

Harriet Network Vision(s)

To paraphrase Mikki Kendall - doing well at school requires burying my emotions deep inside my flesh in order to maintain the necessary facade.

I try to erase my memories of how it felt to be hungry, cold, or scared until all that is left is an unmoving, still mask that covers the storm of raging emotions underneath.

The stress of maintaining respectability is unparalleled. I silence myself over and over until the screaming is in my veins, in my weight and my blood pressure and my life expectancy. And yet, at the end of the semester, I realize that I didn't get the academic validation I expected on the other side.

I am lonely. I have to deal with it myself.

We need to take more time off of work and school to be less stressed. Work makes us stressed. School makes us stressed. We spend so much time working we don't have time to play. We don't have time to feel good and to hang out.

Instead of feeling safe and secure in our relationships, we are trained to feel safe and secure in our possessions. We have been asked to sacrifice the safety of friendship for the safety of a penthouse with bodyguards.

We have been asked to sacrifice the security of knowing everyone in the community for the security of a militarized police force we can call when something looks suspicious.

The structure of neoliberalism has been designed to dismantle ties between neighbors and apartment buildings, largely because strong communities make for strong movements. What we have instead is atomization, loneliness.

The loneliness is an epidemic. Dr. Vivek Murthy thinks that loneliness poses a risk to our collective health that can be compared to the effects of smoking. If the economy is always so good, why isn't the loneliness getting better? Can we pay for the loneliness to go away?

The spirit of competition haunts every social gathering and friendly get together.
This spirit is the life of every party, to the point of destroying the party itself.

Homelessness is loneliness made manifest. The spirit of competition has found a skeleton to inhabit in the austere, brutalist warehouse that is the homeless shelter.

How could homelessness be anything else but loneliness made manifest? Homeless shelters are full on Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. Whatever it is made you homeless, it's the same reason that you spend every holiday alone.

Homelessness is abandonment.

If we were to stop relying on police and prisons and wealth and money to feel safe and secure, we would need something to fall back on. But there's nothing. Our neighbors are weird and scary, and we don't know them very well anyway.

What would it look like to cooperate?

What if we pooled resources instead of hoarding them? Maybe that could break the ice.

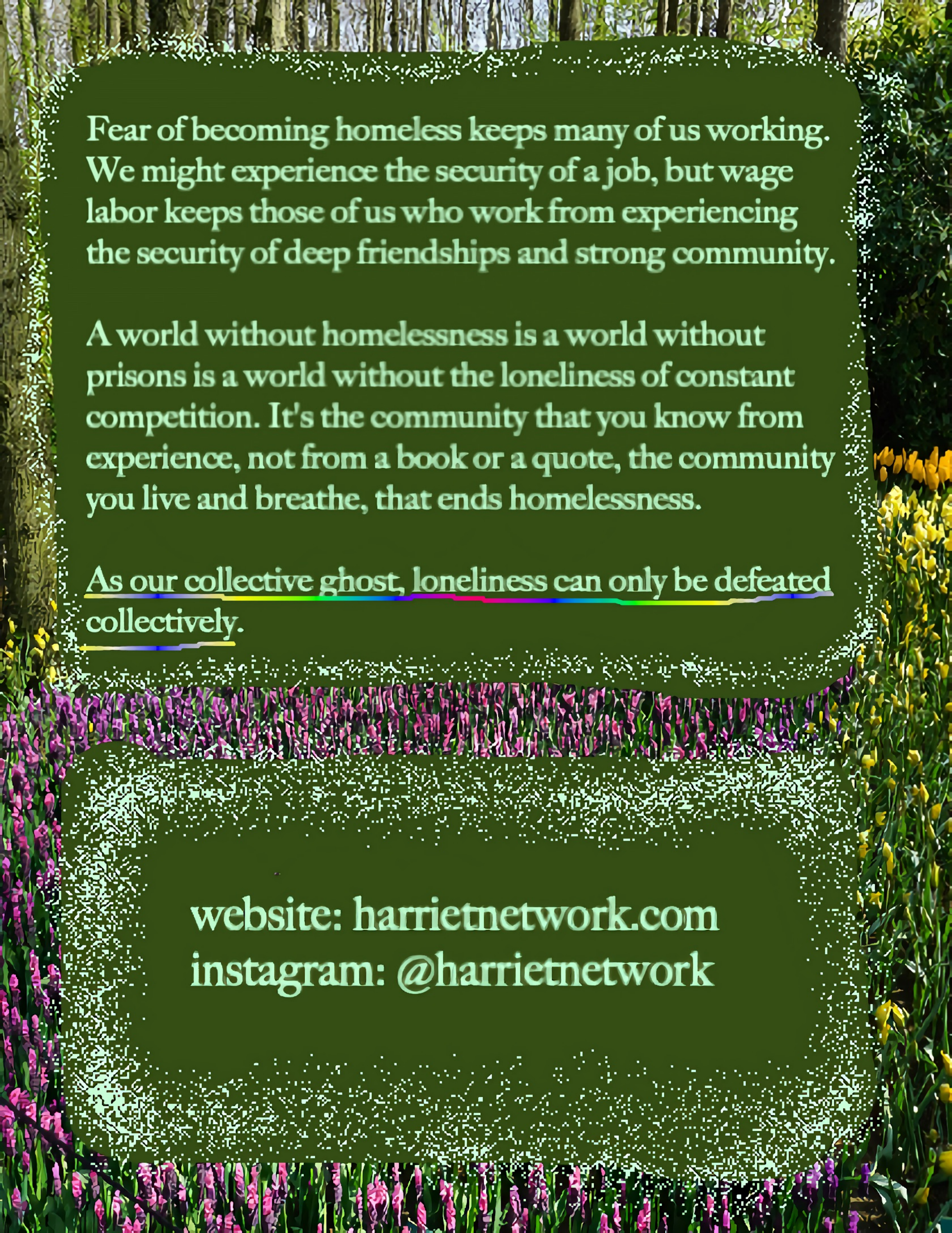
Why can't we do it today? Let's fix all the problems. Right now. Let's share the crowns and the medals. We'll be friends and equals. Let's do it. We can choose to rely on each other.

Sometimes, you come to a crossroads. You might have to choose. What's your choice? Do you choose wealth and misery? Do you choose the misery of poverty or the misery of wage labor?

Or do you want to reject this pathetic essay? Do you want to rip the essay in half and transform this world into something else, somewhere else, somewhere everyone can be happy and well fed?

We can't simply share what we have, and stop competing, because our current legal and economic systems claim that some of us do not count as people - whether that be because of race, class, or something else. The systems in place steal from some to give to others.

It is not that homeless people are not able to be considered law-abiding citizens, but that "no law exists for them" (Arendt). In order for some of us to have things to share, some of us need to be stripped of our belongings. It is not possible to simply share what we have and end competition as everything is right now.

A photograph of a path made of yellow tulips leading through a field of purple tulips towards a forest. The path is in the foreground, leading from the bottom center towards the top center. The field of purple tulips is on either side of the path. In the background, there is a dense forest of trees with green foliage.

Fear of becoming homeless keeps many of us working. We might experience the security of a job, but wage labor keeps those of us who work from experiencing the security of deep friendships and strong community.

A world without homelessness is a world without prisons is a world without the loneliness of constant competition. It's the community that you know from experience, not from a book or a quote, the community you live and breathe, that ends homelessness.

As our collective ghost, loneliness can only be defeated collectively.

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