

Feminist Joycast Episode 1: What is Joy?

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Hello all! Welcome to Feminist Joycast, our very first episode. My name is Kiar. I use they/them pronouns and I'll be your host for today. So this is a podcast that is created and produced by the Gender Justice League at the University of Colorado Boulder. Basically, we are student activists studying Women and Gender Studies. So this is technically a class project, but hopefully, you know, it'll be something that we're passionate enough about to continue doing.

So yeah to kick this off: Why are we making this podcast in the first place?

So we've been -- it's October 2020, so we've been in coronavirus quarantine from the US perspective for about six months. And so we felt we needed a more communal outlet for our activism. So we turned to the internet and we turned to things like our Instagram and we're trying out a Zine, we're trying out a blog, lots of stuff. We decided we really needed an outlet for our passions during this time. So we're trying out some new things that bring us joy.

So today's topic on our first episode of Feminist Joycast is: what is joy?

We want to sort of set up the framework for the podcast and just get a sense for you know what we're really trying to do in the first place.

So I wanted to set up that framework for what joy is using Audre Lorde's works "Uses of the Erotic" and "Uses of Anger" because I feel they're really seminal pieces to understanding the relationship between social justice and joy, so let's begin with some quotes from "Uses of the Erotic." So Audre Lorde states that "the erotic is a resource within each of us... [it] offers a well of replenishing and provocative force." So what I really want to point out with this one, is that our joy creates our power and it creates a well within us to pull from and you know to push from to some degree; to push against oppression, to push against how things exist in the world. And so we really just want to emphasize joy at this time and emphasize that it is social justice and activist work to focus on our own joys.

Another quote, "We have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge". So I feel personally that a lot of people think activism has to be a very rationality based approach and very logical approach where you know, if we're not getting something done in a specified amount of time that it's not activism, that we're not doing the work, and I just really want to emphasize that you know, maybe when your body is telling you something, when your body is saying "hey, I'm tired. I need to rest," that can also be activism because it's feeding into your future sustainability and your future actions.

Audre Lorde also states that "once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion, we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closest to that fullness." So in short, you know, what makes your soul orgasm? What gives you that rush of serotonin when you do it, what makes you feel very full and very content at the end the day? And you know, once you really find that space where you know that you're very content, very satisfied with what's going on, then you can hang on to that and we can really understand what we're willing to handle and what we're not.

So really, from this framework, I want us to understand like why even make a joycast? So Lorde states that "the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding." So we want to be able to share our joys as student activists and as people so that other people can feel that they have permission to feel joy but also sort of understand issues better rather than you know, looking at just statistics or you know, the horrific news of the day we can come together and talk about things that we may have never heard of but are really worth enjoying and gaining things from and still doing the work at the same time.

Lorde also says "that deep and irreplaceable knowledge of my capacity for joy comes to demand from all of my life that it be lived within the knowledge that such satisfaction is possible" and here I think she's really saying we will not allow ourselves to be oppressed if we're fully awakened and committed to our joy. So I think one of the

key steps in becoming an activist, you know, if there is such a thing as a concrete activist, one of those key steps is recognizing that there is a better world out there and recognizing that it's not always doom and gloom. It's "now sucks and we can do something about that." And so when we really understand what we want for ourselves and what we want for the world we can create that.

Now I wanted to turn to Lorde's "Uses of Anger". So this is a little bit more about how we can derive power from anger and you might be wondering, "Why is this on a podcast about joy?" Well, all in due time. So I think personally that anger really can feed into joy but I'll let Audre Lorde say it -- "everything can be used except what is wasteful." So here what I'm picking up from this is that, it's not that you should stay in anger to drive yourself always because obviously that isn't sustainable, but when anger comes up organically we should acknowledge it and where it comes from. If we're angry about injustice, maybe we should recognize that we're passionate about that and that we have the power to do something about it.

She also states that "anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our visions and our future is a liberating and strengthening act." So what I really want to take from this is that, in combination with joy, our anger can sort of be a momentum generating force in our lives to create that brighter future that we know we can feel joy from. And so what I really want to understand before we really launch into this podcast is that you know, people don't often consider the range of emotions behind joy. You know, for example me personally, I derive joy by turning my anger at injustice into movement towards change. You know, I definitely have my joyful moments of like dancing like nobody's looking, and at the same time I also have joy from that anger. I was recently scrolling Twitter, obviously, because that's all we do anymore. I was recently scrolling Twitter and I found that there were a lot of tweets which were really bothering me because they were very exclusionary towards the queer community, and that motivated me to sort of want to work on my research project because I really wanted to see a more just world for the queer community. And so I feel like I felt joy in that moment, even though I was so pissed because I knew that I had the power to make change and I had reinvigorated my commitment to this research project to make change.

And I just want to emphasize, joy is so important because like Audre Lorde was saying, you can't pour from an empty cup. You need to have somewhere to pour from, you need to have a source of rest and comfort and passion; you need to feel like a whole person before you can offer yourself to other people sometimes.

So, why am I passionate about this?

Well, obviously as you can tell I'm passionate about different ways of showing joy, and that's because, number one: neurodiverse people may get joy from different places than neurotypical people. So for example, I struggle with depression and anxiety and so, you know my relationship to the chemical processes that create joy or that express joy in our bodies is different than other people's. And so, when I feel real ecstasy type of joy, it's really a special moment for me. But I also gained that from somewhere that's completely different from someone who's never had depression. And so I just really want to bring to light that there are many ways to live with that.

Another element of my passion for this is that what joy is being made available to us is changing in the world -- obviously with the coronavirus, you know, we're maybe losing the joy of connecting with our friends in person. But you know, we also gain some joys and recognize what joys we already had and so we should really hang on to what we have so that we don't, you know, completely fall off the wagon when joy is denied from us in some ways. And you know, this isn't to say that we should always be happy and we should always be joyful because I think obviously, you know, emotions that aren't so constantly positive are also very necessary for our journey, but that we we do need joy at times to have something to replenish us.

And the last reason that I really want to emphasize why I'm passionate about different ways of showing joy is because I used to personally feel very ashamed about how my anger fed my joy because I felt like that made me a very angry person, and I don't want anyone to feel ashamed of what feeds them because you know, as long as I'm not projecting that anger onto someone else and you know harming them and harming their Joy then why not, you know, why not jump into it and embrace it and, you know, recognize that it's not sustainable at moments, but also recognize that sometimes it's all we can do to feel that joy.

So if you're interested in engaging with this topic further, I would obviously suggest reading Audre Lorde's essays on the uses of the erotic and uses of anger. They are amazing. They teach so much about social justice

and activism and I think honestly diving into anything Audre Lorde would be recommended by anyone who's going to host the podcast. Secondly, I would also recommend reading adrienne marie brown's "Pleasure Activism." By now, you've probably heard of it. It's pretty big now. It covers a lot of ground on connecting activism to what brings us joy, and it does that in a lot of different ways with a lot of different authors including Audre Lorde. So if you pick that book up you will get "Uses of the Erotic" away. And the last thing I want to recommend is to really do the work of discovering what brings you joy and energy to do the work of social justice or any work that feels necessary to you. So what I mean by that is really sitting down, and recognizing when something joyful comes up for you or when something, some great passion comes up for you, remembering that and coming back to that and really thinking about, you know, being intentional and mindful about what energy we get from our actions and activism? And so one way I would recommend doing that is checking out our Instagram, you know, shameless self-promotion, checking out our Instagram @CU_genderjusticeleague for some ideas on how to practice self-care and activism. We often post, at least once a week, we post a more lighthearted joy-based post to kind of keep it fun, keep it playful. Just as a closing note, I would recommend not letting anyone tell you it's wrong to be excited about things you enjoy, you know, as long as you aren't hurting yourself or others go for it really dive into joy dive into you know, don't be afraid to jump into things that really bring you passion and bring you happiness.

So yeah with that thought, thanks for joining us on Feminist Joycast and we hope to see you soon. Bye y'all.