



**Emergent Strategies of Care - 2027 EAAS Women's Network Symposium  
Novi Sad (Serbia), June 2-4, 2027**

In her 2017 book *Emergent Strategy*, adrienne maree brown describes methods for social change that begin at the local arena. Encouraging self-actualization and local actions of social change, she writes, "A fractal is an object or quantity that displays self similarity, which means it looks roughly the same at any scale. Small-scale solutions impact the whole system. Use similar principles to build at all scales" (45). Insistence on ethical exchange and the development of local activist groups are just two forms of the emergent strategies that brown discusses throughout her book. Following her metaphor of the fractal, brown argues that local, interpersonal changes can and will affect our systems on a large scale. Part of her effort here is to undermine the ambivalence, helplessness, and isolation that have become key features of our lives in the twenty-first century, an age distinguished by ongoing climate catastrophes and growing global precarity. For the 7th biannual Women's Network Symposium, we would like to apply this impetus for local arenas of social change to our academic inquiries related to women's and gender studies.

To some extent, the local has always been a feminist concern: women and other marginalized gender identities are often tasked with familial and extrafamilial care work, which regularly goes unpaid and unrecognized, based on the premise that women are naturally more caring and relegated to the private sphere. Joan Tronto reclaimed the political role of care in her 1987 article, "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care", where, in response to Carole Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), she advocated for the redistribution of caregiving responsibilities, as well as care-receiving among people, pointing out that individuals who dedicate their lives to caregiving are often socialized into underprivileged positions (652). She also exposed the paradox that, while care is essential for the livelihood of our species (1998: 16), it remains unequally redistributed, pushed to the margins of what is deemed socially important. According to Nancy Fraser, we currently live in a "crisis of care" (2016: 99) brought about by late capitalism. As populations age, austerity measures, privatization, and the systemic devaluation of care work intensify existing care inequalities, leading to further precarity and vulnerability (Butler 2004). Put simply, care disrupts the neoliberal logics of individualism and self-reliance, revealing individuals as interconnected and interdependent.

Feminists of color have long been central to this intervention, undermining the veneer of progress attributed to white women's upward mobility within neoliberal capitalist contexts. When white women take on jobs in the public sphere, Black women, other women of color, and impoverished white women have always already taken on the care duties associated with the private sphere. Indeed, feminisms of color undermine the existence of a public/private divide in the first place. For feminists of color, in particular, the mantra that "the personal is political" has long resulted in organizing and publishing around the kitchen table, as in Barbara Smith,



Beverly Smith, Cherríe Moraga, and Audre Lorde's development of *Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press* in 1980.

This symposium aims to explore some of the following questions: How can a politics of care transform our reality? What everyday practices can contribute to fostering an ethics of care? What strategies of care can reshape and subvert structural inequality? Which modes of care—as in the resurgence of feminine domesticity in the form of the trad wife or the siloing of professional women into positions associated with carework—maintain structural inequalities? How can we conceive of local action in ways that undermine a public vs. private divide?

We welcome proposals related, but not limited to, the following topics:

- The relationship between small-scale ethical engagement and large-scale political change
- Activist-academic encounters and initiatives
- Historical and contemporary case studies of feminist and queer activism and political action
- Gender, academia, and care: the mental load outside the home
- Care and/as activism: care as resistance
- Disability studies interventions in the discourses of care
- Transformation of representations of care and caretaking in literature, film, and culture
- Care and intersectionality: gender, sexuality, race, class, ability
- Queer kinship(s) and care
- Speculative alternatives of care
- Emotional labor in late capitalism
- Critique of university and speculations about alternatives to contemporary academia
- Grassroots literary and publishing practices as care networks

We are looking for scholars across disciplines within the field of American Studies. Please send a 300-word abstract proposal and a 100-word bio note to [eaaswomensnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:eaaswomensnetwork@gmail.com) by **December 15, 2026**. Notification of acceptance/rejection will occur by **January 15 2027**. Online attendance is possible if you let us know ahead of time. Please note your interest in participating online in your abstract proposal.

Registration will open after acceptance is notified. **Conference fee:** 50€ professors // 30€ PhD students/ independent scholars.

#### Works Cited

- brown, adrienne marie. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. AK Press, 2017.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2004.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Contradictions of Capital and Care." *New Left Review*, vol. 100, 2016, pp. 99–117.
- Tronto, Joan. "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care." *Signs*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1987, pp. 644-63.
- . "An Ethic of Care." *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging*, vol. 22, no. 3. 1998, pp. 15-20.