



Image from an ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) march

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## A personal note from Sour Queer Press

In May of 2023, a little over three years from the start of COVID, all signs were pointing towards continued death, debility and abandonment. The amerikan government ended the public health emergency, WHO declared COVID is no longer an emergency. The meager protections that remained were disappearing. Pride would be in a month and for the covid-cautious queers, it filled us with dread. What does solidarity look like in practice? Can it really exist on the basis of identity alone? In an empire leaving disabled and sick people for dead, why are so many queers following suit rather than rebelling against such structural neglect? Is the phrase We Keep Us Safe only a slogan with no meaning behind it? And, my god--why is queerness all about who looks the coolest rather than how can we keep each other alive? These are some of the questions that keep us up at night, that led us to ponder a zine in which local queers had the chance to tell their stories.

What we love about zines is that they can liberate so much information, and also remind us that the information we have within our own communities is just as valid (if not more!) than that in the ivory tower of academia and publishers. That being said, while it may take less to distribute a zine than to publish a book, a note on access feels important here. One, the free time to even dedicate to making, printing and distributing zines. Second, the money to buy supplies and have access to a printer. So while it's cool to create zines within a group of those who have the time and supplies, it's even cooler to make space for stories from people who don't have that access and engage outside of our access, even if that access is a super exhausted printer that costed a couple hundred dollars on amazon. The submission format of this zine was important to us. We want to hear from and distribute the stories of all the queers we can,

and in the process encourage others to use their free time and supplies to do the same in their own communities. Something that brings us so much grief is the loss of stories and wisdom between queer generations. This is our small way of refusing that loss.

If we believe that queerness is truly subversive to the state, to domination and to the evils of capitalism, then we need to center accessibility when we shape our spaces, interpersonal relationships and politics. This is not an arbitrary preference, it's a matter of survival. Disabled and immunocompromised people have always existed but are constantly forced to survive in the margins, even in explicitly "anti-oppressive" spaces. We want to actively challenge this deep-set ableist pattern by making disability liberation a central node of how we live queer lives.

Just as white supremacy and fascism alienate and detach us from one another, ableism is also structurally isolating and individualistic. The pandemic is illuminating this in truly devastating ways. How can we say we love one another or care about each other when we are actively leaving sick and disabled people for dead? What does this abandonment, neglect and disregard for vulnerable lives say about the way we relate to one another in general? When we let any group become disposable, we pave the way for our own disposability. Relationships show us that we can do more when we intertwine our lives than when we isolate or are forced into isolation. In the words of Han Olliver, "may we view mask wearing as radical care, as civil disobedience, as a practice of intimacy amongst comrades, committing ourselves to the rigor required to reshape the world in everyday actions we take to keep each other safe."

Autonomy is dangerous and counterrevolutionary without a collective orientation. We see how autonomy gets individualized and removed from the source of its power, because the ruling class benefits massively from teaching us to think

of ourselves and our nuclear family as separate from others. I imagine autonomy as the will of one part of an ecosystem acting in concert with our fellow participants for a larger goal of liberation from these oppressive systems. What if we turned toward one another and explored the ways we are connected and the ways that we feel that connection embolden us to fight for one another's well-being? Autonomy is about celebrating the way our varied ways of being and doing can weave together something strong and flexible, able to withstand fascism. So, we remind the cool kid militants that asking each other to wear a mask is not "policing" or "taking away autonomy", it is an act of collective care and an act of refusal against the state's coercion and control it seeks to instill over our wellbeing and survival.

Lastly, we need grief practices in order to be well, to be good to one another and ourselves. When we cannot process loss, it becomes incredibly hard to take action against more loss. We must resist desensitization because it is a tool of oppressive violence. Unmoved grief is like a rock inside us that grows and grows until we are held in place so strictly that we forget we can move. Our ability to feel the suffering and pain is what reminds us that we deserve more than what we are given in this system. However, doing it alone is insurmountable. We need one another to help move the emotions around, to help bare the weight. Connection is the pathway to a more loving, joyful, grief-filled way of living together. And even grief practices can be co-opted and weaponized by the state. People who have lost someone to covid or are feeling the impacts of the current eugenicist norm are told to "let go" to "accept". We want to say that holding on firmly, to ourselves, our loved ones and those who have died is a powerful thing to do. If there was an individual that was an active danger to people's lives, the state would criminalize and incarcerate them (fuck prisons). But caring about covid is in direct conflict with capitalism and therefore the apathy and ableism that causes continued death becomes an ally to the state.

Since the use of shame continues to be a discourse all forms of organizing, we will share some notes on shame from Lee Shevek (@butchanarchy on twitter)

“Shaming is never an effective tactic for change!” Have y’all ever met another human being? I know for a fact that many people have stopped masking because other people have shamed them for not going along with the status quo. But y’all are just going to pretend that only disabled people use it to defend our lives, and that we’re bad when we do? Fuck off entirely.

Shame is a very powerful social tool used in many contexts, by literally everyone. Y’all only cast it as bad when marginalized people are asking you to consider how your actions hurt and kill them. I DO think you should feel ashamed if you value your own pleasure or comfort over the lives of others. I think that shame should haunt you forever, actually, and maybe even spur you to, you know, change your behavior.

If you’re feeling shame maybe you even ought to, idk, examine the behaviors behind that shame? See if they really align with your values? Experience personal growth rather than batter at the folks who shine a light on it? Just a thought. I’ll never understand nor accept the liberal idea that “shame” and “judgement” are inherently bad regardless of the context. They can absolutely be tools used to further oppression, but they are *\*also\** used to establish counter-hegemonic social norms that establish safety & care.

In fact, even the line “shaming is never an effective tactic for change!” itself relies on evoking shame in order to achieve a change in behavior lol. “Shame on you for shaming people!”

Please.

Speak directly and clearly about what you think should not be shamed, because that's the point you're actually making. Just like with "violence," most libs prefer we talk about these things through context-less abstractions so they don't have to say what they really believe imo.

Easier to say you're against an abstract "violence" than to say you're against oppressed people defending themselves. Easier to say you're against an abstract "shaming" than to say you don't like it when people point out your ableism. Own your beliefs or change them."

## Definitions of solidarity

By Rowan Haaland  
(they/them/theirs)

Intersectional above all  
Headless, autonomous, organized  
The center of so many overlapping circles  
We are integrity of thought and deed  
Community minded  
Black, trans, gay, woman, working class, and anyone so  
sick of begging for a living wage  
Harbingers of revolution  
There are lines we will not cross  
Collectively  
Against injustice, cops, and billionaires  
An offense against one is an affront to us all  
A brick sailing through the window  
Of your local nazi bar  
A spark fanned at the precinct  
Reborn in fire  
Diverse in our backgrounds, our ages, skill sets  
Together we rise  
On closed down highways  
Pulling down fences  
Lifting one another, scaling walls  
An antidote to every man for himself  
Without it, we are nothing  
Through solidarity we are everyone  
And in this way, we are never alone





## Re-emerge as Enemies of the State

“Without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed. As long as we refuse to address fully the place of love in struggles for liberation

we will not be able to create a culture of conversion where there is a mass turning away from an ethic of domination.

Without an ethic of love shaping the direction of our political vision and our radical aspirations, we are often seduced, in one way or the other, into continued allegiance to domination--imperialism, sexism, racism, classism. It has always puzzled me that [people] who spend a lifetime working to resist and oppose one form of domination can be systematically supporting another. I have been puzzled by powerful visionary black male leaders who can speak and act passionately in resistance to racial domination and accept and embrace sexist domination of women, by feminist white women who work daily to eradicate sexism but who have major blind spots when it comes to acknowledging and resisting racism and white supremacist domination of the planet. Critically examining these blind spots, I conclude that many of us are motivated to move against domination solely when we feel our self-interest directly threatened.

*Often, then, the longing is not for a collective transformation of society, an end to politics of dominations, but rather simply for an end to what we feel is hurting us. This is why we desperately need an ethic of love to intervene in our self-centered longing for change. Fundamentally, if we are only committed to an improvement in that politic*

*em rodriguez (they/them)  
first, i'm a pissed off commie  
dyke. i'm both white and  
mexican and i want so much  
more from the queer com-  
munity. i want to participate  
in building the solidarity  
networks we need to sur-  
vive. abandonment of our  
disabled comrades is fascism  
and i refuse to take part !!*

*of domination that we feel leads directly to our individual exploitation or oppression, we not only remain attached to the status quo but act in complicity with it, nurturing and maintaining those very systems of domination. Until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that undermine our individual quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle.”*

~Love as the Practice of Freedom, by bell hooks

This excerpt from bell hooks touches me deeply. The last paragraph, especially, moves me as I have watched so many queers, specifically radical queers, abandon solidarity and act in concert with eugenics. It fuckin’ terrifies me. This may sound self-righteous and I will of course name that I have some privileges that have made surviving this pandemic easier than others. I am a housing stable, pre-disabled white-presenting Mexican queer and I come from a petty-bourgeois upbringing. There are many more details that make me who I am but those seem significant to name so that you know a little bit about what experience I am writing from.

As much as it would feel good for me to write a raging manifesto against the ableist, liberalized and de-politicized queer folks I see all around me, I want to exercise some humility first because obviously I was not always a radical queer communist. I had friends who were patient with me and made space for me to grow a deeper understanding of the world. This isn’t to say that I am not enraged and horrified to see how assimilation into cis-het settler society is the path that so many queer folks take! I’m so heartbroken by that, so angry by the abandonment. But, it would also be presumptuous of myself to act as if I haven’t actively harmed people by

doing or not doing something too. It's challenging to admit where I have been neglecting solidarity with others. It has taken me such a long time to learn how to do that and I STILL struggle with it. It's important to me to leave a little space for people's struggles with that.

All that said, I want to direct some loving gratitude toward the queer folks who ARE showing up for one another in this pandemic.

Thank you to all the queers/dykes/fags who have continued masking for 3 years now. Thank you!!! Changing long-term behavior patterns very quickly is VERY DIFFICULT. Let's give ourselves some compassion and grief-space for the ways of socializing that have been taken from us because of this, even though we know why we are doing it. Letting go of individualism is something that takes time, discipline, and support and, damn, have we been unsupported. Disabled trans and queer folks have known this for decades. This is \*not new\* even if it is newer to me. We are weathering strategic misinformation campaigns from the amerikkkan government through the CDC to confuse us about COVID. We are taught our whole lives to believe in institutions, whether they be medical or governmental or financial. It is ingrained in us from a young age that they have our best interests in mind, that they are benevolent structures meant to keep the "peace". What we actually find, when we peel back the layers of propaganda, is that racial capitalism is the beating heart of all amerikkkan institutions and they only care about us insomuch as they can extract our labor, our joy and grief, our energy, our livelihoods. That is a very scary truth to unfurl.

I want to say thanks because most of the time we get harassed, gaslit, socially isolated, and violently othered, which upholds the genocide that our society is built upon. I see

us striving to live a more fair and caring way of life in an extremely hostile time. This is what settles me and soothes me when anxiety and fear rise in my belly; seeing us try so fuckin' hard to creatively survive and change our world. Continuing to reach toward one another makes my heart feel more at home and more of us are doing it than we think.

### **How does this all relate to queerness?**

I believe the politics of queerness means that we try to live our lives by an ethic of revolutionary love, which directly contradicts the kind of social relationships the oppressor class of this country want us to have. They enforce their settler bourgeois organization of “family” and “love” so that it reproduces constructs like the treatment of land as dead “property” to be owned and subjugated, forced gender binaries and roles, alienation from communal living/family structures, and ableist/white supremacist rules about who has access to love, social life, and care. To be queer means we must reject this construct by creating something better in its place, or reconnecting with ways of relating that have been taken from us. This is not a one time rejection!! We don't come out once and “become” radical or “become” queer. We cannot “become” radical or queer anyway, at least, not based on what I have learned from the many wise people who have come before us and those who are still living and have chosen to live radically. They have taught me that it is something we practice together and not something we are. It is not a boot that we take on and off according to our individual needs, rather, it is the soil we sink our toes into. It is alive and it can be enriched by how we treat it or degraded by our neglect. Coming out is a brave act in our society because it contradicts the violent liberal order. However, we must constantly re-emerge as enemies of the oppressive patriarchal state! We must keep coming out and meet one another where we are at and see ourselves as truly capable of creating lasting change.

The way we respond to this Covid pandemic, the ways we practice what it means to keep each other alive now, will set in motion our actions for the hard years to come. Adapting to new problems is an act of love. It challenges all that we are told to believe about ourselves, though, which is not easy. Being able-bodied is a temporary or impossible state of being, especially in this society where organized abandonment is the reality for most of us, especially QT-BIPOC disabled folks. I believe in our collective ability to resist assimilation into actions that uphold the daily, normalized violences of amerikkka. Those actions are presented to us as simple choices of preferences and that should terrify us. Wearing a well-fitting mask is the bare minimum in a pandemic that is disabling and killing our families, our friends, our neighbors, people we don't know and never will now. If people who claim to have radical politics refuse to make the very clear connection between our abandonment in the pandemic to fascism, then why would i ever believe those people want lasting change? Wearing a mask and taking other necessary precautions to build safe communities IS lasting change! It's here, the chance to change is here and can be taken up at any point. It won't be easy but we can't change our world by doing what everyone else is doing, the status quo is allegedly what we are FIGHTING! Unmasking is fascist violence and you can choose to stop playing your role in it at any point!

Our \*love\* for one another will transform our world. Fighting for love militantly and tenaciously will transform ourselves and our circumstances. Loving makes us courageous and revolutionary love is the beating heart of strong political will.

**Be a dyke and GIVE A DAMN !!!**



I miss the old annoyances that weren't life-or-death. Staff regularly left decorations on the patio to degrade and blow away in the wind. Birthday parties covered the ground in lost vape pens, and glass. Vehicles were nearly always left in front of driveways and sidewalk entrances with no regard for pedestrian accessibility. Occasionally music would get left on a little too late, with the bass a little too loud. I didn't love it, but they were only temporary annoyances. (Except the accessibility crimes - those are unforgivable.)

*Any/all pronouns. Anonymous - I'm scared of people knowing how disappointed I am. I don't like attention. My partner and I both have existing genetic conditions that are statistically proven to become worse, and life-threatening, after a COVID infection.*

I *definitely* missed those complaints when everything shut down. I missed those signs of life. The place even stayed shut after the mandate ended and pledged to do so for as long as COVID raged on. I was proud of them! They were doing The Right Thing by us even as other establishments gleefully threw open the doors. I promised myself that I would show my gratitude someday - "when all of this is over."

"Ugh, who the hell is having a party?" I groaned to my partner as I saw vehicles lining the streets, several parked very illegally. As we started down the street we could hear music getting louder...and louder...and louder. Turned the corner and...the bar was packed. The line was out the door! Anger wasn't even the first thing I felt. It was a numbness. Of course their promise was too good. Of course they couldn't actually hold out. What did I expect?

Getting home from our walk, the first thing I did was check their social media pages. Every account was plastered with apologies. "We're so sorry but we have to open," they wrote,

“please stay home if you’re immuno-compromised!” As if instead of a choice, it was a natural disaster or a beast stalking the area. I tried to be understanding - the employees need money to live and the business needs money to pay them, I guess. It wasn’t any comfort, but I could push it to the back of my mind. No one was commenting with anything but joy, so maybe I was wrong. Maybe it was totally fine that they singled out the disabled community in their posts - asking us to stay home instead of asking the community to be respectful of our existence. Oh well, I just have to avoid walking that direction on weekends. No problem. I switched my mind to other problems for my own sanity.

Before I could go back to my thoughts on that matter, the paper signs so much as recommending masks disappeared from the doors. Employees shared videos of tearing their masks off and pictures serving drinks with a visible smile. Within a month they had to close for a week due to staff outbreaks. “What did they expect?” The smug thought felt so justified, albeit cruel.

So, now I get to be spiteful about all the old things - the littering and the blocked paths and the noise - as well as the weekly superspreader events. As well as other queer-owned businesses and events that feel like they’ve abandoned us.

And do you know what else? To a stranger, I look completely fine. My reason for being painfully cautious is invisible. It would be reasonable for anyone to think, “how dare you be in public?” After all, that’s how I think when I assume someone doesn’t care. Even if I wear a good mask correctly, **how dare I?**

Of course, everything is open now. Queer or not, there are too many establishments to be angry at. And it’s overflowed to numbness again. I almost don’t care if I get sick anymore...almost.

titled not

4

jazzy (they/them/she) is a  
white, queer, & disabled  
creative writer living on  
Dakota Land in mpls

*There will be no liberation without us knowing how to depend on each other, how to be encumbered with and responsible for each other. We will dream and never descend.*

—Cynthia Dewi Oka

this grief is a riverbed  
gaslit  
gutted  
going home  
to myself is so  
complicated now  
in the color of knots  
narrowing, breath shuttering  
in the color of  
“wait up”  
“don’t go”  
“please see me”  
and all the glorious bodies swept  
under this rug, swept  
into the arms  
of willows in the wind  
bending always

i am still out here  
roaring in the color of  
“am i wrong?”  
“are you serious?”  
how hard is the earth  
actually when it catches  
the sore skin of knee?



i know with this body.  
and my body  
is not  
broken  
my body  
is becoming  
my body  
is a beam  
of moonlit light

shining singing yearning  
to belong  
to be wanted  
needed  
named  
as beloved  
as "i could never  
forget you."

could you?

the answer of my body is no  
you cannot have me  
at your convenience  
you can have me only  
under the conditions  
that we share  
meaning "me too"  
remember?

under what conditions?

*survivable* for more than “the fittest”  
*desirable* for more than the most  
meaning us as in we  
meaning i cannot be  
unmet in the middle

meaning yes, we’re still here  
meaning yes, you still need us  
for the “everyone” you speak of  
with your anarchist hats  
with your stickers and ribbons  
claiming inclusion  
while claiming a life  
you didn’t realize  
the way the system meant for

I, too, am airborne  
and this grief is a wilderness  
a wild river long  
that is longing  
to be seen longing  
to be safe  
when it meets the sea

*Anonymous*

5

Queer as in fuck you

It was really hard for me to start this and I almost scoffed at the idea of the invitation to move 3 years of grief with one story. But I believe in practice and that story will lead to more stories, and help me to start to move the boulders in my body, even if starting means just looking at them and seeing how fucking big they are.

When covid hit, I was working at a liberal grocery store in a rich neighborhood. I was also a hospice volunteer and a PCA for someone who was immunocompromised. I had stopped going to the nursing home and PCA-ing out of fear of spreading covid. To say that I was terrified to give anyone covid was an understatement. While some people were able to work from home (and I'm glad they could!) I had to continually go into a high risk environment where our wealthy clientele would hoard food, all the while waiting for any opportunity to not mask. I started to notice that I had more physical proximity to customers than I did the loved ones in my life. I had recently started dating someone when covid hit, who was also in another relationship, so I took my place as the highest risk partner and we went on distanced / masked walks for several months. There were moments at work, more than I could count, when I would hear my co-workers weeping in the back, hidden under chefs coats and behind lockers. I will never forget when I called the nursing home on a break, crouched down in back stock, to ask if the people I used to see were still alive. Unfortunately and unsurprisingly covid had hit that nursing home, and killed the 4 people I was checking on.

One of those people, Ruth, had just gotten a hip replacement, and was just learning how to walk again and was becoming a faster walker than me. She used to grab my hands, no matter where I was going or what I was doing, and demand my full attention. She would use me to help stabilize her, I would walk backwards while she held my forearms and even though she was looking at me, I could see all her attention going to every muscle she needed to learn how to walk again. 2 years into the pandemic the person I had PCA-ed for also passed away. And I guess what I'm getting at is how much I've been through and how terrible it has been for me. I remember feeling so much comfort in the beginning of the pandemic in my fellow queers. Since the start of the pandemic I have seen slow and fast declines in caring. And I know a lot of people are trying to understand psychologically what is happening, that so many people are experiencing cognitive dissonance. But for the sake of my mental health and frankness, a lot of queer people don't fucking care anymore. If you don't show me you care, you don't get the label of caring, period.

What is fascinating to me is that queer community focuses so much on consent. It's truly mind blowing to see people go back to dance & house parties, large and small events unmasked. Poetry readings and community care events, all with either no or sloppy precautions that make no sense (fyi, if you require masks you better have a way of making sure people are wearing them or else you are still excluding disabled folks). The irony to me of a group that cares so much about community and being trauma-informed contributing to the spread of a disabling virus is too much. And there aren't really words for seeing person after person let you down. All in the name of something we (queer militants) have a history of fighting, assimilation. Eugenics

in the name of mental health. As if queer disabled people aren't some of the most creative people I've met. And I've been so disappointed in the queer community that I forget, so much of the invisible (no thanks to you) queer community does care about covid. It's the aesthetic, back-to-normal, eugenicist, assimilating queers that don't care. And it dawned on me, y'all aren't fucking queer. Your values align with every white woman you make fun of, for being fragile, attached, sensitive. Queerness is more than a denim vest and who you fuck or don't. Queerness means fighting for the very values "queer" (from this point on, y'all queer fuckers that don't take covid seriously are getting a " ") people are abandoning. We lost an entire generation to AIDS, and the nightmare is a generation of "queers" who are happy to forget how hard we've fought for each other. It seems like people think queerness is more about how you look and not about how we move. So do me a favor, stop calling yourself queer. you don't deserve the label. Go hang out with the boring ass cis hets who go to brunch on the weekend and go to that new restaurant for Wednesday night dinners. I'm sure they'll appreciate your added spunk and since that's what you're assimilating into anyways, just get to it and stop pretending.

In the meantime, we've been building community, lugging who ever has a filter back and forth to houses, taking whatever money we can spend on masks for ourselves and each other, watching movies and making art. But I'm gonna be honest, that's not good enough for me. That's what you want anyways isn't it, for us to isolate in our communities. No, I think I'm going to start calling in our AIDS ancestors and bringing dead bodies and ashes to your door step. I'm tired of seeing event after event of really cool shit, shit I would love to go to, yet has no precautions or mention of covid.

And the idea that I'm supposed to somehow take these organizers / ideas as abolitionist. or revolutionary. HA. y'all are a joke to us. And so I come to the end, and thinking, well, what do you think my goal is in you reading this? Like surely I'm trying to convince you to care. To change your behavior. Here's the thing, we don't think white supremacists are worth trying to convince. And I don't think that trying to pull someone out of an equally impactful ideology falls on the backs and dead bodies of disabled people. If we are dead to you then you are dead to us. so I guess instead of a hello this is a good bye. I think a lot of people say that all you have to do is wear a mask, it shouldn't be that hard. Well for me, that's not enough. An unimaginable number of people have died, and you are complicit. You owe the disabled community more than a fucking mask. Oh you thought this was for you babe? No this shit is for me, to remind myself that I never want to lose the ability to advocate for myself and tell my story, and to give a solid "fuck you", even if I can't do it in person.

# 6

ode to care, the moon, the queers  
that save us

Jesse (they/them) is a  
white, trans, mad poet  
probably hanging out at  
Lake Hiawatha.

there is nothing more beautiful  
    than the care we give and receive  
    because in it,  
we move like the earth  
    think of waves  
    in the rhythm of their coming and going  
shorelines are shaped      and an oceans' current  
    redistributes heat   oxygen and nutrients  
    think of the tallest trees  
in a rainforest      the promise made with the flora  
    and fauna underneath:  
    *there is enough light for all of us*  
orcas are moving   in militant harmony  
    to sink ships  
    to refuse annihilation  
when we reach toward      one another  
    it is not a debt owed   and  
    it is never worthless  
please   we are not machinery  
    our deaths are not statistical inevitabilities  
someone who saved my life   once said:  
    *i want to be the moon for the people i love*  
    and i wonder if they know  
that floating rock   has the gravitational pull  
    to move the earth whole

# 7

## Pandemiclessly

*jazzy (they/them/she) is a white, queer, & disabled creative writer living on Dakota Land in mpls*

*There is widespread agreement among infectious-disease experts that this remains a dangerous virus that causes illnesses of unpredictable severity — and they say the country is not doing enough to limit transmission.*

—The Washington Post

*...It became clear the U.S. was going to “end the pandemic,” not by stopping [the spread of] covid, but by re-narrating its social and political meaning.*

—Death Panel Podcast

When I think of you  
beneath the mask—  
breath sweat  
collecting—  
your philtrum  
a treasure chest,  
tiny pearls of you, salted  
so completely.

I want to cry out  
and many times, I do  
— waking myself  
with my own wet face



in the dark—  
*come home*  
you tell me, urgently  
as if I will  
solve a problem.

I rise, pack clothes  
in the night as if  
I could come to you  
like I used to—  
to share simplicity  
of air and egg breakfast  
of birds  
and open windows, as if

I could still  
lie down on the purple carpet.  
No need for the radio,  
only rain and your singing  
before solving  
our problems  
in person, as if  
I could have

taken deep breaths  
for you.



## Pandemic and Me, In Fragments

### Fragment 1:

There is this hadith, a narration of a declaration made by Prophet Muhammed (sallallahu alayhi wa salaam // may God's prayers and peace be with him), that states a community, in their mutual love and compassion, is like that of a single body. So that, if any part of the body is not well, all other parts share in the sleeplessness and fever. [Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 40]

I fear we are gravely ill.

### Fragment 2:

Honestly, I have a hard time identifying my relationship with the queer community, the community's effect on me, and the inverse, my effect on the community. Truthfully, "the community" feels like an elusive entity detached from my own life. I am a queer mixed disabled Muslim. I am a hijabi. Queer folks, primarily white queers, don't often embrace me into the fold, often reacting to my otherness as though it conflicts with theirs.

The pandemic has only added layers to this disconnect. I struggle to find a genuine sense of belonging within the queer community as the gap between us widens, mirroring the divergence between people's once-declared ethical stances and their attitudes toward COVID precautions. I'm

### *Anonymous*

*My covid-cautiousness is rooted in necessity, for myself as a chronically ill person and for others whose safety is bound up in my own.*

thankful to have found a small group of COVID-cautious queer folks who see me in my wholeness, and I see them in theirs; we fill the gaps in each other's worlds in ways that are safe and joyful. But it took a long while to find these people, and honestly, I still feel rather alone.

*Fragment 3:*

The struggle to trust others and believe in their capacity to love, care, and take action has been a pervasive internal conflict. Trust, for me, is intrinsically linked to integrity. When someone consistently acts according to their declared ethics, my ability to trust them and fully engage with them grows tenfold. But I've been struggling with this even more so the past three years. I've been struggling with witnessing so many folks I once relied on, who have previously acted upon their declared ethics in countless areas, succumb to indifference and complacency. People's willingness to be in a symbiotic state with me, as well as with other disabled and ill folks, has deteriorated as people withdraw from community-driven states of being and back into a state of individualism. It is a painstakingly familiar indifference.

*Fragment 4:*

This pandemic and people's reactions to it—namely, their lack of regard for COVID safety— have left me in a fractured state. Relationships that were based merely on shared activities have drifted. I've moved away from folks who seem irritated by my covid-safe convictions. And in many areas of my life, things feel rather segmented. But I'm not sure; thinking about it has me considering that maybe it's the opposite...? Perhaps I am demanding to be seen and treated in my whole state, and it is my old self, pre-pandemic me,

that is the one that was in pieces? I suppose the pandemic has forced me to require others to see me in my wholeness, to no longer have my disabled and ill existence relegated to a mere undercurrent. It has me wondering that maybe in building relationships that maintain a foundation of safety and respect, relationships that are intentionally and carefully bound to each other's shifting needs, that maybe my disabled existence has flooded into a new current. One that is, although a bit quieter, is so much more beautiful, stable, and nourishing.

*Fragment 5:*

I wish it wasn't so quiet. I want more. I want masked community gatherings, I want a corsi-rosenthal in every Masjid, I want queer and covid-safe iftars, I want to not have to face indignation when I ask about masking, I want to continue safely masking at the airport without TSA testing me for bomb residue. It doesn't need to be like this. Where is the solidarity? Where is the support? I don't understand. I sincerely do not understand.

## *Interview with a disgruntled chef*

How have you felt the impacts of queer and able bodied abandonment, especially in the working class industry when you're both unable to work from home and being disabled from working in the kitchen?

i think i will start by saying i am a white, agender, mad, queer, chronically ill, fat ancom living in occupied Wahpekute territory. i am also a chef with 20 years of experience, and i am currently working within the industry in an unmasked environment in a suburban town that really hasn't given a shit about COVID, since november 2022. me and the majority of my co workers (over 80%) have all experienced COVID at least three to five times. i believe i have been infected with COVID, at \*least\* four times. because of the CDC and WHO's decision to "end the pandemic", finding reliable testing sites is a lot more complex, and rapid tests at home aren't as reliant. so, i don't actually *know* how many times i've been infected. at work, both of my bosses have voiced as long as folx are feeling okay to work, they don't mind if they come in, regardless of whether its covid or the common cold. the language they continue to choose to use deeply suggests they are much more concerned about their business and finances, than the hard working folx they employ. its full on abandonment from people who care way more about keeping their kids in a private school, as opposed to worrying about whether or not they're treating the people who work for them, ethically. its a classic cat and mouse game of managers befriending the crew, then using their friendship as a foot in the door to exploitation. it's been very difficult to find that my empathy reservoirs have dried up because of these dicks. there's no way to win. the only way forward is to get

the fuck out of the restaurant.

things that suck about having 20 years of experience in one specific field: the idea of leaving that field is super daunting. it's intimidating to end anything that you have been a part of for so long. an incredible offer was presented to me during the uprising that gave me the privilege & opportunity to feed people out of necessity and intention. being forced to return into the capitalist grind has been the most soul draining experience of my life. experiencing that in tandem with owners and managers that love cops and don't give a fuck about COVID procedures, this means being stuck having to be exposed to COVID over and over while being exploited by the service industry, 40 hours a week, and still be told that i need to cut corners to save the owners a buck or two. meanwhile they take numerous vacations, work on their tattoo sleeves and heavily depend on their partners for support.

the amount of abandonment felt, specifically from pre-COVID friends and coworkers i reunited with has been devastating. i tried going into it thinking that i could make a change where i was at. its on me. now, i hold a resentment that is growing towards these folx that i used to believe were committed to making changes. or were at least be interested with aligning with the working class, and were interested and invested in organizing. maybe even unionizing. that's just not the case, and its just typical. The capitalist mentality is so ingrained, they can't possibly stop to think about how it's affecting others, outside of their experiences.

i have limited lung capacity and have been undertreated for asthma for as long as i can remember. the first time i had covid was before the vaxx was readily available, and i experienced an entire onslaught of symptoms. it can be said with certainty that i was unwell for 6 solid months. heart inflam-

mation, heat intolerance, and palpitations were parts of long covid times, and i still find in large ways that i am still still living with several complications. all this to say, i am a hypocrite. i am physically disconnected from the community that i feel the most camaraderie with, because of a fucking job. i am physically unable to mask at work, which means that i am an unsafe person. i can and do mask in public, as i am able to pace myself. i have to go slow. that doesn't work in a kitchen environment, where it is hot, humid, and fast paced. masking, very sadly, makes an already difficult task feel very impossible. there's no way to actually isolate yourself in a restaurant. the fact is, that all of our co-workers have been sick three to five times and nobody bats an eye. Some of the people who have been sick the most are still!!! refusing to wear masks, anywhere, simply because they don't want to! i feel completely disconnected with the folx i have established these really good relationships with, and love very much. but, when those connections almost feel invisible, its really alienating. it means i am having to choose survival and pick capitalism just to make it work.

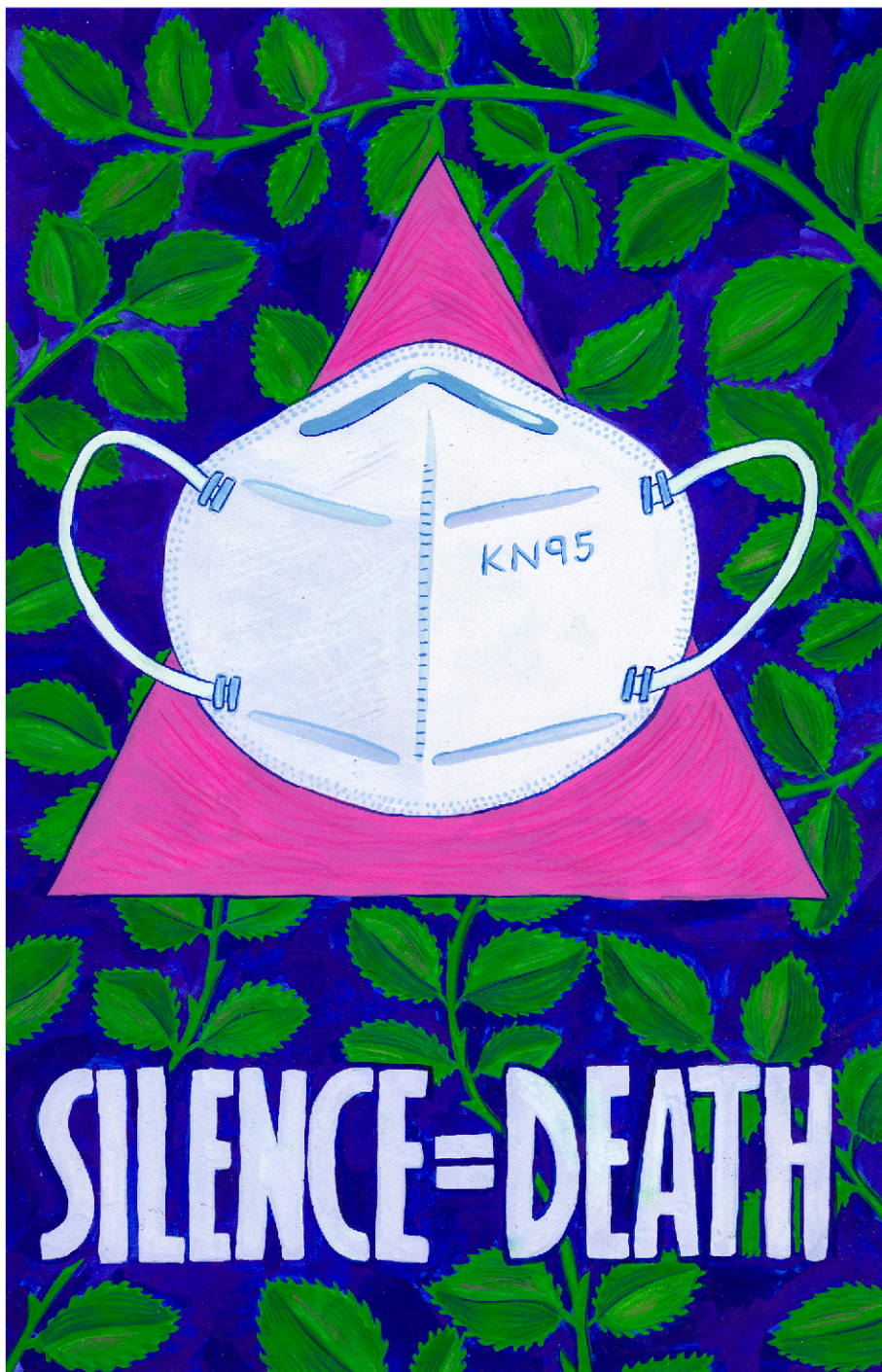
**Friendo: I'm curious, I know how much you love food and you love what you do. Like where do you see your relationship changing with food because of COVID?**

its a lot. i believe in the power of food, but there's this whole concept that california cuisine is gonna save the world. there is not enough turmeric in the world that will rid my body of COVID related inflammation. with decline in health in mind, i have recently discovered that i can't eat most foods without having a reaction to them. my relationship to food has become sad, because like, you know me, i am a fat fucking person that loves to fucking eat and i am not fucking ashamed of that, at all. i fucking love that about me.

I have a really good palate and i'm really good at what i do. it's really frustrating; because of COVID, my talents are being taken away. a lot of my cooking has turned into guesswork, because i can't taste or sample many of the things that i make, because i cannot eat them without getting sick. i have been sick for three solid years, and that's another thing that people just won't hear. i often hear i'm overreacting, being too sensitive, a hypochondriac or it's psychosomatic. i absolutely wish that was the case, but it's not. it'd be so nice if this was all in my head. it is a vascular disease, and nobody wants to talk about it.

i don't have doctor money to figure out what's fucking wrong with me, and we are the experts of our bodies, right? we are the ones who know what is happening to us, and that should be enough to be validated and listened to. what are we supposed to do when healthcare professionals stop listening? i have gone in multiple times to urgent care and emergency rooms to try and figure out what is wrong with me. every doctor i have seen, shrugs their shoulders, and wants to blame it on me being fat. last time i saw a doctor was because i had tinnitus, and they literally prescribed me medication to help me lose weight. this is in the year of our lord, 2023. how do you not feel rage about it? i don't know. i'll let you know, when i do. i could definitely let myself be consumed by the rage really easily, but that doesn't solve anything. It's really about picking your battles. i only have so many spoons throughout the day. if i spend those few spoons being mad at life, then i have to craft spoons from my own flesh, just to make it through the end of the day, showered and fed. i'm tired all the fucking time. i don't have the option to slow down because i simply cannot afford to. the cost of living is too outrageous. as outrageous as the phrase "cost of living" really is. i don't have the answers. i desperately wish i did.





artwork: [fiddleheadfinn.com](http://fiddleheadfinn.com)



jazyzy (they/them/she) is a white, queer, & disabled creative writer living on Dakota Land in mpls

last night the sky asked / tonight the sky asks / tomorrow the sky will ask (a love poem)

1. *if someone else's life depended on it, would you wear a mask in public for the rest of your life?*
2. *if someone else's future depended on it, would you wear a mask in public for the rest of your life?*
3. *if someone else's access to connection and community depended on it, would you wear a mask in public for the rest of your life?*
4. *is your safety more or less important than any other person's safety?*
5. *are your relationships more or less important than any other person's relationships?*
6. *are the relationships you've lost more or less important than the relationships any other person has lost?*
7. *is your loneliness more or less important than any other person's loneliness?*
8. *is your life more or less valuable than any other person's life?*
9. *is your autonomy more or less important than any other person's autonomy?*

10. is your freedom **more or less important** than any other person's freedom?

11. are your options **more or less important** than any other person's options?

12. will you die one day?

13. what is now, then?

14. what will the world remember about you?

15. what will you remember about you?

16. what will you give?

17. what will you receive?

18. what will you do with the rest of your life?

19. what will the rest of your life do for you?

Write us at:  
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