

shadowlands

Bookstore & Cafe

a brief history

The concept for Shadowlands was born on a lazy summer weekend in Brooklyn. I remember sitting on a hill in Fort Greene Park, having finally taken a moment to study the statue I'd passed so many times before. In the shadow of a monument paying homage to the lives of thousands of prisoners of war who died under the hands of their foreign oppressors during the American Revolution, lying on a patch of green once traversed by Walt Whitman, I felt inspired to dream bigger and do more.

I began planning more seriously the idea for an active learning, community engagement space. It would feature a small stage area for live events and walls adorned with materials that draw the eye and provoke the mind. Shadowlands would coax the outcast, nerd, misfit, rebel and reject in each of us to come out and be seen. We'd relax under the influence of conversation and rhythms that jostle us from our isolation in flashes of recognition for the shared nature of all human experience. In the evenings, it would be a place to workshop new ideas, test out raw routines, and stage readings from manuscripts under development. Exposure to the creative process would build greater appreciation for how vulnerable and exposed artists become when sharing intimate parts of themselves, whether in song, gesture, or strokes on a page.

Bruce Hornsby's "Shadowlands" from Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* was the initial reference point for the name:

Darkness is definitely falling, moving so slow I'm barely crawling.
Here I sit dirt on my hands, lying way out in the Shadowland.
Made my bed and here I lie, trying to hold my head up high,
Lying to myself sometimes, bad decisions but I won't cry.
Been down a long and twisted road, sensing myself at a record low,
Do anything just to get ahead, now it's all quiet here in this
Shadowland.

So I crafted a business plan and named a few close friends as partners. The idea went nowhere. Life intervened as I relocated to the Bay area on a whim, chasing a sliver of hope in the future of an unlikely love affair. As expected, it didn't work out. But once the dust had settled, I found myself renewed and energized, one step closer to fruition of an impossible dream I dared to believe was within reach, even for me. Parenthood.

Birthing this dream incubated two decades ago and three thousand miles away feels like a new lease on life. Somewhat aged, more mature, but at the foundation the same naïve, youthful conception: a community gathering space with no barriers to entry. No face control. No size or age restrictions. No racial or gender preferences, implied or otherwise. No prerequisite of political affiliation. No advance requirements of any kind.

Just come as you are.



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