What we lost in 2016

Forward

The Trump era has been marked by cruelty, violence, apathy, and the resurgence of evil ideologies to the forefront: fascists are unafraid to walk the streets, oligarchs are trying to take everything they can before fleeing to Mars, and millions of people don't seem to care.

What's it like to live in this time? Not just the moments of immediate danger but the day to day wearing down from always being afraid, never feeling safe.

How has it been effecting *you?* Have you been finding yourself feeling like there's no point to anything? That the world is ending so your job, your hobbies, your

dreams are pointless?

Have you lost touch with friends because you're too anxious? Have you been afraid of leaving the country lest you not be let back in? Do you go out in public spaces anymore?

Can you feel yourself changing from the constant fight against despair? Do you ever feel like it's twisting you into someone else?

I think everyone I've talked to has been feeling like this. Feeling like they're battling against nihilism and suicidality.

What you're reading are the words of a

number of people who've messaged me to share what they've been feeling, how things have changed, and what they feel like they've lost.

"Why?" is a reasonable question to ask. "Surely this is just an exercise in despair itself?"

But I don't think it is. Evil people bring nihilism like fleas carrying plague. We need to diagnose the disease, understand its symptoms. The first step is collecting these stories so that we can feel less alone. The next step is getting angry and fighting.

1

I'm angrier than I used to be

I have difficulty doing anything that doesn't feel like it's contributing to some kind of bigger goal or good

I don't **enjoy** things

I don't read for pleasure

I rarely play videogames for pleasure but rather distraction

I feel way less likely to give someone benefit of the doubt

I can't picture being alive in 10 years

I'm way more cynical about people

I don't feel comfortable sitting outside

I've been reading up on what I'm allowed to carry for self-defense

I tense up when kids references memes that started on 4chan

I've lost touch with friends

because everyone else is doing just as badly that I feel like I have nothing to give

I wonder if it's responsible or cowardly that I don't drop everything and fight

I feel like my sense of touch has numbed

2

I keep having anxiety attacks over concentration camps. Not even useful anger just

paralyzing fear. Shutting down.

I don't feel safe in my area. I live in an area where Confederate flags and Blue Lives Matter shit is normal and I don't feel safe.

I've avoided getting diagnoses for illnesses that I know I have because I don't know how long the pre existing conditions protections will stay

It's not even shocking anymore. It's just the numbing sadness and the panic. It's just distracting myself to stay alive and feeling guilty when I do.

It's... I'm not sure I have a future, anymore.

I'm not sure anyone does.

3

I've been patrolling the edges of my social spaces to try to keep assholes away. Block, sometimes report. Meeting new people is scary, not fun. What if this one is another AK-47 Guy?

I don't always want to retweet my friends, because what if an asshole is following me and I just retweeted them into a hostile space?

TATUNO

4

I spent my term in undergrad studying history.

It was really fulfilling when I first started out around 2015, and it kind of gave me a sense of purpose and identity I'd been missing out on.

This administration's inability to address global warming completely changed my attitude towards the field by my senior year, and at this point I can't see myself getting any kind of graduate level history education.

I can't see a point in writing history when, considering the scope of the crisis, it's really likely that no one will be around to learn from it in the near future.

And like, I've tried to talk with my professors about it, it feels like none of them get it. It feels like they have no frame of reference, and it always seems like most of them get the impression I'm worried about notoriety.

Really I guess I'm not totally hopeless on a day to day level, I like to think I'm just kind of numb about the whole thing.

But it is enough to get me to think about how I'm spending my twenties.

Like, why go to grad school for anything analytical

if everything I put out feels kind of pointless and ephemeral?

5

As a transwoman, married to a transman, we do not get out of the house alone much

We go together, armed and alert.

We go together, armed and alert. We cannot just go and enjoy a movie or concert,

because we need to be alert to threats. Anti-LGBT sentiment is on the rise in TX, and we're seriously considering a move

6

In the past three years, I've had to talk a few different friends out of self harm and suicide

But the hard part comes from keeping up the conviction to tell them that things will get better,

that there's enough to live for that ending their lives would be a mistake.

It's getting harder to not feel like maybe they have a right to end their suffering.

I'm still holding on, and doing what I can to be there for them,

but the longer this goes on, the heavier that task becomes.

7

Climate change is a constant dread now.

I've stopped reading about it, becaues I make myself sick.

I don't understand the depth of evil that is happening, and how people can simply decide to ignore it.

8

Mostly, I just feel exhausted. I see us failing to tackle climate change.

I see the left fighting with the left. I see us completely failing to dismantle the systems that have ended us up here.

And

I just feel so very tired.

I know it's not just the rise of fascism and runwaway climate change that has me feeling this way.

My international move isn't complete, and I've not yet a permanent address. I've lost family members and friends.

My brain chemistry isn't always kind to me.

But world events don't make it any easier. It's hard to look forward to things.

I used to always tell people how humanity as a whole is getting *so much better*, even if western nations aren't.

Trying to see human progress feels like looking through lenses coated in grime.

And so I've found I've hunkered down, and what really worries me is that I find it harder to care about the future of humanity.

It feels exhausting, and so often it feels like my efforts are doing so little.

It's easier to just hide in a game or sell my labour.

While part of me knows that stabilising my life is important to make an impact, I'm also worried that it'll stabilise into something where work takes up my attention.

Where Netflix and games and friends keep me distracted. Where I stop caring for humanity because I'm doing okay.

I miss that energetic spark. That will to fight and improve. I worry that I'm worn out, and I'm just going to throw in the towel.

9

I don't write stories anymore. I can't envision a future where they would matter.

I don't enjoy the outdoors. I can't stop thinking about how it's all going to die.

I can't appreciate small things. I feel guilty allowing myself a moment of peace.

I throw myself into projects without regard for my mental health

because it feels like there's so little time left.

I stopped having the mental energy to cope with my trauma and anxiety. I stopped believing I had intrusive thoughts,

and started believing everything my brain told me was real

Feeling small and scared and powerless all the time feels like I'm back in my abusive childhood

I live in a haze of trauma with no way to escape. I don't believe I matter.

I don't believe I have any way to fight.

I don't believe I have any control over myself or my own life.

10

Before art, I was working on my degree in astrophysics and aeronautics.

I saw how the world is rapidly heading towards an oblivion that we've seemingly chosen to ignore,

and abandonded any hope for living long enough to see my projects come to fruition.

I came out as trans in 2015. At first, things were difficult in the sense that no one quite listened to me with the same confidence or trust that they used to.

Now I have a genuine fear for my life every time I walk out the door. Every morning I make the trek to school or go to the store I wonder if today will be my last day.

As someone who was assaulted, repeatedly, the recent outing of abusers and their defenses

have been nothing less than scarring. I can barely wrap my mind around it

As for hobbies, they're my only escape left. Brief moments of the day where I can be someone else, somewhere else.

Because facing a conquerable evil, regardless of how terrifying, is somehow more relaxing than

knowing an ignorant fascist with a gun might end your whole world without a moment's notice.

All of this…often feels like too much.

More times than I care to admit I wonder if I should try to kill myself again,

because somehow that feels like a better pill to swallow than all of this.

Holding onto hope

I don't know if you saw something of yourself in the words of all the contributors to this project. I'm guessing at least some of it resonated, some of the despair and fear and hurt hit home.

I hope this helps you feel less alone, less like you're bearing the weight of the world or a prophecy of the end times.

But you might be asking "if so many of us feel this way, why do we keep going?"

My answer is that I don't believe in determinism.

What I mean is that not only do I think nothing is destined in a mystical sense I believe we *always* have choices: all of us.

That's why I think there's still hope and why I think nihilism is so dangerous. It's not determined that the fascists will take over America or that climate change will destroy everything we love.

We can still do so much. There's so many opportunities to make differences large and small. Recently, ICE attempted to kidnap people on their "to deport" list without any pretense of due process. They failed spectacularly. Why? Because neighborhoods fought back and people protected each other.

Climate scientsts *do* have plans to try and protect the environment and one of the biggest obstacles they face is climate despair, where people think it's already too late so they're not fighting for their governments to do what needs to be done.

We need to protect each other. We need to organize. Maybe that means you can be a part of a general strike. Maybe it means you protect your friends from La Migra or the Proud Boys. Maybe it means you just listen to the people in your life who are hurting. Maybe it means you start sharing your hurt.

No matter what, we need each other & we need to not give up.

Thank you so much for reading this zine and sharing in this with us.

— Clarissa Littler

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