

**Transcript for White Whale event with Hil Malatino for *Side Affects*
(as published on the University of Minnesota Press podcast)**

Halsey: Thank you so much for being here tonight. We are here for a joyous occasion. So I'm going to go ahead and get started with my introduction. So I have personally been really looking forward to hosting Hil Malatino on tour for his latest book *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad* and joining Hil in conversation is Zena Sharman, author of *The Care We Dream of: Liberatory and Transformative Justice Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health*. I know I feel like I wouldn't be able to, you know, give this introduction without acknowledging the state the world is in especially in relationship to transgender individuals and the lives—I've come from a lived experience. So the lives of myself and my trans siblings are facing and the rhetoric going out. So these events are especially important and this literature is very important in informing those of us who are not up to speed and who are actively choosing to believe a rhetoric against our existence. I'm very privileged, grateful to be the host tonight and to pass things over to Hil and Zena in just a second. Just a little bit about myself and White Whale quickly. I'm Halsey, the events coordinator at White Whale Bookstore. White Whale Bookstore is a family-owned independent store located in the Bloomfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Our store motto is, "Conversation, community and culture" and we strive to be a home for book lovers. Our events programming features local, national and international writers and translators, reading, discussing and celebrating literature for all genres and all ages. A few events we think you might be interested in, we're excited to celebrate a new anthology from UGA Press, *The Long Devotion: Poets Writing Motherhood* and joined online by the contributors Zeina Hashem Beck, Joy Katz and Emily Mohn-Slate as well as editors Emily Pérez and Nancy Reddy. It's a great reading. Don't miss it. On Tuesday May 24th at 7:00 p.m. we're thrilled to virtually host William Brewer in

celebration for his latest, *The Red Arrow*. William will be in conversation with Neema Avashia, author of *Another Appalachia: Coming up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*. And you can join us online for that. You can find out more about these events if they're online at whitewhalebookstore.com. Just a few notes on our Zoom settings, you will notice you're not able to turn your cameras on or to turn your mics on and that is just a security precaution that we take. You are only able to message me your host in the chat. So if you have any questions, comments, concerns whether that be about tech things or about bookstore things, I am your go-to. So please feel free to send me a message. And you will have the opportunity to ask our wonderful visitors this evening some questions. So at any point if you have questions, I will be keeping track of all of them in a Word document and moderating the Q&A with a last little bit at the end. Please send me your questions at any time. And then of course take a look at the reactions button. This is a great place to contribute even though we aren't in person. You can use the heart Emoji or the clap Emoji or if you hear something that surprises you, you can always use the wow Emoji. I definitely encourage you to use those, you know, just so that you can interact with the readers and their work. If you would like to send any messages of praise or gratitude to Zena or Hil please feel free to message those to me as well. We do edit down the chat and forward those to our readers so they will be able to hear your praise and comments and gratitude as well. Just what to expect this evening. Once I introduce Zena and Hil I'll turn things over to Zena and then Zena will talk a little about her book and then after Zena is done I'll turn things over to Hil and Hil will talk a little bit about his book and then they will talk to each other about their books and each other's books and then we'll move into the Q&A. I think that's all I have logistically. Now we get to get to the bread and butter of the evening. I get to introduce our two wonderful guests. Oh, I actually switched it around. Hil is reading first and Zena

is reading second. Thank you so much Zena messaged me in the chat. I appreciate you Zena. Thank you so much. I'll introduce the two of them. A little bit about Hil. Hil is assistant professor in the departments of women, gender and sexuality studies and philosophy at Penn State and the author of *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad* from Minnesota 2022. *Trans Care* also from Minnesota published in 2020 and *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence and Intersex Experience*. And a little about Zena. Zena Sharman is a writer, speaker and strategist and LGBTQ plus health advocate, the author of three books including *The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory and Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health*, published by Arsenal Pulp Press in the fall of 2021. Zena edited the Lambda Literary award-winning anthology *The Remedy: Queer and Trans Voices on Health and Health Care*. She's also an engaging speaker who brings her passion for LGBTQ plus health to audiences of health care providers, students and community members at universities and conferences across north America. You can learn more about Zena and her work at zenasharman.com and I'll drop that link in the chat and I'm going to turn things over to Hil.

Hil: Thank you so much for joining us tonight and thank you Halsey for that great introduction. Just to clarify, we're introducing the books myself, then Zena and toggle back to the readings, yes, Zena? Or just do it all at once? Do it all at once. Okay. We'll do it all at once. Thank you all for being here. I wanted to start with just a short land acknowledgment. I teach at Penn State and live in a village outside of Penn State. Penn State is one of the largest land grant institutions in the United States. The main campus I teach at is the ancestral land of is Susquehannock peoples and also several member tribes of the Haudenosaunee confederacy, but because Penn State is such a massive institution, the land sessions that comprise Penn State number over 50 across 16 states and they were expropriated from over 112 tribes. So I want to note that at the outset.

And also thank Zena for doing this event with me. It's like a total dream event. And, yeah, so a little bit to enframe the book, I'll keep this really brief because I know we started a bit late, I wrote *Side Affects* largely because I was really, really sick of dominant discourses regarding the importance of trans inclusion and trans representation. I thought they were extremely limited and mostly tended to tarry with the respectability politics that I remain not a fan of. And the other reason I wrote it is because I thought that just -- and both dominant discourses, mainstream discourses on transness as well as in resistant discourses, I feel like there wasn't enough attention paid to the durability of negative affect at all points during, before, after the transition process, and I also think the temporality of transition and the way we narrate the pre and post is problematic which is part of what I write about in the book. So I wanted to write about the bad feelings that attend trans experience but while working on the book I found it overwhelming so I wrote another book trans care practices to keep myself sort of together as I was spending many hours of my life tracking and meditating on the different forms of negative affect or bad feeling that trans folks experience. So I will stop talking about the book and read a little bit from a chapter on rage. Which I think is appropriate given the political climate in the U.S. in particular. So the chapter is called "Tough Breaks: Trans Rage and the Cultivation of Resilience" and has two epigraphs, the first is from Susan Stryker: "Rage gives me back my body as its own fluid medium" and the second is from my mentor Maria Lugones who passed a couple of years ago, from an essay called, "Hard-to-Handle Anger:" "Rage is equated by dominators with hysteria or insanity." I'll read the first couple pages and we'll get right to Zena. So this section, the first section is called "The Productivity of Rage: The Work of the Break." Pop psychology would have us believe that anger is only a mask for sadness protecting us from feeling the effects of a much deeper woundedness. It has been analyzed within

psychotherapeutic literature as a form of problem anger and countless strategies have been developed in order to help folks therapeutically manage it. It tends to be analyzed in highly individual terms as a problem endemic to individuals to be resolved through a therapeutic relationship at the level of the individual. The few social scientific analyses that theorize rage as a social phenomenon focuses on the way it shapes majoritarian hegemonic forms of subjectivity. That is, they analyze the rage of the privileged. The forms of rage driven by entitlement and characterized by intersections of xenophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia. Anger is within these readings that which protects the subject from experiencing the full psychic impact from trauma. It is a dissimulating mask that deflects attention away from profound hurt. That supports an idea that the subject is inviolable, impenetrable. It is a defense reaction that stands in the way of supposed true healing, a roadblock on the way to recovery. We are told that one of the unfortunate aspects of anger is it's too often coupled with a conviction of moral righteousness that can be utilized to justify all manner of belligerent violence. All kinds of acting out, and acting up. Anger is almost exclusively understood as negative, a negative deleterious emotion that is best worked through and then discarded. The possible resurgence of anger must be guarded against. If it does reemerge it should be prevented, contained we're told. I turn away from dominant articulations of rage and philosophical re-evaluations of supposed negative affect because I seek a different way of interpreting anger, a different mode of understanding the phenomenon of rage. I think contra popular understandings of the effects of rage that it offers a critical resource for minoritized subjects. Engaging in the work of women of color feminists, theorists and trans scholars, activists and artists, this chapter examines how rage is key to the survival of minoritized subjects. It is an energy that propels us toward more possible futures, that encourages us to break those relationships that do not sustain us, that do

not support our flourishing. In other words, I explore how rage is transformative and world building. Not merely a negative affect of force that compromises flourishing and impedes the cultivation of resilience. Thanks. So before Zena starts I just want to reiterate how totally excited I am to be sharing this event with her and also say that from the moment that I began working on I think my first book I was accompanied by her work. Specifically the book *The Remedy*, which recalibrated what I thought might be possible in terms of queer trans health care. Yeah, remaining a constant companion of mine for almost a decade now. I'm not even talking about *Persistence*, the book that came out in 2011 I believe which I'm also a huge fan of. I'm so stoked to hear from you and share this now. So we can hear from you.

Zena: Hil, I just love you, I really do. I'm so happy to be here. So I want to first begin just really by offering another apology for the access fail. I know that we advertised this event as having ASL and CART. There was a captioner and interpreters booked and something happened. They're not here. Just again reaffirming our commitment to posting a captioned recording and a transcript later so folks can have some access which I know is not the same. But just really wanted to anchor into that commitment to putting disability justice into practice. Part of that as well is I'll offer a brief visual image description. I am a person with peachy skin, a white person with curly silver hair and I'm wearing a black headset and cat-eye glasses and hot pink lipstick and you can't see it but my shirt says protect trans kids. I'm showing up to you today from the unceded territories of the Quw'utsun peoples which is on the west coast of Canada. So I'm conscious of being a cis person, someone in a different context that many of you who I know are joining from the states and really thinking about one part of the genocidal colonial history of the lands many of us are on which is that white supremacy in settler

colonialism included the violent imposition of the gender binary on so many Indigenous children as well as murdering and harming them and that we need to really think about the deep interconnectedness of all of these struggles. Honoring where I'm showing up from in all its complexities and my limitations and really grateful to be here to celebrate Hil's work. Hil, your work is such a companion of mine and I think with your work and you offer me different vocabularies of feeling, and truly the only definition of resilience that I like. All the other ones make me a bit mad. Yeah, I really feel like I was so closely traveling with your work through the creation of *The Care We Dream Of*. So it feels really alive and present for me and continues to be. And with that, I'm going to read from an essay, actually Hil, that you read the very, very first iteration of. It shape-shifted a lot but it's a piece from *The Care We Dream Of* which is a book that combines a number of long essays by me with really amazing interviews and contributions from 15 other queer and trans folks from across North America imagining what liberatory and transformative health care might look like. So it's very much an act of radical dreaming. This is called queer alchemy perverting the health system fighting to win. And you'll hear me talk about a mirror in the beginning of this essay and it references a gold mirror made by the artist Lex Non Scripta that has lived in my bedroom for years and has a line from the Queer Nation Manifesto on it. It says "Every time we fuck, we win." My LGBTQ+ health work is motivated by a desire to keep queer and trans people alive in the face of conditions that harm or kill us. I, too, am driven by love, grief, and rage. Still, I sometimes fear I've been lulled into complacency. I notice where I've let the comfort of people who hold power in institutions like universities, medical schools, or hospitals diminish the force of my demands, and my condemnations. Some part of me believed if I asked nicely and didn't ask for more than they could give without ceding power, control, or resources, they would care enough to keep us alive. How often was I wrong?

At what cost to my community? Many of us who work in the field of queer and trans health are also members of the LGBTQ+ community. We live and work in contexts that try to force us to conform and hide the parts of ourselves deemed too unruly, too abnormal, too pathological, too perverted. This conformity becomes both a survival strategy and a means of gaining access to the systems and institutions we are trying to change. Yet as Alisa Bierria wrote on behalf of radical antiviolence organization Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA), “The dissonance of maintaining a real identity and a disguised one creates significant amounts of stress and consumes considerable amounts of precious time and resources that should be spent organizing.” “Assimilate” is a verb; it suggests an active process. Action takes energy. I am learning to remember that “pervert” is a verb, too. Its origins are in Old French and Latin words meaning to undo, destroy, and subvert; to turn, transform, be changed. To pervert something is to alter its course, meaning, or state to distort or corrupt what was originally intended. It’s often used in the negative (“to pervert the course of justice”), but if the system you are trying to change is fundamentally rooted in oppression, should it not be perverted? Disabled Puerto Rican Jewish writer and activist Aurora Levins Morales writes, “It’s worth discovering who your political ancestors are, tracing your genealogies of empowerment.” Today, when I look into that small gold mirror on my altar, I see my face reflected back to me and it reminds me who I am, where I come from, and who I’m accountable to. I feel a kinship with the generations of queer and trans ancestors who loved, fucked, and fought their way toward more liberated futures. I make a practice of thanking those ancestors. I promise to live and work in ways that will offer similar gifts to our descendants. I promise to pervert the system. It’s no coincidence that queer perverts taught me how to take a punch—and how to throw one, how to achieve deep and precise impact without inadvertently damaging the delicate,

breakable places you want to avoid. And the truth is, I want to pummel the systems and institutions killing the queer and trans people I love. I want to punch them into an entirely different shape or make them disappear altogether so we can grow something new in their place. I want to pervert these systems and institutions, to let forth with the full force of the love, grief, and rage that propel me in this work. I want to stop pulling my punches.

Hil: I love that section so much, Zena. It's one of my fave moments of *The Care We Dream Of*.

Zena: Thank you.

Hil: And I'm wondering—well, I was like we should start with perversion. Let's start with perversion.

Zena: Great.

Hil: But I know because we have talked about it before in a meeting that we had a little while ago that you're thinking about critiques of normative familial arrangements, but you're also thinking about what you call in *The Care We Dream Of* family as a technology of survival as well. So I'm wondering—maybe it's a question. But how you're thinking about pervert is a verb in relationship to the family these days.

Zena: Yeah. I mean, I feel like that is a complex and layered question for a number of reasons. Right. Like I mean, part of it is certainly around obviously the terrifying and

violent rhetorics being applied to queer and trans parents and families, you know, like I'm thinking of the groomer language and things like that and the very real fear that many parents I know feel. And of course, all the ways in which whiteness being in this part of my life, you know, comfortably, middle class or more, being nondisabled like insulates my family and me from the kinds of intrusions from the state that could happen in other contexts. And I mention that because something I write about in the book is that I'm in a queer family. I'm coparenting now three kids—we have 5-and-a-half-week-old baby twins and 4-year-old—with three other people in a family structure of our own making. I'm very interested in those kinds of queer kinship practices and like how do we practice this kind of world building now. I'm also taking a short course in family abolition right now. So I've been reading deeply about family abolition in the mornings while my family sleeps. So that has been I think a fascinating juxtaposition and I'm still inside that space of thinking. But I feel like there's a part of me that is very interested in thinking with abolition in the amazing imaginative transformative work that I think is so present in your work as well like how do we imagine alternate possibilities and also engage in pre-figurative practices in the now because I also think as I know you do about the pragmatic realities of care work. Like the complexities of care work. The intensity of care work. And that there is so much care to be given and to be received. So really wanting to be inside that and I mean, the last thing I would say on this and then would love to hear what you think is like also how do we be in a space of deep intergenerational solidarity? At a super practical level, we're raising our kids gender open because we trust our children to tell us who they are. Right. Which means intervening on systems at multiple levels but for me at a deeper level becoming a parent especially in my 40s now has me thinking so much about what does it mean to be in deep and genuine solidarity with children and young people, not just the ones in my house but all of them? You

know, with older adults in a community so impacted by ageism and of course disabled folks because there's so many points of intersection and systemic ageism and ableism that I think really impact the richness of our communities and our ability to work together for change in ways that don't leave people behind. Yeah, really sitting with all of those questions. Definitely more questions than answers but I'm certainly interested in the everyday learning I'm doing in my own house in this work of family making.

Hil: Yeah. I mean I think about this stuff all the time and I actually wanted to run what I'm about to talk about through how you address aging and dying in *The Care We Dream Of*. As you and several other thinkers are talking about what it means to get old and to want to get old as a trans person, a queer person. I think I want to start with an anecdote before getting into this. It has to do with my mother and my mom passed in September of this past year, September of 2021. I won't go into the details of that. We had a complicated relationship. But in the last few months of her life, I got the mockup for *Side Affects* like the cover. And I showed her, she didn't know the title of the book and she looked at the title of the book and she hated the title of the book. And I thought oh, well, it's too late to change it now. So I guess I'll just have to live with this knowledge that my mother hated the title of this book. But what was interesting is she looked at the subtitle and was like "being trans and feeling bad?" and then said "but your transhood hasn't been that bad" and I thought, oh, this is so interesting because it spoke to this massive sort of -- misunderstanding between her and I but also to the things I had never been able to speak with her about in terms of the specificity of depression, anxiety, substance abuse that I very much attached to grappling with what it met to be trans. And I began thinking about that dissonance a lot because to her my transhood seemed to encompass the years I was visibly hormonally transitioning and not the decades

before that or really what was to come after it. And the fact that I was just realizing that this was her conception of not just my transness but transness more broadly as she was passing was poignant to me for many, many different reasons. But one of them had to do with the fact that largely the way the negative affect that I write about has played out in my own personal life is that it had convinced me for a long time that I probably wouldn't get old. Wouldn't be able to get old. And also, I think a lot of the fall-out from the negative affects I discuss in the book - rage, burnout, fatigue, numbness, et cetera - meant that grappling with those took precedence over doing the work of planning for what it would mean to be alive into my 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and hopefully I will be alive into those decades and I think that experience is relatively common and folks who are lucky enough to come into middle age I think as trans or queer often find themselves in a situation where it's like well fuck, I didn't prepare for this at all, and I'm not even sure in terms of infrastructure what I need to do to get ready. Right. For what it means to be old. And that has—that affects the way that the decisions people make around kinship, affects the decisions people make around parenting. But also, the economics of transition means that for so many folks what little money they have has gone into facilitating transition and not towards retirement and not towards being housed and the list can go on and on. Yeah. So there's something about negative affect in transness that really complicates this idea of families and technology of survival while simultaneously the care networks, the care webs that trans people piece together are of course like crucially a part of that technology of survival. So I'm just thinking about all this in relationship to your work. I'll stop there and see what you want to say.

Zena: I mean, as you know, Hil, I have 20 pages of notes on all of your books that I took because I did a read of the new one and a reread of older ones while holding babies in

April. I'm just dropping books everywhere now. I'm saying that because there's like seven different things popping into my mind right now, classic Gemini move, and one of the things I want to offer back to you in a way will feel good and not weird are your own words which is there is a question you ask in *Side Affects* where you say: "How can we think futurity without acquiescing to the narrative lures of optimism, salvation, rebirth, redemption?" And also and I put these together in my notes for today, in *Trans Care*, and you're talking about trans kids here, you say, "I want trans kids to have trans elders to turn to and I want them to have the chance to become trans elders themselves."

Right. And I feel like there's something about the conjoining of those ideas from those two books and thinking about how many people I know are surprised to still be alive, right? And you know, I think in different ways you and I work with negative affect, you know, with the negative as talked about in this book because for me it feels like actually a really rich and vital place to be. It feels like a crucible, you know, in terms of a place transformation can happen. I also am definitely the friend that is like hey, do you have your health care proxy paper organized. Do you have a will? They're not just for rich people. What do you want to happen to your body when you die? How are we going to take care of each other when we get old? Some of that for me I feel like is that method of care, some of it is, like you, I lost my mom as a younger person. She died in 2014 at 66. So I'm seven years out from losing her. I was her caregiver at distance but like the only child of a single mother and that was an incredibly challenging transformative powerful experience that I was like just in the aftermath of when I put together *The Remedy*, like that book, I created it in the two years after she died. And *The Care We Dream Of* is like me years later having done an immense amount of grief work and really being in a different stage, being a parent which I never imagined I would be until I came into the particular family formation that I'm in. Yeah, just to offer like I think there is

something about what you're doing in *Side Affects* and something I find really compelling about like the feelings and states that we are somehow not supposed to think and talk about. Some of which is because they have been rendered unimaginable and some is the like if you say it out loud, it's going to happen, like if you ask someone if they're feeling suicidal, they're going to die by suicide which is like actually the opposite of what is real. Right. Like how do we destigmatize these conversations? Which I mention specifically because I know that there's specific discussion of that in *The Care We Dream Of* in a really practical sort of way. But I'm also thinking about something you write about in *Trans Care* and also in *Side Affects* and I wonder if you can talk about this and explain the concept which is one I needed to sit with to feel like I really understand which is this idea of an infrapolitical ethics of care. And it's this infrapolitics thing that's kind of been hard for my brain to wrap around but then when you explain it in writing, I feel like I get what it looks like in practice. If you can bring that concept to life for folks as you see it in trans communities, I feel like it's really relevant to this moment.

Hil: Yeah. Absolutely. So the like scholar part of my brain wants to make sure that I give the citation.

So the concept of infrapolitics comes from the work of James Scott and a book of his called *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. And he coined the term to think about how so much of the work, you can think of it as care labor, but I think it encompasses other forms of labor as well, that supports the possibilities of what we understand as legible political resistance is work that hasn't historically properly counted as political. So he coins the term infrapolitical to think about all of—in some ways like all of the shit work, all of the checking in with folks that make something like a strike action possible. And for me, thinking about the infrapolitical really has to do with what multiply

marginalized communities do when they're not engaging in public facing resistance work, when they're not planning street protests, when they're not planning strikes. So a lot of that work really is care work. So the infra-political is for me I think a space wherein mutual aid and care labor happens amongst marginalized folks. And it's work that is absolutely necessary for any kind of more intense resistance to happen. So another way of putting it not immediately citing James Scott is to think that infrapolitics is what happens when folks are hanging out and learning each other and becoming intimate with one another, not necessarily sexually but that, too. And it's the work of social reproduction. It's the work that, you know, keeps us alive. And to understand that work is not just an adjunct to political resistance but it's the stuff out of which political resistance is made is the reason why I find that concept so useful. Yeah.

Zena: The part of the book where you talk about infrapolitics and the infrapolitical ethic of care I'm just going to say infra-politics now, because I'm like I totally understand that. But it's in "Tough Breaks," which is the essay that -- the chapter you read from at the beginning of this piece. I love all *Side Affects* and I feel like I have a special love for certain chapters in the book and the way that you engage with rage and transformation but also the notion of breaking, right, and what happens when we break. And I want to just offer again some of the things that I found really potent there and something I've been sitting with as well is like where do trans care and the kinds of care work that is circulating in trans communities, where do they come together with disability justice? Of course, thinking about really important works like *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha who also has a new book coming out this fall, a follow-up called *The Future is Disabled*. But there's this passage in the book where you talk about basically like what happens when people break and you write, "We

associate instability with breaks precisely because of their radical differential of possible aftermaths, precisely because of these high stakes. Breaks scare us, and others, for that reason. But our survival is radically dependent on these others; what happens during and after a break depends on the communal uptake such breaks receive, how they are witnessed and understood. If one breaks—if one keeps breaking—and is met only with criticism, pathology, censure, isolation, or institutionalization, the spectre of suicide looms larger and larger.”. And some of what I feel like you do with that section of the book is challenge the carcerality, the ableism, the sanism that's so often accompanies a break, right, like what happens if someone ends up incarcerated in a psych ward against their consent for example versus the kinds of rich collective care practices that we create in communities. Like the work that I'm sure we have all done to keep loved ones out of psych wards, for example, because that's what they want and need in that moment, which demands a particular kind of community care. So I want to kind of move from that and like invite your reflections on those places in this moment of like heightened carcerality in so many facets of the world and so much need for care and some of the thinking I know you have been doing around the places where we see certain like neoliberal logic showing up around queer and trans health including from within our communities which I know you talked about at the Bluestockings launch and is also something you and I have had salty feelings about for quite some time now. The neoliberal privatization of care by and for our communities which I really don't like. So would love to hear your thoughts on any and all these things.

Hil: Yeah. I mean, you totally nailed it when you framed the thinking about breaks in relationship to practices of keeping folks from being institutionalized because they did not want to be institutionalized and I think that there's a really intricate skill-set that

comes from doing that work. And some of us do it over and over again. So I want to sort of say thank you for just connecting those dots in a way that I don't think is explicit in the text. And also, I mean—how do I want to get into this? I feel like thinking critically about carcerality in relationship to the health system means that we have to think about collective care which of course, what you do is all about doing that. But also it necessitates thinking about what happens to us when we're engaged in that kind of collective care work over years and decades. And also when we need that kind of care work ourselves. So the reciprocity of these forms of collective care in relationship to keeping folks out of carceral systems, keeping folks—because they're safer outside of those systems. So there's something about what you're pointing to in the chapter on rage and on breaking that immediately links to everything I've written about burnout, too. And I want to kind of highlight that connection because I think burnout is one of the prime sites that ascendancy of neoliberal wellness culture has targeted. And consistently offers up these deeply individualized modes of supposedly addressing burnout that don't ever effectively address burnout because what could address burnout is massive structural change. Working less. Right. Having more resources to take care of ourselves and loved ones both energetically financially and time-wise. What am I trying to say? I'm mindful of time. So part of me is like looking at Halsey and saying it's 7:52 and I want to hear from folks in the chat. Let me stop with that - rage and breaking and burnout are what happens when people do collective care labor over long periods of time. Over long durations.

Halsey: So I am going to just start going through some questions in the chat right now. We have three questions just so you can have expectations for what's about to happen. This is actually going off of what you just talked about. So maybe you will have the

opportunity to continue pushing your thoughts out there. But I guess like what, you know, like practical advice do you have for people trying to build specifically like anarchists, like basically going against the hegemonic systems and trying to build collective care systems from the ground up, like what kind of advice do you have for, you know, specifically like trans communities or queer communities or you know just like anarchist communities trying to do that work?

Hil: Yeah. I feel like I often get advice questions and I'm so bad at them because I'm so predisposed to criticality that being like well, here's what to do is not in my nature but I think one of the first things I thought as you were framing the question was to go slowly and consistently check in with the folks you're collaborating with, that you're co-creating spaces and projects with. And also, on the other side of that, right, to let things die when they need to die, when they have run their course. I think oftentimes folks stay committed to projects that become organizations or become nonprofits long after those organizations or collectives are functioning well and sort of serving the purpose they had hoped to serve. So go slow and think about infrastructure carefully and don't institutionalize if you don't need to. Like stay flexible and responsive. Then also, I mean, of course, if you haven't read it, right, read Dean Spade's work on mutual aid and read as much other literature on the origins of that concept and the practice of that concept as it plays out in radical queer and trans spaces as you can to learn lessons there. But Zena the probably better at these questions honestly because Zena is so much more pragmatic than I am.

Zena: I agree with everything you said. I mean, I would say maybe just a couple of other kind of adjacent concrete suggestions like on the Dean Spade piece specifically, I

couldn't—I can't quickly pull up the videos but I can find them and share them on Twitter which is the easiest way to publicly do that. Dean also did a series with the Barnard Center for Research on Women which was a mutual aid capacity building workshop series. My understanding, and I'll double-check this, is that the videos should be available online, I think captioned and with ASL. But it actually goes through specific kind of skills and tools that mutual aid groups would potentially want to look at in terms of that practical skill-building work. I also just left the board of a small, you know, trans-centred nonprofit in the city where I had been living for 20 years which was a community created health center for trans and gender diverse folks that was particularly created at a time when there was much less access to trans health care and especially by community, for community well before informed consent hormone prescription, for example, was the norm. And it was really interesting to be part of that small organization which was run collectively and has been now for a decade and all of the kind of shape-shifting it's done over the years. I would say was a place where I kind of sat with in community with others, the complexities of the nonprofit industrial complex. So the book *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* which is an anthology created by INCITE! women of Color Against Violence is a really important critical history and look at the nonprofit industrial complex as is Mryl Beam's *Gay, Inc.* which looks at that in an LGBTQ context in particular. I say that because I think the thing with nonprofits is they originate in a charity model that was like rich white land barons trying to protect their wealth and follow through on their agendas which included things like eugenics, right, so not really a great model that we want to keep replicating. And of course, I'm sure many of us are or know people who have been destroyed by work in the nonprofit sector. So like just kind of holding to the complexities as you were saying, Hil, of institutionalization piece and the nonprofitization piece and looking at the disability

justice and the work of people like Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha who looks at really practical examples in *Care Work* is such an amazing resource and I think just to also start small. Like I went to a talk on transformative justice that Mia Mingus offered a couple of years ago and pre-pandemic I was in a roomful of people, so it's been a while now, but one of the things she talked about was the idea of actually practicing transformative justice in our lives and intimate relationships. So what does it look like to practice that care in our lives and intimate relationships before we feel like maybe we have to scale and how to know what's already happening in your community. Like if you're a white person like me, being conscious of not like swooping in to solve a problem when perhaps there's already really rich and robust community created solutions that already exist and need to be supported. So I think there's a lot of generative questions.

Halsey: Thank you both so much. I'm going to combine two questions together because I think that they go really well together. The first one is for Hil. You know, this person is asking—this is part one. Knowing about *Side Affects* what would you change about your own transition and what would have made your transition better, smoother, less traumatic and that is in any context you want to address it in. And then the part two is regarding aging as trans and it being one issue that there hasn't even been the beginnings of a visual societal place for us until recently. So you know, in relationship with transitioning and aging, how do you imagine we can occupy that space and occupy ourselves over that elongated period of time?

Hil: Yeah. That's a great question. I think the two are definitely related to one another. And how I'm thinking of responding actually refers back to some of what Zena

mentioned regarding intergenerationality within queer and trans communities. When I think about how my transition could have gone smoother, it's hard for me to answer. There are probably a million ways, right, if the medical industrial system were a little bit better equipped to deal with trans folks than they had been—if it had been the system in the states we encounter now if you're in metropolitan areas where there are at least a handful of folks that operate with an informed consent model. That would have been great when I was a teenager. That would have been great when I was in my 20s but that was not the case in the '90s and early 2000s. At least not for folks who weren't like in New York City or in San Francisco or L.A. And even there, it was spotty and tendentious often. So what this has to do with intergenerationality: I was very, very close with some older radical dykes when I was young and I had like several significant mentors that were like, you know, working class, butch dykes in their 40s and 50s when I was in my early 20s. As I moved through college, as I moved through grad school, some of those older radical dykes were also professors of mine who became academic mentors to me as well as members of my extended queer kinship network. To be totally blunt, some of them were real fucking bad about trans stuff. And this meant that when I was a teenager, my early 20s, I would take baby steps towards transition and be like whoa, am I going to lose this queer kinship network or is my position within these majority sort of radical dyke spaces going to be compromised by transitioning. I was deeply, deeply afraid of that, I think more so than the limited medical access and the gatekeeping around medical access that existed. I mean, what impeded me or was a real roadblock for me was worrying about that acceptance. And yeah, I mean, there's a lot more I can say about that. There's stories. There's gossip. Conflicts and confrontations. It also means I'm much more predisposed now to being generous when there are older nontrans queer folks who aren't as great around trans issues as you

would want them to be. So I think that's really important to note, too, right, that the commitment to queer intergenerationality means that you don't treat folks like that as if they're disposable or as if they're just beyond some sort of pale, that they're not members of potential coalitions, collectives and communities. Sometimes that's easier said than done. I'll stop there because I know we're a little over the hour and I wanted to hear from Zena on this bigger question.

Zena: I just sent a link to Halsey to share in the chat. I think it's a beautiful example. There's a gorgeous project, a collection of photos and interviews with trans and gender nonconforming older adults called *To Survive on this Shore* and it's a collaboration between a photographer, Jess Dugan, and Vanessa Fabbre, who is a researcher and I remember when that project first came out and seen so many people and I write about this in *The Care We Dream Of*, so many people in my circles sharing it and sharing it and the photos are incredible and it's so beautiful to see so many visions of like what in this case trans aging can look like in all its richness and possibilities. Right. I think it's so important again coming back to like the nexus of ageism and ableism that keeps our communities so age segmented. Like if we think about an abolitionist praxis, you know, there's so much thought about abolition around police and prisons. Certainly I was thinking with abolition much more in my work now. And the pandemic has really radicalized me much more around long-term care abolition and abolition of all institutions, all carceral institutions and you know, I think a lot about how—and I understand very much why this work is being done. Like the emphasis on creating like more LGBTQ inclusive nursing homes and I think that is absolutely an awful option for our communities because no one should be in an institution. Like we should deinstitutionalize full stop, right. So I think again, really thinking about these solidarities

and sort of systemic considerations and fighting carcerality in all of the ways that it shows up including in its entanglements with ableism, ageism, of course, with white supremacy, settler colonialism, transphobia, homophobia, all of the things that show up to discipline people's bodies and minds and like tell us that it's not possible to be as we are across the full possible spectrum of what our lives then can be. I think it could be a radical act to reclaim the possibility of aging, you know, and I think many of us don't know how to do that. Like I'm still learning. I'm still learning, like I turn 43 at the end of the month and I specifically was saying to my partner that I want to make my birthday theme this year, which will be a small gathering in my yard because it's still a pandemic, like age fest, and that it's just going to be a celebration of getting older and I don't know what that's going to look like but I'm interested in creating space for my little queer community here and the small community I live in now to think about that together.

Halsey: So we have one last question. And I think it could be even like a quick one. So we have one audience member who is specifically looking for additional resources, like whether that be—they specifically said any literature. So that includes not just like critical theory or like social science writing or research writing but also fiction, poetry, especially that you have read that have helped you think through with trans and queer and negative affect and practices of care especially if they both kind of address—or the literature addresses both of those issues at the same time. And I will be radically dropping links in the chat for people to access these books. So please feel free.

Hil: So I will say a few right off the top of my head. One is T Fleischmann's *Time Is the Thing a Body Moves Through*. I love that book so much. But there's a real attentiveness to the role of negative affect in radical queer collective living that is present in that book

that I think is so beautiful and complex. And then the other is the classic *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* which I think some folks might already be familiar with that are here. It came out of—it's fictional but comes out of the experience of this commune called the Lavender Hill Commune in the late 1970s. It was based outside of Ithaca, New York near where I used to live. So I'm partial to it for so many reasons. But yeah, it's really similar to Fleischmann's work in how it details the role of negative affect and queer collective living and also why queer collective living is so often so difficult and compromised for folks and hard to engage over the long term. Like there's a reason why a lot of these radical back to the land projects from the '70s that queer folks were engaging in are no longer around or if they are, people don't want to keep them going or move to the land it was established and this is leaving aside all the questions about settler coloniality and whether back to the land projects are like a good thing or a desirable move. I think they're not. But that's an aside. So those two off the top of my head. There's so, so many others though. I'm looking at Zena to be like what did you—

Zena: I'm collaboratively unmuting myself. Yeah. I mean, I don't know. Like I read and listen to podcasts and am just kind of constantly sponging information into my brain. Just because it's kind of how I am. I'm not an academic. Like I'm trained, Ph.D.-trained, but left academia on purpose but I really like to think and learn all the time. I mean, I will say I feel like a hugely transformative lineage and ongoing movement and body of thought and practice that has had a foundational impact on my work is really evident in the shift between *The Remedy* and *The Care We Dream Of* in the evolution of my own thinking has been learning from and with disability justice which is a continuing process of learning and a practice. Right. And it's very much a lineage grounded in queer and

trans, Black, Indigenous and people of color, disabled, communities and lineages, people like Patty Berne, like Leroy Moore on the east coast of the U.S.—west coast of the U.S. I just mixed up geography. Oakland is just downstairs from here, I am also on the west coast. I mean things like the Sins Invalid disability justice primer, books like Aurora Levins Morales' *Kindling: Writings On the Body*. Eli Clare's *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* is a really important book for me. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* which I mentioned a couple times. Shayda Kafai has a beautiful recent book called *Crip Kinship* which is all about Sins Invalid and I feel like what those offered me was something similar to in some ways what learning more about police and prison industrial complex abolition has done for me which has enabled me to think so differently about what's possible for solidarities, for systemic transformation, like for the kind of world building that is necessary. And really coming back to a line that I've learned from Sins Invalid which is, "We move together with no body or mind left behind." Right. And really thinking about what would it mean to actually build our movements and our care practices around that kind of commitment and to put that into action.

Hil: I want to add one more recommendation really quick because it was so formative for me and that's Ann Cvetkovich's book *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Which is behind *Side Affects* entirely because in that book she reconceives of depression as fundamentally a collective political phenomenon. So it was like a total game changer.

Halsey: I really—I believe I speak for all of us whenever I say from the bottom of my heart thank you both so much. This did not disappoint. In fact, it exceeded my expectations for what I even hoped to be possible of like the absolute highest point. So you literally just made probably my whole year. So thank you both so much for making

my year for being here with us tonight all the way from the west coast. I do invite everybody to clap react because it is much deserved. And please, everybody, go ahead and get your copy of *Side Affects*. I'm going to go ahead and drop it in the chat one more time. As well get *The Care We Dream Of*, I'm also going to drop that in the chat one more time. Zena and Hil are some writers contributing to a longstanding lineage I think all of us in this Zoom chat care very deeply about and we're just—I'm just very grateful for your scholarship in these ways. Thank you so much. Have—oh, and then—perfect. Zena actually just sent me a super incredible resource for all of you. This is a *Care We Dream Of* reading guide. So that Google doc is in the chat for you. Please go ahead and click on that while it's still there. I'm just going to give you a second to do that. But I hope everybody here has a fabulous rest of your Thursday. Enjoy. I hope that it's spring where you are finally. I know that at some places it's not spring yet. I hope that it's spring where you are and stay safe out there. Everybody, have a fabulous night.

Zena: Bye.

Hil: Bye. Thanks Halsey.

Halsey: You're welcome.