

A Coffee Shop Open on Sundays

During July in the Salt Lake Valley, girdled by the backsides of the Rocky Mountains, the fireworks last for weeks. Pioneer Day brings out a sort of ultra-nationalistic pride in Utahans, and gunpowder dashes red, white, and blue across a seven-thousand-year-old sky. The city rests along the Wasatch fault line, said to be formed by a faultless God, and the doorsteps are worn by the soles of dress shoes and the souls of men forcibly saved. We—those who defiantly insist without end that we don't belong here—have our jokes about this place. There are three types of people in Utah, we assert: treatment kids, Mormons, and ex-Mormons who have been estranged from their families and seek amnesty in the underground freedom of the Sugarhouse district.

Nestled within these seven or so square blocks of Salt Lake City lives a vibrant community of punk musicians, gay clubbers, hemp-milk drinkers, and spray-paint artists. Zines line the bookstore shelves, perused by millennials with minimalistic tattoos and crystal altars in their shared apartments. The coffee shop is open on Sundays. When I am not here (and sitting, cross-legged, on the succulent-adorned patio), I am talking about being here. I paint portraits of myself with iced almond-milk lattes in hand.

In one corner sits an old and long-loved piano; in another, a message board advertising farmer's markets and poetry slams. In another still, a small shelf which holds exactly three books: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, a dense examination of gender roles and their decided uselessness; *House of Light* by Mary Oliver; and *Catcher in the Rye*. Even the gender-neutral bathroom is warm, lined with posters quoting Whitman and Frida Kahlo. The whole place smells of honey, bergamot, and cloves, all this mingling amid heated political discussions in the open air. Wild gesticulations fly beneath Edison-style lights strung through re-sourced mason jars. More than five hundred miles from home, I forge a space for myself here—just on the weekends, when I can get away. Sugar House coffee, boasting house-made chia-seed pudding alongside fair-trade chocolate bars, is a place of halcyon.

Outside these flier-covered doors, the city rages on. Mormons who refuse to drink caffeine become victims to the opioid crisis. Parents are disinvited from their children's weddings because they, not yet reached by the newest generation of Mormon missionaries, cannot enter the church. There is not a single store in Utah County which does not abide by the LDS-influenced rule of prohibiting the sale of alcohol on Sundays. Meanwhile, many basements of Sugarhouse are filled with anarchists tripping on LSD.

Sugar House Coffee lies somewhere between the two norms. Its culture inspires visions of a slightly more self-aware *Portlandia* without ever reaching the world of *Almost Famous*—indie-punk music drifts ambiently over conversations of literature and paint swatches. The people in this room know that this is our place, among the wannabe hipsters and podcast producers. We are proud of the fact that security would never allow us to enter the church within Temple Square, so we talk of septum piercings and Sappho's poetry like a doctrine of our own. When we exit, the door swinging behind us, we choose to conform to this nonconformist coffeeshop culture rather than conform to the city outside of it.

The sun sinks earlier behind the mountains here in the same way morning comes late. The ring of mountains around us puts the world to sleep early, so we learn to like the dusk. Eventually, the night becomes a place of comfort. We seek shelter here, far from our doorbells and the doctrines which wait behind them.

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