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# SOLIDARITY IS A LOVE VERB IN ACTION: REVOLUTIONARY CAPACITY TO BE CRITICAL OF OURSELVES

DJ Kuttin Kandi



**F**irst of all, I am really honored to be here—as I sit upon the occupied territory of Kumeyaay land. I am honored that I am trusted to be there, to be invited into this space—your space.

And trust is a word I do not take lightly. Because as an Organizer—our trust matters to us—we know this, as there is surveillance amongst our own people, we know this as a people who been colonized, where we have gone through that intergenerational trauma that gives us good reason not to trust—because we have been lied to—our ancestors before us have been lied to, they have been violently and brutally murdered, tortured.

There is good reason not to trust.

So when people give me their trust—I value it tremendously.

## **Because Trust = Solidarity.**

And both trust and solidarity are built by relationships; it's built in deep profound love in someone and in that relationship, that friendship we have taken time to nurture and carry through over time.

And these friendships I have with Kirin, with Jojo, with Mark, with Nicole—are a deep profound love I cannot even begin to describe.

## **Solidarity is a love verb in action.**

Because even when we do not know someone—we lean into that trust that my dear friend Adrienne Maree Brown speaks of in her core emergent strategy principles, **“Trust, and the people will become trustworthy.”**

And so we trust— and we trust and we trust . . . in hopes that we can build relationships.

I say all this because as a non-degreed person—I tell you—that you don't need to speak all the social justice language or academic jargon for

you to understand **humanization**, although I have learned it (academic jargon), studied it, can articulate it for you, or recite whole paragraphs on Marxism or Fanon or Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Chandra Mohanty, Paul Kramer or Dylan Rodriguez.

But—

Literally—all it takes is—the capacity to love our people whole. But not just any holistic love—but a love that has the revolutionary capacity to feel and provide revolutionary care. The revolutionary capacity to believe someone when they say they have been harmed, the critical consciousness capacity to take the hard truth about yourself when someone is calling you in/or calling you out to tell you, and literally in tears—**“Listen to me, you have harmed me, you are oppressing my people . . . you are appropriating my culture . . . romanticizing my people . . . as though I am not here . . . as though I am in the past . . . as though I am no longer here. My people are here . . .”**

All it takes is harnessing the **revolutionary capacity** to be critical of ourselves, the revolutionary capacity to want to learn—to seek, to know—to build that critical consciousness to do right by the people we say we love. The people we say that we are doing “justice” for—the critical consciousness capacity to listen to the most vulnerable—to believe the people from the margins within the margins; **not to call them “gate-keepers”** when they are simply naming the dignity, the respect, the humanization they deserve.

### **This is how we build trust.**

Because I do not know everything. I literally fk up all the time. I mess up. But if I have worked on **deepening my relationships**—I trust that I will be called in/or even called out because I would have worked authentically to rectify, truthfully name my learning edge—to know better and do better.

**“Solidarity”**—a word that I just don’t throw around either.

As both an Artist and as an Organizer who has traveled worldwide for two decades, now, I have been to a lot of countries. But one thing I have always done as I traveled was to always make sure I do what I do here, which is to always build with the people on the ground—and listen to the most impacted and vulnerable. Here is what I learned from 25+ years of traveling country to country—The asks by people from our homeland and other countries are **specific** and it matters.

At the same time what we must remember is that as we return to where we reside on these stolen lands—we still have privileges and power.

Indigenous Peoples everywhere—including here in the states—are constantly erased, excluded, and lumped with other identities and origins when they have their own creation stories.

We must navigate how we speak up, when we take up space, when we need to move back. It matters how, it matters when, it matters why, and it matters what. It won't all look the same.

While we may connect with folk from their homelands, when we get back to these stolen lands we still have those privileges—there are Indigenous Peoples here—if we're not building with them, learning from Indigenous Peoples here on these current stolen lands—then it is a disrespect to the asks of what Indigenous Peoples and Tribes ask of us, back in the homeland. I get people wanting to know of their roots and lineages, and perhaps connections to Indigenous roots lost, forgotten. Perhaps, we may never know. But privilege and power is a real thing—and with Indigenous Peoples being more than just an identity but an actual Politicized, Lived identity and experience that our own current lives have not and currently do not experience—to be taking up space in ideas and notions and romanticization of a westernized capitalistic, individualist, personal concept of decolonization, a westernized concept of what it means to “honor” our roots and lineage is, well—saviorism . . . Matt Damon type Hollywood bullshit. Like Mark called—white people shit.

To Decolonize—we must resist the entire system—against the settler colonial, patriarchal, racist, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous system. That is decolonization.

I say it again—Solidarity is a love verb in action.

So there are questions i ask for people who say they are in solidarity:

- **Who are you building with here in the states of Indigenous Peoples?**
- **Who are you connecting with here?**

**How are you taking up action in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and their Indigenous sovereignty, more than just rituals and the props and the visit to an imagined past that we romanticize—that we do not experience the same kind of lived experience of oppression that Indigenous Peoples face both here in the Philippines and in the Diaspora?**

**Dr. Dylan Rodriguez** named “Filipino Americanisms,” which really speaks to how the haunting of the experiences of the Philippine-American war and imperialism in our homeland—has brought in this desiring the recognition, an embracing and romanticization of settlement,

immigration, and an “American” redemption, a ritualistic performance of a moral allegiance.

To deny this kind of Filipino Americanism, romanticization—is a failure to recognize the “arrested raciality,” in which I quote Dylan, that “displaces, exoticizes, and/or postpones” a willingness or even capacity to conceptualize “race” as a central structure of subject formation and social organization.

**You see, solidarity means that we must name things . . .**

Scot Nakagawa stated over a decade ago that anti-blackness and anti-Black racism is the blueprint and the fulcrum of white supremacy and how it functions. Dr. Connie Wun had shared at one of our People’s Collective for Justice and Liberation town halls that, **“anti-Asian Racism exists and is made possible by anti-Blackness and anti-indigeneity.”** She has also shared that anti-Blackness is its own framing in itself—violent, brutal . . . enslavement of Black people—and racial capitalism needed anti-Blackness to exist. **To this i also add**—anti-indigeneity as its own framing . . . and white supremacy heteropatriarchy needed genocide to happen against Indigenous Peoples—not just here in the states but globally in order to conquer and to build Empire . . .

**This is anti-Indigeneity. This is anti-Blackness.**

And this is STILL happening. Today. This is not even just in the past. This is right here. Right now. Especially with the Terror Law in the Philippines. An experience I cannot understand or experience because I am—right here, right now, in these stolen lands.

So when we talk about solidarity, we must be able to name these things—Because when we name that, when we speak that truth, and be honest about our own privileges and power because we do not hold the same current lived experiences—

Then we can finally get to a place of what it means to decenter ourselves so we can actually be in solidarity.

To decenter means that we begin the work of addressing the ways in which we have been, conditioned to be—and currently are—anti-Black, and that we have already perpetuated and currently are still perpetuating anti-Black racism and already are being anti-Indigenous.

As I’ve shared before—we must stop with the guilt and the defensiveness, as Audre Lorde told us, **“guilt and defensiveness are bricks on a wall against which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures.”**

**It is when we are guilty, defensive, apolitical, silent, complicit that we are continuing to uphold white supremacy.**

When we can name. When we can create space. When we can decenter.

We will then know what solidarity and what commitment will look like. It will teach us what solidarity means. It will tell us to look towards the people at the margins who must take lead at the center... it will show us that solidarity is the only way through. And maybe then we cannot just be invited—but be in the movement for the freedom of our people with Indigenous Peoples at the heart and the center of that movement.

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