Dear OUTWORDS friends,

We wish you comfort, safety, sustenance and peace during this very challenging time.

Here at OUTWORDS, we have been struck in recent weeks with the importance of the mission that has been entrusted to us. LGBTQ+ elders, the pioneers of our extraordinary civil rights movement, are among those most acutely threatened by the coronavirus crisis. We want to take this opportunity to send them a special greeting of honor, love, and gratitude.

One day, the history of the COVID-19 pandemic will be written. At present, we are simply living through it. Thankfully, we have abundant media resources that are allowing us to document the crisis even as it is unfolding. With devices as simple as cell phones, we can record first-hand stories of what we and other individuals are experiencing, in real time.

It hasn’t always been so. As a result, a great deal of history has been lost and rewritten.

Imagine if someone had been able to record on-camera interviews with indigenous Americans, even as they were being driven off their lands? Or with enslaved Africans arriving on our shores for the first time? With early immigrants as they arrived at Ellis Island, or with the women at the forefront of the
Suffragette movement? How much better would we understand these critically important chapters in our national story?

The best model that we know of, for the work that OUTWORDS is doing, is the Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archives containing some 52,000 interviews with witnesses and survivors of the Holocaust. We believe that projects like the Shoah Foundation and OUTWORDS create a firewall against attempts to erase, deny, or rewrite history. For proof of lived events, there is nothing as powerful as face-to-face testimonies.

Visual History Archive

An invaluable resource for humanity, with nearly every testimony encompassing a complete personal history of life before, during and after the subject's firsthand experience with genocide.

We are sobered, humbled, and grateful for the mission we have been given. We offer it up at this time for the benefit of our community, and of all who are experiencing trauma and loss due to COVID-19 pandemic. Please take a few minutes to watch this short video from our interview with indigenous people’s advocate Sharon Day of Minneapolis. We hope you will find it both comforting and inspiring. As Sharon says elsewhere in her interview, “Love is the healing grace.”
How can you help OUTWORDS to fulfill our mission? You can grow our community by telling your friends and families about us. Follow us on Instagram and Facebook, or suggest someone for us to interview. (Unsung heroes in remote locations are particularly welcome!) Send us a note about the value you see in our work — or just tell us how you’re doing. Hearing from you sustains us in wonderful and lasting ways.

Above all, please keep yourselves safe. And remember: Love is the healing grace.

With all best regards,

Mason Funk
Executive Director, OUTWORDS