

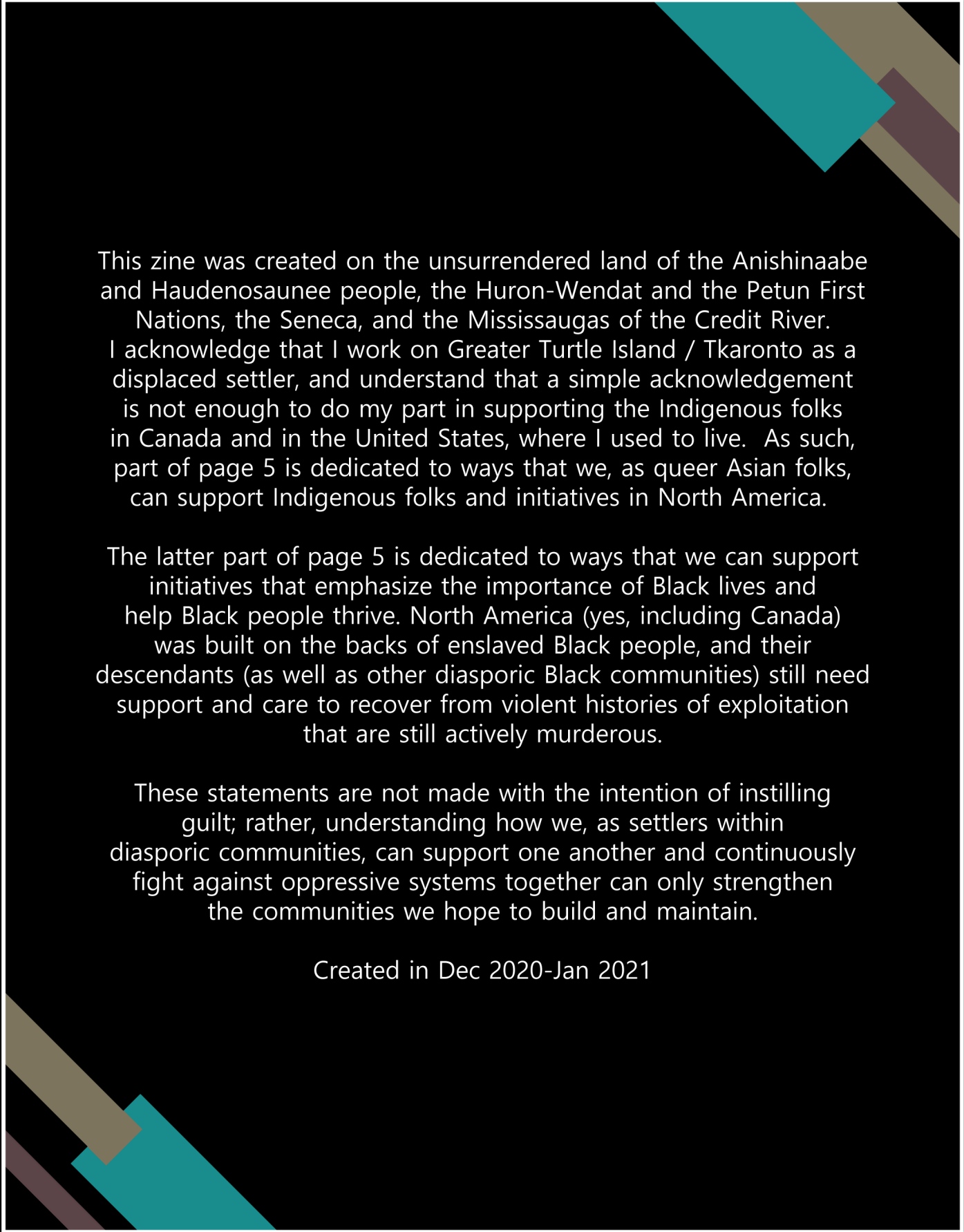


# Of All Stripes

A Support/Health Zine for  
Queer Asians in Toronto

created by  
Dany Ko

A  
CBRC Summit 2020  
Creator Project



This zine was created on the unsundered land of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people, the Huron-Wendat and the Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. I acknowledge that I work on Greater Turtle Island / Tkaronto as a displaced settler, and understand that a simple acknowledgement is not enough to do my part in supporting the Indigenous folks in Canada and in the United States, where I used to live. As such, part of page 5 is dedicated to ways that we, as queer Asian folks, can support Indigenous folks and initiatives in North America.

The latter part of page 5 is dedicated to ways that we can support initiatives that emphasize the importance of Black lives and help Black people thrive. North America (yes, including Canada) was built on the backs of enslaved Black people, and their descendants (as well as other diasporic Black communities) still need support and care to recover from violent histories of exploitation that are still actively murderous.

These statements are not made with the intention of instilling guilt; rather, understanding how we, as settlers within diasporic communities, can support one another and continuously fight against oppressive systems together can only strengthen the communities we hope to build and maintain.

Created in Dec 2020-Jan 2021

Hello there.

I'm not so good at introductions--my awkward, generally confused being prefers to just stare at you until you say hi--but I really don't have any option here (I guess I could draw my eyes, but something tells me that won't make for a good introduction, either). Instead, let me start with a short explanation.

I'm a deaf, multiply-disabled, genderfluid, demisexual, bisexual Chinese-Filipino nerd named Dany. This zine is a culmination of personal reflections and resources I needed (and often use) as someone at the intersection of so many different identities.

Included in this zine are several parts:

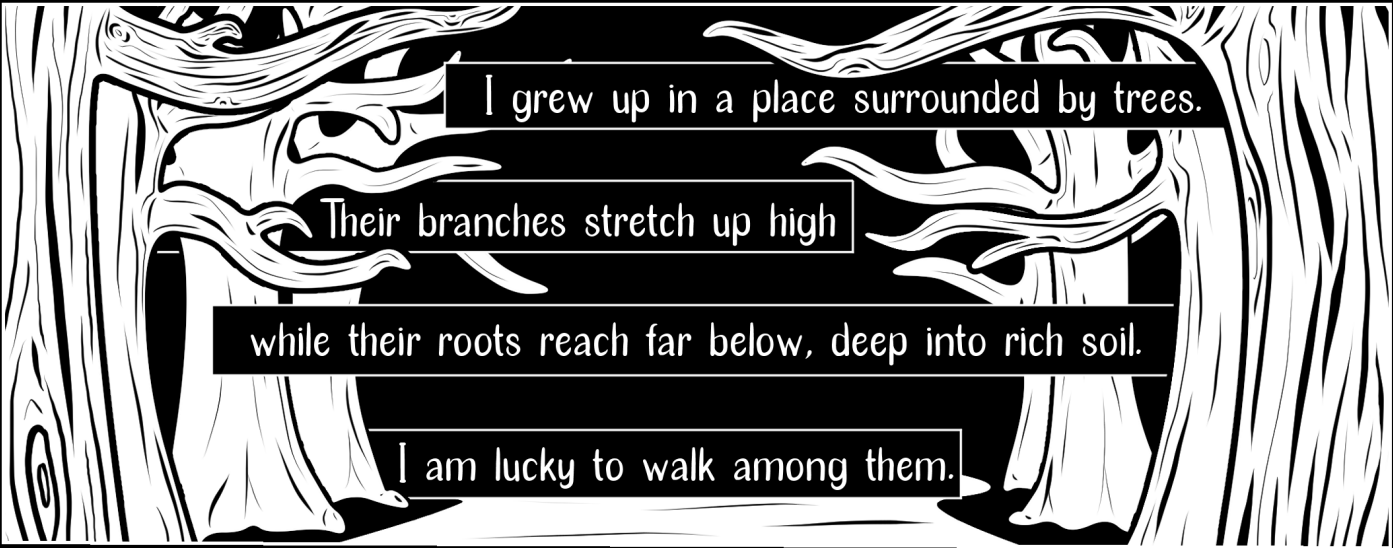
Comics I drew reflecting on various parts of myself and my identity, as inspired by the Community-Based Research Centre 2020 Summit.

An explanation for the comics and why it's important to reflect upon these experiences and teachings.

Resources for queer Asian folks pertaining to supporting Indigenous and Black Communities, general health and support, mental health, and sexual health. Some of these resources are Toronto-specific and some are more widely accessible.

I hope that, if you are a queer Asian person, this zine helps you in some way. I understand that I'm still growing and learning, too, so it makes sense if you're uncertain about some of the things I say and depict here. I appreciate you picking this up and reading through it nonetheless, and I hope you find even a little bit of support and/or hope here.

So much love to you.

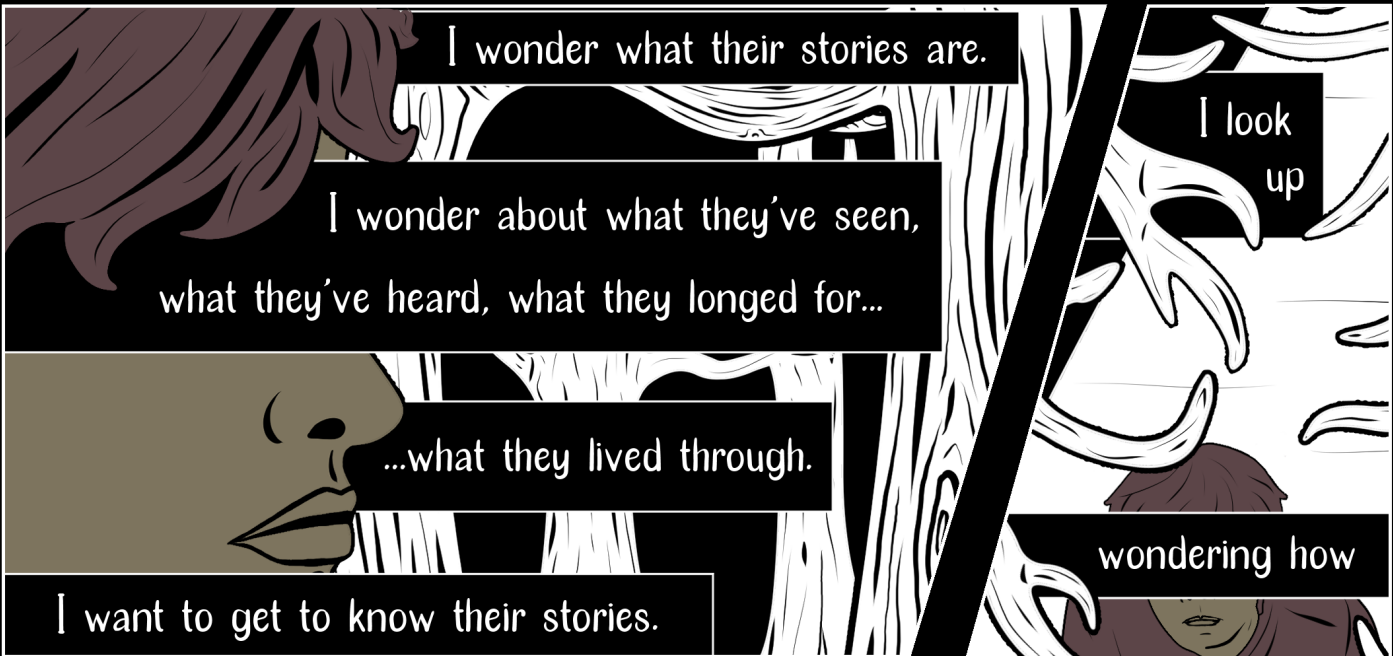


I grew up in a place surrounded by trees.

Their branches stretch up high

while their roots reach far below, deep into rich soil.

I am lucky to walk among them.



I wonder what their stories are.

I wonder about what they've seen,  
what they've heard, what they longed for...

...what they lived through.

I want to get to know their stories.

I look  
up

wondering how

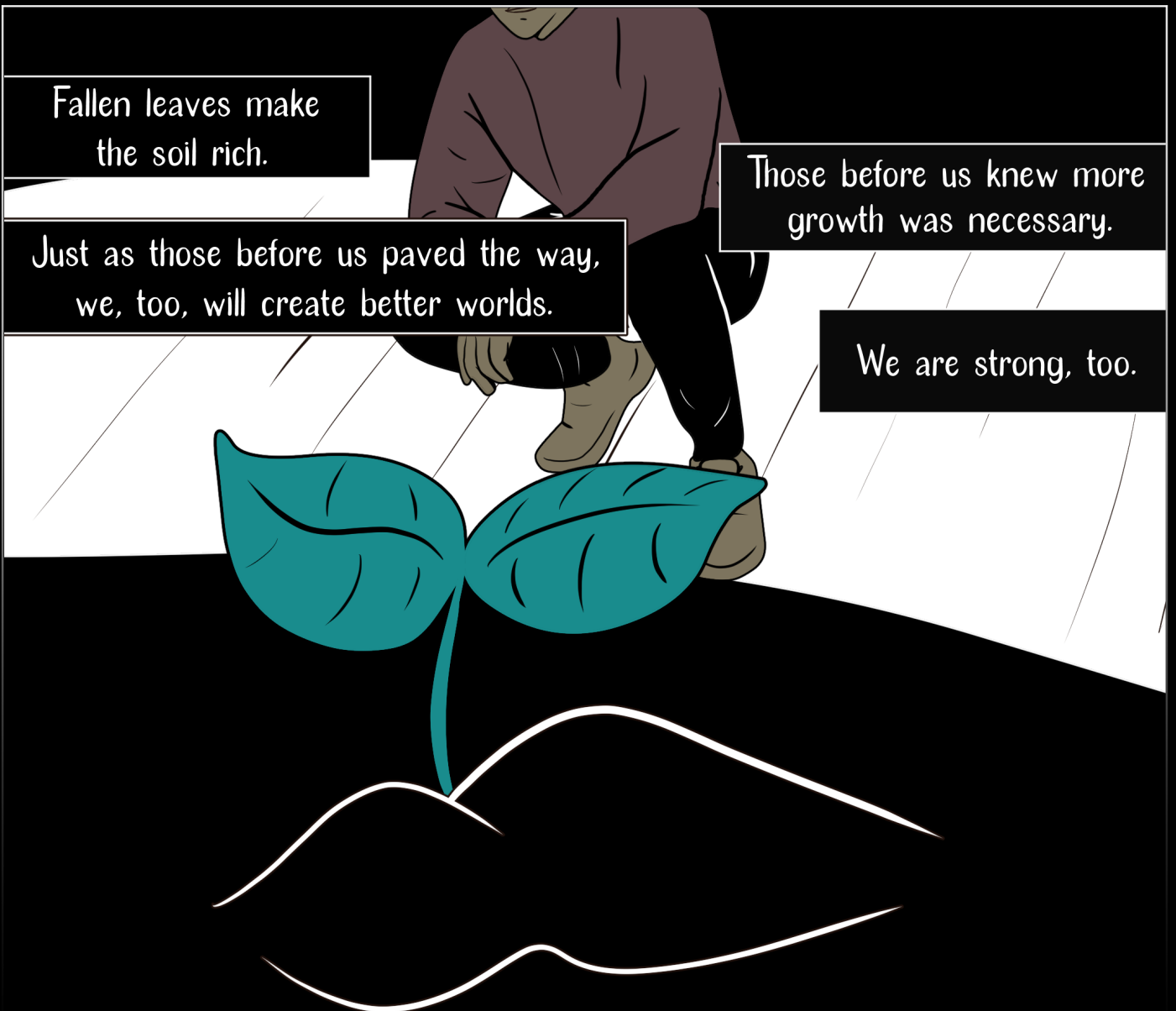


They stand strong

Even when  
"dead"

Even when we pass.

to be  
like them.



I grew up next to a forested area, and a part of me will always long for days when I can go back and walk amongst those trees again. I always thought of them as watchers, as beings who look over us and watch as we are born, as we age, as we die, and as the cycle repeats. I was a very imaginative child, the weird kind you'd find talking up to the trees after school.

The forests I love are similar to how I think of activism; there are cycles of growth, destruction, and rebuilding that systems go through, and while we may not be there for every step of the way, we can do things to ensure the weeds are taken out and the spring brings new blooms.

I always wanted to be as strong as the trees in these forests, to be able to weather most anything. Forcing myself to be that strong when I am still growing, however, is unnatural and harmful. As I am, I am already wily and powerful; in time, I will grow to be something more.

And just as the dying trees that came before me are now giving me room and nutrients to grow, I too will one day help pave the path for others to grow and be strong. That comes with time and with resilience, and I can only control the latter.

Resilient I will stay in the face of harsh winds, chilling precipitation, and wildfires.

There are many others I look to as examples, and many I have learned from in my life. I also do my best to support the communities that have been so kind as to provide resources and support to the communities I am a part of. I hope you find it in your heart to support the organizations listed on the next page, as well.

**Inspired by:**

"Promoting Two-Spirit Health and Wellbeing: A Conversation with Two-Spirit Youth Leaders" with Marie Lang, Tunchai Redversi, and Jeffrey Ansloos  
"Activism as Speculative Fiction: Making Change for the Future" with Syrus Marcus Ware

## Indigenous Organizations to Support

### **Gidimt'en Yintah Access**

Gidimt'en, one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation, is fighting pipeline proposals and resisting colonial efforts to "work" on Wet'suwet'en lands without consent.

<https://www.yintahaccess.com/>

### **Indigenous Peoples Movement**

A collective of Indigenous groups and peoples from all over the world who work together to stand against issues that affect their lands, peoples, and cultures.

<https://indigenouspeoplesmovement.com/>

### **2-Spirited People of The 1st Nations**

An organization that provides support and counselling for Two-Spirit Indigenous folks who are living with HIV/AIDS.

<http://www.2spirits.com/index.html>

### **Idle No More**

A network of Indigenous people based in Canada (and beyond) who have organized this social movement to protect Indigenous rights as well as land, water, and sky.

<https://idlenomore.ca/>

### **ODE: Remembered Voices**

An Indigenous Two-Spirit LGBTQIAP+ group that provides cultural programming and safe spaces for youth to gather in Toronto.

<https://www.facebook.com/ODE2S/>

### **Black Lives Matter**

A group that actively works to dismantle anti-Black racism and its murderous effects on Black people. Make sure to donate to your local branch.

<https://blacklivesmatter.ca/>

### **APAA: Africans in Partnership Against AIDS**

This group provides support, outreach, and education services for African people living with HIV/AIDS in Toronto.

<https://www.apaa.ca/>

### **SNaPCo: Solutions Not Punishments Coalition**

A Black trans and queer led organization that works to bolster community and advocates for an end to mass incarceration/criminalization and gender-based violence.

<https://www.snap4freedom.org/about>

### **Not Another Black Life**

A Toronto-based activist group that regularly posts resources, provides funds to community members, and shares information on Black activism.

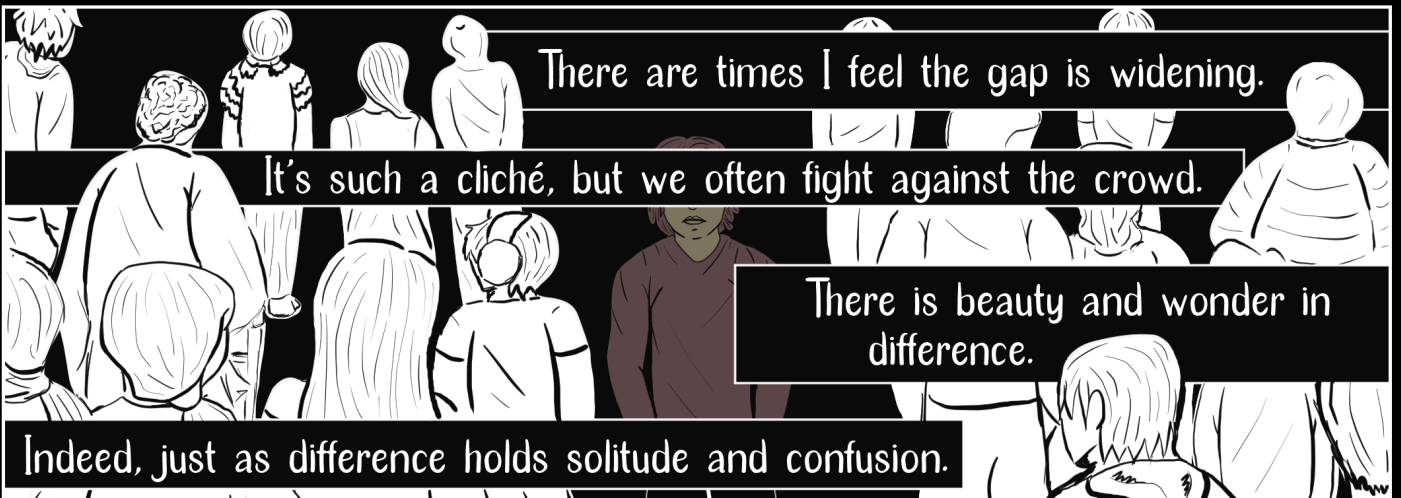
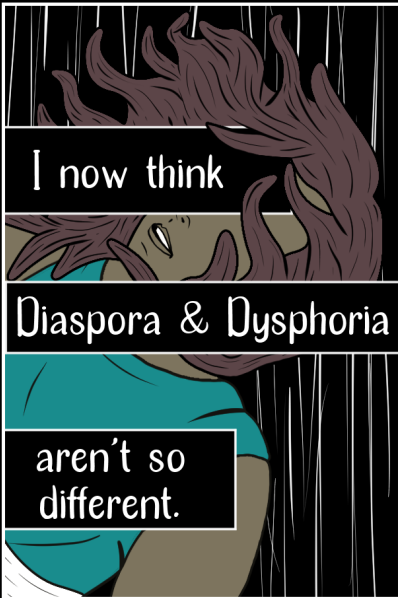
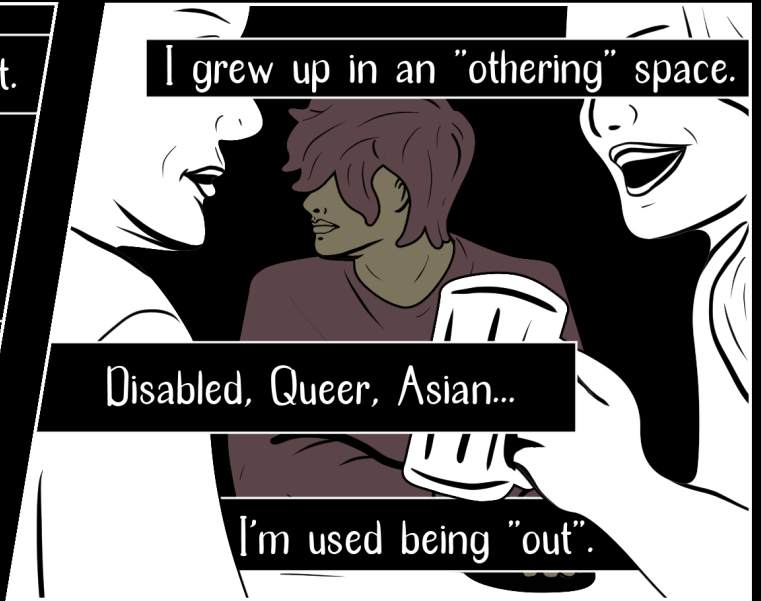
<https://linktr.ee/notanotherblacklife>

### **Black CAP: Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention**

Black CAP provides support and outreach services for Black LGBTQ+ folks living with HIV/AIDS in Toronto.

<http://black-cap.com/>

## Black-Led Organizations to Support





It might be obvious to some, but

only recently, I've realized

I'm not lost at all.

It took a while, but there are

wonderful communities

wherein  
some...

understand  
how I feel.

Diaspora is a cultural disconnect

Dysphoria, more bodily

At this point, I know

that this is okay

because I'm not alone, and  
disconnect can lead

to bountiful connections and growth.

Defying disconnect is a  
way to build community.

I am under the belief that Diaspora is inherently queer: it is a strange experience, both culturally and within oneself, and is something that can be more easily navigated with a communicative, open community.

We need to remember that connections of love, respect, and care can literally keep people alive.

I grew up in and around the American South, surrounded by white colonists who saw me as both a threat and an exotic being. I'm sure many queer Asian folks can relate, whether it be through experiences of the model minority myth, orientalism, and/or other sorts of racism. It's isolating and confusing, and very harmful to our growth.

Dysphoria was also a regular experience of mine. From literally shouting about how I'm "not a girl" to my sixth grade English class to getting into fights with my parents about preconceived gender norms and how I want to defy them, I grew up unsure of the type of support I needed and hoped to get.

Even now, within queer organizations, I am often the "token" Asian, if not the token person of colour. In Asian organizations, I am the "token" non-binary person, if not just generally the token non-male. The ways that diaspora and dysphoria intersect can be both beautiful and insidious, and I am still learning to navigate these systems.

The difference now is that I have support systems; I have other trans and non-binary Asians that I have connected with, people who have all come together to utilize and defy the disconnect we feel to produce knowledge, resources, and spaces for ourselves.

I hope that, if you have not found this support yet but desire it, the resources on the next page can be a good starting point for you.

**Inspired by:**

"Promoting Two-Spirit Health and Wellbeing: A Conversation with Two-Spirit Youth Leaders" with Marie Lang, Tunchai Redversi, and Jeffrey Ansloos  
"Health Equity & Inclusion: Queerspora Project" with Mohamad Altasseh  
"Let's Talk it Out: Sex Without Labels" with Kiarmin Lari and Louis Lin  
"Ambiguous Pandemic Feels" with Rahim Thawer

## General

## Ontario-Based & Queer-Specific

### The 519

A queer Toronto community centre that provides tons of services, resources, and support for queer communities. Programs are run in a variety of languages.  
<https://www.the519.org/>

### Sherbourne Health Centre

This organization holds a number of queer supports, including healthcare to support groups, and many cater specifically to trans and/or BIPOC folks.  
<https://sherbourne.on.ca/>

## Toronto-Based & Queer Asian-Specific

### AQUA: Asian Queer Alliance

An organization that creates programming and supportive spaces for and by queer Asian folks of marginalized genders.  
<https://www.asianqueeralliance.ca/>

### Makulay atbp.

A community group that aims to build community with Filipino/a/x queer, trans, and bakla people in Toronto.  
<https://www.facebook.com/makulay.atbpTO/>

### Trans Lifeline

A trans-led organization that works for all North American trans people and connects them to resources and support.  
<https://translifeline.org/>

## Asian-Specific

### Q-Wave

This grassroots organization mostly focuses on the US, but provides great resources and a space for queer Asians to connect.  
<http://www.q-wave.org/>

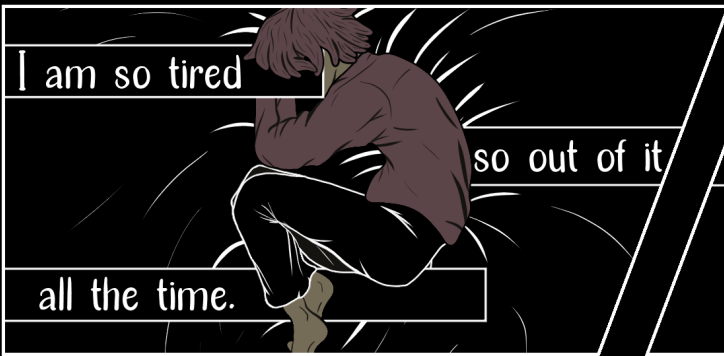
### South Asian Sexual & Mental Health Alliance

This is a great resource for all South Asians in North America in general, and their LGBTQ+ page in particular lists resources for both South Asian U.S. and Canadian folks who are looking for support.  
<https://www.sasmha.org/lgbtq>

## Toronto-Based & Asian-Specific

### Tea Base

While not specifically for queer Asians, Tea Base is extremely queer-friendly and is a community arts space that hosts workshops, leads community events, and advocates for social justice.  
<https://www.myteabase.com/>



I am so tired

so out of it

all the time.



My mind

is filled with so much...

I ask:



Am I being authentic?

Did I actually achieve anything?

Do I actually deserve to be here,  
and am I actually happy?

Why can't I do things I used to do?

Who even am I, really?

and more.



...I am so tired.





But I know we have to remember...

the isolation we feel is purposefully curated.

We are made to feel like we'll never be enough.

We're told that we are not worthy unless we produce something.

And we are to monetize what we do produce.

If we feel pressured, then we have already failed.

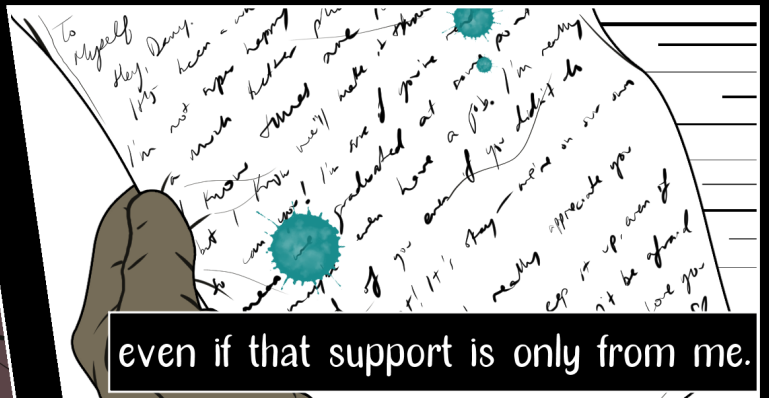
And all of this was purposefully crafted

to make it difficult to fight "power".

I need to remember

that I'll make it through

with help and love



even if that support is only from me.

Mental health resources that are specific to our cultural and personal experiences are rather rare. I personally have only ever faced white therapists, and the only queer therapist I had downplayed a lot of my experiences because they couldn't understand what I had gone through.

We need to keep each other safe and provide support, but how can we do that when community organizations are left to fight for resources with each other? How can we do this when we are deemed expendable, depending on how much funding and resources various institutions are willing to allot to us at any given time?

It's not an accident that finding resources specific to our experiences is hard. It's not an accident that we are often viewed through a lens that is different from the way we wish to be seen. It's not an accident that we are competing for resources that are more abundant than we're supposed to realize. Overpopulation is a myth, and so is the idea that we have to earn our necessities, as if the right to live should be bought and sold.

Not all of us can be out, and not all of us can be who we want to be at any given moment. If that is lost to us, how do we seek resources and connections in safe ways? We should not be forced to come out to seek help; if anything, help should be accessible regardless of where we are.

All this to say that it makes sense if you are unable to seek and/or find the physical and mental health help you need, but that if you can, it is wonderful to seek that help. On the next page are some resources that might be accessible or at least point you in the right direction.

I wish you all the best,  
and I wish so much warmth and joy to you.

**Inspired by:**

"Promoting Two-Spirit Health and Wellbeing: A Conversation with Two-Spirit Youth Leaders" with Marie Lang, Tunchai Redvers, and Jeffrey Ansloos  
"Activism as Speculative Fiction: Making Change for the Future" with Syrus Marcus Ware  
"Ambiguous Pandemic Feels" with Rahim Thawer

## General Canadian-Based

### **MMHRC: Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre**

A great general resource for Canadians looking to get information on various mental health supports in a variety of locations and languages.

<https://multiculturalmentalhealth.ca/>

## Ontario-Based & Queer-Specific

## Toronto-Based & Asian-Specific

### **Umbrella Mental Health Network**

A group of mental health professionals who work to provide supports and resources to the LGBTQIAP2S+ community.

<https://www.umhn.ca/>

### **Hong Fook Mental Health Association**

This association has been serving various Asian communities for many years now. They provide information, support, and services to people and their families to promote mental health.

<https://hongfook.ca/>

### **Egale Canada**

An organization that is known for its counselling, homelessness, and suicide crises services. Not solely dedicated to mental health, but holds fantastic resources for queer youth regardless.

<http://egale.ca/>

### **SAWC: South Asian Women's Centre**

SAWC provides a variety of services such as counselling, advocacy, and crisis intervention in many South Asian languages.

<http://www.sawc.org/programs-services/>

### **LGBT Youthline**

A great way for queer youth to get non-judgemental, confidential, and informed support and resources from other queer youth.

<https://www.youthline.ca/>

### **TCSSA: Toronto Chinese Community Association**

TCSSA helps provide Chinese newcomers and Chinese-Canadian communities support in building stronger communities.

<http://tccsa.on.ca/en/home/>

### **Woori Maum Korean Canadian Mental Health Association**

This organization works to reduce stigma surrounding mental health for the Korean Canadian community.

<https://www.facebook.com/woorimaumtoronto/>

### **AMHC: Asian Mental Health Collective**

AMHC is a great resource for any Asian folks who need mental health support. They list resources for various countries including hotlines, helpful organizations, and therapist directories.

<https://www.asianmhc.org/>

### **Asian Canadian Therapist Directory**

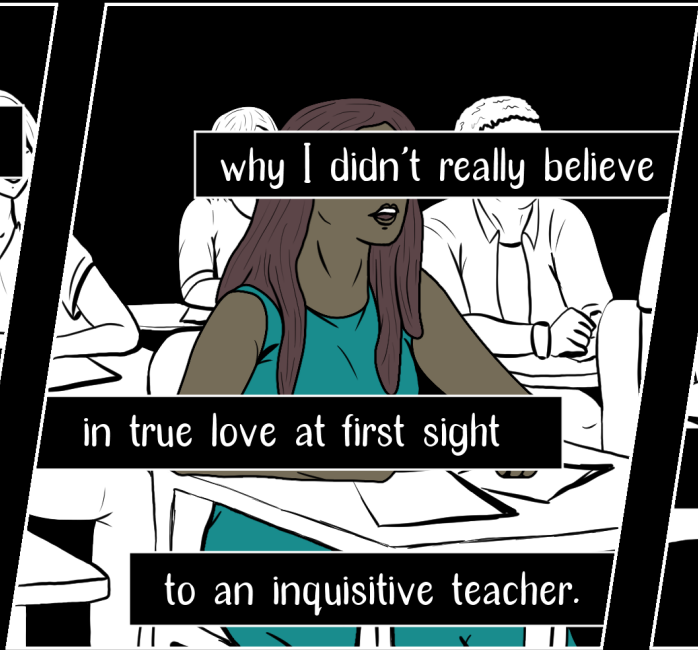
<https://www.asianmhc.org/actd>

## Asian-Specific



I heard snickers

as I explained



why I didn't really believe

in true love at first sight

to an inquisitive teacher.



At the time,

I had no idea

how queer I am.

I'm demisexual, so attraction and love takes time to get to me.

I'm deaf, so I often can't hear whispers of sweet nothings.

Past partners have complained about my bisexuality and genderfluidity, too.

But I'm valid.

As I've grown, I've learned to seek out people who love me as I am and accommodate for me.

Getting to know potential partners is fun.

Finding different and creative ways to communicate is great, too.

Being fluid in gender and sexuality is freeing for me.

It's validating.

Finding pleasure in being myself and having others accept me as I am is absolutely euphoric.



An illustration of two people embracing. The person on the left has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a teal top. The person on the right has short, dark hair and is wearing a dark purple top. The background is dark. Several white text boxes with black borders are overlaid on the image, connected by a white line that follows the path of the embrace. The text boxes contain various statements about intimacy and self-care.

It's slow going, but I'm still learning.

Intimacy can be experienced both with others and with your own body.

Learning about your body and what you personally enjoy is an intimate experience.

Intimacy is not inherently scandalous and neither is tending to ourselves. We are worthy of love and care.

Learning how to make connections to get the support we need is also a process in itself. These connections are essential to staying healthy.

Intimacy creates support systems, both within yourself and with others. Learning how to comfortably be you is a lifelong journey. I hope you are on it, wherever you are.

The sexual education I got was lacking in information about a lot of things: consent, contraceptives, STIs, various gender and sexual identities, and much, much more.

But that led to the question--how could I properly educate myself about my body and other intimate experiences (both intimacy with myself and with others) when I didn't even know where to start? How could I properly pursue correct information if I've been told my whole life that the way I identify and love is wrong? How can I ask for my partners to accommodate for me when I don't even know what sorts of things I need?

Thankfully I finally got the courage to ask for resources from other queer Asians and learned a lot from my university courses, but not everyone has access to connections and resources. It's also understandably nerve-wracking asking for the correct information from your doctor when you're not sure if you're ready to come out yet. Especially for diasporic people, it's considerably harder to access health resources when you're still coming to terms with your identity. Language barriers, cultural stigma, and more can hold us back.

It's why it's so important to integrate trans and non-binary Asian folks into multiple levels of sexual (and general) health access. It's a slow but steadily growing movement, and hopefully we are able to safely pursue knowledge about our bodies and intimate experiences from people who have gone through similar things soon. For now, I hope these resources suffice.

**Inspired by:**

"Let's Talk it Out: Sex Without Labels" with Kiarmin Lari and Louis Lin  
"Health Equity & Inclusion: Healthcare Access & Discrimination Among Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Colour" with Berto

"Health Equity & Inclusion: Queerspora Project" with Mohamad Altasseh  
"Leaning Into What You Don't Know -- Preliminary Findings of the Ontario Trans Interweaving Project" with Dane Griffiths & Devon MacFarlane

## Toronto-Based & Asian-Specific

**ACAS: Asian Community AIDS Services** (and by extension, **QTAY: Queer Trans Asian Youth**)  
ACAS provides a variety of services and supports for Asian people living with HIV/AIDS and queer Asian folks.  
<http://acas.org/>

**ASAAP: Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention**  
ASAAP provides multilingual and culturally appropriate resources for South Asians living with HIV/AIDS and queer South Asian folks.  
<https://www.asaap.ca/>

## Ontario-Based

**Sexual Health Ontario**  
A comprehensive website with information about sexual health resources that also has a live chat feature to answer any questions you may have.  
<https://www.sexualhealthontario.ca/en/home>

**Hassle-Free Clinic**  
A trans-positive sexual health clinic that provides various services and resources both in-person and on their website.  
<http://hasslefreeclinic.org/>

**Maggie's Toronto**  
A place for sex workers of all genders and backgrounds to get resources and support in order to work with safety and dignity.  
<http://maggiestoronto.ca/>

## General

**Scarleteen**  
A grassroots organization that focuses on sexual health and relationship education, and provides youth with services and resources.  
<https://www.scarleteen.com/>

**Autostraddle**  
A website with tons of articles for queer women, trans, and non-binary folks about sex and dating.  
<https://www.autostraddle.com/>

**Planned Parenthood**  
Along with family planning services, Planned Parenthood offers queer-friendly general and sexual health services.  
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>  
**Planned Parenthood Toronto**  
<http://ppt.on.ca/services/>


I dream of when

I can finally be free  
to explore these things  
without compromising anything  
about myself or what I love.

But for now, I  
will keep going



and  
growing.



I hope you can or are  
doing the same.

Much love  
to you, friend.

FIN.

You've made it here.

Whether you're like me and tend to flip to the end of the book quickly  
or you actually read through it all--

Thank you.

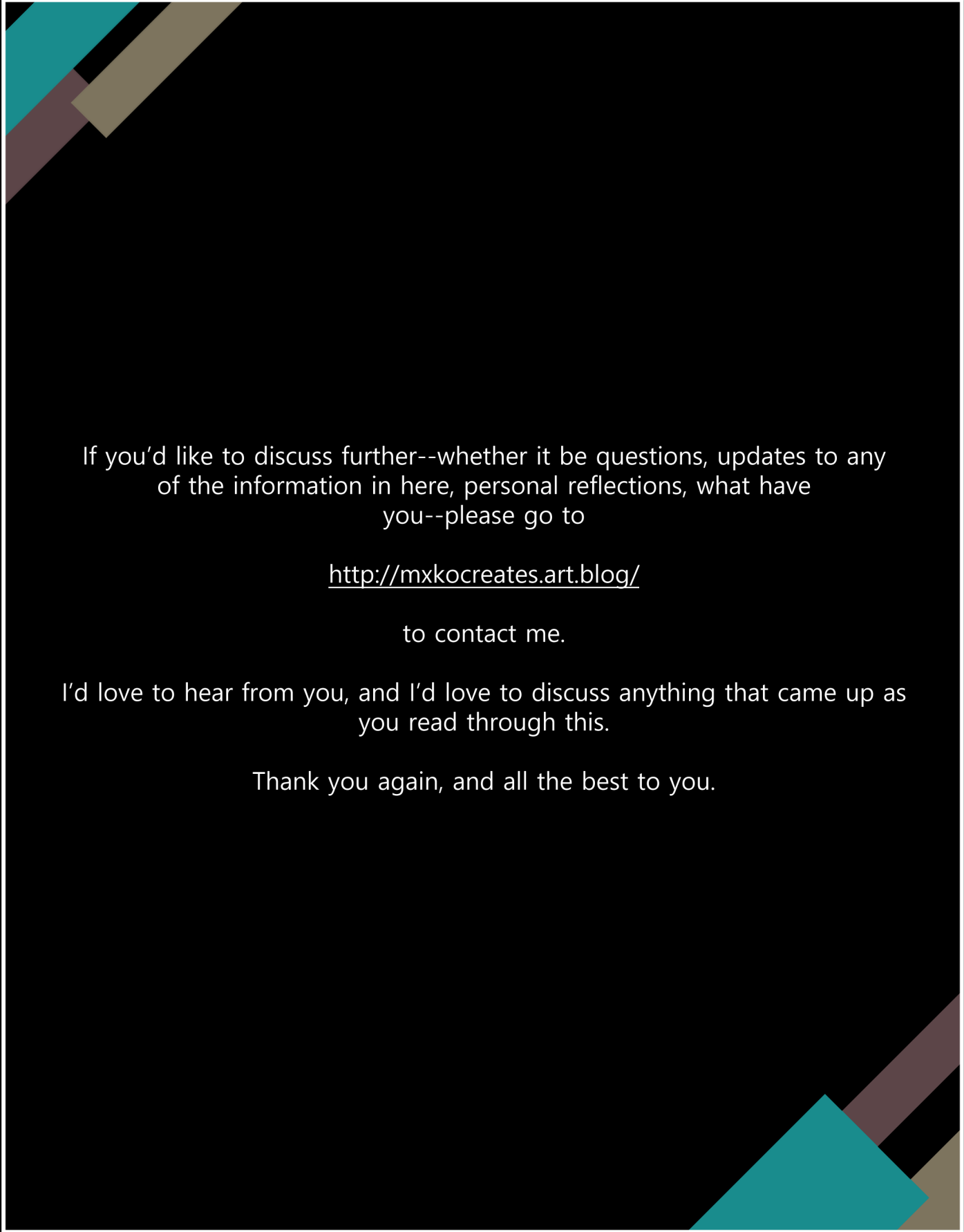
I hope my vulnerability and desire to share has helped you in some way,  
and I hope the resources included also start you on your way to getting  
the support and care you need.

I write this in the middle of a pandemic as an immunosuppressed person,  
and I mean it when I say

You deserve so much love, care, and respect.

I hope you get it, even when times are hard, as they are now.  
I hope you are someday able to get to a place where you can be  
yourself, even if you're currently in a place that is unaccepting.  
I hope you find community, even in a time of isolation.

So much love to you.



If you'd like to discuss further--whether it be questions, updates to any of the information in here, personal reflections, what have you--please go to

<http://mxkocreates.art.blog/>

to contact me.

I'd love to hear from you, and I'd love to discuss anything that came up as you read through this.

Thank you again, and all the best to you.

