

THE PRACTICE OF COLLECTIVE SELF-CARE IN TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS

In times of coronavirus (COVID-19), the emergency with which we have to deal with chaos tests the ability to relate to each other. Moments like these can highlight our weaknesses and differences, but, above all, they must enhance relationships for the common good and make us reflect and strengthen our ideals of activism.

During the time that I have been working on the issue of care, it was possible for me to observe that activists perceive this concept from different scopes. For this reason, I invite you to reflect on what collective care may mean in the field of feminist movements, which is often related to the quality of interpersonal relationships cultivated both in one's own movements and in others.

Although we are in a group with one purpose and have common interests, we are unique, with our personalities and singularities, each one with her/their own experiences; which explains why our political positions are also so different, either because we are black and the experience of racism affects to a greater extent black women, or because we have the social privilege of being born white.

The interpersonal relationship is the way we relate to fellow activists, and to this regard, it is important to remember that we are talking about the place where we are because we have the same ideals. Maintaining a good relationship between colleagues is essential for the quality of what we intend to struggle for.

In practice, to be able to have quality relationships, it is necessary to identify and recognize our differences. We shouldn't be in the middle of a "war" of forces amongst ourselves, discussing who speaks the "truth" or who speaks more and better, but facing a struggle against a system. The truth is *the property of corresponding to facts or reality*. Though we may narrate different realities, the reality is yours and will be experienced in different ways by each one of us; within the organizations and groups in which we operate the same phenomenon occurs.

The lack of dialogue due to the existence of "a truth" weakens our relationships and establishes violent practices that arise from the lack of perception of the limits between us. In



many occasions, the way of speaking emits an imposition that comes from a place that does not reflect the collective. Therefore, the need to recognize our differences is essential so that we do not reproduce practices of inequality to which we are subjected on a daily basis.

In this context, in which a virus affects the planet, we are called to look within ourselves and, at the same time, to think and act collectively. Conflict is necessary, as it allows us to understand the differences, but it must serve primarily to strengthen our relationships. Therefore, the idea is not to escape conflict, but to face it, understanding our limits and those of others.

One of the main tools used in activism to identify the needs of those with whom we are fighting for, is listening. Without listening we would not be able to recognize the full dimension of the demands of our political agendas, since behind each campaign, each meeting, each daily confrontation we have, there is a woman with her life story. This is why active listening is so important.

Active listening means to hear carefully to the other's speech, it means being interested in what she/they has to say and focusing only on her/their, giving value to her/their and also to her/their opinion on a certain topic. This must happen between us activists in our daily life. It does not mean that we need to agree, but to respect others, and respect is expressed by the way we react to something that we can often disagree with.

There are many challenges to put into practice collective care, so I invite you to start the search by identifying your feelings and perceiving yourself as part of a whole. It is a time of change, a time that requires transformation, adaptation, reflection and shelter from all of us.

¡Ubuntu! I am because we are!

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