

Some of you may not like Commandante Che Guevara.

He's a communist you might say, perhaps even a dictator's sidekick or just an iconic guerilla face you see screen-printed on T-shirts and posters.

I don't see him that way.

Che was a doctor, a photographer, an orator, a leader. To some he was an inspirational hero. To some he provided hope for a better future. To me, his words have provided guidance in ways I believe I should carry out my own life work.

How?

Through his fervor, his will, his passion, and through his belief that man could be something greater than what he was believing himself to be.

**A CHILD**

# OF MY ENVIRONMENT

by Mari Nakano

# ON REVOLUTION

**A Child of My Environment**

by Mari Nakano

a response to

**On Revolutionary Medicine**

selected excerpts

by Ernesto Che Guevara

translated by Beth Kurti

spoken August 19, 1960 to the Cuban Militia

**ON**

**REVOLUTIONARY**

**MEDICINE**

**I AM NOT**

**I AM NOT**

**I AM NOT**

I am not a leftist radical.  
I am not a justice-for-all do-gooder.  
I am not striving to be a philanthropist.

# I AM SIMPLY A CHILD OF MY ENVIRONMENT.

It's been there all my life, this need to exist in a way where my life only feels purposeful when I do things for others. It's not about being in servitude or having no mind of my own. I completely condone independence and self-assertion, but to me, my life has little meaning if I can't help those around me. Actually, the word "help" isn't the right word. Rather, it's that I want to seek ways to better co-exist and co-create with other humans.

Like everyone, I wanted to succeed. I dreamed of becoming a famous medical research scientist; I dreamed of working indefatigably to discover something which would be used to help humanity, but which signified a personal triumph for me.

**I WAS,  
AS WE ALL ARE,  
A CHILD OF  
MY ENVIRONMENT.**

**Utilizing our professions for the sake of the social collective never struck me as out of the ordinary. It was nothing profound. That's all I've ever wanted to do.**

Maybe I was influenced by the religious schools I attended, always being told subconsciously that selfishness equated to placing oneself in closer proximity to hell. Hahaha. Maybe it was my upbringing in a family whose cultural values emphasized reciprocity. I'd like to think I was just born to feel this way – that the minute the soldier collided with the egg, so did my vocation – but I know that I owe this conviction of mine to my family, to friendships, to timely life encounters and to many star-aligned serendipitous moments.

We must review again each of our lives, what we did and thought as doctors, or in any function of public health before the revolution. We must do this with profound critical zeal and arrive finally at the conclusion that almost everything we thought and felt in that past period ought to be deposited in an archive, and a new type of human being created. If each one of us expends his maximum effort towards the perfection of that new human type, it will be much easier for the people to create him and let him be the example of the new Cuba.

The principle upon which the fight against disease should be based is the creation of a robust body; but not the creation of a robust body by the artistic work of a doctor upon a weak organism; rather, the creation of a robust body with the work of the whole collectivity, upon the entire social collectivity.

**UTILIZING OUR PROFESSIONS FOR THE SAKE OF THE SOCIAL COLLECTIVE**

**That's all I've ever wanted to do. That's all I've ever wanted to do.**

**THAT'S ALL**

**I'VE EVER WANTED TO DO**



**I am no radical**

The revolution.

**but it doesn't hurt**

My revolution.

**to look at one's life**

The revolution.

**in a revolutionary manner.**

My revolution.

The revolution. My revolution. It is my goal to strive to work with others to improve social conditions in a way in which people can empower themselves in order to attain a sense of freedom from the elements that have oppressed them either physically or mentally. Again, I am no radical but it doesn't hurt to look at one's career in a revolutionary manner. My revolution is about learning to utilize my skills in a way that is more purposeful and expandable beyond boundaries of ordinary design and art. My revolution is also about encouraging others to utilize their skills in the same manner. So, as a designer, it's not about making translucent mouth-watering eye candy. It's about making positive change in one person or a collective environment in a way that can trigger a subconscious or perhaps even bold chain of events that lead to something greater, something more magnificent and meaningful for all of us.

Some day, therefore, medicine will have to convert itself into a science that serves to prevent disease and orients the public toward carrying out its medical duties. Medicine should only intervene in cases of extreme urgency, to perform surgery or something else which lies outside the skills of the people of the new society we are creating.

But for this task of organization, as for all the revolutionary tasks, fundamentally it is the individual who is needed. The revolution does not, as some claim, standardize the collective will and the collective initiative. On the contrary,

# IT LIBERATES MAN'S TALENT.

What the revolution does is orient that talent. And our task now is to orient the creative abilities of all medical professionals toward the tasks of social medicine.

**He pushed the idea of thinking beyond our typical professional roles so we could think about what other creative ways we could service the social collective.**

Che Guevara didn't see a medical professional as just a master of his trade. Rather, he viewed doctors as professionals who could utilize their abilities in a way that would permeate into areas beyond the confines of a hospital, and that would permeate into the social culture of the people. He pushed the idea of thinking beyond our typical professional roles so we could think about what other creative ways we could service the social collective. That's how I am learning how to think about my role as a media designer. I want to be hypercreative with what I know, and I want to contribute myself to places and spaces that before never thought would gain value from the likes of me—the artsy-fartsy designer who surprisingly has something intelligent and relevant to say about the current and developing situations of the world.

**THE DOCTOR,**

And one way of getting to the heart of the medical question is not

**THE MEDICAL WORKER,**

only to visit and become acquainted with the people who make

**MUST GO TO THE CORE**

up these cooperatives and work centres, but to find out what

**OF HIS NEW WORK,**

diseases they have, what their sufferings are, what have been their

**WHICH IS THE MAN**

chronic miseries for years, and what has been the inheritance of

**WITHIN THE MASS,**

centuries of repression and total submission.

**THE MAN WITHIN**

**THE COLLECTIVITY.**



We shall see that diseases need not always be treated as they are in big-city hospitals. We shall see that the doctor has to be a farmer also and plant new foods and sow, by example, the desire to consume new foods, to diversify the Cuban nutritional structure, which is so limited, so poor, in one of the richest countries in the world, agriculturally and potentially. We shall see, then, how we shall have to be, in these circumstances, a bit pedagogical – at times very pedagogical.

It will be necessary to be politicians, too, and the first thing we will have to do is not to go to the people to offer them our wisdom. We must go, rather, to demonstrate that we are going to learn with the people, that together we are going to carry out that great and beautiful common experiment: the construction of a new Cuba.



# THE REVOLUTION

We shall see, then, how we shall have to be, in these circumstances, a bit pedagogical – at times very pedagogical.

# MY REVOLUTION

We

shall have to be, in these  
at times very pedagogical.

# I'M LEARNING HOW TO STRETCH MY BRAIN IN A WAY THAT WILL HOPEFULLY ALLOW ME TO THINK AMOEBCALLY ABOUT MY PURPOSE AS A MEDIA DESIGNER.

I want to be precise, craftswomanly and well-knowledged about what I do, but I want to also be flexible enough to move around and collaborate with others. And that doesn't necessarily mean I want to collaborate with other professionals, but perhaps just with other normal people.

My interests lie within the communities, within neighborhoods, within schools, within homes, within gardens, within the average places we frequent. That's where I believe I can learn and that's where I believe I can be purposeful. I belong there, not in a skyhigh office or über cool open plan modern studio.

If we medical workers – and permit me to use once again a title which I had forgotten some time ago – are successful, if we use this new weapon of solidarity, if we know the goals, know the enemy, and know the direction we have to take, then all that is left for us to know is the part of the way to be covered each day.

And that part no one can show us; that part is the private journey of each individual. It is what he will do every day, what he will gather from his individual experience, and what he will give of himself in the exercise of his profession, dedicated to the well-being of the people.



It is what **she** will do everyday, what **she** will gather from **her** individual experience, and what **she** will give of **herself** in the exercise of **her life work**, dedicated to the well-being of the people.

I BELONG WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT THAT HELPED SHAPE MY LIFE GOALS AND THAT HELPED DEVELOP MY LIFE WORK. THIS IS WHERE I PLAN TO GO.

It is what she will do everyday, what she will gather from

THIS WHERE I PLAN TO STICK AROUND.

her individual experience, and what she will give of

herself in the exercise of her life work, dedicated to

I AM A CHILD OF

the well-being of the people.

MY ENVIRONMENT.

