

Culture Push

10 YEARS

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Date: **MAR 13 2009**

CULTURE PUSH INC
C/O MICHAEL M YI
LEE ANAV CHUNG LLP
350 FIFTH AVE STE 5411
NEW YORK, NY 10118-0000

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Employer Identification Number:
26-3250931
DLN:
17053048039009
Contact Person:
ROGER W VANCE ID# 31173
Contact Telephone Number:
(877) 829-5500
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Dear Applicant:

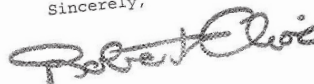
We are pleased to inform you that upon review of your application for tax exempt status we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code. You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code. Because this letter could help resolve any questions regarding your exempt status, you should keep it in your permanent records.

Organizations exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Code are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined that you are a public charity under the Code section(s) listed in the heading of this letter.

Please see enclosed Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, for some helpful information about your responsibilities as an exempt organization.

We have sent a copy of this letter to your representative as indicated in your power of attorney.

Sincerely,



Robert Choi
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

Enclosures: Publication 4221-PC

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between fellows

Moving Justice: Noemi Segarra and Sarah Dahnke

moderated by
Clarinda Mac Low



Image: Ivan Gilbert

Fellowship for Utopian Practice: Dances for Solidarity,
Sarah Dahnke (Fellow 2015)

Noemi Segarra: I've been saying that movement is more my first language than Spanish--before I could speak I was moving, I've also been really considering how my practice is claiming my space in the world, so obviously I have to take it out of those theatrical settings. This is about something bigger. It's ambitious, and it's intersectional. I thrive in chaos. The first institution is the family and mine was broken up right away, and I'm from Puerto Rico, a colony in a post-colonial world. My first memory of movement came from my mom in the kitchen, and I'm in the living room and my dad is in another room, and they're screaming at each other and I'm in the middle making a little dance, making a little home to be safe. So, in a way, that's the beginning of my practice. That's why, when I went back to PR, I went back to my living room to make a platform for my personal practice that immediately started to connect to fellow movement artists. It's claiming space in this reality as it is now--it's anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist. It's a practice of freedom.

Sarah Dahnke: In what ways are you using movement very tangibly right now in the world?

Noemi: It's really simple. I created this [actual] platform in my living room, a new floor, or piso. It is an elevated dance floor above the cement floor of my home. As dancers we need that cushion, or that support, that is softer or allows us to carry out this commitment to a practice where we're not going to injure ourselves, and in a way that's a metaphor, but it's also very real grounding. Piso has this double entendre--piso is the dance floor, but piso is also a verb, meaning "to take an active step in the now," "yo piso." I'm taking a step towards my dream, or utopia. I had that platform, it was 20 by almost 10 feet. Then I started doing this mobile practice, and in New York we would carry a 2 by 2 panel, with [a] cushion. So wherever I go I can do an intervention, I can have a relationship with a place. Then I self-document and I take that with me. That's the practice in a nutshell.

Sarah: That answers my question, if the floor is necessary anymore. But the floor has been embodied.

Noemi: I'm okay with bringing it in because it grounds [the practice] in a visible, real plane, but evidently the practice and the project are bigger than that. The project is the rediscovery, and reinhabiting the body as a site of potential and of change, and that's the best technology I've ever seen.

Sarah: Because a practice could be your whole life, it could be everything you embody, and the ways that practice comes out over time, may look different. I know with me it's looked very different throughout time, and probably will continue to. Movement is always somewhere there in the center. I'm thinking about the word intervention, because something I've been noticing when I've been writing about Dances for Solidarity, or in conversation with the folks who collaborate who are incarcerated, and just hearing about how movement has had the effect that it's had, or the changes it's [made], what I've started to think about is movement being an integration instead of an intervention, which I think is maybe a utopian idea. I actually feel like I realized what I was striving for, was hoping would emerge, this integration. Movement is a conversation, but I think that for most of us it is not part of a daily practice, or even a thought. So I don't know what that looks like, when more of us have that language, and if that changes the type of conversations I'm interested in having about movement.

Noemi: What is your practice?

Sarah: [Movement is] this reminder of what it really means to be human, the basic elements of being human.

Noemi: We're privileged, because we're able to move [consciously] and we take it for granted, we forget that we're breathing, we're able to move, we're able to enact something against systems of oppression.

I'm moving all the time--thought is movement, breathing is movement, circulation is movement, I'm alive. How to get people involved to think outside that box of what we're brought up with, and what's already there.

Sarah: [There is] something so lovely about a group of people just moving together without there necessarily being a leader or dictator. I feel like a lot of times I'm striving to create a situation that is a container, where we can just all do this thing together. And I don't know that I've thought incredibly deeply what that means for change. I think of isolated incidents as interventions, but when I think of them as integrations ... what if this was just life? What if that was what we all just did?

Noemi: This is great because it brings to the conversation the topic of words and language, and discourse and, going back to movement as my first language, freedom! I think of Noam Chomsky, who is an anarchist, and how somehow his research has to do with how language shapes knowledge and that implicates power structures. That's why silence and moving disrupts the status quo or order of things. It's generating the space for other languages. We talk about unity and diversity, we know it conceptually, but how do we embody that and allow it to happen?

Clarinda: I'm interested in how that specifically relates to Dances for Solidarity.

Sarah: With that project specifically, dance as freedom is such a core principle. You [Noemi] said the very same thing, that dance, movement is freedom, and I feel like that is something I may have taken for granted, just as a feeling I've always felt with movement. The collaborative element of creating these dances together is also creating spaces where movement might not always exist, where that freedom could exist, but I think there are maybe several steps in between getting from where you currently might be to getting to this feeling of dance as freedom and removing the boundaries that might prevent you. That might be physical, that might be mental, they might be architectural and they might be a combination of all of those. When I was hearing you describe this suspension of what's possible, "oh maybe there is something more to the process." What does it mean to work together, not just with dance as freedom or movement as freedom but what things are necessary to get there? I don't know if I've ever really dug into that.

Noemi: I think in PR we live like that, out of necessity for survival, and I've been really insisting on this idea that conversation is part of the strategy for survival--in the Caribbean region, not just PR. Right now I feel that my work is to hold my ground and speak my truth, wherever I happen to be. That's a practice, and because I'm embodying that, I allow other people to think that they might be able to do that. But that takes guts and practice and commitment. Making a safe communal space because that's the only way you can heal.

REGIMEN SELF CARE

ESTHER PERFORMANCES

Esther Neff situates social operations, research projects, and performances. As the founder and lead organizer/artist of PPL (Panoply Performance Laboratory), work has involved thinktanks, conferences and symposia, a lab site, tours, a pop-up diner, temporary museums, books, "operas of operations," plays, and civic stagings. Current projects include MARSH (Materializing & Activating Radical Social Habitus) in collaboration with her mother (in St. Louis, MO) and a community compendium entitled Institution is a Verb (The Operating System).

In 2013 Culture Push supported—via an Honorary Fellowship—a conference called Theorems, Proofs, Rebuttals and Propositions: A Conference of Theoretical Theatre, organized by Yelena Gluzman and me. This conference positioned performance as theorization processes and performed theory as “sites for sight.” My own work (performance, text, organization) continues to practice (un)disciplined modes of embodied thinking as deliberate, affective, (en)semblative gut-brain-mind-doing. By “we” in this text, I mean my self and my plural entanglements with that and those for and with whom “care” may (have) be(en) performed..

Thank you and in solidarity, E.

We would never ooze like C_3H_6OS in your presence, sore, or smear on you the faces of cut onions. Every morning we sweat or weep a small amount of poison, 5-20 minutes.

The most we are willing to give ourselves is permission to express opinion and even this, we are often sure, is not our place; sometimes we write but, due to disease, for at least 1 hour we must sit on the toilet and usually this takes up the time allotted.

Our grandfather hacked open his body cast with an axe to save his legs from gangrene. We grew up in a culture skeptical of physical pain and enraged by emotions. He believes that we (and other so-called women) cry in order to manipulate others.

When, passing a cheap bar of chocolate, the discussion turns to “self care,” we do understand that we should pursue it to save our-selves because no one else will. We do understand that they keep us barely alive, just enough to consume soothing products, drugs, and technologies, and to produce licenses. We do understand capitalism as an eugenics schema, all of its final solutions stemming from metabolic panics regarding access to “resources.” Regarding those autopoetics like meaningfulness and joy, some affective insurgencies, are “worthless” to them as goods, thus potentiate liberation. We are here now, where people talk all over one another and little social discipline is in place for preempting default disrespects.

We appreciate the ideas about pleasure orientations, and the ethical perspective that One Self is also a person to which one should do no harm. Yet, we have never really tried to quit smoking.

We want to be the taster who ingests small portions of cyanide daily, until they can assassinate the king, the snake handler who tattoos themselves with the venom towards immunity, the “maiden” who feeds themselves arsenic until they can poison any rapist with a kiss.

Discipline falls one step above self-punishment and three steps behind self-righteousness (how many steps are there, en total, to this program? May we absent the regimen entirely, and freely embrace you, overwhelmed by a love so terrible the tornado sirens are triggered?)

**Discipline is de-feminized language for self-care.
Discipline is emasculated language for self-control.
Discipline is not just what we do for our selves, it is also what we do for you. Otherwise, we would surely hurt you.**

At the end of the day, we have a bed to ourselves, an almost intolerable luxury. We perform this score: focus on the crown of the head until a vortex forms, pull the tip down to fill the skull, feel the force pulling at the third eye, gathering in the gorge, vibrating in the chest, splintering lightning throughout the abdominal brain, melting in the lower belly, opening up the anus and cunt, prickling with fresh rain all down the thighs, calves, falling down into the earth through the soles of the feet.

LANGUAGE AS LIBERATION

IN HONOR OF OUR DOMINICAN FATHER AND OUR PATERNAL HAITIAN GREAT GRAND- MOTHER: WHY DOMINICANS LOVE HAITIANS MOVEMENT.

CLARIVEL RUIZ



Clarivel Ruiz, daughter from Kiskeya Ayiti Bohio (aka Hispaniola aka the Dominican Republic and Haiti), raised in NYC on the ancestral bones and covered shrines of the Lenape people. In 2016 we initiated Dominicans Love Haitians Movement to celebrate the beauty of our commonalities, to forge a future free from tyranny and heal from the traumas of colonization using art as an antiracist tool. We are alumni of Hemispheric Institute's EmergeNYC, a Civic Practice Seminar participant at the Metropolitan Museum, The Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellowship at CCCADI, and a 2019 Brooklyn Arts Council awardee.

“There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear.
We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.”
—Toni Morrison

“the role of the artist is to make revolution irresistible”
—Toni Cade Bambara

“**Platano, platano, platano**” rises the singsong selling of plantains upwards like so many butterflies flickering from one flower to the other, upwards to la galeria, a second floor veranda in the Dominican Republic. We¹ watched the vendor pulling his cart, while his song of plantains stayed with us in the air. It was the music that would wake us up or amuse us as various people would come and go selling their items on the streets of Santiago, Dominican Republic.

Language creates our realities. In the beginning of our metamorphosis into this human species the advent of speech is what started us developing our culture. Language and culture are intimately linked with each other. It is a marriage that binds our ways of being and behaving with how we linguistically process the world around us. It is what fuses people and communities together. It is the building block of culture, and without it people would not be able to pass along ideas, knowledge, and social norms. Alfred L. Krober, a cultural anthropologist from the United States, has said that culture started when speech was available, and from that beginning, the enrichment of either one led the other to develop further.

We sat in la galeria, our parents watching the comings and goings of people daily, during the cool of the morning, the neon buzz of the afternoon, until the richness of the night. We were watching our parents as we documented them to better understand who they are and the trials they have gone through in their lifetimes. During our stay in our sister’s home, our father constantly watched this particular mango every day. It was a question of when it would be ripe enough to eat, the weight of the fruit as it pulled the branch closer to the rooftop, how our father imagined the spraying of pulp in his mouth as he tasted the cool sweetness.

Language can either liberate or oppress.

Using language to shift the context of the environment we live in, if language is central to culture and how we experience the world around us it would make sense that we alter our reality by altering the words we speak with ourselves and with the people who are around us. Let us look at this recent study created by Ikea in 2018 with the help of several school groups who experimented on plants to discover the impact of bullying. Two sets of plants were given the same amount of water and sunlight, the biggest difference were the words spoken to each of the plants. One received positive words and phrases and the other received negative words and phrases. The experiment took place for thirty days, the plant that received positive and enthusiastic words of affection thrived, while the plant that received messages of failure wilted before the thirty days were up.

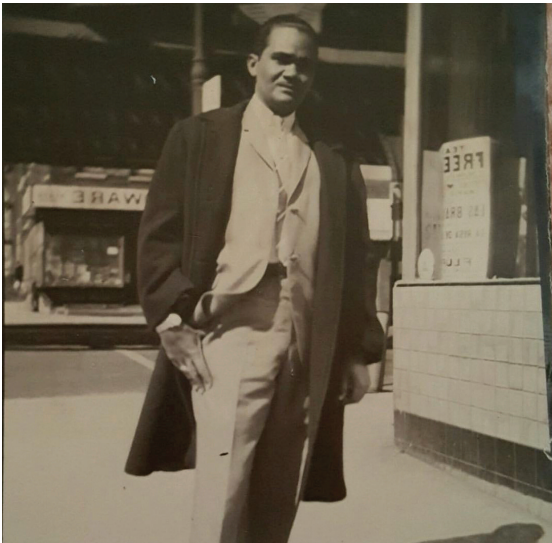
In August 2009, when we landed in the Dominican Republic with our parents, we were bombarded by messages in newspapers that blamed Haitians for thievery and other instances of degradation. We were appalled that a family member insisted that we be careful of Haitians living in her particular area. This was before the beginning of the TC/0168/13 deportation act that would make thousands of Dominicans of Haitian ancestry stateless.

1 [Editor’s note: The author uses “we” as a first person singular pronoun]

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In 1970, Harvard psychiatrist and professor, Dr. Chester Pierce coined the term “microaggressions” describing the “subtle racial putdowns that degrade physical health over time.”

So, culturally in a racialized society if what we see and hear in everyday conversations, including the media, the educational and government systems represent black and brown people as lazy, angry, untrustworthy, etc. these constant slights adversely impact our health and ability to bloom. Very much like the plants, we diminish and waste away under the constant barrage of antagonistic linguistic forces.



Left: Domingo Ruiz in NYC

Right: Domingo and Tomasina Ruiz

(Images from Family Archive)

Our father watched that mango religiously as it kept growing fatter, musing at the possibility of plucking and tasting it. We watched silently, the breeze cooing and cooling us in la galeria, as the mango grazed the top of the roof, growing exponentially larger each day as we witnessed its growth. In that moment of quiet, when even the streets were hushed in anticipation, our father proclaimed, “Our grandmother was Haitian.” We were struck, and our consciousness was altered. In that moment. Just as swiftly, our mother said, “Aaagghhh if we would have known that, we would never have married you!”

“[Audre] Lorde considered language a site of struggle...In her speech, *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*, delivered to the Modern Language Association in 1977, Lorde voiced awareness that language as a tool ‘has been made to work against us,’ because Lorde recognized that language tends to represent and reproduce the interests of dominating groups.”

The next day the mango was gone. Plucked and consumed by its owner. Our father’s musings and tastebud were never satisfied.

Sitting here in la galeria with our mother’s tears and our father’s introspection this is where our personal journey began, a wish to know and connect with our ancestors, our ancestral lands and spiritual teachings. We gained a sense of focus a releasing of breath that one never knows they are holding in the remembering and naming of truth.

Felix Cumbe, in a short documentary produced by Adam Taub, talks about the double nationality of living as a Haitian in the Dominican Republic and writing music that is composed of Spanish, French, and Haitian Kreyol, and having to live within that duality of altering messages from one language to another and therefore one reality to another.

As an artist we are constantly transposing the limitations and nuances that can only be understood culturally. You are constantly living in a divided world, plagued by the dominant messages that you have to put aside in order to survive.

We imagined the world of our great grandmother and our grandmother growing up in the Dominican Republic in the 1900s. Our father was born in 1932 and grew up under the dictatorship of Trujillo, having to silence his close relationship to Haitians. In 1937 Trujillo ordered the massacre of thousands of Haitians living on the borders of Massacre River (so named because thirty French buccaneers were killed by Spanish settlers there in 1728). The systematic extermination by the National Police took place thirty kilometers south of Dajabon north to Monte Cristi, with such efficiency that 30,000 souls perished. The killings were not limited to the border-they occurred throughout the country. Haitian workers on U.S. owned plantations were the only ones spared.

Our father would have been five in 1937. It would have been best to keep these things secret.

The great Masai warriors greet each other by asking “Kasserian Ingera?” which means, “And how are the children?” Dr. Rev. Patrick O’Neill, minister of the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn says, “I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children’s welfare if in our culture we took to greeting each other with this daily question: ‘And how are the children?’ I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, if it would begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of or cared about in our own country.”

We left our parents in the Dominican Republic and travelled back to the United States, sadder, wiser, and with a purpose, a seeded mango, growing in our belly ready to ripen, ready to be shared and consumed. Understanding the power language has as a tool for our liberation. Every time someone sees or says Dominicans Love Haitians Movement it is our desire that we are shifting our cultural consciousness from one of oppression to one of freedom.

Like the Masai people we are imbuing an embodiment of people able to say “all the children are well.” That we are reconciling and healing from the traumas of genocide, colonization and enslavement of indigenous and black people. That we are able to escape from the mire of xenophobia and anti-Haitianism. That children can celebrate their Haitian and Dominican culture without fear of being an outcast, deported and massacred. That we are finally able to language and see a self-determined future created inside of joy and love.

That is our greeting. That is our prayer. That is our affirmation.
That is our future. *Asé Asé Asé* ooooo. Let it be so.

1. <https://www.wbur.org/remembrance-project/2017/02/08/dr-chester-pierce>
2. Quarterly Journal of Speech, November 1998 , The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action, delivered to the Modern Language Association in 1977.
3. Paulino, Edward, “Anti-Haitianism, Historical Memory, and the Potential for Genocidal Violence in the Dominican Republic ” Genocide Studies and Prevention 1:3 December 2006

Clarivel Ruiz, daughter from Kiskeya Ayiti Bohio (aka Hispaniola aka the Dominican Republic and Haiti), raised in NYC on the ancestral bones and covered shrines of the Lenape people. In 2016 we initiated Dominicans Love Haitians Movement to celebrate the beauty of our commonalities, to forge a future free from tyranny and heal from the traumas of colonization using art as an antiracist tool. We are alumni of Hemispheric Institute's EmergeNYC, a Civic Practice Seminar participant at the Metropolitan Museum, The Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellowship at CCCADI, and a 2019 Brooklyn Arts Council awardee.

SELF CARE

REGIMEN

ACTUAL SELF-CARE REGIMEN	WISHFUL SELF-CARE REGIMEN
eight community acupuncture sessions and five expensive massages I couldn't afford during my lifetime thus far	regular fully paid body work such as acupuncture, reflexology, reiki, massage, etc. especially during super stressful times
swimming once a month, yoga twice a month, several runs every two years	swimming six days a week, yoga three days a week, running twice a week
necessary dental care paid out of my own pocket which forces me go into credit card debt	fully paid dental care without any restrictions
fasting during the month of Ramadan while working two day jobs in NYC	not having to work at my day jobs while fasting during the month of Ramadan, and while having full support of people around me (instead of people telling me how they could never do it while eating and drinking in front of me)
PRJ sending me random texts to tell me that I am a great artist	PRJ sending me random texts to tell me that I am a great artist
limited reproductive care with restrictions	free quality reproductive care
locking myself in my apartment for a weekend while I binge watch my favorite TV show and do not communicate with the outside world, especially after intense art projects and work with my communities	being able to afford a real vacation in a serene and peaceful natural environment for long enough to properly rest, recover and recharge after intense art projects and work with my communities
friends listening, caring and being there for me	friends listening, caring and being there for me
occasional casual consensual sex with a partner I trust	regular consensual sex with a partner I love and trust who feels the same way about me
seeing my parents, sisters and the rest of my family for a few days usually two times a year	seeing my parents, sisters and the rest of my family for at least a week several times a year with possible vacation trip that we could all take together
convincing myself that any opportunity to share and make my work is worth it even when that success comes at a personal financial cost for me	negotiating not only pay, but an actual fair pay for the labor I put into my work with confidence and power

Aida Šehović (b. 1977, Banjaluka, Bosnia and Herzegovina) is a Bosnian-American artist based in New York City. A 2007 Jacob K. Javits Fellow, Šehović holds an MFA (2010) from Hunter College and a BA with Honors (2006) from the University of Vermont. Her work has been exhibited at the Queens Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park, the Flux Factory and the Grand Central Art Center.

THE VEINS OF OYA WAS ALWAYS HERE

(2014)

Vinyl tablecloths, organic produce, wicker baskets.

Dimensions Vary.

Performance, 90 minutes.

Inspired by the kitsch style of my grandmother's kitchen, the Jamaican marketplace, and lazy susans from Chinese restaurants, vinyl tablecloths are sewn together and placed with baskets to convey the idea of a communal event. In this piece the baskets contain nine ingredients commonly used in both Jamaican and Chinese cuisines.

I invited participants to create a Chinese-Jamaican tossed salad with these nine ingredients:

- 2 bell peppers (green or red)
- 1 3" piece of ginger (add more to suit your taste)
- 1 pineapple
- 1 cup white rice
- 4 carrots
- 1 handful of scallion
- 2 Iceberg lettuce
- 4 tomatoes
- 3 orange

Instructions:

- Boil 1 cup of white rice.
- Chop and peel fruits and vegetables.
- In a large bowl add the chopped fruits and veggies.
- When rice is cooled add rice.
- Stir it up and serve.

Serves 10



I originally made this salad just out of curiosity. Also, I was interested in using food as a subject in my work. I wanted to use food as a conduit of exchange. I found that the nine ingredients in *The Veins of Oya was Always Here* were used often at home when I was growing up. I think a lot about the migration of food, too, and how a culture of people adapts when arriving at a new place. The vegetation of a landscape differs from one place to another and so I think about how people have created cuisines just from the lack of certain familiar foods.



Image: Vela Oma

Jodie Lyn-Kee-Chow is a Jamaican-American artist living and working in Queens, NY. Her work explores performance and installation art focusing on Caribbean folklore, feminism, globalism, spirituality, and migration. Lyn-Kee-Chow holds a BFA from University of Florida and an MFA from Hunter College. Awards include New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (2012), Rema Hort Mann Artist in Community Engagement Award (2017), Franklin Furnace Fund (2017-18), and Culture Push Fellowship for Utopian Practice (2018).

PUSH THAT

FOUNDER'S ESSAY

AKI SASAMOTO

I love watching experts demonstrate what they do, because passion for their subjects are contagious and peculiar knowledge makes the world more relatable. Because they have already gone through the lonesome work to find out what they want to do and to learn specific means to do so, these people move and talk in special manners. Ahhh, can I see more performance like these?

It is hard to meet experts. Though they are everywhere, people hardly advertise what they do unless they need to. Plus socializing is harder for some especially after isolating time of digging deep. If one's project does not fit in categories, it is extra solo. Wouldn't it be nice to make these people meet and share ideas? The place of serious experts to mingle is precious, if you seek one without a goal of warfare, outside a seclusion of privilege, and open to public.

Shall we just post something online then? Oh, we can be half assed about solitude and interactions in this digitally hooked era. I believe in intense solo times and intense social times. Points of encounter got to be real because I can dream better after such a day.

Apparently 90% of our lives are spent waiting. We are waiting for accidents to occur so that our life twists and turns. Wouldn't it be nice to chance throwing yourself to meeting somebody who may have unexpected insights into the world? I feel like that will increase the chance of life twists. And if we can make each other interesting experts, that would be nice.

Instigate that. Push that.