

A SERIES OF TRANSITIONS

An Interview with Members of What Would an HIV Doula Do?

Andy Campbell

While ideating the exhibition *Metanoia: Transformation Through AIDS Archives and Activism*, four members of the activist collective What Would an HIV Doula Do? (WWHIVDD) asked the following question of themselves: “What happens when we center HIV history around Black women’s experience and contributions to AIDS Activism?” These four individuals—Katherine Cheairs, Alexandra Juhasz, Theodore (Ted) Kerr, and Jawanza Williams, each with their own rich history of activist involvement in HIV/AIDS political movements—worked in committed dialog with one another to bring together archival materials illuminating a suite of related struggles in the history of HIV/AIDS activism and politics. *Metanoia*, which derives its title from the Greek word for transformation, examined the efforts of Joann Walker, who fought for compassionate release and the overall healthcare of women prisoners living with HIV via her work with the Coalition to Support Women’s Prisoners at Cowchilla [a women’s prison in central California], as well as the related activities of Twillah Wallace, who with Walker and others organized the first peer HIV education program for her incarcerated sistren, and Judy Greenspan, who worked from the outside to improve medical care within the California prison system. The exhibition also detailed how Katrina Haslip—a formerly incarcerated person living with HIV and a health educator with the Upper Manhattan Task Force on AIDS—worked alongside lawyer/activist Terry McGovern to agitate for changes to the faulty CDC definition of AIDS, which at the time did not accurately reflect the medical realities of women living with HIV. In each of its two venues—the NYC LGBT Center (The Center) and the ONE Archives Foundation gallery in West Hollywood (ONE)—the exhibition also included contemporary portrait photographs of current-day activists, taken by Lolita Lens Photography (Lolita Beckwith) and Black Queen Photography. During the Los Angeles run of the exhibition the spread of COVID-19 accelerated in the United States, forcing the closure of the exhibition and its related programming. In this interview three of the four curators speak to the doulas’ process, the aims and meanings of *Metanoia*, and what taking care of one another looks like in the midst of overlapping pandemics.

ANDY CAMPBELL: Katherine Cheairs’ “grounding” opens out *Metanoia*’s catalog, a check-in with one’s own body and relation to other people. Since she is not here for this conversation, I thought we could begin with her words, which end with a turn toward the archival:

This moment is time to notice, observe, write down, document, reflect, save, prepare, pass on, extend out, listen.

Give thanks for the Archive you've always been building even if you didn't know it.

You are the Archive. We are the Archive.¹

I think this is an appropriate way to begin a conversation about activism, AIDS exhibition-making/programming, and the present reality of COVID-19. Can you each begin by talking about What Would an HIV Doula Do? (WWHIVDD) and how you first got involved in the group? What do you see as the work of the group within a broader frame of AIDS activism—historical and/or current?

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: From the start of this project we decided that those of us who had capacity, time, and energy would show up and do the work as we were able. It's unfortunate that Kat's not here, but I also think it's something to learn from. We show up and contribute when we can, and we rest and prioritize other things as needed. Case in point, Kat recently produced the digital version of *Metanoia* pretty much by herself with a team at ONE Archives Foundation; and we are here doing this interview. It is not about fairness, or balance, it is about working in community.

ANDY CAMPBELL: With that in mind, why don't we back up a bit and hear how WWHIVDD came to be?

TED KERR: We were born of a conversation that happened in 2015 after I got a little funding to do a one-day symposium from Pato Hebert at NYU. In the middle of that symposium was a session called "What Would HIV Doula Do?" attended by ten people, primarily folks I had invited whose work I admired. We had an in-depth, spiritually connected conversation about care, HIV, and the work of showing up across time. A few months later, many of us came together again to present our thinking at The New School. Rather quickly the difference between presenters and audience disappeared. A collective conversation emerged, and that has been ongoing ever since. During that first year of meetings we came up with an understanding of ourselves that still resonates:

We understand a doula as someone in a community who holds space for others during times of transition. For us, HIV is a series of transitions in someone's life that does not start with being tested or getting a diagnosis, nor end with treatment or death.²

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: I deeply appreciate WWHIVDD. I can't really say the first time that I came into contact with the collective. For me, as a person with HIV and one involved in AIDS activism, I think what resonated with me the most about the group was the idea of seeing HIV not as a hyper-biological phenomena, but instead situating it as a cultural phenomena. It's not just a virus and I think that's what *Metanoia* ultimately gets at. It's about all of the things that have exacerbated it. And what we've gained because of it, as horrible as that can seem. WWHIVDD was a sort of space, a group of people, and also an orientation about how to think about the virus multi-dimensionally.

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: For the first few years of WWHIVDD, I lived in California and participated as much as I could. Then, when I moved back to NYC, I became much more involved. This was around the time that the collective was becoming more project-oriented, and some doulas would respond, while others would support from the sidelines. Around this time I was invited by the ONE Archives Foundation to curate an AIDS exhibition using the vast holdings at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in New York (The Center) and ONE Archives at USC Libraries.

I wanted to do the show, but only as a collective. I reached out to Ted, and then we reached out to Jawanza and Kat, and happily everyone said yes. As soon as we got started two things became clear, we were a powerful team of people together, and this project was going to be important because we had each other, but also the support from the two archives, and ONE Archives Foundation. *Metanoia* was born.

ANDY CAMPBELL: Let's talk about metanoia as a term. Jawanza, I want to start with you for a couple of reasons: one is that I was really taken with your description of "Metanoia as a term that articulates the fully transformative nature of movement work," and the second is it's your tattooed arm that appears on the cover of the catalog—in a wonderful photograph by Lolita Beckwith (Figure 13.1). The photograph of your forearm highlights the tattoo you have there: a cross and then the word metanoia.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: I think it's a very powerful term. I first learned about it, I want to say 2018, at Middle Collegiate Church, where I attend services. The Reverend Dr. Jacqui Lewis, who says that it's our job to build the Kingdom of God on Earth, used the term in a sermon talking about repentance. Essentially what she said was that God does not call us to repentance, but God calls us to transformation. The reason why it came up in the context of WWHIVDD, and in the context of this archival show, was because I feel like the AIDS response does not always meet the immediate needs of people with HIV. It does not always speak to the souls of impacted folks. I think that our exhibition was us doing the kind of work that I know I need, and I know other people with HIV need.

ANDY CAMPBELL: That makes sense. In an interview you all gave in *Lambda Literary* you were talking about the biological origins of the term metanoia. But Jawanza, you were also talking about the way in which the term makes sense in relation to movement organizing—that organizing itself embodies this procedure. And Alex you said in that same interview that working across differences and collaborating produces the same or similar kind of metanoia. I'm wondering what more you all might have to say to that?

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: We had to do the show very quickly and the four of us had never worked together. And so we had to meet each other, find common ground, choose a theme, enter the archives ... and I remember when Jawanza told us about metanoia, it resonated with us in a way that was powerful, and maybe at first surprising. I am not Christian, Ted is in his way, and I think that in that conversation Kat said that she was not. So there was this moment where we listened to Jawanza and the meaning of that term for him, both theologically and in relation to HIV, and it is then that our collective-building really began, by listening to each other, honoring each other, and finding profoundly intense places of connection. This is in relation to an AIDS exhibition centering Black experience, particularly the experiences of women and femme people. Metanoia said it so well. In movement work, what I hope to work for is to coalesce the power and the mood of everyone in the room, whether that's four people or one hundred people. That means defining common ground. And that happened with the four of us, and it was not easy. But it really was about a deep respect for our collaborators and wanting to learn from them and wanting for yourself to be transformed from that interaction as well, which is what metanoia means.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: I'm getting chills, it was a really profound show in that it emphasized this multi-dimensionally: it's not just what you do physically, but also what you feel, what you think, how you are in the world. It would have only been possible to produce this show through the sort of prism of people and ideas and attitudes and understandings and experiences that is convened through the project.

TED KERR: Let me add something from a WWHIVDD statement, “since no one gets HIV alone, no one should have to deal with it alone.” That’s something that is important to all our work, and we see that from Alex’s first decision to not curate the exhibition alone. I guess I will say one more thing, I also don’t want us to take the word movement for granted. We all are deeply invested in HIV, and so the stakes for us being together in those rooms were really high. And that’s what creates the show but that’s also what produced the anxiety and the love and the attention that we all had for each other in the process. And that’s movement-building.

ANDY CAMPBELL: I think you’re all speaking powerfully to how many people think of an exhibition as an end product and begin there, rather than inquire as to what kind of thinking or feeling had to be in place first for that to even become a possibility in the first place, right? Can you talk about what archives and collections comprised the show?

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: Oh, this is a really important part of both the personal and political analysis of the show. My own life in AIDS activism and cultural production had established my best guess that ONE Archives and The Center’s archives were going to primarily hold the experience of gay white men. From day one, we as a collective knew that while we can honor the gay white male experience this show was not going to be about that. To their credit, ONE understood and supported us. They said something like, “We want you to use our archives in other ways.” And we did, starting with Kat’s idea to focus on Black women and to look at the archive searching for records of women in prison and HIV. We didn’t know at the outset that we were going to tell the story of women organizing to save themselves in a set of correctional institutions across the United States. But, by following Kat’s wisdom, we found Black women’s experiences with HIV in the archives.

TED KERR: Jawanza, I’m gonna say something I hope it’s not overwhelming: I think one of the other archival pillars is your life and your flesh. Literally your arm, the experiences you brought ...

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: No, no, I think that’s right because, unlike Ted, Alex, and Kat, I hadn’t even consumed a lot of exhibitions. I don’t even know if I’ve ever said before how new the whole idea of an exhibition itself was to me. I was aware that these kinds of activities existed, but I hadn’t understood the scope of what they can accomplish, let alone that I could be a person that legitimately and meaningfully contributed to something as profound as *Metanoia* became. And perhaps I don’t even know—and now I’m being very honest—I’m not even sure if my degree of vulnerability was apparent at the time. I didn’t feel like it was appropriate to offer up this vulnerability at that time. Every time I think about *Metanoia*, I’m shocked that I was a part of curating this kind of show. But to Ted’s point, my ability to be able to meaningfully contribute was connected to my individual experience, my organizing and political work. That helped me contextualize my individual experience, which is why I felt like it was appropriate to bring it up in the context of making this particular show. I was diagnosed HIV positive in 2013, January 15. Because of my HIV seroconversion, it opened my eyes about the world, and I was able to see people and situations that I had not been able to see before. Dealing with HIV stigma, and queerphobia / homophobia my whole life, I realized that so many of the things that I learned were false, and now I was experiencing it. I could point to Ronald Reagan not publicly mentioning AIDS until 23,000+ people in the United States had died from HIV—but I can’t express to you how angry I was when I realized that if this person had been conscientious, loving enough, not homophobic ... that perhaps nearly thirty years after the onset of the pandemic, maybe I shouldn’t have gotten HIV at all.

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: In relationship to movement building and the conversation we're having for being fully accountable to Jawanza as an HIV-positive gay young Black man: he was in the room. We were present. We were respectful. We were learning. I don't think we would have done that show ethically or responsibly in any way without his presence and his affirmation.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: You know Alex, I was aware that you were aware of that, which made me feel more comfortable with the project. This brings us full circle with WWHIVDD. I felt the curatorial team was holding the complexity of what we were having a conversation about. As Alex and Ted have both said, it was a very challenging project. For me, as a person with HIV, it was important that I understood that the folks that I was working with understood that. The questions that we asked, how our meeting agendas were organized, it was all a consistent throughline for movement building itself.

ANDY CAMPBELL: Let's jump into the exhibition itself. I'm not going to list all of the components involved, but it is a lot, and, as you all have said at this point, it came with its own complexities and challenges, which I can only imagine. Maybe we can start with some of those challenges that you felt as a group putting this together...

TED KERR: In the process of making the exhibition I broke down at least twice, crying. I've had a lot of time to reflect on that, and ask myself why, what led to the tears. First off, I think for many of us, HIV is an isolating experience. I am HIV negative, and even for me, I have felt very alone as someone who thinks and organizes a lot around the virus. So to be working vulnerably with other people on HIV was scary, hard, exciting and frustrating. It led to emotions coming out... which is a good thing. Second, Alex and I have spent almost a decade thinking and working together on HIV, so even if I have felt isolated in my experiences, I have also been lucky to have an amazing work partner. But, I can tell you going from working alone, to working in a pair, to then opening that relationship up is hard. Working together meant also bringing together many different experiences, privileges, lacks, and all those things. Collaborating to produce something beautiful also created some tension. Lastly, I will say, exhibitions come with such a huge responsibility, because at the end of the day most people will never think about or see your process, and what is or what isn't on those walls is all an audience has. People might feel elated or hurt or angry or seen or fucked yet again. That was something that I was very conscious of. I don't care if people misunderstand the throughline of the show, but the idea that people would walk away and feel slighted (yet again) or feel unseen (yet again) was very scary.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: For me, as a Black gay person my defenses are up all the time. And even today in campaigns that I work on now, with Vocal NY, there's always this subterranean conversation that's happening: what is the extent and the scope of contribution that a Black queer young person can make to something as profound as *Metanoia*? For me it comes down to imposter syndrome: should I be the person contributing if I'm the only HIV positive person in this group making this show? Am I going to do justice? There's all this weight on one's shoulders when you are the representative of all of these people. And there's two parts to that: am I going to be able to be that person, and second, am I expected to be that person legitimately? And I think that, whenever conflicts arose that related to me I think perhaps there was a layer of that.

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: I respect Jawanza's point and add that the project was made over a course of a few years in American history where anti-Black racism, Black Lives Matter, Trumpism, had really put a lot of pressure on interracial conversation in movements and in ways that were important. And so to be white people and Black people at this moment, where there was really important pressure in relationship to racial politics in

relation to anti-Black racism in the United States—and what our responsibilities are in the face of that, what our responsibilities are with our friends with our colleagues, with people we're in movements with, with people we're in community with—that was always on my mind for our show.

ANDY CAMPBELL: I saw the show on its second stop, at ONE Foundation's West Hollywood gallery. Something that really struck me, as someone who does spend a lot of time inside of exhibitions, was how much people were sticking around to read everything that you brought out from the archives. I would look at a corner of the room and a person would be reading the letters sent between Joanne Walker and Judy Greenspan. Four minutes later they were in the exact same spot, still reading those letters. I see that as a great barometer of how successful an exhibition can be at telling new stories, and activating people with materials. I want to ask a question about the different modalities of the exhibition: there are the installations at The Center and ONE's gallery, the catalog, a website version of the exhibition, in-person and online programming, and more. Across these modalities you linked prison abolition, the changing of the definition of AIDS, and contemporary portraiture. So I'm wondering if you can speak about what it meant to produce this thing in those different modalities, and how you see what endures from the project?

TED KERR: An exhibition is a vehicle to share thoughts, feelings, images, and ideas. And so, we always had in our heads that it would have to somehow live online and that there would be at least something that was physical, so we also made a catalog. Each modality opened *Metanoia* up. There would have been nothing sadder to me than if our exhibition, which tells largely unknown stories of Black women's experiences with HIV, was seen by only twenty white people during the run of the shows. We wanted to share what we were learning about the past in the present, but also ensure that it was available to folks in the future. So, we also wanted to add to both the present understanding of AIDS work, and contribute to the archive of the future. That's why those photographs of living activists are so important (Figure 13.2).

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: We should also say, *Metanoia* is a text heavy show. We had a lot of conversations about words on the wall as art. About things that didn't start as art—whether that be protest chants or letters or flyers—and what it meant to transform movement objects to let them be art. For example, think of the chants. If you're in a room with people chanting it's transformative. It makes you one. So we fell in love with the chants when we found them, and that's why they are showcased on the walls, and why we made them available as handouts at the exhibitions. We would activate them whenever there was an event, because suddenly you'd be in a room full of diverse people and they're there for the art, or for prison abolition, or AIDS, and we would make them chant the most outrageous feminist queer lesbian words! I am thinking of the opening at The Center, and how thrilling it was to watch so many white gay men in suits chant, “C.D.C YOU FUCKING SCUM / WHY DON'T YOU RESEARCH WIMMIN'S CUM” How wonderful to be in a room, speaking the needs of women, voicing the demands of women, in unison. It was so beautiful every time we did that.

TED KERR: I didn't know at the time that the chants would become so vital. I did a lot of tours of The Center exhibition and on an early tour the amazing writer Brian Carmichael got emotional when we got to the chants because he knew them as somebody who was on the inside. When he and others would be in their cells, and they would hear activists on the outside making noise, playing music, or chanting, it was a sign to them that they were not alone. All of the things in the exhibition, including the chants are archives of memories and history, and of present strategies for how people survive and thrive.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: The thing about chants is that they mean everything, because the words of the chants sound the polyrhythms that become encoded—I don't know if there's something happening in a collective unconscious when these sets of words are said by these people... but there's a conjuring that happens. In *Metanoia* there was magic on the walls, including the chants, and of course, Joanne's letters! They are magic. They're written to one person, but now hundreds of people have seen them, and not in this voyeuristic way, but in a sort of intimate way; if that's not witchcraft, it's human craft, and that's what I appreciate about it.

ANDY CAMPBELL: Let's talk about what happens when COVID became a reality, and how the work shifted or changed. The show was still up when the first quarantines began. What is the response that the doulas have to COVID? It seems like the *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* zine was a natural extension of what was happening in the exhibition. I think about the repetition of the line of text "let's not be afraid of each other," which appears on the cover, like a chant.

TED KERR: Early in the pandemic I invited WWHIVDD members to contribute to a zine I was calling, *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* Notice the similarity and difference with the collective name, the shift from *What Would...* to *What Does...* This was important because even before lockdown I was seeing WWHIVD members hitting the ground running, figuring out ways to care for themselves and others during what many people were calling an unprecedented time. I am thinking specifically of member Tamara Oyola-Santiago who in the early days of the first lockdown would take early morning walks in the Bronx, photographing and posting the empty streets and using the captions to raise questions around who was able to shelter in place, who had access to public health messaging. Of course it make sense that if you have lived through HIV, the war on drugs, the attack on immigrants, state-sponsored terrorism of Black people and people of color and queer people and women, then actually, you have the skills when another emergency hits. Contributions to the zine started coming in, and what was emerging aligned with what Umi Hsu at ONE Archive Foundation was thinking when they suggested that we find a way to bring *Metanoia* online since the exhibition was no longer accessible by way of the gallery. With Umi's vision, and ONE's support we made a beautiful zine, with over twenty contributions, and archival material from the exhibition. The idea was to make connections between pandemics and pandemic responses, but leaving room for difference and for things to not line up exactly. While many of us could see the parallels between HIV and COVID-19 we were also against cheap comparison.

The zine also included, as you mentioned Andy, the phrase, "Let's not be afraid of each other," which was created and designed by me, Ripley Soprano and virgil b/g taylor as a meme / invite to a March 2020 online event where we asked friends and strangers alike to meet us on zoom. We repeated the phrase in the meme and throughout the zine because HIV is built on repetition, literally HIV transmits through repetition, but also AIDS culture is built upon repetition. We thought it was a powerful phrase because our lived experiences have taught us that in the face of a communicable illness people look for a scapegoat. The zine and the zoom event were early attempts to bring the WWHIVDD online and create community along the way. We know that in the face of annihilation, community builds, and is needed.

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: My experience in the digital realm has really changed during COVID, but again that's true for everybody. Initially, none of us knew how to be on

zoom, and we were trying to figure out how to be honest and personal. A shared awareness of a vocabulary around HIV was consistently useful, but not just the vocabulary, the organizing principles, frameworks of analyses, ways of being together, ways of helping each other, all that we had already learned with HIV. We doulas directly moved into COVID thoughtfully together. I learned so much from the fifty-two people that started coming on the calls, they were helping me get from living with COVID to having a political analysis of COVID.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: I've been responding politically to HIV and so understood that sort of intimate connection that you could have in this new pandemic. So much about our experience of HIV was informing how we responded to the moment of coping, and by that I mean specifically like who was left out of the immediate response. I'll name one example, and there were many. The primary mandate in New York City (and really everywhere) was to say that everybody is to stay home—as if everyone has a home! And in my work with Vocal NY, we started this campaign called “Homeless Can't Stay Home”/#HomelessCantStayHome, responding to this. How are we going to go forward with this new reality, while being able to honor our full humanity?

ANDY CAMPBELL: You've all spoken beautifully about the correspondences and divergences between HIV and COVID, but I want to bring forward the words of Salonee Bhaman, one of the contributors to the *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* zine. She writes this beautiful thing:

it struck me that the mutual aid projects responding [sic] to this crisis mobilized so quickly (grocery money, ad-hoc unemployment benefits, healthcare funds for sex workers, retail workers, restaurant workers, artists, theater workers, nail salon workers, musicians, authors) because our communities have had to hold each other tightly and provide for contingency in the face of state neglect for a long time. We have insurgent and hard-won knowledge about how to make a legume last for a long time, how to take care, nourish, and to protect your body when your work is touching others. The work of the COVID-doula is to share this information, to connect these communities, and think about who falls through first when society cracks under outside pressure.³

What I love about that last line is that we usually discuss people falling through the cracks, but Bhaman turns that and describes the procedure of societal cracking. As a way of wrapping up, one of the things that WWHIVDD values is asking questions. Such questions appear throughout WWHIVDD's projects and programs—they're crafted to really push people toward thinking, feeling, acting, being—all of those things. I'm wondering at this point in the work around *Metanoia* and its transformation through COVID-19, what questions do you have currently? And what questions might you have for a reader of an anthology on art and activism?

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: I'm incredibly disillusioned and discouraged in many ways, just politically about where we're headed as a people in the United States, and really around the world. I think that *Metanoia* asked people to go a little bit deeper, in a moment where you can have fires burning in Oregon but then the smoke is in New York City; where you have people refusing access to a free vaccine to defeat this new pandemic, as some countries don't even have access to the vaccine. At what point do we love each other enough to act like it? Because I feel like that's not happening. And it's making me question everything. I'm starting to feel like we're wasting our breath, or that we might be curating shows in vain, in some kind of weird vacuum when there's ten people who understand, while the millions around us just could care less, or are unable, for whatever

reason, or are unwilling, to engage. And that's why we keep finding ourselves in this moment. The AIDS crisis was a potential moment, the Movement for Black Lives is another moment, and COVID is another. And they're happening in succession along with the climate crisis and nuclear proliferation. I'm not sure that we have an infinite number of opportunities for transformation, and my question is what will be enough? It's just really weighing on me. The dominant narrative has been to compartmentalize things, to silo our collective experiences, and that's just not what it means to be a human being. I'm trying to refind that, because I've had it for years and I just feel a little defeated right now.

TED KERR: Jawanza, I hold that disappointment and disillusionment with you. And that's what took me from working in the art world to going to Union Theological Seminary and embracing everything that Christian theology had to offer. It provided me with a new language and has given me hope. We can come together, but what happens after we come together? I'm not trying to make you feel better, because I really love you and care about you, and I'm trying to be honest with you. I actually think this feeling you're having is the beginning of a reset that a lot of us are a part of, and it means that good things are on the way. It means we went as far as we could with one train of thought, and fuck it took us far. And now a true new train of thought is going to emerge and we need to reset. So I support you and we're going to be on the other side of it.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: Wow, thank you so much for that. I appreciate that, thank you.

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: Movements are very long and they're very slow and they're very disappointing. But daily transformations are small moments of hope. Someone leaving a show having read carefully something from Joanne Walker, that is something! That the living of our hope is not a complete change, it's not always an abrupt end of the things that we name as corrupt, but it is part of a process that is noble and is the best thing that human beings do. Every time I tap into that I don't feel like it's over. How do we continue to find the energy to show up and be our best selves so that we can uplift each other? How do we find that art? How do we make that art? That to me is not even a question. It's just a life activity with my respected colleagues in struggle.

TED KERR: What is the value in calling something art? What is the value in calling some people artists? I'm not anti-art, but I definitely think all of us know of people in their actions, who save our lives, all the time, but they will never get called an artist. How do we capture their life-saving contributions?

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ: But that's what *Metanoia* was! It was like a sieve that caught things that had not been caught before and this time we called it art. Oh my god, talk about change! The activism of people like Joanne Walker and Judy Greenspan was medicine to people in prison; it got people out of prison when they were sick, transformed the experience of women living with AIDS; and then it was medicine for us now.

JAWANZA WILLIAMS: I am connecting to what you are both saying. In my organizing work now I'm teaching other people to be organizers more, and I'm like: What are we doing with people living with HIV, people who are active drug users, people that are formerly incarcerated people, experiencing homelessness? What do we offer them? Because they know what they're experiencing. What we offer them is our perspective, a new framework of reality from which to contend with what you're experiencing.

Sometimes the only story you've been told, if any at all, is the story rooted in stigma, the story that is not informed by data. What I'm trying to say is that we are called to do that human craft-work, that movement-building, that transformative work of creating the kind of world that you actually want to live in. I think that's what Joanne Walker's

letters and all the pieces of the show are doing. Our perspectives are being offered; so every time you walk by a piece you're being offered this perspective. You can come in with your own analysis and your own experiences, but now you're being offered this. Organizing is the human work of creating the conditions for some kind of transformation, so that people understand why they should demand housing for everybody versus just housing for themselves, for example. I'm interested in offering people frameworks of the truth that gets to us collectively being totally free and self-determined and healthy and clear, and I think that's what HIV activism and movement-work has been asking for since day one.



Figure 13.1 Lolita Lens Photography (Lolita Beckwith), *Jawanza Williams*, 2020



Figure 13.2 Lolita Lens Photography (Lolita Beckwith), *Malaya Manocop*, 2020

Notes

- 1 Katherine Cheairs, "Grounding," in *What Would an HIV Doula Do?*, *Metanoia: Transformation Through AIDS Archives and Activism* (New York and Los Angeles: The LGBT Community Center and ONE Archives Foundation, 2020), 3. As part of the curators' aims in presenting "a way to understand AIDS today while working towards a more just future," (6) the four collaborators assembled a printed catalog of the exhibition, reproducing key archival documents and featuring texts by the curators and a select group of interlocutors. Later, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, WWHIVDD released a digital zine, entitled *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* wherein contributors shared written reflections, text messages, and photographs meditating on the overlapping pandemics. These two publications represent a fulsome, and in the case of the latter, a near real-time reckoning with the localized goals and legacies traced in *Metanoia*. As Juhasz writes in the second zine, "These efforts are the start of what we are building, and sharing, in this time of

- fear, uncertainty, illness, and community.” Alexandra Juhasz, “Introduction,” in *What Would an HIV Doula Do?*, *What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do?* (Los Angeles, CA: ONE Archives Foundation, 2020): 7–8.
- 2 “Our Practice,” *What Would an HIV Doula Do?*, <http://hivdoula.work/practice>, accessed September 1, 2021.
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