

RACHEL KAUDER NALEBUFF

I got vaccinated in the basement of the Billie Holiday theater. Other people around me were moved for their own reasons. I was teary eyed because I could picture a different future for the theater, in which performing arts spaces are used to their full capacity.

This wouldn't need an act of god. That's why I was crying. Because there I was, *seeing* it.

Every theater, during the day, could be a community space. There would be free mental health counseling, child care, public restrooms, food distribution, Wi-Fi, a spot to hang. At night there might be shows, or you could go to the restaurant inside that's not fancy. At the bar there are free peanuts and there's tea and cheap beers and no one kicks you out. What I mean is that this theater is almost never empty. And someone is paid really well to clean and make it feel good and bright and maybe there is a resident social worker or group mediator on site who knows how to hold space.

Every park, too, would have a little theater. In these park theaters, local artists are employed during the day to teach free community drama classes. Sometimes there are shows, sometimes there are town halls, sometimes there are visiting speakers, or mimes on tour. This would mean every park sign would add a little symbol for a happy-sad mask.

The people who work in larger theaters and little theaters would be considered cultural workers and maybe even spiritual workers. And these kinds of jobs would be considered green jobs, so we don't even need to wait for someone in Congress to care about the arts, or to lobby for priority, because it's already folded into jobs programs. And there is free health care and affordable housing so no one has to be a star or have inherited wealth to be able to do cultural and spiritual work. And because there is affordable housing we can stay rooted in our communities and create theater for the people with whom we share our lives.

Which means when people, in this bright, not outlandish future, see those happy-sad masks in their local park, they might say, "Oh, this is a place for me."

Our last episode of the year!

Featuring...important messages from our senior listeners about what to remember during and after the election!

And of course, a few grounding exercises to do at home.

Let's say these messages out loud and send them out our windows.

Who knows, someone might hear it and feel it.

Let's take a breath in together, and SPEAK OUR MESSAGES IN UNISON!!! ACROSS ALL THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US!!! LETTING OUR MESSAGES BE KNOWN!

In this bilingual episode we take some time to sit with our grief and celebrate the lives of our senior center community members we have lost.

Whether or not you know the seniors we commemorate, we invite you to get to know them and also make time for the losses you are carrying.

Your turn.

You
can
shed
as
many
leaves
as you
need
to.

Selection of images from the Silver Lining Drama Program, a dial-in drama class created for the Roundtable Senior Center, accessible by phone line and visual instructions, created by Rachel Kauder Nalebuff, Caitlin Ryan O'Connell, Camila Canó-Flaviá, Nicole Villamil, and Coleman Zurkowski through the support of the Bushwick Starr Theater, Brooklyn, NY. Images: Rachel Kauder Nalebuff