



A day after the verdict was announced, as the fatigue of my second shot of the Pfizer vaccine wore off I drove past George Floyd Square, and I took a deep breath.

What felt like the first deep breath I had in months; the air filled my lungs with layered weight and emotions of trauma, grief, connection, power, creation and resiliency. Reflecting on our shared experiences was still so surreal.

As a Chinese American photographer and filmmaker living in South Minneapolis, during the pandemic that would escalate anti-Asian racism, and the murder of George Floyd that led to a global uprising, it would make sense that I would have found my role in the movement by documenting what was happening on the streets.

But if I learned anything from the past year it is that plans change and we have to be able to adapt.



Being the only son of a Chinese mother who lost a daughter and a husband, and in the middle of the pandemic, found herself fighting cancer, my priority became caring for her.

This meant that amidst constantly being pulled to show up to protest, support mutual aid, create healing spaces, and find a way to continue to work while being the sole caretaker of my mother, every decision required a calculation of the risk I was willing to take in getting her sick. We were in the middle of a revolution, but every time I left my home I was taking a chance. Every time I didn't act, I was not doing my part to create change.

I found myself constantly evaluating my priorities, my contribution to society, and my identity.



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After what was for many, the most stressful year of our lives, my mother finished chemo, got vaccinated and is in good health. I went through the entire year without documenting a single protest, and pivoted to keeping a relatively COVID safe behind the scenes routine while supporting other artists and organizers. Despite always feeling like I wasn't doing enough, I am proud of the work I did while making sure my mother was taken care of.

I helped organize Hothouse Film Festival, hosting an outdoor screening and producing 5 films by BIPOC poets and filmmakers, I supported the BIPOC artist collective Creatives After Curfew in painting murals across Minneapolis, I helped launch The Creating Change Gallery at Graves Foundation, an intergenerational mentor program pairing a youth artist with a community artist in creating a solo exhibition, I made a zine with Leslie Barlow, sharing photos, paintings, and stories of community members experiences of the isolation of the pandemic, I received a Minnesota State Arts Board grant to produce a livestream series and reallocated \$6000 to queer and trans BIPOC performance artists to share work online when theaters and venues were shuttered, I started teaching at Minneapolis Alternative High Schools supporting youth in telling their stories through photo and film, and I joined the team at Public Functionary to help build more studio, gallery and performance space for BIPOC artists on the Northrup King Campus in the NE Minneapolis Arts District. As we emerge from the pandemic I look forward to connecting with artists to create these spaces that help us continue to heal, create, and grow together.

As I struggled to find my role in the movement I often told people I was just trying to take care of my people and do something effective every day. Moving into the future I'm going to continue to follow these values, and keep fighting for something better one day at a time.

