

**And I Shall Ride on a Butterfly Wing**  
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I traced the crayon along the edges: blue, green, yellow or “periwinkle,” “cyan” and “canary,” the edges of that butterfly wing. I was proud of my handiwork, neat and each color distinct, starkly delineated by my unerring crayon. I was Master Color-Artist, follower of the one rule of coloring — stay inside the lines.

It is perhaps more than a rule of the coloring book. Staying inside the lines is an instinctive tendency that spans all human endeavors. It is in part due to our need for boundaries, our insatiable need to classify and identify and pin down the unexplainable to several keynote absolutes. Life has an abundance that frightens, and so we strive for simplicity by designating the truths: Work, Money, Food and TV. Maybe Family Values, Insurance and Neighbors.

Man has sought to conquer diversity, to simplify and civilize his existence. Diversity is the savagery of the jungle, the essence of a rioting, untamed life. Diversity is a truth that tells us that nothing is simple, nothing is absolute, and makes us question everything that we hold to be simple, absolute truths. And to question truths is fundamental to our growth as human beings. Diversity ensures that one race, religion, ethic, social system is not above the rest, and every idea will be challenged by another.

To ward off the uncertainties of human diversity, we built fences, houses, society and made conformity our guiding principle. But our cities expanded, and worlds once separated by fragile seas were thrown back into the ages, into a jungle of threatening differences. So we invented another, intangible boundary, one that stood longer than the mortar and brick of our ancestors’ fences. We invented race.

We needed to recognize, identify and understand our worlds so much that we feared the unknown. From this fear we developed my childhood coloring rule, to stay within the lines. Lines are the absolutes that define our lives in understandable monochromatic chunks. Lines are dual warnings with a message to those outside to Keep Out and those within to Keep In. From this first fear blooms the rank canker blossom of other fears, and we hesitate to try, explore, discover. Soon the fetid miasma stifles Life because it stifles its possibilities, its diversity.

And it grows and grows — this choking fear. So much so that we stand back and watch the criminals. While Hitler victimized 6 million Jews, millions of Germans watched. While the black child bore another day of ugly, gut-wrenching slurs to his mother, we watched. And it is an ugly fact that sometimes, somewhere, we have also participated in the crime.

And the lines entangle us — the sinuous, twisting vines of a darker jungle, whose savagery is unnatural as much as it is cruel.

The time has come that we savor life at its nascent purity, to greet the mysterious, wonderful unknowns that unfold every day with innocent eyes, open hearts. We must all, at least once, try the suspicious thingamajiggers at the sushi bar, roll salty velvet caviar beads on our tongue and get slightly tipsy on champagne. We should wrap ourselves in yards of iridescent sari silks or feel the scalloped edges of a lace mantilla on our foreheads. We shall dance one day by the sun-bleached columns of the Parthenon or beat the tanned leather of a bongo drum. If we cannot travel, then we shall take flight with our own wings of curiosity and find the richness that was only a smile away.

Years have passed, and I look at my coloring books — and I damn the lines that taught me too early what a butterfly wing must look like. This is then my one plea to the coloring book makers of the world: Give children beautiful blank sheets — and set them free. Let

them discover before it's too late the pleasure I finally found when I learned to mix "periwinkle" and "canary" to chance upon a yet undiscovered green, to fill the white space with polka dots and wavy lines, to defy the lines with undisciplined color.

And every day we add a new version to the butterfly wings of the world.

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