



Afterword: Thank You

Thanks to each of you for pausing for a moment, putting down your struggle, taking a breath, and hearing that you are okay just as you are right now.

Thanks to each of you who leaves behind the numbing blanket of denial to explore your individual history of abuse and trauma. Thank you for stepping away from the consensus of the crowd to stand shakily in your own island of truth. Thank you for being willing to feel alone there, and know that many of us cheer you on from our own truth islands. Thank you for breathing through terror.

Thanks to each of you who finds steadiness in knowing and understanding and being certain, and is also grimly patient with uncertainty and not knowing and bewilderment. Thank you for trudging through transitions one moment at a time, allowing yourself to live into your new shape and skills and environment as slowly or as quickly as the process

needs to happen.

Thanks to each of you who is in conversation with shame, discerning past shame from present, yours from other people's. Even though shame may silence you or double you over in pain at times, thank you for being willing to be vulnerable and visible in the humble grandeur of your authentic self.

Thanks to each of you who is harnessing anger, letting it flow without flooding you, choosing words and actions with care rather than spraying anger at everyone around you. Thank you for letting anger support your boundaries and fuel your resistance.

Thanks to each of you for defiantly finding joy, for expanding into your full self and savoring delight wherever you find it. Thank you for connecting warmly and loving with fierce protectiveness.

Thanks to each of you who wields power collaboratively, mindful of everyone who is affected. Thank you for finding the middle way of compassion, neither avoiding power nor becoming lost in it. For being open to the aches of the world, for including other points of view, thank you.

Thanks to each of you who is doing the work of acknowledging privilege and dismantling racism and white supremacy. Thank you for taking the next step in front of you: reading, learning, listening, speaking, supporting, leading. Thank you for doing activist work privately, publicly, and politically.

Thanks to each of you who is wearing a mask during the pandemic, despite the awkwardness and discomfort and fogged glasses. Thank you for protecting the people around you as well as yourself. Thank you for taking action to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and shorten the pandemic for all of

us. Thank you for specifically, concretely saving lives.

Thanks to each of you who is sitting with the pain of isolation, gritting your teeth, wailing aloud sometimes, remembering all the other times you have been isolated and wondering if you did all that healing for this? Thank you for building your capacity to tolerate discomfort and pain without rushing to relieve it. Thank you for having the strength to get through, even though I'm sorry you had to go through all the struggles that built your strength.

Thanks to each of you, raw with stress and grief, who knows that we are all raw and still manages to be kind. For nodding from the sidewalk, for putting a little extra warmth into transactions at the store, for making sure people around you have what they need, for mending what you can reach, thank you.

Thanks to each of you for working so hard to be a good person. You are succeeding, minute by minute. Yes, you, especially if you think that I could not possibly mean you. There is no endpoint, no "good person" badge to pin to your shirt or post online, just the ongoing effort. Thank you for caring for the world. Thank you for caring for yourself.

Thank you for embodying hope.