

Diary of a Zine (2003) – from “MamaPhiles: a mama zine collaboration” first issue

People have sometimes made fun of my grammar and spelling in the past – and other people have felt encouraged by it – welcomed to jump in and express themselves also – spelling be damned. (I hope I am improving these days now that spell check has been invented!) I have always written my zine from “the trenches” of being a parent – a single parent on welfare – and – a revolution in the happening. Historically we haven’t seen much of woman’s voices – they have been silenced and overwhelmed – but with the zerox machine – everyone has the means to production.

Still its not easy putting out a zine – even if it’s a messy, cut and pasted, misspelled and written in the anyway-you-can-or-its-not-going-to-be-written-at-all style – for a mother. After all, it’s not easy to go to the bathroom or walk down the street 0 for a mother. It’s not easy to go out to a show – nor to finish your thoughts – or even make it through some days – or to keep your sanity. Not easy but Not impossible either!

So there is always a story behind the making of a zine. The story behind mine was my mother baby-sitting my daughter while I got the zine together and my friends who worked at Kinko’s that would copy it for free. I remember this one time, one of my roommates said “You should write the story of what it takes for you to write this zine” when she saw the struggle I had to make in order to write and the guilt I felt over it.

Yes, some guilt. There is always a sacrifice to make as a writer. As a new mother, I wrote whenever I got the chance, instead of washing dishes. The dishes were never clean at my house. I felt it was an either or choice with my limited time when my arms were free of a baby. Ask all moms of young children and you will see its the same – free time can bring on almost a panic attack of wanting to do so much and afraid of time running out. My daughter (now 15) is kinda pissed off about me being a writer, but I think also a bit proud of me, I hope. She knows more than anyone, the sacrifices I have made to pursue working on my craft. I am constantly writing on the backs of envelopes and scrap paper and not always mentally there. I put out zine number 12 when I should have been seeking employment instead, as we were dead broke (my savings was long from gone, exhausted my boyfriend as a source to borrow money from, parents paying for my mortgage, and I have just about maxed out my credit card on groceries)- but I stayed in my studio writing instead – unable to let my inspiration go, as writing wraps me up in it for days and weeks uninterrupted now as my daughter is more independent. She and me both have plenty of space to our selves now, but she wishes I would bring more money into this house for her. I have always struggled with coming across as a total loser because writing is my number one ambition in life, it takes a lot of my time and I have little to show for it. I try to balance my dreams with my practical head of the household responsibilities – but I still dream that the work of my heart will pay off in the end.

And then there is the fear of expression. One wrangles with their soul, with their own run on sentences, trying to lasso something true out of the chaos of self-expression. To expose the truth? But to explain the situation so others understand. And how much belief do we have in our own experiences – how much belief do we have in ourselves? How much do we dare to expose?

I have gotten lots of positive feedback on being myself and so I continue knowing also how much others sharing their authentic experiences has empowered me.

My zine looks a lot slicker now that my daughter is grown and I am not as quite as desperate for free time. But does that desperation ever go away? Aren't we all short on as much "free time" as we would like. Don't we all have to fight against our own self in order to do what we say we want to? With issue #11 – I had a lot of computer problems. A lot.

My scanner broke. I bought a cord. It didn't work. My computer broke. I brought it to the shop. Twice. They didn't fix it. I drove up to my mom's house in PA and used her computer to lay out my zine. But I wasn't done in the allotted time I had. "Please Mom, I got to take your computer with me, back home – I'll take care of it." Of course my mom lends me it, as she would give me the shirt off her back – rotten brat that I am. I miss most of SOWEBO gathering – a street festival thing that we look forward to every year – along with my boyfriend who is waiting for me. He instead goes to Kinkos and scans my photo's from *Sara taking a Walk in Woodberry* and brings them back to me where I am working on the zine – hoping to finish. (I had wanted to give them to people at the festival.) In the end, I don't finish that day – give it up – and we go out and party anyway. I think I lose my whole file. I don't. I think the printer doesn't work. It does the next day. At one point, I sat in the car, with my boyfriend who is calm despite my tumultuous moods – my selfish pressing of importance of my own things – and say: "I think the universe doesn't want me to make this zine. I really believe the universe is trying to send me a message."

But you know what - issue #11 of The Future Generation looks really good. I forget all about the labor pains when I see my pretty little zine. It caught the eye of an art director of a big design firm here in town and he included it in the zine review for the AIGA newsletter. It's on the greatworm.ca website because Francois wrote and asked to distribute it. All successes. Does it mean anything financially? No – nothing that big. No book deals, no big name for myself. Not even any subscribers or more than a few people sending money in the mail for it. But as a vital woman – I am succeeding in being who I am, even if I'm struggling, even if it's not all worked out. Even if everyone doesn't understand why I feel I can't work and be a mother and be a writer at the same time – that I should just get a Freakin Job already. *You act like getting a job is the end of hope.* Says my daughter. I guess I do. I know I have to set aside my thoughts and my projects sometimes, and let it go. But sometimes I fight in order to make something because if I don't – there will never be the right time and it will never happen. I can't Do Everything at the same time: maybe others can but I

get overwhelmed and can't make it happen – so I try to balance different things I need to do. I know its time to get a job now and put away my 6 hours of writing (and pacing thinking about writing) a day – but just one more minute – ok – while I finish up writing this.

As I finished the last issue of my zine, #12 – I was getting to the point where you become blind because you looked at something too much. I couldn't see what I was looking at yet it still needed work. I had to hold myself back from writing disclaimers all over it. People don't want to see how scared you are to write, what a big pain in the ass this is, and an apology for the mess, on page one – Just write what you got to say and finish this up – I told myself. What if this one won't be as beautiful as the last one? I thought. Oh well, you have my permission to not be perfect – Just make it – I told myself. I was practically hating and wrestling with my zine – sometimes getting all worked up then letting it go. By this time, I recognize this stage. It's classic. It's the I-hate-my-zine-but-have-put-so-much-work-into-it-so-how-can-I-stop-now - very last push. Is this worth it? I ask myself. I blindly push through and hope I will arrive at the calm spot – after a rest and the mess is cleaned up – where I am a proud editor of a beautiful new zine and others will love it as I do.



Domesticide (2007) from Mamaphiles #3, “Coming Home”

It's best for a woman, especially a mother, not to spend too much time in a home. Home equals madness. Home is all the work you have to be in charge of, upkeep, and isolation. I think it's better to be hanging out at a café, playground, beach, an anarchist gathering, warehouse, show, or in a van with friends—then to be at home with no help or diversion between yourself and a small child's needs. Living with other people is usually better than living alone. But eventually you do have to settle down as a parent, at least for your child's sake.

I never planned on home-ownership, just fell into it. The BWI airport destroyed my old neighborhood, turned it into a parking lot, and gave me relocation money to buy a house, even though I was a renter. The number of my house—3614—matched our own ages: I was 36, my daughter was 14 the year we moved in. I knew it was vital to stay put as my daughter went through those difficult teen years. I had to get through that last push of parenthood, and then I would be, that mythical....free.

Now my daughter is 19 and she still lives at 3614. Neither of us ever thought she would still be living at home by this age but it just makes sense. We get along well with each other; come and go as we like. Putting a roof over her head is something I can offer, as a low-income parent. The rest is on her. She is totally liberated and I am free of active mothering. I am giving her this small contribution to her life—a free room.

But sometimes I want to run away! I could, theoretically, be the one to get up and move out! I used to imagine, in those demanding mom-of-teen days, that when she grew up it would be the end to my domesticity and I would live in a hotel type of room where I never cooked and cleaned and just wrote, wrote, wrote. Perhaps in Montreal, I was on my way to Montreal right before I got pregnant. Or perhaps I will go live in a barn! Just me is so easy; she was always the one with more difficult needs.

My daughter talks about possibly moving in with her boyfriend in a few months. She could move out at any time. Perhaps she won't. They have issues sometimes and it's not always good to move in with a boyfriend when you are young. Once she talked about being the one to move to Montreal, when we visited there together, finally, and I thought it was a great idea, maybe even her destiny. But Baltimore claimed her heart again. I like being near, just in case she needs me: we can go out to brunch and catch up with each other when the mood strikes. I love being able to witness her continual blossoming; I enjoy her company. She feels the same. When I tell her how I think about selling the house and leaving town she says she is not ready to be on her own. I would like to stay if she wants me to.

She never sleeps at home anymore, though, and I don't see her that much these days. Sometimes I find myself just coming and going between working alone and home alone and doing little else. Sometimes, its not that I don't want to, it's that I feel I

can't handle it. I wish to move in with my parents in Chapel Hill. It's mellower there. I think I am like that Pink Floyd guy and I need to retire from society.

However, I start to clear out my writer's studio (the third small bedroom) for a new roommate. My daughters friend from high school with her big big dog have moved in early and sleep on the sofa. It takes me three weeks to clean out the studio. I thought I could never finish it, so thick it was with papers, other surprises that somehow sift their way to the top, and even mementos from the ex-boyfriend I moved in with. I've talked about doing this forever but never found the right person, but now that it's happening, it feels right. To clear out some junk and provide a home for a young girl instead of a closed off room I don't use anymore. (I write downstairs in the den, where it's cooler in the summer, now that my daughters grown and I don't live with a lover.) I try to get rid of things, imagine this could be the start of getting rid of it all. What am I waiting for, my death?

At certain point, though, my desperation peaks and breaks. One day I can wake up and think clear headed again. I start to tackle the "to-do" list that the previous week made me cry for two days by just the thought of making it. I put one foot in front of each other and start doing what I felt too weak to do. I call the plumber. I write and turn in my workshop descriptions. I look around my house and get excited with all the (paper) projects I am in the middle of and it feels good. I feel like I am coming home to myself. And it's easier to start from where I am, with the resources I have here, to get to work on the stuff I have started.

Talking to Stacey Marie (a zine friend I had never met in person before, coming on tour with Mouser) I realize the goodness of the middle ground, the gray areas, the space between two extremes—in this case holding onto too much or letting go of everything. I'm glad I still hold onto so many things: the scrapbooks of my daughters early drawings, my wisdom teeth (removed), the little things that make up my memories, that I can share with her. Stacey's friends, the folks in the band, keep thanking me for my hospitality, even though to me its nothing much. They have only been on the road for a few days but it feels good to them to rest here. My daughter offers a sweater, much the same way she picked up warm clothes in Montreal when we were the guests in a new city. It makes such sense to me, this cycle of give and take. The house is full of people, six band members, one daughter off of work and home for the day (a miracle), a new housemate, a big big dog, and its messy, nasty, happy, home!

I take them "the long way" to Mikes Place for breakfast, through the alley—and on the way out of my backyard, I explain how a lot of things are run down, like the back gate. I kick it, it falls down, we walk over, and then I prop it back up. "How Punk Rock!" one of them exclaims as we all laugh and that feels good. I'm glad I opened up my house to the travelers from Athens; as I show them around, it does look lucky and good to have what I have. I will stay, for now, and work to make what I do have, better.

Everybody has to write their own history because if you don't they will write you out (2010) – from MamaPhiles #4: Raising Hell

I've been the submissions editor this go-round, a new role for me, but one I picked myself. I figured that, with my daughter grown, I had more extra time than anyone else in this collection to play email tag and encourage others to get their work in. And now my essay is the very last one to be written! I've been having a difficult time trying to process/structure my thoughts on race and class and reflections on mama zines in the last 7 years. It's such a big topic; a sensitive subject, and one that I am still learning on and don't feel adept at writing about. My writer mama friend suggested that I start over (again!) and put personal stories in it, talk about Mamaphiles and about how I had felt when laying out the last "coming home" issue. When the submissions for #3 had first started to come in I felt appalled at how predominantly white middle class partnered the voices and stories were. A lot of the stories, mine included, centered around the physical structures that we live in. It felt very dividing to me, very alienating, very striating; more and more I see class and race divisions everywhere. I emailed some zinesters who hadn't submitted yet and asked them to write their real life experiences. Write about renting! Write about having a hard time paying the rent! Please just share your story too; make this collection more than one about white women and their houses!

I mean, don't get me wrong: the "Coming Home" issue turned out to be amazing, beautiful, and deeply felt - like all of the ones before it in this compilation project. But I had started to feel a trend that was something more than just personal annoyance or a difference in taste. Writing by mothers, while on the rise in the last decade, can be mainstream, classist, and as racially divided as my junior high lunch room in Prince George's County.

So this time, I reached out for more contributors from the very beginning. I saw that the absence of people of color, single moms, low-income folks, was very scary. I don't consider *Mamaphiles* a "radical" project But I love that *Mamaphiles* is not a radical project: that it has such a simple ability to be "in": You just need to be a parent and have a zine. I think having all different kinds of voices, musings and takes on one theme – is awesome! I liked the openness of this. I liked the fact there are actually a lot of other parents' writing. The zine world hadn't always been like that. During the 1990s, my first decade of putting out a zine, I had been practically laughed at: *A parent putting out a zine? Ha!* Motherhood was often not considered subversive, but instead oppressive; it was seen as an unliberated role and the struggle of mothers as radical resistance was unacknowledged, left somewhere half unraveled in the 70s before it was put away for good from the public consciousness until *Hipmama* gave marginalized mothers' voices more of a venue for communication in the mid 90s and exploded in the early 2000s.

But the thing is, we really do need to have all kinds of voices, to say we have all kinds of voices, not just predominantly white mother writer voices. It's so incredibly alienating, and it's so incredibly hard to get the time to write for those in the

trenches of sexism, racism, classism, transphobia, ableism and more—that sometimes I wonder if writing itself is part of class privilege.

I have felt the silencing of the voice of the (overburdened) radical single mother as well. In my first decade of making zines, there had been a bit of a welfare bohemia, which allowed us single mothers more of a chance to express ourselves, although let me tell you, it was still not easy. I believe the resources that gave birth to *Hipmama* (and *The Future Generation*) are harder to find today, in a post-welfare “reform” world. And that those with a greater relative amount of time, money, and security, as well as access to resources to make media, and furthermore, a kind of unspoken bias over what voices and concerns are valid and feel safe/free to speak—have made it easier for some to rise over others.

Although people of color, working class, single parents, queer, trans, people with disabilities and others do make zines and soar within parenting anthologies and Xeroxed pages, I’m still finding, over and over, how predominant the white middle class partnered mother’s voice is, even in the “alternative” parent scene. I examined three predominately white alternative mothers anthologies that I have on my bookshelves and noticed how rare it is for many to mention their race, partnership status, or means of support in their writing bios. An essay I read at the library says that most white people “do not see the privilege that comes with being a member of the hegemonic racial category and feel that their successes and achievements stem from their special abilities, not privileges associated with being white.” -from *The Punk White Privilege Scene: Riot Grrl, White Privilege, and Zines Different Wavelengths*

This is certainly true in: “Radical Mamas and the Naptime Revolution,” an article I was proud to be interviewed for in the *Broken Pencil* (a Canadian magazine on zine culture). Race is never once mentioned in this essay although all the writers in the article were white. Although it is certainly an epic struggle for any mother to find the time to write and mother’s writing often talks of these difficulties as well as “how they do it,” not all mothers have the same struggles.

I have been coming to a more recent (and often painful) class awareness of myself as a low-income mother. I saw that when I tour, I am usually the poorest parent of all I meet. Many of my experiences are not the same as others with more resources. But I am also becoming more aware of the privileges I have that others do not. That what some call “Radical” is not always radical for everyone (hat tip to “With Heart In Mouth” the zine I read this concept in). That even within groups I don’t expect to find it—like with other anarchist parents for example—I find class and race differences, issues, and problems.

When I prepare to teach or co-host a “Don’t Leave Your Friends Behind” workshop, I find I am always learning about other issues that have been left out or raised by those in attendance. I find this to be very stimulating and to make me even more look outside my experience and around myself at others and be receptive to others

input and expression. Being aware of my own issues translates in a sense into being aware of others and how issues are linked. But, just because a person speaks with a consciousness of one subject (sexism, racism, or classism for example) doesn't mean they will include others. We need to be aware more of the effects of race, AND class, AND homophobia, AND xenophobia AND ableism AND other issues as well among the category of "mama zines" and mothers' writings.

The fact is, however, that no matter what other elements I have faced, my race, color, and background have accorded me white privilege in zines (as well in larger society and in my role as a mother). This certainly shows up in the media reporting with the popular rise of "mama zines". Zines can and have been a medium of the disenfranchised, but even among group of oppressed there are those who are oppressed by others within that same group. Power shows itself in all kinds of insidious ways within a capitalist society and unnamed it is easier to travel unchecked. We need to be more aware of the struggle to write, the struggle of motherhood, and of any group who dominates or benefits from another's exploitation, to raise our consciousness of our own struggles and others; and work to support an inclusive scene where words are challenging, vibrant, and alive. This kind of expression need not be limited to zines, but as Mamita La Mala (VivirLatino) wrote to me while we were making a zine and blog connection, "we all move towards mediums of information sharing that feel organic to us and they are all valid."

I want to end with saying that all of my criticism in this essay are on works which represent radical media breakthroughs that opened up publishing for writings that were not open before; I am critical not to hurt/insult these efforts but to further the widening of what will come next. I believe (that if there is still a future to print) the zine movement is still actually building: new voices joining everyday.

But when looking at the explosion of mama zines and blogs, even in this issue of *Mamaphiles*, we should remember to ask: Do all mamas have equal access to resources? How can we unite for social justice for all? If we don't hear from certain groups as much as others we should ask ourselves why as well as inquire outside of ourselves. And we should look around and see what is going on outside of our own circles. It's a big world out there - a lot is going on

Thank You: Angie, Vikki, and Jennifer for editing, feedback, and/or conversation; to all zine friends; and the radical women of color blogosphere through which I have gained a profound respect for the power of blogging.

Revolutionary Mothering: Chapter VI. Between The Lines, Intro

I made my first zine, *The Future Generation*, in 1990, because motherhood was the impetus to communicate with others outside the lines like myself. I set out to help create an information-sharing network with others as we lived in this world and tried to build another world we wanted. My zine's influences grew from the Reagan era "No Business As Usual" actions and anti-apartheid divestment sit ins, Rock Against Racism punk rock shows, those concerned for ecology, gender nonconformists, and anarchism in its many forms. I watched others make subculture media in the form of flyers, zines, records, and distros so I knew what to do when it was time for me to start something of my own. I wanted to create new alternatives and seek out new ways of living as well as many of my peers. As my daughter grew, the world changed and zines went through different periods of popularity, waning and waxing. At a certain period, zines seemed to me to lose some of their radical edge of understanding independent media made from those who seized control to print what the mainstream would not, but the creation of zines was always a small connection, a letter, not always hearing back, taking some dedication to remain part of and then on other days worth it. Over time, I made more connections until I found myself; through the internet, connected to others, and then one day connected to a whole new generation of radical mother of color bloggers. I learned about networks and communities they had been building for decades. My respect for these media makers renewed my faith again in the media we make. When I met her at the 2009 Allied Media Conference, Maegan "la Mamita Mala" Ortiz (Vivirlatino) told me, "we all move towards mediums of information sharing that feel organic to us and they are all valid." Noemi Martinez (Hermana Resist) has been another influential media maker in my life, a zinester that helped me make the leap from zines to reading blogs. It is predominantly radical women of color media makers who have made the most use of the blogosphere, in my opinion, whose work has helped make greater connections as well as to give the best tools to fight against white supremacy, as well as racism, sexism, classism, and other injustices in this country. It has been women of color bloggers and other marginalized media makers who have most helped inform my rebel path, expanding clarification in continuing explorations of race and class to build the worlds we want and to reject what is killing us. So many letters and conversations, works, and efforts in a world where often for a mother there is no time to spare. No time to oneself to use the bathroom, no heaven of a morning alone, and no time to read beyond a short magazine article or online snippet.

Time traveling is a necessity. We need to tell our stories. Sometimes in a patchwork fashion like my grandmother's patchwork quilt across my parent's bed, we read each other's words in different places and times—and read between the lines. This is essential for us to communicate with each other, to break our isolation into movement as well as to fall back into the spaces between space, now and again.

The purpose of writing, the sacred nature of writing, of self-expression via print, manifesta, collective testimony or theatrical script—to witness heal, resist, and build another way; shifting paradigms and universes—of creativity in its many forms, of exploring and organizing thoughts, making discoveries about yourself and the world, growing and communicating—this is for you. Respect, dignity, justice, this is for you and for everyone. Everyone has their part to play; we can do more together than alone. Actions and words, practical deeds and dreams, this is how we build tomorrow.

Maternal Journal Introduction (2018) - from The Artist Mother Studio (AMS) zine, *Maternal Journal*, compiled and edited by Amy Hughes Braden and Raina Martens, with an introduction by China Martens.

Who is s/he/they?ⁱ Mother Artist: work is easy, motherhood more difficult.ⁱⁱ Is motherhood the last taboo?ⁱⁱⁱ For a serious artist to admit, contain, show their (maternal) body?

Is inequality out of the home better than inequality in the home?^{iv} Do many see what goes on there? Where is the power, surprise of creation—in roots, soil or fruit?

I've been poring over artist biographies every night, googling and googling through twisted umbilical tubes and tunnels of knowledge, preparing to write this introduction. I'm inspired by movements of disruption like Mother Art Collective, who staged "Rainbow Playground" (1974) outside of the Woman's Building artist studios, where dogs were permitted but no children; Woman Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation, who made space for black mothers; and Hackney Flashers, agitprop in London.^v I'm reading about Betye Saar, a 92-year-old living artist who sparked the Black women's movement^{vi} and has a retrospective in New York this November. In her time schools were segregated and she could not go to school for art.^{vii} I'm thinking about politicized art and political action, the unidentified California girl who had her quinceañera outside of the detention center where her dad is being held and the indigenous, immigrant, enslaved, incarcerated, as well as other (young, nonconforming, queer, disabled, poor, and working class) parents and children who are separated from each other, who are denied even this basic right, historically and increasingly in this country. I am trying to place this zine on motherhood by artists who are mothers in context.

I made my first zine—*The Future Generation*—in 1990 *because* I was a mother. I needed to network with others, to create what I couldn't find. It made people laugh to hear I was a mother and a punk, a mother and a zinester. . . how could this be? How hard it was to gather those old issues (like looking at one's old diaries) into a book in 2007. And again to push for a second edition to come out ten years later: to advocate for myself: for *her*. The young me who wrote instead of washing the dishes, or anything else, when she had the chance: when she had babysitting. She had sacrificed too much in order to not stand up for her, now, as the older future me. The me with my daughter grown, long past the empty nest stage, a few years into menopause, but still new to myself: still learning: still struggling to create. As a writer I will always be, fighting for something yet undone.

But now in Fall I treasure the sunlight that I once fled; I taste a different time. I have time: yet time's not enough; and time's still running out too. Nights come faster.

My first book came out when I was 40 and my daughter 18; and the next two in that same decade. As a low-income single mother, I was a continually practicing writer. While I didn't have the discipline before motherhood (at age 21) I didn't have the time after. When my daughter became an older teen, my hands became more "free" and my activist goals found fertile partnerships with younger radicals. Victoria Law and I collaborated on a project that later became *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind* an anthology of stories on supporting families in social justice movements and communities. Harriet Moon, Sine Hwang Jensen, and I started Kidz City, a radical childcare collective in Baltimore that was very much an experiment. When asked what radical childcare was (at the workshops I gave on community support geared towards non-parents) I defined it as:

1. Childcare at radical events;
 2. Organized in collective non-hierarchical inclusive ways;
 3. Including programming for children in the spirit of the larger event.
- Supporting parents and children, especially mothers and marginalized mothers but other caregivers as well, was the best way I saw to work towards putting one's ideals into practice and building a better world.

When it all comes down to it, however, we must define exactly what we are talking about. Not all mothers, like not all women, have the same struggles. After Trayvon Martin's murder in 2012, I felt the most important topic one could work on was to focus against racism and white supremacy. I devoted myself to working on *Revolutionary Mothering: Love On The Front Lines*—an anthology of stories that center mothers of color and other marginalized mothers, with google docs and emails and any way I could after I was asked by Mai'a Williams, along with Alexis Pauline Gumbs, to join the project as a third co-editor. *Revolutionary Mothering* is in the spirit of *This Bridge Called My Back* and *Queer Black Feminism of the 70s and 80s*. Whiteness, I continually see, takes over and must be pushed back against by decentering its oblivious (to itself) narration. Reproductive Justice, a concept, movement, as well as phrase coined by Loretta Ross, like intersectionality, is a way to begin to center black women's intellectual labor and lived experience. Black female leadership is key to everyone's liberation. I felt it was important to give my time to *Revolutionary Mothering* before I could yet take time, in good consciousness, for myself. Now in my early fifties I seek self-actualization, exploration in this special time where I have yet a parent or grandchild who needs my caregiving, and novel writing/creative self-expression is my goal. I also seek a better understanding, healing, of what hurts in me, that I feel was sometimes deflected by activism. It feels radical, and difficult, to care for myself. I am also tired and scared of this world currently, as well as joy seeking, for having reasons to live are no small thing.

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All art needs support. All creation requires conditions conducive to creation. In between movement and culture, we make meaning. Mothers are no different. Mothers also need support. (As walls support roofs, as streets support cars, as invisible labor supports the patriarchy and exploited labor supports the

privileged—as the kitchen supports dinner, and the door supports your entrance, a ramp can support a wheelchair, flexibility can include, as rhetoric excludes, those it wishes to.) Mothers do not exist in a vacuum (or in any kind of vacuum cleaning dichotomy). Mothers and children exist in a society. While it's true there needs to be a better balance between the sexes that is not the only balance needed. Community contains all of us.

Once I dreamed of the childcare squat revolution. I saw the squats of Berlin; and of the Lower East Side in NYC in the 1980s. How do we build a better world? Childcare, child inclusiveness, and creating healthy conditions for children and their caregivers; and us all, with all of our needs (as we all do have needs, some more vulnerable than others, at least at various stages in our life, as I said earlier, just sometimes those more vulnerable show up the situation first that later will effect others less vulnerable) may be a very good way. Another way perhaps, might be following the leadership of those affected, as knowing best and containing the answers for the problems in their own lives. We should listen to marginalized mothers to turn this ship around: to invest in solutions. Likewise artists may help us dream. Mother artists, with all the intersections that affect mother artists of color and marginalized groups, as well as their labor celebrated their genius credited (The tendency these days is for white women to extract words like Intersectionality, coined by Kimberle Crensha; and Reproductive Justice, coined by Loretta Ross—for themselves in acts that repeat white supremacy and colonization with a new jargon.) Accessibility. Representation. Access. Dreams. Art. Childcare! Now I think I am writing a Utopian treatise. But in fact I'm writing an introduction to a supportive structure to contain mother art. Materials we have worked together to assemble and share.

Are all women on the same side? No I don't necessarily think so. Some women with more than you will try to keep it that way. And I know, as a white woman, I am a problem, whiteness my issue to work against. But I am also a woman's woman, which to me is the strategy of the working class. This does not mean that we can't build bridges, however, when we acknowledge our differences and listen to the reality of those with less privilege. However imperfectly, we can act to make a difference, for ourselves, each other, and the world to be.

Next year is going to be the year of the mother artist. Unfortunately it will always be next year until suddenly it's last year. However artists are used to working within these conditions. We will change them. Art is life. Art births, raises, rests, and revives. The era of representation is only beginning. Mother artists are everywhere. They always have been.

- China Martens, Baltimore Maryland, Oct. 31 2018

ⁱ I am thinking of fathers who give birth and/or may also mother as well as non-binary parents who generally do not go by such a gendered term as mother. Also I am influenced by the great spider mother artist Louise Bourgeois who wrote, “we are all vulnerable in some way, and we are all male-female,” and Brazilian cartoonist Laerte, a transgender woman who stated in *Laerte-se* (Netflix, 2017) that she lets her grandchild call her grandfather as asked by her son “since he already has three grandmothers” and questions the category of men and women as perhaps more of a tendency and social construct than firm identity.

ⁱⁱ To paraphrase Yoko Ono.

ⁱⁱⁱ A question raised in *Artist and Mother* Season 9, Episode 7. This episode profiles four California artists who make motherhood a part of their art: Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle, Andrea Chung, Rebecca Campbell, and Tanya Aguiñiga. There's a persisting assumption in contemporary art circles that you can't be a good artist and good mother both. But these artists are working to shatter this cliché, juggling demands of career and family and finding inspiring ways to explore the maternal in their art. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/episodes/artist-and-mother>

^{iv} This question inspired by page 19, *Motherhood in the Art World*.

<http://www.claudiasandovalromero.com/text/MotherhoodintheArtWorld.pdf>

^v Again this wonderful, and international, resource: *Motherhood in the Art World*.

<http://www.claudiasandovalromero.com/text/MotherhoodintheArtWorld.pdf>

There is also a documentary that comes with it:

[https://vimeo.com/claudiasandovalromero/motherhood in the art world](https://vimeo.com/claudiasandovalromero/motherhood%20in%20the%20art%20world)

^{vi} Betye Saar: the artist who helped spark the black women's movement:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/oct/30/betye-saar-art-exhibit-racism-new-york-historical-society?fbclid=IwAR3Eure8fw50ErrnFvXYb2se1oMD0pvWMo2tF4gWuSDESdZAhh9FsiGByjA>

^{vii} Influences: Betye Saar, by Betye Saar. <https://frieze.com/article/influences-betye-saar>

The Artist Mother Studio (AMS) Conference seeks to elevate the voices of artist mothers/caregivers and continue important conversations about communal labor and how mothers can leverage their experiences for positive societal change. The AMS Conference is a part of an artist-driven project organized by DC-based artist Amy Hughes Braden and marks the culmination of a nine week artist-in-residence for artist mothers at Washington Project for the Arts. The conference is free to attend and includes lunch and childcare (provided on a first come first serve basis).

<https://www.wpadc.org/events/ams-conference>