DAY 17: Authentic Self Care and Mutual Aid

“If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” — Lilla Watson, visual artist, activist and academic

Today, we are making an appeal to all those committed to racial equity to also commit to healing and self care.

Much has changed since our first Equity Challenge launched in January 2020. With the subsequent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many others, mental health conditions continue to be triggered due to the compounding impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, domestic terrorism, and repeated racist incidents against and murders of people of color.

Authentic self-care vs. performative self-care— “Authentic self-care is anything that leaves you feeling enriched or nourished . . . what self-care is for one person will look very different for someone else.” (source) The concept of self-care originated in people of color and queer communities as a way to insist to the dominant, oppressive culture that they mattered— it was an act of resistance. The writer Audre Lorde captures the essence of authentic self care; “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” In recent years, the concept of self-care has been co-opted by corporations and social media influencers.

Like self-care, the practice of mutual aid and collective care was also rooted in people of color and queer communities as a response to inequity. Throughout 2020, due to the pandemic, “mutual aid” became a household term as people in communities across the globe coordinated to support each other’s basic needs.

Share your reflections on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag #unitedforequity or #uwwcequitychallenge and tag @uwwashtenaw.
At its core, **mutual aid** is when everyday people get together to meet each other's needs with the shared understanding that the systems we live in are not meeting our needs and that we can meet them together. It is not charity. It is the embodiment of the belief that we are all connected, and that **our individual fates are bound to one another**.

Self-care and mutual aid are inextricably linked. We must take care of ourselves so that we are in the best state possible to care for and engage with our communities.

**Today’s Challenge:**

**Listen:**

- Here's how some therapists are tackling structural racism in their practice.
- In this episode of Why Race Matters, Angela Fitzgerald sits down with Myra McNair, a licensed therapist, to talk about mental health struggles within Black communities, and how the Black church and financial barriers contribute to these issues. They also identify solutions and how finding joy can be a revolutionary act.

**Read:**

- Read about the **history of self-care**– from its radical roots to its yuppie-driven middle age to its election-inspired resurgence– in this article from Slate.
- Read this blog post from Aimaloghi Eromosele making the connection between self-care and community care.
- Check out this visual history of mutual aid curated by Ariel Aberg-Riger.

**Watch:**

- Watch this video on the **history and impact of mutual aid in the U.S.** Spoiler alert: mutual aid is not charity!
- Watch this session of Centering Justice from our partners at Nonprofit Enterprise featuring local perspectives entitled, Where We Heal.
- Watch this session of Centering Justice from our partners at Nonprofit Enterprise featuring local perspectives on Repair: An Ancient Practice.

**Discrimination? Injustice? Racial Inequities?**

**Click here to learn more and join the 21-Day Equity Challenge: 2023 Edition**

Share your reflections on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag #unitedforequity or #uwwcequitychallenge and tag @uwwashtenaw.
Act:

- Check out and then support the work of the Mutual Aid Network of Ypsilanti, who were rooted in Washtenaw County prior to the pandemic.
- Inspired to act? Join the Washtenaw County Mutual Aid + Resources group on Facebook

Share your reflections on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag #unitedforequity or #uwwcequitychallenge and tag @uwwashtenaw.