

# FROM AN AFRICAN FEMINIST KITCHEN

## *Recipes for Radical Care*

16 Days Of Activism  
December, 2023





*“We are each other’s harvest; we are each other’s  
business; we are each other’s magnitude and bond.”*

*- Gwendolyn Brooks*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# EXHALE

*Avery Katumba-Nakabaale*

Grey clouds gather,  
rain down my cheeks  
Lightning tears the skies,  
burns my skin  
Thunder rattles the ground  
breaks my bone  
It's commonplace  
Storms catch in this room  
Whistle in the graveyard  
Voice buried in his hands to speak  
Fettered here,  
Lobbying for a saving grace

Forget to close the door  
Follow the colours in the sky  
The tribe over the rainbow  
Plaster my wounds  
Pat my back,  
spat out the poison I was fed  
At the pyre, my old flesh stained by you  
Turns into ash as we hymn to Lilith  
Blackfoot daisies denouncing Adam's rib  
Whispers of crowds won't throw me  
Throw me back into your thralls  
It's beautiful—  
To reside in a house where the sun touches

The air dances on my skin  
Daylight pierces through the clouds  
Baptism by mirth and love  
Warm as the morning sun  
Hands clasped into others  
Not only mine anymore  
Take in heavy breaths  
Eyes shut  
One, two, three to ten,  
Exhale

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Akina Mama wa Afrika and the GBV Prevention Network joins the global campaign for 16 Days of Activism with a resounding message; we must extend radical care to individuals and communities as a potent shield against the violence perpetrated against women and girls in all their diversities. This act of care isn't just an act of prevention; it's an embracing of healing. It's about offering unwavering support to those most affected, women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals. Together, we stand as a united force, nurturing both bodies and spirits in our shared journey towards a world free from the violence perpetrated against women and girls in all their diversities.

As part of our offering, we are compiling a feminist guide to radical care featuring stories of feminist activists laying foundations for radical care, serving underserved communities, and building on ancestral legacies. This guide also provides resources on how to build care-centered communities through poetry, African recipes, remedies, and readings from Africans.



## **WINNOWING THROUGH THE CAPITALIST NEOLIBERAL CHAFF TO PRESERVE THE GOLDEN GRAIN OF RADICAL CARE: A LETTER**



Revolutionary greetings siblings,

The delicate work of survival requires us to take constant good care of ourselves and each other. Yet, one finds that the kind of world we have built drives us to do the opposite. From the cradle where we gurgle and coo with new life to the grave where we sleep without a care, the journey in between for the majority will be akin to that of a rose growing through concrete. The concrete here is a metaphorical representation of the harsh climates engineered against our survival and ability to flourish.

These harsh climates come in many forms. Some are parasitic economic and political systems that treat us as hosts, siphoning our minerals, our labor, and even spilling our blood so that a handful of the world's population can create utopias on earth. Other climates are racist, sexist, and ableist in nature, with a widespread and deeply seated conviction that, because of who we are, we are less than other human beings—less valuable, less worthy of love and care compared to others. These climates set out to exclude, discriminate, and erase us in favor of others.

These artificial climates are compounded by other intersecting factors, further making us live half-lives or no life at all. As we individually and collectively awaken to the injustices around us, the prejudice, exploitation, and slow erasure to make room for others, a quiet murmur has risen in our spirits and across our communities to take care of each other. We increasingly hear the call to prioritize “self-care,” and many of us have heeded this call. However, we have become more awake to the realization that “self-care” is not a magic potion that will make our burdens easier to bear. We are reminded by those on the watchtower, the decolonial radical feminist theorists who have an aerial view of the network of oppressive systems at work, to watch out for the neoliberal capitalist exploitative hand that returns under the guise of self-care, this time perfumed and laden with shiny stones and gold string to lure us back into the lair of individualism where we are easier to subdue.

Returning to the granary of wisdom left to us by our ancestors, we are reminded by Ubuntu that it has always been, “I am because we are.” This ancient maxim reminds us that survival is a communal obligation and not a private quest. To understand that survival must be shared is to understand that care cannot be drawn from the exploitation of others nor the exclusion of others.

Borrowing from feminist poet and activist Alice Walker, who says that radical means to grasp things at the root, “Radical Care” then means an approach to care that goes past the symptoms that we often treat to the taproots from where our problems

spring.

To bring it home, spa days and lavender-scented body balms to relax overworked muscles cannot be undermined in the arsenal of care champions, but a more sustainable route would be examining what causes us to be in a constant state of fatigue. Is it how we exploit or allow our bodies to be exploited in work, perhaps the way we relegate rest to the back of the room, the back of our lives, at the tail end of the week, to the small hours of the morning, to the last week of the year, or to the evening of our lives as retirement? A radical approach to fatigue, for instance, would begin at the place of questioning: Who are the forces that separate us from our rest? When we rest, for instance, during the holidays, who stays working so that we have our rest? When do those who run the paradises to which we flee to rest, rest?

A radical approach to care sets out to ensure that by virtue of the fact that one is born, they have access to the things that matter in life: food, shelter, medicine, knowledge, meaningful and dignified work, love, and community. At the root of radical care is a concern and desire for all of us to be held tenderly, and this responsibility is burdensome for individuals but feather-light in the hands of all of us.

In transcendent solidarity always,

*Mubeezi Tenda*



## Guiding Question

*Who in our lives have we not cared for well? In what ways can we care for them better?*

An illustration on a light purple background showing several hands in white line-art style. The hands are holding and supporting green leaves and stems, symbolizing growth and care. The text is centered over the image.

**LAYING  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF RADICAL  
CARE IN THE  
COMMUNITY**

# Bury Me in a Free Land

*Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (America)*

Make me a grave where'er you will,  
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;  
Make it among earth's humblest graves,  
But not in a land where men are slaves.

I could not rest if around my grave  
I heard the steps of a trembling slave;  
His shadow above my silent tomb  
Would make it a place of fearful gloom.

I could not rest if I heard the tread  
Of a coffle gang to the shambles led,  
And the mother's shriek of wild despair  
Rise like a curse on the trembling air.

I could not sleep if I saw the lash  
Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,  
And I saw her babes torn from her breast,  
Like trembling doves from their parent nest.

I'd shudder and start if I heard the bay  
Of bloodhounds seizing their human prey,  
And I heard the captive plead in vain  
As they bound afresh his galling chain.

If I saw young girls from their mother's arms  
Bartered and sold for their youthful charms,  
My eye would flash with a mournful flame,  
My death-paled cheek grow red with shame.

I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated might  
Can rob no man of his dearest right;  
My rest shall be calm in any grave  
Where none can call his brother a slave.

I ask no monument, proud and high,  
To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;  
All that my yearning spirit craves,  
Is bury me not in a land of slaves.

# BEYOND THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS, HOLDING FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN CARE

## EMD - Mutual AID founded by ANSK, KMTM and NMG

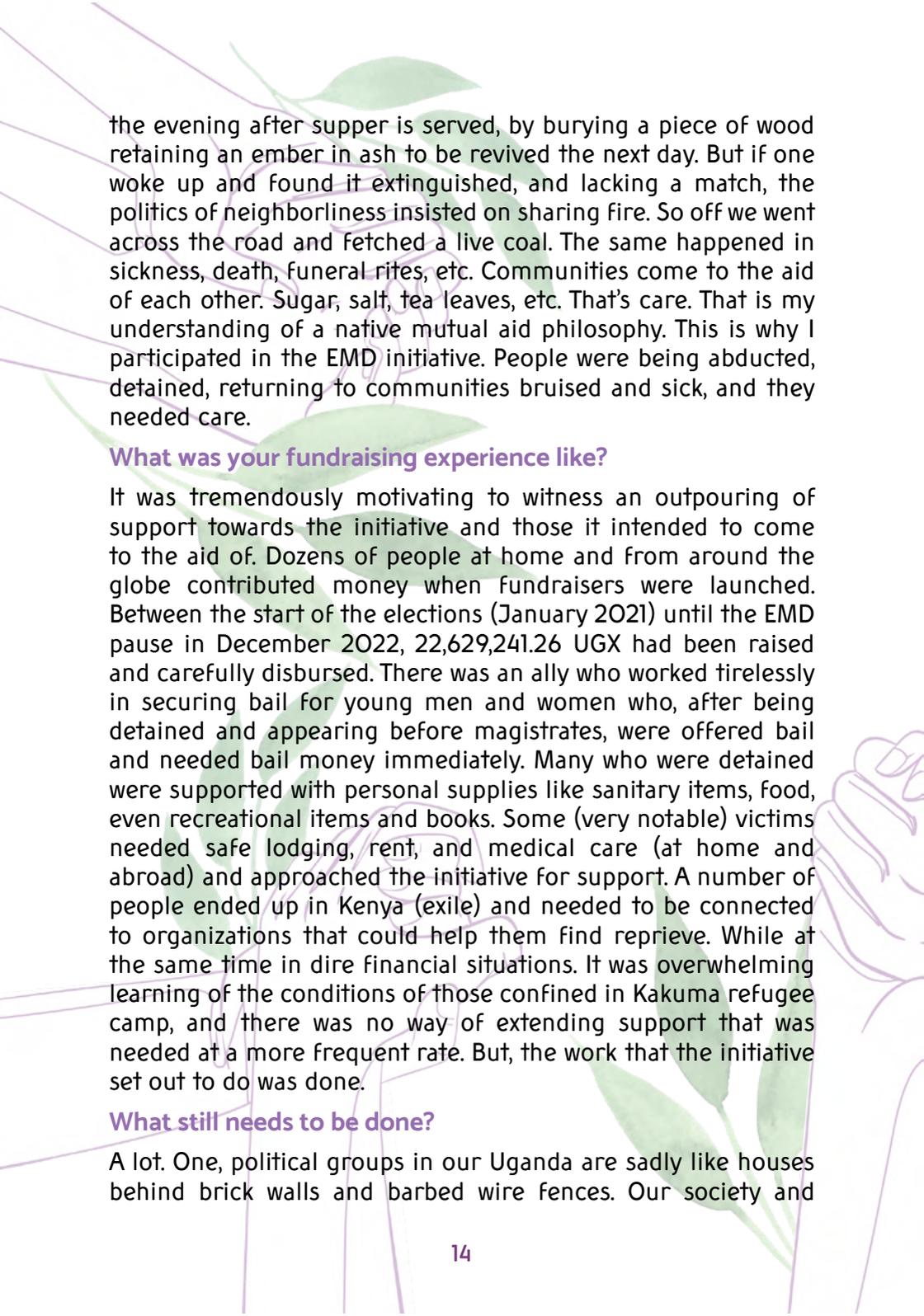
### Tell us about the origin of EMD - Mutual Aid

The mutual aid initiative was ANSK's idea. I received an invitation via Twitter. I liked the idea because I had this longing for a proactive response essential to the 2021 general elections, other than the usual commentary or reactionary input to political events and debates. So many Ugandans, especially everyday Ugandans—peasants, market women, the elderly, young people trapped in hopelessness—were actively engaged in tangible activism and political organizing, and I knew it was no longer enough to engage in social media commentary.

To begin, three of us—ANSK, KMTM, and I—met via Zoom to discuss the scope of work. In a very short period of time, more activists were invited, and in a short period of time, there were at least eight of us in a WhatsApp group. We settled on “EMD” as the guiding principle for the work. There was much debate on the logistics of the initiative: How to look for resources, locating organizations engaged in adjacent work like legal aid, medical, housing services, and being able to disseminate this information to victims of political persecution. (I am reluctant to mention names here without the consent of the participants.)

### You have organized for mutual aid, what is mutual aid and what inspired this work?

In Ganda society, before the advent of barbed wire and brick-wall fences, access to people's homes was carte blanche. It was/is common for families to send children to the neighbor to collect live coal. It was often live coal when I was growing up in the countryside. Households made an effort to save 'fire' in



the evening after supper is served, by burying a piece of wood retaining an ember in ash to be revived the next day. But if one woke up and found it extinguished, and lacking a match, the politics of neighborliness insisted on sharing fire. So off we went across the road and fetched a live coal. The same happened in sickness, death, funeral rites, etc. Communities come to the aid of each other. Sugar, salt, tea leaves, etc. That's care. That is my understanding of a native mutual aid philosophy. This is why I participated in the EMD initiative. People were being abducted, detained, returning to communities bruised and sick, and they needed care.

### **What was your fundraising experience like?**

It was tremendously motivating to witness an outpouring of support towards the initiative and those it intended to come to the aid of. Dozens of people at home and from around the globe contributed money when fundraisers were launched. Between the start of the elections (January 2021) until the EMD pause in December 2022, 22,629,241.26 UGX had been raised and carefully disbursed. There was an ally who worked tirelessly in securing bail for young men and women who, after being detained and appearing before magistrates, were offered bail and needed bail money immediately. Many who were detained were supported with personal supplies like sanitary items, food, even recreational items and books. Some (very notable) victims needed safe lodging, rent, and medical care (at home and abroad) and approached the initiative for support. A number of people ended up in Kenya (exile) and needed to be connected to organizations that could help them find reprieve. While at the same time in dire financial situations. It was overwhelming learning of the conditions of those confined in Kakuma refugee camp, and there was no way of extending support that was needed at a more frequent rate. But, the work that the initiative set out to do was done.

### **What still needs to be done?**

A lot. One, political groups in our Uganda are sadly like houses behind brick walls and barbed wire fences. Our society and

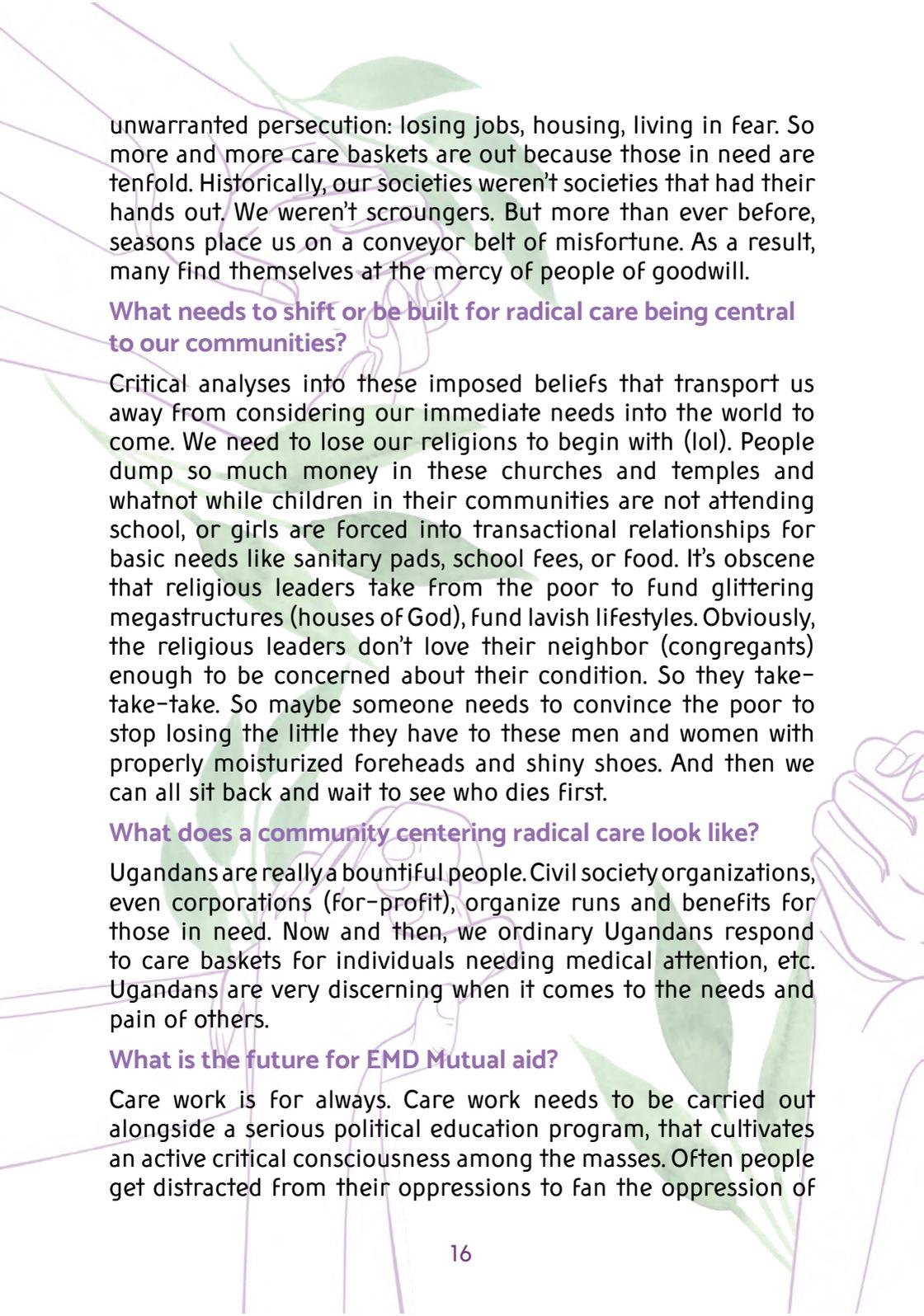
activism bind victims of political violence to their political parties. Even as these outfits espouse Pan-Africanism and depressingly quote scriptures; a man or woman clobbered and left for death by the roadside is an NUP or FDC supporter. Not a human being, not Omuntu or a neighbor, not a Ugandan. For political capital, they have to belong somewhere, of course. Which also makes it easy to dehumanize the next person. Because we are stripping and diminishing our humanity constantly. The origins of political factionalism are not lost on me, but goodness; the devastation every election cycle, the continuum teaches us nothing. Baganda say 'ekuba omunaku, tekya (esigala mumutwe)' and that's what happens year after year and every five years of general elections. I don't know what can be done and how factionalism can be addressed in the face of brutality, but it's really necessary to remind ourselves of that aspect of life. We are all human beings above all else.

Two: Time and again, people die and get scarred in color. Political education should precede care that comes from mutual aid initiatives. One can't profess to be an agent of change while tittering to willful mass illiteracy and ignorance. Our education system is rubbish, but we are not seeing robust organizing around sensitization and the educational side of political organizing. I trust there is room for it as long as crowds are pulled.

Three: Those with power and resources can keep their color and carry on with the disco. They've earned it. Those agitating for better systems of governance, ahead of the next election cycle, owe their supporters a post-mortem in regards to what has happened, how and why it happened, and what can be done differently.

### **Which communities/individuals or groups are currently on the margins of communal care and why?**

Reports point to a decline in the mental health of Ugandans. Women, children, young people, and men are all experiencing untold levels of mental distress, wallowing in hopelessness, dealing with deficits in basic needs, etc. On top of existing in this precariousness, Ugandan Queers have to contend with



unwarranted persecution: losing jobs, housing, living in fear. So more and more care baskets are out because those in need are tenfold. Historically, our societies weren't societies that had their hands out. We weren't scroungers. But more than ever before, seasons place us on a conveyor belt of misfortune. As a result, many find themselves at the mercy of people of goodwill.

### **What needs to shift or be built for radical care being central to our communities?**

Critical analyses into these imposed beliefs that transport us away from considering our immediate needs into the world to come. We need to lose our religions to begin with (lol). People dump so much money in these churches and temples and whatnot while children in their communities are not attending school, or girls are forced into transactional relationships for basic needs like sanitary pads, school fees, or food. It's obscene that religious leaders take from the poor to fund glittering megastructures (houses of God), fund lavish lifestyles. Obviously, the religious leaders don't love their neighbor (congregants) enough to be concerned about their condition. So they take-take-take. So maybe someone needs to convince the poor to stop losing the little they have to these men and women with properly moisturized foreheads and shiny shoes. And then we can all sit back and wait to see who dies first.

### **What does a community centering radical care look like?**

Ugandans are really a bountiful people. Civil society organizations, even corporations (for-profit), organize runs and benefits for those in need. Now and then, we ordinary Ugandans respond to care baskets for individuals needing medical attention, etc. Ugandans are very discerning when it comes to the needs and pain of others.

### **What is the future for EMD Mutual aid?**

Care work is for always. Care work needs to be carried out alongside a serious political education program, that cultivates an active critical consciousness among the masses. Often people get distracted from their oppressions to fan the oppression of

others. This will continue to happen and to derail organizing around radical care work. Ugandans are of course aware of the political forces responsible for their deficits. Ugandans can also be very stubborn, very easy to rile up or distract. Only an educated and informed critical consciousness can safeguard our response to the needs of others. We can not continue to organise (non government) in waves of willful and counterproductive idiocracy. So, the work of the initiative needs to evolve as well.

## Dawa Tea for the sore throat

*1 cup of water*

*1 cinnamon stick*

*5 individual clove seeds*

*2 lemons*

*1 heaped tablespoon of minced ginger*

*1 tablespoon of honey*

Put the spices in a kettle of water and bring to a boil. Pour in a cup and add table spoons of honey to taste. Drink or serve when the temperature is right. Dawa tea is good for the throat, the skin and the gut.



**READ**

**Wild  
Imperfections:  
An Anthology  
of Womanist  
Poems**

## Take me to the river

*Gloria Kiconco (Ugandan poet)*

We say “take me to the river”  
but what the river wants is the body of a stone  
the kind of stillness that can be worn.  
It runs from its destructive nature  
and we run to its healing waters.  
What the mouth wants is wetness  
a torrent of forgiveness  
to baptise flesh with abandon.  
We sing of the rivers of Babylon  
and on your skin my fingers babble on.  
When the choir takes to the pulpit  
my eyes flutter into alternate timelines  
suspended in anticipation that is timeless  
and so we meet again  
and so we meet again  
and so we meet again.  
What the flesh wants is excess,  
A spiritual lust that is endless  
where the source of every flow is ecstasy.  
My eyelids capture every fantasy.  
This is how I mean to possess it all.  
This is how I mean to possess it all.  
Like eyelashes capture dust and filter light  
I hold this pleasure up to light  
separate finite from finite  
teach the body how to swim spiritual  
show the soul how to drown physical.  
What the heart wants is freedom  
to relocate itself on the body  
today on my sleeve  
tomorrow on the cliff of my clavicle  
sprung free by your tongue  
which sings “take me to the river”

# WE WANT BREAST MILK DONATION TO BE AS ACCEPTABLE AS BLOOD DONATION

## ATTA BreastMilk Community founded by Tracy Ahumuza Kakyo

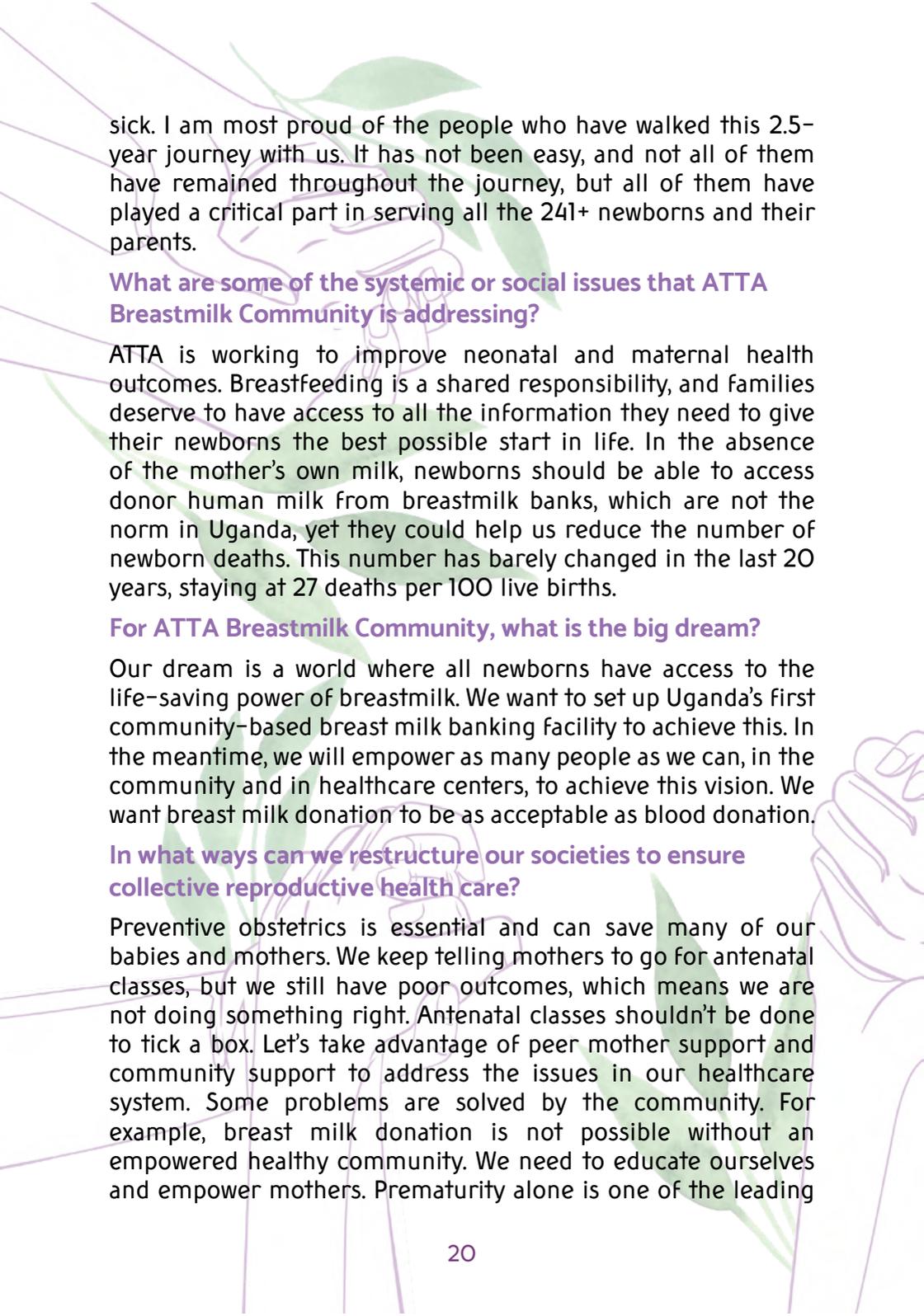


### Who is Tracy Ahumuza Kakyo?

I am a mother, mothering differently from many mothers but dedicated to ensuring as many mothers as possible have an easier time caring for their newborn babies. I used to be a journalist, so I am passionate about storytelling and hope to use it to reach even more families and empower them at a time when they are most vulnerable and expectant. I am also the team leader at ATTA Breastmilk Community.

### Building a breastmilk community – what inspired it and what does it take?

ATTA Breastmilk Community (ATTA is an acronym for my daughter's name and mine, Alyssa Taha and Tracy Ahumuza). When I chose it or when the acronym came to me, I didn't know how useful it would be in keeping me dedicated to the cause. It constantly reminds me of the work we do and the importance of the Mother+child dyad in improving health outcomes for both women and babies. It reminds me of why I started because I was that mother who needed comprehensive support she did not get. On a more playful note, it fits perfectly because a few people have told me that it rhymes with "Mata" milk in our local Bantu languages and can easily be baby-speak for milk. We are dedicated to making breast milk equitably accessible to all newborn babies, especially those who need it to survive and thrive. These are usually babies born too soon, too small, or too



sick. I am most proud of the people who have walked this 2.5-year journey with us. It has not been easy, and not all of them have remained throughout the journey, but all of them have played a critical part in serving all the 241+ newborns and their parents.

### **What are some of the systemic or social issues that ATTA Breastmilk Community is addressing?**

ATTA is working to improve neonatal and maternal health outcomes. Breastfeeding is a shared responsibility, and families deserve to have access to all the information they need to give their newborns the best possible start in life. In the absence of the mother's own milk, newborns should be able to access donor human milk from breastmilk banks, which are not the norm in Uganda, yet they could help us reduce the number of newborn deaths. This number has barely changed in the last 20 years, staying at 27 deaths per 100 live births.

### **For ATTA Breastmilk Community, what is the big dream?**

Our dream is a world where all newborns have access to the life-saving power of breastmilk. We want to set up Uganda's first community-based breast milk banking facility to achieve this. In the meantime, we will empower as many people as we can, in the community and in healthcare centers, to achieve this vision. We want breast milk donation to be as acceptable as blood donation.

### **In what ways can we restructure our societies to ensure collective reproductive health care?**

Preventive obstetrics is essential and can save many of our babies and mothers. We keep telling mothers to go for antenatal classes, but we still have poor outcomes, which means we are not doing something right. Antenatal classes shouldn't be done to tick a box. Let's take advantage of peer mother support and community support to address the issues in our healthcare system. Some problems are solved by the community. For example, breast milk donation is not possible without an empowered healthy community. We need to educate ourselves and empower mothers. Prematurity alone is one of the leading

causes of newborn deaths in Uganda, yet breastfeeding and its associated practices, such as skin-to-skin, have the power to save 820,000 lives annually.

In many African communities, breastfeeding has always been a communal or family affair as opposed to to a private affair. In the event that a mother is absent or unable to produce breastmilk, family members or close family friends would step in to become breastmilk donors.

Read this article to see grandmothers in South Sudan breastfeeding the babies of the daughters who have passed on or are unable to produce breast milk.

[In South Sudan, grandmothers breastfeed malnourished grandchildren](#)

## Obushera the cool nutritious beverage from the Bakiga nation

*Millet or Sorghum flour,  
Cold water (boiled/ drinking)  
Boiling hot water  
millet or sorghum malt.*

Mix millet flour in a jar with a little cold to make a thick, smooth paste. Slowly but consistently add boiling hot water to the mixture, while mixing. Pay attention to the colour change of your millet mixture from whitish to brown. Keep mixing and stop when the colour of your bushera is brown, and the consistency is thick.

Then add the fermented millet/sorghum [malt](#)/starter culture, and allow mixture to cool to room temperature. After cooling, leave the mixture open or partially covered to allow to fermentation for 24–48 hours. Once fermentation is complete, the obushera is ready to be served.



**READ**

Thoughts on  
radical care  
in African  
Feminist  
praxis –  
Jessica Horn

# Return Of The Bird Of Exile

*Mazisi Kunene (South Africa)*

Our regiment haunched heavily on the pure sands of the sea  
Watching without a murmur waves and spray on the banks  
Inert and silent as the albatrosses gambolled on the dunes  
United in spirit, in anxiety to strike the blow for freedom  
Our sunset eyes espied a giant honey bird charting the route  
Meandering along a silver line of those ominous clouds  
An evident cue to resume our nocturnal march  
Each man longing for the warm hearth of home  
The silhouette of the bird of liberty taking us South

## Katogo, the breakfast of champions from Uganda

*15-20 Matooke (Green bananas)*

*10 Medium sized tomatoes*

*1 Large onion*

*1 Tsp. Oil + Additional 1/2 Tsp. Oil*

*Salt and pepper*

Dice the tomatoes and onions and set a side. Place a clean pan on fire and add the 1 teaspoon of oil. Add the onions and let them cook till translucent. Next add the tomatoes. Let the tomatoes cook till tender and paste-like.

Add the bananas and enough water to almost submerge the bananas. Let the katogo boil till the bananas are almost tender. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Once they start becoming tender, reduce the fire and let the katogo simmer. Remove from fire and let cool. Serve with ghee, a side of greens and tea.

# WHEN WOMEN GO TO PRISON, WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THEM

As told by Mamawa Kaikai Juliet (Sierra Leone)  
Feminist Lawyer, Activist for incarcerated women at AdvocAid

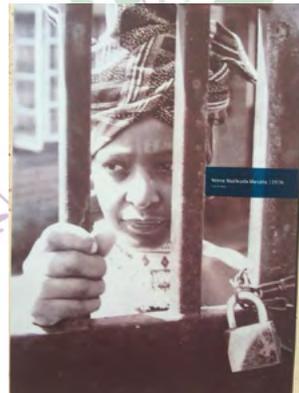


Who is Mamawa, and what has her journey as an advocate of justice been like?

When I became a lawyer, I hated my profession, and it's ironic because I had always wanted to be a lawyer. I simply became disillusioned by many things; it was not how I imagined law or justice would be. You know the law was shaped by men for other men, and because of this, it is hard to carve a niche for oneself within this patriarchal legal setting. At this point, however, I can now talk about my profession with enthusiasm because I am doing work that is geared towards shaping the law. I would describe Mamawa as a person moving through life and embracing all the moments that come with it. I am curious to take a walk in the minds of African feminists. I live for those moments when I feel fascinated. I live for the work of creating a society through the law that centers women's lived experiences and integrates them into that structure.

Holding incarcerated women in radical care and love

I work with incarcerated women through our organization, AdvocAid, in West Africa, which works with girls and women caught up in Sierra Leone's often unjust legal system. We are the



only organization in West Africa providing holistic access to justice via free legal representation, education empowerment, detainee support, and a moving forward program, ensuring detainees leave as stronger women with brighter prospects.

After 11 years of war, incarcerated women in Sierra Leone needed more than legal aid. In a post-war setting, many of their families had no idea that their members were incarcerated, while other incarcerated women had no idea where their families had migrated to. Even after release from prison, the stigma surrounding ex-convicts made it difficult for women to be reintegrated into society, and this meant that they couldn't find work easily or earn a source of living. Outside of providing welfare and psychosocial support, we felt that it was important to study the forces that were behind women's incarceration. We have to continually examine how women end up in the justice system and tackle these forces head-on while advocating for a gender-responsive legal system.

### **Getting rid of the death penalty in Sierra Leone**

Through sharing stories of women who had been victims of domestic violence and had been charged with murder, we were able to highlight the double marginalization that women experienced through the death penalty. After 15 years, our advocacy resulted in the abolition of the death penalty in Sierra Leone, which meant that women could not die because they were defending themselves.

### **What are some of the systemic or social issues that are behind the problems that your work is addressing?**

The lack of gender sensitivity in the criminal justice system is the biggest challenge that we have. Even before a woman comes into contact with the law, there are prejudices against her from the onset. Crime or breaking the law for women is often rooted in being victims of domestic violence, illiteracy, mental health issues, poverty, and because the criminal justice system doesn't take these things into account, it is often gender-blind.

### **Ensuring collective justice in our society... is incarceration the**

### **answer? What does justice look like?**

Collective justice would ensure that all of us support women who are arrested and are in prison because when people come face to face with the law, it means that they have been failed by society in some way. It means that we, as a society, were not there to support them enough. We all have the capacity for evil, and in some way, we are collectively responsible for the evil that goes on in the world. Collective justice would require the alleviation or reduction in crime through the government taking on the role of providing psychosocial support and other basic needs to ensure that people are supported so as not to resort to desperate measures.

### **When women go to prison, we should not forget them**

In my experience, feminist conversations seldom center experiences or work around incarcerated women. It is important to do this work around incarcerated women because as we do our activism work in hostile environments, we are all one moment away from the prison system. This is why it is important to remember incarcerated women because they are us; before they wound up in prison, they were girls, women with lives, and we need to take collective steps to remember them and to secure justice for them.

### **Is incarceration equivalent to justice?**

I don't know if incarceration is always a pathway to justice, and I am not sure whether we should completely do away with incarceration. I think, however, that we must lean into restorative justice for both perpetrators and victims.

### **The morning after the revolution, what would justice look like?**

It looks like coming home and having a shot of whiskey. It looks and feels like restorative justice. Sometimes holding people accountable isn't addressed by them going to prison. After all, real criminals are not in prison; it is usually the marginalized that come face to face with the law.

“Cages confine people, not the conditions that facilitated their harms or the mentalities that perpetuate violence. On the way to abolition, we can take a number of intermediate steps to shrink the police force and to restructure our relationships with each other.”

Excerpt from **“We do this till we free us”** by Mariame Kaba

## Readings on prison abolition and restorative justice

Are prisons obsolete? By Angela Y Davis

Let this radicalise you by Mariame Kaba

[Let This Conversation With Mariame Kaba Radicalize You](#) by Truthout

Ride Or Die: A Feminist Manifesto for the Well-Being of Black Women by Shanita Hubbard

[Woman Wahala na Prison](#)

[Women In Prison: African Regional Initiative 2019](#)



## A Memory of Us

*Safia Elhillo (Sudan)*

when i think of us i think of the lakewater  
near longtown, what might not technically  
constitute a lake but i prefer that word for  
the open mouth of its vowel, how it called  
us to its throat & held us there, in the sun,  
the high points of our faces slick with light  
& its arc around our shoulders, the soft  
gathering of flesh around our knees,  
the lone chair we found near the shore  
where we took turns posing, jutting out  
an eloquent hip, cackling in the bright language  
of flowers for whom i downloaded an app  
& learned their names: beautyberry, yarrow,  
cornus florida, black-eyed susan, & you,  
& you, my bright hibiscus, my every color

# DANCING AND GARDENING TOWARDS COMMUNAL JOY AND SUSTENANCE

**As told by Apenyo Mildred, Feminist Gardener, Dancer and many other hats (Uganda)**



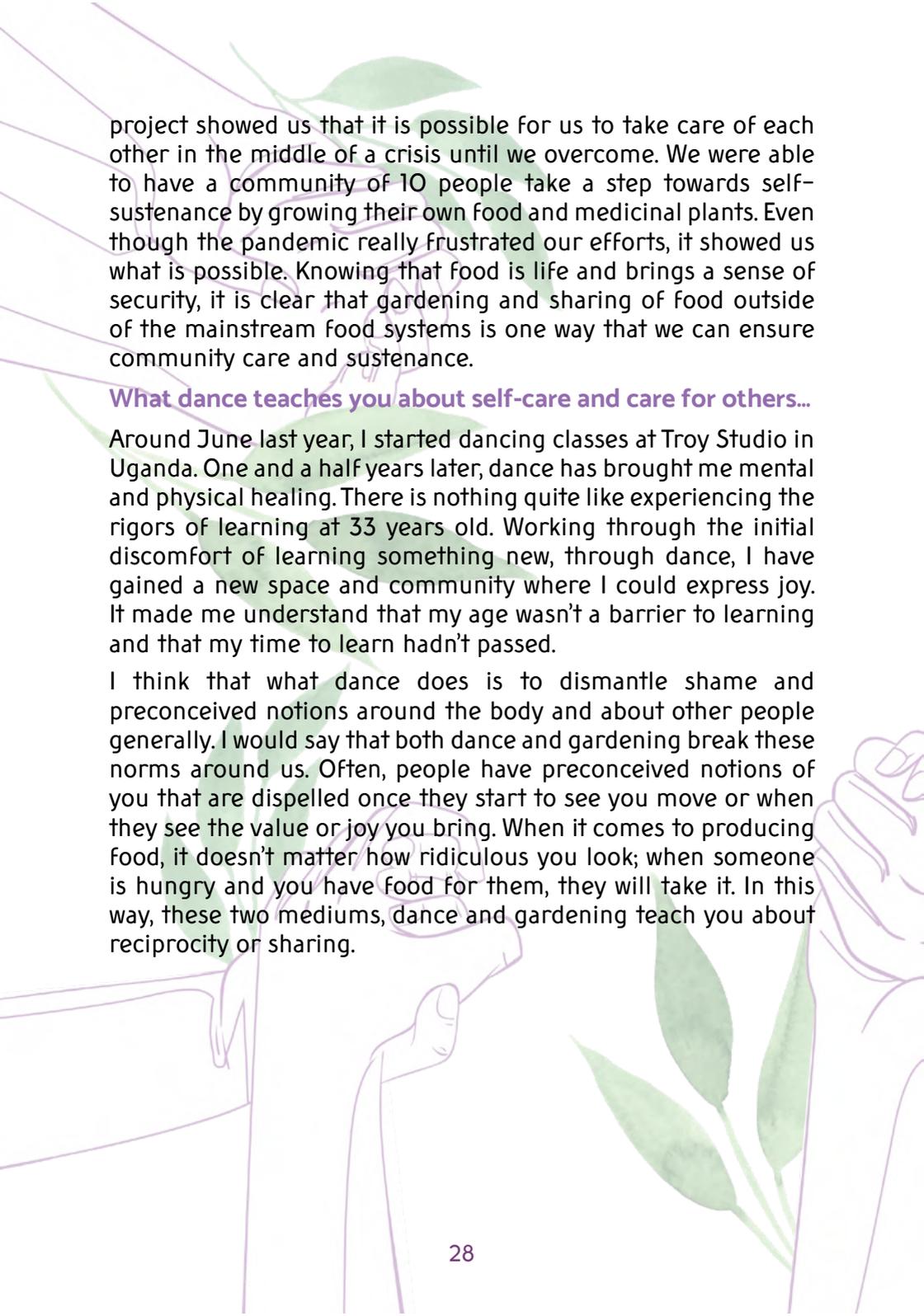
## Who is Apenyo in a few words?

I am a 34-year-old dancer, photographer, earth healer, dance teacher and student, and founder of Fitclique Africa, the Garden Feminist.

## Gardening, Feminism, Dance - at what point do they intersect with care for the self and the body?

When it comes to gardening, I see the earth as a large body that creates many bodies which eventually return to its body. Everyone who loves the earth and cares for it eventually loves the body. My introduction to gardening was through my father, who loved plants so much that even when he was renting a house, he would buy plants and adorn the whole place. After a few months, it would be a piece of heaven.

In 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, I received a grant to promote healing through a gardening project called the Garden Feminist that intended to create mental wellness through food security. Even though we had asked for the grant beforehand, we did not envision the coming of the pandemic and how relevant it would be. Under this program, we gave each individual ten different food plants like spinach, eggplants, fruits, ntutunu, and raspberries. We also gave them medicinal plants like aloe vera, lavender, and mululuza. Even though the pandemic, with the transport bans and the general complexity of the situation, made it hard to commune often and exchange foodstuffs, the



project showed us that it is possible for us to take care of each other in the middle of a crisis until we overcome. We were able to have a community of 10 people take a step towards self-sustenance by growing their own food and medicinal plants. Even though the pandemic really frustrated our efforts, it showed us what is possible. Knowing that food is life and brings a sense of security, it is clear that gardening and sharing of food outside of the mainstream food systems is one way that we can ensure community care and sustenance.

### **What dance teaches you about self-care and care for others...**

Around June last year, I started dancing classes at Troy Studio in Uganda. One and a half years later, dance has brought me mental and physical healing. There is nothing quite like experiencing the rigors of learning at 33 years old. Working through the initial discomfort of learning something new, through dance, I have gained a new space and community where I could express joy. It made me understand that my age wasn't a barrier to learning and that my time to learn hadn't passed.

I think that what dance does is to dismantle shame and preconceived notions around the body and about other people generally. I would say that both dance and gardening break these norms around us. Often, people have preconceived notions of you that are dispelled once they start to see you move or when they see the value or joy you bring. When it comes to producing food, it doesn't matter how ridiculous you look; when someone is hungry and you have food for them, they will take it. In this way, these two mediums, dance and gardening teach you about reciprocity or sharing.

# You came too

*Nikki Giovanni (America)*

I came to the crowd seeking friends  
I came to the crowd seeking love  
I came to the crowd for understanding

I found you

I came to the crowd to weep  
I came to the crowd to laugh

You dried my tears  
You shared my happiness

I went from the crowd seeking you  
I went from the crowd seeking me  
I went from the crowd forever  
You came too

**ADDRESSING VIOLENCE  
AND PURSUING  
JUSTICE SHOULD ALSO  
BE A COMMUNAL  
ENDEAVOUR**

**Frauen Initiative co-founded by  
Safina Virani**

**How would you describe yourself?**

My name is Safina Virani. I describe myself as a radical learning feminist. I say learning because I embrace the idea that feminism



is an ongoing, lifelong journey. It's a path where some will gain deeper insights, some might face challenges, and others may temporarily lose their way, but the journey of learning never ceases. Additionally, I am a Ugandan woman from the global south and I think that plays a significant role in making me who I am. But before anything, I am a feminist.

**Tell us about your work with Frauen Initiative, what inspired the work, and what are you most proud of.**

I am one of the co-founders of Frauen. The inception of Frauen Initiative Uganda dates back to the COVID-19 lockdown when Uganda experienced its own online MeToo movement. Witnessing weeks of women bravely exposing rapists online was a powerful moment, breaking the silence surrounding sexual violence. However, as feminists, including myself, delved into these stories, a common thread emerged. Women were sharing their traumatic experiences of rape, struggling to find available help, and facing societal backlash when they spoke up. Recognizing the absence of a supportive community, about 40 women came together with the vision of becoming the much-needed community for survivors of sexual violence. Initially, we envisioned providing a sisterhood, a support system. Yet, as we gathered, it became apparent that there was a significant gap in the system. Survivors were not accessing emergency medical assistance or legal aid, crucial elements in the healing process. This realization led us to expand our goals, transforming into the multifaceted organization we are today. Our focus extended beyond providing a safe space to addressing the systemic issues that necessitated the creation of such a space.

I cannot speak on behalf of the entire organization or outline what each member finds pride in, but personally, I take pride in the resilience and continued existence of Frauen. While it may seem simple, maintaining our presence is an achievement, considering the challenges many organizations face, leading to their closure within a few months. Being a relatively young organization with limited access to funding, yet persevering and reaching nearly 100 individuals, is a source of great pride for

me within Frauen.

### **What are some of the systemic or social issues that are behind the problems that Frauen is addressing?**

Frauen focuses on addressing the pervasive issue of sexual violence in the country, recognizing its significant prevalence and the lack of sufficient resources dedicated to this specific area. Sexual violence is alarmingly reported as one of the most widespread crimes in the country, impacting every woman and girl to varying degrees, from psychological and verbal harassment to physical attacks. Despite its widespread nature, there appears to be a lack of urgency in addressing this issue within society. At Frauen, we aim to bridge this gap by offering comprehensive support, including emergency medical aid, legal assistance, and psychological support. Our goal is to serve as a holistic one-stop center, recognizing that consolidating resources in one place facilitates quicker and more effective trauma recovery for survivors of sexual violence.

### **What is your vision for Frauen Initiative and this work around SGBV in general?**

I envision Frauen expanding its reach to serve every victim of sexual violence in the country. Personally, my passion lies in working with victims of conflict, and I hope that Frauen will eventually have the capacity to address the unique challenges faced by victims of conflict-related sexual violence. This expansion would involve extending our services to areas such as northern Uganda, and refugee settlements. However, our immediate organizational goal is to build the capacity needed to effectively address the cases we encounter on a daily basis.

### **In what ways can we restructure our societies to ensure the alleviation of SGBV?**

Abuse is a collective undertaking within a community, requiring active participation to either encourage or safeguard abusers. Consequently, addressing violence and pursuing justice should also be a communal endeavour. Beyond mere dialogue, these conversations must evolve into initiatives that empower women

both economically and socially. The establishment of more robust support systems is essential. Through our group therapy projects, we've observed the transformative impact of collective healing within a community, emphasizing the strength found in sisterhoods. This could be attributed to our various African cultures that emphasize holistic approaches. Nonetheless, the efficacy of this approach is evident.

Additionally, advocating for political commitment and leadership that prioritizes the eradication of SGBV at both national and regional levels is paramount. Without leaders prioritizing the eradication of sexual and gender-based violence, progress will stagnate. The responsibility of this work cannot rest solely on feminists and civil society; every member of society should be equally accountable.

It is crucial to provide training for all law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and judicial personnel to handle SGBV cases with sensitivity and efficiency. Allocating resources for the training of teachers and educators in delivering age-appropriate sex education is equally important. Additionally, funding organizations engaged in grassroots efforts is essential. Implementing these measures will guide us in the right direction in the ongoing fight against SGBV.

“Loving ourselves and each other deepens our disruption of the dominant systems. They want us unwell, fearful, exhausted, and without deep self-love because you are easier to manipulate when you are distracted by what is not real or true.”

*Tricia Hersey, Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto*



“How Can We Ground Ourselves in Care and Dance Our Revolution?” by Urgent Action Funds contains interviews with 141 activists in 63 countries speaking on how they integrate care into their activism and work. [https://rootingcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAU\\_RootingCare\\_en.pdf](https://rootingcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAU_RootingCare_en.pdf)

# WE ARE ADDRESSING PATRIARCHY IN ITS VARIOUS SHAPES AND FORMS

## Raising Voices work around Sexual and Gender Based Violence



### How would you describe yourself as an organisation?

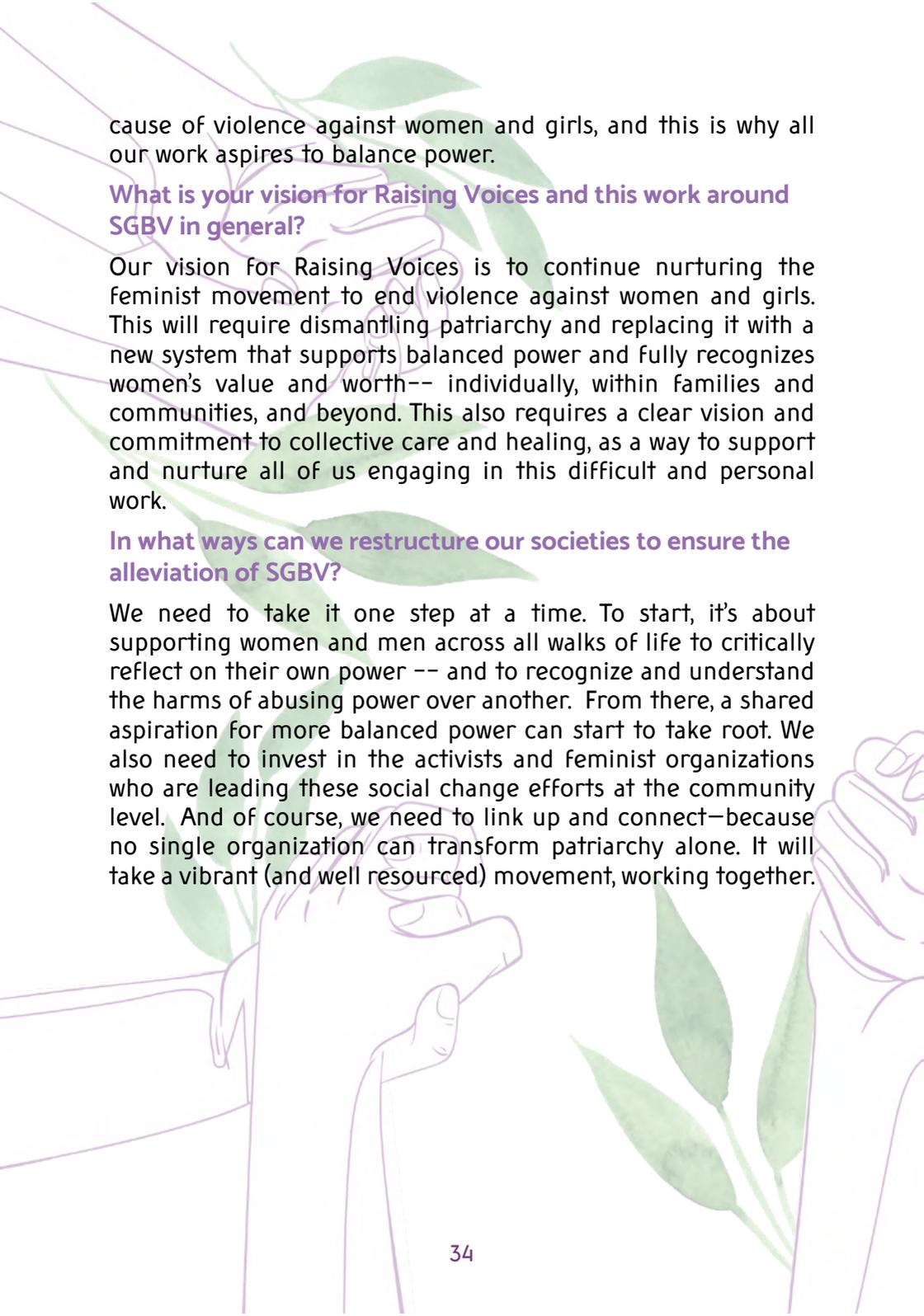
Raising Voices is a feminist organization, committed to preventing violence against women and children. Our vision is a future where all women can flourish, experience their own power, and meaningfully connect to their family, friends and community. You can read more about our story and our work at [www.raisingvoices.org](http://www.raisingvoices.org)

### Tell us about your work with Raising Voices, what inspired the work, and what you are most proud of

All our work at Raising Voices is inspired by a belief that change is possible, and together we can prevent violence. We approach this vision through different approaches, including creating programs like SASA! Together, that engage entire communities to balance power and bring forth more justice, equity, and non-violence for women. We also work alongside sister organizations to influence policymakers, donors and others to better understand (and invest in!) feminist approaches to violence prevention. And as a learning organization, we continuously reflect on what is (and is not) working in order to tweak and strengthen our own approaches, as well as to share lessons with other organizations.

### What are some of the systemic or social issues that are behind the problems that Raising Voices is addressing?

If we put it simply, we are addressing patriarchy in its various shapes and forms. We believe that gender inequality is the root

A stylized illustration in purple and green ink. It shows two hands, one on the left and one on the right, holding a plant with several green leaves. The lines are thin and delicate, giving it a soft, artistic feel. The background is white.

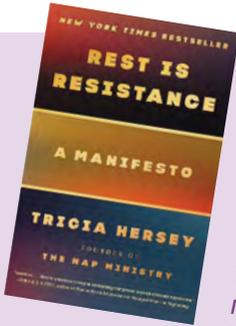
cause of violence against women and girls, and this is why all our work aspires to balance power.

### **What is your vision for Raising Voices and this work around SGBV in general?**

Our vision for Raising Voices is to continue nurturing the feminist movement to end violence against women and girls. This will require dismantling patriarchy and replacing it with a new system that supports balanced power and fully recognizes women's value and worth-- individually, within families and communities, and beyond. This also requires a clear vision and commitment to collective care and healing, as a way to support and nurture all of us engaging in this difficult and personal work.

### **In what ways can we restructure our societies to ensure the alleviation of SGBV?**

We need to take it one step at a time. To start, it's about supporting women and men across all walks of life to critically reflect on their own power -- and to recognize and understand the harms of abusing power over another. From there, a shared aspiration for more balanced power can start to take root. We also need to invest in the activists and feminist organizations who are leading these social change efforts at the community level. And of course, we need to link up and connect--because no single organization can transform patriarchy alone. It will take a vibrant (and well resourced) movement, working together.



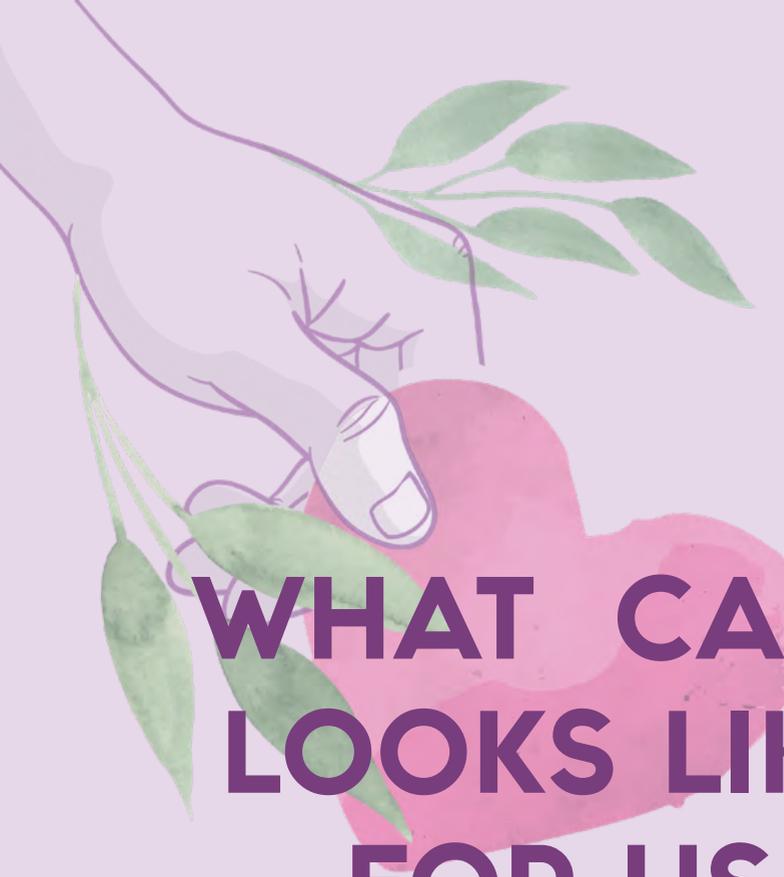
*“The Rest Is Resistance framework also does not believe in the toxic idea that we are resting to recharge and rejuvenate so we can be prepared to give more output to capitalism. What we have internalized as productivity has been informed by a capitalist, ableist, patriarchal system. Our drive and obsession to always be in a state of “productivity” leads us to the path of exhaustion, guilt, and shame. We falsely believe we are not doing enough and that we must always be guiding our lives toward more labor. The distinction that must be repeated as many times as necessary is this: We are not resting to be productive. We are resting simply because it is our divine right to do so.”*

**Tricia Hersey, Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto**

# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM 2022





An illustration of a hand with a white glove holding a large, textured pink heart. The hand is positioned at the top left, with fingers wrapped around the heart. Green leaves and a thin branch are also visible, extending from the top left towards the heart. The background is a light purple color.

# WHAT CARE LOOKS LIKE FOR US

## *Elisabeth Charity Nabuchabo, Uganda*

My name is Elisabeth Charity Nabuchabo, but most people call me Lisa Charity. I'm a 23-year-old writer, decolonial feminist, and artist. Currently, I'm apprenticing in Communications at Femme Forte Uganda, a feminist movement-building organization in Kampala. I'm a Ugandan residing in Kampala.

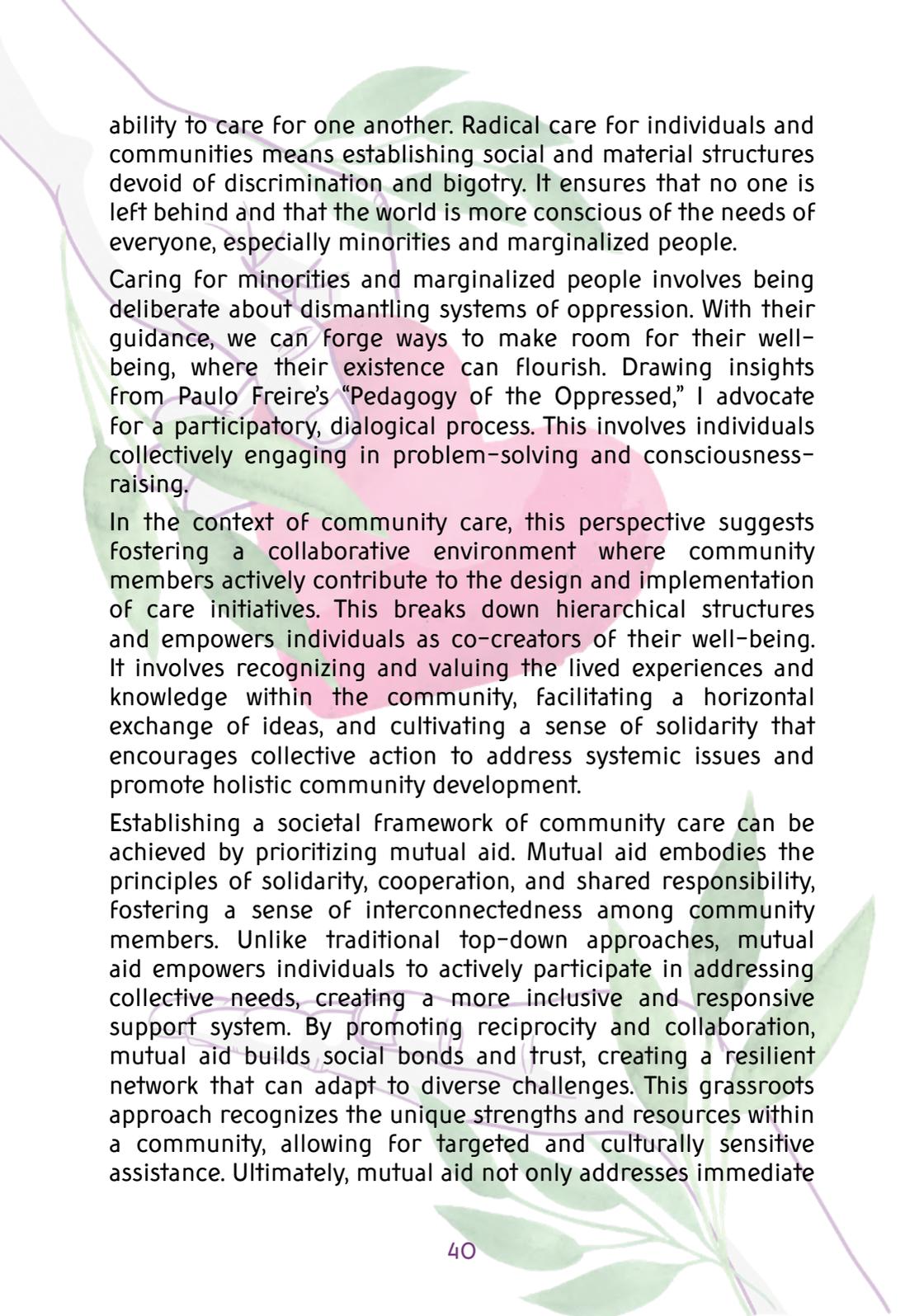
### **How do you take care of the people close to you?**

I take care of those close to me by prioritizing empathetic listening. I make a conscious effort to recognize and appreciate their uniqueness, striving to understand and appreciate them for who they truly are. This enables me to gauge their individual needs and inquire about them directly. My approach to caregiving involves tailoring my actions to suit how each person personally perceives care, as I believe it varies for everyone. Consequently, I gain valuable insights through these connections. My ultimate goal is to serve as a positive influence, consistently encouraging others to embrace their best selves and pursue self-actualization. I offer unwavering support and enthusiastic encouragement throughout their different journeys, adapting to the diverse needs that may arise. Most importantly, I do my best to create a space where they can freely express their authentic selves.

### **What does radical care for individuals and communities mean to you? In what ways can we entrench this into our society?**

My understanding of radical care has been shaped by my feminist and liberatory politics. Radical care, to me, means, first and foremost, acknowledging the existing oppressive systems in the world we live in today. It involves recognizing how, where, and who is affected in a landscape actively working towards erasing marginalized people. I firmly believe that survival is a shared burden, not an individual obligation.

Community care, for me, requires a robust approach to assess the needs of people while acknowledging their differences. We must prioritize sustainability and interdependence, challenging the individualism we've been taught that compromises our

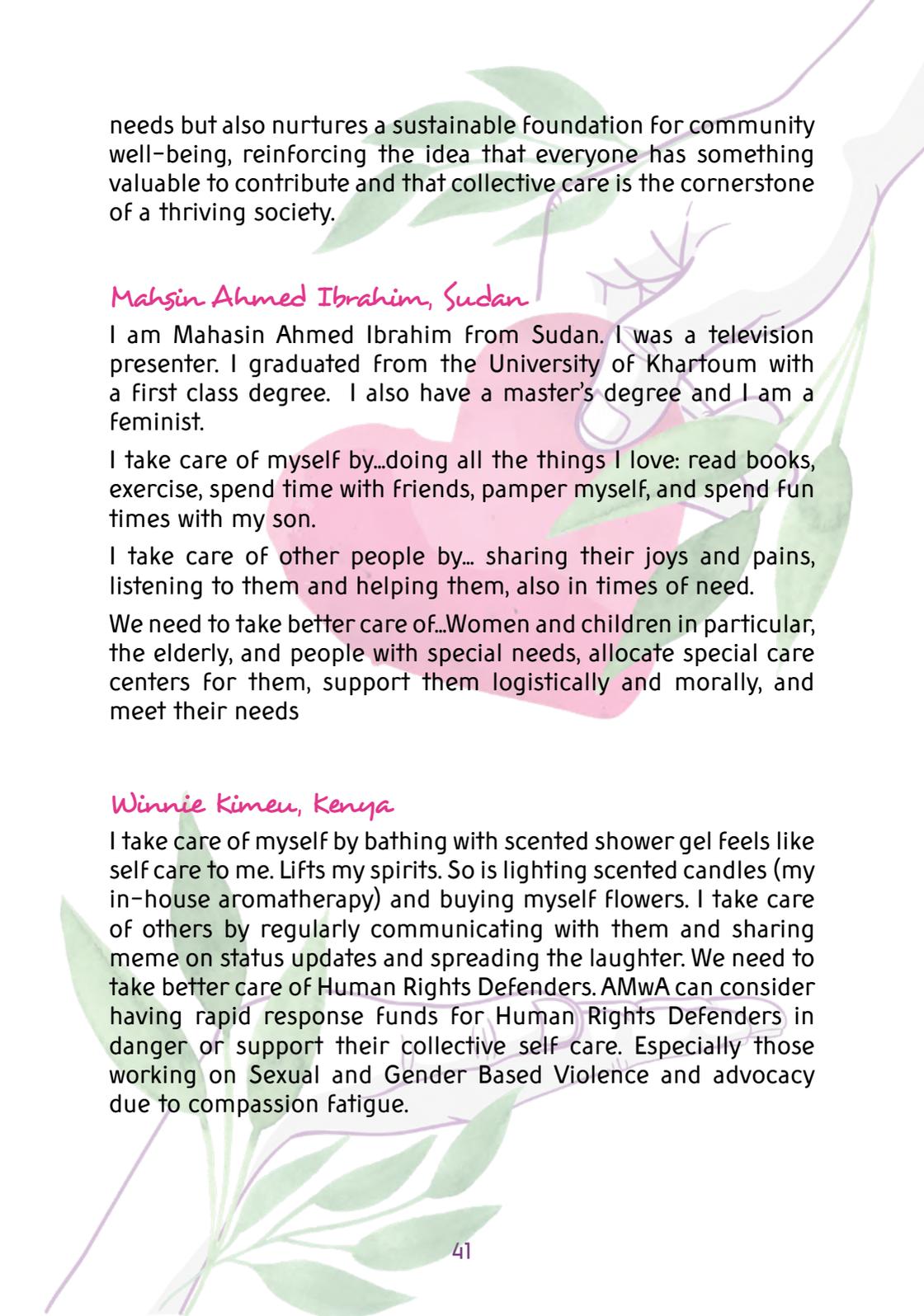


ability to care for one another. Radical care for individuals and communities means establishing social and material structures devoid of discrimination and bigotry. It ensures that no one is left behind and that the world is more conscious of the needs of everyone, especially minorities and marginalized people.

Caring for minorities and marginalized people involves being deliberate about dismantling systems of oppression. With their guidance, we can forge ways to make room for their well-being, where their existence can flourish. Drawing insights from Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," I advocate for a participatory, dialogical process. This involves individuals collectively engaging in problem-solving and consciousness-raising.

In the context of community care, this perspective suggests fostering a collaborative environment where community members actively contribute to the design and implementation of care initiatives. This breaks down hierarchical structures and empowers individuals as co-creators of their well-being. It involves recognizing and valuing the lived experiences and knowledge within the community, facilitating a horizontal exchange of ideas, and cultivating a sense of solidarity that encourages collective action to address systemic issues and promote holistic community development.

Establishing a societal framework of community care can be achieved by prioritizing mutual aid. Mutual aid embodies the principles of solidarity, cooperation, and shared responsibility, fostering a sense of interconnectedness among community members. Unlike traditional top-down approaches, mutual aid empowers individuals to actively participate in addressing collective needs, creating a more inclusive and responsive support system. By promoting reciprocity and collaboration, mutual aid builds social bonds and trust, creating a resilient network that can adapt to diverse challenges. This grassroots approach recognizes the unique strengths and resources within a community, allowing for targeted and culturally sensitive assistance. Ultimately, mutual aid not only addresses immediate



needs but also nurtures a sustainable foundation for community well-being, reinforcing the idea that everyone has something valuable to contribute and that collective care is the cornerstone of a thriving society.

### *Mahsin Ahmed Ibrahim, Sudan*

I am Mahasin Ahmed Ibrahim from Sudan. I was a television presenter. I graduated from the University of Khartoum with a first class degree. I also have a master's degree and I am a feminist.

I take care of myself by...doing all the things I love: read books, exercise, spend time with friends, pamper myself, and spend fun times with my son.

I take care of other people by... sharing their joys and pains, listening to them and helping them, also in times of need.

We need to take better care of...Women and children in particular, the elderly, and people with special needs, allocate special care centers for them, support them logistically and morally, and meet their needs

### *Winnie Kimeu, Kenya*

I take care of myself by bathing with scented shower gel feels like self care to me. Lifts my spirits. So is lighting scented candles (my in-house aromatherapy) and buying myself flowers. I take care of others by regularly communicating with them and sharing meme on status updates and spreading the laughter. We need to take better care of Human Rights Defenders. AMwA can consider having rapid response funds for Human Rights Defenders in danger or support their collective self care. Especially those working on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and advocacy due to compassion fatigue.



### *Nshemire Agnes*

I constantly take moments of rest to care for myself and enjoy the day like doing meditation, taking a walk, exercising. I constantly visit my friends, playing, listening to music together, dancing, and also cooking our favorite food. Marginalised women need to heal from all the stressful life they are living for example by taking them for retreat to take off stress.

### *Nakibuule Hajarah, Uganda*

I am a female youth councilor from Mubende district, a feminist, gender based violence referee of kasambya constituency. I take care of myself by being me, knowing my values and rights as a young woman.



### *Jeniffer Alwoch, Uganda*

I take care of myself in different ways, such as eating my favorite foods when I want, watching a movie once in a while, having a massage done by a trusted person around me, talking to my loved ones, and having good sex, among other activities. I take care of others by ensuring that my actions do not affect their mental health. I help them whenever I am able to, I buy them gifts, and actively listen to them. I believe every one really needs to be taken care of; for instance, children, mothers, people with disabilities, and the elderly. However, for a person living with HIV, I choose to focus on taking care of them because some of them go through a lot. The stress of taking medication every day is tiresome, along with experiencing so much body pain. We could organize self-care sessions and create safe spaces for them to share their stories and heal.

### Trudy Asiima

I take care of myself by hydrating (could be water and alcohol lol), venting in my notes app and to my friends, staying away from trouble and taking my calcium supplements. I take care of others by calling or texting to check on how they're doing, sometimes reminding them of what to do or showing up for them.

### Nantongo Bashira, Uganda

I take care of myself by giving myself peace and allowing my soul to rest especially when I feel sad, anxious and tortured. Then I often meditate and have alone time without any disturbances. I eat whatever I want to eat and be around people who give a reason to keep going. But most importantly, I love myself. I learnt one thing about life. That we are



like trees in a way that we have the roots, support system, leaves and fruits. For this matter I learnt to know how to care for each one person close and supportive to me. I appreciate them, gift them and most importantly reciprocate the love they offer to me. I think we need to take better care of the youth especially the victims of HIV. We can always create unique sessions of celebrating their existence and listening to their stories. We need to let young people know the power of speaking up or letting out their mind or feelings. We can also organize some dramas in form of plays for purposes of edutainment.

### Emmaculate Shisia (Scarlet), Kenya

I take care of myself by embracing self-care, I've cultivated resilience by setting healthy boundaries with loved ones, prioritizing mindfulness, and embracing rest. Seeking solace in healing spaces that celebrate authenticity, I dedicate two hours daily to meditation, fostering a positive mindset. This

holistic approach empowers me, ensuring balance and well-being in my personal and advocacy journey. My self-awareness proves invaluable in caring for my loved ones. I create safe spaces by leveraging my mental health knowledge, actively listening, and offering advice. I encourage vulnerability, allowing them to open up. I express love in their preferred language, fostering deeper connections and understanding within our relationships.



### *Linessi Kwata, Malawi*

I am a young feminist from Malawi. I advocate for women and girls' rights. Linessie has been working in gender equality and Gender Based Violence related Projects for over 3 years. In order to ensure that Girls in my community had access to education which has been a major challenge, I founded Girls Arise Club in my community to motivate girls to stay in school while on the other hand acting as a safe space for them. The safe space provides mental health awareness, SRHR information and GBV related information as these play a vital role to self care among girls. I take care of myself by ensuring that I stay away from things that would affect my mental health because I believe what I expose my mind to has a huge impact on who I am in my daily life. In addition, I take care of myself by participating in sporting activities and also giving myself a break after stressful moments. I always tell myself that as much as I need to work hard to achieve various things, I also deserve a rest. I can not enjoy life or money if I am drained physically or mentally. I take care of the people close to me by creating a good environment to them. A toxic environment to my close friends would definitely affect their mental health and the relationship I have with them. In addition, I take care of them by complementing them and celebrating



with them whenever they do something good because receiving good feedback brightens their days. Lastly, I take care of them by correcting them whenever they do something wrong before what they do becomes a habit that would risk their lives and their careers

I believe girls and women with disabilities needs a better care. Often times, women and girls with disabilities go through mental breakdowns because of the rejection they face in societies. They can be taken care of by ensuring that they are included in various programs as this will create a sense of belonging to them. In addition, they can be taken care of by creating platforms for them where they can discuss things that affects them and how they would wish to be treated in societies where most of the times their needs are unmet.

### *Hellen Sakisa, Uganda*

My name is Sakisa Hellena from Uganda .I proudly identify as Gender Activist who is passionate about women, girls and youth in spheres of policy making. I take care of myself by creating personal boundaries, second being mindful on what I consume as a person; be it food or reading material. Lastly, doing some simple dance moves to just celebrate myself. We need to take care



of others better by first identifying the people that belong in the minorities and help create a safe space for them like any other person in the community through giving them the platforms to ably share their plight without condemnation.

### *Netsai Emmanuellie, Zimbabwe*

I am a queer woman who has been fighting for the rights and equity for women and girls especially those from the rural areas. I take care of myself by making sure I get enough sleep, even if I have a lot of things I need to work on, I prioritize getting rest. I



always have a book that I am reading. When I feel overwhelmed, I shut down everything electronic and escape into my book. I take care of others by constantly checking up on them, asking them if there is anything I can do for them. I also cook hearty meals for them, my food brings comfort and joy to those around me. I believe that we need to

take better care of vulnerable people and those whose voice is not heard. Many women and girls from the rural areas hardly have a platform to speak or voice out their concerns.

### *Daisy Arutun, Ugandan*

I usually give myself some time off to be me, just me. I think it's called the "me time". During this time I take time to reflect on life and do whatever I want. I have also learnt to always gift myself each time. I take care of my friends by spending time with them, talking, going places together and also providing for them whenever I can.



### *Milanya Jackline, Kenya*

I identify myself as a woman. I am an African feminist who uses art and sports to infuse my gender and disability work on inclusion. We need to take better care of single mothers with disabilities and Human Right defenders plus us feminists cause we keep on taking care of others and forget about ourselves.

### *Edna Ninsiima, Uganda*

I take care of myself by resting. That includes sleep, or just relaxation – during which time I can read a good book, or watch

a good film, or even meditate. For the people close to me, I make phone calls and listen to what they many need to talk about, send flowers or food or money, give hugs and always remind them that I love, and I'm here for them.



There are 3 groups I can think of in the moment, which are especially not accorded space within the capitalist patriarchy. People marginalised for being diverse, people living with chronic-illness/disability and poor people. Because we exist within patriarchal, ableist and capitalist systems, with class and other hierarchical structures, we are all at risk of succumbing to the same alienating, single-issue approaches that these systems dictate. But while our fight is primarily the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression, we must continue to confront the ways in which even with our collective struggle, oppression expands and contracts based on our different social and political identities, as well as circumstances. That intersectional approach is as important on paper and in our work as in our interpersonal lives and feminist praxis.

So, with the examples of groups I mentioned at the start, we can begin by paying extra care and attention to them. Inquiring and seeking to learn how further they can be supported, even as we go about our liberation work, or put together those nice self-care programs that we all deserve. As Audre Lorde herself taught us: "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

*Chepkirui Ronoh Tumising, Kenya*

Self-care is a conscientious practice that revolves around the acknowledgement that my body serves as the vessel for my entire being, tirelessly carrying out all tasks and desires. It is an intentional recognition that the body, mind, and soul require moments of repose, recovery, and rejuvenation to operate at



their optimal best. To achieve this, I engage in various self-care activities, including monthly Swedish massages, facial scrubs, cleansing, and hydrating. Additionally, I prioritise deep hair washes and natural styling, regular home workouts occasional swimming sessions, and venturing places that immerse me in the wonders of nature.

Sometimes, I take moments to retreat indoors, dedicating time to meditation, extended sleep, and indulging in captivating movies. These practices collectively contribute to my holistic well-being and serve as a testament to the importance of nurturing oneself amidst life's demands.

Amid my bustling schedule, I carve out dedicated time to foster connections, particularly with my brother. As part of my caregiving role, I ensure he has his essential needs met, contribute to his educational expenses, and extend support during periods of illness by facilitating necessary treatments and therapy. Crucially, I serve as his primary cheerleader, offering unwavering encouragement for his dreams and aspirations while motivating him to be proactive in pursuing success while maintaining a keen awareness of his mental and overall well-being. Beyond my immediate family, I extend my support to relatives, friends, and colleagues in various capacities, assisting in any way possible, even in the smallest gestures, recognising that these nuances hold significance in fostering meaningful connections.

One crucial demographic that requires enhanced care is women, who consistently contribute significantly to various spheres—be it within their families, workplaces, or social circles. Often prioritising the needs of others, women tend to overlook their self-care. Juggling multiple roles and engaging in multitasking, they navigate various responsibilities without sufficient moments for personal well-being. It is imperative to establish nurturing spaces exclusively for women, providing them respite from their myriad duties. These sanctuaries allow them to step away temporarily, find repose, engage in recreational activities,

contemplate their own needs, and experience profound feelings of love and appreciation. The Feminist Healing Festival stands out as an exceptional initiative catering to these specific needs.

Another group that demands careful attention is gender and sexually expansive people. This community faces a myriad of challenges that extend beyond concerns of identity and acceptance. To better care for them, it is crucial to foster environments that prioritise inclusivity, understanding, and respect. This involves creating support networks that address the unique challenges they encounter, ranging from social stigmatisation to access to comprehensive healthcare. Empathy, education, and advocacy play pivotal roles in dismantling barriers and ensuring a more inclusive and supportive society for gender and sexually-expansive individuals. By actively listening to their experiences, providing resources, and amplifying their voices, we contribute to creating a world where they can navigate life authentically and without unnecessary hardships.

### *Nabakooza Georgia Atwijukire, Uganda*

My self care depends on the circumstances. I learnt in 2022 that when I'm under immense stress, I like to cook myself a meal; something fancy or something basic just to exert some modicum of control over my life. This is time I also find relaxing because I get to worry about something else other than what's troubling me. Sometimes this meal prep can mentally go on for weeks because

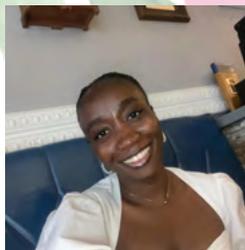


I need to get it right to attain the dopamine flow. I tend to my plants as they bring me joy. My urban garden constituents include flowers, herbs and spices. In all honesty, a flower say a rose can bloom for up to four days but those are days I smile sheepishly at the thought of just remembering that one is in full bloom. So, taking care of my plants ensures that I have hope for a flower to bloom and with it the joy it brings. Doing manipedis has become a necessity but in my profession, they're

a way of adding colour to my life on a daily hence the choice of photo attached. I take care of others through sharing food. It is my love language to friends and family. Just knowing what makes a friend tick and when the thought of them crosses my mind, I get them something to say I care. These range from sweets, smoothies, juice, confectionaries, spices and they never disappoint.

From experience, I get troubled by persons living with disability and unconsciously checking if life is ideal for them when it comes to accessibility issues

*Ayomide Solanke, Nigeria*



I still self-isolate to cope with stressful situations. I shut the doors, and sometimes my gadgets and try to settle on something I like, typically good music and just stay in that space where nothing can touch me. I also love to go to new places, try new dishes, and just get a different feel of life. This is how I take care of myself.

As a way to take care of my people, I do a lot of affirmations, chai! I find affirmations soothing for both me and my people. I don't stop talking about something I like about them or the way they have styled themselves. I just keep it going until they are thoroughly full of confidence. I think I do this because I like when it is also done to me, I like how it makes me feel also.

I think that we need to take care of young mothers, especially teenage mothers. The experience is isolating and the lack of regard they get only makes them susceptible to abuse or more unplanned pregnancies, we can be kinder in our approach to them. Not shunning or condescending but just kindness in our interactions. That may go a long way.

## *Bisrat Kubi, Ethiopia*

Taking care of myself has become essential in my work, especially in the field of SRHR. An incident on a Thursday left me burnt out for months, leading me to question the path I was on. It became clear that self-care is crucial. To strike a better balance and build resilience, I started being more proactive about self-care. I separated work and personal life, creating a healthier balance. I also brought back things that make me happy—reading, enjoying Kdramas, spending time with family, and playing volleyball. This conscious effort to infuse happiness into my routine proved instrumental in mitigating burnout, fostering a profound sense of fulfillment. I came to understand that self-care is not a destination but an ongoing journey, an integral part of my routine. Nurturing my well-being through these intentional activities became a compass, guiding me through the challenges of my work with resilience and maintaining a steadfast positive outlook on life.



In caring for the people close to me, I prioritize creating a supportive and nurturing environment. Actively listening to their concerns, offering a non-judgmental space for expression, and providing emotional support during challenging times are key aspects of my approach. I celebrate their achievements and strive to understand their needs, adapting my actions to ensure their comfort.

Additionally, I am conscious of maintaining a healthy emotional boundary. I don't want their sadness or challenges to negatively impact my well-being, so I make an intentional effort to navigate these situations without letting it loop into my own emotions. This balance helps in fostering a supportive atmosphere while preserving my emotional resilience.

Ensuring the well-being of various groups, including women, adolescents, and marginalized communities such as those with disabilities, demands a multifaceted approach. This involves promoting equal opportunities for women in education,

employment, and leadership, ensuring accessible healthcare and addressing gender-based violence. For adolescents, the focus is on comprehensive education, mental health support, and platforms for self-expression. Marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, require accessible spaces, inclusive policies, and representation. Additionally, addressing the needs of the elderly, sexually and gender diverse persons, and minority ethnic groups involves tailored healthcare, social inclusion, anti-discrimination policies, and cultural sensitivity.

### *Afrika, Kenya*



I take care of myself by ensuring I get 8 hours of sleep, eating 3 meals a day, reading when I find time, enjoying my coffee, bonding with my small family (cat and my gf) and enjoying the feeling of the sun on my face. I take care of my people by constantly checking in with them to ensure they are okay, have someone to talk to which in this case is me and also

help spread joy in their lives. Honestly? Feminist organizers and first born African daughters. The amount of trauma we carry? It's a lot. Everyone always expects us to be strong but no one ever asks if we are okay.

### *Mubendo Joseph, Uganda*

I take care of myself by loving my self and prioritising my health. When I am sick I go for medical check ups, eating food and having regular physical exercises. I take care of others by listening to them when they present to me any challenges. I support them in seeking accurate information about SRHR Services so that they can enjoy a meaningful



life. I think that we need to take better care of young people living with disabilities, those living with HIV and those living with

## Albinism and survivors of Gender Based Violence.



*Feizha Fadhili, Kenya*

I prioritize self-care by taking moments to recharge and acknowledging small victories. Whether it's a quiet break or celebrating achievements, it's vital. Embracing my body, both mentally and physically, is key. Nurturing a positive relationship with myself contributes to overall well-being. In life's

hustle, these practices become anchors, ensuring I navigate challenges with resilience and gratitude.

I extend my self-care approach to loved ones by fostering a supportive environment. Listening without judgment, celebrating their successes, and being a source of strength during challenges. Recognizing the importance of mental well-being, I encourage open communication and provide a space for shared vulnerabilities. It's about creating connections that promote growth, resilience, and collective happiness.

We must prioritize the well-being of young girls and women in marginalized areas who lack access to quality education and resources. To care for them better, we can establish educational initiatives, providing scholarships and mentorship programs. By investing in community infrastructure and healthcare, we address their holistic needs. Empowering these women economically through skill development fosters self-sufficiency. Additionally, spreading awareness about their challenges ensures collective support. It's a holistic approach that combines education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, creating a path towards a brighter future.

*Esther Adokey, Uganda*

To take care of myself physically I prioritize my sleep and whenever I miss out on sleep or sleep later than my usual set

time which is usually 9:30pm, I compensate whenever I can any time of the day with a nap. My phones are usually on silent so I'm unable to be disrupted from my sleep. Mentally whenever I feel exhausted and no longer grasping anytime set for the day I usually try to shut everything out of my mind by locating a quiet place and just sitting and staring in space and sometimes when I'm where I cannot access any quiet I open up a game on my phone usually its candy crush and just play then resume work with much more concentration Emotionally when I'm feeling any uncomfortable emotions especially anger and sadness. I speak out to my husband or my sisters. I usually feel better after talking to any of them and once in a while especially on weekends we take ourselves and the kids out to just change the environment and live freely.



I try my best to ensure that I take care of others through the energy I release around them. I make sure it is positive as well as comforting and encouraging them whenever I can. Most of all I remind them daily of their importance including thanking them for every small thing they do. Each day I talk to them and when I cannot, I always leave a message to know how each of them are doing.

I think that we need to take better care of Adolescents, and these can be cared for by listening to them without any judgements, encouraging them in all they do and advising them on some of the decisions they make and lastly create for them opportunities to use their own judgments while we support them and correct them where necessary.

### *Adah Bitiah Chembo, Zambia*

I recognize the profound significance of self-care, understanding that it's not just a buzzword but a vital practice for personal and collective well-being. I've learned to prioritize my emotional, physical, and overall well-being. As a changemaker, I understand



the significance of the fact that I cannot pour from an empty cup which means I can only be able to effectively take care of others of when I take care of myself.

Therefore, when I feel emotionally or physically drained, I've developed a habit of taking a step back and creating a personal sabbatical. During this time, I focus on rejuvenating activities that nourish my mind, body, and soul. Whether it's spending time in nature, engaging in creative pursuits, or simply resting and reflecting, this intentional withdrawal allows me to recharge and regain the strength needed for both personal and collective advocacy.

Taking care of the people close to me is deeply rooted in empathy and understanding. I approach it with the golden rule in mind—doing unto others as I would want them to do unto me if I were in their shoes. It's a guiding principle that shapes the way I interact with and support those I care about. One of the ways I express my care is by being their biggest cheerleader. I celebrate their victories, big or small, and offer encouragement when they face challenges. Knowing that having someone genuinely rooting for you can make a significant difference, I strive to be that positive force in their corner.

Communication is key, and I make a conscious effort to let them know that they matter. I express the significance of their needs and feelings, creating a space where they feel heard and understood. This not only validates their experiences but also reinforces the idea that their well-being is a priority. Sometimes, being there is more about presence than action. I understand the power of simply being a supportive presence, whether it's sharing moments of joy or sitting with them during times of difficulty. It's a silent reassurance that they are not alone and that I am there for them, no matter what. In essence, my approach to taking care of those close to me revolves around empathy, genuine support, and a commitment to being a positive and present presence in their lives.

We need to prioritize better care for marginalized groups, particularly focusing on women and children. Ensuring equal access to education, healthcare, and opportunities is crucial. Addressing systemic barriers, promoting inclusivity, and advocating for policies that protect their rights are essential steps toward better care. Empathy-driven initiatives, such as mentorship programs and support networks, can also make a significant impact.

### *Sojoud Elgarrai, Sudan*

I take care of myself through meditation, spa days, watching movies and taking to loved ones. I take care of others by being available to listen to their stories. We must take better care of refugee women, they are under a lot of pressure and feel alone. We can help by providing support and assistance. Listen to their stories and struggles.



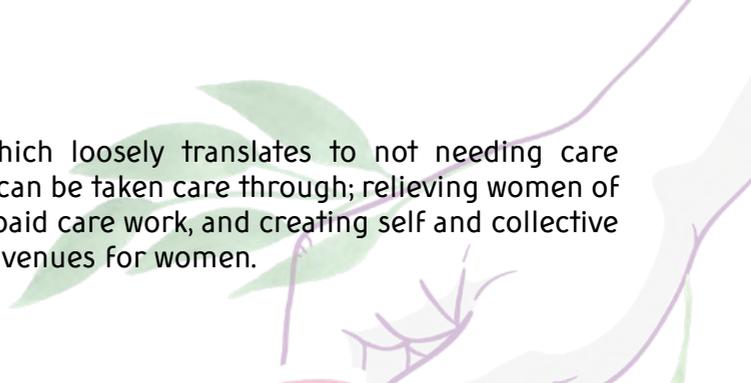
### *Esther Mercy Atim*

I take care of myself through intentionally choosing rest as a radical act of resistance. Rest is political for me especially in a society where resting or slowing down is equated to unproductivity. Recognizing my physical, emotional, and mental limits, and allowing myself to hit pause without any guilt is one of the ultimate forms of self-care for me.

I take care of others through recognizing and acknowledging their full humanness; which allows me hold space for them and give them grace to be flawed and different from me while still being accepted, respected, and loved by me.



Women need to be taken care of better because they shoulder the biggest burden of care work and have often been required



to be “strong” which loosely translates to not needing care themselves. They can be taken care through; relieving women of the burden of unpaid care work, and creating self and collective care spaces and avenues for women.

## Grandmother the alchemist

*Warsan Shire (Somalia)*

“Grandmother, the alchemist, you spun gold out of this hard life,  
conjured beauty from the things left behind.  
Found healing where it did not live.  
Discovered the antidote in your own kitchen.  
Broke the curse with your own two hands.  
You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then  
passed it down to her daughter.”

– Warsan Shire

## Remedy for migraines and colds



Boil eucalyptus leaves in a saucepan, let the mixture cool for a bit.  
Cover your head and lean over the saucepan. Periodically, uncover  
your head and take some fresh air and steam again. Give it time and  
you will feel better.

*Ultimately, care is the compass that leads us to liberation. And care in and of itself bears as many faces as grief. Sending love in abundance to anyone who's navigating the many matrices that the Present moment is invoking, and saying a prayer for the collective will to continue onwards.*

Excerpt from **Grief has many faces** by Neema Githere Siphone

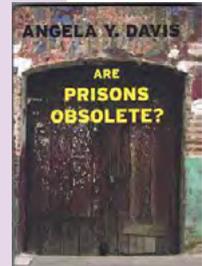
# Reading List



**Black Feminism Reimagined after Intersectionality** – Jennifer Nash

**Right-Wing Women** – Andrea Dworkin

**Are Prisons Obsolete?** – Angela Y. Davis

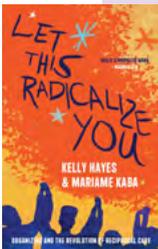
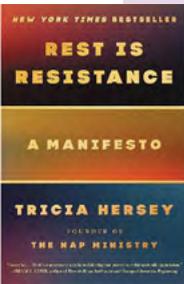


**Feminist Africa**

**We Do This 'Til We Free Us** – Mariame Kaba

**Let This Radicalize You** – Kelly Hayes & Mariame Kaba

**Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto** – Tricia Hersey



## ABOUT AKINA MAMA WA AFRIKA



Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) – translating into, “Solidarity with the African woman” is a feminist Pan-African development organization, founded in 1985 and operating in Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Tunisia, Rwanda, Zambia and Ethiopia.

Through the African Women’s Leadership Institute, AMWA has relentlessly worked towards increasing the individual and collective power of women, girls and gender expansive persons to influence policy and transformative social change by uprooting patriarchal, imperialistic and capitalistic systems of oppression.

Through the African Women’s Leadership Institute, AMWA continues to train a critical mass of feminists in intersectional feminist analysis and strategies in the areas of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Women’s Political Leadership and Economic Justice and Climate action, to bring about justice, equity, equality and justice.

## ABOUT GBV NET



Established in 2003 in Kampala Uganda, GBV Net is a vibrant network of activists, organizations and friends working to prevent violence against women (VAW), united in our mission to create a safer world for women.

The Network uses multiple strategies to mobilize the movement around VAW in the region through including enhancing member organizations’ feminist analysis of VAW, fostering solidarity between and among members, and increasing activism at the individual and organizational levels to prevent VAW.

Join us in building a feminist utopia  
Access African decolonial radical feminist theories and  
strategies here:



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