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Care Is the Point

“Care is infrastructure.” This became the rallying cry for funding social programs in the first years of the Biden presidency, and there was hope that this framing would win over politicians and influencers in the center. But now that [the Inflation Reduction Act has excluded care work](#), we should openly discuss what ‘care as infrastructure’ implies about our human experience – and share ideas about more liberatory futures.

Infrastructure scaffolds and supports what’s truly important. Roads and bridges are thanklessly driven over. Pipes move what society needs to live and function, and they get replaced once they burst. Windmills are strategically stood up to spin and spin. Should we extend the metaphor to care, care work, and the people who care for our children, for our elderly, for all of us? We believe it is time to evolve past the infrastructure narrative for care work. People are not made of concrete – we are not means to ends, but ends in and of ourselves. Put plainly: it is not okay to *use people*.

‘Care as infrastructure’ tracks with the theory of social reproduction, which does offer a helpful analysis of the mess we are in together. Social reproduction is all the work done by women and non-women to supply and maintain the labor force necessary for production in a capitalist economy. [Sylvia Federici](#)’s writing on the global chain of care sheds more light on the reality and harms of racial capitalism. Consider a mother in an artificially poor country contributing free labor, during pregnancy and over decades, to give birth to, nurture, and raise two daughters. Both daughters then travel away from home and community to be paid sub-living wages to care for aging adults in a richer-by-GDP country. Their care work enables local workers in prime production years to work long hours optimizing for corporate profit.

Our current systems recruit and position caregivers, fund programs, and support care work only to the extent needed for capitalist production, ultimately advancing the interests of those in power. We all suffer these conditions and transactions, alienated from family, community, and our caring selves. Social reproduction serving only capitalist production also strips care of its revolutionary potential. This is our reality today, but we do not need to accept it for tomorrow.

What if we organized around care as the point? Can we imagine economies in service of communities full of care, love, creativity, and joy? Privatizing and nationalizing care are not our only options – community-based collectives could be supported by gifts from all of us, to all of us (also known as public funding!). Women of the Black Panther Party ran the [Free Breakfast for Children Program](#) as a matter of survival, showing what is possible when communities self-organize. We can learn from doula collectives like [Aunties on the Road](#), Indigenous full-spectrum

doulas in Ottawa working to secure reproductive justice for Indigenous youth.

We benefit from care when we give it, when we receive it, and when it is happening around us. Care is something to be elevated, celebrated, designed for, and valued. More of us forming non-transactional relationships with our family members and neighbors could have transformative effects on social isolation, caregiver ‘shortages’, mental health (across all age groups), true public safety, living and working conditions for families, and community-level culture.

Should each of us and each of our families serve the economy – or should the economy serve us and our relationships? There is a beautiful future where care is the point of it all.

Toward Communities of Care >



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