

SEE NO STRANGER

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Lessons & Practices
of Revolutionary Love

SEE NO
STRANGER

A MEMOIR AND
MANIFESTO OF
REVOLUTIONARY
LOVE

VALARIE KAUR



“This work belongs to all of us. . . . We all have the ability to participate in this great love story. Imagine the stories we tell, the institutions we will build, and the lives we will lead when we affirm that every person **is** a person. Imagine the world we will birth when we see no stranger.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 299)



Welcome!

This Educator's Guide is designed to equip people to practice revolutionary love as a tool for personal and political transformation. We hope that these lessons can help us to nurture “pockets” of revolutionary love in classrooms and communities.

This guide unpacks the 10 core practices of revolutionary love described in *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* by Valarie Kaur. It can be paired with our other educational tools found on the [Revolutionary Love Learning Hub: The Revolutionary Love Compass](#) and the [Reader's Guide](#) to *See No Stranger*.

Who is this guide for?

We invite all educators—classroom teachers, community leaders, faith leaders, youth workers—to use this guide. This guide was designed for educators in the U.S. context, but can be adapted into other contexts as well. It offers a roadmap to teaching, learning, and practicing revolutionary love in classrooms and communities. These lessons are designed to be accessible to a broad audience, as well as students in grades 9-12 and above.

We encourage all participants (educators and students) to read *See No Stranger*, but we also designed these lessons to be accessible to those who have yet not read Kaur's full text. For those wishing to engage more closely with *See No Stranger* as a text, the [Reader's Guide](#) is an essential accompaniment for educators and students to this guide.

We envision these lessons as a *pilot curriculum* that is responding to the social issues of our time, especially COVID-19 and the Movements for Black Lives. We consider these lessons to be evolving and dynamic and for additional educational tools to follow.

Rather than offering a strict script for teaching revolutionary love, these lessons serve as a guide and toolkit to explore revolutionary love through stories, critical thinking questions, reflection activities and additional resources. We invite you to adapt and remix these lessons to best suit your needs and the needs of your students and communities.



For individuals and study groups: Individuals can also use this guide for their own independent learning. Each of the lessons can also be adapted for individual use. Whenever possible, we also invite and encourage people to study in small groups or small “pockets” of revolutionary love. Because revolutionary love is a community practice, these lessons focus heavily on dialogue. We believe and are based on the understanding that our learning and practice are strongest when we work collaboratively.

How to use these lessons

*Revolutionary love is “the choice to enter into labor for **others**, for our **opponents**, and for **ourselves** in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy.” (Kaur, 2020, p. 310)*

This section introduces the structure, learning goals, and pedagogical approaches of the lessons. Before delving into teaching revolutionary love to others, we ask educators to take some time to reflect on the foundations of this framework and their own pedagogical approaches to teaching about social justice.

To guide your students, community members, or yourself through these lessons in revolutionary love, begin with these steps.

To Prepare

****Strongly recommended****

Read [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#) by Valarie Kaur. The ideal engagement with these lessons is to read the full text *before* or *alongside* each lesson.

Explore the Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass

[The Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#) introduces the 10 practices of revolutionary love. Begin here for an orientation to the revolutionary love framework on how to love others, opponents, and ourselves.

Engage with the lessons

We encourage educators to begin by introducing revolutionary love to students with the [Introduction to Revolutionary Love lesson](#), especially for groups who have not read *See No Stranger*. After introducing students to revolutionary love, educators have the option to move sequentially through these lessons or drop in to any of the lessons that interest you and your students.

Learning Goals

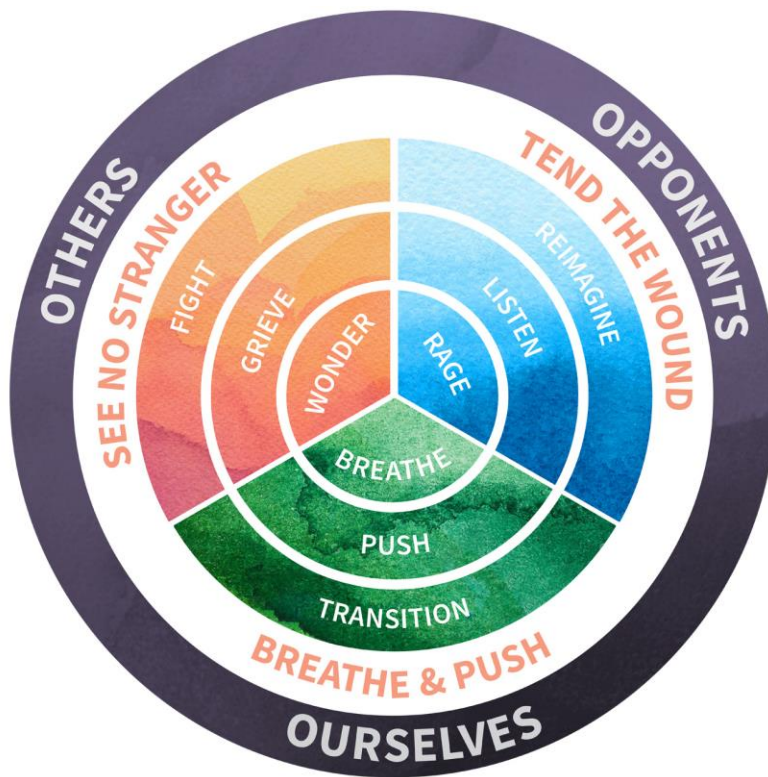
The learning goals of these lessons are:

- To teach and learn about revolutionary love as a praxis for personal and political transformation.
- To examine additional stories, theories, and practices from writers, scholars, activists, and practitioners whose work has informed the framework of revolutionary love.
- To connect the practices of revolutionary love to historical contexts and contemporary social issues and concerns.
- To engage in practices of revolutionary love to challenge power inequalities, dismantle unjust institutions, and create a world that honors the humanity of all of us.

Lesson Format

There are 11 lessons, which includes an introduction to revolutionary love, and a lesson that focuses on each of the 10 core practices of revolutionary love. Each lesson corresponds to a chapter in the book *See No Stranger*. We invite you to read or revisit the chapter as you engage with each lesson.

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The time needed for each lesson plan varies. The reflection and dialogue components are designed to take approximately 1.5-2 hours, and the timing can be flexible based on a group's needs. Each lesson can be divided into multiple sessions (e.g. two 45 minute sessions). Educators can also adapt lessons for longer or shorter time frames.

These lessons supplement the revolutionary love framework with research from the fields of education, ethnic and gender studies, peacebuilding, ethics, neuroscience, public health, others. We invite you to adapt and remix these lessons and incorporate additional forms of learning and expression (e.g. art, music, podcasts, and group projects) to best suit your needs and the needs of your students and communities.

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Lesson Plan Format

1. Title

2. Description

3. Learning Goals

4. Materials Needed

- a. Each lesson includes at least one specific story or case study to ground discussion and application of the selected practice of revolutionary love. Each of the materials selected (essays, articles, films, music, poetry, podcast episodes) are accessible online at no cost. Whenever possible, links to transcripts of audio materials are also included.
- b. **Note:** The stories and examples in the selected materials are particularly U.S.-centered. For educators (especially those located outside the U.S.), feel free to substitute stories or materials that address your specific histories and contexts.

5. Opening Reflection

- a. Reflection is a necessary part in the praxis of revolutionary love and each lesson includes an opening and closing reflection that can also double as discussion prompts. Reflections are generally structured as “think-pair-share” activities that ask students to 1) think/reflect and write about their responses to a prompt, then 2) pair with another student or small group, followed by 3) a large group sharing/dialogue.

6. Definition and Guiding Questions

7. Engagement and Dialogue

- a. This section focuses on the selected readings or films for the lessons, along with sample discussion questions, activities, or writing prompts. This section is intended to be guided and supplemented by the information in the “Key Points” section below.

8. Closing Reflection

9. Key Points

- a. These key points elaborate on the theories and practices of revolutionary love highlighted in each lesson and are intended to guide the engagement, discussion, and reflection sections of the lesson.

10. For Deeper Exploration

- a. This section offers suggestions for future research and study, as well as additional theories and resources to expand the lessons for college-level classrooms.
- b. Additional readings and resources (a partial list)

At A Glance: Overview of Lessons

Lesson	Learning Goals	Topics & Materials*
Introduction to Revolutionary Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To define and explore revolutionary love as a choice to labor for others, opponents, and ourselves in the pursuit of justice To redefine love as more than emotion, but rather as the choice to enter into sweet labor To explore and reflect upon our own understandings and definitions of love 	“Three Lessons of Revolutionary Love In a Time of Rage” (Kaur, 2018)
1: Wonder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the practice of wonder through examining the processes and power dynamics of storytelling To examine the ways that stories reveal information about the listeners, the storytellers, and the society and culture in which it is told To question how issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other social factors shape how stories are told, heard, and valued To reflect upon our own practice of wondering about others 	Wonder and storytelling: “The danger of a single story” (Adichie)
2: Grieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the practice of grieving as a labor of revolutionary love and a practice of solidarity building To learn about and from the fight for Black lives, past and present To learn about and from the experiences of Sikh Americans after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 To examine how collective grieving—in communities and as a nation and world—might transform our visions and actions for justice 	<p>Part 1: Grieving, Anti-Black racism, and revolutionary love: The American Nightmare (Kendi, 2020)</p> <p>Part 2: Grieving hate crimes against Sikh Americans after 9/11: Documentary film: “Divided We Fall: Americans in the Aftermath” (Kaur and Raju, 2008)</p>
3: Fight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the relationship between the practices of revolutionary love, anti-racism, and fighting for justice 	Fighting through anti-racism and revolutionary love: How to build an anti-racist world (Kendi, 2020)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reflect upon our roles and responsibilities in the fight for justice, including our work as accomplices/allies for others 	
4: Rage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the practice of rage as a force for justice To examine the work of women of color and their writings on rage To reflect and learn what our collective rage has to teach us about how to love others, opponents, and ourselves 	Rage, reckoning, and revolutionary love : “Killing Race: Militant Resistance” (hooks, 1996)
5: Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the practice of listening to opponents by studying examples of deep listening To reflect upon our roles and responsibilities in listening to opponents To discern challenges and possibilities of listening to our opponents To examine how we can learn from listening to opponents and apply this information in our work for justice 	Deep listening and revolutionary love: Confederate Pride, White Supremacy, and My State Flag (Moral Courage, 2017)
6: Reimagine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about the theories and processes of prison abolition and their relationship to the practices of reimagining and revolutionary love Exercise our collective imagination by reimagining systems of justice, harm, and collective care, and accountability Consider the practices of rage and listening to opponents in the work of reimagining Consider alternate forms of justice and healing that could be implemented in place of our current systems Reflect upon our own commitments to act in the service of a collective vision of justice 	Reimagining justice: Prison abolition and restorative justice Materials include What a world without prisons could look like (Van Buren, 2017); Ruth Wilson Gilmore Makes the Case for Abolition (<i>Intercepted Podcast</i> , June 10, 2020)
7: Breathe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine “breathing” in revolutionary love through the principles and practices of collective care and disability justice To name and challenge structural inequalities (such as ableism, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, 	Breathing and lessons from disability justice movements: Materials include 10 principles of disability justice (Sins Invalid, 2019); Organizing in a Pandemic: Disability Justice Wisdom

	<p>transphobia) that treat some bodies as less worthy of care, attention, and love</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the role of interdependence and reflect upon our own practices of collective care 	(Irresistible podcast, April 14, 2020)
8: Push	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine the processes of healing from harm and accountability from violence To analyze the principles and movement-building strategies from Tarana Burke's "Me Too" campaign To reflect upon our own processes of accountability and responsibility when we commit harm 	Pushing, healing, and revolutionary love: Me Too is a Movement, Not a Moment (Burke, 2018)
9: Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the processes of transition as individuals, communities, and as a nation To reflect on the practices of transition as a revolutionary act of loving ourselves To cultivate our own bravery in commitments for justice 	Transitioning ourselves, our communities, and our nations: These Are The Times That Grow Our Souls (Boggs, 2003)
10: Joy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore joy as a practice of revolutionary love To engage with artists, activists, and practitioners who explicitly center joy as an act of resistance, resilience, and creation To reflect upon and share the practices, people, objects, and places that bring us joy 	Joy and revolutionary love. Materials include: " On Joy and Sorrow " (Gibran, 1923) and Racism is Terrible, Blackness is Not (Perry, 2020)

Key Points for Educators and Learners

In revolutionary love, *how* we do the work is as important as the work that we do. We believe that our classrooms and communities can be places of deep creativity, bravery, and transformation. We invite you to bring the practices of wonder and revolutionary love into the ways that you teach and learn.

The following are some key points about how to understand and teach what revolutionary love is (and what it isn't).

Revolutionary love is ...

Revolutionary love is an orientation to the world and to the work of justice that is most successfully practiced in community. Revolutionary love is more than an emotion or feeling. It is the ongoing choice to labor for others, opponents, and ourselves.

Revolutionary Love is a praxis.

- We approach teaching and learning about revolutionary love as a *praxis*. The term *praxis* was articulated by Paulo Friere (1970) to describe an educational process that could be liberatory and directed towards social change. To engage in praxis is to engage in a continual cycle of ***theory, action, and reflection***, all of which are directed towards creating social change. Each component is essential to the process, both in practicing and teaching about revolutionary love.
 - **Theory:** Revolutionary love offers principles and practices to guide our actions for social change.
 - We understand that a strong grounding in theory, histories, and data makes us better equipped to create social change. The framework of revolutionary love is informed by multiple sources and fields of study, including intersectional feminist theory, movement building frameworks, ethics, law, education, peace building, public health, psychology, and neuroscience.
 - **Action:** Theory can guide us but must also be activated through action. Revolutionary love calls us to action—to choose to labor for others, opponents, and ourselves. The practices of revolutionary love are designed for us to work collectively to challenge injustice in our communities and institutions.
 - These lessons offer stories, histories, data, and practices to allow us to examine how to act courageously and collectively, to build strong coalitions, and to envision and transition our world towards justice.
 - Education and theory are critical parts of our praxis, but the ultimate goal is to put revolutionary love into practice through sustained and thoughtful action that challenges systems of inequality.
 - **Reflection:** Continual self and collective reflection is a necessary part of this praxis. When we reflect, we pause and allow ourselves to summon our creativity, imagination, and deepest wisdom. When we reflect, we give ourselves time to ask ourselves: Are we breathing? Who are we breathing with? In what ways are our actions aligned with our principles? How can we hold ourselves and others accountable when we have committed harm? In what ways can we continue to challenge ourselves and one another to love more deeply?
 - Each lesson contains an opening and closing reflection to encourage students to engage in reflection as an ongoing practice.

Revolutionary love is brave labor, and it is for all of us.

- Revolutionary love is an embodied and ongoing praxis, one that engages all of our emotions, as well as our actions in the world.
- As with all brave labors, discomfort is a necessary part of the processes of teaching, learning, and practicing revolutionary love. Discomfort is not a sign of failure or deficit but of bravery. Whenever possible, we encourage you to engage these lessons in community or “pockets of revolutionary love” to support each other’s learning.

Revolutionary love is not ...

- Revolutionary love is not an all-or-nothing metric, a panacea, nor is it a set of prescribed actions. Rather, revolutionary love offers a compass and orientation to guide us through the complexities of engaging in the work of justice, including within our communities and institutions.
- Revolutionary love is not a way to transcend or bypass social problems (as in the mistaken belief that *if we just practice the emotion of loving one another, the complex problems will resolve themselves*). Revolutionary love is not any one feeling, but the choice to labor and take action. It requires harnessing many emotions in that labor, including grief and rage. It is the fierce and imperfect work of engaging deeply with the complexities and social issues in our world. The frameworks of revolutionary love offer practices that invite us to breathe, push, and stay in the labor.
- Revolutionary love is not only a process for personal and community transformation, but also a *social transformation* process. We aim to **transform our institutions and systems** towards greater justice. Like the lifelong processes of being actively anti-racist, the practices of revolutionary love require patience, praxis, and commitment, and are directed towards bettering not only ourselves but also our communities and our world.
- Revolutionary love is not a “quick fix.” Like all labors for justice, the practices of revolutionary love require commitment and investment in deep relationships. While we seek to be responsive to the challenges facing our society at any moment, we also know that the work of revolutionary love spans generations. Our investment in revolutionary love is not only about us, but draws from our ancestors, and is directed towards our descendents.
- Revolutionary love is not only about resistance and what we are fighting against. Revolutionary love focuses on reimagining, rebuilding, and remembering what we are fighting *for*. Revolutionary love is not only about critique and dismantling systems, but also about creating equitable institutions that nurture dignity and joy.

Building Our Foundations

The following items outline the assumptions and foundational tenets for these lessons.

- We begin with the understanding that our nation's founding is born from colonization and genocide of Indigenous people, and enslavement of Black people, and that our nation has never fully reckoned with these systems of violence. We understand that these systems of oppression and supremacy continue to order our institutions and persist in our cultures, communities, and even in ourselves.
- We believe in centering the leadership and agency of Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), and other marginalized communities. The examples and readings throughout each of these lessons highlights the scholarship, activism, and wisdoms of these communities, particularly of Black women.
- We understand that any approach to justice must be intersectional, that is, reckoning with the complex ways that systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and other forms of oppression are deeply intertwined and must be addressed collectively.
- We believe we have the power to create change. We understand that structures of injustice and inequality are neither static nor "natural." Rather, these are constructions that are created and maintained but can be dismantled. This understanding that we can transform our world is what we call *critical consciousness* (Freire, 1970).
- We understand that no forms of education are politically neutral, and that a critical education includes questioning and challenging structures of inequality. As scholar Ibram X. Kendi (2019) writes, "*Knowledge is only power if it is put to the struggle for power*" (p. 209).
- We believe that everyone has a role in the labors of revolutionary love at any given time. Empathy and kindness are important, but they are not enough to change the structures of inequality and oppression that we face. To make meaningful, lasting change, we need to address structures of inequality as well. In the words of [adrienne maree brown](#): "Where we are born into privilege, we are charged with dismantling any myth of supremacy. Where we are born into struggle, we are charged with claiming our dignity, joy, and liberation."
- We believe that our practices of revolutionary love should be informed by our histories and ancestral wisdoms while also engaging directly with innovative and creative action for social justice today.
- We believe that all of us are simultaneously teachers and students, and that we all have much to learn from one another.

Additional Resources

Teaching about and with revolutionary love requires continual reflection on our own praxis as educators, so that our pedagogies align with the content we are teaching. We encourage you to

engage in a revolutionary love praxis *alongside* your students, positioning everyone in the group as both teachers and learners.

For educators who may be new or unaccustomed to teaching content focusing on social and racial justice, we strongly encourage you to engage in your own processes of learning *before and alongside* teaching social justice content to your students. This includes exploring internal biases and socialization we all carry. If we do not engage in our own anti-racist, anti-oppressive work, we risk causing harm to students and our communities.

See the [Appendix](#) for [Social Justice Resources for Educators](#), and practices for [Setting the tone](#) for our classrooms including [Land Acknowledgements](#), [Community Agreements and Brave Spaces](#)

All *See No Stranger* page references are taken from the 2020 hardcover edition of [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#)

Our Appreciation

Thank you for joining us in exploring the practices of revolutionary love. We see this guide as a beginning, one step in the ongoing processes of transition and transformation. We invite you to engage with the multitude of excellent resources, books, and toolkits listed here and elsewhere. We hope this guide will equip, challenge, and nourish you and your students and communities.

We are indebted to the work of countless scholars, activists, educators, movement leaders, faith leaders, ancestors, families, and community members who do the work of justice in small and large ways. Thank you for nurturing our spirits and rooting our lives and labor in joy. Thank you for being part of our community. Thank you for being in the labor with us.

To learn more about the work of the Revolutionary Love Project, our campaigns, and our calls to action, please visit www.revolutionaryloveproject.com and follow us on social media at @revloveproject.

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Elizabeth Keller, RLP Social Media Director, copy-edited the Guide.

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Introduction: What is Revolutionary Love?

We recommend that **all students begin with this introductory lesson, especially those who have not read the book *See No Stranger*. **

Description

*“Love is a form of **sweet labor**: fierce, bloody, imperfect, and life giving—a choice we make over and over again. Love can be taught, modeled, and practiced. . . . “Revolutionary love” is the choice to enter into labor for **others**, for our **opponents**, and for **ourselves** in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 310)



This lesson complements Valarie Kaur's 2018 TED talk: [Three Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#) and invites students to examine and explore Kaur's definition of revolutionary love as a force for justice.

Learning Goals

- To define and explore revolutionary love as a choice to labor for others, opponents, and ourselves in the pursuit of justice
- To redefine love as more than emotion, but rather as the choice to enter into sweet labor
- To explore and reflect upon our own understandings and definitions of love

Materials Needed

- Valarie Kaur TED talk: [Three Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#) (20m)
- The [transcript](#) of the talk is also available.
- The [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
- Strongly Recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#) (Valarie Kaur, 2020)
- Material or device to write; art supplies (e.g. markers, colored pencils) and easel paper or whiteboard

Opening Reflection

Before viewing the TED talk, reflect upon the following questions. These prompts can be answered individually and/or in small groups.

Reflect and free-write upon the following questions.

- How do you personally define love?
- How did you learn about love from your family, friends, partners?

Share your responses in groups or pairs. In your groups, consider the following discussion questions:

- What do you notice about these definitions of love? What is similar and different about these definitions of love?
- What types or *kinds* of love are included in these definitions (ie. romantic love, familial love, love of country, self-love)?
- In what ways, and from whom, have we learned what it means to love and be loved?

****Options for educators:**

- If time permits, you may choose to have individuals begin by freewriting about the prompt individually, then work in small groups to create a collective illustration of their responses on larger pieces of easel paper or on a chalk/white board. Small groups could present their illustrations and the discussion questions could be discussed by the class or larger group.

Definition and Guiding Questions

“Love is a form of sweet labor: fierce, bloody, imperfect, and life giving—a choice we make over and over again. Love can be taught, modeled, and practiced. It engages all our emotions: Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit, wonder is the act that returns us to love.”

‘Revolutionary love’ is the choice to enter into labor for others, for our opponents, and for ourselves in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy.” (Kaur, 2020, p. 310)

1. What is revolutionary love, as defined by Valarie Kaur?
2. How is revolutionary love similar and different to our society’s popular definition of love?
3. How can revolutionary love be a force for both personal and political transformation?



Engagement and Dialogue: Introducing revolutionary love

View

- [Three Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#) (Valarie Kaur, 2018, 20m).
- The [transcript](#) of the talk is also available.
- As you view the film, consider the following questions:
 - How does Kaur define revolutionary love?
 - In what ways is Kaur’s definition of love similar or different to your/your group’s definition of love?

Activity: The art of revolutionary love

After viewing the film, engage in the following discussion and illustration activity. If working in groups, you may utilize the same groups as created in the opening reflection.

Discuss the following questions:

- How does Kaur define revolutionary love?
- How is revolutionary love similar or different from the ways that you have been taught about love?
- Which of the 3 directions of revolutionary love—love for others, opponents, or ourselves—are you most curious about? Why?
- Based on Kaur's talk, what is the relationship between love and justice?

Using images, symbols, and phrases, create an illustration of the definition of revolutionary love as defined by Kaur.

****Options for educators:**

- In a larger group, educators may choose to divide the students into 3 groups to focus their illustration on one of the directions of revolutionary love. For example: Group 1: illustrates love for others, Group 2: love for opponents, Group 3: love for ourselves.
- These illustrations could be shared with the large group by having each group present their illustration or by arranging a “gallery walk”: posting the illustrations around the room and asking students to walk around and view the illustrations as though viewing art in a gallery.

After creating and sharing these illustrations, refer to the questions below to facilitate dialogue about the film and illustrations.

Sample dialogue questions

*See the Key Points section below to guide the dialogue.

- What are some key distinctions between love as we have been taught (illustrated in the introductory discussion) and revolutionary love (as defined by Kaur)?
- How does revolutionary love ask us to *act* in ways that are different from the ways that love is “supposed to make us *feel*”?
- Do you think that we need revolutionary love in our communities and country now? Why or why not?
- What do you think are the challenges of fighting for justice through revolutionary love? What are the opportunities and possibilities?
- What do you think revolutionary love looks like in practice?

Closing reflection

Read the [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#) and reflect on the following questions:

- Which of the three directions of revolutionary love—love for others, love for opponents, or love for ourselves—are most challenging for you to practice? Why?
- Which of the 10 practices of revolutionary love are the most intuitive or easiest for you to practice? Which are the most challenging? Why?

After completing this lesson, educators may choose to proceed sequentially through the 10 lessons, or may “drop in” to any of the lessons that interest them.

Key Points

- “Revolutionary love is the choice to enter into labor for *others*, for our *opponents*, and for *ourselves* in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy” (Kaur, 2020, p. 310).
- There are three directions of Revolutionary Love: love for others, opponents, and ourselves. “Loving only ourselves is escapism; loving only our opponents is self-loathing; loving only others is ineffective. All three practices together make love revolutionary, and revolutionary love can only be practiced in community” (Kaur, 2020, p. 310).
- Revolutionary Love is a continual practice, a *choice* to labor and each of us has a role in any given time. We can all be midwives in this time of great transition (Kaur, 2020).
- Revolutionary love draws from the teachings and examples of generations of activists, community leaders, scholars, and ancestral wisdoms, particularly those of Black, Indigenous, women of color.
- “Revolutionary love is demanding labor, but it is also creative, transformative, and joyful labor— immeasurably complex and messy, tumultuous and revelatory, marked by wonder, and worth it” (Kaur, 2020, p. 315-316).



For Deeper Exploration

- Read [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#) (Kaur, 2020)
- Additional readings to accompany this lesson for undergraduate audiences may include *All About Love* (bell hooks) and *Art of Loving* (Erich Fromm)
- Educators and scholars could explore the ethic of love within their specific fields. For example, “How have scholars and practitioners theorized or applied an ethic of love (or an ethic of care) in your field of study?”
 - Examples: In the field of education, scholars/pedagogues who write about teaching and learning through an ethic of love and healing include bell hooks, Paolo Friere, Antonia Darder, Jeffrey M.R. Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morell, Antonia Darder, and Shawn Ginwright.
 - In the field of peacebuilding, scholars include Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach.
 - In ethics, scholars include Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, and other scholars of [moral theory](#)

Additional Resources and Readings (a partial list)

- [Notes and references from the TED talk](#)
- Selected [Reading list](#)

Lesson 1: Wonder

Description

*“It is easy to wonder about the internal life of the people closest to us. It is harder to wonder about people who seem like strangers or outsiders. But when we choose to wonder about people we don’t know, when we imagine their lives and listen for their stories, we begin to expand the circle of those we see as part of **us**. We prepare ourselves to love beyond what evolution requires.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 10-11)

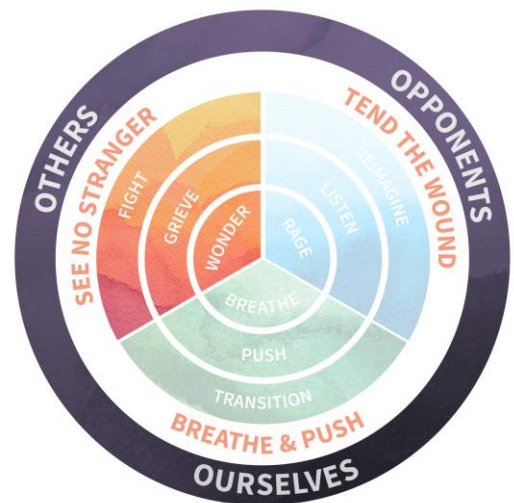
“Seeing no stranger is an act of will. In brain-imaging studies, when people are shown a picture of a person of a different race long enough for comprehension, it is possible for them to dampen their unconscious fear response. We can change how we see.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 26-27)



In *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes that the practice of wonder and “seeing no stranger” can transform us, our communities, and our nation and our world.

Wonder is the first practice of revolutionary love for others. Wonder is the practice of cultivating a sense of awe-filled openness and reflection about others’ thoughts and experiences, their pain and joy, their wants and needs. Wonder involves seeing the world and other people as *part of me I do not yet know*—vast, complex, and worthy of love. When we wonder about other people, we acknowledge that their lives are as vast and complex as our own. We can begin to expand our circles of care when we understand others as part of us.



This lesson focuses on the relationship between wonder, storytelling, and revolutionary love. The stories we tell and hear about others are powerful. Stories reveal a society's values, perceptions, and norms; stories can create bonds or barriers between communities. This lesson highlights Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk: "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009) and asks us to examine how stories can help us to "see no stranger."

In her talk, Adichie highlights the importance of complex, diverse storytelling as a way to honor the humanity of oneself and others. Adichie speaks of her experience as a young girl in Nigeria and the ways that her imagination was nurtured, and also limited, by the British authors she read. She recounts how "single stories" shaped her reality and advocates for the importance of telling complex stories from multiple perspectives that value our collective humanity and dignity.

When we wonder about another person's story and the social forces that influence their experiences, we can begin to ask ourselves how we can grieve and fight with others for a more just world. See the [Lesson 2: Grieve](#) and [Lesson 3: Fight](#) for additional information.

Learning Goals

- To explore the practice of wonder through examining the processes and power dynamics of storytelling
- To examine the ways that stories reveal information about the listeners, the storytellers, and the society and culture in which it is told
- To question how issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other social factors shape how stories are told, heard, and valued
- To reflect upon our own practice of wondering about others

Materials Needed

- TED Talk: "[The danger of a single story](#)" (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2009)
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#) : Chapter 1 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Opening Reflection

Write a free-write response (for approximately 3 minutes) to the following prompt. In a free-write, the goal is to keep your pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) continually for the allotted time, without editing. There are no right or wrong responses. Alternatively, students could create a sketch or use images or memes to respond to the prompt.

- “People expect me to be _____, but I’m actually _____.”

Now reflect on the following questions. Share your response in a group, or pair:

- How does it feel to be perceived or seen differently than you actually are?
- What do you think these expectations of you are based on?
- Do these expectations generally lead to positive treatment by others? If so how?
- Do you experience negative consequences from these expectations? If so, how?
- What do you wish other people knew about you?

Definition and Guiding Questions

Wonder is the first practice of revolutionary love for others. To wonder is to cultivate a sense of awe and openness to others’ thoughts and experiences, their pain, their wants and needs. It is to look upon the face of anyone or anything and say: *You are a part of me I do not yet know.* Wonder is an orientation to humility: recognizing that others are as complex and infinite to themselves as we are to ourselves. Wondering about a person gives us information for how to love them. You can practice wonder for *all* others – animals, trees, living beings, and the earth. Wonder gives you information for how to care for them. Wonder is the wellspring of love.

- How can the practice of *wonder* help us to “see no stranger” and to love others?
- What are the challenges of practicing wonder for others?
- What do we lose or risk by *not* wondering about others?
- What becomes possible for us and for our nation when we practice wonder and “seeing no stranger”?



Engagement and Dialogue

View

[“The danger of a single story”](#) (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2009)

The [transcript](#) of the talk is also available.

As you view the talk, consider the following questions:

- How does Adichie define a “single story”?
- In what ways are single stories dangerous?
- Take note of any quotations that are particularly noteworthy or impactful for you.

Sample questions for dialogue

Reflect upon or discuss the following quotations from Adiche’s talk in pairs or groups.

*To guide the dialogue, see “Key points” below.

- 1) “The problem with stereotypes is not that they are inaccurate, it is that they are incomplete.” (Adichie, 2009)
- 2) "Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again and that is what they become.” (Adichie, 2009)
- 3) “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. . . . When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.” (Adichie, 2009)
 - What do you think about Adichie’s statements above? Can you relate to any of these statements?
 - What is Adichie’s main argument? What are the dangers of the “single story”?
 - What are some “single stories” that you have heard, or have experienced?
 - Which parts (if any) of Adichie’s talk do you relate to? Why?
 - How are “single stories” related to race, gender, class, sexual orientation and other social factors?
 - In what ways do we learn and internalize these stories about ourselves and others? In what ways can we unlearn these stories?
 - In what ways can stories empower and humanize others? Do stories have the power to change the world? Why or why not?

Wonder and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue about the questions below.

- In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes:

Stereotypes are the most reductive kind of story: They reduce others to single, crude images. In the United States, the stereotypes are persistent: black as criminal, brown as illegal, indigenous as savage, Muslims and Sikhs as terrorists, Jews as controlling, Hindus as primitive, Asians of all kinds as perpetually foreign, queer and trans people as sinful, disabled people as pitiable, and women and girls as property. Such stereotypes are in the air, on television and film, in the news, permeating our communities, and ordering our institutions. We breathe them in, whether or not we consciously endorse them. Even if we are part of a marginalized community, we internalize these stereotypes about others and ourselves. In brain-imaging studies, for example, nearly half of black people, queer people, and women exhibited unconscious fear and distrust in response to pictures of people who looked like them. In other words, we live in a culture that makes us strange to ourselves. (p. 17)

 - How does Kaur’s quotation relate to Adichie’s definition of the “single story” and its dangers?
 - What do you think Kaur means when she writes that “we live in a culture that makes us strange to ourselves”?
 - How can the practice of wonder and “seeing no stranger” help us to see beyond “single stories”?
 - How might the practice of wonder help to transform ourselves, our communities, and even our institutions?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader’s Guide](#) for additional discussion questions.

Closing reflection and assignment

Kaur writes that *Seeing No Stranger* is an act of will, one that requires conscious practice. A simple exercise, with massive repetition, can help us to orient to the world with wonder. Repetition can help us re-train our brains to “see no stranger”. This assignment is to experiment with this practice for one week.

Every day for 7 days (or a time frame of your choosing), practice “seeing no stranger.” As you move through the day and encounter people in your classes, on transit, on the street, on TV, etc, practice saying to yourself as you look at their faces: “Sibling, Sister, Brother, Aunt, Uncle, Son, Daughter, Grandparent, Family, etc.” You may also choose to say to yourself, “You are a part of me I do not yet know.”

Each day, take a few minutes to briefly journal about what you notice and learn as you engage in this practice of wonder. Be kind to yourself and others in this practice and consider the following questions:

- What did you notice today as you conducted this exercise?
- Who were the people it was easiest to wonder about and call “family”? Who was most challenging? Why?
- What surprised you about this practice? Did this exercise reveal any strong feelings or biases? If so, how?
- What was this practice like for you? What did you learn about yourself as you practiced wonder?

If possible, share your reflections with others to discuss. In your journal and dialogues with others, consider: what additional practices might you develop in order to cultivate an orientation to wonder?

Wonder is a lifelong practice, one that can be nurturing and joyful. If the practice is challenging, that's okay too. Part of the practice is also not being strange *to ourselves* and offering ourselves our own wonder and empathy.

Key Points

- Wonder is the first practice of revolutionary love for others. Wonder is the practice of cultivating an awe-filled openness and reflection about others' thoughts and experiences, their pain and joy, their wants and needs. Wonder involves seeing the world and other people as *part of me I do not yet know*—vast, complex, and deserving of love. When we wonder about other people, we acknowledge that their lives are as vast and complex as our own. We can begin to expand our circles of care when we understand others as part of *us* (Kaur, 2020).
- Acts of love begin in wonder. We have to wonder about someone in order to know how to love them. “We begin to sense that they are to themselves as vast and complex as we are to ourselves, their inner world as infinite as our own. In other words, we are seeing them as our equal. We are gaining information about how to love them. Wonder is the wellspring for love” (Kaur, 2020, p. 10).
- Wonder is a sustained, dynamic process. Wonder requires practice and conscious repetition. When we are able to wonder about others, we begin to “see no stranger”. Then the labor of love begins (Kaur, 2020).
- The practice of wonder and *seeing no stranger* is ancestral and has been taught to us by spiritual leaders, indigenous healers, and social reformers for generations. “These teachings were rooted in the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual contexts of their times, but they touched a common vision of our interconnectedness” (Kaur, 2020, p. 11).
- Our interconnectedness is also a wondrous, biological fact. The primary DNA in my body is contained in yours and in the bodies of the animals and trees and amoeba. We can look at anything and everyone and say: *You are a part of me that I do not yet know* (Kaur, 2020).
- Reclaiming our capacity to wonder about each other is hard work and it requires practice. Implicit bias, which happens before conscious thought, provides a biological barrier; this response is automatic, but not inevitable. We also face social barriers to “seeing no stranger” in the form of stereotypes and biases that we are conditioned to believe. But with practice, we can train ourselves to see others differently. We have the ability to change how we see others (Kaur, 2020).
- When we are able to wonder about others, we are able to grieve with them and to fight for and with them. These are the practices of revolutionary love for others (Kaur, 2020).



For Deeper Exploration

- Explore Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso's concept of "[majoritarian stories](#)" and "[counter-stories](#)." Majoritarian stories are "mono-vocal" stories that represent stories of privilege and that ignore, misrepresent, and/or dehumanize people of color and other marginalized groups. Counter-stories are "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are often not told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The [counter] story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (Solórzano and Yosso).
- When we think deeply about the stories we tell and the stories we are told (in the media, in our history books), we can practice wonder by asking ourselves:
 - Whose stories are most often seen as valid and trustworthy?
 - Whose stories do we find easiest to cultivate empathy and compassion for?
 - For whose stories do we feel indifference?
 - Whose stories are *not* told? Why?
 - What are the social forces that influence the ways that stories are told and received?

As we work towards justice, we seek not only to wonder about the stories of others, but also to *change the unequal systems* that shape our experiences through discrimination and oppression. Using wonder to examine the power of storytelling offers a starting place to challenge inequalities of power.

- Read John A. Powell's work on two types of stories: [breaking stories and bridging stories](#). Breaking stories focus inward, towards what and who we already know, and against groups we consider to be "other" or "outsider." Bridging stories turn us outwards, towards other groups especially those different from us, in the effort to build connection and belonging. View a [conversation with Powell and Valarie Kaur](#) (along with Lucas Johnson and Monica Guzman Preston) connecting the practices of "bridging" with "seeing no stranger."
- Explore **quantitative studies** on [storytelling and empathy](#) and [reduction or prejudice and in-group bias](#). Research has shown that storytelling, if empathy toward outgroup characters is intentionally induced, can reduce both discriminatory behavior, explicit attitudes, and implicit biases.
- Explore the following questions: Whose stories are told in our school curriculum and textbooks? What is possible when we tell stories of groups who have been left out of our textbooks? Read about the value of teaching disciplines like [Ethnic Studies](#) on students and schools.
- This lesson could be paired with additional examples to highlight campaigns that focus on people who have been rendered invisible or less valued, such as [Say Her Name](#), [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women](#), [Movement for Black Lives](#)
- Explore the [questions](#) and practices of Critical Media Literacy to examine stories in media.
- Learn about Bobbie Harro's model *The Cycle of Socialization* which describes the societal processes that train us to accept certain views and stereotypes and to uphold systems of

inequality, even despite our good intentions. Harro describes how our social identities are learned and enforced through a Cycle of Socialization, which she defines as “pervasive, consistent, circular, self-perpetuating, and often invisible” (Harro, 2000, p. 15). Explore the processes of breaking the cycle of socialization through education, questioning, listening, and working to change unjust systems. Harro’s article *The Cycle of Liberation* provides a visualization of ways to break the cycles of socialization that we all learn.

- Explore [tests on implicit bias](#), as well as [critiques and limitations](#) of these assessments.
- Examine [studies on in-group bias](#) and [cultivating compassion](#)
- Explore readings on systemic racism, oppression, and resistance. A few starting places include *Readings for diversity and social justice* (M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, R. Castaneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), 2013), *Stamped from the Beginning* (Ibram X. Kendi, 2016), and [Scaffolded Anti-Racism Resources](#).
- For additional ways to practice wonder, see [Guide to the Revolutionary Love Compass](#).

Additional Resources and Readings (a partial list)

- [Asian American Racial Justice Toolkit](#): Resource with critical tools and modules to fight structural racism with an intersectional lens. See the Racial Justice Trainings section.
- [Facing History and Ourselves](#): Resource for educators to teach history with a focus on inequalities and discrimination while promoting students’ own roles and responsibilities in present time. Includes resources for teaching both about history as well as contemporary issues.
- [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#): A documentary series about race in the United States, featuring discussion guides, teacher’s guide, and resource pages.
- The [Storytelling Project Curriculum](#): Curriculum on Learning About Race and Racism through Storytelling and the Arts, focusing on the framework of counter stories.
- [Voice of Witness](#): Voice of Witness advances human rights by amplifying the voices of people impacted by injustice through books, educational programs, and tools for educators.
- [Zinn Education Project](#): Resources and pedagogical tools to teach history from a social justice perspective.

Lesson 2: Grieve

Description

“Grief has no end really. There is no fixing it, only bearing it. . . . When we are brave enough to sit with our pain, it deepens our ability to sit with the pain of others. It shows us how to love them.” (Kaur, 2020, p. 43-44)

*“We must be able to say: **This was wrong and must not happen again.** Telling the story is the prerequisite to justice. But for the story to matter, someone we trust must be listening. It is not easy to listen. . . . But it is worth it. Grieving together, bearing the unbearable, is an act of transformation: It brings survivors into the healing process, creates new relationships, and energizes the demand for justice. We come to know people when we grieve with them through stories and rituals. It is how we build real solidarity, the kind that shows us the world we want to live in—and our role in fighting for it.” (Kaur, 2020, p. 44)*



In *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes that grief is a necessary practice in loving others. Grieving with others is the practice of sharing their pain, without trying to minimize or erase it. Grieving with others requires a willingness to be transformed by their experiences, especially those who have suffered trauma and violence. Grieving collectively and in community gives us the information to build solidarity, to fight for justice, and even to share in one another's joy.

In Chapter 2 of *See No Stranger*, Kaur writes about the violence experienced by Sikh and Muslim communities after the attacks of September 11, 2001. She writes:

America's greatest social movements—for civil rights, immigrants' rights, women's rights, union organizing, queer and trans rights, farmworkers' rights, indigenous sovereignty, and black lives—were rooted in the solidarity that came from shared grieving. First people grieved together. Then they organized together. . . . When people who have no obvious reason to love each other come together to grieve, they can give birth to new relationships, even revolutions. (Kaur, 2020, p. 58-59)



When we grieve with communities who have experienced violence, and when we choose to fight with and for them, then grieving becomes a revolutionary act.

This is a two part lesson plan that focuses on the practice of grieving collectively. Part One focuses on grieving for the lives of Black people, especially those lost to police violence, or those whose deaths have not received state justice. Part Two focuses on grieving for those targeted by hate crimes after September 11, 2001. These are only two of the many historical injustices that deserve our nation's collective grief. We hope that this lesson will offer context to the current political crisis in the United States and provide opportunities to envision how revolutionary love can guide our actions to address inequality.

Please note that as this is a lengthier lesson, we encourage educators to divide the discussion and engagement into multiple class sessions.

Learning Goals

- To explore the practice of grieving as a labor of revolutionary love and a practice of solidarity building
- To learn about and from the fight for Black lives, past and present
- To learn about and from the experiences of Sikh Americans after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001
- To examine how collective grieving—in communities and as a nation and world—might transform our visions and actions for justice

Materials Needed

- Part 1
 - “[Kindness](#)” (poem) by [Naomi Shihab Nye](#)
 - [The American Nightmare](#) (Ibram X. Kendi, June 2020)
- Part 2
 - Film: “Divided We Fall: Americans in the Aftermath” (Kaur and Raju, 2008).
 - The film is 1 hour, 38 minutes, available in full [here](#).
 - Note the length of the film. Depending on the length of your class meetings, you may wish students to view the film prior to gathering as a group.
 - [Divided We Fall Dialogue Guide](#).
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#) : Chapter 2 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Part 1: Grieving Black Lives

Opening Reflection

Read the poem "[Kindness](#)" by [Naomi Shihab Nye](#) and reflect on the following questions.

- What are your impressions or feelings about this poem?
- In the poem, what is the relationship between grieving, loss, and kindness?
- What is a phrase or image from the poem that is meaningful or interesting to you? Why?

Definition and Guiding Questions

Grief is a necessary practice in loving others. To grieve with others is to share their pain, without trying to minimize or erase it. Grieving with others requires a willingness to be transformed by their experiences, especially those who have suffered trauma and violence. Grieving collectively and in community gives us the information to build solidarity, to fight for justice, and even to share in one another's joy.

- How is grieving an act of love? How can collective grieving with others be a practice of solidarity and a revolutionary act?
- How can the practice of wonder help us to love and grieve with others, even those we do not know?
- What is at stake for us when we grieve together? What is to be gained? What is lost when we have failed to grieve as a nation?
- What can we learn from the fight for Black lives, past and present?



Engagement and Dialogue

Read

[The American Nightmare](#) (Ibram X. Kendi. June 2020). Highlight words and phrases that most interest and challenge you in the article.

Sample questions for dialogue

*To guide the dialogue, see “Key Points” section below.

- What is Kendi’s main argument in this essay? How does Kendi define the “American nightmare”? What are the qualities and characteristics of this nightmare, as experienced by Black Americans?
- What was most memorable, surprising, or challenging to you about this essay?
- Kendi writes, “While black Americans view their experience as the American nightmare, racist Americans view black Americans as the American nightmare.” How does Kendi support this statement in his essay? Do you agree or disagree with his argument, and why?
- Kendi begins this essay by referring to the text *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* by Frederick Hoffman. Kendi cites Hoffman’s text which reads, “Gradual extinction [of Black Americans] is only a question of time.” In what ways have the ideas in Hoffman’s text continued to influence Black Americans and U.S. policies in the present day (e.g. in the health care system, in treatment by police, etc)?
- Kendi writes, “The two explanations available to Hoffman more than a century ago remain the two options for explaining racial disparities today, from COVID-19 to police violence: the anti-racist explanation or the racist explanation.” How does Kendi define both the anti-racist explanation and the racist explanation?
- “Many American probably believe both explanations—and live the contradiction of the American dream and nightmare.” What does Kendi mean by this statement and what examples does he offer as evidence? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Grieving Black lives and revolutionary love

*See “Key Points” below to guide dialogue about the sample questions below.

- How does Kendi’s essay relate to grieving as a practice of revolutionary love?
- Kendi names Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd and asks us to “*step into their souls*”. In what ways does Kendi’s descriptions surprise or illustrate for you the realities of anti-Black racism in the U.S.? How do these experiences contrast to the promises of the “American dream”?
 - How does this exercise of *stepping into the souls* of these individuals relate to the practice of “wonder” and “seeing no stranger”? ([See Lesson 1: Wonder](#))
- In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes:

Grieving together, bearing the unbearable, is an act of transformation: It brings survivors into the healing process, creates new relationships, and energizes the demand for justice. We come to know people when we grieve with them through stories and rituals. It is how we build real solidarity, the kind that shows us the world we want to live in—and our role in fighting for it. (p. 44)

How does this passage relate to Kendi’s essay?

- Kaur (2020) also writes of the United States:

Our story of exceptionalism doesn't allow us to confront our past with open eyes. A nation that cannot see its own past cannot see the suffering it has caused, suffering that persists into the present. A nation that cannot see our suffering cannot grieve with us. A nation that cannot grieve with us cannot know us, and therefore cannot love us. (p. 57)
- How does this statement relate to Kendi's essay?
- Kendi notes that even within the danger experienced by Black people, "Black people experience joy, love, peace, safety."
 - Why do you think it is important to acknowledge these realities in addition to what Kendi describes as the "unforgettable moments of toil, terror, and trauma [that] have made danger essential to the black experience in racist America"?
 - In what ways can acknowledging and protecting joy be a practice of fighting and revolutionary love? (For additional discussion, see [Lesson 10: Joy](#))

Part 2: Grieving with Sikh Americans after September 11, 2001

Opening Reflection

Reflect upon the following questions:

- What do you know or remember about the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York, Washington D.C.? If you are old enough to remember, what do you remember feeling or hearing about this time?
- What are the stories you were taught (in school, by the media, by the people around you) about these attacks? What were you taught about and the events leading up to and following these attacks?
- In the grieving that followed the attacks, who or what were we grieving as a nation?
- What, if anything, were you taught about Muslim or Sikh Americans at this time?

Definition and Guiding questions

Refer to [definition and guiding questions](#) above.

- Additional guiding question for Part Two: What can we learn from Sikh Americans experiences, post 9/11, about grieving and love?

Engagement and Dialogue

View

[“Divided We Fall: Americans in the Aftermath”](#) (Kaur and Raju, 2008) (1 hour, 38m)

The documentary “Divided We Fall” chronicles hate crimes after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 as told through the perspectives and stories of Sikh Americans.

As you view the film, consider the questions:

- What new information did you learn while viewing this film?
- Which part of the film surprised or upset you?
- Which part of the film gave you hope?

Sample questions for dialogue

- What were your reactions to the film?
- How were your memories of (or experiences in learning about) 9/11 similar or different to those seen in the film?
- What new information did you learn? Which part of the film surprised or upset you?
- Which part of the film gave you hope?
- What lessons do you think we should have learned from the experiences of Sikh Americans after 9/11?
- For additional dialogue and discussion prompts, see the [Divided We Fall Dialogue Guide](#).

Grieving with Sikh Americans and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue about the sample questions below.

- How could the practices of *seeing no stranger* change how Sikh and Muslim Americans were treated after 9/11 and in present day? ([See Lesson 1: Wonder](#))
- In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) asks:
 - What does it look like for a nation to grieve together? I am not talking about the hollow rituals of grief—singing the national anthem, lowering the flag, firing rifles into the air, or the stilted offerings of ‘thoughts and prayers.’ I am talking about sitting with pain together, modeling how to do that in public view, reflecting quietly on our deepest values, and mourning the dead, all of the dead. (p. 58)
 - How might you respond to this question? What would it look like for a nation to grieve together, especially in grieving those groups most directly impacted by historical and on-going violence? What might this grieving make possible?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional questions and practices.

Closing Reflection

Kaur (2020) writes:

America's greatest social movements—for civil rights, immigrants' rights, women's rights, union organizing, queer and trans rights, farmworkers' rights, indigenous sovereignty, and black lives—were rooted in the solidarity that came from shared grieving. First people grieved together. Then they organized together. Often, they sang and celebrated together. “We sang our grief to clean the air of turbulent spirits,” writes poet Joy Harjo. This is not the dominant narrative of American history, but, if you look closely, you can see many stories of solidarity. In response to great violence or injustice, there are people who rush to bury the dead, cut down the lynching noose, or attend the memorials to say: Not in my name. When people who have no obvious reason to love each other come together to grieve, they can give birth to new relationships, even revolutions. (p. 58-59)

Reflect on this passage and the following questions:

- In what ways can shared grieving lead to solidarity?
- How can the practices of grieving and “seeing no stranger” help us to transform ourselves, others, and our institutions?

Key Points

- To grieve with others is the practice of sharing their pain, without trying to minimize or erase it. Grieving with others requires a willingness to be transformed by their experiences, especially those who have suffered trauma and violence. Grieving collectively and in community gives us the information to build solidarity, to fight for justice, and even to share in one another's joy (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 2).
- "Grief is the price of love" (Kaur, 2020, p. 43). We do not need to know people in order to grieve with them. Grieving is how we come to know people. Grieving is a practice rooted in wonder. Grieving in community can be transformative (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 2).
- Everyone will grieve in our lives, but not all of us will grieve for acts of violence in our communities. Communities who are targeted by violence (due to racism, sexism, xenophobia, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, or a combination of these and other factors) experience grief and trauma that is both historical and continuing in the present time.
- Grieving is necessary to solidarity. Grieving in community gives us the information we need to fight for those who experience violence and injustice. "If we are present to pain. . . we can begin to ask: How do we fight for one another?" (Kaur, 2020, p. 58). Grieving shows us what we need to fight against, and fight *for*.
- Grieving is both a personal and political act. In order to transform our nation, we must grieve for the violence that our nation has committed: against Indigenous people, against Black people, and others. Grieving collectively and truthfully as a nation opens the possibilities of accountability, healing, justice, and even shared joy (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 2).
- For additional information and discussion points, see:
 - Curriculum guides on the [Divided We Fall](#) website
 - See [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice



For Deeper Exploration

- Continue to explore the issue of grieving and accountability as a nation:
 - In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) asks, “What does it look like for a nation to grieve together?” (p. 58). What do you think this looks like? What is possible if our nation grieves its most vulnerable people? How would and should a nation acknowledge and grieve the violence of its past?
 - Explore texts that pose the questions of a national reckoning and accountability for our nation’s history of violence: such as Ta-Nehisi Coates’s [The Case for Reparations](#), the work of Ibram X. Kendi, and the writing of Indigenous scholars and leaders such as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.
 - See Judith Butler’s [Precarious Life](#) where she addresses the question: Whose lives are grievable after violence?
- Learn the histories of movement building and community organizing rooted in the solidarity that arose from shared grieving. These movements include our nation’s civil rights, immigrants’ rights, women’s rights, indigenous rights, and queer and trans rights movements. Examine not only the historical violence experienced by these communities, but also their continued resilience and agency in challenging injustice.
- Read Iris Marion Young’s [“5 Faces of Oppression”](#) (2000) to for definitions of historical and systemic oppression and violence.
- Explore further the importance of grieving and fighting for Black lives. Read about [Movement for Black Lives](#) and examine how practices of collective grieving have shaped this movement’s development and policy platform.
 - View [The Urgency of Intersectionality](#): Kimberlé Crenshaw (TED talk) for an introduction to the analysis of intersectionality and importance of grieving and fighting for Black women, including Black trans women.
 - Read “Call It What it Is: Anti-Blackness” (kihana miraya ross, 2020) for an analysis of the specific forms of racism and dehumanization experienced by Black people and [“The Condition of Black Life Is One Of Mourning”](#) (Claudine Rankine, 2015)
 - NOTE: As we grieve with others, remember that we are not only honoring people’s deaths, but also how they deserve to live, thrive, and be joyful. See [Lesson 10: Joy](#) for more information.
- Examine ways that Islamophobia and xenophobia continue to shape contemporary policies, media discourse, and content in our students’ curricula.
- Read about the histories of Sikh Americans and their contributions in the United States. *The Making of Asian America* (Erika Lee, 2015) offers an introduction to these histories.
- Contextualize and [address acts of bullying in schools as acts of xenophobia](#).
- Learn about [increasing hate incidents against Asian and Asian Americans](#) since the COVID-19 pandemic. Contextualize this information in the histories of Asian Americans and their resistance against injustice. An excellent source to examine the complexities of Asian American history is [A Different Asian American Timeline](#).

- Explore studies in neuroscience that suggest practices of grieving while also remaining anchored in the present moment. One source: *The Body Keeps the Score*. (Van der Kolk, B., 2014).

Resources and Reading List (a partial list)

- Multiple reading lists about anti-racism and anti-Black racism exist. Some examples are [here](#) and [here](#).
- See also “[Lessons 3: Fight](#)” and “[Lesson 6: Reimagine](#)” additional discussion about fighting for Black lives.
- Selected resources on 9/11 and challenging Islamophobia:
 - [Commemorate 9/11 by Confronting Islamophobia](#): Article and lesson plans
 - The [Islamophobia Syllabus](#)
 - [Islamophobia is racism](#) syllabus
 - [Sikh Coalition](#)
 - [SALDEF](#): Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
 - Resources to combat violence:
 - [Bystander intervention trainings](#): A resource and training to stand up for others when you witness hate or harassment
 - [Hate Free Zones](#): A community defense system to protect communities from violence
 - [Not In our Town](#): A resource to combat hate, racism, and bullying and that works to build safe, inclusive communities for all.
- [Grieving together as an act of revolutionary love](#): Conversation with Valarie Kaur and Melissa Canlas about grieving during the COVID-19 pandemic, hosted by Dream Corps and the Revolutionary Love Project.
- See the [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice grieving.

Lesson 3: Fight

Description

*“The question therefore is not whether or not we will fight in our lives but **how** we choose to fight.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 67)

*“When you love someone, you fight to protect them when they are in harm’s way. If you ‘see no stranger’ and choose to love all people, then you must fight for **anyone** who is suffering from the harm of injustice. This was the path of the warrior-sage: the warrior fights, the sage loves.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 92)



To fight is to choose to protect those in harm’s way. To fight with revolutionary love is to fight against injustice alongside those most impacted by harm, in a way that preserves our opponents’ humanity as well as our own. This commitment to fight comes from an understanding of our interconnectedness. To fight with revolutionary love is to recognize the resilience of communities who have been historically targeted by oppression: Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), women, queer and trans communities, disabled communities, and others. Practicing revolutionary love means understanding that we have a responsibility to fight against injustice wherever we see it. This includes challenging unjust ideas and actions in ourselves, our communities, and our institutions.



In Chapter 3 of *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur describes how she learned to fight for justice after 9/11, both in the external world—protesting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—and also in her personal life—fighting to protect herself and those she loved against violence, racism, and sexism. Kaur writes of the importance of our biological urge to fight: “Honor that in yourself. You are alive and have

something worth fighting for. . . . How will you channel that into something that delivers life instead of death?" (Kaur, 2020, p. 97).

This lesson focuses on the practice *fight*: the third practice of revolutionary love for others. Social reformers have long grounded their fights against inequality in the ethic of love. In recent years, the ethic of love has been embraced by a new generation of individuals and communities seeking to transform unjust systems. This lesson focuses on solidarity and allyship/accompliceship as practices of fighting against anti-Black racism and fighting for Black lives.

For educators unaccustomed to teaching about racial justice, we recommend that you prepare by exploring some of the recommended resources in the introduction to this curriculum, as well as by [setting or revisiting community agreements for your group](#). For this lesson, as with each of the lessons, we also recommend that you read through and process the content in this lesson, preferably in dialogue with others, *prior* to teaching it.

As with each of the lessons in this Educator's Guide, this lesson is not meant to be comprehensive or conclusive, but rather one step in a life-long practice of anti-racism and revolutionary love. We recommend that you pair this lesson with [Lesson 2: Grieve](#). For additional information about fighting for justice, see [Lesson 6: Reimagine](#).

Learning Goals

- To explore the relationship between the practices of revolutionary love, anti-racism, and fighting for justice
- To reflect upon our roles and responsibilities in the fight for justice, including our work as allies/accomplices for others

Materials Needed

- Interview with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi: [How to build an anti-racist world](#) (May 2020). The [transcript](#) of the interview is also available.
- [The Role Of White Co-conspirators In Dismantling Systemic Racism](#) by Andrew Greenia
- "[On Making Black Lives Matter](#)" (Roxanne Gay, 2016)
- [Alicia Garza: Tweet](#) (May 27, 2020)
- Additional readings (optional)
 - [How To Be an Anti-racist](#) (Ibram X Kendi, 2019)
 - [Call It What It Is: Anti-Blackness](#) (kihana miraya ross, June 4, 2020)
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 3 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Key Terms

Anti-Blackness: “Anti-blackness is one way some black scholars have articulated what it means to be marked as black in an anti-black world. It’s more than just ‘racism against black people. . . Anti-blackness describes the inability to recognize black humanity. . . . Anti-blackness covers the fact that society’s hatred of blackness, and also its gratuitous violence against black people is complicated by its need for our existence” ([kihana miraya ross, 2020](#)).

Racism:

- “Racism is a system of advantage based on race and supported by institutions, policies and practices that benefit dominant groups and disadvantage subdominant groups. Racism is a social expression of power and privilege” ([National Educational Association](#)).
- Racism is the belief in the superiority of whiteness over other races. Racism manifests when power is used to deny access, rights, and/or opportunities to a particular group or person based on their racial background (CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum).
- Racism is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 54).
 - (Definitions from Tatlong Bagsak Critical Concepts Handout, 2020)

Anti-racist: A descriptor of behavior that supports anti-racist policies or actions. Anti-racist policies and actions understand that there is no inherent superiority or inferiority of any racial group. Antiracist policies are those which advocate for racial equity and justice. Anti-racist behaviors identify root problems of inequities with abuses of power and unequal systems, rather than assuming that inequities are the result of deficiencies in groups of people (Kendi, 2019).

For additional terms and strategies for teaching about racism, see [Social Justice Resources for Educators](#).

Opening Reflection

Respond to the following 2-part reflection:

- What do you know about how communities fight against injustice? Generate a list of ideas, and be as specific as you can.
 - What examples of movements or campaigns can you name?
 - What were these groups fighting against?
 - What were these groups fighting *for*?
 - What do you know about the values, actions, and strategies utilized by these communities or groups?
- How do you define or describe “power”? In what ways does power influence how people fight for justice? Create an illustration or drawing to represent your definition.

Share your responses with a group or pair. In your discussion, consider the following questions:

- What are some of the ways that you have seen individuals and communities fight against injustice? (e.g. through protest? boycotts? media campaigns? legislation? through caring for one another?)
- Is power a positive or negative force in the fight for justice? Why or in what ways?
- What do you notice is similar or different in your pair or group's responses?

Educators may wish to share or compile these responses in a shared document, or ask students to share in small groups and report back to the class.

Definition and Guiding Questions

To fight is to choose to protect those in harm's way. To fight with revolutionary love is to fight against injustice alongside those most impacted by harm, in a way that preserves our opponents' humanity as well as our own. When we fight for those outside our immediate circle, our love becomes revolutionary.

Why is fighting necessary in the labor of revolutionary love?

- How can revolutionary love inform how we fight against injustice?
- How can the practices of *wonder* and *grieving* help us to fight for justice?
- What do we risk when we fight? What do we lose when we choose *not* to fight?
- What are our own metaphorical swords and shields in the fight for justice?



Engagement and Dialogue

Listen

Listen to the interview with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi: [How to build an anti-racist world](#) (May 2020). The [transcript](#) of the interview is also available.

As you listen to the interview, consider the following questions:

- How does Kendi define anti-racism?
- How can we build an anti-racism world?

Sample group dialogue questions:

- How does Kendi define anti-racism? What are some of the strategies and actions Kendi outlines to build an anti-racist world?
- Kendi states, “to be anti-racist. . . is to recognize that. . . either there's something wrong with people or there's something wrong with power and policy” (13:14). How do you understand what Kendi means by this statement? Do you agree or disagree, and why?
- Kendi argues, “And so I'm not really asking white Americans to be altruistic in order to be anti-racist. We're really asking people to have intelligent self-interest.” In what ways is it in the self-interest of white Americans to live in an anti-racist society?
- Why does Kendi say that “We are addicted to racism” in this country?
- How does Kendi define “feelings advocacy”? What are the limitations of “feelings advocacy” and what does he recommend instead?
- What do you think about Kendi’s argument? What points do you agree with? What points do you disagree with, and why?

Fight and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue about the sample questions below.

- Kendi states, “At the heart of being anti-racist is love. . . to love humanity is to push humanity to be a better form of itself.” In what ways does this statement relate to the practice of *fighting* with revolutionary love?
- To fight with revolutionary love is also to recognize the ongoing fight and resilience of communities who have been historically targeted by oppression: Indigenous, Black, people of color, women, queer and trans communities, disabled communities, and others. Fighting with revolutionary love means understanding that we have a responsibility to fight against injustice wherever we see it. This includes challenging unjust ideas and practices in ourselves, our communities, and in our institutions.
 - Ijeoma Oluo, the author of *So You Want To Talk About Race*, writes, “The beauty of anti-racism is that you don’t have to pretend to be free of racism to be anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself.”

And it's the only way forward." How do you relate to this statement? In what ways does Oluo's statement relate to the practice of *fighting* with revolutionary love?

Additional dialogue and engagement: How will I fight? The roles of accomplices/allies

There are many ways to define the word "ally." The word "ally" is often used to describe an individual or community who engage in the work of "helping" other communities in their struggles for justice. However, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color have long asked for others to do more than "help" but to do the brave work of making issues of injustice their own. In the words of Lilla Watson and other Aboriginal rights activists from Queensland, Australia: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Some Indigenous and Black leaders have called for the language and framework of "accomplices" or "co-conspirators" rather than allies. One way to understand these distinctions is through the following definition:

An ally will mostly engage in activism by standing with an individual or group in a marginalized community. An accomplice will focus more on dismantling the structures that oppress that individual or group—and such work will be directed by the stakeholders in the marginalized group. Simply, ally work focuses on individuals, and accomplice work focuses on the structures of decision-making agency. (<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/ally-or-accomplice-the-language>)

To be a co-conspirator is to use your privilege to take risks and "put something on the line" with and for the people most impacted by violence.

To learn more about how to fight and love others as an ally/accomplice/ or a co-conspirator, explore the following

- [The Role Of White Co-conspirators In Dismantling Systemic Racism](#) by Andrew Greenia
- ["On Making Black Lives Matter"](#) (Roxanne Gay, 2016)
- [Alicia Garza: Tweet](#) (May 27, 2020)
- [Ally v. Co-Conspirator](#) (Bettina Love, March 19, 2019)

Sample dialogue questions

*See "Key points" below to guide dialogue about the sample questions below.

- What is challenging or impactful to you about these readings?
- What critiques do these authors make of the role of an "ally"? What are the limitations of the word and practice of "allyship"?
- In her remarks, how does Love define the distinctions between allies and co-conspirators? How is the example of early slavery abolitionists related to the practice of being a co-conspirator?

- Why does Gay write that “Black people do not need allies”? What does she, and these authors, call for instead?
- In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes the importance of continuing the practice of “ancestral solidarity”:

People of color survived oppression throughout our history through acts of solidarity. Shallow solidarity was based on the logic of exchange—You show up for me, and I will show up for you. But deep solidarity was rooted in recognition—I show up for you, because I see you as part of me. Your liberation is bound up in my own. (p. 82)

 - How does Kaur’s statement relate to the readings about allies and accomplices above?
- In [The American Nightmare](#) (June 2020) cited in [Lesson 2: Grieve](#), Ibram X. Kendi asks, “Will we fight for black people to live? History is calling the future from the streets of protest. What choice will we make? What world will we create? What will we be?”
 - How would *you* respond to Kendi’s statement?
 - Based on these readings in these lessons, what commitments, skills, and ideas does fighting for justice require? In what ways does fighting for justice require us to act as accomplices or co-conspirators in the work for justice?

Closing reflection

In *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes about the importance of honing our “swords and shields” in the fight for justice. Kaur writes of her own Sikh faith and the Sikh warrior tradition of fighting to protect and love one another. In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) poses the following four questions:

- “First, what is your sword, your kirpan? What can you use to fight on behalf of others—your pen, your voice, your art, your pocketbook, your presence?”
- “Second, what is your shield, your dhal? What can you use to protect yourself and others when the fight is dangerous—your camera, legal counsel, a group of allies, public witness?”
- “Third, what is your instrument, your dilruba [to lift your spirit and center your mind]?”
- “Finally, who is your sacred community, your sangat?” (p. 98).

Reflect upon the questions above. Free-write, journal, draw, or discuss your responses to these questions. Share your responses with a group or a partner. What surprised you about what you wrote (or drew or heard)? What additional swords and shields do you want to practice with?

Alternatively, or in addition to the reflection above:

- Read and complete and discuss the reflection in Deepa Iyer’s [Mapping Our Social Change Roles in Times of Crisis](#).
- Reflect upon and discuss the following questions (From [TatlongBagsak.org](#))
 - What will you and your organization forgo to ensure the liberation of Black lives?
 - What will you and your organization do or change to ensure the liberation of Black lives?

- How will you cultivate relationships within your communities and across communities to build transformative solidarity?

For additional discussion, pair this lesson with [Lesson 6: Reimagine](#).

For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional discussion questions.

Key Points

- Fighting is necessary in the work of justice and the labor of revolutionary love. What matters is *how* we fight and the values that guide us. When we fight with revolutionary love, we know that we are not fighting only to remove individual bad actors, but to transform institutions, cultures, and systems of inequality (Kaur, 2020). See also [Course Lesson 6: Reimagine](#).
- The practices of *wonder and grieving* can give us the information that we need to fight. As we fight, we follow the lead of Black, Indigenous, and women of color, along with other communities who have been most harmed by injustice—this includes queer and trans people, people with disabilities, and others. This means that we center the concerns, experiences, and demands of those most harmed by injustice, and we use this information to inform our own commitments to action (Kaur, 2020).
- Fighting is not based on a logic of exchange. Transformative, deep solidarity is rooted in recognition: “*I show up for you, because I see you as part of me. Your liberation is bound up in my own*” (Kaur, 2020, p. 82).
- Everyone has a role in fighting for justice, and these roles shift and change. We each must develop our own “swords and shields” and we must also work in community with others to fight against injustice in our institutions (Kaur, 2020). Our own processes of knowledge are important in this process, but it is equally important to continue to address our institutions. As Kendi writes, “Justice requires awareness. Awareness doesn’t necessarily lead to justice. . . Knowledge is only power if it is put to the struggle for power.”
- Fighting with revolutionary love requires understanding and building collective power. Power is often used and (mis)understood to be a negative force (*abuse of power*), but power also means “to be able.” When we fight with revolutionary love, we ask ourselves *what are we able to create with and for one another?*



Key Points, *continued*

- Fighting through revolutionary love means asking ourselves how we combat the realities of violence without succumbing to violence ourselves. This is brave, and sometimes dangerous, work, and it requires all of us.
- Fighting is risky, and so is *not* fighting. Fighting is an action, but choosing not to fight is also an action. When we choose not to fight, we also risk losing parts of our own humanity. There is a concept in peacebuilding of “moral injury”— that when we fail to act in the face of injustice, we too suffer a kind of moral and emotional injury. Because we live in a structurally unjust society, there is no neutral action. As Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said, “Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”
- When we fight with revolutionary love, we work to embody the world we are fighting for. Fighting is not always the direct action of protest in the streets, but also the slow and steady presence of building relationships, caring for one another, investing time and presence in our communities.
- *How we do the work is as important as the work that we do.* There will be times when we feel hopeless and overwhelmed. At those times, we breathe, rest, and nourish our joy so that we can return to the labor and *last* (Kaur, 2020). See also [Lesson 7: Breathe](#).



For Deeper Exploration

- For additional reflective tools to examine our roles in movement building, see models such as Daniel Hunter's [Building a Movement To End the New Jim Crow](#).
- Explore the principles and practices of non-violence. Resources include [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolence](#), “*Nonviolence: A Road Less Traveled*” (Jo Vallacot), and *The Dynamics of Nonviolent Actions* (Gene Sharp).
- Examine social movements and campaigns that have rooted themselves in solidarity and love. Sources include: [When we fight we win](#) (Jobin Leeds and Agit Arte); [Love With Power: Practicing Transformation for Social Justice](#) by Kristen Zimmerman and Julie Quiroz from [Movement Strategy Center](#); and the webinar [Love in a Time of Violence: How do we #LeadwithLove when we're being attacked](#) (2016) featuring Judith LeBlanc (Native Organizer's

Alliance), Fahd Ahmed (DRUM & #NoMuslimRegistry), and adrienne maree brown (Co-Editor Octavia's Brood).

- Questions to consider for each of the resources above:
 - What were these groups or campaigns fighting *against*?
 - What were these groups or campaigns fighting *for*?
 - What were the shared practices and values of these groups or campaigns?
 - What specific actions and strategies did they employ? How were these actions and strategies informed by an ethic of love?
 - What were some of the challenges they faced?
 - What did these groups risk in fighting? What did they gain?
 - What did you learn about the impact of this group's work, both the internal transformation and external impact?
 - What surprised or most interested you about this group and their work? What are some of the takeaways for you?
- Learn about the work of organizations like [DRUM: Desis Rising Up and Moving](#) and their processes of [transformative solidarity](#).
- Study how intersectional analyses can help us to fight more inclusively and strategically. Starting places include [The Urgency of Intersectionality](#) (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2016), [How to do intersectionality](#) (Rinku Sen, 2017), *Intersectionality* (Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, 2020).
- Explore the lesson on "[Reimagine](#)".
- For additional ways to practice fighting in revolutionary love, see the [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#).

Additional Resources and Readings (a partial list)

- [Activist Songbook](#) a collection of 53 songs and raps to counteract hate and energize movements. (Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis)
- [Anti-racism resources for white people](#)
- [Actions for Solidarity: #BlackTransLivesMatter](#)
- [#BlackDisabledLivesMatter](#) (Britney Wilson, 2016)
- [The March Continues: Five Essential Practices for Teaching the Civil Rights Movement](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- Movement for Black Lives: [Anti-racism support services](#)
- [Scaffolded Anti-Racist Resources](#)
- [Shareable Anti-racism Resource Guide](#) (Tasha K, 2020)
- [Showing Up For Racial Justice](#)
- [Show Up: Your Guide to Bystander Intervention](#) (ihollaback.org)

Lesson 4: Rage

Description

“I thought of all of us who have been trained to suppress our rage—women, especially women of color. Rage is a healthy, normal, and necessary response to trauma. It is a rightful response to the social traumas of patriarchy, white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 130)

“Divine rage is fierce, disciplined, and visionary. . . . The aim of divine rage is not vengeance but to reorder the world. It is precise and purposeful. . . . It points us to the humanity of even those who we were fighting.”

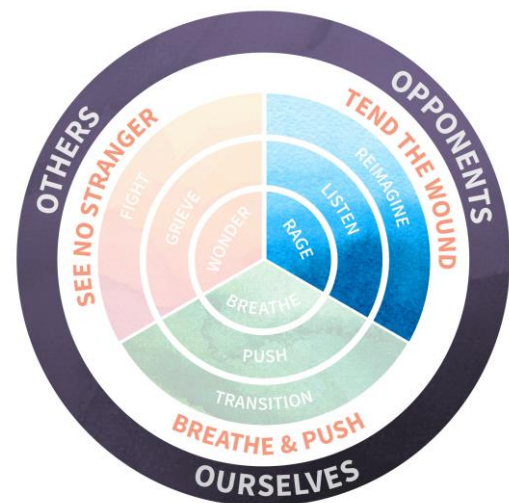
(Kaur, 2020, p. 130)



Rage is the first practice in loving our opponents. To rage is to honor and tend to our own pain so that trauma does not hijack our ability to see another’s humanity. To rage as a practice of revolutionary love is to listen deeply to our rage against injustice so that we have the information and energy to transform ourselves and the world.

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur defines an opponent as:

any person whose beliefs, words, or actions cause violence, injustice, or harm. The word “enemy” implies permanence, but “opponent” is fluid. We have a range of opponents at any given time, distant and near. Even the people closest to us can become our opponents for a moment. It is daring to put all these people in one big category, but it is useful, for whether our opponents are political or personal, persistent or fleeting, we can practice tending the wound—ours, and if it is safe, theirs. (p. 312)



Note Kaur's use of the word "opponent" rather than "enemy": The word "enemy" implies permanence, but "opponent" is fluid and changeable. The practice of rage is a practice in tending our own wounds before we can tend to the wounds of our opponents.

In Chapter 4 of *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur describes her struggles with rage: rage at the person who sexually assaulted her, and at the police officer who physically assaulted her. Kaur writes that she had initially believed that she needed to ignore or minimize her rage in order to love her opponents. Only after multiple, failed attempts to tame her rage did she realize that her answer was to tend to her wounds and to process her rage in safe containers—spaces where she could express her rage without shame or harm to herself or others.

In revolutionary love, Kaur concludes that rage is necessary in the practice of loving others, as she writes, "Perhaps our task as human beings is to find safe containers for our raw reactionary rage—and then choose to harness that energy in a way that creates a new world for all of us."

Learning Goals

- To explore the practice of rage as force for justice
- To examine the work of women of color and their writings on rage
- To reflect and learn what our collective rage has to teach us about how to love others, opponents, and ourselves

Materials Needed

- Song and Lyrics: "[Black Rage](#)" by Lauryn Hill
- "[Killing Race: Militant Resistance](#)" by bell hooks. From *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, 1996
 - You may wish to assign this reading prior to class/group meeting.
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 4 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Background Content: Rage, Reckoning, and Revolutionary Love

This lesson focuses on the experiences of Black women and rage and focuses primarily on an essay by bell hooks, feminist theorist, cultural critic, and writer. In "Killing Rage: Militant Resistance," hooks describes her experience boarding an airplane with a friend, and the numerous experiences of racism and sexism that they experienced along the way: in hailing a cab, upgrading their tickets to first class, her friend being reseated out of first class to accommodate a white man. Through each of these experiences, the silence and acceptance of bystanders were another form of complicit discrimination.

hooks acknowledges feeling a “killing rage” at the white man seated next to her on the plane. She reflects upon the larger systems of race and racism and describes the ways that racism silences Black people and their rage. She writes, “We learned when we were very little that black people could die from feeling rage and expressing it to the wrong folks. We learned to choke down our rage.” At the same time, she writes that white rage is not only accepted, but also condoned by the state, as evidenced by white people killing Black people out of rage or fear. “White rage is acceptable, can be both expressed and condoned, but black rage has no place and everyone knows it.”

hooks writes of the uses of rage and its “potential not only to destroy but to construct” and even to heal. The framework of revolutionary love and the practice of rage draw upon the tradition of Black women like hooks who insist that rage is a healthy response to injustice and violence. As the Black poet, writer, and mother, Audre Lorde writes, “Anger is an appropriate reaction to racist attitudes, as is fury when the actions arising from those attitudes do not change.” Expressing, sharing, and listening to our rage can offer us the information we need to fight injustice.

Opening Reflection

Listen and examine the lyric to the song “[Black Rage](#)” by Lauryn Hill, written in response to the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014.

- Consider the questions:
 - According to Hill, what are the foundations of Black rage? What historical events or systems is she referring to?
 - What do you think Hill means when she sings, “I simply remember all these kinds of things and then I don’t fear so bad.” Why do you think rage helps her to feel less fear?
 - Is Black rage a positive or negative force in her life? Why?
- *To learn more about how Black Lives Matter was founded in Ferguson from an ethic of love, see [Ch. 3 Lesson: Fight](#)*

Definition and Guiding Questions

In revolutionary love, rage is the first practice in loving our opponents. To rage is to express our body’s most fiery energy, it is to tap into our body’s power to protect ourselves and others. To rage is to honor and tend to our own pain so that trauma does not hijack our ability to see another’s humanity. When we listen deeply to our rage against injustice, we gain the information and energy we need to transform the world.

- In what ways is rage a practice of Revolutionary Love?
- Why is rage a necessary practice in loving opponents?
- What does rage, particularly the rage of Black, Indigenous, and women of color, teach us about justice?
- How can rage be a generative force for justice?



Engagement and Dialogue

Read

[“Killing Race: Militant Resistance”](#) by bell hooks (1996).

Sample dialogue questions

Consider the following quotations:

- “I grew up in the apartheid South. We learned when we were very little that black people could die from feeling rage and expressing it to the wrong white folks. We learned to choke down our rage.”
- “Now, black people are routinely assaulted and harassed by white people in white supremacist culture. This violence is condoned by the state. . . most black folks believe that if they do not conform to white-determined standards of acceptable behavior they will not survive. We live in a society where we hear about white folks killing black people to express their rage.”
- “Confronting my rage, witnessing the way it moved me to grow and change, I understood intimately that it had the potential not only to destroy but also to construct. Then and now I understand rage to be a necessary aspect of resistance struggle. Rage can act as a catalyst inspiring courageous action.”
- “Rage can be consuming. It must be tempered by an engagement with a full range of emotional responses to black struggle for self-determination.”

Sample questions

- What is hooks main argument?
- What do you think about hooks argument, and the statements above? What parts of hooks’ essay do you agree or disagree with, and why?
- hooks writes that Black rage is silenced by systems of white supremacy and that Black people have learned to mute their own rage. According to hooks, what are the consequences for Black people and others when Black rage at injustice is muted and silenced?
- What roles do racism and sexism play in determining whose rage is seen as socially acceptable?
- According to hooks, how can rage be both constructive and healing?

Rage and revolutionary love

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur defines an opponent as:

any person whose beliefs, words, or actions cause violence, injustice, or harm. The word “enemy” implies permanence, but “opponent” is fluid. We have a range of opponents at any given time, distant and near. Even the people closest to us can become our opponents for a moment. It is daring to put all these people in one big category, but it is useful, for whether our opponents are political or personal, persistent or fleeting, we can practice tending the wound—ours, and if it is safe, theirs. (p. 312)

Note Kaur’s use of the word “opponent” rather than “enemy”: The word “enemy” implies permanence, but “opponent” is fluid and changeable. The practice of rage is a practice in tending our own wounds before we can tend to the wounds of our opponents.

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue about the questions below.

- In *See No Stranger*, Kaur writes, “I thought of all of us who have been trained to suppress our rage—women, especially women of color. Rage is a healthy, normal, and necessary response to trauma. It is a rightful response to the social traumas of patriarchy, white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty. But we live in a culture that punishes us when we show our teeth. . . Black and brown people have been schooled in the suppression of our emotions as a matter of survival.”
 - In what ways does this quotation relate to hooks’ article?
- Kaur also writes about “divine rage.” “Divine rage is fierce, disciplined, and visionary. . . . The aim of divine rage is not vengeance but to reorder the world. It is precise and purposeful. . . Perhaps our task as human beings is to find safe containers for our raw reactionary rage—and then choose to harness that energy in a way that creates a new world for *all* of us.”
 - How does this excerpt relate to rage as a practice of revolutionary love?
 - In what ways is hooks’s description of the healing potential of rage similar or different to Kaur’s description of “divine rage”?
 - How can rage, which is often considered a destructive force, be a force for creation and love?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader’s Guide](#) for additional discussion questions.

Closing Reflection

Kaur writes that the revolutionary practice is not to suppress our rage, or let it explode; but to express our rage in *safe containers*. The practice of rage is also allowing others, *especially those most harmed by violence*, to express their rage without silencing or muting it in the name of “civility.” Kaur (2020) writes:

Divine rage can make people uncomfortable: It can feel disruptive, frightening, and unpredictable. There are those who wish to police such rage in the name of civility. But civility is too often used to silence pain that requires people to change their lives. Rather than taming public expressions of moral outrage, perhaps it is up to the rest of us to train our ears to “**hear beyond [what we are able to hear]**” in the words of theorist Judith Butler, so that we can discern the truth of the pain of injustice and confront our own complicity and responsibility.

Just as we need accomplices to hold protected spaces where the most traumatized among us tend to our grief, so, too, do we need accomplices to stand by us when we express our rage, and help others to understand it. (p. 134)

Consider this passage and reflect upon the following questions:

Exploring my own rage

- What is my relationship to my own rage? What, if any, are my own practices for expressing and releasing rage?
- What, if any, are my safe containers for rage? How can I practice supporting these containers for others?
- What enrages me the most? What information does my rage carry? What does my rage tell me about what I love and want to protect and fight for?

Exploring the rage of opponents

- Whose rage do I find most challenging to listen to? Why?
- How do I see the practices of rage in our current political moment? For example, what are activists and protestors expressing rage about? How is this rage connected to love?

Key Points

- The first step to loving our opponents is rage. We cannot sustain love for people who have hurt us without first reckoning with our own trauma and pain. The practice of loving opponents is *tending the wound*. We must also tend to our own wounds, trauma, and rage before we can do the labor of listening and tending to opponents (Kaur, 2020).
- Rage and love can and do co-exist. Rage reminds us that we have an inherent desire for justice, which is fully compatible with love. When we reclaim rage in labors of love, we can access our full ability to fight for ourselves and others. “It is not the anger of other women that will destroy us,” writes Audre Lorde, “but our refusals to stand still, to listen to its rhythms, to learn within it, to move beyond the manner of presentation to the substance, to tap that anger as an important source of empowerment.”
- Rage is necessary and can be creative and generative. Safe expressions of rage can lead us to pathways for healing, for individuals, communities, and systems, without blinding us to the humanity of our opponents. Once we are able to release our rage, we are able to ask, “What information does my (or our collective) rage carry?” (Kaur, 2020).
- At the same time we seek to nurture our own safe containers, we also work to listen deeply to the rage of others, without policing their divine rage out with calls for “civility” that silence the call to action (Kaur, 2020).
- We need to train ourselves to listen to rage, particularly the rage of Black and Indigenous communities. For example, As Robin Di Angelo (2018) writes, “It is white people’s responsibility to be less fragile; people of color don’t need to twist themselves into knots trying to navigate us as painlessly as possible.”
- We express rage as a practice of love so that we can reclaim our ability to wonder and to listen to our opponents. If we are immersed in our rage and trauma, we may not be able to wonder and listen. This is okay. If we are tending to our rage, the practice of wonder and listening becomes the work of our allies and accomplices. Revolutionary love is a community praxis, and we all have our roles in the labor of revolutionary love at any given time. (Kaur, 2020)



For Deeper Exploration

- Read: “[The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism](#)” by Audre Lorde (1984)
- Explore theorists such as Judith Butler and [Sara Ahmed](#) and their writings on rage.
- Read [studies](#) that suggest the connections between [anger](#), injustice and physical pain and health.
- Examine the role of white supremacy and sexism that condition men to release unchecked rage, and train women and girls to suppress our rage. This conditioning is not only based on gender, but also intersects with race, ethnicity and other social factors.
- Explore the context and histories of institutional racism in the United State and the roles of rage and protest. Sources include: [Institutionalized Racism: A Syllabus](#) and [1619 Project](#).
- See [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice rage and revolutionary love

Additional Resources and Readings (a partial list)

- [Beyond the Messy Truth](#) (Van Jones, 2017)
- [Eloquent Rage](#) (Brittney Cooper, 2018)
- [Killing Rage: Ending Racism](#) (bell hooks, 1996)

Lesson 5: Listen

Description

*“Deep listening is an act of surrender. We risk being changed by what we hear. . . .Empathy is cognitive and emotional—to inhabit another person’s view of the world is to feel the world with them. But I also know that it’s okay if I don’t feel very much for them at all. I just need to feel safe enough to stay curious. The most critical part of listening is asking **what is at stake** for the other person. . . . [Then] I ask myself, **What is this story demanding of me? What will I do now that I know this?**”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 144)

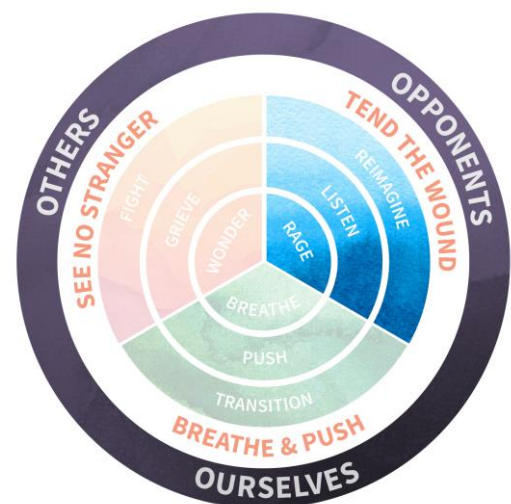
“Our goal is to understand them. . . . In understanding the cultural forces that shape such a belief, and the institutions that embolden people to act on it, we can better focus on what we need to fight: not a few bad actors, but entire policies, platforms, and echo chambers that perpetuate supremacy. In order to create a safer world for all of us, we must not only defeat such opponents but invite them into transformation.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 156)



Listening to our opponents is seeking to understand them. It is an act that preserves their humanity—and our own. Listening as a practice of revolutionary love is both moral and strategic. The goal of listening is not to agree with our opponents, but to *understand* them. Listening gives us the information we need to fight strategically against harmful systems and to build a world that includes all of us.

Kaur (2020) defines an opponent as “any person whose beliefs, words, or actions causes violence, injustice, or harm. The word ‘enemy’ implies permanence, but ‘opponent’ is fluid” (p. 312). Listening to our opponents is rigorous work and difficult labor, especially if it means listening to



opponents who may mean us harm. We may not always have the capacity to listen to our opponents—and this is okay.

The overall practice of loving opponents is called “tending the wound” (Kaur, 2020, p. 312). When we are actively tending to our own wounds, trauma, or rage, it is not necessarily the right time to listen to our opponents. But when we are able, we can practice listening to opponents. We can listen for the ways in which their wounds drive them to cause harm.

In Chapter 5 *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes about the practice of listening to opponents. She recounts her experience of hearing three men in a restaurant in Los Angeles who used a racial slur. She decided to speak with them and asked them to consider looking at her as a little sister, just as she looked at these men as her uncles. In hindsight, she realized that she might have put herself in a dangerous situation; she writes, “Someone had to listen to them. . . . I’m just not sure it had to be me” (Kaur, 2020, p. 158).

The practice of listening as an act of revolutionary love is a continual and community process. As Kaur (2020) writes, “tending wounds is the practice of a community, not the sacrifice of an individual” (p. 314). When we cultivate listening in community, we can take the time to tend to our own healing when needed, and to give others permission to do the same. The following lesson examines the work and practice of listening: how to practice developing our listening skills, while we also discern when it is safe for us to listen.

Learning Goals

- To explore the practice of listening to opponents by studying examples of deep listening
- To reflect upon our roles and responsibilities in listening to opponents
- To discern challenges and possibilities of listening to our opponents
- To examine how we can learn from listening to opponents and apply this information in our work for justice

Materials Needed

- [Confederate Pride, White Supremacy, and My State Flag](#) (20m video) and [Should the Confederate flag still fly in Mississippi?](#) (10m video) (Moral Courage, 2017)
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#); Chapter 5 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Background Content

In 2016, artist, rapper, and writer Genesis Be staged an artistic protest of Confederate Heritage Month that made national headlines. In the short documentary film [Confederate pride, white supremacy, and my state flag](#), Be shares her experiences in combating attacks and harassment that followed her protest. The film follows Be as she travels to her home state of Mississippi to speak with Louis, a childhood friend and proud descendant of Confederate soldiers. The films document their dialogue.

Opening Reflection

Identify and reflect upon 3 scenarios.

- 1) Reflect upon a time when you heard something that you *strongly* disagreed with. This may be something you read on social media, in the news, or in conversation with another person.
 - a) What were your first impulses or reactions? How did your body feel in those moments? (i.e. Did you notice any tenseness in your body? Did your breathing change? Did you feel sensations of heat or cold?)
 - b) How did you respond or react, both internally and externally? Are there different ways that you *wish* you had responded or reacted externally? If so, how?
 - c) What do these experiences tell you about the *challenges* of listening to opponents?
- 2) Think about a time when you felt deeply heard by someone who you did not always agree with.
 - a) In what ways did this person allow you to feel heard and respected even if they did not agree with what you were saying?
 - b) How did you feel in this conversation? How did your body feel?
 - c) If you cannot recall an example, can you imagine what this might sound and feel like?
- 3) Can you recall a time when you witnessed people in disagreement who were able to listen to each other—even if the conversation was impassioned and did not reach agreement? This might be an exchange you witnessed on social media, in a film or book, or in person.
 - a) What was the situation? What did you notice about these interactions?
 - b) If you haven't experienced this, can you imagine what it might look like?
 - c) What do each of these experiences tell us about the possibilities of listening?

Share your responses in a pair or a group.

****Note to educators:** You may choose to have students do a free-write and then work in pairs or groups to dialogue with one another about these questions. You may also ask students to illustrate (with symbols, images, and words) what these interactions looked and felt like to then share these illustrations.

Discussion questions for the group:

- What did you notice about what you shared, and what was shared?

- What are some of the challenges and possibilities of listening to others even when you disagree?

Definition and Guiding Questions

To listen to our opponents is to seek to understand them—not to change them, or persuade them, not to compromise with them, or legitimize them. Listening to our opponents preserves their humanity—and our own.

Listening is not just a moral act; it is strategic. Listening enables us to fight in smarter ways for justice—not only to remove bad actors from power but to change the cultures that radicalize them. This is how listening to our opponents becomes a powerful act of revolutionary love.

Ask yourself: When is it my role to listen? When am I emotionally and physically safe? When can I take on the labor of listening when others are not safe to do so? We can all be one another's accomplices.

Definition of opponent

Kaur defines an opponent as “any person whose beliefs, words, or actions causes violence, injustice, or harm. The word ‘enemy’ implies permanence, but ‘opponent’ is fluid.” Listening to our opponents is rigorous work and difficult labor, especially if it means listening to opponents who may mean us harm. We may not always have the capacity to listen to our opponents—and this is okay.

The overall practice of loving opponents is called “tending the wound” (Kaur, 2020, p. 312). When we are tending to our own wounds, trauma, or rage, it is not the right time to listen to our opponents. But when and if we are able, we can practice listening to opponents so that we can listen for the ways in which their wounds drive them to cause harm.

- In what ways is listening to opponents an act of revolutionary love?
- What are the goals of listening to our opponents? What is required of us when we practice deep listening?
- *Who* should be asked to do the labor of listening to our opponents? What are the roles of allies or accomplices in the practice of listening to opponents?
- What do we risk when we listen to opponents? What might we gain? In what ways should deep listening inform our actions for justice?



Engagement and Dialogue

View

[Confederate pride, white supremacy, and my state flag](#) (20m video) and [Should the Confederate flag still fly in Mississippi?](#) (10m video)

- As you view these short films, notice your reactions and responses, particularly those in your body (For example: Were there moments when you felt anxiety or tension in your body? Were there moments when you felt relief or other sensations?)

Sample questions for dialogue and reflection

- What surprised or interested you from these films?
- What did you think about Genesis's conversation with Louis about the Confederate flag?
 - What did you notice about the ways that they communicated with each other?
 - How would you describe their interaction? Would you describe their conversation as successful? If so, why? If not, why not?
- In the second film: What did you think about the way that the groups of Mississippians spoke and listened to one another?
 - What did you notice about these conversations?
- How do these short films illustrate some of the challenges and possibilities of listening to our opponents?
- In listening to opponents, Kaur (2020) writes:
Our goal is to understand them. . . . In understanding the cultural forces that shape such a belief, and the institutions that embolden people to act on it, we can better focus on what we need to fight: not a few bad actors, but entire policies, platforms, and echo chambers that perpetuate supremacy. In order to create a safer world for all of us, we must not only defeat such opponents but invite them into transformation. (p. 156)
 - What do you think about this statement? Did you see this kind of understanding take place in these films? If so, how?
- Are there other issues you wish had been discussed in these films? If so, what?
- John A. Powell (2019) writes about *breaking stories and bridging stories*. *Breaking stories* focus inward, towards what and who we already know, and against groups we consider to be "other" or "outsider." *Bridging stories* turn us outwards, towards other groups especially those different from us, in the effort to build connection and belonging.
 - What kinds of breaking and bridging stories do you notice being told in these videos?
 - Why do you think Genesis chose to begin these conversations with Louis, rather than a different opponent? (Note that it took many months after her protest, and subsequent time to process its effects before she engaged in these conversations).

Listening and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue from the sample questions below.

- How can listening to our opponents be a practice of revolutionary love?
- How are the practices of listening and wonder (see [Lesson 1: Wonder](#)) related?
- Anger and divine rage are often important and necessary parts of these dialogues as well. How might expressions of anger or rage influenced these conversations? What challenges or possibilities might expressions of anger have added to these conversations? (see [Lesson 4: Rage](#))
- The practice of listening and revolutionary love includes discerning *who* should do the listening in a given moment. The examples in this lesson highlight individuals like Genesis who spoke directly to those (Louis and others) with opposing views. This is courageous labor. However, listening does not always need to be borne by the people and communities experiencing or targeted by violence.
 - How is Louis’s commitment to continue having these conversations with other white people an act of revolutionary love, and an act of allyship/accompliceship?
- Kaur (2020) writes that in the practice of listening to opponents:

No one should be asked to *feel* empathy or compassion for their oppressors. I have learned that we do not need to *feel* anything for our opponents at all in order to practice love. Love is labor that returns us to wonder—it is seeing another person’s humanity, even if they deny our own. We just have to choose to wonder about them. (p. 139)

 - How do you understand Kaur’s statement? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- In Chapter 5 of *See No Stranger*, Kaur writes that listening is about cultivating empathy, but empathy is not enough to create the political and social transformation we need to remake the world. She writes:

We can have all the empathy in the world for a group of people and still participate in the structures and systems that oppress them. We might believe we are listening, but we have journeyed only half of the circle. We have drawn close to the story and lost ourselves in another’s experience, but we haven’t returned to ourselves and asked: What is at stake for *me*? Is it the collapse of my privilege? Is it an expansion of whose struggles connect with mine? What will I *do* differently now? (Kaur, 2020, p. 144)

 - What does this quotation reveal about the challenges of listening as both a practice of personal *and* political transformation?
- In *See No Stranger*, Kaur writes about the political transformation that can be made possible through deep listening and action. She writes:

Imagine if we as a nation had treated Obama’s election, not as the end of white supremacy, but as our first real opportunity to dismantle it. Imagine if, on the day after the inauguration, we had gathered in the same spaces where we had organized in order to discuss truth and reconciliation in America. We might have

initiated it ourselves, block by block, practicing that hard, genuine listening together—listening in order to confront the past and create a new future. . . . Imagine if we had each assumed our role as Kings—as voices in a dialogue that allowed for reckoning and reconciliation on national and local levels, the sort that could lead to real, binding unity. . . . Some of us might have been able to tend to the rage and grief of disaffected white people before they were whipped into racist nationalist fervor. In those eight years of opportunity, might we the people have begun to birth the America that Obama had lifted before our eyes? (Kaur, 2020, p. 152)

- How would you respond to Kaur's question in this passage? In what ways can deep listening lead to solidarity and political transformation? What would be required of us to do this?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional discussion questions.

Closing Reflection

- Kaur (2020) writes, “No one should be asked to *feel* empathy or compassion for their oppressors. I have learned that we do not need to *feel* anything for our opponents at all in order to practice love. Love is labor that begins in wonder—it is seeing another person's humanity, even if they deny yours. We just have to choose to wonder about them.” (p. 139)
 - Reflect upon this statement: What parts of this statement do you agree or disagree and why? In what ways does listening to our opponents reflect the “choice to labor” for opponents, regardless of our personal feelings about any specific individual?

Additional reflections

- Consider: Who is one person or group I could practice listening to? This could be a friend, family, or community member whose views you do not always agree with. This could also be the practice of reading differing viewpoints in the media, or listening to podcasts with individuals with differing beliefs than yours. **There is no need to practice with your most difficult opponent.** You could consider a person for whom you are able to both listen to *and* practice wonder. John A. Powell calls this the practice of building a “[short bridge](#)” so that we can practice building longer bridges with our opponents. The goal of listening is to understand, not agree, and the practice of listening is to build these skills, one small step at a time.
- If you do not yet feel ready to listen, consider: How can I learn by *listening to other people listen* to their opponents? Seek out stories and books where people engage with others who have conflicting beliefs (see the resource list below for examples). As you listen, notice what is happening in your body—if you feel yourself tighten and tense, consider slowing down your breath so that you can continue to listen with wonder and curiosity. Practicing how to listen and rehearsing our wonder in these ways can help us train for the challenging practice of listening to opponents.

Key Points

- Listening is an act of wonder. It is a refusal to demonize our opponents and a labor of love (Kaur, 2020).
- Listening is both moral and pragmatic. *Understanding* is the primary goal. When we listen to understand, we can release ourselves from the pressure to defend our position or persuade our opponents. This does not mean that we relinquish our values, or legitimize theirs. But when the focus instead is on understanding, it carries inside it the possibility of transformation.
- Listening enables us to fight better for those in harm's way.
 - Listening does not grant the opponent legitimacy. Listening does not mean we must agree, compromise, or that we are "neutral." Demonizing and ignoring opponents further risks radicalizing them.
 - Listening gives us the information we need to fight against the social forces that enable reprehensible views and behaviors (Kaur, 2020).
- We listen so that we can change the social forces that have allowed our opponents to hurt others. We listen in order to hold up a vision of a future that includes even our opponents. Ultimately, our true opponents are not individuals, but the societal forces and institutions that authorize and enable these beliefs and behaviors (Kaur, 2020).
- Listening involves asking ourselves: "What is at stake for *me*? Is it the collapse of my privilege? Is it an expansion of whose struggles connect with mine? What will I *do* differently now?" (Kaur, 2020, p. 144).
- Discerning when and *who* should listen is key. When you find yourself safe enough, by virtue of whatever privilege you have, to listen to your opponents, you have a vital role to play. If you are in trauma and pain, your role is not to listen to opponents, but to practice loving yourself. It is the role of allies or accomplices to listen to our opponents when we ourselves cannot (Kaur, 2020).
 - For example, when Black people are being killed by police violence or by forces of white supremacy, their role is not to listen to opponents but to tend to their own healing and nurture their joy. It becomes the role of white people, and non-Black people of color to do the listening.
- Kaur (2020) writes, "tending wounds is the practice of a community, not the sacrifice of an individual" (p. 314). Listening, like each of the practices of revolutionary love, is most powerful when done in community. There will be times we will be called to listen, and others times when we will need to tend to ourselves and our communities. When we practice revolutionary love in community, we can ask and rely upon one another to take these roles in the labor at different times (Kaur, 2020).



For Deeper Exploration

- Explore the connections of listening to wonder and storytelling. (See [Lesson 1: Wonder](#))
 - Study [John A. Powell](#)'s work on "[bridging](#)" as a practice of building connection and belonging across difference
 - Explore Dr. Arlie Hochschild's concepts of the "deep story" and "empathy walls" in her book *Strangers In Their Own Land* (2016)
- Read [Heartwired](#), a strategy guide developed by [Amy Simon](#) and [Robert Pérez](#), which includes the practices of deep listening and research in order to enact strategic political change.
- Read [So You Want To Talk About Race](#) by Ijeoma Oluo (2018) and listen to [Want To Have Better Conversations About Racism With Your Parents? Here's How](#): a conversation with Ijeoma Oluo and Sarah McCammon (2020) to explore how to have challenging dialogue about race.
- Read [The Gift of Our Wounds](#) about the healing and friendship between Pardeep Kaleka, whose father was murdered in a mass shooting by Wade Michael Page in 2012, and [Arno Michaelis](#), formerly a leader of a white supremacist organization.
- Learn about the [Spectrum of allies](#), an analytical tool used by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1964, in order to turn "passive allies" into "active allies" through community organizing and relationship building. Listening to our opponents can be an important strategic tool in this process. (See [here](#) for image)
- Explore the principles of [Intergroup Dialogue](#), [Nonviolent Communication](#).
- Learn about the roles of race and gender bias as barriers to deep listening, theories of listening such as *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* (Ratcliffe, 2005).
- Read about how practices of listening and dialogue are used in international [peacebuilding processes](#).
- Explore the scientific data and support of physical practices such as [paced breathing](#) that can aid in the labor of listening.
- Learn from examples of groups who are specifically challenging anti-Black racism in their communities, such as Asian Americans who are speaking with and listening to their own community and family members. Some resources include: [A Letter From Young Asian-Americans To Their Families About Black Lives Matter](#), and [Black Lives Matter Translated](#): a resource guide for Asian and Asian Americans to listen and fight for Black lives.
- Explore the work of activists and writers like Grace Lee Boggs who writes, in *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*: "We are beginning to understand that the world is always being made fresh and never finished; that activism can be the journey rather than the arrival; that struggle doesn't always have to be confrontational but can take the form of reaching out to find common ground with the many others in our society who are also seeking ways out from alienation, isolation, privatization, and dehumanization by corporate globalization."
- See [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice.

Additional Resources and Readings (a partial list)

- [Beyond the Messy Truth](#) (Van Jones, 2017)
- [“The Deep Stories of Our Time”](#): Conversation with Arlie Hochschild (podcast episode from “On Being” podcast with Krista Tippett, 2018)
- [The Opposite of Hate: A Field Guide to Repairing Our Humanity](#) (Sally Kohn, 2018)
- [The People's Supper](#) hosting guidebook, a guide for hosting conversations and meals to nurture connection among people of different identities and perspectives.

Lesson 6: Reimagine

Description

*“In the traditional activist playbook, we resist the actions of our opponents with the goal of removing them from power. But the longer I spent listening to the stories of marginalized people, tending to their wounds, the more I heard a deeper longing—for a future where we were all safe and secure in our bodies, free to pursue our dreams, where our social, political, and economic institutions supported not just our survival but our flourishing. We could resist with all our might and never deliver such a future. We needed to do more than **resist**. We needed to **reimagine** the world.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 171)

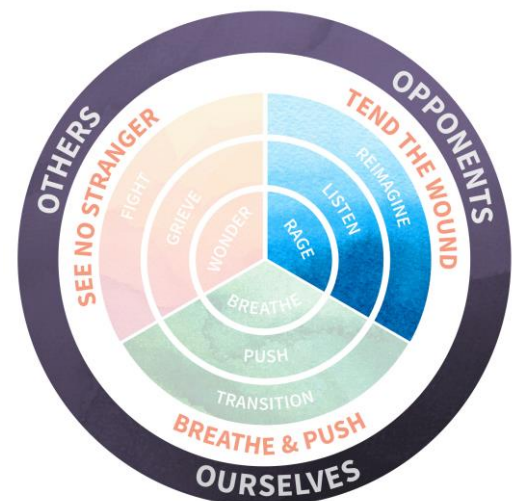
“Any social harm can be traced to institutions that produce it, authorize it, or otherwise profit from it. To undo the injustice, we have to imagine new institutions—and step in to lead them.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 172)



To reimagine is to exercise our collective imagination to create a world that honors the humanity of all of us. Reimagining requires more than resistance and replacing people who hold power in unjust systems. Reimagining requires the courage to create systems of justice that represent what we are fighting for, not only what we are fighting against.

In Chapter 6 of *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes of her roles in collective efforts to reform three different criminal justice institutions: the East Haven Police Dept, Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp, and Northern Correctional Institution, a supermax prison. In East Haven, CT, Kaur worked directly with Latinx community members who had been terrorized by their



local police department. At Guantanamo Bay and Northern, Kaur advocated for those incarcerated and also spoke and listened to her opponents—prison guards, correctional officers, and others.

Kaur arrived at the conclusion that prison reform is not the ultimate solution. For justice to be transformational, we need to reimagine our systems and definitions of justice in a way that liberates all of us. Kaur writes:

these prisons were not broken. They did exactly what they were designed to do. We could not reimagine them—there was no version of them that did not inflict harm. No, we had to dismantle them. We had to imagine America *without* them. We had to imagine a world where *all of us* are free of them, including the ones who hold the keys to our cells. (p. 195)

This lesson focuses on the practice of reimagining our world and utilizes the example of prison abolition movements. Prison abolition is not a new concept or movement, but these conversations have entered a new level of consciousness in the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings. Prison abolition movements challenge us to ask: Can we reimagine responses to harm and accountability beyond our existing systems of punishment? How can these responses be rooted in revolutionary love, healing, accountability, and our shared humanity?

In order to reimagine systems that *seem to be* enduring requires us to nourish the understanding that we have the ability to transform ourselves, our opponents, and our systems. Nourishing a *critical consciousness* (Freire, 1970) allows us to remember that structures of injustice and inequalities are neither static nor “natural.” Rather, these are constructions that were created and maintained, but can be dismantled. As scholar, activist, and prison abolitionist Angela Davis writes, “I have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world and I have to do it all the time.”

This is a lengthier lesson, which includes 3 sections of “Engagement and Dialogue”: 1) envisioning restorative justice, 2) exploring prison abolition, and 3) exploring abolitionist alternatives. Educators are encouraged to divide this lesson into 3 or more sessions.

These topics can be very challenging for students as well as for educators. We encourage educators to review this content in full, prior to teaching it to others. We also recommend reviewing the group's Community Agreements (see introduction to the [Reader's Guide](#)) as needed with the group.

For discussion about other practices of love for opponents, see [Lesson 4: Rage](#) and [Lesson 5: Listen](#). We also recommend pairing this lesson with [Lesson 3: Fight](#).

Learning Goals

- To learn about the theories and processes of prison abolition and their relationship to the practices of reimagining and revolutionary love
- To exercise our collective imagination by reimagining systems of justice, harm, and collective care, and accountability
- To consider the practices of rage and listening to opponents in the work of reimagining
- To consider alternate forms of justice and healing that could be implemented in place of our current systems
- To reflect upon our own commitments to act in the service of a collective vision of justice

Materials Needed

- TED Talk: [What a world without prisons could look like](#) (Deanna Van Buren, 2017). The [transcript](#) is also available. 15 minutes.
- [Ruth Wilson Gilmore Makes the Case for Abolition](#): Parts 1 and 2 from *Intercepted Podcast*. (June 10, 2020) A transcript is available at the same link.
 - Part 1 is 54 minutes. Part 2 is 31 minutes.
 - Note the length of the podcasts. You may wish to assign these prior to the class/group meetings.
- Examples of abolitionist alternatives: [Young Women's Freedom Center](#), [Critical Resistance](#), [Oakland Power Projects](#), [Anti Police-Terror Project](#), [Sacramento: MH First](#), [Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#), [Creative Interventions](#), [Ella Baker Center](#), [Sogorea Te Land Trust](#)
- Recommended materials
 - [If you're new to Abolition: Study Group Guide](#) (2020)
 - [Abolition 101 webinar](#) (2020)
 - [Is Prison Necessary: Ruth Wilson Gilmore Might Change Your Mind](#) (Rachel Kushner) (2020)
- For reference
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 6 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Key Terms

- **Prison Abolition:** "PIC [Prison Industrial Complex] abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance, and creating lasting alternatives to

punishment and imprisonment. . . . Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal” ([Critical Resistance](#)).

- “‘Abolition democracy’ is not only, or not even primarily, about abolition as a negative process of tearing down, but it is also about building up, about creating new institutions” (Angela Davis). Abolition is “building the future from the present in all the ways we can” (Ruth Wilson Gilmore).
- “When we talk about abolition we are talking about an ongoing historical process that will always need to be struggled over, and developed, and expanded. We’re talking about a fact that there will never be a time in which the contradictions and struggles that are emerging through this process will cease to exist. But we argue that the world we are building will be better for the majority of the people on the surface of this earth than the world that we are currently inhabiting” (Orisanmi Burton, 2020).
- Restorative Justice: “is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible” ([Howard Zehr, Zher Institute for Restorative Justice](#)).
 - Restorative justice: “Acknowledges and repairs the harm caused by, and revealed by, wrongdoing (restoration); encourages appropriate responsibility for addressing needs and repairing the harm (accountability); involves those impacted, including the community, in the resolution (engagement)”([TransformHarm.org](#)).
 - Restorative justice practices embody a love ethic by seeing offenders as redeemable and not defined by the crime committed. It also seeks justice and restitution for the victim, as well as restoration of the relationship between the offender, victim, and community.
 - When well facilitated, RJ processes create the possibility for transformation of people, relationships, and communities. This is often a radical departure from the pre-conflict status quo. So what are we restoring? For me it’s about returning to the part of us that really wants to be connected to one another in a good way. Returning to the goodness inherent in all of us. One might say returning to the divinity present in all of us. Or as indigenous elders put it, returning to that part of us which is related to all things (Fania Davis quoted in *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Zehr 2003, p. 14-15).
- For additional key terms see: [Abolition 101](#) webinar: (begins at 6m 35s) and [Critical Resistance Toolkit, Part 7](#)

Opening Reflection

Reflect upon the following questions: What does our current system of criminal punishment look like? How does it work? Upon what principles and values was this system founded?

Using images, symbols, and phrases, illustrate what our current system of criminal punishment looks like. Be as detailed as you can.

Share your illustration in a group or pair and discuss:

- What do you notice about these illustrations? What are the common threads among these illustrations?
- What principles or values does this system operate upon?
- Are our current systems of criminal punishment effective? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Do our current systems of criminal punishment address the root causes of harm? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What other forms of justice could or should we implement in order to address these root causes of harm? What would you change to make these systems more just and rooted in principles of love for all, including our opponents?

Definition and Guiding Questions

To reimagine is to explore a vision of a relationship, community, and world where we all flourish. Reimagining means that we're doing more than resisting our opponents. We are looking at the cultures that radicalize them and institutions that authorize them. This is the moment to declare what is obsolete, what can be reformed, and what must be reimagined. Reimagining focuses us not just on what we are fighting against, but the future that we are fighting for.

- What is the role of imagination in loving opponents and fighting against injustice?
- How can the processes of prison abolition be a practice of revolutionary love?
- How would you reimagine the world you want to live in? What does a collective reimagining of our world require of us?
- What does a world, or a nation, rooted in revolutionary love look like?

How can these visions of the world inform our actions and commitments in the present time?



Engagement and Dialogue (Part 1):

Envisioning Restorative Justice and a World Without Prisons

View

[What a world without prisons could look like](#) (Deanna Van Buren, 2017). The [transcript](#) is also available.

Sample questions for dialogue

- How does Van Buren describe restorative justice?
- In what ways do restorative justice practices address harm in communities? How is this approach different from our traditional criminal punishment approaches?
- What are some of the connections between prisons and school discipline? In what ways does/can restorative justice influence our schools?
- How can designing buildings for restorative justice influence how we transform our systems of harm and accountability?

Reimagining and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue about the questions below.

- In her TED talk, Van Buren speaks of alternatives to prisons such as peacemaking centers, centers for restorative justice and restorative economics, and pop-up villages.
 - Reflect back to the question from the opening reflection: Is our current criminal punishment system effective? Does our current system address the root causes of harm in our society? Why or why not?
 - In what ways are these approaches (peacemaking, restorative justice, and restorative economics) rooted in an ethic of love? In what ways can these approaches help to address the root causes of harm in our society?

Engagement and Dialogue (Part 2): Exploring Prison Abolition

Note to educators: You may choose to complete these additional engagement activities in separate sessions or meetings.

Create a KWL chart.

This is a chart with 3 columns, labelled Know, Want to Know, Learned.

Know	Want To Know	Learned (and still want to learn)

Questions for reflection

1. What do you know about prison abolition and prison abolition movements? Generate a list of ideas or impressions about what prison abolition is. If you are unsure, think about what you have heard about abolition or what impressions you have about abolition (e.g. Is this a positive or negative thing? Why?) Write these items in the K (Know) column of your chart.
2. What questions do you have or what do you want to know about prison abolition? Write these items in the “W” (Want to know) column of your chart.
3. Leave the “L” (Learned) column blank for now.

Share your list in a pair or group. We will revisit this chart later in the lesson.

Listen

Listen to [Ruth Wilson Gilmore Makes the Case for Abolition](#): Parts 1 and 2 (podcast). A transcript is available at the same link. The total podcast length is approximately 90 minutes.

Sample questions for dialogue

*Refer to “Key Terms” above as needed.

- How does Gilmore define abolition? What are its primary concerns and goals? How is this similar or different to what you know or have heard about abolition?
- Gilmore and others state that abolition is not only about absence and closing of prisons but of *presence*: “of vital systems of support that many communities lack.” What forms of support are communities lacking to be safe, healthy, thriving, and well?
- According to Gilmore, what are some of the problems of our systems of policing and prison?
- Gilmore states that abolition includes examining the perception that “what prisons do is natural, normal, and inevitable.” What do you think about this statement? Is our system of incarceration natural? Normal? Inevitable? Why or why not?
- What are some of the assumptions about prisons and criminality that Gilmore challenges?
- What does Gilmore mean when she states, “When Black lives matter, everybody lives better.”
- According to Gilmore, what roles do socio-economic class play in the issues of police violence and mass incarceration?
- Gilmore states, “The thirst to punish someone who hurt you is a real feeling. But the society that we want to bring into being won’t come into being through a better system of punishment.”
 - What do you think about Gilmore’s statement? Can we build a more just and loving world by building better systems of punishment? Why or why not?

Reimagining and revolutionary love

*To guide the dialogue about the following questions, see “Key Points”

- Gilmore and others state that abolition is not only about the absence and closing of prisons but of *presence*: “of vital systems of support that many communities lack.” She states, “No abolitionist who is a true abolitionist wants to save money. What we want is for the money to be spent, to enhance, and support human life so that it can flourish in a way that doesn’t destroy the planet.”
 - How do Gilmore’s statements relate to the practice of reimagining as a practice of revolutionary love? What can we build and what forms of support can we invest in to create communities that are safe, healthy, thriving, and well?
- Gilmore states, “Where life is precious, life is precious.” How do you understand this statement, and how does it relate to the principles of revolutionary love?
- Gilmore asks, “What are the conditions under which it is more likely that people will resort to using violence and harm to solve problems? . . . What can we do about it so that there is less harm? . . . What is it that makes people’s lives vulnerable?”
 - How would you respond to these questions? How can our responses to these questions help us to define what we are fighting *for*?

Reflect

Revisit the KWL chart you created. List some of your reflections in the “L” column of your chart. Consider the following questions:

- What did you learn? What surprised you in the readings and dialogue?
- In what ways were your impressions about prison abolition similar or different to what you encountered in the discussion?
- What is challenging about the processes of prison abolition? What is promising? What questions do you still have? What conflicts or tensions are you wrestling with? In what ways can you continue to hold or explore these tensions?

Additional Engagement and Dialogue (Part 3): Exploring Abolitionist Alternatives

Explore

Explore and examine these examples of community-based programs that have created models of community based safety. These “abolitionist alternatives” are experimental projects that can provide models and knowledge for other contexts. Consider how each of these programs addresses harm, accountability, healing relationships, and shifting power. (Examples taken from [If you’re new to Abolition: Study Group Guide](#))

- [Young Women’s Freedom Center](#)
- [Critical Resistance, Oakland Power Projects](#)
- [Anti Police-Terror Project, Sacramento: MH First](#)

- [Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#)
- [Creative Interventions](#)
- [Ella Baker Center](#)
- [Sogorea Te Land Trust](#)

Educators may choose to assign each source to a pair or group of students, and then ask students to report back their findings.

Questions for exploration and dialogue

- What are the goals of these programs?
- Upon what principles or values does this program operate?
- How are these approaches to harm different from the traditional criminal policing system and principles?
- In what ways do these programs address harm and the root causes of harm?
- In what ways are these programs rooted in an ethic of love?
- What did you learn and what do you still want to learn about abolitionist alternatives?
- In what ways do these programs reflect the practices of revolutionary love?

Closing Reflection

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes:

In the traditional activist playbook, we resist the actions of our opponents with the goal of removing them from power. But the longer I spent listening to the stories of marginalized people, tending to their wounds, the more I heard a deeper longing—for a future where we were all safe and secure in our bodies, free to pursue our dreams, where our social, political, and economic institutions supported not just our survival but our flourishing. We could resist with all our might and never deliver such a future. We needed to do more than *resist*. We needed to *reimagine* the world. (p. 171)

This reflection asks us to practice protecting and nurturing our imaginations so that we can reimagine what we are fighting *for*.

- Listen to the podcast episode [2020 Visioning: a New Year's Practice with Alicia Garza](#) from Irresistible podcast (30m) The [transcript](#) is also available.
- Complete the accompanying [visual guide](#). Share your responses in a pair or group, and consider posting a visual reminder for yourself, somewhere prominent (Garza recommends placing reminders on your phone case) so that you can be reminded of your commitments and visions.

Key Points

- Reimagining our world is not a futile or frivolous exercise. Rather, as poet Lucille Clifton writes, “We cannot create what we can't imagine.” Reimagining systems that *seem to be* enduring and unchangeable is a necessary practice in birthing a world through revolutionary love (Kaur, 2020).
- Resistance alone will not deliver us. It will not heal our wounds. We need a new way. So instead of only resisting systems of harm and oppression, we must follow the example of visionaries, especially Indigenous people, Black people, and women of color who have been modeling for us how to *reimagine* institutions and embody the nation and world we dream, here and now.
- The real opponents, the ones that last, are the institutions that authorize, radicalize and equip the people who hurt us. If we only resist individual bad actors, we may stop the hemorrhaging but we never create lasting social change (Kaur, 2020).
- Reimagining is a practice rooted in creativity, community, and hope. Reimagining a world through revolutionary love includes imagining systems where healing, transformation, and reconciliation are possible; where institutions are grounded in love; and where all of us, including our opponents, are valued and seen as human and worthy of respect (Kaur, 2020).
- There are numerous examples of communities, past and present, who reimagine and transform their communities through ethics of care, community organizing, and movement building. These examples not only nurture hope, they help us determine our present commitments and future. As historian Howard Zinn writes, “What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives.”
- To be hopeful as we reimagine the future is to be grounded in the evidence of history. Our nation's greatest wins for justice and equity began at the grassroots and community level. While history credits “great leaders” of history, it is the collective and courageous acts of everyday people, especially those from marginalized groups, that have changed the systems in which we live.
- The practice of reimagining is intertwined with the other practices of revolutionary love. Reimagining requires us to work in community, nourish our collective imagination, breathe, and nurture our joy (Kaur, 2020). See also [Lesson 7: Breathe](#) and [Lesson 10: Joy](#).



For Deeper Exploration

- Explore the report [Love With Power: Practicing Transformation for Social Justice](#) by Kristen Zimmerman and Julie Quiroz from [Movement Strategy Center](#) which offers a vision of collective transformative practice, grounded in love. This report includes specific examples of communities and organizations that center ethic of love in their work. It poses the following questions to guide our movements towards fighting for justice:
 - “How can we develop the collective strength and insight needed to transform a culture and an economy built on racism and domination?”
 - How can we cultivate our readiness to engage with extraordinary challenges—even when we don’t feel ready?
 - What aspects of our social movements will continue to serve us, and what do we need to leave behind?
 - How can we respond to a world of injustice and violence with the love and power we are just beginning to imagine?
 - How can we embody the world we want and need right now?”
- Explore additional resources and readings on Prison Abolition from the following resources:
 - [Are Prisons Obsolete?](#) (Angela Davis)
 - [Angela Y Davis - 150 Years Later: Abolition in the 21st Century](#)
 - [No One is Disposable: Everyday Practices of Prison Abolition](#)
 - [Abolition 101 Webinar](#)
- Learn about our current system of policing and criminal punishment by viewing the documentary: [13th](#) by Ava DuVernay, and reading essential texts such as [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#) by Michelle Alexander .
- Learn more about Feminist, Queer and Trans Abolitionism in the [If You’re New to Abolition: Study Group Guide](#). (See the Week 5 module).
- Explore the site [TransformHarm.org](#) to learn more about ending violence through principles and practices of [abolition](#), [restorative justice](#), [community accountability](#), and [transformative justice](#).
- Explore ways that policing impacts schools and criminalizes students of color. One resource: [Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, And Underprotected](#) (2014).
- Learn about frameworks and practices of abolitionist teaching. Excellent starting places include [Abolitionist Teaching Network](#), the work of [Bettina Love](#), and the webinar: [Abolitionist Teaching in a Global Pandemic](#) with Stephanie Cariaga, Bettina Love, Sagnicthe Salazar, Carla Shalaby, Marylin Zuniga. A [transcript](#) of the webinar is available.
- Learn more about groups doing the work of reimagining such as: disability justice leaders (a queer and trans people of color-led movement) who work to change systems that honor every body and mind; Indigenous people who teach us how to reclaim ancestral wisdom and care for the planet and ourselves; Black Lives Matter for insisting that Black lives are worthy of care and thriving; undocumented and undocuqueer movements for reclaiming what it means to be American; and intersectional feminist movements reclaiming the right for women to live free from violence.

- Create or join a study group to learn more about abolition. Some resources include: [If you're new to Abolition: Study Group Guide](#), [Critical Resistance: The Abolitionist Toolkit](#), [Building a Movement to End the New Jim Crow: Study Guide and Organizing Guide](#)
- Learn more about restorative justice through the work of leaders like Fania E. Davis (author of [The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and U.S. Social Transformation](#)) and others. Explore the frameworks of [Transformative justice](#): See the work of adrienne maree brown, [Mia Mingus](#) and others.
- Examine the ways that social movements can replicate some of the same oppressive behaviors they are fighting against, and reimagine alternative ways to be in the work of movement building. Some readings to consider:
 - [National Women's March is moving the cause of women forward—don't let critics derail it](#) Alicia Garza, USA Today, Jan 18, 2019, emphasis added
 - [Why I Have Started to Fear My Fellow Social Justice Activists](#) (Frances Lee, 2017)
- Read the world of women of color who have practiced and written about the power of radical imagination such as [The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Action for the Twenty-First Century](#), 2012 (Grace Lee Boggs), [Emergent Strategy](#) (adrienne maree brown, 2017), and the writings of Octavia Butler
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional discussion questions. See also [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice

Additional Readings and Resources

Readings and resources on reimagining:

- [Beyond the Messy Truth](#) (Van Jones, 2017)
- “The Cycle of Liberation” (Bobbi Harro, 2000)
- [Emergent Strategy](#) (adrienne maree brown, 2017)
- [Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination](#) (Robin D.G. Kelley, 2003)
- [How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective](#) (Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor, 2012)
- [The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace](#) (John Paul Lederach, 2000)
- [The World As It Could Be Human Rights Education Program](#): program that offers tools, [videos](#) and [curricula](#) for students to examine the frameworks of Human Rights Education and to take action to make Human Rights a reality

Additional resources on abolition and policing:

- [Critical Resistance](#)
- Documentary film: “[The Worst of the Worst: Portrait of a Supermax](#)” Directors, Producers, Editors: Jane Cooper, Valarie Kaur, Ally Lamb, Aseem Mehta, Eric Parrie, Sharat Raju, Ivy Wang. Available to view in full online.
- [Dream Corps](#) and the “[Cut50](#)” program
- [Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police](#) (Mariame Kaba, 2020)

Resources for addressing harm

- [Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators](#) (Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan, 2019)
- [Resources for Addressing Harm, Accountability, and Healing](#) by Critical Resistance

Lesson 7: Breathe

Description

“The world sends a barrage of signals that our bodies—as women, people of color, women of color, queer people, trans people, and disabled people—are not beautiful or strong or worthy of love. Taking the time to breathe—literally and metaphorically—is a way to assert that our bodies are worthy and beloved. Loving our bodies is the first and primal act of loving ourselves.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 217)

“This is what I want to tell you: You don’t have to make yourself suffer in order to serve. You don’t have to grind your bones into the ground. You don’t have to cut your life up into pieces and give yourself away until there is nothing left. You belong to a community and a broader movement. Your life has value. We need you alive. We need you to last. You will not last if you are not breathing.”

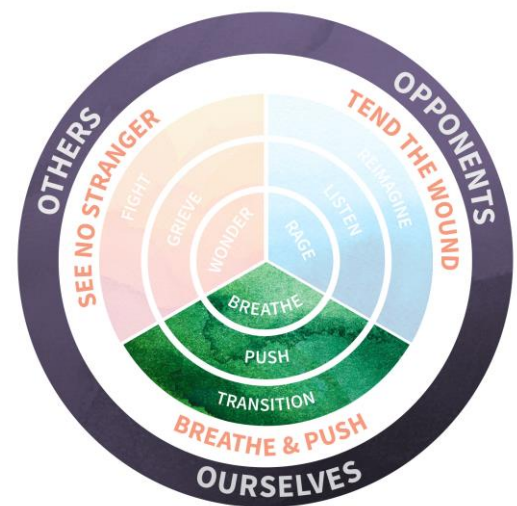
(Kaur, 2020, p. 247)



Breathing is the first practice of revolutionary love for ourselves. We are using "breathing" as a literal and metaphoric term. It is the practice of taking conscious deep breaths. It is also the act of creating space in our lives to slow down and care for our bodies, minds, and spirits. Breathing as a practice of revolutionary love is to nurture one another in community, sustain ourselves and our labors for justice, and cultivate and create space for joy.

In *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur (2020) writes:

Breathing creates space in our lives to think and see differently, enliven our imagination, awake to pleasure, move towards freedom, and let joy in. For those of us who live in bodies that are denigrated by society, breathing like this is a *political act*.” Note that Kaur uses the term “love for ourselves” rather than “love for self.” (p. 216)



The emphasis on the collective “ourselves” reminds us that our health and well-being are connected to the wellness of the community as a whole. Caring for ourselves is a practice that we do with the support of others.

In Chapter 7 of *See No Stranger*, Kaur tells the story of the mass shooting at a gurdwara in Oak Creek in 2012. She invites the reader to breathe with her and listen to the stories of the massacre, and the grieving, healing, and activism that followed. Kaur writes, “I was seeing that the Sikh community’s response to this massacre had something to offer the nation—how to grieve together, how to breathe through hate and violence together, how to practice love together.”

Throughout the chapter, Kaur describes her own struggles in taking care of her own health and well-being. She writes:

I had been made to believe that overwork was the only way to make a difference. I had come to measure my sense of worth by how much I produced, how well I responded, and how quickly. I had worked for so long, and so hard, and at such great speeds, that I had become accustomed to breathlessness. (Kaur, 2020, p. 247)

This lesson examines the practice of breathing and loving ourselves as a personal and political act. Rather than focusing on breathing as an individual act of self-care, this lesson focuses on the wisdom and leadership of disability justice activists who offer models of collective care as practices of love. Disability justice is based on challenging ableism and systems of inequality. It is built on principles of interconnectedness, respect, dignity, and justice for all bodies.

Learning Goals

- To examine “breathing” in revolutionary love through the principles and practices of collective care and disability justice
- To name and challenge structural inequalities (such as ableism, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia) that treat some bodies as less worthy of care, attention, and love
- To explore the role of interdependence and reflect upon our own practices of collective care

Materials Needed

- Short videos:
 - [My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does](#) (Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern, 2017)
- Podcast episode: [Organizing in a Pandemic: Disability Justice Wisdom](#), from Irresistible podcast, April 14, 2020, 55 minutes.
 - Note the length of the podcast (55 m). We recommend assigning this to students prior to class meeting.
- [10 principles of disability justice](#) (Sins Invalid, 2019)
- [Pod Mapping for Mutual Aid](#) (Rebel Sidney Black, 2020)
- Recommended materials
 - [Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People, a Disability Justice Primer \(2nd Edition\)](#) (available for \$7 as digital download)
 - [Changing the Framework: Disability Justice: How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness](#) (Mia Mingus)
 - [“Disability Justice” is Simply Another Term for Love](#) (Mia Mingus)
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 7 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Background and context

Caring for ourselves requires the protection of basic human rights such as access to water, clean air, nourishing food, access to quality health care, rest and leisure, as well as the right to live free from violence. The realities of our society—particularly for Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, queer and trans people—show us that these rights are not equally distributed, and that our bodies are not all treated equally.

Disability justice movements, led by women of color and queer and trans communities, teach us how to name and address these unequal systems. They invite us to recognize how ableism and other forms of inequality are embedded in our society. Disability justice movements emerged in 2005 and sought to build upon and expand the scope of earlier disability rights movements active in the 60s and 70s. Disability justice movements take a more intersectional approach than earlier disability rights movements by focusing not only on issues of disability but also race, gender, sexual orientation, class, gender identity, etc.

This wave of disability movements is led by queer and gender nonconfirming disabled people of color. Disability justice frameworks recognize that ableism is inseparable from other forms of domination, such as white supremacy, that define groups of people and bodies as “less-than” or inferior. Disability justice movements also intersect with movements such as racial justice, especially as [one-third to one half of people](#) killed by the police have a disability.

This lesson centers disability justice activists and examines how our collective well-being and health are interconnected. We explore how we can love ourselves well by ensuring that all of us have what we need to breathe and flourish. As the United States continues to struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, disability justice activists offer deep wisdom and critical analysis about what collective care and a healthy world looks like for all.

Key Terms

Ableism is a “system of oppression that favors able-bodiedness at any cost, frequently at the expense of people with disabilities. Ableism touches every aspect of life” ([Stacey Milbern](#)).

- “Ableism is connected to all of our struggles because it undergirds notions of whose bodies are considered valuable, desirable and disposable” ([Mia Mingus](#)).

Disability Justice: “A disability justice framework understands that:

- All bodies [and minds] are unique and essential.
- All bodies [and minds] have strengths and needs that must be met.
- We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.
- All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them” (*Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People*, Sins Invalid, 2019, p. 19).

Physical impairment v. Disability: A physical impairment is a physical or neurological manifestation. A disability is a condition created when society erects barriers for people due to a physical impairment. Impairments are not necessarily disabling if one’s access needs are met. Society’s barriers create the disabling condition when people’s access needs are not met. Disabilities are dynamic, shifting, and affected by environmental conditions ([Stacey Milbern, 2017](#)).

Opening Reflection

Reflect on the following questions:

- What are the things that everyone needs to be whole and healthy:
 - in mind
 - in body
 - in soul or spirit?

List or illustrate your response to these questions. Share and discuss your responses with a group or pair.

Discuss:

- What do you notice about your list/illustration?
- What are some of the responses that your group had in common? How do these shared responses help define how we understand what “health” and “healthy” mean in our society?
- Which of the items on your lists are the most difficult to attain or secure? Why?
- Are some of these requirements more accessible to some communities over others? If so, which ones? And why?
- What barriers exist to having the things we all need to breathe and thrive? In what ways do issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc. influence a community’s ability to access these requirements to be healthy and well?

[Read 10 principles of disability justice.](#) (Sins Invalid, 2019)

- Discuss: How do these principles of disability justice relate to, add to, or challenge some of the items we just identified? How can these principles assist us in creating a society where everyone has what they need to be healthy?

Definition and Guiding Questions

Breathing is the practice of taking conscious deep breaths. It is also the act of creating space in our lives to slow down and care for our bodies, minds, and spirits. Breathing in community is how we sustain ourselves and our labors for justice — and let joy in.

Choosing to love ourselves, by breathing deeply each day, is a political intervention. Taking the time to breathe—literally and metaphorically—is a way to assert that our bodies are worthy and beloved. Loving our bodies is the first and primal act of loving ourselves. This is how breathing becomes an act of revolutionary love.

In *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur (2020) writes:

Breathing creates space in our lives to think and see differently, enliven our imagination, awake to pleasure, move towards freedom, and let joy in. For those of us who live in bodies that are denigrated by society, breathing like this is a *political act*. (p. 216)

Note that Kaur uses the term “love for ourselves” rather than “love for self.” The emphasis on the collective “*ourselves*” reminds us that our health and well-being are connected to the wellness of the community as a whole. Caring for ourselves is a practice that we do with the support of others.

- How is the practice of breathing an act of revolutionary love for ourselves?
- How can *collective* breathing be a revolutionary and political act?
- How can the practices of breathing help to love others and opponents, to wonder, grieve, fight, rage, listen, and reimagine?



Engagement and Dialogue

Before engaging with the videos and readings below, consider:

- What do you know about ableism and disabilities? How are people with disabilities seen (or unseen) by our society?
- In what ways could we, as a society, reorganize our systems and ways of being to ensure that people with disabilities, and all people, can be healthy, well, and thriving?

Listen

Podcast episode: [Organizing in a Pandemic: Disability Justice Wisdom](#), from Irresistible podcast, April 14, 2020, 55 minutes.

View

[My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does](#) (5m) (Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern, 2017)

Review

[10 principles of disability justice](#) (Sins Invalid)

Sample dialogue and reflection questions for the group:

*Refer to “Key Terms” above as needed and refer to “Key Points” (below) to guide the discussion.

Questions re: [My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does](#)

- In [My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does](#), Stacey Milbern speaks of a “social model of disability.” In this model, the “problem” isn’t people with disabilities, but rather a society that doesn’t meet the needs of multiple kinds of bodies or body-minds.
 - What distinctions does Stacey Milbern make between impairment v. disability? Why is this important?
 - How does ableism impact how people with disabilities are seen (or not seen) by non-disabled people?
 - What is society’s role in providing access and care for people with disabilities? What *should* this role be?
 - What are the intersections between people of color, people with disabilities, special education, policing, etc?
- Patty Berne states, “It’s not easy to live with an impairment. There are times when it’s not convenient to have a body. But that’s not what oppresses us. What oppresses us is living in a system that disregards us, is violent towards us, essentially wants to subjugate our bodies or kill us—that’s oppressive. My body doesn’t oppress me.”
 - How do you understand this statement? How does Berne’s statement point to the systems of institutionalized ableism and its consequences?
- A central principle of disability justice is: “We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.” How does this statement challenge commonly held beliefs about people with disabilities?

Questions re: [Organizing in a Pandemic: Disability Justice Wisdom](#)

- What were your main takeaways and lessons from this podcast?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic brought attention to issues that disability justice communities have been fighting for? What are some of the specific practices that our society has adopted during this time of pandemic that disabled people have long pushed for?

- How does [Piepzna-Samarasinha](#) describe “crip time”? How can this understanding of “crip time” help us to challenge forms of ableism and offer care to ourselves and others?
- Consider these statements from the podcast:
 - “All bodies are valuable, and all bodies have needs and strengths and desires.” (Berne)
 - “We’re in complex bodies, all of us, and we don’t have to be ashamed of our needs.” (Berne)
 - “I remember one time one of my colleagues came in. They were like, “I don’t really know if I can do anything.” And they were feeling really guilty about it. And I was like, “Why don’t you lay down and chill and contribute to this space in that way? You don’t have to be productive in order to participate, giving your energy and your beauty.” (Berne)
 - “There’s also this ableist idea that really just always sees disability as a deficiency or as a lack. . . I really feel sorry for people who aren’t in touch with disability communities. . . we know that when we’re in them that there’s such a rich abundance of options and creativity and innovation and possibility, right? . . . We all, as disabled people, not only do our bodies and minds have needs, also we all have abilities.” ([Piepzna-Samarasinha](#))
 - In what ways do these statements reveal the expectations and ableist assumptions about our bodies and our own care?
 - How do these statements relate to the [10 principles of disability justice](#)?
- How does [Piepzna-Samarasinha](#) describe activism? What examples does she give of activism and how are these examples related to care and loving ourselves?
- What most interests or challenges you about disability justice? How is creating access and justice for disabled people an act of love for ourselves? How do the goals of disability justice allow us all (disabled and non-disabled people) to breathe, heal, and be healthy and well?

Breathing and revolutionary love

- Consider the [10 principles of disability justice](#) (Sins Invalid):
 - How do these principles relate to the practices of revolutionary love, breathing, and love for ourselves?
- In [Changing the Framework: Disability Justice: How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness](#), (recommended reading), Mia Mingus writes:
 - As organizers, we need to think of access with an understanding of disability justice, moving away from an equality-based model of sameness and “we are just like you” to a model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is considered “normal” on every front. We don’t want to simply join the ranks of the privileged; we want to dismantle those ranks and the systems that maintain them.
- What does Mingus’s statement reveal about the possibilities of disability justice practices to transform structural inequalities?

- How does Mingus's statement above relate to the practice of "reimagining" the world (described in [Lesson 6](#))?
- In [Changing the Framework: Disability Justice: How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness](#) (recommended reading) Mia Mingus writes:
 - With disability justice, we want to move away from the 'myth of independence,' that everyone can and should be able to do everything on their own. I am not fighting for independence, as much of the disability rights movement rallies behind. I am fighting for an *interdependence* that embraces need and tells the truth: no one does it on their own and the myth of independence is just that, a myth. (italics added)
 - How can the practices of interdependence and disability justice help us to transform our society into one that allows *all* people to better love ourselves, be respected, cared for, and able to breathe?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*, see the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional questions and practices to discuss breathing and Kaur's reflections about breathing, trauma, and the 2012 mass shooting in Oak Creek.

Closing Reflection

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes:

Loving ourselves happens in community. Black feminists in my life show me how. My colleague Lisa Anderson, a black queer theologian. . . says, 'Movements for social justice will no longer happen on our backs, or over our dead bodies'. . . . Melissa Harris-Perry, my friend and big sister, is shifting public discourse from self-care to collective-care. Self-care implies that caring for ourselves is a private individual act, that we need only to detach ourselves from our web of relations and spend our resources on respite or pampering. But Melissa reminds us that care is labor that we all do for one another, in seen and unseen ways. It should not come with a price tag. It should be available to all of us. Instead of self-care, Melissa calls for "squad care"—a way to be in relationship with people committed to caring for one another: "Squad care reminds us there is no shame in reaching for each other and insists the imperative rests not with the individual, but with the community. Our job is to have each other's back. (p. 248-249)

Interdependence, accountability, and collective care are core principles of both disability justice and [transformative justice](#). Nurturing our interdependence and our roles and responsibilities to one another can help us to love ourselves collectively. This reflection draws upon the tool of "[Pod Mapping](#)," developed by Mia Mingus for the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (BATJC), as a guide for care and support for individuals who have experienced violence or harm.

Pod mapping offers a chance to reflect upon our relationships with others and to envision our own networks of collective care. Read and complete the [Pod Mapping Worksheet for Mutual Aid](#) and reflect upon the following questions:

- What do you notice? What did you learn about yourself and your community through this exercise?
- What relationships are the strongest in your pod? What relationships do you need to strengthen? How can you dialogue with others about your role in their pods and your commitments to caring for others?
- How can these practices inform how we could reimagine and remake our institutions in order to provide better care, resources, and access to nurture the health and well-being of all people?

Key Points

- Breathing is the first step to loving ourselves. For activists and those involved in justice work, we breathe because the work is important, and we want to maintain the capacity to do the work over the long haul. We breathe to soothe trauma. We breathe so we can create spaces for joy and be fully present to experience the revelations and results of our labor. (Kaur, 2020)
- Loving ourselves is a feminist intervention. Too many of us in marginalized communities are taught to hate our own flesh. We are led to believe that service requires bleeding for others or the movement. But many female activists, particularly Black women, have also taught us that we must love our own flesh. These practices of breathing and love for ourselves are indebted to the wisdoms of Indigenous communities, Black communities, and models of community care from disability justice movements often led by queer and trans people of color. (Kaur, 2020)
- Many of us encounter barriers to caring for ourselves well, because the most dominant institutions in our nation are driven by capitalism and steeped in ableism. For example, it is difficult to breathe if we live in a place without clean air or full of social toxins. Loving ourselves is a way to challenge notions of “self-care” or “love of self” as an individual act and to challenge models of wellness that prioritize white, middle class, able-bodied bodies.
- Love for **ourselves** (note: not love for self) intentionally emphasizes the need to love ourselves collectively, to love ourselves *interdependently* (rather than independently), to participate in community care, and to advocate for the health and well-being of all in the community. (Kaur, 2020)
- Loving ourselves in an ongoing, collective, and shared process. We must act as midwives to one another and help one another breathe. (Kaur, 2020)
- Loving ourselves is also a call to our allies/accomplices. To those who are not directly in harm's way: How will you make space for us to breathe? How can you share the labor of justice, so that those most harmed can focus on loving and caring for ourselves? (Kaur, 2020)



For Deeper Exploration

- Learn more about disability justice responses to COVID-19. Some resources include: [Social Distancing and Crip Survival: A Disability Centered Response to COVID-19](#) (Sins Invalid, 2020), [Our Responses to COVID-19 Must Center Disability Justice](#) (Katie Tastrom, 2020) , [We must take care of each other: The Movement Response to COVID-19](#) (maya finoh, 2020). See additional resources re: disability justice below.
- Learn more about the intersections of [disability, race, and police violence](#).
- Explore the frameworks of Healing Justice, an anti-oppressive framework pioneered by Black women that addresses intergenerational trauma and violence and offers collective practices for healing and liberation. Some starting places include: [Healing Justice Principles](#), [Transform Harm: Healing Justice](#), [Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective](#), [The Beth Zemsky Podcast: Healing Justice with Susan Raffo](#) (podcast episode)
- Examine the [toll of social justice work](#) for activists, communities and movements: [Burnout and Social Justice and Human Rights Activists](#) (Chen and Gorski)
- Explore how the labor of women of color has often been exploited in the service of caring for others. For example, domestic workers, a workforce consisting mostly of women of color, share the labor of caring for children and families, but they often lack fair and healthy working conditions that make it possible to care for themselves. Explore the work of groups like [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#) and [Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network](#) who work to ensure dignity, respect, and fair wages for this workforce.
- Explore healing centered approaches for teachers and youth workers such as [The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement](#) (Shawn Ginwright, 2018).
- Read about Indigenous understandings and relationships of care. One source: [The Emergence of the Breath of Life Theory](#) (Cindy Blackstock, 2011).
- Explore ways to nurture and build community and the [data on the health benefits of social connection](#).
- Explore the research and science of breathing and mindfulness. One source: *Fully Present: The science, art, and practice of mindfulness* (Susan L. Smalley and Diana Winston, 2010)
- Explore the Chapter 7 of See No Stranger (Kaur, 2020). The [Reader's Guide](#) and endnotes to the book contain additional information to explore more deeply Kaur's retelling of the mass shooting at Oak Creek in 2012. Two films to supplement this chapter: ["Oak Creek: In Memoriam"](#) and ["Oak Creek: 5 Years Later"](#)
- See [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice breathing

Additional Resources and Readings (a partial list)

Additional resources on disability justice

- [Skin, Tooth, and Bone: A Disability Justice Primer](#) (Sins Invalid: Second Edition)
- [Ableism tells us some bodies are valuable and some are disposable](#). (Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern): Short videos

- [Access is Love](#) and [Disability Visibility Project](#)
- [Access is Love with Alice Wong](#) (Irresistible podcast episode)
- [Access is Love reading list](#): includes ways to make events and information accessible to people with disabilities
- [#BlackDisabledLivesMatter](#) (Brittney Wilson, 2020)
- [Disability Justice - a working draft by Patty Berne](#) (2015)
- [Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the 21st Century](#) Edited by [Alice Wong](#) (2020)
- [Project LETS: disability justice resources](#)
- [Sins invalid: An Unashamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility](#). Click on “Education” for links to curriculum and study guides
- [#StaceyTaughtUs Syllabus: Work by Stacey Park Milbern](#) (Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Alice Wong, 2020)

Breathing resources for activists

- [Angela Davis on Radical Self Care](#)
- [Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice](#) (Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018)
- [Caring for Ourselves as Political Warfare](#) (adrienne maree brown, 2014)
- [From Fired Up To Burnout: 7 Tips To Help You Sustain A Life Committed To Social Justice](#) (Rockwood Leadership)
- [How to keep the resistance going in 2018, even when you're impossibly tired](#) (adrienne maree brown, 2018)
- [I Vow Not to Burn Out](#) (Mushim Patricia Ikeda)
- [Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others](#) by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky
- [The Nap Ministry](#) by [Tricia Hersey](#) (also on instagram and facebook)

Information and tools to care for domestic workers and care-workers

- [The National Domestic Workers Alliance](#): National organization to support domestic workers, whose “work makes all other work possible.”
- [Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network](#): includes resources on campaigns for labor rights for nannies, attendants, and cleaners; also checklists and tools for being a responsible employer of a domestic worker

Additional Resources

- [“Making Space for the QTPOC Self in the Self-Care Movement”](#) (Dom Chatterjee)
- [Girl Trek](#): Radical self care and healing for Black women through walking. See Girl Trek’s list of [100 Radical Acts of Self Care](#)
- [The Body Is Not An Apology: The Power of Radical Self Love](#) (Sonia Renee Taylor, 2018) and [website](#)
- [The Wellness of We](#)

Lesson 8: Push

Description

*“When I was finally ready to love myself, I had to learn how to **breathe and push** through my grief, rage, and trauma. On the other side, I found what seemed utterly impossible before: healing, forgiveness, and even reconciliation.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 253)

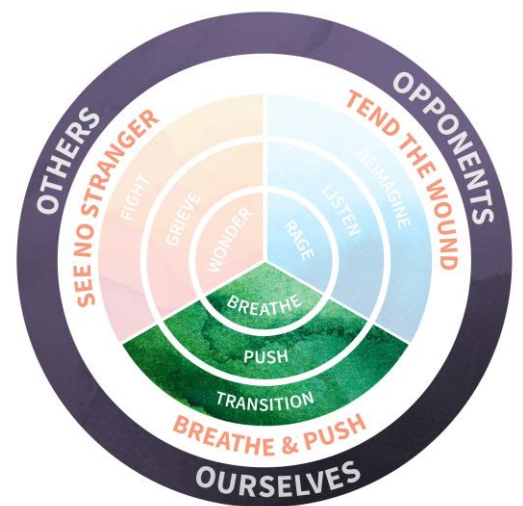
“America needs to reconcile with itself and do the work of apology: To say to indigenous, black, and brown people, we take full ownership for what we did. To say, we owe you everything. To say, we see how harm runs through generations. To say, we own this legacy and will not harm you again. To promise the non-repetition of harm would require nothing less than transitioning the nation as a whole. . . . reckoning with the past, reconciling with ourselves, restructuring our institutions, and letting those who have been most harmed be the ones to lead us through the transition.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 271)



In *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur utilizes the metaphor of birthing to describe revolutionary love and the practices of love for ourselves: **breathe, push, and transition**. In utilizing this metaphor, Kaur (2020) writes:

Only a subset of women give birth this way, or give birth at all. But the ability to create and nurture is a human right, not a biological one. I use birthing labor as a metaphor for any person in the midst of creative endeavors. If the metaphor of war offers wisdom for how to face injustice and fight the good fight, then perhaps the metaphor of birth can offer all of us wisdom about the courage needed to create something new. (p. 278)



To push as a practice of revolutionary love is to choose to engage our grief, rage, or trauma in order to create new possibilities in ourselves and others. Pushing requires us to discern the right times to breathe and rest, and the right times to push deeper into difficult sensations, emotions, and thoughts,

however painful. Pushing is the second practice of love for ourselves, and it accompanies the practice of breathing. (link to [Lesson 7: Breathe](#))

In Chapter 8 of *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur shares her processes of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. She tells the story of the apology she received from Roshan, a person who had sexually assaulted her in her youth, and the healing and reconciliation that took decades. She draws upon the metaphor of birthing to describe working through trauma as “pushing” to create new possibilities. She asks, “*Could we protect spaces for women to rage and heal and find justice, and also for men to claim their own process of accountability, apology, and transformation to earn a pathway back to community?*” (Kaur, 2020, p. 266, original italics).

This lesson explores issues of harm, healing, and accountability by drawing upon the work of the Me Too Movement. Contrary to many misconceptions, Me Too is more than a 2017 hashtag. It was a campaign initiated by Tarana Burke in 2006 to address the healing of Black women and girls who had experienced sexual violence.

Burke is clear to note that the Me Too Movement, like other movements, is commonly misunderstood. The social media hashtag campaign in 2017 was not the movement but rather a social media amplification of some of the injustices that Me Too addresses. [Burke states](#), “The movement is the work that our organization and others like us are doing to both support survivors and move people to action. It’s the work that we’re doing on the ground to support survivors, it’s the programs that we’re implementing, it’s the initiatives that we’re standing behind, it’s the way that we’re coming together collectively to move the work forward.”

Content warning: *Please note* that this lesson focuses on the issues of sexual violence, assault, and healing. Educators: please preface this lesson with a [content warning](#), and with the encouragement for all students to take care of themselves or opt out if needed.

Learning Goals

- To examine the processes of healing from harm and accountability from violence
- To analyze the principles and movement-building strategies from Tarana Burke's Me Too campaign
- To reflect upon our own processes of accountability and responsibility when we commit harm

Materials Needed

- [Me Too is a Movement, Not a Moment](#) (Tarana Burke, 2018) (16m)
 - The [transcript](#) for this talk is also available.
- [Me Too](#) website
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 8 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Opening Reflection

Consider the following questions and free-write or illustrate your responses:

- What do you know about the Me Too Movement?
- What is it about? What are the primary issues or concerns of this movement? What do you know about the goals of this movement?
- Whose experiences does this movement focus on and why?

Share your responses with a group or a pair.

After you've reflected, visit and explore the [Me Too](#) website and the resources included on the site. Then discuss the following questions:

- What do you notice about the content of the Me Too website? What kinds of content are included and highlighted?
- Based on the content on the website, revisit the question: What are the primary issues or concerns of the Me Too movement? Is your response similar or different from your initial perceptions? In what ways?
- What did you learn and what, if anything, surprised you?

Definition and Guiding Questions

To push is to choose to enter grief, rage, or trauma as part of a healing process. Pushing requires us to discern the right times to breathe and rest, and the right time to push through painful sensations, emotions, and thoughts to birth new possibilities in ourselves and others.

- What does it mean to “breathe and push” in the labor of revolutionary love?
- How can the practices of breathing and pushing lead us towards healing, accountability, forgiveness, and reconciliation?
- In what ways can breathing and pushing help us heal and transform—as individuals, communities, and as a nation, and world?



Engagement and Dialogue: Examining a Movement

View

TED talk: [Me Too is a Movement, Not a Moment](#) (Tarana Burke, 2018) (16m).

- The [transcript](#) for this talk is also available.

Sample questions for dialogue

*To guide the dialogue, refer to the content in the description of the lesson and in the “Key Points” section below.

- What surprised or interested you about Tarana Burke’s talk?
- What are the main themes of Burke’s talk? What are the goals of the Me Too Movement as Burke founded and defines it?
- Burke states, “Numbness is not always the absence of feeling. Sometimes it’s an accumulation of feelings.” Is this a sentiment that you can relate to? If so, why?
- What do you think of the critiques of Me Too as a “witch hunt” or “gender war”? How do these critiques address (or fail to address) survivors of sexual violence?
- Burke asks, “But what of survivors?” How does the Me Too Movement aim to focus on survivors of sexual violence?

- How does Burke distinguish between the 2017 hashtag campaign and the work of the Me Too Movement that she founded? Why are these distinctions important?
- Revisit the [statistics](#) that Burke cites in her talk:
 - one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually assaulted before age 18
 - 84 percent of trans people will be subject to discrimination, harassment and assault
 - Indigenous women are three-and-a-half times more likely to experience violence, including sexual violence, than any other group
 - people with disabilities are seven times more likely to be sexually abused
 - 60 percent of Black girls will experience sexual violence before they turn 18
 - How do these statistics reveal how violence impacts groups differently based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc?
- Burke names power and privilege as the “building blocks” of sexual violence. She also states that power and privilege can also “be used to serve to create and build.” How do you understand this statement? Can you think of examples where power and privilege can be tools of creation, services, and healing?
 - For additional reading, see “#MeToo founder Tarana Burke: [‘You have to use your privilege to serve other people’](#)” by Emma Brockes (Jan 2018)

Pushing and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue from the sample questions below.

- Why does Burke say that survivors shouldn’t have to tell the stories of their trauma all the time? How does the healing work of the Me Too Movement relate to the practice of “pushing” as a form of revolutionary love for ourselves?
- What is the role of joy in healing from trauma? Why does Burke say that joy is a necessary part of healing from trauma? How can joy be a practice of revolutionary love? (See [Lesson 10: Joy](#))
- What, to you, would a world free of sexual violence look like? What would this require of our institutions? Our communities? Us? How do these processes relate to reimagining? (See [Lesson 6: Reimagine](#)). What is needed to build this world?
- The Me Too Movement focuses on the care and healing of survivors of violence. In Chapter 8 of *See No Stranger*, Kaur also writes of the journey towards accountability and apology for those who enact violence. Kaur (2020) writes of the apology she received from Roshan, her abuser, many years after the assault:

The healing process for a perpetrator of violence is different than for a survivor. I had to release my trauma and reclaim my power; Roshan had to stand the heat of his internal shame and guilt. His healing was a process of *self-reconciliation*, accepting the darkest parts of himself and integrating them into who he knew himself to be. My healing did not depend on his accountability, nor did his healing depend on my forgiveness. But when he was ready to make a genuine apology, *and* I wanted to hear it, we had found a way into this reconciliation. (p. 268)

Note: It is important to emphasize that Kaur’s process of loving herself was not dependent on the actions of Roshan, and that she set healthy boundaries for herself by distancing herself

from Roshan, while also giving permission to her family members to love Roshan over the years. Burke states that *Me Too* is about healing, not punitive punishment: “Justice looks different for everyone and survivors don’t think punitively,” [Burke said](#). “We want healing.”

- When we are the ones who have caused harm, how is offering a genuine apology and taking responsibility for harm an act of loving ourselves?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional discussion questions.

Closing Reflection

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur writes that “pushing”—doing the labor of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation—is not only for our personal relationships but it can help us transition our nation. She asks:

What does it mean for us to love ourselves as a people? What does it mean for us to push as a nation

America needs to reconcile with itself and do the work of apology: To say to indigenous, black, and brown people, we take full ownership for what we did. To say, we owe you *everything*. To say, we see how harm runs through generations. To say, we own this legacy and will not harm you again. To promise the non-repetition of harm would require nothing less than transitioning the nation as a whole. It would mean retiring the old narrative about who we are—a city on the hill—and embracing a new narrative of an America longing to be born, a nation whose promise lies in the future, a nation we can only realize by doing the labor: reckoning with the past, reconciling with ourselves, restructuring our institutions, and letting those who have been most harmed be the ones to lead us through the transition. (Kaur, 2020, p. 271)

Reflect upon this passage and consider the following questions:

- How would you respond to Kaur’s questions: “What does it mean for us to love ourselves as a people? What does it mean for us to push as a nation?”
 - What might these processes look and feel like?
 - What could a national reconciliation look like, if it were rooted in belonging and healing, rather than systems of shame and punishment? What would this require of all of us?
 - What might it look like if America apologized and was held accountable for its own systemic violence, the harm it has caused to Indigenous communities, Black communities, women, queer and trans people, poor people, immigrants, etc.? What would this kind of apology require of us?
 - See also [Lesson 6: Reimagine](#)

Key Points

- Pushing is a practice of loving ourselves. Deciding when to breathe and rest and when to push is a matter of discernment. Only we can determine when we are ready to engage painful sensations, emotions, and thoughts as part of the healing process (Kaur, 2020).
- Like the labor of breathing, pushing is best practiced with other people who can help us through the healing process. When we breathe and push together, we honor our interdependence and our responsibilities to support one another. (Kaur, 2020).
- “Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is freedom from hate” (Kaur, 2020, p. 263). Healing has its own timeline for everyone. No one should be rushed to forgive someone who has harmed them. As Kaur (2020) writes, “Sometimes the choice to withhold forgiveness is an act of agency too” (p. 263).
- Forgiveness and reconciliation are related but distinct processes. Forgiveness is a process that one can do on their own, and that does not require participation from the person who committed harm. Reconciliation rests on accountability and requires perpetrators to accept full responsibility for their actions.
- Taking responsibility for the harm we have caused can also reflect love for ourselves. adrienne maree brown writes that accountability and growth should stem from a deep sense of belonging to ourselves. She writes, “From that deep place of belonging to ourselves, we can understand that we are inherently worthy of each other. Even when we make mistakes, harm each other, lose our way, we are worthy. . . . A proper apology is rooted in this worthiness—‘I was at my worst. Even at my worst, I am worthy, so I will grow.’”
- As civil rights leader Bryan Stevenson states, “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. . . . We are all broken by something. We have all hurt someone and have been hurt. We all share the condition of brokenness even if our brokenness is not equivalent.”
- We can create systems of accountability beyond mere punishment or retribution. As Stevenson states, “We evolve our pursuit of justice from retribution—an eye for an eye—to collective liberation.”
- Pushing together—engaging in projects of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation as a nation—is a necessary part of the labor for justice (Kaur, 2020).



For Deeper Exploration

- Study the Me Too Movement through an intersectional lens, to examining the connections between racial justice and sexual violence. Some sources include:
 - [“She Founded Me Too. Now She Wants to Move Past the Trauma”](#) (Aisha Harris, 2018)
 - [How Tarana Burke founded "Me Too" movement in Selma, Alabama](#) (ShaunaStuart, 2019)
 - [“Me Too founder discusses where we go from here”](#) (Colleen Walsh, 2020)
 - [The urgency of intersectionality](#) (Kimberlé Crenshaw TED Talk (2016)
- Explore other campaigns and movements that address sexual assault, sexual harassment, and consent. See campaigns for the safety and rights of domestic workers by organizations such as the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#).
- Explore the science of trauma in the body: One source: [The Body Keeps the Score by Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk](#) (2014).
- Explore ancestral and decolonizing approaches to [healing intergenerational trauma](#).
- Learn more about processes to [transform harm](#) through the practices of [restorative justice](#), [community accountability](#), and [transformative justice](#).
- Learn about frameworks of healing justice and transformative justice which draw upon [ancestral practices](#). As [Susan Raffo](#) states, healing justice is not necessarily about “feeling better,” rather it is about more equitably sharing the pain that exists in our communities. (See also [Lesson 7: Breathe](#))
- Consider [Brenè Brown’s research](#) on the necessity of accountability for harm, the relationship between accountability, shame, and guilt, and why shaming others is not an effective tool for social justice.
- Explore examples and frameworks of apology accountability, such as the following pieces by Mia Mingus: [How To Give A Good Apology Part 1: The Four Parts of Accountability](#) (Mia Mingus, 2019) and [How To Give A Good Apology Part 2: The Apology—The What and The How](#) (Mia Mingus, 2019)
 - *Important note: Mingus writes that these pieces specifically refer to “apologizing to people that we care about; people with whom we want to continue to be in relationship; people who are already in our lives and with whom we have loving or caring relationships.”
- For additional discussion on apologizing after committing harm, see [The profound power of an authentic apology](#) (V, formerly Eve Ensler, 2019) (8m, [transcript](#) available) and [The Apology](#) by Eve Ensler (2019)

Additional Readings and Resources (a partial list)

- [Dreaming accountability](#) (Mia Mingus)
- [Fumbling Towards Repair](#) (Kaba and Hassan, 2019)

- [Addressing Harm](#) (2019). A panel discussion featuring adrienne maree brown, Shira Hassan, Mimi Kim, Priya Rai, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna Samarasinha, and Amita Swadhin. Moderated by Ejeris Dixon
- [Resources from Me Too](#)
- See [Guide to the Compass](#) for additional ways to practice

Lesson 9: Transition

Description

*“The final stage of birthing labor is the most dangerous stage, and the most painful. . . . The medical term is ‘transition.’ Transition **feels like dying** but it is the stage that precedes the birth of new life. . . . In all our various creative labors—making a living, raising a family, building a nation—there are moments that are so painful, we want to give up. But inside searing pain and encroaching numbness we might also find the depths of our courage, hear our deepest wisdom, and transition to the other side.”*

(Kaur, 2020, p. 278-279)



In Chapter 9 of *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes of “transition” as the third practice of love for ourselves. Kaur uses the metaphor of birthing to illustrate how to love ourselves through the labors of life: breathing, pushing, and summoning the bravery to transition. Kaur (2020) acknowledges:

Only a subset of women give birth this way, or give birth at all. But the ability to create and nurture is a human right, not a biological one. I use birthing labor as a metaphor for any person in the midst of creative endeavors. If the metaphor of war offers wisdom for how to face injustice and fight the good fight, then perhaps the metaphor of birth can offer all of us wisdom about the courage needed to create something new. (p. 278)

Birthing is a metaphor for all of us.

Transition is both a noun and a verb. We define the stage of transition as the fiery painful process that is required to move from one reality into another. *To transition* is to summon the courage to stay in labors of love and justice, even when we feel we can’t. It requires us to draw upon collective wisdom to birth something new together.

Transition, like each of the practices of revolutionary love, is both personal and political. In *See No Stranger*, Kaur explores transition through the story of birthing and mothering her son, where she discovers her own internal wisdom, a voice she calls her “Wise Woman.” Kaur also explores transition



in the story about how she and Rana Sodhi started a reconciliation process with Frank Roque, the man who murdered Balbir Singh Sodhi, Rana's brother, in a hate crime after 9/11. In both of these stories, she describes an "I can't" moment—and the need to find the wisdom to stay in the labor. She writes that our nation as a whole is *in* transition:

Transition is the most painful and dangerous stage, but it's also where we begin to see what comes into the space we open up. Fresh horrors arrive daily, but our responses are smarter and our solidarity deeper than ever before. . . In such moments, I see glimpses of a nation waiting to be born, the society we aspire to be—an America that is multiracial, multifaith, multigendered, and multicultural, a nation where power is shared and we strive to protect the wellness and dignity of every person and work to save our earth and our collective future. Each of us has a role in this long labor, no matter who is in the White House. That means when a voice in us says, "I can't," our most urgent task is to find the wisdom to stay in the fire. (Kaur, 2020, p. 278)

This lesson poses the question: What is required of us—as individuals, communities, and societies—to transition our nation? We explore this question through the life's work and writings of civil rights activist Grace Lee Boggs.

Learning Goals

- To explore the processes of transition as individuals, communities, and as a nation
- To reflect on the practices of transition as a revolutionary act of loving ourselves
- To cultivate our own bravery in commitments for justice

Materials Needed

- [Valarie Kaur's Night Watch Service 2017](#)
- [These Are The Times That Grow Our Souls](#) (Grace Lee Boggs, 2003)
 - Note: This is a lengthier essay. You may wish to assign this to students prior to your class meeting.
- [What will you tell your daughters about 2016?](#) (Chinaka Hodge, 2016, TED talk: 4m)
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#) and [Guide to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 9 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Background and context

Grace Lee Boggs was a lifelong activist and writer whose activism included her work with Black communities, Black Power campaigns, and nonviolent resistance. Her work encompassed national issues, but she focused on local communities in Detroit, where she advanced community initiatives to support elders, workers, and youth; build community gardens; and organize arts efforts and festivals. With her husband, she co-founded [Detroit Summer](#) and [James and Grace Lee Boggs School](#). Boggs was a prolific writer and scholar, and earned her doctorate in 1940, an uncommon feat at the time, especially for a Chinese American woman. Boggs continued her activism well into her nineties. She died in 2005 at the age of 100.

Throughout her life, Boggs focused on the practical work of transitioning a nation, including the moral, cultural, and philosophical shifts needed to transform cultures and institutions. In her book *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism For the Twenty-First Century* (2011), she writes, “We are struggling to change this country because we love it.”

In 2015, she posed the [question](#): “How are we going to create a new vision for this country, a vision of a new kind of human being, which is what is demanded of this moment?” She continued:

[Americans] need to know that a revolution is to advance their humanity and to advance the humanity of the human race. They need to know that a revolution is to create solutions and not to get angry at the people. They need to know that a revolution is not just protests, it's not just anger, it's not just a search for power. It's a search for real problems for how to be a human being. And I think that's what's unique about the American revolution. . . . I think the most profound hardship of the American people is that they want to change, they want to change themselves, they want to change this world, and they don't know how to do it. And revolution is the way to do it, but not the old kind of revolution. . . in the United States [there is] a hunger that's much deeper, that we have to find our souls. (Boggs, 2015)

Boggs' focus on “how to be a human being” and “find[ing] our souls” in order to transition, illuminates how transitioning is also a practice of loving ourselves. It is how we birth new life—for and within all of us.

This lesson draws upon Grace Lee Boggs's work to explore transition. It leads with the question posed by Kaur, “The future is dark. But what if this is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb?”

Opening Reflection

This reflection takes place in 2 parts.

Part 1:

In her writings and speeches, Grace Lee Boggs often posed the question “What time is it on the clock of the world?”

Reflect upon this question and free-write or illustrate your response. Consider:

- How would you describe the state of the world today? What challenges do we face?
- What is needed in the world at this time in history? What possibilities are offered to us at this moment in the world?

Share your responses with a pair or groups and discuss.

Part 2:

View: [Valarie Kaur's Night Watch Service Speech 2017](#)

Reflect and discuss:

- How does Kaur's speech address Bogg's question: "What time is it on the clock of the world?"
- How would you answer Kaur's question, and why: Is this the darkness of the tomb? Or the darkness of the womb? Is it both? In what ways?

Definition and Guiding Questions

Transition is both a noun and a verb. Transition is the fiery process that is required to move from one reality into another. To transition is to summon the courage to stay in the labors of love and justice, even when we want to give up. It requires us to draw upon collective wisdom to birth something new together.

Transition, like each of the practices of revolutionary love, is both personal and political.

- How can understanding the transition stage help us to respond to the challenges of the present time?
- What does it mean to "transition" ourselves as a practice revolutionary love?
- What does it mean to transition our communities?
- What does it mean to transition our nation and world through revolutionary love?
- In what ways is the practice of transition an act of loving ourselves?



Engagement and Dialogue

Read

[These Are The Times That Grow Our Souls](#) (Grace Lee Boggs, 2003) and highlight or circle words and phrases that are meaningful or striking to you. We'll utilize these specific words in the closing reflection.

Sample dialogue reflection questions

- Although this essay was written in 2003, many of the social conditions Boggs writes about continue to be relevant in present time. Based on this essay, how might Boggs answer her own question about our present time: “What time is it on the clock of the world?”
- In the first part of the essay, “More questions than answers,” Boggs poses numerous questions about the state of our nation. Which questions do you find most compelling, and why?
- How does Boggs describe the roles of art, music, and poetry in our movement building?
- In “Growing Our Souls,” Boggs offers a brief history of civil rights, feminist, and environmental movements. What interested or surprised you about the information in this section?
- Boggs writes of an “organically evolving cultural revolution” in the United States. What does she mean by this? What aspects of our cultures are being transformed today and how?
- In the third part of her essay, “Rebuilding, redefining, and respiration Detroit,” Boggs writes about her work, along with her husband, James Boggs, to address social issues and build relationships in Detroit.
 - Which of these projects most interested you and why?
 - In what ways does their work in Detroit offer a model for the kinds of work needed nationally to transition the United States?
- Why do you think Boggs chose to end her essay with the poem, “Dig”? How do the themes of the poem reflect or complement the themes of the essay?

Transition and revolutionary love

*See “Key points” below to guide dialogue about the sample questions below.

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes:

Transition is the most painful and dangerous stage, but it’s also where we begin to see what comes into the space we open up. Fresh horrors arrive daily, but our responses are smarter and our solidarity deeper than ever before. . . . In such moments, I see glimpses of a nation waiting to be born, the society we aspire to be—an America that is multiracial, multifaith, multigendered, and multicultural, a nation where power is shared and we strive to protect the wellness and dignity of every person and work to save our earth and our collective future. Each of us has a role in this long labor, no matter who is in the White House. That means when a voice in us says, “I can’t,” our most urgent task is to find the wisdom to stay in the fire. (p. 278)

- In what ways do the processes of transition relate to Boggs’s essay?
- Based on Boggs’s essay, what might Boggs say is necessary for us to “stay in the fire” of transition?
- How is Kaur’s view of the nation waiting to be born “multiracial, multifaith, multigendered, and multicultural, a nation where power is shared and we strive to

protect the dignity of every person and work to save the future of our earth” a vision in loving *ourselves*?

- Boggs writes, “These are the times that try our souls. Each of us needs to undergo a tremendous philosophical and spiritual transformation. Each of us needs to be awakened to a personal and compassionate recognition of the inseparable interconnection between our minds, hearts, and bodies, between our physical and psychical well-being, and between ourselves and all the other selves in our country and in the world. Each of us needs to stop being a passive observer of the suffering that we know is going on in the world and start identifying with the sufferers.” (p. 2)
 - What does this quotation mean to you?
 - In what ways does this statement relate to the practices of *transition* and revolutionary love?
 - How does this statement relate to transition as a practice of loving *ourselves*?
- Kaur writes that transition, like each practice of revolutionary love, is a practice done in community. She writes:

Sometimes, when the labor gets hard and my emotions are painful and the situation is unbearable, a voice in me says, “I can’t.” In such times of transition, we need midwives—those who summon our bravery. Sometimes another person. Sometimes our ancestors. Sometimes our own deepest wisdom. (Kaur, 2020, p. 315)

 - Reflect on this quotation and consider: Who are the people in your lives—your ancestors and midwives—that can help you to summon your bravery in times of transition? In what ways, if any, do you play the role of midwife to others?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional questions and practices.

Closing Reflection

Boggs writes of the importance of art and poetry in growing our souls, and she ends her essay with the poem, “Dig” by Angela Jones. This closing reflection is a creative exercise in writing poetry, with two options.

Option 1

Write a found poem using the text of Boggs’s essay. A found poem is a free-verse poem that uses *only* words found in a particular text (in this case, Boggs’s essay). To begin, look back at the words or phrases that you highlighted in the text. Remix these words or phrases into a free-verse poem. The only guidelines for the found poem are:

- Words are limited to those found in the text. You may remix these words (that is, they do not have to appear in the same order as in the text), change verb tenses, and you may add words such as “a, an, the, and.”
- The tone and meaning of the poem should reflect the meaning of the original essay.

Option 2

View this 4 minute performance: [What will you tell your daughters about 2016?](#) by poet, playwright, and educator Chinaka Hodge.

Consider what you want to be able to tell your future self or loved one about the role(s) you played in this year, or this time in history. Write a poem that addresses the prompt:

- “What will you tell your loved ones about your role in this moment?” OR
- “What will you tell *yourself* about your role in this moment?”

In composing your poem, consider the questions:

- What commitments have you made (or do you want to make) this year?
- What story do you want to be able to tell your loved ones, or your future self, about who you were, and what you did this year?

Envision the best, most aspirational version of yourself as you compose your poem. There are no rules or structures to follow, and your poem does not have to rhyme.

For both options

After writing your poem, consider or discuss with others: What was this experience like for you? In what ways can this poem or experience guide you to “stay in the fire” during the stages of transition, for yourself and for our nation?

Key Points

- Transition is the painful process required to shift from one reality into another. At this time in our nation, the United States is in a stage of transition. The labor of birthing a new nation is cyclical, not linear. As Kaur (2020) writes:
- The labor is ongoing, the injustice relentless. But each time people organized, each turn through the cycle opened a little more space for equality and justice. It also created ancestral memory: We carry the memory of movements that came before us. Like the body in labor, we have gained more embodied knowledge about what to do when the crises come. Even when the crises are unprecedented, we can still turn to the wisdom of our ancestors for *how* to labor—to wonder, to grieve, to fight, to rage, to listen, to reimagine, to breathe and to push, and to find the bravery we need for transition. (p. 278)
- Transition requires the collective processes of breathing and pushing in order for us to shift our realities and social conditions. We cannot push through transition alone. This is the moment when we need to call upon all our ancestors at our backs, the midwives at our side, and the deepest wisdoms within each of us (Kaur, 2020).
- Transition is a process of creation—a practice in loving ourselves and birthing new life for and within all of us (Kaur, 2020).
- Transition requires us to listen to our deepest wisdoms, and this listening requires disciplined practice. The loudest voices in our world are often those that amplify fear, criticism, and cruelty—both in the outside world and sometimes within ourselves. The practice of listening to our deepest wisdoms—what Kaur calls her “Wise Woman”—requires nurturing the voices within us that speak with understanding, compassion, and bravery. Kaur (2020) writes, “[Wise Woman] does not give me all the answers, but she does know what I need to do in this moment—to wonder, grieve, fight, rage, listen, reimagine, breathe, or push. She helps me show up to the labor as my best self” (p. 281).
- Transition is an imperfect metaphor: There is no one point when a new society is born. We always find ourselves in the middle of a cycle and practices of revolutionary love can help us to stay in the fire of transition, and to return to the labor with joy.



For Deeper Exploration

- Explore writings and work of Grace Lee Boggs
 - [The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century](#) (Grace Lee Boggs, 2011)
 - [“American Revolutionary: the Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs”](#) (film, 2013)
 - [Remembering Grace Lee Boggs](#) (Democracy Now, 2015)
- Examine [Dr. King’s Speech: “Where do we go from here”](#) (1967), and his call to love not as “emotional bosh” but as a “strong, demanding love”—a political force, necessary to make structural changes in our nation.
- Study the histories of social movements in the United States. As Kaur writes, “Progress during birthing labor is cyclical, not linear. It is a series of expansions and contractions, and each turn through the cycle brings us closer to what is being born. . . . We carry the memory of movements that came before us.” See also [Lesson 3: Fight](#) and [Lesson 6: Reimagine](#)
- Read [Emergent Strategy](#) by adrienne maree brown (2017) and the writings of Octavia Butler (such as [Parable of the Sower](#)). Both authors offer creative, bold visions for our future.
- Review Valarie Kaur’s TED Talk : [3 lessons of revolutionary love in a time of rage](#) (2018)
- See the [Revolutionary Love Compass](#) for ways to practice transition.

Additional Readings and Resources (a partial list)

- [3 Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#) (Kaur, 2018, TED talk: 22m)
- [2020 Visioning: a New Years Practice with Alicia Garza](#) (includes link to a visual guide)
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: Experience Rana Sodhi and Valarie Kaur’s conversation with Frank Roque in print, audio, and video: [His brother was murdered for wearing a turban after 9/11. 15 years later, he spoke to the killer.](#)

Lesson 10: Joy

Description

“Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit, wonder is the act that returns us to love.”

(Kaur, 2020, p. 278)

“In the face of horrors visited upon our world daily, in the struggle to protect our loved ones, choosing to let in joy is a revolutionary act. In joy, we see even darkness with new eyes. Joy returns us to everything that is good and beautiful and worth fighting for.

(Kaur, 2020, p. 307)



Joy is the core practice that sustains all others. Joy is the gift of love. Joy returns us to everything good and beautiful and worth fighting for. It gives us energy for the long labor.

In the epilogue of *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur writes about tending to her dear friend and mother-figure Joyce Frazier on the night of Joyce's death. Valarie also describes the birth of her daughter, Ananda, whose name in Sanskrit means *divine joy*. Kaur (2020) writes:

Joy is possible even amid great labors—the labor of dying, the labor of birthing, and the labors between. . . . In the face of horrors visited upon our world daily, in the struggle to protect our loved ones, choosing to let in joy is a revolutionary act. Joy returns us to everything good and beautiful and worth fighting for. It gives us energy for the long labor. Letting in joy, therefore, is the tenth practice of revolutionary love, the core practice that sustains all others. Joy is the gift of love: It makes the labor an end in itself. I believe laboring in joy is the meaning of life. (p. 307)

Kaur writes that we cannot force joy, but that we can create space and time to let joy in. This lesson explores the relationship between joy and grief, and the cultivation of joy as an act of resistance.

Learning Goals

- To explore joy as a practice of revolutionary love
- To engage with artists, activists, and practitioners who explicitly center joy as an act of resistance, resilience, and creation
- To reflect upon and share the practices, people, objects, and places that bring us joy

Materials Needed

- [“On Joy and Sorrow”](#) from *The Prophet* (Khalil Gibran, 1923)
- Read [Racism is Terrible, Blackness is Not](#) (Imani Perry, June 20, 2020)
- [The Black Joy Project](#)
- [Black joy is resistance: Why we need a movement to balance Black triumph with trials](#) by Kleaver Cruz
- [The Nap Ministry](#). website [Nap Ministry Instagram page](#). Be sure to look at the “mission” tab.
- [This Joy](#) (at 4m) by [The Resistance Revival Chorus](#)
- [“There will be joy”](#) by Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis from [The Activist Songbook](#)
- For reference:
 - [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#) and [Guide to Revolutionary Love](#)
 - Strongly recommended: [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#): Chapter 9 (Valarie Kaur, 2020)

Opening Reflection

Reflect on the role of joy in your life. Imagine that joy is a person or a living being in your life, such as an animal, pet, plant, or tree.

- Free-write or illustrate: Consider joy as a living presence in your life and respond to the question: “What is your relationship to joy? “
 - For example: If joy is an animal, what kind of animal is it? How do you feel when you are with joy? How much time do you spend with joy? Are there times when you ignore joy, and why? Do you and joy have a close relationship? Why or why not?
- Share your responses. Discuss: In what ways can we create more time and space for joy in our lives? What might this look like? What might make this possible?

Definition and Guiding Questions

Joy is the core practice that sustains all others. To let in joy is to give our senses over to what is beautiful, delightful, pleasurable, or wondrous in the present moment.

Joy is the gift of love. Joy returns us to everything good and beautiful and worth fighting for. It gives us energy for the long labor.

- Why is joy a necessary practice of revolutionary love?
- What is gained—for others, opponents, and ourselves—when we practice, protect, and cultivate our joy?
- In what ways is joy an act of moral resistance and reimagining?



Engagement and Dialogue

Read the excerpt: “[On Joy and Sorrow](#)” from *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran and [Racism is Terrible, Blackness is Not](#) (Imani Perry, June 20, 2020)

Reflect on the questions below.

Questions for discussion/reflection:

- How does Gibran define the relationship between sorrow and joy? Do you recognize this relationship in your own life? If so, why?
- Does Gibran’s description align with your own definition of joy? What do you think is the relationship between sorrow and joy?
- Perry writes, “Joy is not found in the absence of pain and suffering. It exists through it. The scourges of racism, poverty, incarceration, medical discrimination, and so much more shape black life. . . . The injustice is inescapable. So yes, I want the world to recognize our suffering. But I do not want pity from a single soul. Sin and shame are found in neither my body nor my identity. Blackness is an immense and defiant joy.”
 - How do you understand this quotation? How does it relate to Gibran’s poem and your own understanding of joy?

Joy and revolutionary love

- Kaur (2020) writes, “Joy is possible even amid great labors—the labor of dying, the labor of birthing, and the labors between. . . . In the face of horrors visited upon our world daily, in the struggle to protect our loved ones, choosing to let in joy is a revolutionary act” (p. 307).
 - How does Kaur’s quotation relate to Gibran’s and Perry’s writing?
- In what ways is joy a practice of revolutionary love for others, opponents, and ourselves?
 - *See “Key Points” section below to guide the dialogue.

Additional engagement and dialogue: Sharing our joy, resistance, and resilience

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur (2020) writes about choosing to dance with her family on election night, 2016, even amidst her panic and fear. The act of dancing with her son and husband created space to feel unexpected joy and energy. She writes, “In the face of horrors visited upon the world daily, in the struggle to protect our loved ones, choosing to let in joy is a revolutionary act. Joy returns us to everything good and beautiful and worth fighting for” (Kaur, 2020, p. 307).

The following resources are examples of joy as an act of resistance. Choose at least two of the following to view, explore, and discuss.

- Educators: Feel free to collect your own examples to share with your class or group. You may choose to have your students work in groups, selecting two sources and reporting back to the group to share and discuss.
- View [Share the UndocuJoy!](#), written by [Yosimar Reyes](#)
- [The Black Joy Project](#) and [Black joy is resistance: Why we need a movement to balance Black triumph with trials by Kleaver Cruz](#)
- Explore the work of Tricia Hersey and [The Nap Ministry](#). Browse the [The Nap Ministry](#) website and [Nap Ministry Instagram page](#). Be sure to look at the “mission” tab.
- Listen to [This Joy](#) (at 4m) by [The Resistance Revival Chorus](#)
- View and listen to “[There will be joy](#)” by Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis from [The Activist Songbook](#). “There Will Be Joy” is inspired by the words and actions of PJ and Roy Hirabayashi, pioneers of North American taiko and founders of San José Taiko. The song pays tribute to Asian American activists.

Questions for dialogue

*See “Key Points” section below to guide the dialogue.

- How do these artists express the relationship between joy and grief, art, liberation, struggle, and movement-building?
- What changes are needed for our society as a whole in order to practice and nurture joy collectively?

- adrienne maree brown describes joy as feeling her own *aliveness, purpose, and agency*—the ability to make choices and seek connection even in the difficult moments. How can practicing and redefining our joy be an act of resistance against forces of inequality?
- For readers of *See No Stranger*: See the [Reader's Guide](#) for additional questions and practices.

Alternate or additional activity

Ask your students to identify things, practices, expressions or activities that bring them joy. Ask them to share some visual or auditory representation of their joy with the group. This might include each student having 4-5 minutes each to share their expression of joy with the group.

Create a visual that represents each student or students' joy. This may include asking students to collaborate on a shared slide presentation or visual, creating a social media prompt, or taking photographs (or screenshots, if meeting virtually) of these items to compile into a collaborative image.

Closing reflection

Assignment: Nurturing our joy

- For 10 days (or a timeframe of your choosing), make nurturing joy an intentional daily and reflective practice. There are no right or wrong ways to do this. Your daily joy may be as simple as listening to your favorite song without any distractions, cooking a nourishing meal, taking a 10 minute walk, making time to talk with friends and loved ones.
- Each day, keep a journal or log and reflect (even for only 5 minutes daily) about this practice. You might also choose to use this reflection as a social media “Joy Challenge” and invite friends to post photos or reflections of their daily joy with you.
- As you reflect daily, consider some of the questions:
 - What did you do today to nurture and protect your joy?
 - How did this practice feel today? What did you notice about what makes you joyful? (e.g. Stillness? Movement? Solitude? Connection with others? Play? Rest?)
 - What lessons, if any, did this practice reveal for you?
 - Refer back to the opening reflection from this lesson: After this daily joy practice, how would you describe your relationship to joy? What might you do to protect and nurture your joy further? What daily or weekly practices might you develop in order to make joy a consistent practice moving forward?

Key Points

- Joy is the tenth practice of revolutionary love, the core practice that sustains all others. Choosing to let in joy is a revolutionary act (Kaur, 2020).
- Joy is neither selfish nor indulgent, but a core practice that we can access even in the most difficult moments. We cannot force joy, but as adrienne maree brown writes, we can create moments to be present to our own aliveness. This is the practice of letting joy in.
- Joy is not the absence of grief or difficulty but rather accessing our feeling of aliveness within whatever moments we are in.
- Like each of the practices of revolutionary love, joy is a collective practice. We can choose to nurture our joy, and the joy of others in our communities. We can choose to labor in joy as we struggle for justice (Kaur, 2020).
- Joy sustains us and our labors and returns us to everything good and beautiful and worth fighting for. As Kaur (2020) writes, "I believe laboring in joy is the meaning of life" (p. 315).



For Deeper Exploration

- Read Audre's Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" and explore how she defines the erotic and its relationship to joy.
- Read adrienne maree brown's book [Pleasure Activism](#). She asserts, "Pleasure is not one of the spoils of capitalism. It is what our bodies, our human systems, are structured for; it is the aliveness and awakening, the gratitude and humility, the joy and celebration of being miraculous" (brown, 2019, p. 16).
- See the [Revolutionary Love Compass](#) for ways to practice joy.

Additional Readings and Resources (a partial list)

- [adrienne maree brown on finding joy during the coronavirus](#) (WNYC podcast, April 6, 2020)
- [adrienne maree brown on Pleasure as Birthright](#) (For The Wild Podcast, episode 115, 2019)
- [Activist Songbook](#) (composer Byron Au Yong and lyricist Aaron Jafferis)
- “[Deep in the cloud filled valley](#)” a poem from [The Palace of Contemplating Departure](#) (Brynn Saito, 2013)
- [Joy as an Act of Resistance—Resistance Revival Chorus](#) (Sarah Sophie Flicker & Meah Pace)
Podcast episode from Irresistible podcast
- [A reading list for children about Black Joy](#) (Lolade Gbadebo, 2020)

APPENDIX A: Teaching *See No Stranger*

Additional resources for educators

If you are teaching *See No Stranger* to students, whether as a whole or select chapters, you can assign or explore the following resources for a deeper dive. Some bring scenes from the book to life through film and video; others are scholarly resources on concepts and studies cited in the book. Most are taken from the endnotes that you can find at the back of the book.

INTRODUCTION

On the love ethic

- **READ**
 - hooks, b. (2000). *All about love: New visions*. HarperCollins.

Creating new visions of America

- **READ**
 - Hughes, L. (1994). Let America be America again. In A. Rampersand & D. Roeseled (Eds.), *The collected poems of Langston Hughes* (pp. 189-190). Vintage.
 - Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How democracies die*. Crown.
 - Lederach, J. P. (2005). On mass and movement: The theory of the critical yeast. In *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (pp. 87-100). Oxford University Press.
- **WATCH**
 - Kaur, V. (2017, March 6). 'Breathe! Push!' Watch this Sikh activist's powerful prayer for America. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/03/06/breathe-push-watch-this-sikh-activists-powerful-prayer-for-america/>

CHAPTER 1: WONDER

On Sikhism

- **READ**
 - Singh Mandair, A.S. (2013). *Sikhism: A guide for the perplexed*. Bloomsbury Academic.

The neuroscience of wonder

- **READ**
 - Sapolsky, R. (2017). Us versus them. In *Behave: The biology of humans at our best and worst* (pp. 387-424). Penguin Press.
 - Wheeler, M.E & Fiske, S.T. (2005). Controlling racial prejudice: Social-cognitive goals affect amygdala and stereotype activation. *Psychological Science* 16(1), 56–63.

Implicit bias, othering, and belonging• **READ**

- powell, j.a. (2012) *Racing to justice: Transforming our conceptions of self and other to build an inclusive society*. Indiana University Press.

Indigenous people in California• **READ**

- Madley, B. (2016). *An American genocide: The United States and the California Indian catastrophe, 1846–1873*. Yale University Press.

Scenes from the chapter• **LISTEN**

- Guru Nanak's "Asa di Vaar" or “Ballad of Hope” sung by Chardikala Jatha. The “Wondrous” verses that Kaur cites can be found between 15-16 minute marker.
 - SikhInside. (2017, May 17). *Chardikala Jatha | Asa di Vaar | Khalsa Week | Singapore* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lh7yyEdzdeo>.

CHAPTER 2: GRIEVE**Narratives post 9/11**• **READ**

- Iyer, D. (2015). *We too sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh immigrants shape our multiracial future*. New Press.
- Malek, A. (2011). *Patriot acts: Narratives of post-9/11 injustice*. McSweeney's.
- Maharidge, D. (2004). *Homeland*. Seven Stories Press.
- Sidhu, D. S. & Gohil, N.S. (2016). *Civil rights in wartime: The post-9/11 Sikh experience*. Routledge.

• **WATCH**

- Raju, S. & Kaur, V. (2008). *Divided we fall: Americans in the aftermath* [Film]. New Moon Productions.
- *Presidential address: George W. Bush* [Video]. (2001, September 11). C-Span.
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?165970-1/presidential-address>

Black lives and mass incarceration• **READ**

- Alexander, M. (2012) *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New Press.

On the necessity of collective grieving• **READ**

- Hamber, B. (2003). Does the truth heal? In N. Biggar (Ed.), *Burying the past: Making peace and doing justice after civil conflict* (pp. 158). Georgetown University Press.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. Verso.

CHAPTER 3: FIGHT

Anti-war declarations

- **LISTEN**
 - King, M.L. (1967, April 4). *Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break the Silence*. Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/beyond-vietnam>.
- **WATCH**
 - Byrd, R. C. (2003, February 12). *Byrd's anti-Iraq war speech February 12, 2003* [Video]. C-Span. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4550037/user-clip-byrds-anti-iraq-war-speech-february-12-2003>.

Ancestral solidarity

- **READ**
 - Nikkei Progressives & Nikkei Resisters (2018, July 5). *Japanese Americans condemn Trump executive order detaining families*. Nichi Bei. <https://www.nichibeijournal.com/2018/07/japanese-americans-condemn-trump-executive-order-detaining-families>.
 - *Our story*. The Yonsei Memory Project. Retrieved September 29, 2020 from <https://www.yonseimemoryproject.com/about>.

The story of Mai Bhago

- **READ**
 - Nihang, N. S. & Singh, P. (2008). *In the master's presence: The Sikhs of Hazoor Sahib*. Kashi House.

Scenes from the chapter

- **WATCH**
 - Film about Kaur's grandfather Kehar Singh, written by Kaur. Raju, S (Director). (2008). *Becoming American* [Film]. New Moon Productions. <https://valariekaur.com/film>.
 - A performance by Tantoo Cardinal of the monologue that Kaur performed in *The vagina monologues*. NativeWomenRestored. (2013, June 20). *Crooked Braid* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/9GmrAMWnz_s.

CHAPTER 4

On rage

- **READ**
 - Chemaly, S. (2018). *Rage becomes her: The power of women's anger*. Atria.

Somatic experiencing therapy as a safe container for rage

- **READ**
 - Levine, P. (1997). *Waking the tiger: Healing trauma*. North Atlantic Books.

Scenes from the chapter

- **WATCH**

- Sharat's film from Spinning Wheel Festival, referenced in the chapter Raju, S. (Director). (2003). *American Made*. Atomic 5/AFI Executive. <https://sharatraju.onfabrik.com/portfolio/american-made-1>.
- Goodman, A & Gonzalez, J. (2004, September 2). Guantanamo on the Hudson: Detained RNC protesters describe prison conditions [Video]. *Democracy Now!* https://www.democracynow.org/2004/9/2/guantanamo_on_the_hudson_detained_rn

- **READ**

- The arrests in New York during the DNC and Guantanamo on the Hudson
 - Goldstein, J. (2007, January 31). Operation overlord II: NYPD planned RNC arrests. *New York Sun*. <https://www.nysun.com/new-york/operation-overlord-ii-nypd-planned-rnc-arrests/47754>.
- Huda Alwazi's story from "Abu Ghraib" (play), performed by Kaur
 - Harding, L (2004, September 20). After Abu Ghraib. *Guardian* (U.S. edition). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/20/usa.iraq>
- Kaur's trip to Kālīghāṭ
 - Moodie, D. (2018). *The making of a modern temple and a Hindu city: Kālīghāṭ and Kolkata*. Oxford University Press.

CHAPTER 5: LISTEN**On the importance of listening to our opponents**

- **LISTEN**

- Tippett, K. (Host). (2018, October). Arlie Hochschild: The deep stories of our time. *On being* [Audio podcast]. <https://onbeing.org/programs/arlie-hochschild-the-deep-stories-of-our-time-oct2018/>

- **READ**

- Jones, V. (2017). *Beyond the messy truth: How we came apart, how we come together*. Ballantine.
- Isaacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue: The art of thinking together*. Currency.

Obama 2008 presidential campaign

- **WATCH**

- NowThis News. (2019, February 11). *President Barack Obama's 'More perfect union' speech in full, March 18, 2008*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iA3O2VguXks>.

- **READ**

- Working Narratives (n.d.). *What is public narrative and how can we use it?* Retrieved August 19, 2019, from <https://workingnarratives.org/article/public-narrative>.

White supremacy in the United States

- **READ**

- Gervais, B. T. & Morris, I.L. (2018). *Reactionary Republicanism: How the Tea Party paved the way for Trump's victory*. Oxford University Press.

- **READ**
 - Anderson, C. (2017) *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*. Bloomsbury.

Scenes from the chapter

- **READ**
 - Premiering “Divided We Fall” in Mesa, AZ
 - Martin, N. (2006, September 15). Documentary tells story of Sikh slain after 9/11. *East Valley Tribune*. https://www.eastvalleytribune.com/news/documentary-tells-story-of-sikh-slain-after/article_dcf81c32-5978-5166-8204-db89196e24d5.html
 - Kaur, V & Raju, S. (2007, December). *Divided we fall year-in-review*. <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs076/1101865578764/archive/1101867243209.html>

CHAPTER 6: REIMAGINE

Reimagining America

- **READ**
 - Hannah-Jones, N. (2019, August 14). Our democracy’s founding ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true. *New York Times Magazine*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/black-history-american-democracy.html>
- **WATCH**
 - Lee, G. (Director). (2013). *American revolutionary: The evolution of Grace Lee Boggs* [Film]. Cherry Sky Pictures. <https://www.amdoc.org/watch/americanrevolutionary/>.
 - Dream Corps. (2020, June 22). *Reimagining and remaking America: A virtual gathering w/ Valarie Kaur #4* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/aUOcdLEySz4>

Scenes from the chapter

- **READ**
 - Information on East Haven Police Department
 - MacMillan, T. (2010, April 23). Report: East Haven police target Latinos. *New Haven Independent*. https://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/report_tickets_show_east_haven_targets_latinos.
 - Kaur’s report as a legal observer in Guantánamo
 - Kaur, V. (2010). Valarie Kaur. *National Institute of Military Justice reports from Guantánamo*. 2, 14-19. <https://nimj.org/wp-content/uploads/topics/guantanamo%20observer%20documents/National%20Institute%20of%20Military%20Justice%2C%20Reports%20from%20Guantanamo%2C%20Vol%202%20%282010%29.pdf>
- **WATCH**
 - Kaur’s film about Northern Correctional Institution
 - Kaur, V. & Raju, S. (Directors). (2020). *The worst of the worst: Portrait of a supermax prison* [Film]. Yale Visual Law Project. <https://vimeo.com/54826024>

CHAPTER 7: BREATHE

Oak Creek

- **WATCH**

- Kaur, V & Raju, S. (Producers). (2008). *Oak Creek: In memoriam*. New Moon Productions, <https://vimeo.com/52729831>.
- Auburn Seminary. (2012, August 17). *Groundswell delivers messages to Oak Creek gurdwara & Sikh community* [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/47723529>
- Interview of Oak Creek Police Chief by Kaur
 - Raju, S. (2013). *Oak Creek police chief John Edwards* [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/50335607>
- Kaur's visit to Oak Creek Gurdwara
 - Kaur, V. (2020, August 5). *The Oak Creek Massacre* [Video post]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1666451403531667>

Scenes from the chapter

- **READ**

- Additional history on hate crimes against Sikhs in America
 - Thompson, A.C. (2017, August 4). *Sikhs in America: A history of hate*. *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/sikhs-in-america-hate-crime-victims-and-bias>
- Exchange between Lt. Brain Murphy and then-presidential candidate Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign
 - Full rush transcript: Donald Trump, CNN Milwaukee Republican presidential town hall (2016, March 29). CNN. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2016/03/29/full-rush-transcript-donald-trump-cnn-milwaukee-republican-presidential-town-hall>

- **WATCH**

- Subcommittee hearing that resulted changes in reporting hate crimes against Sikhs
 - Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights. (2012, September 19). *Hate crimes and the threat of domestic extremism* [Video]. U.S. Senate, Judiciary Committee. https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/meetings/time-change_hate-crimes-and-the-threat-of-domestic-extremism
- Harpreet's testimony at the Subcommittee hearing referenced above
 - Saini, H.S., testimony, in U.S. Senate, Judiciary Committee at 01:15:48. Full transcript available at <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/9-19-12SainiTestimony.pdf>

CHAPTER 8: PUSH

Forgiveness and apology

- **LISTEN**

- Enslar Eve (2014, May 7). In the body of the world. *Library talks* [audio podcast]. New York Public Library. <http://newyorkpubliclibrary.libsyn.com/eve-ensler-in-the-body-of-the-world>

Sexual abuse in South Asian culture

- **WATCH**

- Gurpreet Kaur, founder of Kaur Movement, on raising awareness about abuse within South Asian Families SikhNet. (2020, August 15). *Kaur Voices ep 14: Gurpreet Kaur on sexual abuse* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/pv-v6FMM7Eg>
- Conversation with Baljit Sangra, filmmaker of the documentary "Because we are girls" SikhNet. (2020, August 22). *Kaur Voices ep 15: Baljit Sangra, award winning filmmaker* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7ZKo2j-IEw&feature=youtu.be>
 - Baljit's film is also available on Amazon Prime. <https://www.amazon.com/BeCause-Are-Girls-Baljit-Sangra/dp/B08D6BQ69N>

Scenes from the chapter

- **READ**

- Information about the cosmic calendar
 - Sagan, C. (1977). *The dragons of eden*. Random House.
- Kaur's public admission of sexual assault
 - Kaur, V. [@ValarieKaur]. (2017, October 16). #Metoo. *But it took years of sisterhood and healing for me to say these words out loud*. [Photograph]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaUbJMMHJg1/?igshid=t6arvy4u3hx7>

CHAPTER 9: TRANSITION

Murder of Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha

- **READ**

- Information about the murder of Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha, and the foundation their families founded
 - Talbot, M. (2015, June 15). The story of a hate crime. *New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/22/the-story-of-a-hate-crime>
 - Our Three Winners Foundation. (n.d.), Our story. Our Three Winners. <https://ourthreewinners.org/who-we-are>

Scenes from the chapter

- **READ**

- Information about the first Mai Bhago retreat.
 - Kaur, L. (2017, March 22). Sikh women gather at Mai Bhago retreat. *Kaur Life*. <https://kaurlife.org/2017/03/22/sikh-women-gather-first-mai-bhago-retreat>

- **READ and WATCH**

- Additional information about Kaur and Rana Sodhi's talk with Frank Roque.

- Kaur, V. (2016, September 23). His brother was murdered for wearing a turban after 9/11. 15 years later, he spoke to the killer. *The World*.
<https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-09-23/his-brother-was-murdered-wearing-turban-after-911-last-week-he-spoke-killer>

EPILOGUE: JOY

- **READ**

- Poetry by Kaur's dear sister in ancestral solidarity, Brynn Saito.
 - Saito, B. (2013). Deep in the cloud-filled valley. In *The palace of contemplating departure* (p. 84). Red Hen Press.

APPENDIX B: Social Justice Resources for Educators

The work of critical pedagogy and anti-oppressive education is a lifelong praxis—one that is challenging, rewarding, generative, and joyful. There are many organizations that support educators in this work including: [Abolitionist Teaching Network](#), [Education for Liberation](#), [Teachers 4 Social Justice](#). We encourage you to join with other educators to build community as you do this work.

If you as an educator are unfamiliar with teaching about social justice, the following resources provide a strong starting place:

- [A Collection of Resources For Teaching Social Justice](#) (Gonzalez, 2016)
- [Abolitionist Teaching Network](#) and [Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning](#)
- [Anti-racism resources for white people](#)
- [Asian American Racial Justice Toolkit](#)
- [Facing History, Facing Ourselves](#)
- [*Indigenizing Love: A toolkit for Native Youth to Build Inclusion](#)
- [Readings for Diversity and Social Justice](#) (Blum, Catalano, and Adams, eds., 2018)
- [Scaffolded Anti-Racist Resources](#)
- [Shareable Anti-racism Resource Guide](#) (Tasha K, 2020)
- [Social Justice Teaching Resources](#)
- [Storytelling Project Model](#)
- [Teaching for Change](#)
- [Teaching Tolerance](#)
- [What's My Complicity? Talking White Fragility With Robin DiAngelo](#)
- [Why Teaching About Social Justice Matters](#)
- [Zinn Education Project](#)

Setting the tone

Setting the tone for our classrooms and community spaces can help us to engage bravely with the content in these lessons. Some practices we recommend include honoring Indigenous people through land acknowledgements and setting (and revisiting) community agreements.

Land acknowledgement

As stated above, we recognize that when we gather on U.S. land, we are gathering on lands that were taken by violence. We ask you to consider opening your class or gatherings with an acknowledgment of the traditional Native inhabitants of the land on which you gather. If you are not already familiar with the indigenous inhabitants of the land on which you gather, we encourage you to research and learn more about these groups.

One source to learn more about land acknowledgement is [Honor Native Land: A Guide And Call To Acknowledgment](#). As this source states, “Acknowledgment by itself is a small gesture. It becomes meaningful when coupled with authentic relationships and informed action. But this beginning can be an opening to greater public consciousness of Native sovereignty and cultural rights, a step toward equitable relationship and reconciliation.”

Community Agreements and Brave Spaces

We encourage educators to nurture the creation of *brave spaces*, where students can engage in dialogue with respect and passion, and where conflict and discomfort can be transformational. We intentionally use the term “brave space” rather than “safe space” to underscore that “safety” is sometimes conflated with comfort, and with individuals feeling that they cannot challenge or question injustice because of the risk of making others uncomfortable. We encourage instead the goal of *brave spaces* where discomfort, risk, and even conflict are recognized as necessary parts of the learning process. We understand that discomfort and conflict, when held with respect and care, can be signals of a healthy, transformational learning environment. For more information on Brave Spaces, see “[From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces](#)” (Arao and Clemens, 2013).

To nurture these brave, caring, and respectful environments, we encourage all groups to work together to create a collective, dynamic set of community agreements at the beginning of your work together. These agreements can be dynamic, revisited regularly, and revised or added to as needed.

You might begin by asking your students: “What principles or practices would best support you and our group as we learn together?”

Some examples of community agreements include

- We all want to be here for the good of the group.
- We are all in a learning process. It’s ok if we don’t have answers.
- We are all prejudiced; prejudice is learned and can be unlearned.
- We will all make mistakes. We will assume everyone’s best intentions.
- Our stories, histories, and identities matter.
- Take care of yourself and others.
- Take space, make space.
- Confidentiality: “What’s heard here stays here. What’s learned here, leaves here.”
- “We acknowledge and respect that in our group, there are differing political analyses, theories of change, and organizational structures. Our collective inquiry: Where are we aligned and how could we build together?”*
- We recognize that this is not a whole space. There are people, voices, and perspectives missing. We will hold ourselves accountable as a network to bring more voices into these spaces.*
- Learning and loving requires risk. We will do our best to be brave.
- Take care of yourself and others.
- We are here to *learn with and from* each other.

*From TatlongBagsak.org