

Un/Familiar Territory

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I am white. For me, familiar territory has consisted of assuming that everyone at the core of their experience, is no different than I am. If I took the time to think about it, I would have said that my whiteness was not any different than someone else's brownness or blackness. It's not that I didn't see color, it's just that I assumed we all came from the same family of ideals and experiences.

I thought we all lived in the same country.

And then I began to read, watch and listen. And I began to walk on unfamiliar pathways which turned my assumptions around and upside down. I saw what I had been missing, what truths I had separated myself from. I found that my experience of life, of being human and relating to others is so very different than a significant portion of the people in this country.

And I realized that while I had been brought up to believe one idea, my myopia was hurting everyone, including me.

There exists a profound physical, emotional and spiritual separation in this country, one based on skin color. My white skin puts me on one side of the line and connects me directly to the people who caused this separation. And, because I am connected with them. I must believe that I am causing this separation as well. This is an incredibly difficult concept, one that I hate, resist and desperately want to ignore.

I think I will struggle with it for the rest of my life.

Questions arise out of this self reflection. What happens to the psyche of a country that is built on the fact that one group's experience of life is separated from another group? How does ignorance, denial and privilege show up in the bodies and actions of a white person?

How does continued inequities, and racism show up in the body of a black or brown person?

And how do the ensuing interactions between the two show up in the space and energy of our collective lives?

Un/Familiar Territory is my exploration of these questions and truths.

It is a site-specific experiential installation built to recreate the historical and current separation that exists in this country. I am hoping that it will foster a dialogue about the different types of separations that exist and challenge people's familiar ideas about living in America.

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