

I Too: Unmasking Emotional Labor for Women of Color Librarians

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Centering Women of Color voices

Everything said in this room is rooted in believing the narratives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and recognizing systemic oppression.¹

If you do not identify as a BIPOC, we invite you to select another session to attend. Reflect on why you are leaving and why we are staying.

¹. This language was borrowed from We Here.



mindful check in

Introductions & Getting Started

- Who we are: Alyssa, Kimberly, Sharon
- Our session: Background | Concepts | Emotional Labor | Intervention | Ahead
- *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS* (2018) chapter: **"I, Too: Unmasking Emotional Labor of Women of Color Community College Librarians"**
 - Context at Seattle Central:
 - 55% students identified as POC
 - quarter of faculty identified as POC
 - 56% identified as "female"
 - Story Gathering from others:
 - WOC librarians in Washington State Community & Technical College (CTC) Libraries
 - Survey asked how WOC identity affects workplace experience, emotional labor, and self-care practices

Survey Respondent Demographics

The nine respondents who completed the survey represented a wide range of identities and work experience.

Racial/ethnic identities included:

African American/Black; American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American; Asian/Asian American; Latino/a/x or Chicano/a/x or Hispanic; Middle Eastern; and Mixed Race/Biracial (respondents were able to check more than one box).

R = Number of respondents

Length of Service	R
0-3 years	4
4-10 years	2
11-20 years	3
>20 years	0

Employment Status	R
Tenured	3
Tenure-track	3
Full-time non-faculty	0
Adjunct/part-time	2
Temporary full-time	1

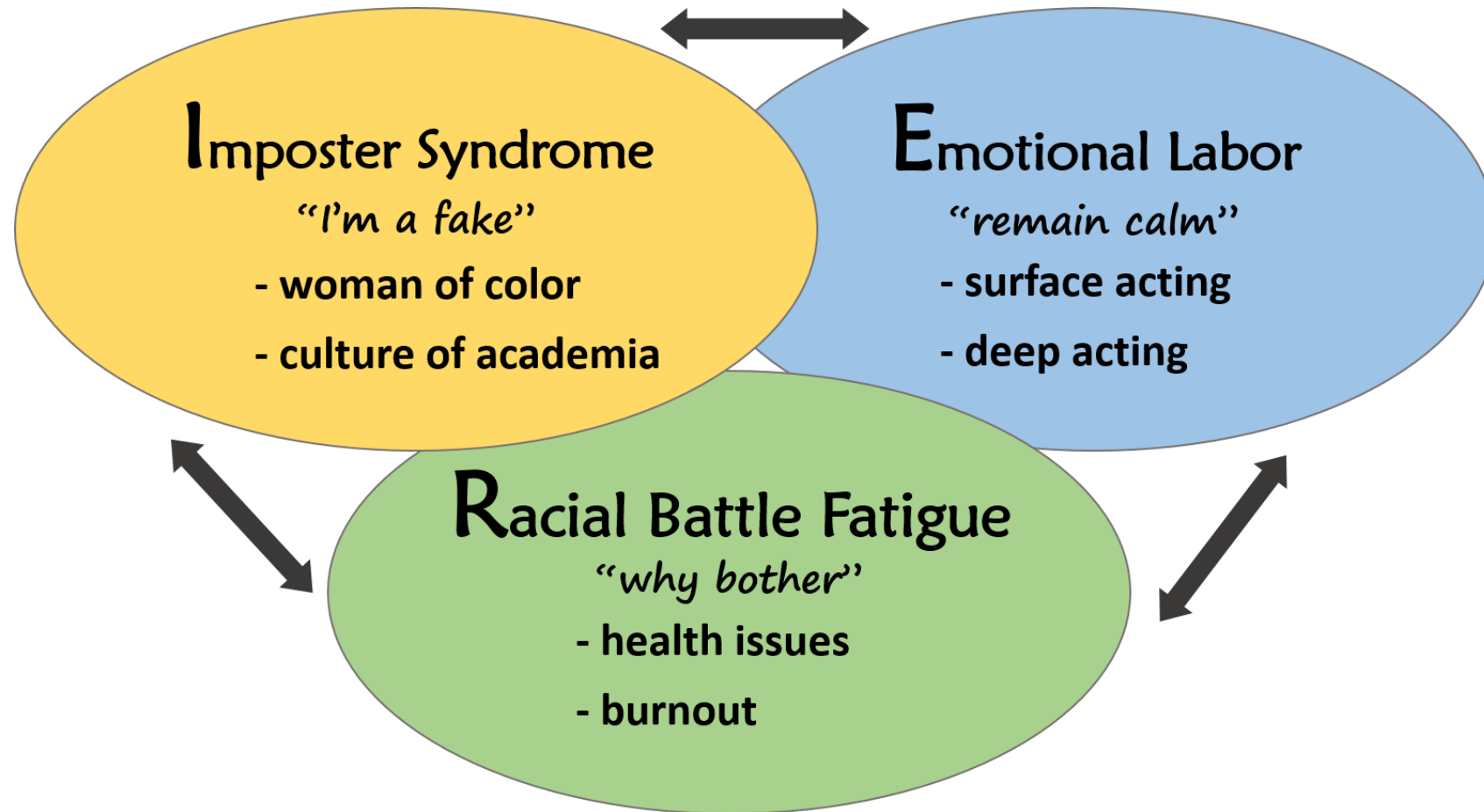
Primary Role	R
Instruction	1
Reference	6
Cataloging	0
Systems	0
Collections	0
Outreach	0
Other: All of the above except Cataloging	1
Other: Move to Admin	1

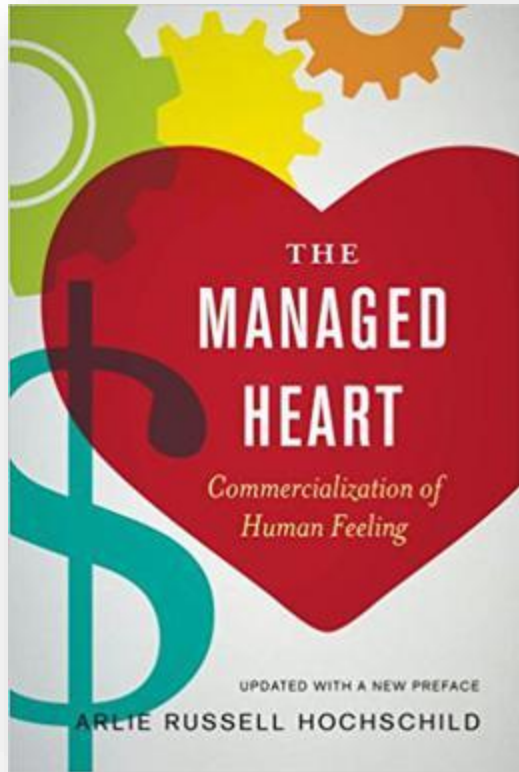
Location	R
Rural area	0
Urban area	4
Suburban area	5

Foundational Terminology & Concepts

- **Emotional labor** the effort required to manage one's emotions to meet organizational expectations; ...it calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality (Hochschild 2012).
- **Imposter syndrome** occurs when individuals are unable to internalize their own success; these individuals often believe any success they achieve is not a product of their own ability, and that they will eventually be exposed as frauds (Harvey and Katz 1985).
- **Racial battle fatigue** the physiological and psychological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups and the amount of energy lost dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions and racism (Jain 2016; Smith 2003).
- **Microaggressions** subtle assaults (verbal and nonverbal) directed towards people of color that are often enacted automatically or unconsciously; can often be layered assaults, based on race and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname. Cumulative assaults can take a psychological, physiological, and academic toll on People of Color (Jain 2016; Sue 2010).

Interplay of IRE





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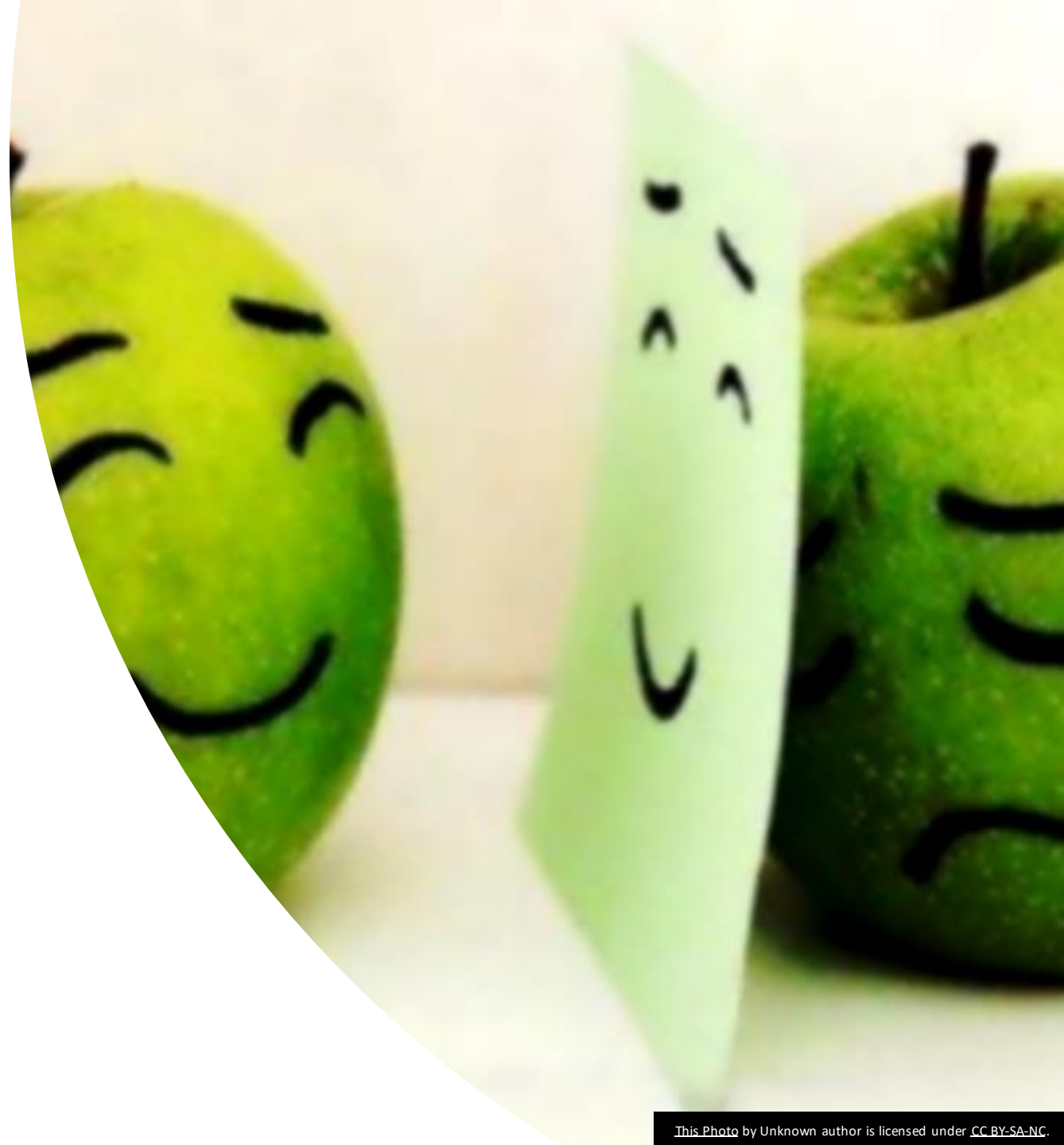
Emotional Labor

"Can I take off my mask at the end of the day?"

... I have everything.
I can see, I can feel,
I can breathe."

Mehnaz Hoosein

**Emotional labor is
embedded in public,
academic, and special
librarianship and library
work.**



Professional Standards

ACRL / Teaching Librarian Roles:

Advocate: **Partners with faculty** to encourage information literacy within courses and within the curriculum.

Coordinator: Uses emotional intelligence and political acumen with highly developed, **inclusive communication skills to navigate complex and sensitive situations**. Collaborates in the development of campus-wide information literacy initiatives and goals and facilitates change while generating trust, support, and commitment from administration and faculty partners.

Leader: **Creates an environment of positive learning, trust**, and reflection, addressing pedagogical or instruction-related conflicts and encouraging the development of confidence in teaching.

RUSA

1.0 Visibility/Approachability: ...It is essential that the reference **librarian be approachable**. Whether acting in a traditional/in-person role or a remote/virtual role, the librarian's first step in initiating the reference transaction is to **make the patron feel comfortable** in a situation that can be perceived as intimidating, confusing, or overwhelming.

3.0 Listening/Inquiring-The reference interview is the heart of the reference transaction and is crucial to the success of the process. The librarian should effectively identify the patron's information needs in a manner that **puts the patron at ease**.

5.0 Follow-Up: Supplying information is not the end of the reference transaction. The librarian is responsible for **determining if the patron is satisfied with the results of the search**, and referring the patron to other sources including those not available through the local library.

Professional Standards

YALSA Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff-

Interactions with Teens: Recognizes the importance of relationships and communication in the development and implementation of quality teen library services, and implements techniques and strategies to support teens individually and in group experiences to develop self-concept, identity, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with peers and adults.

Cultural Competency and Responsiveness: Actively promotes respect for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful library atmosphere that embraces diversity.

Youth Engagement and Leadership: Responds to all teens' interests and needs, and acts in partnership with teens to create and implement teen activities and to foster teen leadership.

Guidelines for ILL Operations Management

4.1 Have the ability to work collegially with other groups within and outside the library on issues that directly impact interlibrary loan and document delivery services.

Professional Expectations

- Reality Check, then and now
 - Committee representation
 - Institutional goals
- Intersection of Race and Gender

Reflection

How does your race and/or gender impact how you navigate the workplace?

Have you experienced any microaggressions or overtly racist acts at the institution?

How have you experienced emotional labor at your institution?



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Intervention

To fly, we have to
have resistance."

Maya Lin

Self Care

Professional Boundary Setting

- Be specific about capacity to work (or not work) on a project
- Repeat mantras (“one thing at a time,” “I am enough”)
- Say “No” more often
- Turn off email notifications
- Refuse to check work email at home

...discipline and compassion...

Personal Self-Care Practices

- read, exercise, meditate, watch movies, cook, and write
- interact with people of color and other support systems
- family “they share many of the life experiences that have shaped me, and they understand my perspective.”
- trusted colleagues and friends “They let me be who I am. I do not have to wear a ‘mask’ to see them.”

...practice is progress...

Support

How does our institution support our needs?

At Seattle Central College's library:

- Hosting cultural competency trainings;
- Revising job descriptions and interview questions to explicitly identify the library's values of and active engagement in diversity and social justice;
- Beginning meetings with a few minutes of mindfulness;
- Participating in the WA State Board for CTCs' faculty of color mentorship program

Support

How could our institution support our needs?

We call on institutions/white colleagues/men of color to:

- Recognize the additional mentorship of POC students and peers as legitimate work;
- Advocate for compensation for extra labor (outside of contracted hours)
- Strategize to bring accountability to professional development training on sexual harassment and cultural humility;
- Provide a space for contemplative teaching and learning that builds self-awareness;
- Interrupt the oppression that librarians face when women are objectified;
- Implement equitable strategies to recruit and track retention of WOC faculty/staff



Reflection

What are some self-care practices you have implemented (whether you call them that or not)?

What support or programs currently exist at your institution?

What support or programs would you like to see at your institution?

I CAN

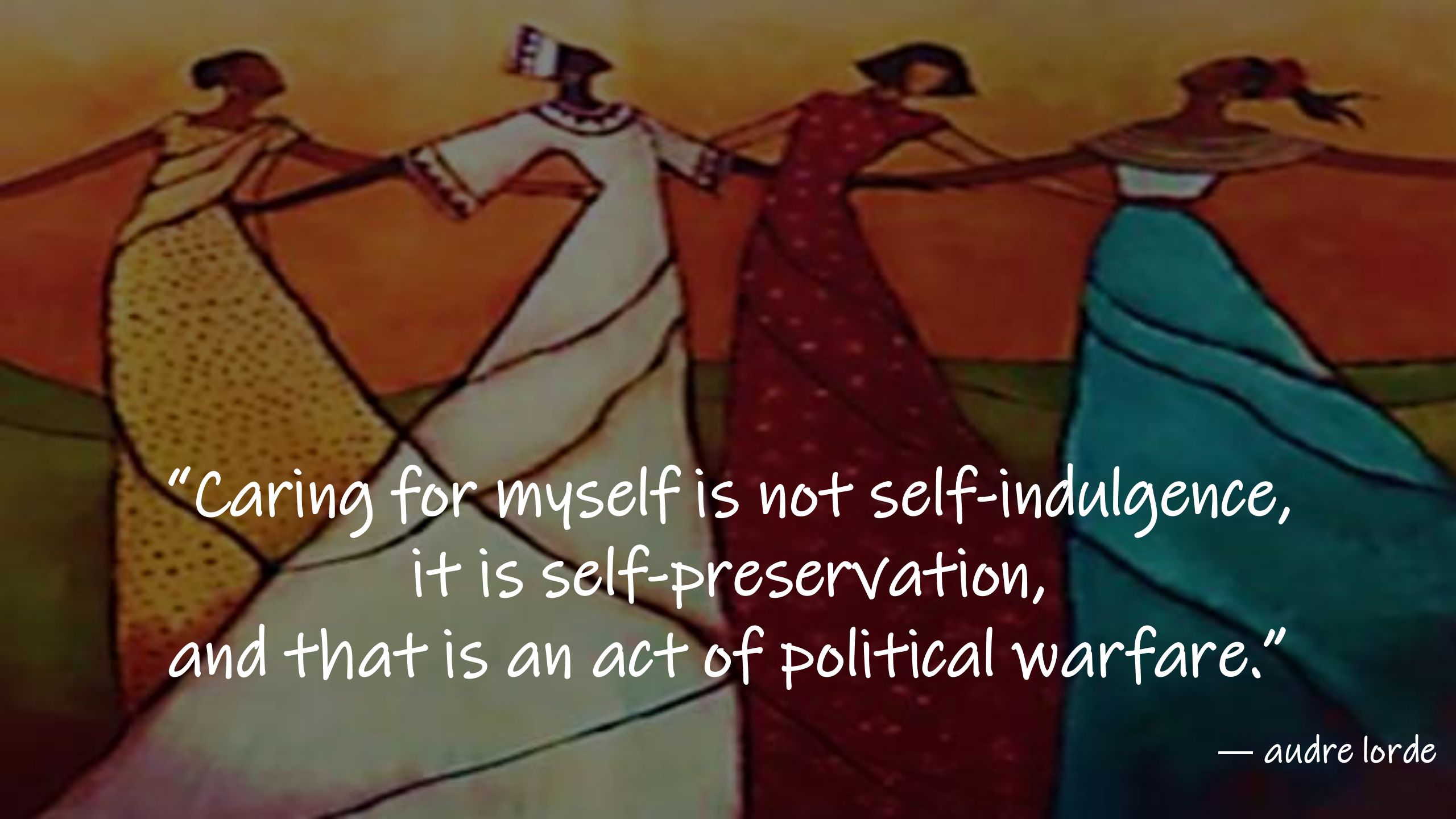
I AM

I HAVE

INTENTION

Today!

I WILL



"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence,
it is self-preservation,
and that is an act of political warfare."

— audre lorde

Resources

- We Here (online community for POC librarian/staff solidarity, collaboration, etc.)
- Library Juice Press (publisher)
- *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, edited by Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez and Angela P. Harris (2012), (second volume forthcoming)
- Mindfulness for the People, Dr. Angela Rose Black
- WOC + LIB, wocandlib.org (digital platform)