

A Journal, Alice Hoffman and the Promise of Redemption by Davida Goldberg

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MY PASSION FOR WRITING was sparked through beginning a daily journal. I have found my journaling to be both a blessing and a curse. I have always felt that I am at my best as a writer when writing journal entries. When I write I tend to focus on the workings of my inner world while paying scant attention to the outer world, which tends to work nicely for a journal or a blog. However, I am left with the question of how to translate the expression of my inner world from journal entry into something that I can present to a larger audience. At present I am attempting to compile the past few months of journaling into book form. As I transpose my handwritten pages from paper to laptop, I find myself doubting that anyone would be interested in reading about my inner struggles and thoughts. Why the need to publish a diary anyway? The journal is my safety zone and I am scared to wander too far from it. With the journal if I wrote a page a day for an entire year I would have a book written. It would have happened without my expending the energy or effort to create plot, character development or worry about how to come up with enough content to produce something of significant length.

I want to write. I need to write to connect to my soul. I have told myself many times that I should stop writing, as what are the chances that writing will take me anywhere productive in my life. However, it never works. I can never get myself to walk away. Sometimes I feel that I only really exist and become visible to myself and to the world when I write. When I don't write, I don't know who I am and I feel lost and cannot make sense of my life. Writing helps me to put the pieces of the puzzle together; it gives my life meaning and direction.

There is a common theme in my journal entries. That theme is a painful and consuming need to express myself. If I could start over again I would have gone to graduate school and studied film, journalism, or English. But I didn't know myself well enough then; I mistakenly believed that my path was to be a psychotherapist. After accumulating significant student loan debt and investing hours of class and internship time I realized that I chose wrongly. My nature is not that of a therapist. I have found it exhilarating and terrifying to realize that my true nature is that of a solitary person that craves creativity. I yearn to have the power and control to create worlds and paint pictures through words. When I have a pen in hand I feel as though I am holding a paintbrush. I become an artist painting a picture on the page through the beauty, elegance, simplicity or complexity of words. My journal has been my crutch, but ultimately it is not enough. I cannot truly paint the pictures that I want to paint through my journal. I know that the fulfillment of myself as an "artist" will only come about through writing fiction. The prospect of beginning and finishing a piece of fiction is quite daunting, as I worry that I will surely run out of steam mid-way through.

I recently wrote an article about author Alice Hoffman visiting the Margaret Mitchell Literary Center in Atlanta to

promote her latest book the *Red Garden*. Ms. Hoffman is one of my favorite authors, so it was quite a pleasure to do a write up about her, and to meet her in person at the book reading. I am not a person that seeks out autographs or that is overly impressed with celebrity. However, I could not pass up a chance to have Ms. Hoffman sign the inside cover of my journal. As she was signing my journal she asked me if I write fiction. I said that I write articles, however, I want to write fiction. At that point Ms. Hoffman looked up at me and said with all earnestness, "Then you will write fiction." In that moment, I felt as if Ms. Hoffman could see into my soul and that she glimpsed my full potential and my deepest desires. It felt as if with those five words she was making a proclamation about my future. I left the Margaret Mitchell Center that night feeling as if I had been given the go ahead to pursue my dream of being a novelist and that somehow everything would eventually work itself out.



DAVIDA GOLDBERG is an inspirational speaker, contributing writer for *The Jewish Woman* online magazine, and writer for *Ask Miss A* online magazine for women.

CONTACT: davidagoldberg69@gmail.com

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