

We must break the GEN

Door Lester Arias

'GENERATION' originates from *genós*, from the Greek 'gen' (race, origin, birth) and from the latin *generare* (engender, generate). And there's finally a suffix: '-cion' (action, cause and effect). We are dealing with a word that is more complex than what most people seem to acknowledge.



Easy to say: 'I'm a millennial', 'People from the 80's are like this, my generation is like this', 'Men are like that', 'Theatre technicians are always the same', 'Oh, my God, who's driving that car? Must be a women.' Casually, we find the same etymologic root for: *generalisation*.

And that's the zone that we are entering today, both as citizens, political bodies and theatre-makers. The world is demanding from us to stand on the tight rope, find balance, and experience duality, and acknowledge that a Generation is actually compelled by countless specificities. We are asked in one hand to acknowledge and respect profoundly our differences, in the other hand to dissolve them and become one. Difficult task.

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Generation shares the same etymologic root with: 'gender', 'gentrification', 'genotype', 'genocide' and of course 'Geneva'. (The last one was a joke, but I've been there a lot lately). We must break the GEN, we must absolutely break with a prefix that only validates people within very rigid structures: hierarchical, pyramidal, male dominant structures.

Stretching the structure

So, publicity time: I'm presenting this piece at Theater aan Zee called *HOUSE*. You're very welcome to come and watch. There is a point in the play where I try to make audience members have sex with each other in their minds. The question about generations comes really strong there. Whom should I put in intercourse with whom? An old lady with a young gifted man, a 45 and 20 years old women, two guys that are sitting besides their wives? All these combinations are possible, there is nothing wrong about them. But of course, depending on the context, I will be invited to normalise my ideas, my self, as in the street, and hook up a young girl with a young guy. I might do this to not break the

togetherness with the audience or I must commit to my ideals and bring a healthy discomfort, bring a necessary dislocation.

The same here, being perhaps the only brown, South American, gay, young theatre maker, non Flemish speaker (specific combination). I must also stand up on the tight rope... and balance, and respecting you all continue with my labour: which is to highlight the unbalance, to bring a healthy discomfort, bring a necessary dislocation.

How to make a theatre that can make people re-imagine what they are... inside?

A very old lady, here at TAZ, at the Belgian country side, said to me with sparks of love and enjoyment in her eyes: 'It was a pleasure to make love to you in the garden!' That moved me so deeply! I could feel the life in her nails while she grabbed my arms. How to make a theatre that can make people re-imagine what they are... inside? That could slightly, softly, show a possibility of the self that was never allowed to be imagined, or enjoyed, or accepted, or experienced?

Same, here, in this room: how can I - how can we - make something that could stretch (because perhaps is too soon to break) the structure. The structure of the GEN. We must then not be afraid and line up with our pretensions and re-imagine ourselves deep... deep inside, as a community.

Start being We

To which generation do I belong? My generation is being killed and murdered and violated. My friends, people put in jail and abused just for defending their right for democracy. I don't belong here. I'm not part of your generation. Or could I, or do I?

Definitely, it's a work that shouldn't only depend on how strong I am to resist, to make outstanding work, enough money to be able to stay in the EU and pay my visa, or speaking your language, or integrating and domesticating my being to your cultural standards. It is a mutual work, it's our work: Generate, Generosity, Genuine, Gentleness, Genitalia.

We must stop being afraid of our positions, our statuses

In the same way it is our work (and I dare to be their voice right now) that all Belgium, Dutch and European young makers have fair and generous opportunities. That we feel not used by the system, and feel supported and not alone. That someone truly cares and profoundly helps to vanish this fear and this anxiety. So that we can feel hope for this world, that is already tough enough. But for this we must stop being afraid of our positions, our statuses, of the image we have constructed of ourselves, of our skin colour, our race. And start relocating our coordinates, and start being: We.

Permit ourselves to Dream

I'm not gonna judge my words, I'm not gonna question too much 'who is we?'. To question too deep keeps us sitting in our desks, overthinking our words, delaying us from action. It keeps us talking to the ones we know, with the words that are permitted. We must today stand up and make mistakes, fuck it all the way up and generate polemics that hopefully will lead to dialogues, that hopefully will calm the waters.

We must today stand up and make mistakes, fuck it all the way up

Let us show each other that vulnerable side and speak a new language of companion, care and love. We must move, and do, and touch and get touched and change each other forever, every single second. The world needs that, is asking for it urgently.

And we have to permit ourselves to Dream, and - even more importantly - to talk, speak out those peculiar, individual dreams and not be embarrassed and not be judged for being dreamers. Dreaming is not a naive thing at all. To talk about how can we make those dreams possible together. To believe that Dreams are possible, to brake the GEN.