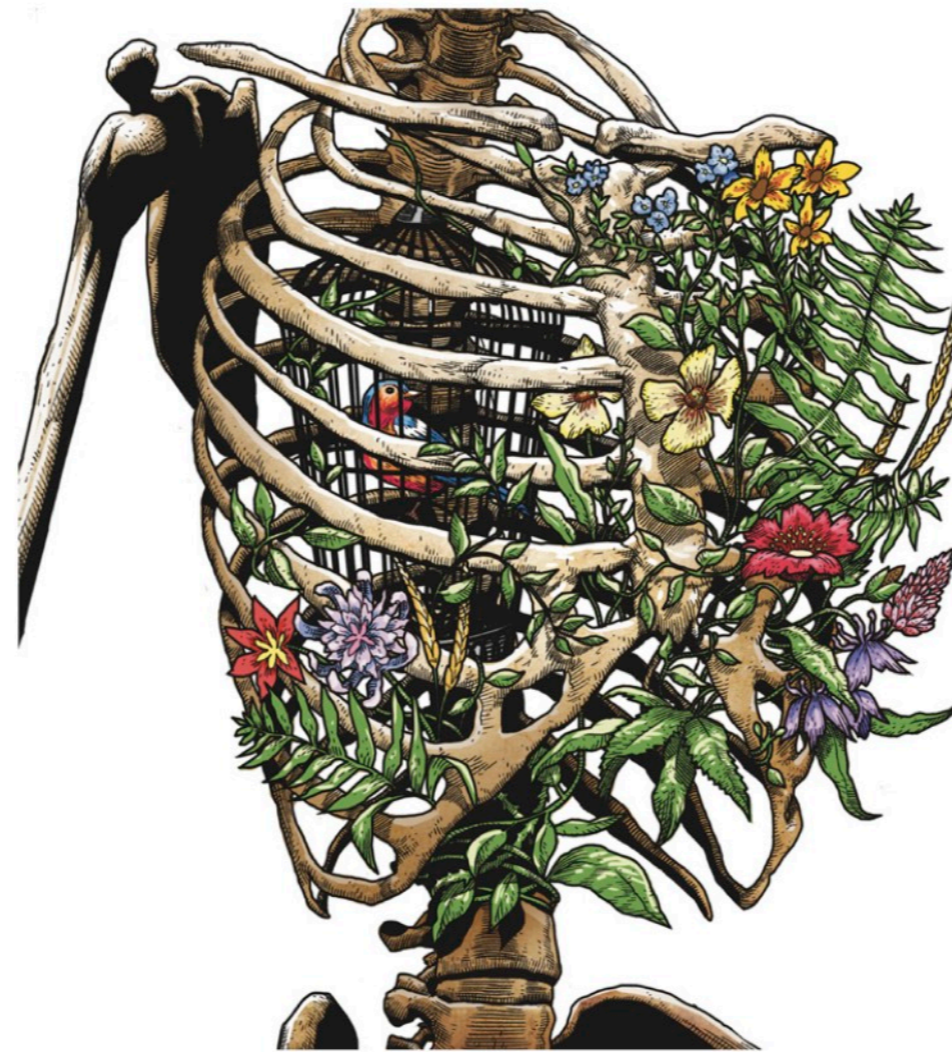


THE POLITICS OF ANARCHISM, BURNOUT & COLLECTIVE CARE

DERRY RADICAL BOOKFAIR - ONLINE WORKSHOP



SATURDAY 30 JANUARY 12PM UTC

Some disclaimers

- **Content warning:** State violence, prison, policing, self-harm, suicide, cancer
- **This talk is nothing new!** People have been supporting each other to survive through mutual aid and working with plant medicines since forever all over the world. Especially Black, Indigenous, POC and oppressed communities.
- Feminists & others have been agitating about the politics of care for decades.
- State violence is **very** broad and inseparable from other forms of violence. This talk is **very** limited in its focus (mostly state repression, prison and border violence in Europe).
- Not an academic/theoretical talk. Topics bigger than 45 minutes :)

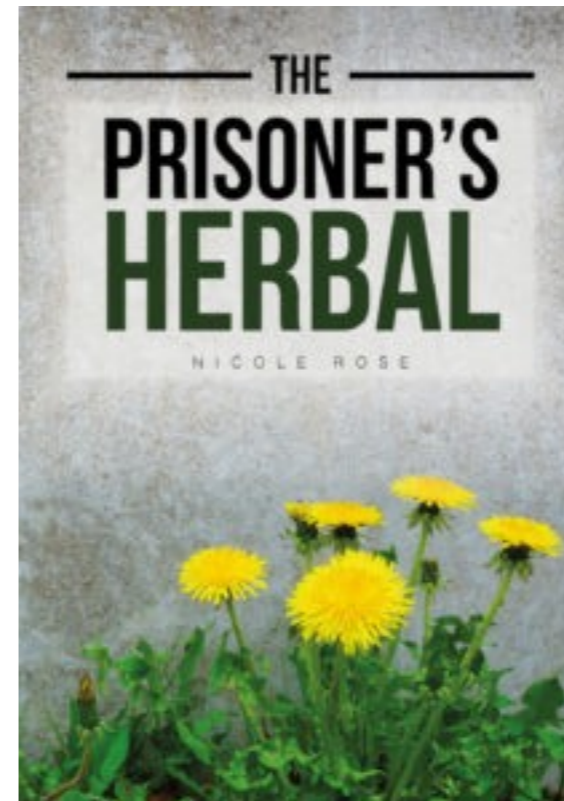
Talk Overview

- Personal context
- Anarchism & Care
- Burnout
- Collective Care
- Grassroots
Herbalism
- Resources



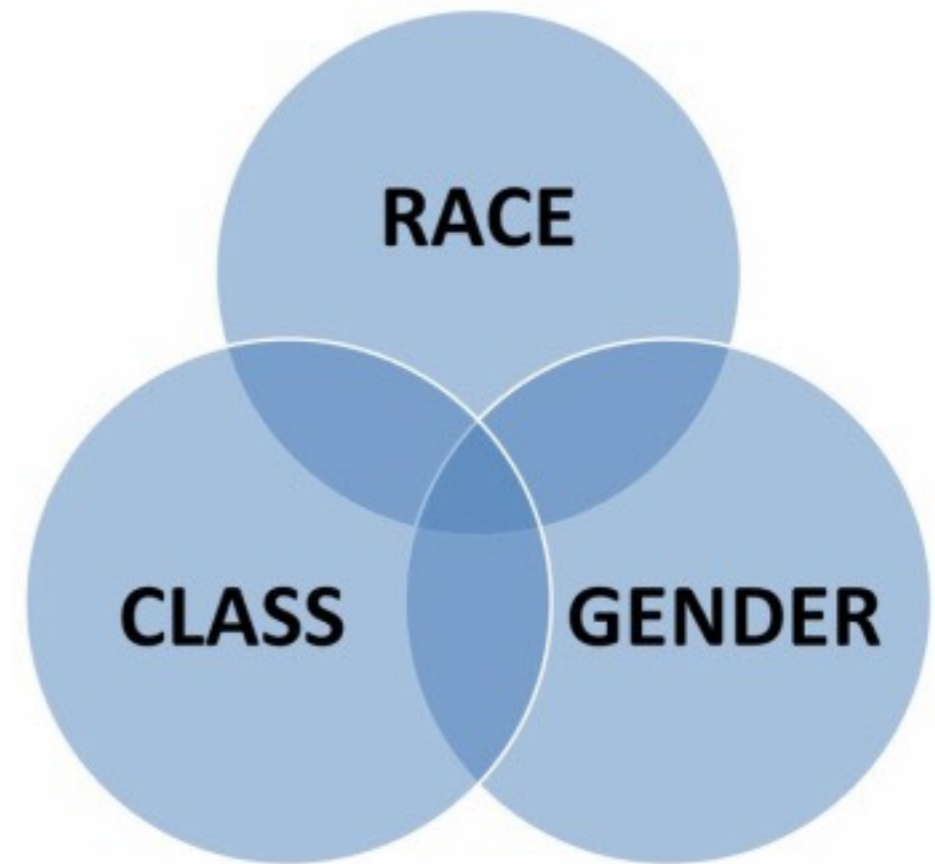
Context

- Young carer & worked in care work. First partner sent to prison when I was 16 years old.
- 3.5 year prison sentence when I was 21 as part of huge police operation. Witnessed horrifying abuse and neglect inside.
- Worked in the prison gardens & started studying herbalism in prison.
- More than 15 years of prisoner solidarity, including friends dying inside and experiencing life-threatening medical neglect. Lots of other anarchist organising.
- Developed PTSD and chronic health issues post-prison which led to more herbalism study and eventually clinical training. Wrote the books etc.



Who cares for...

- Children?
- The elderly?
- People with disabilities?
- People with chronic illnesses?
- People with mental health challenges?
- People who are pregnant or giving birth?
- People who are sick?
- People who are dying?
- Who does housework? Who cooks food?
- **Who gets paid to care? Who doesn't? How is this caring labour valued? How visible is it?**



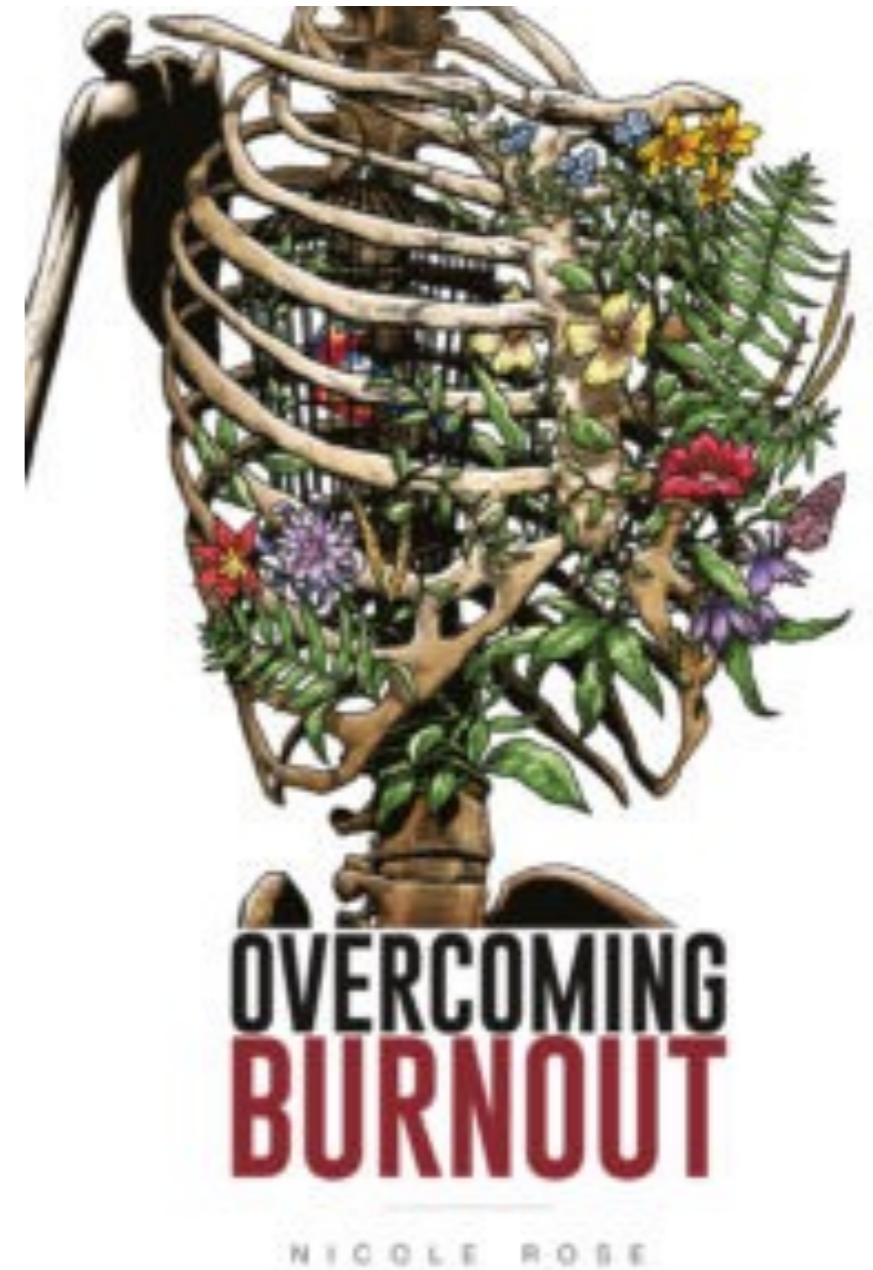
Anarchism

- “Liberation is the goal, anarchism is the placeholder” - William C. Anderson, author of *As Black As Resistance*
- Dedication to eradicating all forms of domination
- Analysing power relationships & systemic forces of oppression
- Building power from below
- Mutual Aid, direct action, community self-defence



Burnout

- Organising with others for human, animal and earth liberation can be one of the most empowering experiences alive.
- Yet frontline resistance comes with **risks to our physical and emotional health** (on top of surviving capitalism) that can lead many people to burn out and abandon movements (or be left behind by them).
- Burnout is **inseparable from systemic forces** such as racism, classism, ableism, sexism, transphobia etc.
- We cannot respond with individualised 'self-care'. We need mutual aid and models of collective care that challenge existing conditions.



Networks of care

“Whenever we seriously threaten the state and capital, they will turn on us with extreme force; from the outset we need to build the capacity and skills for combat. To support our struggle, and to support life, **we need to create our networks of care.**”



- Shahin, Nietzsche and Anarchy.
Psychology for free spirits, ontology
for social war

Collective Care in our movements

- How is the division of caring labour in our movements?
- Who supports people burning out or chronically sick from struggle?
- Who does the anti-repression and prisoner support work?
- Who is organising with significant caring responsibilities already?
- How can care become a liberating force?

Prisoner solidarity

“This is a movement rooted in care: It means supporting prisoners as part of a movement culture where people care for one another, create new bonds of solidarity, and celebrate people’s history.



This is a movement focused on shrinking the state’s capacity to repress: It means working to close prisons, end solitary confinement, free prisoners, eliminate borders. It means embedding direct challenges to the carceral state within social struggles while working to popularise a wider set of radical politics. While no one organisation can do everything, a successful anti-prison movement will need to synthesize direct action, popular relevancy, and radical critique. To separate these victories is to grant victory to the prison state.”

- Dan Berger, *The Struggle Within*

Chronic illness & Organising

- Ableist worldview (internal & external)
- 30+ contributions from people
- Attitudes, reactions & (lack of) support
 - Deadwood
 - Illness = weakness/Machismo
 - Mental-physical binary
 - Burden
 - Feeling left behind
 - Disposability

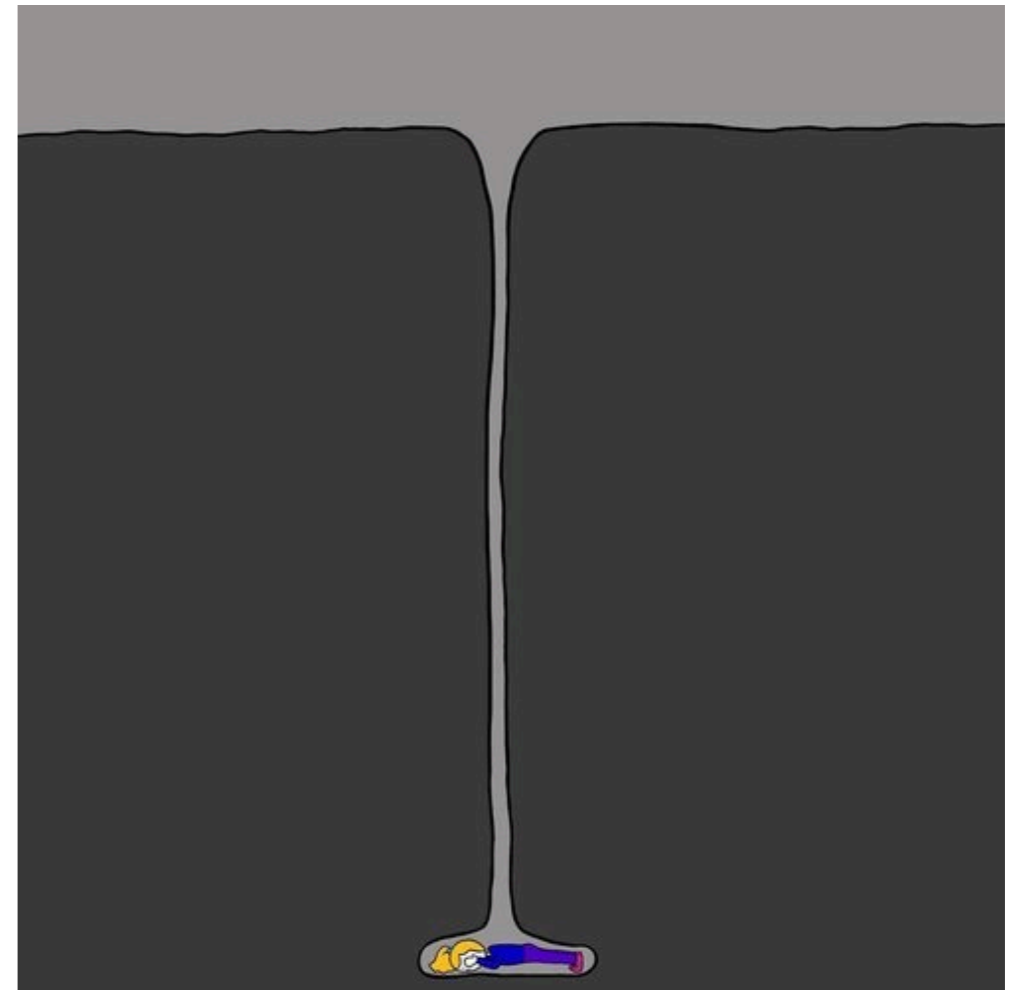


Illustration by Amani Omejer

How to not leave people behind

- Check-ins
- Breaks
- Listening
- Practical solidarity to meet people's needs
- Not pathologising or dehumanising people
- Not measuring attendance as care
- Stay connected
- Distribution of work & back ups
- Accessibility & collective problem solving



Health Autonomy

“We start with the idea that nearly all of our healthcare needs can be addressed using **preventive or primary care**. In light of neoliberalism’s destruction of primary care, there exists a need to expand the territory of care beyond the authority of the doctor, examining room, and prescriptions. And in doing so, there is potential to **recuperate the more fundamental forms of care and mutual aid in everyday life.**”

- For Health Autonomy, Care Notes Collective

IF YOUR PLANS FOR
REVOLUTION
DON'T *consider* THE *needs* OF
**DISABLED FOLKS,
CHILDREN,
ELDERLY FOLKS,**
THEY'RE *not* REVOLUTIONARY.

MALLORY THOMAS

Grassroots herbalism

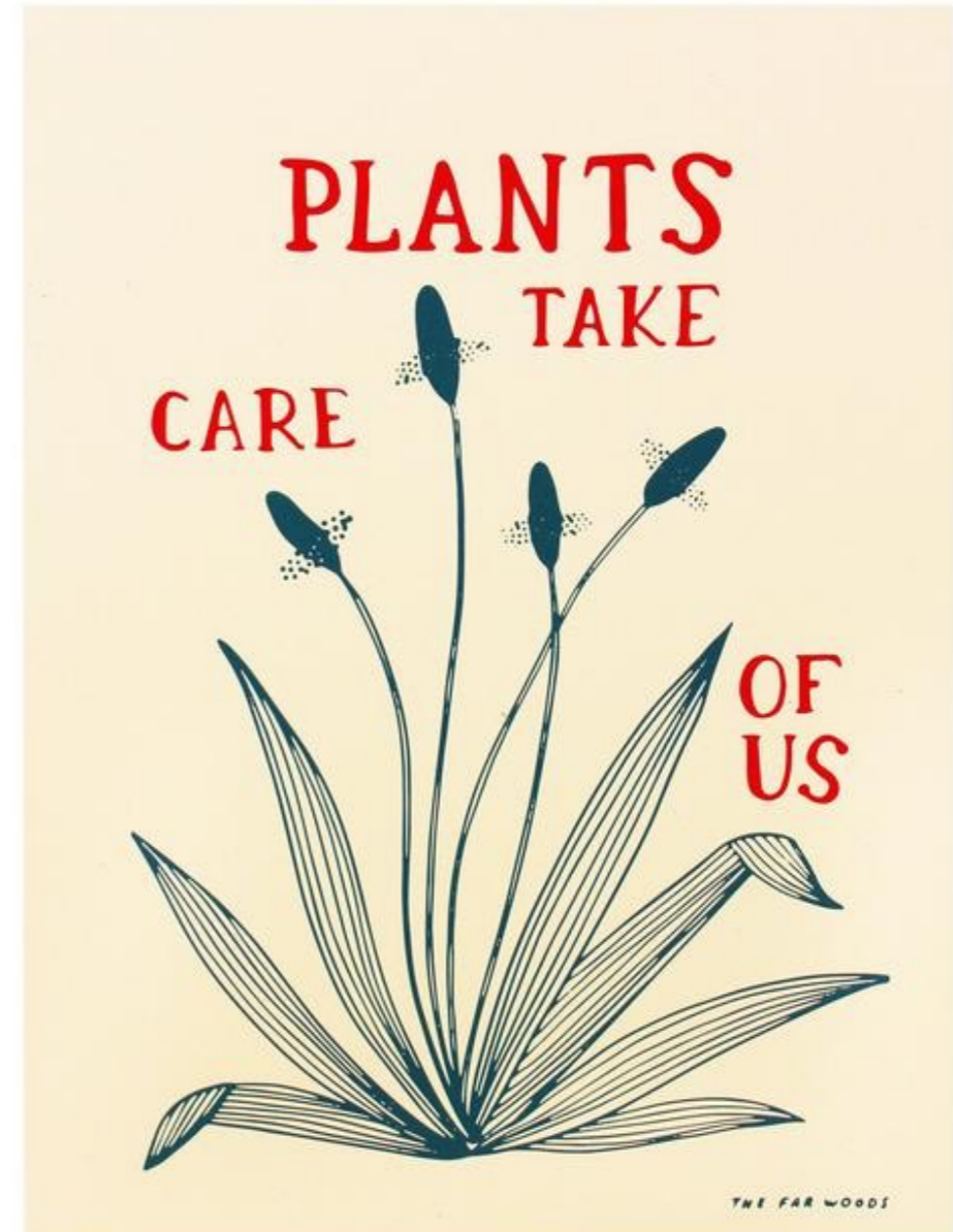
“Herbalists should go with the flow, embrace being on the wrong side of capitalism and the law, and put our energies towards establishing decentralized, autonomous, grassroots health networks that empower community self-reliance, provide care to those most in need, and reduce the need for people to access conventional medicine.”

- Dave Meesters



Plants and Mutual Aid

- Plant medicines can offer support to people experiencing all of these challenges
- They offer tangible physical health support
- Emotional support - plants can offer an anchor of safety and connection



Herbalism, Abolition and Mutual Aid

- Prisoner Solidarity: 11 million people worldwide in prisons excluded from herbalism
- Herbalists can support people leaving prison & recovering from state violence
- Herbalists can support anti-repression efforts e.g. defendant herbal support
- Herbalists can support frontline organisers to sustain their work
- Herbalist street medics can support protests, riots & insurrections. They can offer care to people fleeing state violence at border hotspots
- Herbalists can hold space at occupations & sites of resistance
- Herbalists can support plant communities
- Herbalists can offer popular education on plant medicine
- Herbalists can be engaged in building integrated infrastructure for health autonomy and healing justice beyond the state



HERBALISM = **MUTUAL AID**

The Solidarity Apothecary

The mission of the Solidarity Apothecary is to materially support revolutionary struggles and communities with plant medicines to strengthen collective autonomy, self-defence and resilience to climate change, capitalism and state violence.

www.solidarityapothecary.org

Email: info@solidarityapothecary.org

Instagram: @solidarity.apothecary

Sign up to the newsletter: <https://mailtrain.solidarityapothecary.org/subscription/gJSQATljq?fid=2>



Resources

- www.autonomynews.org - Loads of resources about mutual aid, launched during the pandemic
- Eshe Kiama Zuri - Full Spectrum Community Care - <https://eshekiamazuri.com/fsc>
- 'We've been organising like this since day' – why we must remember the Black roots of mutual aid groups - Eshe Kiama Zuri - <https://gal-dem.com/weve-been-organising-like-this-since-day-why-we-must-remember-the-black-roots-of-mutual-aid-groups/>
- UK Mutual Aid - <https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/292963391332421/>
- Care Work. Dreaming Disability Justice, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- Otter Liefte - <https://otterliefte.com/> - Survival is an act of resistance - <https://anarchiststudies.noblogs.org/article-survival-is-an-act-of-resistance-an-interview-with-kes-otter-liefte/>
- Witches, Midwives & Nurses. A history of Women Healers, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English
- As Black as Resistance, William C. Anderson and Zoé Samudzi
- Revolution at Point Zero. Housework, reproduction & feminist struggle, Silvia Federici
- Caliban and the Witch, Silvia Federici
- Mutual Aid, Dean Spade
- To Care is to Struggle, Kevin van Meter
- Winds from below, Team Colors Collective
- Burn Down the American Plantation, Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement

Herbal Projects

Herbalism Schools and Projects by and for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour

- **Seed, Root & Bloom:** “is a hood collective gathering to weave healing + justice for our indigenous and african lineages.” They offer in-person and online trainings for indigenous and black people of colour. The site also calls for donations as a form of reparations – <http://www.seedrootandbloom.com/fund-us.html>
- **Ancestral Apothecary school:** is dedicated to the study of herbal, folk and indigenous medicine – <https://ancestralapothecaryschool.com>
- **Harriet’s Apothecary:** Described as “Harriet’s Apothecary is an intergenerational, healing village led by the brilliance and wisdom of Black Cis Women, Queer and Trans healers, artists, health professionals, magicians, activists and ancestors”. – <http://www.harrietsapothecary.com>
- **School of Liberation Healing and Medicine:** “is a space where we can share knowledge about suppressed black, brown, queer, two-spirit, trans and gender non-conforming healing histories.” The school organises the POC Herbal Freedom School – <https://www.patreon.com/liberationhealing>
- **Toi Scott:** Blog of Toi Scott who founded the above School of Liberation Healing and Medicine – <http://queerherbalism.blogspot.com/>
- **Queering Herbalism:** Toi is also the author of the amazing publication Queering Herbalism available on etsy – <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/afrogenderqueer?ref=l2-shopheader-name>
- **Rootwork Herbals:** Education, consultations and apothecary. Run’s People Medicine School offering students the chance to learn the foundations of herbalism from a decolonial framework which centers BIPOC and QT experiences. Also a Woke without the Work workshop for non BIPOC herbalists - <https://www.rootworkherbals.com/>

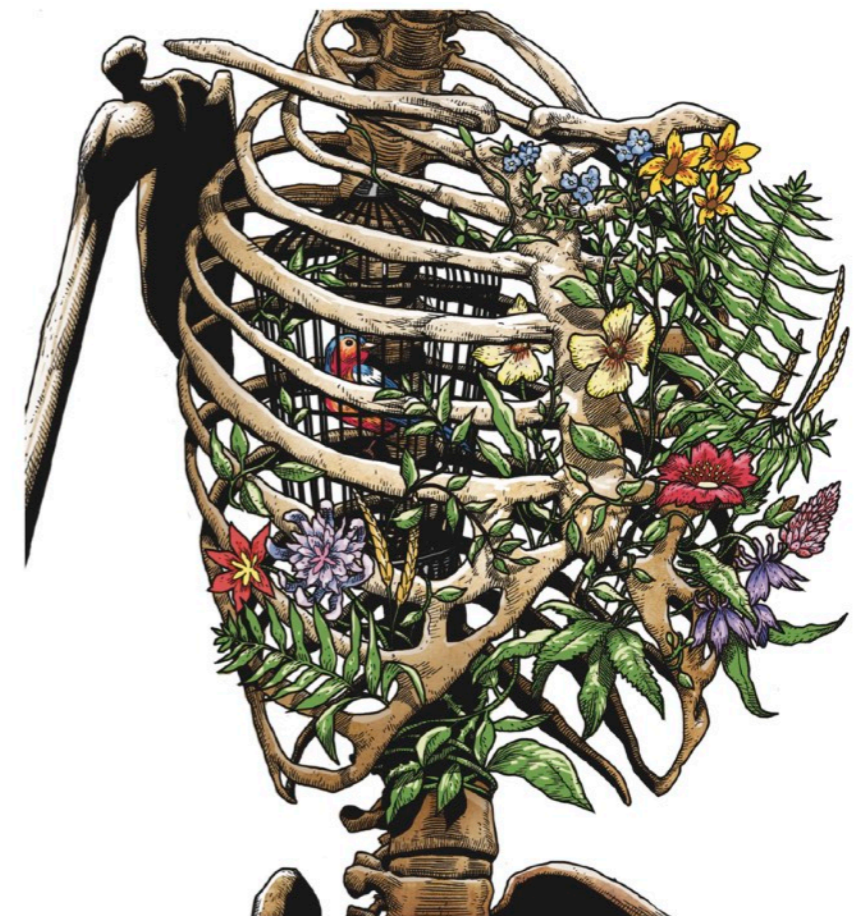
Herbal Projects

- **Key Points on Herbal First Aid Aftercare for All Who have experienced police violence** (Dixie Pauline, Grassroots Apothecary, MASHH; Greta Montagne, Gentle Strength Botanicals, MASHH; Dana Aronson, Wild Kin Botanicals; Ingrid Bauer, MD, Five Flavors Herbs; Jocelyn Laurel Pena, Paramedic, Blackcap Medical Collective, MASHH.) - <https://www.wildkinbotanicals.com/ebooks/3u2ild8i3q1kxiunvnovs5t8lmyzkw>
- **Herbalist Mutual Aid Directory** - free and sliding scale herbal support during COVID19 and beyond - <https://solidarityapothecary.org/directory/>
- **The Prisoner's Apothecary, Solitary Gardens** - The Prisoner's Apothecary is a travelling project and community-driven strategy dedicated to education, harm-reduction, and healing. An extension of the Solitary Gardens, this project grows plant medicine in collaboration with incarcerated individuals and distributes it to affected communities nationally. <https://solitarygardens.org/apothecary>
- **Herbalists without Borders International** - <https://www.hwbglobal.org/>
- **Herbalista:** A broad network of clinic projects and herb programs, including the Herb Bus Mobile Clinic. As well as loads of resources on the website – <https://herbalista.org/>
- **Herbal Equity Project** - <https://www.welldeepremedies.com/herbalequityproject>
- **Chicory Zine** - (chicory.) is a self-published zine and line of small-batch herbal goods handmade in New Orleans, Louisiana by Nikki Minor. A portion of all proceeds go to the [New Orleans Safety and Freedom Fund](#), a local bail fund - <https://chicoryzine.bigcartel.com>
- **Rise Up! Good Witch podcast** - loads of great interviews with radical herbalists
- **Herbal Medicine & Radical Self Care Support for the Black and Brown Community** - Elsie Harp - <https://www.divinabotanica.com/herbal-medicine-for-the-black-commu>
- **Herbs Heal Hearts** - Jungle Bae - <https://herbshealhearts.com/>

Extra Slides

State Violence, Trauma and the Body

- Chronic stress impacts our bodies
- It was obvious through long-term ABC work that nearly all defendants, especially those facing prison would experience physical manifestations of their stress. For example:
 - Coughs, colds, flu during court cases
 - Poor sleep & nightmares
 - Musculoskeletal tension
 - Worsening of existing health issues e.g. endometriosis, chronic fatigue, insulin resistance, depression
- This is in addition to post traumatic stress symptoms such as flashbacks and intrusive thoughts, nightmares and disturbed sleep, hyperarousal etc.



State Violence, Trauma and the Body

- Friends leaving prison would often have:
 - Severe post traumatic stress symptoms
 - Serious chronic health issues e.g. cancer
 - Severe nutritional deficiencies e.g. anemia



Examples of networks of care

- Gilly & ALFSG
- Anarchist Black Cross
- Black Panther Party Survival Programs
- Health Workers Union, Spanish Revolution
- DIY Kodak Collective, Brighton
- Childcare co-ops
- Radical Doula Networks
- Mutual Aid Disaster Relief



Example: Herbalists without Borders in Calais

