

A note on trigger warnings and content notes

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I'm a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, adult partner abuse and stalking (some of which is ongoing), attempted forced psychiatric treatment and lots of Big Wild Violence. I'm a Mad person who has lived with suicidality who has lost loved ones to suicide and medical industrial complex, racist, fatphobic and transphobic violence, overdose and more. I make art about all about it. I do this because I had my life saved by people who made art with apology or watering down their truths about their own experiences of violence and survival- I probably would be dead if I hadn't shoplifted that copy of *Bastard Out of Carolina* by Dorothy Allison from the Framingham, MA Borders Books when I was 17 or read *American Dreams* by Sapphire or *Stone Butch Blues* by Leslie Feinberg when I was 19. The work in this show explores and addresses all of the above issues.

As a survivor, particularly one with CPTSD and panic attacks, I appreciate when trigger warnings are offered for graphic depictions of sexual or other violence, ritual/ organized abuse, or torture or murder, because they give us a heads up and a choice as survivors about whether we want to engage with those visions today. A bunch of my work does not depict these things graphically- which is a choice I have made as a survivor, to hold myself and the reader and to move away from demands of the world to "tell us what happened so we can see if we believe you or not." There are many ways to write a survivor story,

But I feel complicated about trigger warnings' use in other ways. I've done gigs where white curators asked me to provide trigger warnings because- gasp- we (two disabled brown queers) would be talking about racism and ableism at a, all BIPOC workshop, and I was like, hey we deal with racism every day- we WANT to talk about it. Who is being protected here? Sometimes trigger warnings play out in ways that feel more shaming of our real survivor/ BIPOC/ queer/ Mad experiences than like they're coming from us. Sometimes they can come off as one more way we're told telling the truth about our lives is too much, too harsh, and we should water it down and muffle it to avoid shocking anyone (in particular people without those experiences.)

I also know that while some triggers are pretty universal, I've had conversations with other BIPOC survivors where we acknowledge that our triggers are so specific (feathers; the ice cream truck song) it feels difficult to trigger warn for all of them.

So what do I offer for this show? I trust you to know what you need and to engage with these works as works for you and your body and mind. I experience the Disabled Grief Portal Altar as beautiful and intense. I have cried every time I have set up this installation because of how full of my beloved dead it is. This altar groans full of my chosen siblings, people who brought me into disability justice, Mad comrades from the 90s who were better to me than

my own dad, and people who I never met in this life but whose lives saved and made mine and all of ours possible. Be open, be present, take care, allow yourself to be surprised.