (or at least regular activities) that I have made a part of my yearly cycle, which allow me to touch base with other like-minded folks in those communities and keep relationships going. More importantly, though, attending events (or regular activities) allows me to embody, encourage and fuel a particular identity facet for myself. Going to a writer's con makes me feel like a writer; going to Faire every weekend for 6 weeks makes me feel like an actor and more specifically a Paddy Wester and part of the Faire family; going to a handpan gathering makes me feel like a musician, and so on and so on. I really like being part of all these communities at the same time—I feel like I gain a richness and a more complex understanding of how people are (and who I am, embedded as I am) from having multiple points of view. Of course many of those points of view are overlapping and synergistic, especially the creative communities like Burning Man and Faire or writers and handpanners.

Interestingly enough, most of these communities are fairly new ones for me. The Dixie parent and writer communities probably go back the farthest (I've been a Dixie parent since 2006, and my 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of going to Viable Paradise is coming up this fall...and I started going to cons in 2008). I've been a member of Rodef for much of my life, but I think really I have only been particularly active since maybe 2011, which is when I think the Chevra Kadisha started). I've worked at Dickens Fair since 2013 (though I of course also have Faire friends still from the Ren Faire/St. Cuthbert days 20+ years ago), and been a Burner since 2011, which makes it almost 7 years now (and we've been Pink Heart Campers for the last 3). I'm just under two years in for the handpan community, though it's feeling like I'm definitely growing that. This particular period of multi-community involvement roughly corresponds to the period of identity work that has been ongoing since I left my Consumer Products Licensing career and started working for myself (first as a web solutions business owner and then as an independent creative).

With all those communities to be a part of, it would appear that I've traded depth for width (although I think that I've been able to go pretty deep in at least some of those communities). I never do spend all my time in one place, and the price of being active in so many places is that I can only give each community so much of my time and attention. But I seem to be juggling these 6 (plus my extended family/friends network) reasonably well. Plus, lately I have also realized that this "trading depth for width" tendency is part and parcel of the identity work that I've been thinking and talking about for years now (oh hi, midlife crisis). You know, that thing where the high-stakes struggle I was having to try to correctly identify the "one bright shining star" that I would spend my life following actually turns out to be quite easily and comfortably resolved by accepting that my identity (and "career", such as it is and has been) is not singular but rather made up of a whole constellation of sometimes related, sometimes disparate things. Clearly, that identity work process seems to be reflected in my interest in (and ability with) juggling these multiple, varied communities.

So here I am, reminding myself of this lesson, yet again: I, like all of us, contain multitudes (to paraphrase Whitman), and that is a good thing.