Quilting from My Bed: A Neurodivergent Pandemic Story
March 2020-January 2022
Susan Naomi Bernstein Queens New York

March-April 2020 Beginnings

March-April

I taught speeches by James Baldwin and Martin Luther King to first-year college writing students, pivoting from face-to-face classrooms to remote learning. I began the quilt,and the quilt draft became background for remote teaching and learning.

Image Description: A collection of black, pink, blue, white and purple thread spools on a floral bedspread. At the left is a red pin cushion with one needle sticking out of it.



Image Description: A piece of chevron shaped fiber art on a deep blue bedspread printed with tan flowers. The fiber art is made of tan pieces of fabric sewn together, joined in the center by a vertical row of tan buttons. At the top left is a piece of masking tape with #StayAtHome written on it. At the top right the fabric is patterned with darker threads, including a shape that looks like a leaf. Below is a patch with a pig. At the bottom left and right are dark brown flowers.



May-June 2020 Anxiety

May

I coordinated my dad's 90th remote birthday party. George Floyd was murdered two days later in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I was unvaccinated. I could protest only from my bed.
June #BlackLiveMatter protests continue. The quilt draft was in disarray. I made a map of the draft of the quilt and tried to write. I could not write. Eventually, after 90 days in quarantine, my partner and I emerged from lockdown. See "Emerging" https://youtu.be/EZxj_QJpOiE (YouTube video)

Image Description: Squares of fabric on the same dark blue printed bedspread. The square of fabric are outlined in bright orange, purple,

green, red, yellow, blue, gray, white and black lines drawn on with a computer program.

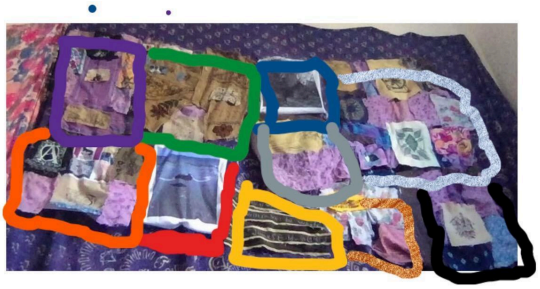
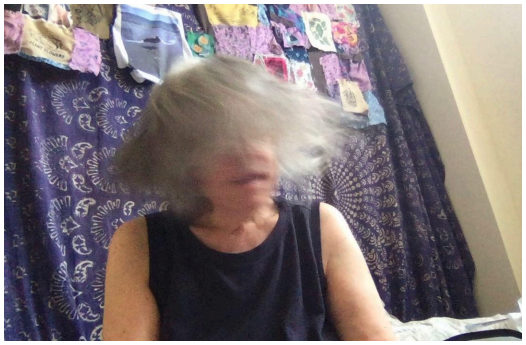


Image Description (provided by Susan Naomie Bernstein): Sitting on my bed, I shake my head so that my gray hair appears in motion and covers most of my face, showing only the nose and mouth of an older white person. Behind my head is a blue and gold tapestry on which various quilt pieces loosely pinned.



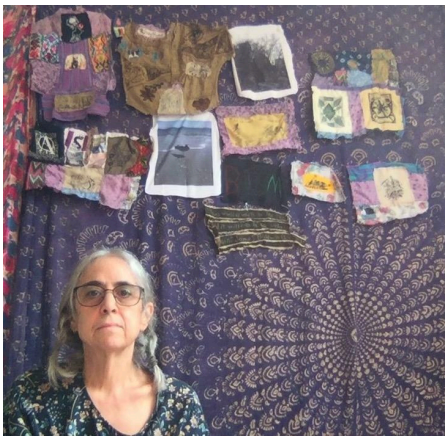
July 2020 Persistence

July

I co-founded and co-facilitated an antiracism reading group (ongoing in January 2023).
I returned to quilting from my bed.

Image Description (provided by Susan Naomi Bernstein): I sit against the blue and gold tapestry with the quilt pieces more noticeable above my head. My face is fully visible and wears a determined expression. My hair is

in two loose braid that reach my shoulders. I am wearing glasses and a blue flowered shirt.



August-December 2020 Precarity

September

Quilting continued. I began the first full semester of teaching remote sections of First-Year College Writing. See "Beyond Zoom Fatigue, or Why I Asked for Accommodations." https://community.macmillanlearning.com/t5/bits-blog/beyond-zoom-fatigue-or-why-i-asked-for-accommodations/ba-p/13157 (Blog Post for Bits Blog Macmillan Community)

October

My partner's surprise 70th birthday party was hosted remotely.

December

I thought the quilt was finished. My dad came down with Covid 19. I managed his care from my bed.

Image Description: Squares of multi-coloured fabric, mostly purples, pinks and browns. They make a rectangle and are bordered by dark reddy brown patterned fabric. The rectangle, the quilt, rests on white bed sheets.



Image Description (provided by Susan Naomi Bernstein): Wearing a black fleece jacket over a blue tunic, I sit in front of an apparently finished version of the quilt pinned to the blue tapestry. To the left of my head, a white star is pinned to a smaller blue, pink, and white tapestry. My hair is loosely pulled back and my face shows the beginnings of a smile.



January 2021-December 2021 Grief

January

My dad died on January 6, 2021 at the same time the insurrection was beginning in Washington D. C. From bed. I planned my dad's funeral and, several days later, watched the funeral on the mortuary's Facebook livestream. Shortly after my dad's funeral, I got my first vaccine and a new president was inaugurated in Washington D.C. See "The Body Cannot Sustain an Insurrection," poem/reflection at http://journalofmultimodalrhetorics.com/6-2-dieterle-and-berry *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics 6.2.*

February

I continued teaching from bed. My partner received his first vaccine.

March

Our cat swallowed a piece of fabric and almost died. He was isolated through the beginning of April and eventually recovered.

August

I realized that the quilt needed to be revised. I added the patch: "Write everywhere."

October

My partner and I received our first booster shots.

November

The quilt still seemed unfinished. I added a quote from James Baldwin, "All safety is an illusion."

Image Description: The quilt, now without the reddy brown border, hangs on a white wall. Hanging from the bottom, a square of white fabric,

bordered with black. On the white square black letters spell out ‘All safety is an illusion, James Baldwin 1962’.



January 2022 Movement

January

I was still teaching remote first-year writing from my bedroom, but I decided to teach from a makeshift desk near the window where the light was better. The quilt was complete, at least for now. For my last Covid-19 pandemic semester of remote teaching, I hung the quilt on the window frame to use as a background on Zoom.

Image Description (Provided by Susan Naomi Bernstein): Wearing a purple shirt and white earbuds with hair tightly pulled back and a serious expression, I am sitting in front of the finished quilt. The quilt is on the lower half of a closed window, with a dark gray panel underneath the quilt. Books sit on the window ledge next to an off-white painted wall.



Credits

Fabric and patches

Liminal Spaces Shop	Manitoba, Canada
Occupy Wall Street Screenprinters Cooperative	New York City
Microcosm Publishing	Portland, Oregon
Housing Works	New York City
Goodwill	Tempe, Arizona
Philadelphia Printworks	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friends	Everywhere

Related Multimedia Created from My Bed

Emerging
Beyond Zoom Fatigue, or Why I Asked for Accommodations
The Body Cannot Sustain an Insurrection

Gratitude

James Baldwin for Inspiration
Steve Cormany for wisdom
Sarah Mangle for email art prompts

This is not the original version collected for the archive. This version has been formatted to add image descriptions and add headings to make the document's content accessible for screen-readers. The original document can be requested from the archive by [eventually we'll insert the proper protocol].