

## CROSS OCEANS

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It wasn't polite to stare, my father said. Still my seven-year-old self couldn't help looking at the girl who sat in front of us on the bus, twisting little Mardi Gras necklaces into different shapes. I watched her build a snowflake, then twist the edge of it into a loop, making it into an ornament.

The bus made a stop, and her mother rose, signaling her to follow. But before she did, she turned, smiled at me, and handed me the snowflake ornament.

I still have it to this day.

I've always been what they call a lover girl. Someone who loves hard, who gives too much, who falls so hard I end up landing on my face. Growing up, giving my heart away so freely more often than not ended up with me in tears, and I soon began to close myself off, thinking that if I expressed how much I liked someone, whether platonically or romantically, it would be seen as foolish, naive, and "cringe." Being overly friendly, which had once gotten me all my friends, started to feel like a weakness, and in high school, I retreated into my shell, depressed.

A quote began circulating on social media during that time: "Don't cross oceans for people who wouldn't cross a puddle for you." But someone reposted it with the caption, "No, do it. Do cross oceans for people. Love people, all people. No conditions attached, no wondering whether or not they're worthy. Cross oceans, climb mountains. Life and love aren't about what you gain, it's about what you give."

Slowly, my shell began to crack.

I was 13, on a train to Portland during the rubber band bracelet craze. I had a pack full of colorful, ring-sized rubber bands, and was braiding them together when I saw a little girl in the row in front of me had turned in her seat, watching unabashedly as my fingers weaved.

Once, I had been her.

“What are your favorite colors?” I asked.

“Pink and purple,” she said, her eyes lighting up as I pulled the colors out of my bag.

It was my favorite bracelet I ever made, and the only one I still remember.

In *Unreasonable Hospitality*, Will Guidara explains that unreasonable acts of kindness of an employee in a restaurant or hotel can not only improve the wellbeing and happiness of the recipient, but actually leaves a mark on all those who witnessed the act of unreasonable kindness, increasing their mood and making them more likely to do a good deed for someone afterwards.

To be the type of leader that heals the world, not harms, we must be the first to have our hands outstretched to others. The ones to be unreasonably kind, even to those that hate us, even when it makes no sense to.

In the wake of tragedy, it is tempting to let fear overtake us. But to heal the world, we must be the first ones to reject this, to be unreasonably kind, unreasonably good, unreasonably hopeful.