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# Love in Public

a 'zine • a collaboration • an offering

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EVERYONE IS WELCOME



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In the last months of 2018 I put out a call for anyone who wanted to join me in carrying a question for all of 2019. This question would inform our way of being in the world and with others, and was inspired by Cornel West's quote:



Never forget that  
**justice**  
is what  
**love**  
looks like in public.

**The intention and aspiration with this project was to create a culture of abundance and challenge the idea that one person can't make a difference.**

We are interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent beings. What one person does matters because nothing we do is done in isolation. I wanted to cut through limiting ideas we have about the value of our contributions to the world by demonstrating how a group of individuals can do something meaningful through shared practice.

**In 2019 ten people joined me in holding, contemplating I living the question:**

## **What does love in public look like?**

This 'zine is the result of our collaboration.

**May it be of benefit.**

**May it inspire, enrich and guide you.**

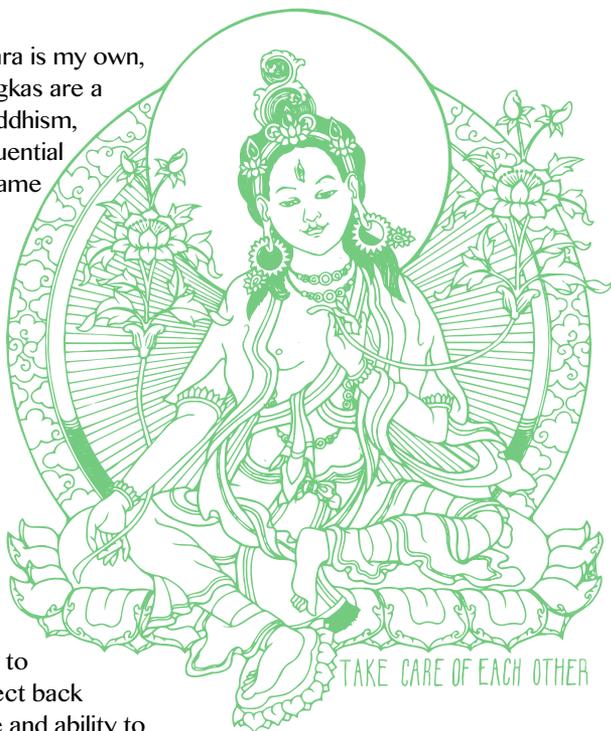
**May it be a reminder that you are not alone and you are enough.**

In love and liberation,

K.S.C. Hatch

This depiction of Green Tara is my own, completed in 2017. Thangkas are a traditional part of Tibetan Buddhism, which has been the most influential to my practice. When I first came to Buddhism, I was resistant to thangkas, because I saw them as deity worship, and I didn't want to co-opt or appropriate what I thought were goddesses and gods from another culture.

But the deities depicted in thangkas are not idols to be worshipped—they are tools for practice. Each one represents an aspect of our mind and potential. Looking at a thangka could be likened to looking at a mirror. They reflect back to us our own wisdom nature and ability to wake up.



After listening to Lama Rod Owens\* teach on her, I realised how reflective Green Tara is of my practice, and how fitting her image would be for Love in Public.

Green Tara is a representation of compassionate action—as depicted in her willingness to step down from her throne. She is the embodiment of being so moved by compassion to be willing to step down into the muck, to engage, interrupt or serve in any situation.

**May you have the strength, wisdom, and energy of Green Tara.**

~ KSCH ~



**\*Lama Rod Owens** is one of the co-authors of *Radical Dharma: Talking race, love and liberation*, and co-founder of the online dharma community Bhumisparsha.

Visit [lamarod.com](http://lamarod.com) to learn more.

# QUESTIONS

**C**uriosity is one of the greatest tools we have. It helps us open up—to move beyond the limitations of our experiences and embodiments to see the world from a much bigger perspective. A really good question feeds new questions.

In the first months of this collective project, collaborators shared the questions that arose for them as they asked themselves about love and justice, and what it meant to express love publicly.

## What do you have at the centre of your personal mandala?

Lately I've been asking myself, "Well, what DO I stand for?" I recently saw a bald eagle sitting on a nest and asked myself what egg I wanted to be sitting on? I came up with the egg of love and freedom.

Is this the state of mind in which you would like to die?

How do we hold a conversation that allows us to open our hearts and create greater vulnerability outside of friends and family in our communities?

In what ways do we need to heal to feel safe for these conversations?

How DO I define love?  
What does it look like when it's not just limited to family, friends or romantic partnerships?

Can I be big enough to love everyone?  
What does that kind of love feel like?

What does love in public look like?  
**I think it looks like a public toilet.**

Especially, a clean, safe public toilet. We all need food and water, and making sure that everyone has these is love in public. We also need a place to eliminate these and when we do, we may not be near home, or we may not have a home. Not everyone has a car to get home quickly and not everyone has a home to get to.

**What happens when someone needs a toilet and the only ones available are “for patrons only”?**

**What happens when someone has to pee, or is menstruating heavily or when they didn't expect to?**

**Or they have diarrhea and there is no toilet available?**

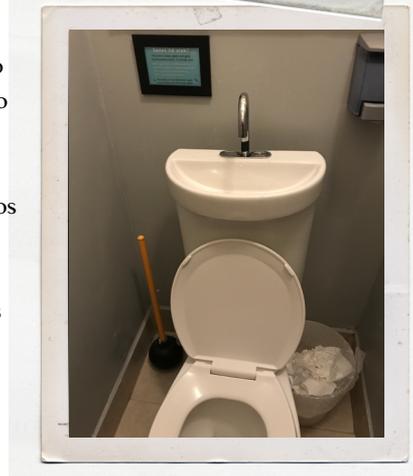
**What happens when they can't afford to be a “patron” in order to use a toilet?**

How do people respond to others who smell of pee or whose clothes are soiled? How do they respond to people who use alleyways for toilets? Usually, the response is not outrage that there are not public toilets available.

Rather than being offended by the intentional marginalization of the poor or homeless or too old to move fast enough, people too often blame those who are powerless and suffering.

As I am travelling around and needing toilets, my kudos go out to places that provide them for everyone. I know there are more attractive topics for the poster child of love in public, but when ya gotta go, a toilet is a beautiful sight! I want them available without being attached to the cost of a latte or a panini.

~ Ani ~



The other day I was pumping gas and there was a man standing there with a sign requesting 'any help'. I knew I had the care packages in my back seat and I thought to myself, 'do I approach him, don't I approach him?'

I took a moment to check-in with my own fears. And they weren't about him, they were about my vulnerabilities. What IF he doesn't accept my approach? Me? What does it mean to be vulnerable? And then the universe spoke, I smiled, and thought: wow, we are the same. I'm afraid. And in that moment again - I thought: what right do I have? And so I walked up to him, smiled, and said, "This is what I have," and held out the care package, and he smiled and said "anything helps".

I felt this intense sadness, just as I do writing this - that it took that internal dialogue to move past my own fears and vulnerabilities. And that also makes me aware of what I need to change - about me. And I wonder if he knows the gift he gave ME?

So I vow to be more vulnerable. And in doing so - more connecting. Because we are all the same.

~ Sheryl ~

## **Making Care Packages for Your Unhoused Neighbours**

**Step one:** Get some extra large (1 gallon) zip lock bags and gather supplies like thick, warm socks, granola bars, jerky packages, water bottles, coffee shop gift cards, fruit snacks, hand warmers, batteries and/or tampons/pads.

**Step two:** Divide the supplies into piles to fill each large zip-lock bag. Include a little of everything in each. For menstrual supplies, include enough for one cycle in each pack.

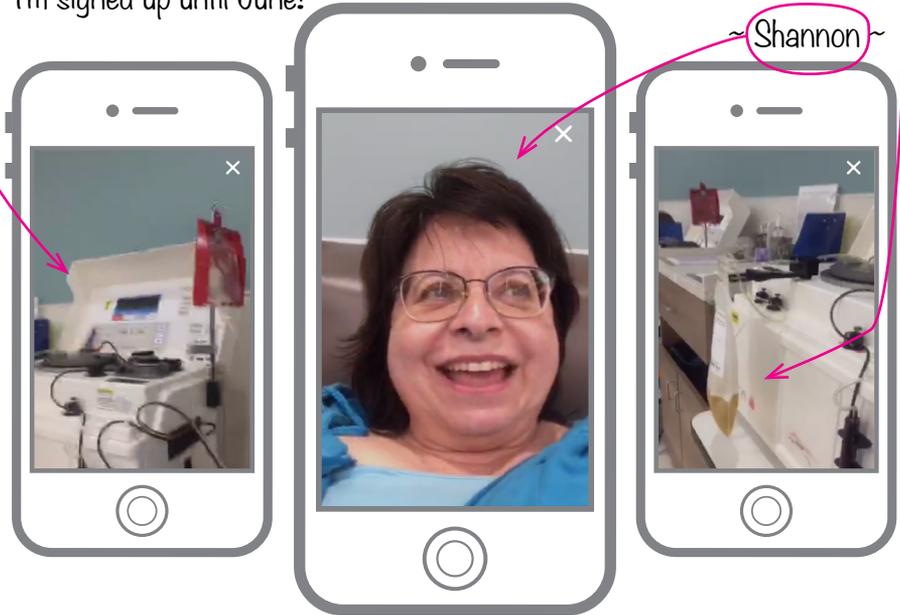
**Step three:** Every time you leave the house, take one or two packs along with you in a bag or in your car.

**Step four:** When you see someone holding a sign asking for help, or you are stopped by an unhoused person on the street, give them a pack!

"Still working on defining 'Love in Public', but one of the things—I'm going to show you a machine here, dunno if you can see it—I'm donating plasma!"

"First time donor! It's about an hour and a half to do."

"Information I found out is that Canada can only meet 15% of the needs of Canadians who require immunoglobulin treatments, so they buy the rest from the States. And apparently what I'm donating today won't be ready for nine months. But you can donate plasma once a week and so I'm signed up until June!"



**TIL:** One of the The United States' biggest exports—because they pay donors—is blood. Often, the people most likely to donate are those in need of quick cash—which is to say, impoverished people are the most frequent donors of blood in the USA.

Imagine if we lived in a country where you didn't have to sell your blood to make ends meet, and you didn't have to prove it was profitable for you to receive medical care? **Love in Public looks like campaigning to create a health system with patients, not profits, at the center.**

~ Anonymous ~



## love in action all over the place!

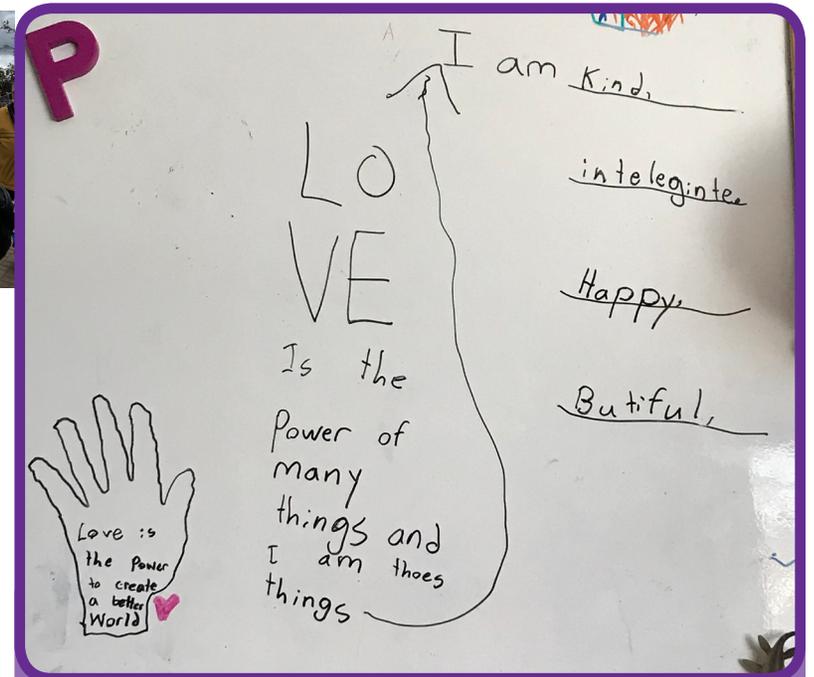
I am attaching a few photos from the Climate Strike! In the one with the police, we had reached a tense point. This was the second time we had come to this point and they were clear that they were going to arrest us. While we regrouped, a new officer came on the scene. He said we could work together to come up with something that served their needs and ours, and we did. That was some powerful love in action!

We agreed to work together with them helping us by blocking traffic for us while we talked to the people in the cars. Then, we would clear to the sidewalks, they would move the squad car that was blocking the traffic, and that group of cars would move through. They did this about ten times for us and then, by common agreement between us and the police, we stopped after that.

When I thanked the officer later, he was very clear that he saw this as his issue too. He said he had kids and he was glad for the work we were doing. A few other officers asked for copies of our flyer and said they agreed with what we were doing.

I had the number of the attorney for us sharpied inside my arm and there was a woman in charge of making sure she would be at the police station when I was released. More love in action!

I had great conversations with people and there was a strong sense of commitment to doing what we can all do to work for systemic change. This is about so much more than the climate!



### LOVE IN PUBLIC IS SOMETIMES A REFLECTION OF HOW WE LOVE IN PRIVATE

I feel I am in the mode for loving. It's a fine balance of loving others and loving yourself. Once upon a time it was a lot easier to love others more than my own self. Sometimes it still is.

I feel pampering one's self is the most beautiful act of love.

Nourishing the body, the mind.

Show gratitude.

Fill your bucket.

Let things go in the waters. Let things go in the wind.

~ Zabine ~

This morning I listened to an interview on a radio station KRVS in Lafayette, Louisiana. Dr John Griffen, a friend of mine from the 60's, was talking about Cuba. He spoke in very simple terms that everyone could understand, about very ordinary things that anyone could relate to, but, because he was speaking in the U.S. about Cuba in the U.S., I think it was an act of courage, resistance, and love.

He said that he grew up learning to hate Cuba, and, at the age of 60, he decided to go to Cuba himself to see if what he had learned was true. He found out that it was not. Choosing to return to Cuba with supplies for Cuban people, without U.S. permits (as an act of civil disobedience) and in violation of the Cuban embargo, he continued to learn about Cuba and now he is very publicly challenging U.S. policies toward Cuba.

At the end of the interview, he was particularly direct and spoke to kids, telling them that this embargo has gone on for longer than most of their parents have lived. He spoke of why it was ill-founded, and the harm it was

causing, both to Cubans and to the people of Lafayette. It was down to earth and touching to me.

As an example of "love in public" it struck me because here is someone who has many colleagues, friends, and family members as well as casual acquaintances, neighbours etc who might be surprised, if not shocked or angry about what he said. Yet he was willing to speak publicly about these things, disputing the misinformation he had been raised with and sounding like he believed that others were capable of changing their opinions and ending the hatin' talk and policies toward Cuba.

Based on listening to John, I am reminded that love in public means being willing to challenge our beliefs. And it means talking to people who have different opinions and beliefs and trusting that honest dialogue can make a difference. It means having the courage to speak out even when there might be a price to pay for our honesty. Hats off to John!

- Ani -



# THREE VIGNETTES



## AN EXAMPLE WE SHOULD FOLLOW.

I am outside for only minutes tonight...in my car it reads 40 degrees however with the biting wind, I am sure it's colder. I forgot my gloves and my fingers start to quickly ache. I only have to walk 20 steps, if that, until I reach the men I'm looking for – they live in tents, under a bridge, near my home.

A poem comes to mind that I heard as a child, "Lord, forgive me when I whine, ...." And you can fill in the remaining words to make it your own and exchange Lord for whomever or whatever you believe. In this moment I'll choose to continue with the original structure of the poem, "**Lord, forgive me when I whine, I have a home, the world is mine.**" And I stop and breathe, and think, if I could only stand this cold for minutes, what must it be like for those whose reality this is every day? They don't get in a car, like I did, and blast the heat and cup their hands around the warm air and then go to a heated home.

Twice, in a matter of minutes, I am struck with a mixture of awe, sadness, and gratitude. As I walk away from the man, whom I handed 2 homemade pork pita sandwiches, I turn back and see him sitting on a chair as the other man approaches carrying bags – and he holds up one of the pita sandwiches....and I am struck by this simple gesture.

He could have easily kept all of the food. Yet, he chose to simply raise his hand, and hold out much more than food.



## COOKING OIL PLEASE.

Each day I experience more joy and wonder as I reflect on my fear while continuing to choose to engage with people who are vulnerable enough to sometimes, daily, sit outside a very public place and ask for assistance, for acknowledgement, for humanity.

**Cooking oil please.** Three very simple words. It caught me off guard and I smiled. And then the conversation commenced. Would you like extra virgin olive oil. No. Would you like sunflower, grapeseed..? Hmmm. I'd just like regular cooking oil. So I smiled and said, "You got it. Are you sure you don't want anything else." And the response was "No thank you. That's good."

And I'm smiling as I write this. I love how my eyes are being opened. My heart has always been open — my fear of being rejected, though it sounds ludicrous as I write this — had blocked my ability to 'see'. My vision is almost 20/20 now.

I almost skipped into the grocery store. I could feel the lightness in my step, because it radiated from my soul and lifted me a few feet of the ground. And I found a special kind of joy in going down the 'oil aisle' and perusing the brands and types available. I bought what I thought was a great bottle, and bought it from the perspective of 'could I see myself cooking with this?'

I walked outside and in my arms was a bag of groceries, a basket I carry, my purse, and dry cleaning. He was watching me awkwardly juggle this and got up to greet me, thanked me, and told me a story that made me smile. He said that cooking on an open fire causes things to burn and the oil was going to help. He added that someone tried to give him It's Not Butter and that just wasn't up his alley. I laughed and told him I couldn't agree more. And I said to him, "Thank you." He smiled.

And as I walked back to my car — I almost skipped, again.



## TO BE SEEN. TO BE HEARD. TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED.

A simple sign – an even simpler request: **I dream of an iced coffee and oatmeal.**

I'd guess he was in his mid to late 20's. Does that really matter though? He is a human with a simple request and had the strength (how often I say vulnerability – is it really that though? Or is it being strong and brave, to put your 'dream' on a piece of cardboard and hope that someone not only reads it but sees you and does something about it?) I think I'm going to shift from the word vulnerable, and instead look at my fellow humans and acknowledge how **brave** they are.

He was sleeping next to his sign. In a sitting position. Head down. I tiptoed up and said, "I don't want to scare you." And gently placed an iced coffee and warm oatmeal, from Starbucks, in front of him. I handed him a straw and stir stick, spoon, napkins, several different types of sugar – and a Starbucks card. He looked up at me and said, "You read my sign." And I said, "Of course."

And as I write this I now know the meaning of "the tears burned my eyes". I've never really thought about that saying until this moment. It's a deep sadness that comes directly from my soul and overflows out of my eyes. I remain dumbfounded by this world we've created of inhumanity.

One of my favorite movies is Pay It Forward – and I think of the premise of this 6th grader creating this 'movement'. You go out and do 3 acts of kindness and all you ask in return is they do 3 acts of kindness. Mathematically it's pretty simple. The humanity that would vibrate through our world if we all did this —and continued to do it — would be world changing.

To read a sign. To take an action. To have a connection. To be seen. To be heard. To be acknowledged.

~ Sheryl ~

# Examining & Undoing Whiteness

I'm aware that a big part of Whiteness is NOT TALKING about the elephant in the room under some guise of propriety. Don't look at it, ignore it, shame anyone for naming it, make it about them not being diplomatic, or find some way of accusing them of being uncompassionate because their words were sharp.

Well, a surgeon is not delicate when it comes to cutting out dead tissue or a cancerous growth. I'll wield that scalpel on myself because I know I can be a better person, and that doesn't mean I'm a shit person now. My goodness is in my capacity to cut away that which doesn't serve liberation, to see what needs to be cut away, even if it's going to be painful. That's love. That's justice.



Photo Credit: Tom Olin



be my  
eyes

Did you know there is an app that connects sighted people with visually-impaired folks who need assistance?

It's super cool and super simple. Download **Be My Eyes** from the app store and it will give you all the information you need. If you are available when a visually impaired person uses the app, answer the call and help them with whatever task they are doing.

# Reflections after a year of holding the question: What does love in public look like?

"I am more sentient, which means I am learning to care. Learning to care means learning to grieve and this is all okay. The circle of life. Not eloquent but my listening skills are being honed. Thank you for the opportunity this has afforded me to grow."

"I'd say that love in public for me has been largely through the changing ways that I relate to friends and family with a better understanding of social conditioning and institutionally enforced power imbalances. Lots of space, respect and warmth."

"It seems that I am in a web of love. Love like mycelium that is unseen but vast and always producing more love."

"I feel like I've done a lot of thinking about holding compassion for myself and others, especially with relationships that are difficult for me or when challenges arise in general. I have a tendency to rush forward, so I am trying to practice giving things more space to see what arises naturally."

# RESOURCES

for cultivating love in public

## LISTEN (podcasts)



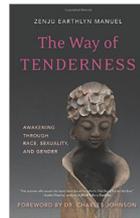
**How to Survive the End of the World** feat. Mariame Kaba—*The Practices We Need: #MeToo and Transformative Justice*

**Meditation in the City** feat. Rev. angel Kyodo Williams—*Why Your Liberation is Bound up in Mine*

**On Being** episodes with Ruby Sales, John Lewis, Mirabai Bush, Eula Biss, & Mahzarin Banaji

**This American Life**—*The Problem We All Live With parts 1 and 2*

## READ



## WATCH

*The Alt-Right Playbook* by Innuendo Studios & *The Pop Culture Detective Agency* on YouTube • The documentary *Reel Injun* • Hannah Gadsby's comedy special *Nanette* on Netflix



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