

Gender Jawn Season 1 Episode 2: Shana Bahemat & Gwendolyn Beetham on Self-Care

Transcription by Emma Davies

[*Gender Jawn* theme song]

(0:30)

Maria: Welcome to *Gender Jawn*, where gender is what you do and Jawn is everything else, a podcast out of Philly, sponsored by the Alice Paul's Center for Research on Gender, Sexuality and Women at the University of Pennsylvania.

(0:52)

Maria: I'm Maria Murphy, the Interim Associate Director at the Alice Paul Center. And this podcast episode is being released for the month of November. And it seems like a good time to revisit the concept of self care in light of the federal election results, which may be ongoing and contested this month. On top of the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic. On top of an ongoing national reckoning on state violence and racism. On top of the ongoing social isolation that's a byproduct of this virtual world we're occupying these days. So I've invited two of my brilliant co workers to be guests on the podcast this month because they both approach self care in such creative, meaningful but also practical ways. Of course, self care is a term that's been co opted for many different discourses. And in this episode, we're not really talking about getting a glass of wine at lunch, though no shame, if that's in your arsenal of self care tactics. But today we're going to be hearing from Shana Bahemat and Gwendolyn Beetham about their own self care practices. Some of the thinkers they engage to think about health, self care can be part of radical work, and how necessary self care is to keep that work going. And Shana has graciously offered to start us off with a meditation which I encourage listeners to also participate in if you feel comfortable.

(2:15)

Shana: Thank you, Maria, for that wonderful introduction. My name is Shana Bahemat. I am the program coordinator for APC and GSWS. I am a healer-in-progress, food lover and writer, as well. And today, we're going to just start with a little meditation. Feel free to skip this over, if it's not your cup of tea. But go ahead and take a moment to find some comfort and support from the earth beneath you. You're welcome to sit up or lie down on your back or side, whatever feels best in your body today. You may keep your eyes open, soften your gaze, or maybe close your eyes. Your hands can rest beside you on the earth or maybe somewhere on your body, if that's calling to you, your abdomen, perhaps the tops of your knees or the center of your heart.

Once you're settled, slowly begin to bring awareness to your breath. Begin to feel your inhales and exhales.

Now begin to deepen and lengthen your breath without rushing deeply inhale and slowly exhale out of the nose.

As you continue to follow your breath. Notice if you can soften where you may be holding tension just a little bit more. Maybe your jaw gently releases or your shoulders rest down your back as you continue to breathe, following the rhythm of your own breath.

As you deepen and lengthen your breath, begin to notice how you feel. Invite yourself to notice any physical sensations in your body. Notice how your spirit feels today. There may be emotions or thoughts that arise and try to observe them without any judgement. Breathe here. Allow your awareness to return to the feeling of your breath. each inhale, nourishing the mind, body, spirit. And each exhale offering a bit more release.

Now to seal our practice, we're going to take five cycles of breath. No effort, no shaping, just letting your body breathe. Each breath inviting you to meet yourself where you are today, with gentleness and compassion. Five cycles of breath.

When you feel ready, you can invite some gentle movement in your body, bringing yourself back into this space, maybe taking a look around you at the objects and the colors and light that you see where you are. And thank you so much for sharing your practice with me.

(6:48)

Maria: Shana, thank you, I needed that to reset my morning pretty badly. So I really appreciate that to start us off.

(6:55)

Shana: Of course.

(6:56)

Maria: Shana, perhaps we can we can begin. If I can ask you a little bit about how meditation has worked into your healing practice. Is it part of your own self care routine? Is that what you offer? As a healer in training? I think as you put it, can you just speak to that a little bit?

(7:13)

Shana: Well, I first started yoga, like I would say about, it's almost like 10 years ago. But more consistently, for like the past three years, I've been practicing. And for me, yoga is like movement meditation. And my partner, Sean, actually, is someone who meditates every day, almost every day. And I was like, I don't know how you could sit still with yourself for 10 minutes, I don't think I could do that. And slowly, I just like found resources online for meditation, and the yoga classes that I was attending, would start with like a 10 minute meditation before the class would begin. And so I started to notice, like, Oh, I can sit with myself for 10 minutes and actually, it's very helpful for me to get through my day. And I noticed that when I don't meditate, I often describe this feeling as someone shows up at an abandoned circus and like flicks on the lights and like there's music, and lights spinning and all this like noise. And like just chaos. And of course, even when I meditate, there are days where I do feel that way still. But when I'm in a moment where I feel overwhelmed or anxious, just returning to my breath. And just thinking about just calling awareness to like, Okay, I'm not breathing, or Okay, I am, I need to like, take a minute, and just like slow down a little. And you know, it's not it doesn't always work. But it's just been so necessary for me to incorporate into my routine. And it's just, I don't know if that answered your whole question but that's basically been my journey. And I

guess, you know, being a healer and training, I'm still new to teaching meditation and teaching yoga. I have just been kind of writing meditations that I have inspired me, like people who have inspired me kind of, in my own work and my own process of teaching meditations. Shout out to Daphne Lyon, used to be a teacher in Philly, and now is based in LA. Also Michelle Cassandra Johnson, who I'm currently doing a training with is an excellent yoga teacher and meditation teacher. Yeah. So I've just been kind of thinking about what do I need? What is my community need? And how can I put that into a meditation? So I was thinking about the three of us today and what we need and the theme of this podcast.

(9:49)

Maria: Now that sounds amazing. I mean, I'm curious since you've been doing so much yoga teacher training and this is also part of your creative practice. From what I understand, you know, is that you incorporate this kind of work into your creative writing, and you're writing about food and culture. And I'm wondering if you might also be able to speak to that?

(10:11)

Shana: Kind of how the two work together? Or...

(10:14)

Maria: Sure. Well, what this kind of self care approach, because to me, it seems from the really beautiful excerpts I've been able to read from your writing that you have allowed me to read, that you have shared, seems to me that writing also is an act of self care for you. If I'm projecting you can let me know. But I'm wondering, you know, if you can talk about how those two practices work together, and what that offers you as a writer, and what you might imagine it offers readers?

(10:46)

Shana: Yeah, thank you for that question. I would say it's interesting thinking about writing a self care didn't really happen for me until post grad school. In grad school, I felt like I did a creative project, but I felt like I was forced to create, force to create content and put it out there, to write about my trauma and have it be consumed. And I had a lot of issues with that, that I was trying to work out internally. And so actually, when I graduated, I didn't write for probably a year and so it was hard for me to return to the practice. I guess, when I started to come back into writing, I had to think about, do I want to write about trauma? Do I want to write about family? Do I want to write about these memories that sit with me in my life, in my day to day, and I so I started incorporating food a little bit more. I mean, I did write about food when I was in grad school, food and culture and Iranian culture and things like, that different traditions and rituals and food is a big part of that and gathering. I feel like I had to rebuild my relationship with writing in order to continue to do it. And so I actually reached out to some friends from... two of them from grad school, one of them is my friends partner, and I invited them to join a writing collective all POC folks. And so we were, you know, in this space, just writing without, like, "this assignment is due next week". You know, it's just, I don't know, my teacher voice came out, I don't know, to sound like that. But no, it just felt like we needed structure. But we needed it in a way that was not off of the examples that we've seen in academia. So, we kind of built our own structure to it. So we would like pick a theme each week, and we would write about that theme, or, you know, we were encouraged to explore different mediums of responding to that theme. So like, if we had

rituals was one of our themes. You could take pictures of the rituals that you do in your home or with your family, or you could write a story about a specific ritual. So I wrote a story about one thing, that is in Iranian culture, and I'm sure many other cultures. We clean herbs, and [it's] called Sabzi Khordan, so like herbs that you eat, with your meals. My mom will bring home like bags of dill, parsley, mint, like everything, like giant bags, and you have to go through each one and like clean them out and like maybe pluck off some of the thicker stems. So, it's a meditation, and it's a ritual for me. So kind of circling back to your question, being able to approach my writing in a way of I can write about the things that are difficult for me to digest or making room for my trauma, absolutely, but I can also write about the joys in my life, and the things that don't always relate to my racial identity. So I felt like I was often encouraged in grad school to write about, I mean, I love my grad program. But, you know, I was encouraged to write about my Iranian identity, my queer Iranian identity, and I just felt very trapped in that. That that was all I could write about. That I couldn't write about something that was as simple as I don't know what an example would be, but I couldn't write about my favorite ritual of going to the grocery store every week. No wants to read about that everyone wants to read about like, my parents immigrated here when and like, I mean, of course, these stories are important and no judgement to people that do write about this. I think these are stories that need to be heard. Absolutely. But I also want to be able to shed light on the things that do mean a lot to me that might not be connected to my racial identity as well.

(14:54)

Maria: I mean, you and I have talked a lot about you know, sort of in Yasmin Nair's work, for example, that under neoliberalism, the ideal subject is the traumatized subject. And that those expectations that are often put on writers, often women of color, or often, you know, folks of fem identifications are, there's sort of a prescriptive way, or that that these writers are often expected to speak from trauma and that that's the thing that they have to offer. So I think the way that you talk about, you know, self care in relation to your writing and creative practices, is not just revisiting those tactics to be, you know, really useful, especially, especially for young writers who may feel like they are being pushed into those positions to write from a subject position that requires sharing trauma.

(15:49)

Shana: Yeah, and, and again, it is it is important work. But when it's when you feel like it's all that you are, it's very hard. And so I really had to take a step back and look at that after I graduated and think about the work that I want to create and stepping into, you know, the possibility of being a healer. So, yeah, thank you. That was a great question.

(16:17)

Maria: Well, maybe I'll turn and I'll let you introduce herself, Gwendolyn. But I just want to say, what has been a really exciting part for me in this position, working with Shana and Gwendolyn has been seeing how each of you take self care as like a very sort of political mandate of the work that you do in the university and in your communities. One thing that has been really remarkable to watch since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, at least, you know, as it came to be known and experienced in the US, which was around March 2020, was that Gwendolyn was immediately on the pulse of recognizing what the impact of the pandemic was going to be, where that risk was going to get distributed, and what that was going to mean to exasperate an

ongoing care crisis. It has been very exciting to see how Gwendolyn has formed this coalition of folks across the university who are trying to get you know, the university administration to recognize what kind of unequal distribution of risk is taking place, even within our own university. Part of that really maps on to care work and what needs weren't being met before and now are especially the need is growing. So Gwendolyn, I would like you to introduce yourself, but also wonder if you feel comfortable talking about that work you've been doing at Penn recently.

(17:36)

Gwendolyn: Hi, everyone, I'm Gwendolyn Beetham and I'm the Associate Director of GSWS [Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Program], and yeah, thank you for that and for the recognition for your support of that effort. So yeah, I mean, I want to, I want to try to tie this in, especially, I think, to what Shana was just saying, because I'm so not surprised. I mean, I'm with you. And I'm, you know, angry and sad about it. But I'm also not surprised that you didn't find the university as a space where you could do that kind of work, right? Because the university isn't that space, like for so many people. I think, you know, when we think about care, and we think about the university as a space, for that work, we automatically see this rupture. We automatically see it. So what we've been thinking about now, with this coalitional work is, you know, this is something that's always been there, but now has been made hyper visible and so how do we take that moment to think about it as an opportunity to really do things differently, and to really, to really shift not only our understanding of care, but like, as it appears in practice. I think, as you know, like, that's what I'm excited about doing, that's what I take very seriously, like, in my own work, and in the spaces that I set up, or try to set up, you know, both in terms of how our office works, but also how we work with our students. You know, I think about it a lot. And, you know, I don't think I have all the answers or anything, I think I'm constantly learning. But it's exciting for me to think about how we can really make the university a space that takes these kinds of questions seriously.

You know, these are things that I think about a lot in terms of just the universe, just the space of the university itself. Like right now, it's not even really a physical space, right? We're all virtual all the time. So that's another layer of this, but I think a really intriguing layer, right? Because I'm sitting here looking at you all, and I see, you know, where you're living right now and that's something that I've been thinking about more and more as we're all are now in each other's spaces and each other's lives in these very different ways. So how does that change the way that we relate to each other? And I think it does. You know, like it changed. You know, in those early days when, when you all would see Carter, Carter's my kid, you all see Carter running around in my lap and say hi to her friends, or jumping on the trampoline in the background? Yeah. I do think like that changes things when we, when we let ourselves see people's lives differently. I mean, my hope is that that will, that will shift things more permanently, when we're outside of this particular moment.

(20:46)

Maria: Some of the work that you've been doing as part of this care work coalition that you've put together with all these other folks who are in the university has been about recognizing child care as a very basic need that has universalizing effects or could, if it was appropriately and adequately addressed, and taken care of, and thought through in the context of university life just

to begin with. So in addition to, you know, advocating for really practical solutions, one success that that you had in your effort was getting the university to create these childcare grants to recognize that there's an even greater need right now for childcare with all the added necessary restrictions and precautions that need to be taken and how that affects childcare. The care work advocacy that you've been doing, you've also been someone who's trying to keep reminding us as teachers, for those of us who are teaching and suddenly, there's a whole new kind of virtual intimacy that we're having with our students because we're seeing our students bedrooms, we're seeing their pets, we're seeing their parents or other relatives or other folks who take care of them in the background of these calls, sometimes they're listening in. As part of this whole new virtual community that is, in some ways, facilitated in this great way, in a pedagogical sense. In other ways, it feels very limiting. You have been a person who keeps trying to remind us that this is not business as usual. I wonder if you can speak a little bit about as pedagogues, what we can be thinking about for our students at this time? What kind of ways can we be facilitating care work as part of our teaching? Even if it's not a topic we're covering that week, per se? But also, you know, what is the care that we want to mirror for our students, as well, to some capacity?

(22:40)

Gwendolyn: Yeah, thank you for that question. I mean, obviously, it is something that I've been thinking of. Let me talk about this, I guess in a way of, like my general pedagogy. I really do think about this kind of as a practice, as a feminist practice. But in this particular moment, you know, obviously, there are a couple of ways I've been thinking about it and as you mentioned, as we've made the transition to remote learning, there are so many aspects of it that we need to think about when it comes to understanding the lives of our students and understanding education, as a holistic practice, which I think is very often missed in some people's takes on or some people's approaches to academic learning. It's just really clear at this moment that we must understand education as as holistic, or as the individual in their whole. So that's our social political moment of COVID. But then there's also the other political moment, with the upcoming election [2020 U.S. Presidential Election] , and you know, this is something I've been thinking of since 2016, to be honest, because I feel like I wasn't prepared in the way that I thought I should have been at the time. I wasn't at Penn. I was at Rutgers at the time. And I, I just really didn't feel that I was as prepared as I could have been for my students. So I've been thinking about it basically, since then. There are a couple things that I've been really trying to stress for myself and for the people who I work with who teach students and that's to take care of yourself, as well, because everybody I know is like at their limit right now. So that's a really hard thing to do. But you really must take care of yourself in order to be able to be there for your students. And the other thing is just to really listen to students and what they're saying. I mean, it sounds so simple. When I say that, but like, it's, it's always shocking to me like how little this is practiced. It's something as simple as the suggestions that we made when the transition to remote went out, was send a quick survey. Figure out, how student's access to Wi Fi is. Figure out, if they're in a safe environment. These aren't laborious. You're not violating anyone's confidence by asking these things. You're, in fact, really, again, recognizing the holistic aspects of education. I think really figuring out where our students are is key to all of this.

From my most recent conversations with students, they're not doing well. So whatever we can do to help support them through this time, is really important. I just think from, from my conversations with students, they are they feel most supported in spaces where people are

recognizing what's going on, and who are not pretending as if it's business as usual. I think that does us a disservice. And it does, it does them a disservice as well. These are not normal times. I think we can still have an environment where students are learning. I think we can still have an academic space where students are free to share ideas and learn new things but I don't think that we should expect that we can just proceed as if there wasn't a global pandemic going on. There wasn't an acute political crisis. There wasn't ongoing state violence against black people. This is happening. I want to mention that we're recording this on the day after another police killing in Philadelphia of a Black person and the day after the Supreme Court confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett. So to not recognize that as we're taping this is the same thing as to not recognize what's going on when we teach classes and when we are in spaces together. I think it does everyone a disservice.

(27:28)

Maria: I agree. Today, shortly after this recording, I'll be working with my TAs is to teach on the HIV-AIDS crisis in the early years of the 1980s. And obviously, we'll be acknowledging at the very least, and talking a bit about Walter Wallace Jr. and what the response in Philly has been to that police murder and the violent response of police to protests against police brutality. Of course, there are many connections with the relationship between state violence and police brutality, with early queer organizing around the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. And there are entry points. I mean, in our field, Gender and Sexuality Studies, there are obviously almost always connections to be made with the social context of the histories and theories and politics we're discussing and also with the current events that, as you say is it's irresponsible to ignore. To acknowledge and to recognize that students are dealing with a whole wide range of responses to these events is a necessary part of, or should be a necessary part of, anyone's pedagogical practice right now.

(28:41)

Gwendolyn: Yeah, absolutely. I want to say one more thing on this. I want to make one more point on this. As we think about approaching this political moment and the election next week, Maria, you and I were both in a pedagogy workshop recently about teaching around the election. I hear a lot of stories about civil dialogue, and especially white students who use higher education as a way to come to see things differently. I do believe that and I think that's true. I think academia is a space where we can broaden our understanding of the world, right? Like, that's why we're here, right? We want to do these things. But you know, what, I don't hear a lot in those conversations of people worried about alienating white Trump supporters in these spaces is like, I don't hear them talking about the first generation college students who dropped out because they don't have support. I don't hear them talking about black students who are physically threatened on campus during these times or, or who are finding nooses on trees on college campuses. I don't hear them talking about DACA students who are worried about being deported by this administration. I really think the the differences of being worried about, you know, not feeling free to share your opinion about voting for Trump are very different than the material realities that many of our students face. I just really want to take that seriously. If we go back to this idea about making the university a space where people are truly cared for, then we really have to take seriously, what the very real material effects of this moment on certain groups of students versus others. We cannot ignore it. Again, I think to ignore that reality is irresponsible.

(31:08)

Maria: Gwendolyn, I know that you also brought a reading to share today, which might help inform some of the themes that we've we've brought up in the discussion so far.

(31:24)

Gwendolyn: So I think I told you that you aren't going to be surprised about author of the reading I selected. It's Judith Butler. This is a reading, and I just want to put a warning out there. It's a pretty heavy reading, it's about grief. But I've come to this reading many times over the years at different points in my life for different reasons. I chose a reading about grief because, I think one of the difficulties of this time is that we're all grieving so much, all the time, that there just isn't even enough. There's not enough time to grieve for everything that we need to grieve for, right? Like personal lives lost of obviously over 200,002 COVID alone. Lives lost to racial, state violence. Experiences lost of being in person. There are many aspects of life that we're grieving for right now. So this is a piece that Judith Butler wrote in her book, *Undoing Gender*, on grief:

I am not sure I know when mourning is successful, or when one has fully mourned another human being. I'm certain though, that it does not mean that one has forgotten the person or that something else comes along to take his or her place. I don't think it works that way. I think instead, that one mourns when one accepts the fact the lost one undergoes will be one that changes you, changes you possibly forever. And that mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation, the full result of which you cannot know in advance. So there is losing and there is a transformative effect of loss. And this latter cannot be charted or planned. I don't think for instance, that you can invoke a Protestant ethic when it comes to loss. You can't say, oh, I'll go through a loss this way, and it will be the result and I'll apply myself to the task and I'll endeavor to achieve the resolution of grief that is before me. I think that one is hit by waves and then one starts out the day with an aim, a project, a plan and one finds oneself foiled. One finds oneself fallen. One is exhausted but does not know why. Something is larger than one's own deliberate plan or project, larger than one's own knowing. Something takes hold. But is this something coming from the self? From the outside or from some region where the difference between the two is indeterminable? What is it that claims us as such moments, such that we are not the masters of ourselves? To what are we tied? And by what are we seized? It may seem that one is undergoing something temporary, but it could be in this experience something about who we are as revealed something that delineates the ties we have to other that shows us that those ties constitute a sense of self compose who we are and that when we lose them, we lose our composure in some fundamental sense. We do not know who we or what to do. Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation. But I think it exposes the constitutive sociality of the self, a basis for thinking a political community of a complex order. Let's face it, we're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.

(34:55)

Maria: Okay, now to make an extremely abrupt shift. It is time for the game. This episode's game is about celebrity self care. Who does what, to feel good in these uncertain times. So I have four

questions. I will give you a self care practice and you have to guess which celebrity, and celebrity is defined in different ways in this game, but I would like you to take guesses who you think does which self care practice and if you have reasoning, just share. That is excellent as well. Okay, so, question number one.

(35:42)

Gwendolyn: I know I'm like, scared, I'm going to be bad at this.

(35:49)

Maria: If you don't know who someone is, I think you know who these people are. If not, that's okay. We can still take guesses. Okay, number one, which celebrity binges on guilty pleasure shows like Bravo TV style, to unwind? Is it Roxane Gay? Or Lizzo?

(36:11)

Gwendolyn: Roxane Gay.

(36:12)

Maria: Okay, well, you're right. I don't know why you know that so clearly and quickly.

(36:19)

Gwendolyn: I actually have a story. So I know that because I watch *Real Housewives*. Yeah, so I love *Real Housewives*, specifically *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*. And I listened to this podcast episode, where Roxane Gay talks about all the real housewives shows. And it was so good. It's so so good. It's on *Bitch Sesh*. If you have a chance to listen to it, look it up. It's just listening to her dissect and like analyze each. It's just too good.

(36:52)

Maria: I can't imagine. Well, apparently, Lizzo does guided meditations as part of her self care routine. She has also shared her own guided meditations on Instagram Live with her followers. So that's her self care practice. Okay, number two. Which performer drinks tea out of a *Golden Girls* mug to start their self care routine? Is it *Drag Race All Star* Season Two winner Alaska or Britney Spears?

(37:18)

Gwendolyn: How is Britney? Is Britney free? What's going on? Free Britney?

(37:25)

Maria: Yes, I agree. Free Britney. Take the conservatorship down. That's gonna be excellent. No, there's already so many good podcast episodes that are trying to support Britney Spears independence, which maybe we can link to in the show notes. But do you think that she drinks out of a *Golden Girls* mug to start herself care routine? Or do you think that that's more of a *Drag Race* Alaska?

(37:51)

Gwendolyn: Yeah, I don't think that's a Britney thing. Yeah.

(37:54)

Maria: You're both right. It's Alaska. But you know, again, Britney, her Instagram page is in my opinion, an excellent self care reprieve repository. She's often posting a lot of good messaging that you know, maybe to some folks seems corny, but if Britney Spears is telling you, hey, fall in love with taking care of yourself, mind, body and spirit. I think we should listen.

(38:18)

Gwendolyn: Here, here. Love her content. It's beautiful, beautiful work.

(38:23)

Maria: Okay, number three who swears by sleeping, eating, and talk therapy as go to elements of a self care regime? Is it Tracee Ellis Ross or Laverne Cox?

(38:33)

Gwendolyn: Wait repeat that. I'm so sorry.

(38:36)

Maria: Whose self care routine is about the basics: sleeping, eating and talk therapy. Is it Laverne Cox or Tracee Ellis Ross?

(38:44)

Gwendolyn: I feel like it could be either of them. They're both really... I'm gonna say Tracy. Is it Tracy?

(38:51)

Maria: It's Laverne Cox. But Tracy Ellis Ross is also close. Her go to self care routine is apparently prioritizing movement and exercise, so it's related. Okay, and finally this question involves two actors from *The L Word*. So Sepideh Moafi, who plays Gigi, and Leisha Haley who plays Alice, of these two actors who reads poetry first thing in the morning as a way to "wiggle their senses"?

(39:19)

Shana: Sepideh.

(39:20)

Maria: You are right, 100%.

(39:23)

Gwendolyn: That was not Leisha Hailey.

(39:26)

Maria: Okay, maybe I could have made that harder.

(39:31)

Shana: So I brought this piece that I read beginning of October, or mid October, written by Solange Knowles in *Harper's Bazaar*. It's called "Reflections on Stillness, Joy, and the Year that

Changed Everything". The whole piece is really beautiful. I recommend reading it if you can. And I'm just going to read this one little snippet:

Some days were pain in the ass. Some were the most beautiful days of my life. This was a different kind of joy. I didn't need to skip in the sun to feel it. Joy was the sleep I got after releasing secrets from my bones. Joy was telling the truth, joy was making a song that I didn't care ever saw the light of day, joy was taking a trip alone. And just sitting and staring at the water and seeing my reflection and thinking to myself, "Damn, I'm fine". Joy was having nothing on my calendar and choosing what to do with my time. Joy was having a friend who didn't care how ugly I cried, always inviting and to encouraging me to just be, however that looked that day. Joy was discovery. Joy was having someone show me beautiful worlds of their own and trusting in the journey. Joy was letting go of control. Joy was sitting. Joy was just sitting, joy was seeing how far I had come and waving at my shadows. Joy was accepting that the work is never done. That every day is a choice. Soon I began to feel things that I never felt before. I began to understand who I was becoming outside of all the many names I had been given and given myself. I began to love differently, see differently, seek differently, I began to surrender to the work never being done, but finding joy and that there was room for it all. I cleared my schedule and took time off from everything else to continue this devotion to the work. And then we all had to confront stillness to collectively honor to listen to survive.