

Doorknocking
for Stuart Matis

They were going door to door on Dolores today. Doorknocking today, on Dolores. My street. Looking shinier and more forthright, or would that be righteous, than anything has the right to look in the mission. Never seen on them on my street before. 22 Fillmore. 16th and Mission, maybe. Tenderloin. Downtown. But do we need to be saved on Dolores?

And the interesting thing is that I have a tremendous amount of empathy for them. Doorknocking is one of the hardest things in the whole world. I did it for 12 hours a day, six days a week, up 14 flights of stairs in 8 buildings in the Crown Heights projects, through New York summer and New York winter. I know how tough it is, doorknocking. And believing. Believing is hard. I mean, not believing is hard, but believing is even harder. When you really think you know the answer. Something good. Important. And that it's your job to tell everyone else. And it's your job to get them to change. No, it's your job to save them. A lot of work. Believing. Being right.

Being Mormon. Some of my best friends are Mormon. Really. Always have been, since growing up in a town with a large contingent. Kind and community-oriented and giving. But my Mormon friend Janey, the one who's been in a three-year crisis and depression because she fell in love and had a relationship with a woman, Janey, who could be kicked out of the church, disowned by the only community she's ever known, Janey sent me the email about the tormented 33-year-old Mormon guy who shot himself in front of his church. In California. Because of a lot of things, including Prop 22. Because he literally couldn't exist in the world as he knew it. And this guy's parents knew he was gay and still loved him. And he still killed himself. Because he believed. What he'd been taught. That he couldn't be Mormon and gay.

I don't believe anymore. I don't doorknock anymore. And maybe violence isn't just explosive moments that we can't take back. Maybe violence roils in our hearts and minds, unformed, and churns like potential in our hands and mouths. And maybe violence isn't black and shiny and hard or sharp. Maybe violence is the fleshy repetition of thoughtlessness, the reiteration of ritual, the written word, and the wisdom of the ages, unquestioned. Knocking. Unheeded. Desire unanswered.