

# Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities

---

Volume 10  
Issue 1 *Mycelial Networks of Care*

Article 9

---

2021

## Disruption as Care Work

Cleveland L.  
*Macalester College*, [hhill1@macalester.edu](mailto:hhill1@macalester.edu)

### Keywords:

Self care, disruption, capitalism, self, care, community, healing, breaking, systems, learning, change, trust

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/tapestries>

---

### Recommended Citation

L., Cleveland (2021) "Disruption as Care Work," *Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/tapestries/vol10/iss1/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the American Studies Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities* by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact [scholarpub@macalester.edu](mailto:scholarpub@macalester.edu).

---

# Disruption as Care Work

Cleveland L.

---

## Introduction

My junior year of college, I wrote a paper in school about self care while I dug into my trauma for the first time in therapy. I learned a lot from the process of reading and writing about self care, recognizing its commodification, and implementing steps in my life from the books I read for the paper. I had learned in classes that individualism was a pillar of capitalism and that it was negative, but I couldn't see how to avoid it in my healing work. The books I read for my self care class discussed community building and vulnerability and I desperately wanted my reflection and healing to be a less isolated process, but I struggled to find or create spaces where sharing this process was appropriate.

I'm learning now that one of the reasons I have struggled to break out of this isolated introspective version of healing is that I believed it could happen without disruption. I believed that caring for myself could and should happen without disrupting any systems I interacted with or impacting anyone outside of myself. Disruption is necessary to do care work for ourselves and each other. Disrupting the systems and institutions we reside in as we demand our needs be met is in itself care work.

## Self Care

Institutions encourage "self care" only as a way to maximize our productivity. We are allowed to take time for ourselves outside of the hours we work, class time, or the time required to complete assignments if that is what we need in order to provide high quantities of labor. In a capitalist system, "We learn to control our desires and limit our needs; we are praised for being self-sufficient and showing endurance."<sup>1</sup> In order to cope with a system that does not meet our needs, we are encouraged to meet those needs ourselves. Professors and employers have told me time and time again to take care of myself (outside of work and class/homework hours) when many of the wounds I'm healing on my own time are a direct result of the institutions I'm employed at and study in. I receive praise for coping with situations that are unnecessarily stressful, like harsh deadlines or an understaffed shift.

These institutions see only the work I produce for them, not the things I'm struggling with or working on outside of them. In the classroom, my work proves that I care about the topic I'm learning about, so failing to do that work is often read as failing to care about the topics or future career opportunities. Putting more effort into the work is praised, and I am often required to

---

<sup>1</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 26

stretch myself beyond my limits to meet the minimum requirements to pass my courses.

I need to complete my courses in order to access future career opportunities that will allow me to be financially independent from my family. At work, my goal is to maintain as much financial independence as possible for the time being. I have the privilege of relying on my parents' insurance for healthcare and their money for tuition, but I pay for my other needs. In the cashier job I've had for a few years, my labor is measured in hours rather than quality. It requires less of my energy to do the tasks required of me for my job. However, on my lowest energy days, I am still expected to show up for shifts. In order to pay for rent and groceries, I need to work more hours than I can sustain without burning out. In both classrooms and my workplace, "working hard" is a value, and I am judged as an employee and a student based on how much energy I put into my work and how much I prioritize my work above other things in my life.

At the beginning of my college experience, I believed that classroom learning was a way for me to grow as a person, critically reflect and learn new ways of being in the world. There have been elements of that learning in some of the courses I've taken. I've learned new frameworks for looking at the world and context for understanding it, and I'm grateful for that learning. However, there are many other places where I can learn these things. I started prioritizing my healing work over classroom work while I was at Macalester, and that was the right choice for me. I started

resenting the institution for the methods through which it implemented education.

I was doing extremely poorly emotionally and in terms of my mental health (and the resulting effects on my physical health, like struggling with sleep and eating) when I started college, but I didn't blame the institution. I thought it was a personal failure. As I began to learn about and receive support around my trauma, I still blamed my struggle to cope for my failure to succeed in an academic environment. It wasn't until I got space from the institution, over my study away semester and the subsequent year of leave I took, that I started to understand that it was part of the harm I experienced. I returned for my final semester, and I'm now learning to place blame more accurately. I'm learning that my school and workplaces are failing to support my well being.

These institutions label my ability to work as proof that I'm well. In *Self as Other: Reflections on Self-Care*, a zine that speaks about self care in a capitalist system, the author writes: "it should not be surprising that we tend to measure health in terms of productivity. Self-care and workaholism are two sides of the same coin: preserve yourself so you can produce more."<sup>2</sup> It makes sense that those who demand my labor in some way, in classrooms or work spaces, interpret producing labor as wellness because, in capitalism, the only goal of achieving health is to be a productive member of society. An essay about Audre Lorde expands on this: "'Health,' in this context, is measured by the health of racial capitalism. Such a definition

---

<sup>2</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 8

means that being healthy is understood as having the capacity to optimize your ability to be exploited.”<sup>3</sup> The ideas of self-care and wellness have been co-opted by capitalism in order to maximize our efficiency.

It is very rare for my professors or employers to suggest that I decrease my work load in response to my emotional needs, like prioritizing healing so I can start to build sustainable and joyful ways of being, which often does not include school or cashier work. When this is suggested, it is often with the implicit acknowledgement that it is a radical act to allow me to get away with a decreased workload, and the (sometimes stated) fear that I or others will abuse this privilege. I have experienced a lot of shame around my needs and around failing to do the labor that is expected of me while meeting those needs. Having disability accommodations at Macalester did not change this pattern much, though it did help me understand that my needs were valid and that I wasn’t alone in pushing for them to be met. Navigating my accommodation needs is one avenue through which I’ve started attempting disruption.

There are many barriers to disruption, and I’ll touch on some of them later in this paper, but *Self as Other: Reflections on Self-Care* beautifully explains the destruction of one of these barriers through a story about someone coping with a disability:

*The frustration I’d been nursing against my uncooperative body didn’t disappear; it intensified, rather, into rage—but rage directed outwards, protectively. I’d*

*experienced the most important shift of my life. I’d stopped siding with the enemy.*<sup>4</sup>

The shift from trusting institutions and capitalist messaging to tell me what my needs are and trying to convince me that they are already met to trusting myself to define my own needs is incredibly powerful. Like learning to place blame accurately, it allows me to see more clearly what I am allowed to need and demand. I don’t think this shift is a single moment for me, but a transition that I’m still getting through. I trust myself to identify my own needs more than I ever have before, and the better I understand those needs, the more possible it feels to demand and fight for them to be met. I’ve also found that the more I trust my needs, the easier it is to understand and work in solidarity with others as they define and demand their needs.

This shifting of blame is important because it rejects narratives that place blame on oppressed groups as well: “‘There is a lot of confusion amongst white people in this country, amongst white workers in this country, about who the enemy is.’ ...white workers often ‘end up becoming counterrevolutionary, even though they should be the most staunch revolutionaries.’”<sup>5</sup> If white people believe that the problems that lead to our needs not being met are not a result of capitalism or systemic issues and accept the scapegoating of people of color, it prevents solidarity between white people and people of color in resisting capitalism. Shifting the blame onto the system that is actually to

---

<sup>3</sup> low end theory, *On Audre Lorde’s Legacy*

<sup>4</sup> CrimethInc, *Self as Other*, 29

<sup>5</sup> Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis*, 64

blame is the first step towards resisting and ending that system.

### *Attempting Change “Correctly”*

My first time working with a team to demand our needs be met was my sophomore year of college. I was a resident assistant for the only all-gender floor available to first years as well as for a single-gender/female-centered floor. There were several issues with the way that gender had been addressed in assigning these spaces. I was living on the female-centered floor despite being nonbinary/not a woman, but I had let that one slide because my floor was assigned before I came out as trans. However, another nonbinary person had been assigned to the female-centered floor and they were very uncomfortable living there.

On the all-gender floor, there were also many issues with room assignments. Several cisgender people were placed on the all-gender floor, limiting available space for trans people who had applied and were interested in living on the floor, trans people who had a need for that space that cis people did not. Additionally, trans people who had specifically requested not to room with cis people had been assigned cis roommates. We later learned that, though the college claimed to support trans people, they had completely ignored their genders and defaulted to their sex assigned at birth in choosing their roommates, claiming to assign rooms based on their “legal sex.”

This group of mostly trans students and I went through a series of meetings with our residence hall director and people from the

school’s gender and sexuality resource center. We talked through what we needed and decided that people should be assigned to rooms based on their gender, not their sex assigned at birth or “legal gender.” We decided there needed to be more spaces for trans people to live together on campus without cis people, as this was a part of what safety looked like for a lot of trans students.

This all culminated in me having two one-on-one meetings with a higher-up from residential life and the person in charge of housing. I don’t remember why these meetings were one-on-one, but I’m sure it was not at my request. In one meeting, the person in charge of housing decisions told me that we were not able to ask about a person’s gender on the housing form because there was a risk to trans students in outing themselves, or their parents might respond incorrectly to the form. This was infuriating because there was a group of trans students stating our needs and a cisgender person in a position of power was telling us no, those needs could not be met because this person claimed to be more capable of predicting our needs and the needs of other trans people than we, the trans people, were.

In the other meeting, with the higher-up in residential life, I was told that we didn’t have enough single-stall bathrooms to make having more all-gender spaces possible, and that this goal could only be achieved through new buildings, which the college did not have money for. Prior to this meeting, seemingly in response to our demands, the college began allowing all upperclassmen to room with people of any gender. This was

better than enacting transphobia by restricting room assignments to people whose “legal gender” matched, but it did not actually respond to our concerns. During this meeting, this person told me that they had already responded to our needs. I started crying and this person told me that several other students had already been in their office earlier that day, crying because the new rules about allowing people to room with people of any gender restricted their access to single-gender housing. This was frustrating because the response to our demands was not what we had asked for, and the negative consequences for other students would not have happened had we received the housing options we were actually requesting.

A quote from *We Demand* reminded me of this moment: “It’s important to remember, though, that while saying no to real progress has been a hallmark of US power, saying yes has been part of its power too.”<sup>6</sup> I have experienced so much manipulation and deceit, both intentional and unintentional, in response to demanding that my needs be met. The institution sort of responded to the accusation that they were not meeting our needs. They did enough to show that they had done something, but they did not actually meet those needs. There was never any follow up by any staff of the institution to see if the students had their needs met. They continually told us that they could solve these issues on a case-by-case basis, refusing to change the system they had created that hurt us and putting the responsibility for repairing that damage directly onto the students who

were harmed. This was likely in part due to transphobia and in part due to the limits of their job. They are probably expected to do an absurd quantity of work, and these basic check ins and responding to student needs procedures are probably not officially included in their job.

Our demands were not unreasonable. We were clear about our needs and the ways that the current system was not meeting them, we came up with ideas for moving forward. I hoped that this would be enough because I still trusted Macalester to care about the safety and well being of its students at that point in time. That trust, however brief, was a privilege. It was a result of experiencing very little discomfort as a white student from an upper class background at Macalester, a result of my disability not being overwhelming enough to noticeably disrupt my work yet, a result of my trans identity being generally supported by students. It was only when I stopped being able to navigate the institution smoothly, when my disability became more of a barrier to meeting the high demands of my courses, when my priorities changed, that my trust in the school broke. It is an institution within the US, and it reproduces the same violence. Using the avenues it provided to advocate for our needs was ineffective, as these attempts often are, because it didn’t interrupt the system.

### *Risk and Disruption*

There are a lot of barriers to taking risks and going against what is expected of us by the system that sustains us. The Self as

---

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, *We Demand*, 89

Other: Reflections on Self-Care zine elaborates:

*This is especially complicated insofar as our survival is interlinked with the functioning of capitalism—a condition some have designated with the term biopower. In this situation, the easiest way to preserve your health is to excel at capitalist competition, the same thing that is doing us so much harm. “There is no other pill to take, so swallow the one that made you ill.”<sup>7</sup>*

The vast majority of us rely on capitalism to meet our basic needs. I am from a class background where I rarely had to think about money. There were expensive items and vacations that my family couldn't afford, but our basic needs were always met. I first started thinking about class when I tried to achieve financial independence through my first job. I started to see the things I needed to spend money on regularly. I started to understand how difficult it was to get those needs met working at a low wage job, even with my parents' financial safety net to fall back on if I needed to miss work. I understood that losing a job, my dad losing his job or me losing my job, would eventually make it difficult for us to meet our basic needs. For those of us who can afford food, shelter, and healthcare, it is risky to do things that could mean those are taken away from us. For people who cannot afford those things, it is risky to do anything that could ensure they never have access to these basic necessities within the capitalist system by reducing their

---

<sup>7</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 8

job prospects or ability to receive government assistance. Government assistance is already very difficult or impossible to access and always insufficient even when received.

Many of our needs are not met by this system, but the fact that some of them are or could be and that resistance could mean risking losing those needs or risking the potential to meet those needs makes it really difficult and dangerous to disrupt, and that is intentional. “Breaking with the logic of the system that has kept us alive demands a certain reckless abandon.”<sup>8</sup> The “logic” this quote refers to is the idea that we must work to survive in the system of capitalism. We need to abandon systems and structures that prioritize the well being of those with power over those who are rendered powerless or less powerful by these systems. Breaking with the logic of the system is disruption. When my workplace labelled the two single stall bathrooms with “all gender” signs at my request so other trans coworkers and I would be more comfortable using them, that didn't disrupt the power structure. It was a change that did not impact profit. Had I organized with my coworkers to demand that we were paid a living wage, that would have disrupted the system, prioritizing employees' well being over profit, or the gains of the company's owners. Disruption isn't a safe decision, I don't think, but one fueled by need. It happens when the harm caused by the existing system becomes worse or is understood for the first time to be worse than the risk of change.

The Self as Other: Reflections on Self-Care zine discusses the risk of change

---

<sup>8</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 10

through talking about trauma, and the ways we are taught to cope with it. It tells a story about a co-facilitator of a trauma healing support group who questioned the methods they used to help people. This person realized that they were talking about trauma as if it was a layer over their true selves, and that once the participants of this group dealt with the trauma that layer would fall away and they would become their true, productive selves. The facilitator describes a different perspective on the healing process:

*In another version, far more frightening and yet closer to the experiences they describe... they have no idea who they will become when or if they emerge on the other side. Jobs, relationships, identities, personalities—nothing seems fixed or stable. Hands intertwined, they inch towards the abyss, dizzy with the vertigo of impending freedom, or at least something different from their constricted lives.<sup>9</sup>*

When what we experience becomes worse than the risks of exploring something unknown, we move towards this unstable abyss. With trauma healing, this zine points to an idea that we are moving towards a known end point, becoming our productive selves. It then questions that idea with a more realistic description of moving towards something unknown, “something different from their constricted lives.”

Similarly, as the coronavirus pandemic continues, people, especially white upper and middle class people, speak of returning to the

norm, returning to working in person with nothing else having changed, returning to some known end point. If everything returns to “normal” after this pandemic, assuming there is a definitive end to it, the US government, the system of capitalism, will retain the same biopower that made this pandemic so widespread and violent. The same people who were most at risk and least protected from the violence of this pandemic, Black communities and other communities of color, people with disabilities and chronic illness, people working the lowest paying jobs, incarcerated and detained people, houseless people, undocumented people, and all of the intersections of those groups, will continue to be most at risk of state and systemic violence and least protected from it. Healing from this crisis, which coincides with crises of white supremacy, police violence, houselessness, food insecurity, and many others, needs to be more than a return to how things were before. We may have no idea of what will come next, but healing needs to be more than returning to work.

### *Breaking Windows*

In high school, I heard echoes of the uprising in Ferguson. I heard it called “riots” and “looting” and “violence.” I had some small inkling that this was a misrepresentation related to racism but I didn’t understand how intentional it was, and historical, following the patterns of discrediting protests against white supremacist capitalist cisheteropatricarchal systems that have existed as long as the protests have, as long as the systems have. The protests are a fact of the system itself:

---

<sup>9</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 17

“...capitalism generates contradictions, depressions, unequal distributions of wealth, and uprisings.”<sup>10</sup> I still retained some uncertainty around these events and the dominant narratives of them until this summer.

I was living in St Paul and Minneapolis this summer during the uprising here. I wasn't as involved with it as I could have been, or as involved with it as I wish I had been looking back, or as involved with it as I hope to be with future uprisings, but I was closer to it than I'd been to anything like it before. I mostly transported food and supplies from the suburbs to the cities when grocery stores and gas stations were shut down by the police for “safety,” but really to attempt to stifle the uprising. Black people who grew up in Minneapolis, especially Black youth and young adults, led that movement and continue to lead it.

Before this summer, I still sometimes struggled to reject the narratives around “looting” as a negative, but I have no doubt now that looting and property damage is a valid, legitimate, and necessary response to oppression in the system of capitalism. An article called “Why Break Windows” explains this:

*For millions upon millions, the healthy food, medicines, and other goods they need are the breadth of an entire social class away from them, a gulf they will not cross in a lifetime of hard work—a*

*gulf represented by half an inch of plate glass.*<sup>11</sup>

What is legal or praised by dominant culture has nothing to do with what is moral. It is moral to raid a store on Lake street, redistributing the supplies to support the people who live close enough to walk to it but cannot legally access the basic necessities inside. It is moral to meet people's basic needs. What is immoral is preventing people from having those needs met for the sake of profit.

A tweet by Lillie Franks, Writer of Wrongs @onyxaminelife reads: “Replacing the words ‘the economy’ with ‘rich people's yacht money’ - How can we respond to COVID without sacrificing rich people's yacht money?”<sup>12</sup> While satirical, this tweet gets at part of the reason that preventing people from accessing their basic needs is moral. When I worked at a retail store, there was a small break in and some electronics were stolen. That did not impact me or my paycheck at all, only the potential profit of the company, which only goes to the CEO or maybe a couple other higher-ups anyway. It is immoral to prevent many people's needs from being met in order to protect the profit of people whose needs are already more than met.

*Breaking windows is a way to break this silence, to challenge the absurd notion that the social construct of property rights is more important than the needs of the people around us... colonization,*

---

<sup>10</sup> Pfister, *Getting Personal and Getting Personnel*, 1135

---

<sup>11</sup> CrimethInc., *Why Break Windows?*

<sup>12</sup> Lillie Franks, Writer of Wrongs

*gentrification, mass incarceration, and police killings are all forms of displacement, of erasure. We have become accustomed to ceaseless, dramatic disruptions of the environments we live in—so long as it is capitalists and police driving them, not poor people.*<sup>13</sup>

Disruption is necessary to make change in a system that is insidious in its messaging about who is right, those in power, and who is wrong, those who resist the system and fight for their needs to be met. There are times when the right thing to do is break windows and laws.

Part of my previous failure to interpret disruption in this way was an imposed lack of trust in the decisions of those who are oppressed, especially poor people of color. This was a result of racist messaging that paints people of color, especially Black people, as needlessly violent and otherwise untrustworthy. This has been a tactic used to discredit protests and uprisings that have been happening throughout US history. For example, in Detroit in 1967, police violence and racism fueled an uprising by Black and poor white people, especially auto industry factory laborers:

*As Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin show in their indispensable book *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, photos of the revolt documented ‘systematic and integrated looting’ among Black and poor white working-class participants ‘shopping for free.’ Yet it was described in*

*mass-mediated cultural outlets such as the New York Times as a riot waged by ‘Negroes in Detroit,’ which they asserted created a rampage of crime, violence, and chaos. A curfew was issued to suppress the insurrection.*<sup>14</sup>

The narrative around correct action versus incorrect, illegal, disruptive, and/or “violent” action is not new. I’m including this uprising in Detroit in this paper as a reminder that disruptive action is not new, and the response to it, designed to delegitimize it, is not new.

I didn’t learn about historical events like this in my elementary or high school history classes, and I only learned about them in college because the classes I took happened to be specifically about histories that are underrepresented in white supremacist dominant US culture. Looting is a historical and effective tactic. Mainstream media discredits it, depicting it as violence. The US government issues curfews and deploys federal troops against their people, as they did both during the Detroit uprising in 1967 and the Minneapolis one in 2020, both of which were led by Black people.<sup>15</sup>

This misrepresentation of uprisings trains us not to trust oppressed people, especially Black and poor people. As Paulo Freire writes, “trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that

---

<sup>13</sup> CrimethInc., *Why Break Windows?*

---

<sup>14</sup> Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis*, 52

<sup>15</sup> Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis*

trust.”<sup>16</sup> Trusting myself to define my own needs is challenging in a system that dictates what we are supposed to be able to withstand, what we are supposed to need, how productive we are supposed to be, and what work we prioritize in our lives. However, this work, learning to trust myself, is vital to solidarity work because it helps me trust other people to define their own needs too. It helps me resist the narratives that tell me that people are not capable of knowing what is wrong and what must change and how that change has to come about.

### *Working Towards*

*While we may not be able to eradicate the systems that imprison us immediately, we stand a far better chance if we don't get tricked into thinking our struggles or the solutions to them are individual. The more ways we find to act in honesty with each other, whether in sorrow or in excitement, the stronger and more resilient we become—individually and collectively.*<sup>17</sup>

I'm still working on getting to a point where I can do more disruption and direct action. There is still a lot of fear there for me, and some of it is founded because there is risk, but some of it is based on my continued investment in a system that hurts me and people in my community. Part of my plan for myself to do more disruption in the future is to get more connected to my community, or work on building community.

---

<sup>16</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 60

<sup>17</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 23

Any small disruption I have participated in has been a direct result of my connections with others who share the struggles that warrant the disruption. I feel so much stronger when I know I'm not the only one experiencing harm. It makes me feel validated and it makes me doubt my experience less. It motivates me to act because I know I won't be alone in disruption, and because I won't be the only one who benefits from it. bell hooks discusses this in her book *Sisters of the Yam*: “...communities of resistance can emerge around our struggles for personal self-recovery as well as our efforts to organize collectively to bring about social change. We grow closer in struggle.”<sup>18</sup> While the discussions around gendered housing weren't particularly productive, they could not have happened without the connections with other trans people and dialogue around our needs. While we didn't change the system in the ways we wanted to, those conversations have stuck with me and made me feel more confident and justified in demanding my needs around my gender be met elsewhere. Organizing around a shared struggle was a community building practice.

Several friends and coworkers have expressed hesitation about even talking about the ways that institutions are harmful to them. I've experienced this too, not wanting to seem or be ungrateful. My therapist described a good job as “golden handcuffs,” because it's prettier than a bad job but ultimately has just as much control over us in a capitalist system. I think there is a tendency to shy from naming harm generally. It's easy

---

<sup>18</sup> hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*, 122

to feel like we're overreacting, especially when there's so many lies around what we are supposed to put up with. I have experienced emotional abuse, and recognizing that I had experienced it took me a long time. Talking with and reading about other people's experiences was a big part of how I came to realize that what had happened to me was wrong. The "me too" movement is specific to sexual violence, but it is powerful because of this same idea of collective healing and naming.<sup>19</sup> Self as Other: Reflections on Self Care touches on this:

*Our first instinct under stress or threat is to seek solidarity or comfort with others. If this succeeds, our panic systems disengage and we can return to other functions like play or invention. Knowing that our nervous system responds so powerfully to the presence of others, it becomes clear that self-care and reciprocal care cannot be separated.*<sup>20</sup>

The idea that self care and reciprocal care are linked is powerful. Care work includes work that we do for ourselves and for others. Learning to trust ourselves helps us trust others. Caring for others helps us care for ourselves, caring for ourselves helps us care for others. Creating communities of resistance where we can do collaborative care work, caring for ourselves and others at the same time, is vital. bell hooks writes:

*While I have emphasized the importance of working for self-actualization in the*

*individual's life, we learn about ourselves and test our values in active practice with others. Choosing to be self-actualized and then working to build communities of resistance that are particularly focused on social and political concerns is always necessary.*<sup>21</sup>

Healing is a collaborative process. That is something I personally am still working on. There is so much for me to unlearn about what friendships and relationships are supposed to look like, and some of that work is possible to do through reflection on my own and in therapy, but many of the lessons I need to learn must happen through actual interactions with people. As I build deeper and more meaningful friendships and relationships with people in my life, I find new questions to explore and decisions to make about how I want to engage. Trying to work on learning to relate to people in more healthy ways during a pandemic is extremely challenging, and there are some things that I need to wait to work on until I can meet with people in person. The trusting myself and others to know our needs comes into play here, too. As I work on learning to trust myself to know my needs, I also work on communicating those needs to others. I work on setting boundaries, saying no when I need to, and in that work I learn to respect others' boundaries, needs, and no's too.

Trusting myself to define my own needs means shifting my priorities, too. It means accepting that I do the bare minimum at my jobs to get paid because I need money and I

---

<sup>19</sup> me too. Movement, *History and Inception*

<sup>20</sup> CrimethInc., *Self as Other*, 23

---

<sup>21</sup> hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*, 122

don't value working hard at my own detriment. Putting in less energy at work frees up energy for me to spend on mutual aid or doing things that are energizing for me and bring me joy. I don't know how I'm going to engage with work or career options long term, or what it would look like to try to work in anticapitalist ways within a capitalist system. Right now, I'm working on taking the steps I need to take to make community building possible, to make my relationships healthier and stronger, and to understand my values and priorities better.

Earlier this semester, a classmate said "we need to stop seeking validation in institutions," and that is one way I'm trying to disrupt as well. Refusing to define ourselves by capitalist notions of success is disruption. Prioritizing care for ourselves and each other over labor and productivity is disruption. Community building is disruption. Direct action is disruption. Disruption is a collaborative action that centers trust, care, and healing as we move away from a system that hurts us.

## Works Cited

- Camp, Jordan T. 2016. *Incarcerating the Crisis : Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State*. American Crossroads, 43. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- CrimethInc. 2013. *Self As Other*. [online] Available at:  
<<https://crimethinc.com/zines/self-as-other>> [Accessed 19 December 2020].
- CrimethInc. 2014. *Why Break Windows?*. [online] Available at:  
<<https://crimethinc.com/2014/12/10/why-break-windows>> [Accessed 19 December 2020].
- Ferguson, Roderick A. 2017. *We Demand : The University and Student Protests*. *American Studies Now: Critical Histories of the Present*, 1. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Franks, Lillie. Twitter Post. December 3, 2020, 1:21 PM.  
<https://twitter.com/onyxaminedlife/status/1334578466851852290>.
- Freire, Paulo. 2000. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed 30Th anniversary ed*. New York: Continuum.
- hooks, bell. 1993. *Sisters of the Yam : Black Women and Self-Recovery*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- low end theory. 2013. *On Audre Lorde's Legacy And The "Self" Of Self-Care, Part 2 Of 3*. [online] Available at:  
<<https://www.lowendtheory.org/post/50428216600/on-audre-lordes-legacy-and-the-self-of-self-care>> [Accessed 19 December 2020].
- me too. Movement. 2020. *Get To Know Us | History & Inception*. [online] Available at:  
<<https://metoomvmt.org/get-to-know-us/history-inception/>> [Accessed 19 December 2020].
- Pfister, Joel. "Getting Personal and Getting Personnel: U.S. Capitalism as a System of Emotional Reproduction." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2008): 1135-1142.  
[doi:10.1353/aq.0.0042](https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.0.0042).