

A STUDY AND PRACTICE  
OF SELF CARE AS  
ACTIVISM

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PEAC

Am I PANICKING?

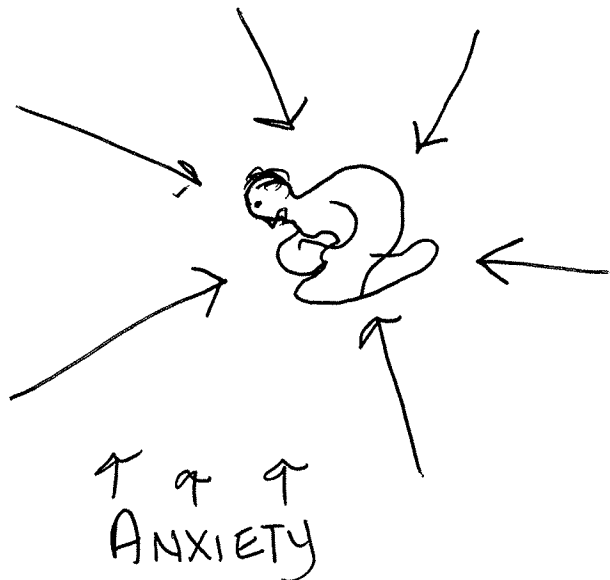
no. I am afraid?

I don't quite feel like I can breathe right. I used to feel like this all the time.

Am I gonna cry? Maybe

Thoughts: I. AM. ~~Not~~ <sup>Puke?</sup> <sup>Cry?</sup> FAILING.

↑  
EXCERPT FROM <sup>MY</sup> NOTES, WRITTEN IN CLASS, PEAC 101 "INTRO TO PEACE, JUSTICE, & HUMAN RIGHTS"  
↑



■ = Alexa ~~XXXXXX~~ (aka Lex) (my sister)

□ = Me (Sierra)

## BRAIN STORM :

LEX: What is the — what is the assignment again?

ME: So, it's like... talk about activism, and essentially that's the only thing that I have to do, in whatever form.

L: And what are you vaguely doing?

M: So, um, I have two things that I'm going off from, almost kind of like found work. Because I'm just looking back at past notes

L: Mm-hmm?

M: And taking meaning out of them...

L: Mmm-hmm

M: And I'm just kind of connecting, um, care for the self and activism, and how that functions — what I've learned about that recently.

L: Yeah, and I think that you could say, um, oh god. I lost it, but I will find it, give me a second...

...  
That, um...

Like...

Oh, goddam it. I ~~am~~ this isn't totally it, but that the ending might be, but not the beginning at all. That like your — the act of you doing this project, and of uh exposing —

M: Working ~~through~~ through this...

L: Yeah, and of exposing <sup>the</sup> like very, you know, personal, very intimate things, in and of itself is a form of activism.

M: Mm-hmm

L: Because — god, I had such a better way to say it — Like, this in and of itself is activism, writing this, not just —

M: I... I don't think it is. I don't know



L: Well, does she have tons of knowledge on mental illness?

M: Yeah.

L: Well, she might not have. ~~Yeah~~ (Laughs...)

M: (Laughs...) No, it's fine. Um, I might include that. I don't think I will.

L: OK, sorry then what were you going to say, then?

M: Um...

L: ~~Yeah~~ ... So, self activism, you were saying.

M: Yeah. Well - no, self care, um... no, well I guess you're right.

L: Self care is a form of - that's, that's what I wanted to say

M: That's what you're saying (overlapping), yeah!

L: Self care is a form of - yeah, my bad.

Self care is a form of activism, in and of itself. That's what I was trying to say.

M: Yeah. Yeah.

So, um, this... I'm going to make this project something that makes me feel good.

I'm going to make it self care. And that -

Because this class is f\*cking stressing me the ~~hell~~ goddam hell out, and like, (laughs) interfering with, um, shit.

But the **community** in our class, the - of the students - is really banding together.

And like, um, the group of us who goes to the prison were coming up with this thing. This concept of a zine, which I told you about.

L: Mmm - hmmm

M: Um - there - we're really working closely with



M(cont.) the people on the inside, um, to like find out what they're comfortable with, what would be useful to them -

L: Mmm-hmm

M: And trying to even acknowledge the fact that we're still kind of in a position of power.

L: Yeah

M: And so like-like try and mitigate for that, like, for example when we're saying um "are you comfortable with such-and-such?" What if someone is not, but isn't comfortable speaking up? So maybe passing around something anonymously, or like um, yeah. Just - This is the first time I actually feel like we're engaging in some form of activism.

L: Yeah

M: 'Cause going in and hanging out with them & having a class with them is great, and it's like, it's probably... I know that they enjoy it. But like I just - I don't feel comfortable calling that activism. I don't think it is. I think it's great. I don't think it's activism.

L: So are you writing about two forms then? Are you writing about that?

M: Um - Right now I'm just kind of brainstorming.

L: Okay.

M: But the connection ~~is~~ between them is that I think the reason I'm able to engage in that right now is because I've been doing a lot of self care. I've been, um - You're here. I've been - well, I've been changing my medication first of all. And I've been having therapy, and having psychiatrist appointments, ~~and~~ and whatever.



M(cont.): And I've also been going vegan, and meditating.

L: [which I did for a project in my PEAC class] I was just gonna say it could be the same concept of the one before -

M: It's very similar, ~~but there's~~ 'cause then -

L: It's just from a different viewpoint, from a different **lense**.

M: Yeah, exactly. So I'm going vegan. And um I'm... yeah, the meditating, and there was another... There was a last one I was - Oh yeah!

I've been exercising, I've been swimming and going to the gym. And like all of these, this time for self care, which like - I haven't been doing any **fking work**. I haven't been doing any schoolwork, pretty much, for weeks more or less. Um, and yet I'm still caring for myself even ~~that~~ though I haven't been doing any **quote schoolwork**, I'm now in a mental state where I feel able to actually put work and thought and, like, **centered effort** into this zine. And, like, I was able to speak on it in ~~the~~ class, and like, help explain it, and - I don't know, I could just tell from inside of myself that it was **useful** what I was saying, which hasn't ~~happened~~ happened in a while.

L: Yeah, and that's a direct result of all these things that you're caring for yourself.

And I don't know if you might want to say like, individually these things might not be enough in and of themselves, but having slowly but surely **accumulated** and



now have reached the threshold that it's enough. And not only does it allow you to um like, go to the prison -

M: Mm-hmm

L: But it allows you to, like be, you know, be really present

M: Yeah, present, and...

L: And like feel energized

M: Mm-hm

L: And like be able to process thoughts, and brainstorm.

M: Exactly

L: Like that's not an ability you had when you were worse

M: Exactly. Yeah. Um. Yeah.

~~Oh~~

L: I know you said it didn't matter how long it is but...?

M: There isn't anything

L: And you're just gonna give her - yeah, I mean, you could finish this quite quickly

M: No, I could finish this now...

And you know what I just realized is, they're very interested in having things be like um new and innovative. I'm gonna just f\*cking write this transcript, man. I'm gonna write this as a transcript, what we just talked about.

L: Awesome

M: I'm doing it in sections. That's gonna be one of the sections.

L: Awesome! ~~Oh~~

3/15/17

In "Carceral Education," Sabrina Alli writes,

*Re-entry programs aim to prevent recidivism despite the insurmountable bureaucracy of extra-penal surveillance....[These] are not an example of the state's generosity, let alone a revolutionary concept in a society that has...5.1 million people under the form of surveillance called "community supervision."*

In "Building a Prison-to-School Pipeline," Larissa MacFarquhar writes,

*Thinking politically meant not falling in love with your own story and letting yourself imagine that...you were special... the redemption narrative...lets society off the hook...*

**Write for a few minutes** about the intersection of these two analyses with the experiences of Elaine Bartlett. Does what happened to her--and the way Gonnerman tells her story of negotiating re-entry programs and becoming a political activist—exemplify, challenge, complexify these claims, or...?

Idle man I have absolutely  
nothing to say right now.  
Not knitting = feeling panicky in this  
moment.

Excuses

excuses

why should my faults

(brain chemistry)

get in the way of

fucking \*  
- academia \*  
\*  
\*





# IDENTITIES

KEY: How I feel about these identities

(PAST) TRAUMA  
CONNECTION POINTS/  
PROUD IDENTITIES

SQUEAMISH ABOUT MY OWN  
PRIVILEGE

Role @ praxis site... Identities I  
carry into RCF:

- white

- woman

Not straight

- white woman

experienced/experiencing  
depression

Never been arrested

grew up in v. white suburban  
neighborhood

Sexual assault ~~survivor~~ ("Survivor"?)

Jewish

sister

Spanish-speaker

daughter

Girlfriend

Fatherless

Friend

Witness to attempted suicide (x2)  
Grieving (father figure / Uncle / Ned)

Femme

Badass

Afraid of my own whiteness/  
Privilege

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑  
"Foucault found that self-writing played an important  
role in helping citizens master the art of living..." (Morell 173)



# CONCLUSION

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This project is the first time I have felt creative in months.

Today I described the experience of depression with a metaphor:

You know when you're wearing sunglasses, and then it gets dark, or you go inside, but forget to take off the glasses? For a while you feel something's wrong, in the back of your mind, but you can't quite pinpoint what it is. Everything is dimmer and less defined, harder to see. Finally, you realize what's going on, and slip off the dark lenses from your grateful eyes. Color! Light! Vibrancy! Again, you can sense the true beauty, light, (and even the darkness) of your world. Relief.  
true

Depression is moving through the emotional and physical world with metaphorical sunglasses.

Unfortunately, no one has the ability to <sup>simply</sup> shed those lenses at will. Wonderfully, ~~and~~ gratefully, joyously, safely... for now, my glasses have lifted.

Finally, I feel again I am a "shaper of the world" ~~(Morell 175)~~ (Morell 175)

Let's hope this lasts.