

## To the Matchgirls and Women of the 1888 Strike,

In 1888, within a small industrial corner of East London, you, the aggrieved workers of the Bryant & May match factory, began to organize to the matchgirls protests, when, in 1881, the factory spread awareness of the treatment and death of owner Theodore H. Bryant sponsored the building your fellow labourers. For several years attempts at organizing a labour union to negotiate against the impositions of the factory owners were met is poignant that for an area steeped in generations with derision and dismissal. And as the bosses began to further exploit the poor teenage workers, Irish immigrants, and working-class mothers protesting the garnishing of wages, debilitating 14-hour workdays, and a workplace laced with cancerous white phosphorus, the calls for a radical change only grew. Therefore, a strike was soon organized as reports and interviews on the wretched industrial confines and abuses were publicized with the support of journalists and political partisans such as Annie Besant and Emmeline Pankhurst.<sup>11</sup> And soon nearly 1500 matchgirls, joined by male labourers, began striking to have the new labour union accepted, a safer workplace established, and wages increased. After several weeks of protest, all these concessions were met by the factory owners and the strike ended.<sup>12</sup>

Looking back on the past, local actions such as this strike have too often been forgotten or omitted from modern memory. For, in the remembrance of things past, it is regularly those moments from the largest scales of conflict and calamity that are deemed the most significant or impactful to our present histories. However, the daily activism of those matchgirls and women served as the first wave of change that soon rippled across all of late 19th-century English society. For the populace spurred on and accelerated by this fervent belief in the possibilities of protest and these everyday activists began to demand for change. Change for themselves, for their children, for their brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers as trade unionists for working rights, as educators for access to education, as journalists for the truth, and as suffragettes for the vote. Subsequently, the protest of the matchgirls in the Bow quarter became one of the most significant labour events in the history of England.13

The Bryant & May match factory remains to this day; however in the time between us, it has been gutted and transformed into a series of new luxury apartments for the rich. Looking back on our popular histories, the sites and monuments of the working and lower classes are often the first to fall away to the forces of others' political progress and economic advancement. These forces of gentrification thus act to not just modify the present conditions of structures, but to manipulate past narratives surrounding historical veneration, humanization, and, ultimately, remembrance. People and their legacies are thus reduced to their yet to be done, for what is needed now is; base usefulness or uselessness to a cycle of commodification that came in the form of those imposing industrial factories of the last century, but are now the forces of commercial heritagization and urban renewal. As a result, local histories are

pacified to appease the mindset of an abstracted gentrified populace. Collective landscapes and memories are expunged of the struggles and injustices faced by those that have come before, and of those impoverished and downtrodden still, who continue to suffer in silence and die to this day.

This can even be seen in the years leading up to of a statue to honour a former Prime Minister of England, William Gladstone, in East London. It of poverty and working-class strife, the memorialization of that legacy is reflected by the petrification of figures from the social, political, and economic elite that not only benefited from the exploitation of the poor, but used that extracted capital to deify themselves as liberators. In spite of all this, singular acts of earnest remembrance for those industrial workers continue to manifest throughout the decades. Spurred on by a rumor that withheld wages were used to fund its construction, an unknown individual or individuals have kept painting the hands of Gladstone red to remember the blood and suffering of the matchgirls and women. In the recent run up to the 2012 Olympics, with international eyes on London, the hands were scrubbed clean by the local council one night, and yet the next day as the sun rose, the fingers and palms of Gladstone were red once more. $^{14}$ 

Reflecting on the present condition of our own profession, we architects have for too long been complicit in the acceptance of deplorable standards for the treatment of our workers and for the compensation of their labour. This complicity extends across the design and construction industry, from the cult of physical and mental exhaustion, to the dependence on unpaid interns, and the reliance on millions of migrant, child, and imprisoned labourers for the extraction of our materials and the construction of our buildings. In the nearly 130 years between us and the labor movements of the past, what has remained consistent are those that continue to be systematically exploited and erased from our industry at every level. It is those who are poor, those who are women, those who are minorities, and those who are immigrants. Amidst these conditions, we are told to find solace in and look up to the established institutions and icons of our age to guide us in the right direction. But what if it is these idols and institutions that systematically incentivise the perpetual need for our struggle? With this we too often forget that the spinning of great change throughout our histories have begun with the simplest and humblest actions of those unknown and unnamed activists of the everyday those who did not seek to change the world. Those who did not seek to change the world, but merely to survive to the next. I shall therefore end this correspondence with the popular activist motto from the time of the matchgirls to honour their legacy, and as a reminder for us to continue to engage in this struggle to finish the work that is

"Deeds not Words" $^{15}$ In solidarity,

Rukshan Vathupola



<sup>1</sup> Toni Morrison, "A Knowing So Deep," Essence, 1985, 31.<sup>2</sup> Morrison, "James Baldwin: His Voice Remembered; Life in His Language," The New York Times, December 20, 1987. 3 "(1981) Audre Lorde, The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,  ${\it Black Past, 2012, black past.org/a frican-american-history/1981-audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-responding-racism {}^{4}{\it Audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-responding-racism } {\scriptstyle Audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-respond-racism } {\scriptstyle Audre-lorde-usea-racism } {\scriptstyle Audre-lorde$ Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," Sister Outsider: Essaus and Speeches (Berkelev, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 110 - 114. <sup>5</sup> Baited with Ziwe is a comedy series in which Ziwe Funudoh attempts to bait her white guest y saying something racially inappropriate.  $^6$  Caroline Calloway, "Ziwe interviews Caroline Calloway," interviews  $^6$ by Ziwe Fumudoh, Instagram Live, June 18, 2020, 7 Taylor Nolan, "Josh Sharp // Taylor Nolan," interview by Ziwe Fumudoh, Instagram Live, August 13, 2020.<sup>8</sup> "Covid in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count," The New York Times, March 3, 2020, irus-us-cases.html.<sup>9</sup> Michael Sorkin, *Twenty Minutes in Manhattan* (New York North Point Press, 2013). 10 Michael Sorkin, Traffic in Democracy: the 1997 Raoul Wallenberg Lecture (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 4.11 Emmeline Pankhurst, My Own Story (New York: Hearst's International Library Co. 1914), 19. 12 "Strike of Bryant and May's Match Girls," Reynold's Newspaper, July 8, 1888, bl.uk/collection-items/new article-reporting-the-match-girls-strike. <sup>13</sup> Henry Snell, Men. Movements, and Muself, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1936) 106.14 Frederick O'Brien, "The red hands of William Gladstone's statue," Roman Road LDN, December 11, 2018,

 ${\tt dlondon.com/red-hands-williamgladstone-statue.\,{}^{15}\,{\tt Pankhurst}, {\it My\,Own\,Story}, 38.$ 

## Dear Michael Sorkin,

As I write this, over 8.6 million people have contracted COVID-19 and over 224,000 have died in the United States due to the virus.<sup>8</sup> Every death is devastating – yours especially. Following your untimely passing in March, I wanted to honor your legacy by revisiting your writings and lectures. At a moment when civic life is deeply challenged, your ideas strike a timely and prescient chord: Prosperous cities depend upon the enrichment of their local communities.

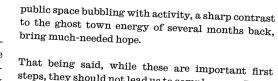
Now, it's our duty – as architects, designers, and urban citizens - to build upon your foundation and carry it forward: How can we design our way toward a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable public sphere?

Reflecting on this question brought back a memory that I imagine you would appreciate. It's one of the final days of summer in 2012. I've just moved to the city, a hopelessly wide-eyed undergrad at NYU. From my dorm room overlooking Washington Square Park I can hear the bluesy trill of a trumpet. Dusk sets in and Greenwich Village awakens for the night. Venturing into the park with a friend, we're drawn towards a crowd clumped around the fountain. A patchwork of musicians are jamming while everyone else sings along – loud, merrily, all together now. I get the feeling this is both impromptu and totally regular. Here in the park, perfect strangers can be close friends, if only for a night.

Eight years later, the pandemic has destabilized and, in turn, reawakened the essentiality of urban public life. Following the outbreak in March, spontaneous, communal moments like the one in Washington Square Park were halted. For many months, as the virus tore through the city and life was restricted to the confines of one's home, NYC didn't feel like itself. A place without its people, a body without a soul. Today, as the city cautiously reopens, new policies and initiatives are attempting to revive the spirit of the city by reshaping the potential of its streets. From how we move around to how we convene, NYC is morphing before our eyes.

In a reaction to the virus's crippling economic toll, NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on September 25 that the Open Restaurants pilot program would be made a permanent fixture. This initiative grants restaurants and bars the option to expand outdoor seating space on to the street in front of their property, repurposing parking spaces for communal gathering. In addition, the ongoing Open Streets program has closed certain blocks to traffic on weekends. Walking down these car-free streets, one gets the sense of a new vitality, a city reincarnated. Michael, I wish you were here to see it. The optimistic signs of





steps, they should not lead us to complacency. Rather, these initiatives open the door to a new realm of possibilities: how can we extend the programs further? How many streets can we turn into pedestrian plazas? Why limit ourselves to the weekends? What subsidies can the city provide to ensure all local businesses benefit from these new initiatives? What processes can we institute to give the public a say in which streets become pedestrianized? In a city where the ratio of residents to private automobiles is vastly disproportionate, this reclaiming of the streets for the people is seriously overdue.

What remain largely unexplored are the extensive benefits the Open Streets program could provide to residential blocks if rolled out permanently and at scale, a topic you explored in Twenty Minutes in Manhattan.9 Car-free, or reduced lane residential streets, can create the space for a vast array of activities, from improved waste management, community gardens, playspaces for children, bicycle storage, street furniture, local business opportunities, events and programming, the list goes on.

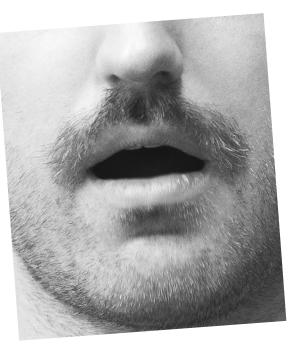
Underlying these shifts is a critical point: design is (has always been) political. It's the substance and systems that shape our lives. The design of the built environment mediates where we encounter each other, who among us can engage, and the quality of that shared experience. For this reason, when we design, it's our obligation to continually ask ourselves who benefits? Who is left behind? Does our work reinforce societal disparities, injustice, and fragmentation or actively reroute our path towards understanding, mutual aid, and connection? Or, as you so aptly put it:

'Propinquity – neighborliness – is the ground and problem of democracy."10

Michael Sorkin, Traffic in Democracy

As we navigate the next chapter in the history of the city, it's clear that this moment holds unbelievable potential for meaningful, lasting progress. A chance for us to make an impact that will transform the lifestyle of New Yorkers well beyond our own time. It remains absolutely central to our charge as citizen-designers to pick up your mantle and fight for a city that puts community first.

In solidarity, Ian Beckman Reagan



from Black-owned bookstores and feeling she deserved an "ally cookie." To which you reply, "There are no cookies in this game."<sup>6</sup> Calloway seems stunned, but the comment sets the tone for the remainder of the conversation, which is stern but amiable.

It's not merely the structure that allows for such honest discussions, but the fact that the show is live makes it impossible for your guests to curate their words. A few guests on your show have clearly attempted to come armed with information and prepared answers, but it is usually a futile endeavor because they inevitably say something insensitive, racist, or privileged. Knowledge itself does not prevent your guests from faltering, but the point is not to have the correct answer. If every person came equipped with an eloquent response to every question, the conversation would be unproductive and honestly not at all entertaining. It is the off-the-cut nature of your show that forces your guests to confront their biases, and being uncomfortable is an essential component of that confrontation.

What I find most intriguing about these interviews is your ability to instill such discomfort in your guests. The sight is both entertaining and terrifying. Terrifying because I can imagine myself in the hot seat, stumbling over my words the same way your guests do when asked, "Who is Marcus Garvey?" I find myself answering questions alongside your panicked guests, gauging my own naiveté. Perhaps the most nerve-racking part of each interview is when a guest says something completely ridiculous, and your response is simply an extreme closeup where the only thing in view is your expression of pure disbelief. I wonder if your guests feel the same sense of impending disaster. But disaster never comes. Your guests survive the discomfort, and so do your viewers.

Comedy is a surprisingly fitting way into a conversation about race; it breeds new discussions, ones that feel safe. There's something disarming about overlaying a serious and candid conversation about race with comedic relief. Your show has helped me better scrutinize my own biases and behaviors while also forgoing the notion that I will always possess the "right" answer and not let that deter me from participating in the conversation. I always assumed these conversations needed to occur in a particular way. However, after seeing your show, I found that the only constant in a productive conversation is honesty, because as you examine, "Honesty is how we'll heal."<sup>7</sup>

In solidarity Alicia Jones

Dear Ziwe,

This past summer, a friend shared an episode of *Baited* with Ziwe.<sup>5</sup> It made me laugh with nervous discomfort and cringe beyond belief. But more than that, it felt sincere in a way other comedies had not. At the time, I was living in Calistoga, California, a little Napa County bubble. There wasn't much activity in terms of activism. There were a handful of "Black Lives Matter" signs and perhaps a small group of protestors on the main street one day in the middle of the afternoon. However, for the most part, it was as if nothing had happened. Nothing disrupted.

In this bubble, I focused a great deal of energy that summer learning; learning about Black history, learning about oppressive housing regulations, learning about systemic racism. I believe I'm not alone in wanting to be equipped with knowledge. Perhaps I hoped my education would help in some way to ward off any remotely racist thoughts and relieve me of my implicit biases. But looking at whiteness or privilege as a whole makes it challenging to carve out personal experiences and prejudices. It is difficult to see yourself lumped together with the overtly racist. It requires taking an honest inventory of your discriminatory thoughts and behaviors. I believe a lot of your work allows us to tap into those personal flaws and ask the questions that get at the heart of those flaws. I see this most prominently in your livestream interviews with famously canceled celebrities.

In June, you aired an interview with Caroline Calloway, an American influencer who was famously canceled for hosting a series of over-priced "creativity workshops," which capitalized on her privilege and were ultimately deemed a scam. You opened the conversation with the question, "You discovered racism in 2018. What were you doing for the first twenty-five years of your life?" A hard hitter right out of the gate. Calloway is visibly uncomfortable but explains herself. You immediately thank her for a thoughtful answer. It was a response I wasn't anticipating. I expected a harsher rebuttal that might further garner criticism against her, but I then understood your guests aren't the punchline. This show is not about chastising people nor humiliating them for being ignorant; it's about healing and realizing their own unconscious bias through a commedic lens.

While your show is not about scolding your guests, you're not shy about calling out their ignorance. When discussing Calloway's promotion of Black literature via Instagram, Calloway mentions each book she purchased



Solidarity work is a lifelong undertaking. If there's one thing we've learned from a year of attending protests and engaging in self-reflection, it's that there is no one lane for allyship. Yet, in our efforts – as students, designers, and human beings – to be politically engaged, many of us have turned to community leaders and organizers for guidance. This issue of Paprika!, "In Solidarity," called for reflections on activist practices that transcend perceived disciplinary boundaries. We asked contributors to write a letter to someone, living or dead, whose activism has meaningfully impacted their lives. Other interlocutors were asked to provide definitions for the terms "allyship," "advocacy," and "housekeeping" as they relate to solidarity work. In collecting these open letters and definitions, we hope to have built a shared platform and archival record of solidarity methodologies that have inspired our community in and beyond YSoA. Exceeding our initial ambitions for the issue, our contributors have offered insightful responses to the following questions: What roles can architects, historians, archivists and theorists play in the cultivation of political alliances and mutual aid? What stories and spaces can be reclaimed in doing this work? The result is no one definition, no one theory of solidarity work, but a multiplicity of proposals and continuous practices.

Issue 06-04: In Solidarity, Issue Editors: Mary Carole Overholt, Laura Pappalardo and Limy Fabiana Rocha

Graphic Designers: Ana Lobo and Anežka Minaříková

Coordinating Editors: Alex Kim, Audrey Tseng Fischer, Brian Orser, Hannah Mayer Baydoun

Archivists: Joshua Tan and Timothy Wong

To a friend,

"I do not believe our wants have made all our lies holv."

Do you remember sending me those words in late August, after a summer of correspondence on the nature of art and grace? You took a photo of the poem "Between Ourselves" by Audre Lorde and cropped it so only three lines were visible. I copied down the words and taped them to the wall above my desk. When I first learned to read poetry, I read for beauty, or more exactly, to feel beauty resonate in the everyday. The measure of a good poem, I felt, was just that: a beauty that makes itself known in an economy of words. This letter is to thank you for helping me know that poems are more than beauty - that poems can be care work, resistance work.

The proud reader in me wants to insist that I've seen this all along; that Lorde and Rich and Anzaldúa have always moved me, that the idea of poetry has always been inscribed in the idea of struggle. But seeing and knowing are not the same, and I know this thanks to your generosity with words. Balwin: "Writing is a political instrument." Of course it is. We tell each other this in shared verses, sometimes (shyly) sharing our own. You sent me your poem about un-living beginnings, and I think of your words often when I think about pride, about learning to read with in-

Publishers: David Keim, Morgan Ann Kerber, and Jessica Jie Zhou

Publish Date: Oct

29,2020

tention. More often than not, to grow into new ways of reading and knowing demands un-living our past.

We know, too, how the violence of aestheticizing struggle is always present. We study "the arts" (I use scare quotes less because I am being facetious, and more because who knows what that means, least of all you and me) and we, as students and kinda-maybe scholars, pride ourselves on our awareness of that violence. We live in the world of images first, words second, actions and emotions farther down the list. You have helped me learn that to see is not enough, to name is not enough, to document and demonstrate an alternative hardly matters: if we are to read poems today, to send each other photos of these words and debate meter and syntax, we have to learn to live through what we see. Naming the violence of the spectator (we met, after all, reading Azoulay) in this public letter to you is not enough.

Diane di Prima: "A lack of faith is simply a lack of courage." You have helped me find the courage to do whatever the opposite of suspending disbelief is, to read for more than beauty: read for potency, read for viscerality, read for truth to power, read to fight. Read to see, read to know, read to recognize where the lies are hidden by the wants.

In solidarity, Holly Bushman

## Dear May Ayim, Dear Audre Lorde, Dear Us:

The creative task at hand - to address a letter to someone or something – is impossible for a black feminist communist. Our ontological totality (à la Cedric Robinson), and the preservation of our collective being (Avery Gordon) is the revolutionary consciousness we inherit. Plural pronouns, here, signify the same "us" summoned by Toni Morrison: "I think about us, black women, a lot." How might we nourish this togetherness and its radical possibilities? Meditating on the transnational sisterhood and critical housekeeping of May Ayim, Audre Lorde, and their legacies is one such method.

Morrison, when eulogizing James Baldwin, says it best: "you knew, didn't you, how I needed your language and the mind that formed it? How I relied on your fierce courage to tame wildernesses for me?"<sup>2</sup>You -May, Audre, and we - are the blueprint for a communist party (Joshua Chambers-Letson).

The recipe is as follows: poetics, dancing, third world solidarity, sunshine, colorful living.

Audre, I understand why you, like Baldwin, sought an elsewhere – you found May, and with her, a home in a movement. The work of *housekeeping* and all its racialized and gendered contradictions were central to your life. In Zami (1982), you detail memories of your Caribbean immigrant mother painstakingly making food last during the insecurity of the Great Depression in New York City. In 1981, while lecturing at the National Women's Studies Association in Connecticut, you told another story of domesticity: a little white girl yells, "Oh look, Mommy, a baby maid!" to your two-year-old daughter as you wheeled her through an Eastchester supermarket.<sup>3</sup> Domesticity is fraught for Black women; however, we know that the domestic sphere (and the care work performed there) can be a source of resistance – Angela Davis taught us this in "The Role of the Black Woman in the Community of Slaves" (1971).

May, I fell apart the first time I was introduced to your work, years ago, at Lichtblick-Kino Berlin,

where I viewed Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years, 1984-1992 for the first time. Ironically, it is that film that cemented my understanding that Lorde was not the American savior of Afro-German women – you were there, with your sisters and community, cultivating a rebellious consciousness. It was simply Audre's tenacious ability to bring us closer to one another that energized you to publish the first Afro-German feminist text in 1986.

The story goes like this: you, Audre, visit Berlin for the first time in 1984. You write poetry, commune, cry, dance, and laugh with Afro-German lesbians and feminists. It takes just a couple of years for you, with Katharina Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz, to publish Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out. Beyond the literary treasures you left us, you illustrated the political possibilities of what other feminist activists refer to as housekeeping the maintenance work done to sustain a movement. I imagine this is what you mean, Audre, when you declare that "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Your friendship not only kept you alive while you were suffering - Audre from breast cancer, May from depression – but also started a movement. The black lesbian feminist transnational origins of the Afro-German movement of the 20th century, as such, necessitated a practice of joy, care, and togetherness. This exceeds and resists masculinist notions of political activism being legible to the state in essentialist ways - housekeeping includes care work, friendship, and communion as necessary components of revolution.

When I think of housekeeping, I remember you -Audre's narratives of domesticity, her insistence on joy and care in movement-building, and the home you found in each other. I cherish your writing, May, about being a black woman attempting to belong despite the post-WWII German national imagination that erases Afro-German existence. If it is true, as Audre believed, that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," then we must build and keep our own house. $^4$ 

In solidarity, Alexandra M. Thomas

## Interview with Rafael Soldi from Strange Fire Collective

The Strange Fire Collective is a group of interdisciplinary artists, curaa venue for work that critically questions the dominant social hierarchy and [is] dedicated to highlighting work made by women, people of color, and queer and trans artists." The "In Solidarity," editorial team had the IS: I think you've already mentioned it briefly, but part of the mis $and\ a\ Seattle-based\ photographer\ and\ curator.$ 

In Solidarity, Editorial Team: Thank you so much for taking time to speak with us today. Rafael, we wondered if you could tell us a little bit about your trajectory as a photographer and how you became a founding member of the Strange Fire Collective.

Rafael Soldi: Thanks for having us, we're excited to talk with you. I was born and raised in Peru and I moved to the U.S. as a teenager. For as long as I can remember, being an artist was the only thing that I could really see myself doing. I went to school in Baltimore at the Maryland Institute College of Art and worked in New York before moving to Seattle, which is where I live now. I've been here working as an artist and as a curator. About five years ago, I was approached by Jess T. Dugan about creating some kind of project that would contribute to an art world that represents who we are and that stands for the values that we stand for. We saw an art world that's primarily white, that's primarily male-driven, that's primarily cis and heteronormative. We wanted to create a space for ourselves that represented us, and that's how Strange Fire Collective was born. I think a big part of the collective, and why it has worked so well, was because we wanted it to be something we were passionate about, that was appealing to us, and what we would have liked to see as young artists.

Jess invited me, Zora Murff who is an artist based in Arkansas, and Hamidah Glasgow who is the curator at the Center for Fine Art Photography in Fort Collins, Colorado. Ever since, we have added two coordinators to the group who've been helping us with a lot of logistics and doing really fantastic work and creating new content as well: InHae Yap, and Keavy Handley-Bryrne. The collective has really progressed over the years and taken on a life of its own. The primary activity of the collective is the weekly interviews-we produce one in-depth interview every Thursday of every month for the last five years.

So far we have nearly 250 interviews. For us, it was really important to find a core activity for the collective that was sustainable. All four of us are very busy, very engaged people in our own lives. And we knew that we needed to come up with a straightforward deliverable and that it needed to be something that we could all handle without dropping the ball. So there's four of us, there's four weeks of the month, and we each do one interview per month.

IS: What is it like working with partners that are kind of all over the country? I imagine that your work took you all over the globe in a pre-pandemic world.

RS: It's been really interesting. I think, especially now during the pandemic, because we were already working in the ways that most people are working today. We had a program recently at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design where we gave a lecture and people were really surprised to hear that that was only the second time we had all been in a room together. So we've been working virtually and on the phone for a long time, and it's worked really well. A big part of that has been because we came up with a manifesto that we all agreed on and that guides our work. We came up with a structure that we all feel we can deliver and that we can sustain and hold each other accountable

We have created an environment in which we trust each other to do the work, and a set of values that we rally around and are each personally really committed to. I think that's what sustains the work long-term, even though we're not in the same room. And then within that, we started the collective in a very democratic way, in that we would all vote on everything. We would all agree



on everything. And we would disagree oftentimes, but you know, we would come to an understanding.

And finally, in the last few years, we've learned to give each other a little more independence and each of us has something aside from the work that we rally around together. Each of us has taken on projects that we're passionate about within the collective and tors, and writers engaging with current social and political forces through have spearheaded, and that's been much more productive because their work. Formed in 2015, the Strange Fire Collective seeks to "create" you can't have four people working on everything all the time. It just takes a lot of time.

pleasure of interviewing Rafael Soldi, one of four Strange Fire co-founders sion that you all are coalescing around is to highlight work produced by women, people of color, queer, and trans artists. Can you say more about the importance of intersectionality to your work?

> RS: Yeah, it's huge. It's always interesting because we use those words very clearly to define the spectrum of people that we work with. But we're being specific because it's important for us to call out those identities loudly and clearly, even though we're not really interested in indexing people into categories. Intersectionality is at the core of what we do; I would say most of the people that we work with fall under more than one of those categories. And oftentimes, all of those things connect in really interesting ways. So, intersectionality is incredibly important and it's really at the core of what we do in connecting all these identities. We started this collective to show the world that it's a lot more complex than what we've been seeing on the surface.

> IS: In doing these interviews and amplifying all of these different artistic practices, I'm wondering how you start to build solidarity across folks of different identity categories. How do you see that kind of communication happening through the sharing of artistic practice particularly?

RS: Absolutely. I think that art is particularly well equipped to do that work and that the reason, or one of the reasons art  $ext{exists} - ext{Nina}$ Simone said, "An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times." I've always identified with that quote because I think that artists have always held a mirror to the horrors, joys, beauty, and injustice in the world

Art is an incredible window through which to see the world. A good example of how we've used the collective to address these themes in an intersectional way, is that when we gave our talk at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, we did a pretty deep audit of the collective to understand what are the themes that are showing up in our work? What are the things that the artists were engaging with and looking at? There were many – maybe 10 or so. And we zeroed in on three themes that we found really important: Policing bodies, Here & Now, and Access to power.

We presented four or five different artists who were engaging with each of those themes in completely different ways, completely different mediums, from different perspectives. I thought that was really great because we did want to show how Strange Fire could be a very useful teaching tool as well. And to be able to say, are you talking about gender? Are you talking about blackness? Are you talking about any of these themes? Here's five perspectives from five artists who are looking at it from really different points of view, from very different experiences, age groups, countries, and how they're engaging with it through different mediums. So I think that's where the collective can offer an intersectional perspective on certain topics by way of its growing archive.

IS: One other way we've been thinking about your work at Strange Fire Collective is as an archival project or an archival institution. In some ways, over these five years, you all have developed this really incredible and deep archive of interviews. I'm curious about how you and the collective relate to this idea of the archive, whether you think there's such a thing as archival activism, and if so, what that might mean to you?

RS: We often speak of Strange Fire in archival terms: we consider ourselves as building a new archive. That being said, we have had conversations and we're really aware of the fact that the "capital-A" archive as we know it is the purest expression of colonial intervention. So it is really important for us to both recognize that, and then become part of a new archive or a larger kind of microcosm of archives that are being created in different places, and that tell a new story or perhaps a more accurate history. The archive as it is, is very corrupted. How do we infiltrate that? How do we create something new?

At the same time we have had conversations, for example, when we ask how to make our website more searchable? How do we categorize things? How do we put our educational resources into sections that make sense for people? And understanding too, that that system of indexing, of naming things, also has a colonial past. It's a really tricky thing and I don't think we can necessarily escape it, but you can question it.

IS: I recently watched a really interesting panel discussion called lemic: Intimacy, Disease, & the Politics "How to have Sex in a of Vulnerability," hosted by New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. It was a really lovely discussion amongst a group of queer theorists. One of the panelists said something that I jotted down in between cooking my dinner: "allyship is a form of kinship." I just loved that quote and I think there is some connection here to Strange Fire's work. What do you think the role of non-biological kinship or kin-making is within the Strange Fire Collective?

RS: It's a big one. I mean, I think it's why we came together. I would say at the time we formed the collective, the four of us - Zora, Hamidah, Jess, and myself-were, I wouldn't say strangers to one another, but we weren't very close. We knew of each other's work, and I think a few of us hadn't met before. But what brought us together was this kinship around issues that were really important to us. Strange Fire itself is a reflection of that notion: that kinship around issues that are important to you, or things that you're passionate about, that you connect to on a deeper level, can create something really meaningful.

For us, for example, we always talk about this Strange Fire Family. Anyone we feature is immediately a part of this Strange Fire Family. Anytime we curate a show or do any kind of programming, we always pull from within the archive because we have 250 people ready at any time, and it keeps growing. And when we see any of our Strange Fire featured artists or curators doing something cool, then that gets amplified, that gets celebrated. So that type of kinship is really important for me personally.

I would say queerness is probably the identity that carries the most weight within me. I've always felt a really strong kinship with other queer artists, even those whom I don't know well. I've always felt that there's a shared experience that carries a lot of weight within our identities.

IS: For this issue, part of the work we're doing as editors is soliciting letters to activists, but another part is to crowdsource different definitions for allyship, advocacy, and housekeeping as they relate to solidarity work.

Interestingly, two of my colleagues on the editorial team for this issue are from different lingual backgrounds: Limy is a Spanish speaker and Laura is a Portuguese speaker. In gathering these definitions, we've already come upon some interesting issues regarding translation. For example, advocacy doesn't have a direct translation in Spanish and Portuguese. So we end up having this multiplicity of definitions that are very tangential or personal – not coming from Merriam Webster. We were wondering if you would share your own definition for one or several of these terms.

