

Meaningful Work Dialogue notes

Check-in

I long for the permission not to find meaningful work – that I'm not a success if I don't have that. I'm aware of the contradiction. I think ultimately nobody should have to do mind numbing work. But the idea that there is something wrong with us if our work is not meaningful, really rubs me the wrong way.

When I had a shop, I never wanted to take responsibility for. I wanted to end it, but it was hard. Looking back I could have really enjoyed. I didn't see it as meaningful work, because I see that trade was low.

Problematic advocacy work: There is a very clear delineation of largely white women advocates and folks who are experiencing poverty and hunger who are people of color at my work. I feel really fake most of the time, i don't know how to do work in this area in a helpful and respectful way.

Come from a poor and working class background, and then did an education jump, My parents work in trade, I feel there is something wrong about what I do now. I work with poor people, not where I live. Its soul crushing at the moment. My partner is in the same space. We are both thinking about changes towards trades – elevator repair or post-office. These are the only things that seem reasonable. Part of me thinks- someone is going to be in this buffer position and its better that they are critical. And another part of me thinks that is bullshit. No matter what I do its problematic. Also stuck with leaving the community I've been in for 5 years.

It was a moment of major cultural betrayal to my family when I switched from an academic career that would have earned money to a social one. I grapple with feelings of, what am I doing here? What am i doing. Even if I was doing my job really well, there is only so far that I push 2nd graders towards a post-colonial framework of everything. Beyond that have been thinking a lot about the non-profit where I work and community based organizations. The way in which the work that I do, could render other projects anemic if I do it really well. The third thing is that I'm not metabolically equipped to deal with 2nd graders for more than a few hours. Labor becomes this ephemeral disembodied joy parade.

I'm not feeling as totally lost as I have in the last years. I don't think I would feel as comfortable as I am now at the bottom rung of an organization led by people of color. I'm

interested in the idea of what is work. Is there a way to do the hustle, and do work with community in transformative relationships. Or actively try to recreate that script. I don't think there is any institutions that isn't fucked by capitalism. Non-profits are in that boat as well. Cooperatives are really exciting.

My work is a joy parade for the students I work with, and the Do What You Love article hit me really hard in terms of naming a bunch of things. That term (type of teacher) is disempowering – side dish, not whole. A while back, it was the minority of teachers. The bittersweetness of heaven on earth pedagogy, and being super exploited... It makes it possible to extract maximum value from me at minimum cost. How about work be work – so when you are not working you are not working. The housewives of higher education is a new term that really hit me.

Come from a family of hippies saving the world and produced children who they wanted to save the world for them, all siblings do amazing work. I'm a consultant and able to earn a high wage, yet so many hours are unbillable, that ive never earned so little but it seems like im living the dream. Now added pressure of my partner not wanting to re-enter the workforce, daily conversations of how to support each other's dreams, not possible to both do this and have a kid. The DWYL is so ingrained. My uncle was a public transportation operator, and he loves his work and never wanted to do anything else, and i've wondered how it would be. Activism is taking a huge toll on my health and my life, and it's what ive worked towards. Big paradigm shift needed.

Confusion comes from my bi-continental life, and working under the table, aware of skin privilege, and feeling like what is it more legitimate when someone gives me a piece of paper work permit. In Europe was a part of squatter communities, and would work all day, growing food and no bills and not being paid a penny, and i miss that. Now therapist, enough to pay my bills. Dream to teach internationally, yet worried about limbo. As a white immigrant, unsure how to navigate race dynamics in private practice and the therapy realm in general.

More of my work is unpaid life, taking care of kids and elderly grandmother. As i struggle to find feminists who engage this, still hard to walk with this in the world. Thought we'd have co-ops with other moms, but people are too spent, people work too hard. In a privileged position which can be isolating.

Therapist in training, i'm just getting into this mental health system. Concerned about what kind of larger effect can have on system, or what it's like working in a fucked up system. I enjoy connecting with people, and there are relationships we can have that are supportive, but if the larger things around those relationships are not changing, what is this. What does

it mean to practice therapy that invites questions of difference, what does integrity mean in this context? It feels powerful when people do open up about that. Something in there feels important to allow that to come into the relationship, having naming of system being part of the work. Unpaid internships on way to licensure, supporting myself doing childcare. Feels disjointed.

Work in private for profit sector. It feels like an experiment, learning about life in this universe. 40 hours a week, go home from work and folks not caring so much what's going on. Computer work feels meditative. My cubicle felt like one place that was stable and settled, when i was in between living situations. Used to teach, and work in non-profits. Hated being a teacher and the education system – no love from me. If i have kids, don't want them to go to school – see parents who panic when their kids reach 4 or 5. I work, and feel freedom to do what i want in my off-time. So new, to get off at 4:30 and do other things. When i did community work, it was always on my mind. Liberating experience.

Ive been on of those buffer zone white ladies for the last 15 years, working in foster home service. I live with significant fatigue disability, mental and physical, which has impacted my decisions about work. I knew from early age i wanted to do social work, which feels like the right match. I am sad that it is constructed the way its constructed, the corporate models. Frustrated ambition, have finally starting to be able t be engaged in more systemic work and restorative justice. Growing up working poor, family was into education. As year ago by, i see the little healing that can happen, everyday, with other service providers. Seeing connections of little and big healing.

Reading The Problem with Work, loving it. Why is work the way it is, how can we think differently about work, and why we work so much. Work with food justice non-profit, has been hardest thing i've ever done. Feeling better that now negotiated 50%. Went to Sacramento to rally with All of Us or None, then made loquat jam with a friend – amazing to have more time to do what want. Looking at whole life expenses, how to cut to be able to continue at half time. Working less is better than working more.

Taking a TO break. Make a shape that represents our worst moments at work. Then make a shape that represents you when you feel the most joy. How do we imagine a shift from one to the other?

Brings up guilt – is it liberating to move towards what I love, or betrayal to the movement. What is the privilege to make that shift?

Thinking about the socialization to focus on me/me/me or everyone else – female socialization to stay accountable to and take care of others leads to guilt when I imagine doing work I love. Shape of the guilt using TO – carrying baggage.

Been doing two jobs for 6 months because boss was gone. Struggled with saying something. If in a field without enough resources, do I have a right to complain about not getting enough resources for me?

Reference Jill Abramson who was fired for complaining because she wasn't making the same as her male predecessor. We still have to fight for it, and are still on the edge and can be fired for it.

Work as a way to deal with our anxiety about getting into heaven – translated now into secular manifestation of trying to absolve ourselves. Feeling constrained by system that doesn't allow us to work with our ideals. If we pour all our energy into reform, we will never really get anywhere. Thinking about quote “dance like no one is watching” transformed into “work like god is watching” –

Socialization to undervalue our contributions. Give as much as I can.

Recent realization that if the work I am doing is not impactful, leads to guilt.

Nonprofit pressure to deliver productivity.

We forget how much power we have. What if all the social workers in SF held hands in a circle around Twitter to raise awareness about tax breaks and cuts to service funding? Etc etc

Applying prison abolition logic to capitalism. Never make a reform that will build up something that we will later have to tear down. Ideas for abolition reforms to capitalism: universal income.

Thinking about times that students were set on fire, etc.

Thinking about burnout due to not enough compensation. Feeling exploited, insecure. Institutional drain bleeding into a boundary-less-ness. Endlessly available, in a really present way.

We are all concerned about racial justice and know this country is built on racism and exploitation to build the country. Anything that was created can be dismantled, but exploitation is deep in our history and it's been a long time since work was optional/joyful. Entrenched in psyche. Standing on the shoulders of something that has already been dreamt.

We need to shut the system down. But the consequences are real pain, and those who have felt the most oppression will feel revolutionary acts the most.

Yesterday was anniversary of President ?Johnson? speech that was calling in a future that would develop industry in a way to allow nobody (really nobody) to work. The industrial vision he harkened are here to reduce necessary labor (aside from raising children). Was a non-feminist view of labor, which meant it wasn't an accurate view of labor. Promises up until 50 years that we would soon work less. How does planned obsolescence play in? There are enough resources on earth, they are just not distributed properly. Not as many people would have to labor nearly as much if not for capitalism.

Disrespect for aliveness inherent in today's system. All the aliveness of what humans could be going down the drain because of greed.

Struck by difference between work (as in job) and reclaiming the term work – “real work.” Sovereignty. I'm willing to work hard and be tired from it if it is for something, for reclaiming humanity. We have deep knowledge in our blood of the work that is required to reclaim humanity.

We can perpetuate capitalism in our activism.

Finding the middle ground between being exploited on one end and white supremacist entitlement to see change right now in my work on the other end.

All I want right now is to find a job that doesn't make me actively violate my ethics. Privilege to choose work, but there are no actually that many choices.

White privilege lens – you can assign meaning to any work. Bizarre startup/hipster mentality that disrupts what was ordinary – now glob upperclass values and give it a rustic cut sign and suddenly it has status. Exact same work can have different meanings.

Our world is in a crisis. Everyone should be doing everything they can to change that. We are in the US, in the Bay Area, we have more access to resources than anyone else.

Movement needs you when you are no longer needed.

Easy to feel demoralized because that's what capitalism does. How can we reclaim our efficacy in every action? This will help us re-energize. We need to remind each other about each other's resilience. Build community. Create comrades. Those are moments of healing.

Speaking from work in for-profit sector. What if we radicalize the for-profit sector? How can we radicalize workers? For example, got all my coworkers to compost. Active thing to invite you to recognize that you hate your job. And it's possible to have a great day.

I don't want to work with people who have something to lose or something to prove. Can't take risks because you're too afraid? I recognize this is privilege, but I celebrate a pink slip if it was because I stood up for something.

Struck by how many of us work for someone else, not for self. Such a different perspective. Feels free to work for self, and also privileged. Can finally just be happy with what I got. Still concerns about accountability and impact.

Pride in martyrdom. Weird pride in never taking vacations. Very different than in Europe – where 5 weeks vacation is normal. And then guilt about people who get no vacation/sick time. And then there are the people who put all free time into social justice work. Based on a very narrow vision of what social justice is. That narrow focus comes from somewhere.

Links with self-worth. People socialized as white females tend towards an addiction to helping people. Need to feel needed, even when it's not true. Would be refreshing to see what kind of work is actually helping.

We put people in boxes based on what they do. Want to be in the "In club of the revolution"

Think about people who get work done, stay connected to self.

Want to learn to be more critical about what work is actually meaningful. Don't know what my role is in the movement.

Take a break for TO – shape our role in the revolution

Next dialogue – trusting ourselves/trust each other/identify barriers/support needed/vision of what would steps look like/have a few folks bring life examples