

REPARATIVE JUSTICE, RACIAL RESTORATION, & EDUCATION SERIES

We Are TIRED: Showing Up for Ourselves is an Act of Resistance Against Oppression

By Cristal Briseida Almonte

I sat in front of my laptop attempting to engage students in a discussion alongside my 'Femtor,' and as we looked around the Zoom call it was apparent that we were all exhausted. This is nothing new for many of the educators and students showing up to class during this pandemic. And yet, what is new is that it has been more than a year since we transitioned to teaching amidst a pandemic.

According to [The New York Times](#), there have been more than 500,000 deaths in the U.S. since March 2020. We have witnessed and experienced state-sanctioned violence while people debate our humanity at every level. [Black and Brown communities have been disproportionately impacted during this time](#). Our elected officials have granted two stimulus checks while systematically [leaving out undocumented immigrants](#). Even as I write this, [elected officials debated](#) whether to provide a third stimulus payment, [which was signed just recently](#) and continues to leave out undocumented immigrants. The decisions made by our elected officials during this pandemic have only emphasized what many of us already knew—we do not matter. We only matter if we are white wealthy people profiting from the cheap and disposable labor of low-income communities and communities of color.

Communities of color and low income communities only matter to the extent that our labor contributes to White elites' generational wealth. We have been fighting to survive the pandemic and continued systemic violence. Meanwhile, the demand for our energy and productivity has skyrocketed. The demands outweigh our capacity. We are all feeling the collective exhaustion during this pandemic, and it is impacting how educators and students are showing up in classrooms.

There has been an [increase in mental health concerns among college students](#) and [students in K-12](#) due to stressors at home, stressors at school, and growing concerns due to the pandemic. As I talk with other women of color, alarms go off in my head. We are not okay. We are facing burn-out. [According to Milly Gomez](#), a Bilingual National Certified Counselor and Licensed professional counselor, "burn-out is a state of emotional, physical, and mental, exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands."

Some of us may have reached this point or are on our way there. This is a call in for our educators. As we consider the socio-political context that we are living in, and we also must consider how we are all doing individually and as a collective. We are being pushed to burn-out and this is having real consequences on our bodies, minds, and spirits. This is also having consequences on our relationships with ourselves, our students, and our loved ones. We are operating from "empty cups" and have very little energy to show up for ourselves or anyone else. None of this is a coincidence.

This is when we as educators might benefit from checking in with ourselves. How are we feeling? Where are we feeling these things? What do our bodies need? What do our minds need? What do our spirits need? We are running on fumes while we are gaslit at every level into feeling ashamed and guilty for struggling while being under constant threat of the coronavirus, white supremacy, sexism, ableism, and capitalism.

This is a call to all educators. This is a call to all folks experiencing burn-out or who may be on their way there. Please pause. Let us give ourselves some grace and compassion. When we honor ourselves and our needs, we disrupt the systems of oppression that have us running ourselves ragged. [The Nap Ministry](#) emphasizes that our rest is resistance. As Audre Lorde said, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” In honoring ourselves, we replenish our cups. In honoring ourselves, we also allow others to honor themselves. We are academically socialized to produce, to serve on several committees or groups, to strive for perfection, and to not only maintain high expectations for ourselves but to enforce them on others too. This can be at the detriment of our own well-being and the well-being of our students.

When we are not well, our students may not be well either. We cannot truly give someone grace, compassion, or understanding when we cannot give it to ourselves. Once we start filling our cups, we may have the energy to be reflexive and take accountability over the ways we have been complicit in maintaining these systems of oppression. We all have our role in upholding these systems and in enacting violence. However, in caring for ourselves, we build the capacity to start making amends and healing while disrupting the very systems that ensure our subjugation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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