

# SPELLS AND PRACTICES FOR EMERGENT STRATEGY



**Emergent Strategy is about shifting the way we see and feel the world and each other. If we begin to understand ourselves as practice ground for transformation, we can transform the world.**

I have spoken about practice many times throughout this book, asking in many words: What is it we need to practice as individuals and communities to come more into alignment with the emergent practices of the universe we know as home?

My practices have included meditation, somatics, visionary fiction, facilitation, working out, yoga, intimate community on social media, check ins with woes/buddies, orgasmic meditation, sex, self-documentation (self-love selfies! Learning to see beauty and power in my standard breaking appearance), sugar shifting, sabbatical (big one in 2012, annual mini-sabbaticals since then), poetry, unscheduled time, moon-cycle rituals, tarot (I am such a fan of this practice that I have bought five other people tarot decks), sage and frankincense cleansing of my home, journaling. I love intentional periods of practice, daily practices, new practices, and even outgrowing practices.

I share in this chapter some areas of practices that can unlock the emergent potential we hold. There are also some spells—these are little poems that shift my state of being and power. I offer them to use, and also to encourage you to create spells for your own self-shifting work.

A lot of these practices and spells came to me, or were primarily practiced outside of an organizational context. But I have found that the work of cultivating personal resilience, healing from trauma, self-development and transformation is actually a crucial way to expand what any collective body can be. We heal ourselves, and we heal in relationship, and from that place, simultaneously, we create more space for healed communities, healed movements, healed worlds. What I offer here are the core ways I have tapped into my own power and wholeness, and ways I have supported others to tap into their own wholeness and transformation. And fractal strategy suggests wholeness in our organizers yields wholeness in our future.

I am a fan of being creative and self-directive with practices. What are the practices you need to line your life up with your values and beliefs?

## Woes/Coevolution Through Friendship

Did I thank the prolific and joyful Canadian rapper Drake yet for bringing the term “woes” to my attention? Woes stands for “Working On Excellence,” and I’ve reveled in it as a way to note those people in my life with whom I am intentionally growing.

I have sets of woes—people who know my north star, who know my challenges, and who hold me accountable to my own development, celebrating my self-awareness and growth. And it’s all mutual. We are in daily contact, and we have intensive visits to check in on our development.

My sisters are one set of my woes, and for a few years now we have instituted a sister check-in during any family visits. Everyone else supports us with childcare and scheduling so that we get the time together to go deep. We each take a turn

of sharing what has moved since we were last together, where we need support, and what's coming up that just needs to be shared. Often the biggest support we need is to speak the truth out loud to those who will hold it with us from a vantage point of unconditional love.<sup>90</sup>

It's friendship, but with a lot of transparency and intention woven into it. Another way of speaking about this is *coevolution through friendship*:

Coevolution is "the change of a biological object triggered by the change of a related object."

One of the outcomes of the "Engage Community of Practice" year of building relationship and sharing of ourselves, was an idea articulated toward the end by participant Gibrán Rivera: coevolution through friendship. Meaning: we evolve in relationships of mutual transformation.

Since the community's formal time ended, I have watched and felt this relational coevolution continue in a variety of ways, including close daily personal contact, occasional opportunities for mutual support, noticing and supporting each other's work and growth from afar, and being more intentional about bringing this practice into the way we hold all of our relationships.

I have been really aware of the power of coevolution through friendship as I have been in what feels like a growth spurt. Babies do this, suddenly overnight become taller, fuller, using new words, more confident in their bodies and complex in their communications. It's pretty incredible to watch—and to feel that the growth doesn't end even if it changes form. In this period, I have been supported, inspired, encouraged, and witnessed by a marvelous circle full of people in their own growth.

The very nature of this is iterative, so I am not writing any definitive guidelines up for y'all. But it is so delicious and impactful that I wanted to share some of what I am noticing, some elements of coevolution through friendship.

#### *Self-transformation.*

Both/all people in the relationship and community are committed to their own self-transformation. We see ourselves as microcosms of the world, and work to shift oppressive patterns in our bodies, hearts, minds, speech, interactions, liberating ourselves into purpose, liberating our communities into new practices. We each set the pace of our own transformation.

#### *Curiosity.*

We have curiosity about our own lives as learning labs for our values and figuring out what it means to be human at this moment in time. And we have curiosity about each other's lives, about why we do what we do, about the roots of our behaviors. We want to know if there are lessons and changes available in the reflection and action cycle of life. This curiosity ranges from philosophical to academic, historical, nosy, somatic. Our lives are our life's work. What matters is that we are authentic with the questions, that we believe the answers are important, and we listen to each other accordingly.

#### *Vulnerable reflection.*

We reach out to each other and say things like "something incredible is happening," "I don't know," "I fucked up," "I think I hurt someone," "I'm overwhelmed," "I'm terrified," "I think I'm hurting," "I'm lost," "Am I falling in/out of love?," "\_\_\_\_\_ happened, what should I do?," "I want to do something new/different/marvelous/dangerous/that feels essential to my soul—help!," and so on. We ask others to be mirrors for us at our most vulnerable places, so we can see what we are learning, see new possibilities in our lives.

#### *Pattern disrupting.*

I know I am always whole theoretically, but I don't always feel that way, I feel half sometimes, I feel fragmented sometimes, messy. Being whole includes owning all of that as me. When I am feeling fragmented or limited, seeing any of my friends in their wholeness reminds me of my own capacity. And as I stand in my wholeness, which includes being more honest with myself and others about what I want and who I am in the world, it exerts a pressure on others, both to receive me and to become more whole in themselves. This disrupts those familiar diminishing patterns in my friends and in myself, the internalization of a world that has rejected every aspect of my identity at some point. Counter rejection. Still I rise. And new patterns become possible, more interconnected and interdependent patterns that rely on being open.

#### *Present and intentional.*

This is perhaps the biggest place to practice. Life is not happening to us. We are learning to be in the actual current moment, to recognize where we have choice... In a terrifying twist, it turns out we always have it. So the great question

is: how to be intentional, in the present moment, to take responsibility for your state of being, and for your life? Another participant-teacher in the community of practice, Jane Sung E Bai, asked us to consider, “What if I am responsible for everything?” It’s not a singular task, to be responsible for what happens in this world—we do not exist or transform in isolation. We are in this universe. We are actively reflecting on how to be in our lives, to best embody our greatness and to yield a more liberated future for ourselves, and thus, in the fractal sense, for all of existence.

There is a lot to be careful of. We are not yet masterful, even though there are moments of collective genius. Sometimes we misread each other, push each other too hard, get defensive, or give unsolicited coevolution pressure.

Sometimes what is happening in the world is so terrifying and urgent that we forget our complexity, or wonder why we would spend time on ourselves or take time for our friendships when there is so much external work to do. What I am noticing is that it is not a privilege to practice coevolution through friendship—it is the deepest work.

I believe it is how communities have survived.

I believe it is Harriet Tubman going back to free others, because it wasn’t enough to free only herself.

I believe it is Ubuntu<sup>21</sup> active in my life.

I believe it is the freedom that we are longing for, which will never be given to us, which we have to create, the pulsing life force of the collective body we are birthing, the rhythm of a shared heart.

## STOP HATING: A SPELL

let me pull the weed up by the root  
and notice the soil that i stand on  
is this a necessary vitriol  
is *this* what i choose now to rant on?  
is there nothing to build  
and nothing to grow  
no more to offer up  
nothing to know  
is there a way now  
that i could let go  
can i look in the mirror  
and love me more

## Authenticity chant:

Let me not posture  
Let me not front  
Let me not say yes to  
Lives I don’t want  
Let me not use words that don’t mean a thing  
Let me be fly  
as I am, no trying  
Let me good  
For my heart, not my rep  
Let me be still  
When I can’t take a step  
Don’t let me get too caught  
Creating my face  
Let me just love me  
All over the place

## Visionary Fiction

Art is not neutral. It either upholds or disrupts the status quo, advancing or regressing justice. We are living now inside the imagination of people who thought economic disparity and environmental destruction were acceptable costs for their power. It is our right and responsibility to write ourselves into the future. All organizing is science fiction. If you are shaping the future, you are a futurist. And visionary fiction is a way to practice the future in our minds, alone and together.

Visionary fiction is neither utopian nor dystopian, instead it is like real life: Hard, realistic... Hopeful as a strategy. Visionary fiction disrupts the hero narrative concept that one person (often one white man, often Matt Damon) alone has the skills to save the world. Cultivate fiction that explores change as a collective, bottom-up process. Fiction that centers those who are currently marginalized—not to be nice, but because those who survive on the margins tend to be the most experientially innovative—practicing survival-based efficiency, doing the most with the least, an important skill area on a planet whose resources are under assault by less marginalized people. Visionary fiction is constantly applying lessons from our past to our future(s).

The best way to practice visionary fiction is to get to writing. The *Octavia's Brood* website offers workshops, and you can also write on your own, form writing groups, and share stories with others.<sup>23</sup> You have worlds inside you. You have permission to share them.

## Meditation

My meditation teachers include but are not limited to: Dani McClain; Angel Kyodo Williams; Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey; Thich Naht Hanh; Sam Conway; a spirit named Jai at Kalani; Robert Gass, Spenta Kandawalli, and Chris Lymbertos; Richard Strozzi-Heckler; a stream of yoga teachers; my nibblings and every baby I have every held; and many more.

“My mother was a lifelong activist, and I truly believe that her fight for civil rights—and the traumas she suffered during that fight—cut her life short. So, to me, the ocean represents the importance of self care. My mother loved music, but ultimately I do not believe she had a quiet or steady enough practice to counteract the negativity and anger she built up through her work. Staring at the ocean, or standing with one’s feet at the shoreline to feel the vastness of the tide as it pulls away, would be a therapeutic practice for social justice workers—or perhaps even meditating about it, if no ocean is nearby. Life and true change are bigger than all of us. Like Martin, we may not all get “there” (there is no “there”), but we can see it on the horizon. We have to learn to count victories even as we continue to agitate. We cannot become so jaded that we lose joy in everything because the flaws loom too large. The journey is the work, the work is the journey. The ocean’s ebbs and flows may remind us of this better than anything.”  
—Tananarive Due

I resisted meditation for so long. I said it just didn’t suit my personality, or that I wasn’t down to sit, that I could meditate while doing other things—active non-meditative things.

I was in good company with this, particularly in social justice spaces—everything we are working on is actually urgent—people are being hurt at every level, people and species are dying, the planet is being damaged. We are not making it up. Setting aside time from our work can feel violently selfish.

And yet! If we haven’t cultivated mindfulness in our attention, how do we ever expect to break out of the cycle of crisis response? How will we ever put our attention onto solutions, put our attention onto the new practices we need?

Meditation kept waiting for me, around every corner, in every room. Grief was the gift that finally let me understand meditation.

In teaching basic meditation at my Windcall Retreat, Black Zen teacher Angel Kyodo Williams once said that our access to the global scale of suffering has become immediate, through technology, but we have not developed the capacity to be with that increased awareness of suffering.<sup>24</sup> I have felt the truth of this many times in my life, particularly as loved ones have transitioned beyond this life, and as I have been politicized, awakened to the specific and overwhelming suffering that is funded by US tax dollars. I have felt my small hands up against these giants of death, of imperialism, of my own hopelessness.

What my meditation teachers have shared with me is that meditation is about choosing where my attention goes. Training my attention. And that when I am overcome by sadness, loss, anger, joy, desire, restlessness, or other emotions, it helps to be able to drop into myself and choose—to be with the emotions intentionally, to listen for what is needed. This has been a path into emergent strategy—the more I listen, the more I understand the interconnectedness of the world, and my place in it, my insignificance, my wholeness, our collective potential and beauty.

There are many many many methods for meditation. I am going to share a few tips that have made meditation possible for me, and that bring me into deeper awareness of emergence.

1. Breath and sensation awareness is the foundational entry into meditation that works for me. Just noticing the breath coming in and out of my body, in through the nose, out through the mouth. Both the idea of the breath, visualizing nourishing breath moving through the body, and the sensations of the breath, the movement of the chest and abdomen, the air against the upper lip, moving through the mouth.

Bringing the attention back to the breath no matter how often or where it wanders.

Ursula Le Guin speaks to this: “To sit and be fully aware of the air going in and out of your nose, and nothing else, this

sounds really stupid. If you haven't tried it yet, try it. It is really stupid. Nothing your intellect can do to help you do it. This must be why so many people for so long have used it as a way towards wisdom.”<sup>95</sup>

2. Reading the work of Thich Nhat Hanh and Pema Chodron has been helpful when relating to thoughts during meditation. I used to think I was supposed to be NOT thinking, and then I learned that many people who meditate, even those who have done it for years and do long silent retreats and stuff, are actually in the tug of war between thinking and being the whole time. Being aware that one is thinking, noticing when thought is happening, can be liberating. The content of the thoughts becomes less important, it is the choice to be thinking vs. breathing.

3. I have actually found the shivasana position in yoga is best for my body for meditation—laying flat on my back, palms up, sinking into the floor or bed. After years of trying to meditate sitting up and spending the entire time in pain, I noticed that the times I felt most capable of meditation were at the end of yoga classes. When I share this with people they always ask, “but don't you fall asleep?” I usually meditate in the morning, so I am already rested, but at night I will return to this often and meditate until I fall asleep. And it seems to be good for my quality of sleep and my dream life to head into sleep in a meditative state.

4. Silence is nice for meditation, but rare in my life. I like to make soundtracks for my meditations, energies moving up or down according to what I am seeking in the meditation. I have also recently gotten into guided meditations<sup>96</sup>—especially those that cultivate lovingkindness, or metta meditation<sup>97</sup>

5. Use poetry! In our generative somatics courses, we often read poems at the beginning and end of our meditations. Some of my favorites for meditation are:

“The Prison Cell,” Mahmoud Darwish;

“The Journey,” Mary Oliver;

“Yes, We Can Talk,” Mark Nepo;

and everything from June Jordan, Adrienne Rich, Warsaw Shire, or Nayirrah Waheed.

6. Time the meditation! My woe Dani has been a gentle teacher and inspiration on my meditation path. One tool she offered me is the “Insight” meditation app, which I use on my phone. Timed meditation is a must for me, and the app marks beginning, end and interim time with bells. This allows me to relax into the meditation, not opening my eyes and looking at the clock desperately every thirty seconds.

I had to start very small, setting the timer for three minutes, which felt like forever. I have built up to a regular practice of forty-five minutes, with my longest continuous meditation at a hundred minutes the night that my mentor Grace transitioned. I consider my meditation practice foundational—I may add or subtract other practices based on what I need to focus on in a given moment, but meditation is a daily practice.

## Somatics

“The dream of the cell is to become two. The evolutionary thrust surges through us as dreams, sensations, longings, images, and inexplicable utterances and gestures. We are constantly adapting, creating, filling, emptying as we become the dream. From the elegant simplicity of our cells to the vast complex networks of our brain we are becoming more.

“In aikido we surrender to the spiral that lives in the blood and plasma of our veins, to our circulating breath, to our turning dance in gravity, to the galactic revolutions that spin in the heavens. Spirals that rise and fall as do civilizations, tectonic plates, to our standing and lying down every day.”

—Richard Strozzi-Heckler

Somatics is the study of the *soma*, a Greek word that means “the living organism in its wholeness.” It is a methodology for transformation that helps us understand that change doesn't come simply from thinking differently. The process involves shifting what we understand, what we can feel, and what we practice, reconnecting us with the incredible data and resilience of the body.

Somatics talks about the body as three billion years of evolutionary wisdom. It's really more than the body in the “Cartesian” view—body as object or machine. Somatics brings an understanding and way to work with us as whole—mind, beliefs, emotions, relations, resilience, adaptations, biology, meaning, and actions... All within and through the body. And, that we are collective bodies as well. We transform both individually and collectively.

The lineage of somatics that I am in, generative somatics, puts an emphasis on somatics in the context of our social conditions, and our efforts to create collective justice. We are never just individual bodies, individual traumas—our lives and the ways we survive are interconnected.

I first came across the work in 2009–2010, through a collaboration called “Somatics and Social Justice.” There was clearly something really valuable in it, but also a lot of challenges about the course, and the trainers were transparent in sharing that it was an experiment, that they were figuring out how to best bridge the distance between somatics and social

justice. That sense of transparent experimentation was exciting to me.

In 2012, I was invited into another course, “Somatics and Trauma.” The course itself was solid, and I was really blown away by the palpable transformation in several of the teachers. I have seen and experienced a ton of leadership development processes, and most of them ultimately seem oriented around reproducing one person’s way of being, which inevitably fails. This course was one of the first that I’d experienced that seemed to truly unlock people’s power relative to their own potential.

I can’t really tell you much about somatics, because it isn’t about what we can say to each other, it’s about what we can feel—of ourselves, of this world we belong to. It’s about the correlation between feeling more and thus having more choices. I can say that, when it comes to adaptation, resilience through decentralization, interdependence, and other key elements of emergent strategy, somatics provides the best framework and practices that I have come across. Some of the aspects of it I most deeply align with include:

- Somatics is about being a fight *for*, rather than a fight *against*. Being in a fight for myself has led me to be honest about what makes me feel happy, strong, like I am realizing my miraculous potential. I’ve also looked at my friendships and relationships, asking myself how can I be a fight for my loved ones? This means not just listening to them, but listening for the truth within them, listening for what they are longing for, for what they know they deserve, for what they need. And showing up with them in that fight for their dignity, life, health, joy, self-realization. I am, again, so glad to be alive and awake at this moment as Black people fight for our dignity to be recognized, our lives to matter. There is so much to fight against, so many people who want us to cower and shrink, or, when we fight, to fight defensively, in isolation, against each other, to confirm some degrading concept of self, of Blackness, that has nothing to do with Black people, with evolving in our human purpose.
- Organizing and fortifying ourselves so that we can source from our longings, health, love, dreams, and visions, from our strength and our connections with each other.
- It is not about healing for the sake of individual wellness, though that is a radical act for any people slated for extinction. It is about healing trauma such that individuals and communities are not operating in reaction to oppression, and not relinquishing control over and over again because of changes outside their power.
- Increasing our agency is necessary—there is always going to be so much devastation to react to, especially for those of us on the wrong side of racism and oppression. The trauma won’t stop. If we hope to advance, we have to find ways to move through and out of the vice grip of trauma that so drastically limits our choices.
- We say, “We don’t practice to feel good, we practice to feel more.”

As a student, I have done immense work on defining my purpose (including bringing these observations of emergent strategy forward), returning to my inherent dignity, and learning to stay present, open, and connected throughout my life.

As a teacher, I have watched room after room of movement organizers and workers drop into more authentic relationships with themselves and each other, increasing the transformation they can collectively leverage in their communities.

The aspects of somatics include somatic awareness, opening, and practices. It is an integrated way to change and become who we long to be, and be on an ongoing path. Generative somatics uses this work within movement organizations and alliances, and the practices and processes of embodied change get to happen there in the collective. The practices include aikido and other martial arts, meditation, physical training and coordination, and building new skills that are embodied (this means new options for responses and actions). Getting somatic bodywork done regularly lets what’s stored in the body—emotions, habits, and survival strategies—process through...changing so much. This is done in a course or means working individually with a practitioner. It works to increase your ability to transform your own trauma through your body, and engage your history, resilience, and purpose.

Definitely seek out a generative somatics (gs) course near you—as part of the training community for gs, I can say we are working to increase the ways people can access this methodology directly from us.

Getting a bodyworker is the other best way into somatics.

Lisa Thomas-Adeyemo is our generative somatics songbird and she once closed a session with this song, which keeps rolling through me:

We gonna rise with the fire of freedom  
Truth is the fire that will burn our chains  
Stop the fire of destruction

## Healing is the fire running through our veins

“Fear and craving and hatred and clinging are deep emotional protections against the unknown that enabled us to survive over millions of years of evolution, and while we need to see how they hold us back, and learn how to overcome them—individually and collectively—we shouldn’t pathologize them. We actually need to respect them.”  
—Jesse Maceo Vega Frey

### Intimate Community on Social Media

I have found social media to be a sneaky place—it can be so comforting, and so distracting. It is the news and it is a bunch of unfounded random opinions and rants and TMI. I have wanted less randomness in my social-media use, and more depth; I want social media to flow with my life, rather than against, away from or over it. So over the past few years I have done a few experiments. There is a group that is now over a thousand people who are interested in Octavia Butler and Emergent Strategy explorations.<sup>98</sup> I love the things shared in that space. I have two other experiments that have become homes on the Internet. Below is a bit more about them, in the words of the participants.

#### *1. Sugar Shift, on Facebook*

##### THE INVITATION:

June 25, 2014: Welcome! My name is adrienne and I am a sugar addict with over thirty years in the game. This group is a supportive environment for myself and others who either self identify as sugar addicts, or in some other way recognize we need to be in active work to shift our relationships with sugar. That may include cleanses or longer term commitments to behavior change. This space is intended to increase accountability, process the real challenges, big up our successes, share recipes, and just keep learning. This process will follow emergent strategy because that is how I believe organic change happens. No failures, just data. Keep learning and self-loving!

##### PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

(THE GROUP IS SECRET, BUT THESE LOVELY SHIFTERS GAVE ME TESTIMONIALS AND PERMISSION TO SHARE THEM!):

**Kenyetta Chinwe:** This is the first space (online or in real life) that I’ve felt safe enough to be honest about my food struggles. Other groups I’ve been in either bombarded me with false encouragement or enabled me to continue in the behavior I was trying to adjust. This space has allowed me to be honest on the days I struggle, without allowing me to remain complacent. I am sure it is because of you all and your honesty that I’m now at my healthiest both physically and mentally that I’ve been in probably ten years. I love that, in this space, it is about being healthy and loving ourselves, not necessarily a particular way of eating other than sugar reduction. There seems to be little judgment either. We’re able to explore what feels good to our bodies and share that without discrediting another’s experience. That’s the most valuable thing in this space to me.

**Bilen Birhanu:** The level of vulnerability and honesty in this space encouraged me to strip down and face the core of my life-long and pervasive struggle with food, especially sugar. The driving force of this community is the notion of shifting—there is no static or set destination, but a continual process of exploration, testing waters and learning new ways. Always learning. And leaning into the discomfort that comes with it.

**Jane Brown:** I feel more balance and I like that. And I want to go even deeper into this question we all have of “How do I face the ups & downs of life without diving head first into foods or patterns that are not healthy?” So, onward into Year 2 of Sugar Shift! And it really does feel like a “life shift” ... I don’t at all feel like I’m “dieting” ... It’s been a lifestyle change that I’m embracing! It’s okay to ask for what you need! It’s okay to say NO and it’s okay to say YES when you’re being intentional about what you eat/do! It’s okay to do this the way it makes sense for YOU!

**Supriya Lopez Pillai:** adrienne and I haven’t even seen each other in years. And, in this space of virtuality, I have grown closer to her and a bunch of other women, primarily, I don’t even know. What the heck am I talking about? Sugar shifting. Back in September I declared myself a dedicated guinea pig to the experiment of ridding my diet of sugar. adrienne read my declaration on Facebook and invited me to a private group called Sugar Shift. It preceded me, it may have had a common history amongst its original shifters (perhaps a shared detox) but what I stepped into was a fantastic space of support with many who share similar politics, with some folks on the wagon, others off the wagon, some barely holding

on by a thread, some totally ambivalent, but all at least thinking about the role sugar plays in our lives and how we all work toward freedom from its hold. Addiction as a metaphor (and a reality) is often raised. The various methods everyone is trying are shared in bits and pieces. Our victories and sidesteps are shared. What I love about the Sugar Shift group is we say, I've fallen down. Sometimes we are ok with being off of it. Sometimes we fell off and in coming back on we declare how much better we feel being back on. Whatever it is, it's a reminder that we are in it together. We stumble, we trip, we fall down, we get up. We stumble, we trip, we fall down, we get up. The body transforms, the mind transforms, everything transforms. Some people start with the mind, some people start with the body, some people start with communities. Whatever the case is, where you start and witness transformation—take it into all aspects of your life. Let it seep in.

## 2. *Am I the Artist or Am I the Art? on Instagram*

### THE INVITATION:

March 2016: I am inviting a small crew of women and gender nonconforming friends into an experiment with each other, to share daily portraits of ourselves in this private thread for a month as a liberation technology, and affirm each other's beauty. Interested?

### WHAT HAPPENED:

There were six of us. I knew each person and wanted to know them better—they mostly didn't know each other. We shared daily self-portraits with each other in the spirit of Frida Kahlo (I was somewhat inspired by a picture of her, painting, that is floating around the Internet with the words "Never Be Ashamed of Your Selfies"). And we kind of all fell in love with each other. Halfway through, I realized that the month exactly overlapped with my month of being pregnant the year before. I was unaware of being pregnant until I was in the hospital losing it, so it was a gift that I spent the anniversary of that month in a daily practice of body celebration and awareness. These women were so generous—we shared pictures of joy and sadness, times we felt sexy and times we felt spent. What emerged was a community, a safe space, that is still very active today. Jay-Marie Hill, one of the participants, gathered some the things we said in affirmation of each other:

**Jay-Marie:** Appreciating the intricacies of y'all's realness, glows, and especially moments of slight defeat.

**Sham-E-Ali Nayeem:** It's a gift to share this space together in this moment in time. How fortunate am I to cross paths with each of you... I love you. Thank you for your gifts, creativity, and beauty.

**dream hampton:** I've really enjoyed being in community with y'all. Love to this whole beautiful crew.

**Aja Taylor:** I long ago stopped thinking of it as an experiment and more as a place I return to when I'm hungry for not food. It's just really wonderful being loved deeply in nonsexual ways. Perhaps the most beautiful shit ever. Especially when it's outside of people who are related to me by blood. It's my favorite part of life.

**Nicole Newman:** Do you know how powerful, how beautiful, how creative you are? Before the world beats no into your brow. Before heartbreak can be spotted in your eyes. Before your lips learn protection as a first language. Your creation was majestic. Your being enough. Do you know how enough you all are?

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<sup>90</sup> See "Liberated Relationships" in the "Transformative Justice" chapter of this book.

<sup>91</sup> Ubuntu is a Nguni Bantu concept that translates to "I am because you are"; <http://www.ubuntu.thiyagaraaj.com/Home/about-ubuntu/ubuntu-philosophy-meaning#TOC-Archbishop-Desmond-Tutu-further-explained-Ubuntu-in-2008>.

<sup>92</sup> "Visionary fiction" is a term coined by Walidah Imarisha, co-editor of *Octavia's Brood*.

<sup>93</sup> "Collective Sci Fi Writing" at [www.octaviasbrood.com](http://www.octaviasbrood.com).

<sup>94</sup> Windcall is an incredible retreat for activists and organizers. To learn more or apply to attend, see [www.windcall.org](http://www.windcall.org).

<sup>95</sup> Ursula Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (Shambala, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> Using "Insight" meditation app.

<sup>97</sup> Metta meditation is a very simple ritual of developing lovingkindness towards yourself and the whole world. As you meditate you say, to yourself or aloud, "May I be happy, may I be wealthy, may I be free from harm and suffering." And then you repeat it for someone you love, someone you feel aversion to, and then for the whole world.

<sup>98</sup> Thanks squad! This is me blowing a kiss to all of you who have cultivated the fire of geeking about all of this stuff with me, and especially for that one day you got me through.