

For those of you who know me well, you probably understand how difficult it was for me to narrow down my beliefs into one hopefully poignant, pointed statement. But after much contemplation I finally decided my beliefs essentially boil down to one thing: the power of words.

Words receive the opportunity to vibrate our vocal cords and grace the ears of others thousands of times every day, to the point where most words become nothing more than mundane and even vapid—which is really a tragedy when you consider the fact that the OED astoundingly contains well over 200,000 words.

Being an avid reader and writer for the majority of my life has developed within me a love of words. I've always loved vocabulary and being the particularly nerdy person that I am, I even have favorite words that I love to say like "ecclesiastical," and "serendipitous." But in all my twenty years, it had never occurred to me that my words may actually be influential—that a single, insignificant young woman, out of seven billion people, on a single planet amidst billions of stars in billions of galaxies can still have an impact.

"Actions speak louder than words." I don't believe that. I've always thought that was such a stupid cliché. Actions are codependent on words. Consider the Civil Rights Movement. Do you really think that people silently marching and fighting, no signs in hand would have made as much of a difference? People formerly uninvolved with the movement were mobilized by the words of Dr. King. "I Have a Dream" and many of Dr. King's other speeches were only accessible to some via radio. There isn't action involved with radio. Words and Dr. King's familiar inflection, not visible actions, inspired those otherwise isolated from the movement.

Unfortunately, words also hurt. Think of all the times you cried as a child because somebody told you that you were a geek or short or fat or ugly. Remember the stories of the young and old who have committed suicide because words such as "faggot," or "dyke" acted as catalysts. Words perpetuate stereotypes, racism, sexism, classism. The effects of words are dependent upon those who use them.

Now, imagine the experience of choral music without words, life without poetry, literature, even art. Words compel us by being arranged in such a way as to urge tears, anger, and utter happiness. I find that amazing. With this, I implore you and I wish for you to understand that regardless of the fact that you are a singular person swimming in a world of over 7 billion people, you still have an impact simply by speaking, writing, singing and creating art. I believe that words are powerful.