

Tending Our Gardens

By L. Kling

This zine is straddled by a global pandemic and civil unrest. After months of quarantine and isolation, while unemployment soars and rent is still due. A few blocks away from where George Floyd, a Black man, had his life stolen by police. The same city where Iyanna Dior, a Black Trans woman, was brutally attacked. On occupied and stolen Dakota and Anishinaabe land. At a time where martial law has been declared and roving gangs of state-sponsored thugs roam the streets.

I am deeply inspired by Mary Oliver's poem, "The Gardener." She questions if she's doing "enough" in life, and then sees the gardener, who is "tending his children, the roses." How relatable. A reminder, despite everything going on, to tend to what is growing around us.

Our gardens can be literal, in a time when our food supply chains are being disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging our under-resourced, underpaid agricultural and animal industry workers. Many food shelves are closed, temporarily or for the foreseeable future. Farmers markets are limited. Our grocery and corner stores are smoldering. We are facing potential food insecurity.

Our gardens can also live in our hearts and minds, as we see in the response to this world of disease and police violence that has been a manifestation of our wildest dreams: Mutual aid.

"Mutual aid" is how we help each other when the state fails us. It's the "Minnesota get together" I have always wanted, with all 50 states and countries around the world joining us in vibrant protests, disrupting everyday privileged lives, bringing awareness to the plight of Black people, and calling our leaders to abolish the police in favor of community care. We are feeding and providing for each other like never before.

How are we tending our gardens? How are we sowing our seeds for a harvest where no one will be hungry? What magic are we finding in the sunshine, water, and soil?

I asked these questions of some artists and writers and got answers in the form of a love letter to wild yeast, sketches of patio sanctuaries, poems about foraged wine, and more. Created by a multi-racial, many gendered, diverse cast of artists, including South Asian, Black, Mixed, white, Fat, Queer, artists.

I hope this zine will inspire you to tend to our collective gardens, and to focus on growth and change for the future.

Oliver, Mary. "The Gardener." A Thousand Mornings, Penguin Books, 2013, pp. 7.