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#loveinthetimeofcovid kit

Artist's Statement

Our inspiration

It is times like these in which we need to draw upon black feminist theories of relationality and lean into practices of unconventional-but-should-be-conventional loving. We must do everything in our ability to refuse the capitalist logic of “love-as-a-limited resource” especially when most responses to this pandemic are to hoard, compete, and isolate (Ríos-Rojas). Our group decided to focus on alternative methods of coping and preventing this virus that not only infects the body but the mind. We must pour our hearts out in order to refill the spiritual, physical, and political vacuum that will be left in the wake of this virus. We wanted to do justice to the lessons of the readings, by trying to apply their abstraction to the lived reality we are feeling. This is our ode to love as medicine, love as a political praxis, and love as the only thing that makes sense right now.

1.Practice Feminist Relationaliy

In practice

- While we need to practice ‘social distancing’ in this time, this does not mean that we are no longer loving, communal beings. Check in on your isolated and homebound friends. We all get lonely, especially those of us who are often ill or unable to access public spaces or events- send a text, letter, call, etc. when you are able to.
- Get to know neighbors and community members through online platforms, and check in with this community about your neighbors’ well being and needs. If there are certain members in this community who need more help than others, work together to find a way to get them what they need.
- Decorate the windows and exterior of your home, so that the boundaries that keep us apart will instead act as message boards, pieces of art, and love letters to each other.
 - Dance and sing from your front yards and share meals over your fences

Theorizing

As June Jordan says, “if I am a Black feminist serious in the undertaking of self-love, then it seems to me that the legitimate, the morally defensible character of that self-love should be such that I gain and gain and gain in the socio-psychic strength needed so that I may, without fear, be able and willing to love and respect women, for example who are not like me: women who are not feminists, women who are not professionals, women who are not as old as young as I am, women who have neither job nor income, women who are not black.” The relationality needed during this time should not be contingent on identities, occupations, or any other categorization. We must choose to do things because we love those unlike us, those whose struggles during this crisis we cannot relate to. The fear felt by COVID-19 is a universal human experience, and thus our love should be “rooted in a committed willingness to struggle persistently with an emancipatory purpose and to intimately

connect that purpose with what [Freire] called our ‘true vocation’ to be human” (Darder). Our relationality must be built upon a shared sense of feeling, of experiencing, and of struggling to live thoroughly despite it all. When we practice relationality not based on superficial things, our community cannot and will not deteriorate in these times of isolation.

2. Be Generous and Seek Nothing in Return

In practice

- We collectively have all that we need. Do not buy items that sick/disabled folks need to survive when they are in short supply. It makes sense that you’re feeling anxious but many of the items you might feel you need (ex face mask, hand sanitizer) you either don’t need in bulk or don’t need at all. For others, being able to have access to those things may literally save their life. Be generous with your time and offer to provide food or materials for those who may be in self-quarantine.
- Support small businesses, especially Asian-owned businesses that are facing overt xenophobia. Fear of the virus is keeping people away from restaurants, who usually operate on small margins. So here is something you can do: go to your favorite restaurant and buy a gift certificate (or get online if possible). Buy it directly from the restaurant, so they get use of your money for a month or two. Then when things have settled down, treat a loved one to a dinner.

Theorizing

This element of our love kit was inspired by King’s notion of agape love as he describes it as “unmotivated, it is spontaneous, it is overflowing, it seeks nothing in return. It is not motivated by some quality in the object” (King 444). In times like these, we often fall into a narrative of humanitarian love, as King explains it: “It’s so easy to love an abstraction called humanity and not love individual human beings” (King 442). The discourse around COVID-19, that calls for you to do things “for the good of society as a whole,” makes this issue more abstract in people’s minds. What we really need is intimate giving and loving, on a personalized level that assigns this abstract duty to a face, that of your neighbor or lover or sister.

3. Mourn and Grieve With Those Affected

In practice

- Moments of silence
- Put emphasis on saying the names of your loved ones during this time, as so many that have passed will go unnamed and will have their lives reduced to numbers.
 - Memorialize them by planting new life in your quarantined backyard.
- Create, create, create for their life, not their death, has lessons meant to be immortalized in art.

Theorizing

In order to repair the world, we all must grieve to the fullest extent even though it may be the more “difficult path” (Anzaldúa 121). As Gloria Anzaldúa exemplifies, the only way to find truth and steps toward progress in difficult times is by experiencing heartbreak to its fullest extent. In doing so,

we are led to “awakenings, insights, realizations, and courage, and the motivation to engage in concrete ways that have the potential to bring us into compassionate interactions” (Anzaldúa 121). We can make a true change out of a devastating situation by mourning those who we have lost and cherishing those who are still alive. We need to reframe the narrative that grief is inherently a debilitating state, and rather argue that the unique and creative responses that could only come from a tragedy like this will move us to act.

4. Surrender to the Joy of Living

In Practice

- You have unprecedented amounts of time with family, and time not tinged by guilt, so ask questions you never thought to ask, make family trees, and relearn the skill of storytelling.
- Redecorate your spaces; appreciate what has always been there by gifting it attention.
- Explore music, poetry, or a subject you’ve never given yourself time to learn.
- Take time to reflect and memorialize the past months of your life that have flown by, with scrapbooking and journaling.

Theorizing

In a time that feels like it’s life or death, we must choose life. We must “surrender to the joy of living,” because by living in this way, we garner collective power and strength (Freire 212). Within the context of a learning space, Freire tells, “we forge a school-adventure, a school that marches on, that is not afraid of the risks, and that rejects immobility. It is a school that thinks, that participates, that creates, that speaks, that loves, that guesses, that passionately embraces and says yes to life.” Likewise, we as a global community must embrace life with the same level of passion. To choose joy, we must know and understand the fear, but not be so hindered by it that we forget to laugh, play, and experience every emotion. We must continue to adapt in order to choose life in whatever form it is presented to us in.

5. Practice Self-Care to Self-Transcend

In practice

- Engage in mindfulness and gratitude for all that your body is doing to keep you healthy each day. Forgive yourself for any fear you may feel.
- Pay extra attention to health and wellness practices. Wash your hands, eat healthfully, and get good sleep because that is an act of love.
- Use this time to get needed rest and rejuvenation, such as doing creative projects.

Theorizing

We chose to end our discussion on the concept of self-care or “self-love” because it is imperative that we embrace Nash’s ideology by distinguishing it from MLK’s utilitarian love. This is self-love in order to love others, not self-love in order to preserve yourself at the *expense* of others. Nash’s theory transfers

over so literally in this situation, because your health is directly linked to the health of the community.

To put it another way, “womanist politics requires subjects to work on their selves in order to transcend their selves; it is, then, a radical articulation of the political limitations of selfhood” (Nash 10). Ultimately, radical self love can never be detached from the larger communities we are a part of.

Self love is the love that enables us to practice relationality, mourn, and help others find the joy in living.