

This summer is proving to be apocalyptic. My first. Something has shifted, even in the month-long space between first pitching this piece and beginning to write it. Initial rage and shock at the severity of the bushfires' decimation of land and community has stilled, settled – replaced by something heavier. For me, knowledge of the climate crisis has taken on a bodily recognition of its cyclical and enduring nature — physical awareness, sticky-sour like dread or off-milk, that this crisis is not temporary and there is no end in sight. This knowledge sits weighted; fatigued, clouding everything, like smoke turning the sun a striking, eerie pink.

Such a luxury of prior ignorance is one particular to certain bodies. As a settler on stolen, unceded land, my body was not aware of what has been bodily knowledge for First Nations people since colonisation: that attempted genocide enacted by British empire equates to apocalypse. For many, this apocalypse is not new, but old, and lived. What does it mean to truly engage with this time-gap in understanding, bodily fatigue, and survival? Perhaps decolonisation, as a core requirement of climate activism, is about sharing this weight, and listening to those whose lived experience has always been survival.

Black visual studies scholar Christina Sharpe has written about Black existence as a politics of survival in ways that make sense to me as a diasporic person of colour (PoC). Sharpe terms 'the wake' as the awareness that Blackness is always adjacent to death in a white supremacist world. This is the reality of living during an apocalyptic crisis: knowing that, at any moment, your physical body can end. This is a reality deeply known by First Nations people in this country, and one which I also recognise in the heavy mirroring of my own diasporic Blackness in global flows of Black death. It is recognised by many queer and trans people; amplified when those identities intersect with living in the Global South.

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Writing on 'the wake,' Sharpe directly invokes the weather as implicated in these structures of oppression through the motif of breathing: "Who has access to freedom? Who can breathe free?" In the current smoke-filled streets of Sydney, the answer is simple — no one can. How might we make use of PoC and First Nations historical 'weathering' of crisis, now that all bodies are under existential threat?

I want to consider what role the internet could play in bringing about the kinds of knowledge sharing and survival practices we need. I have found the immediacy of social media to be tiring and overwhelming; a constant influx of blue-lit panic articulated by numbers, images and text. Yet I wonder if digital mediums might also hold potential as sites of considered, community-focused activism. A form of activism that, despite the urgency of taking climate action, could still engage in deep listening and space-holding.

These attributes of attention and slowness in many ways feel antithetical to the nature of the digital world, which often seems to be moving at a far quicker pace than the physical world. Simultaneously, the internet operates as an environment in which communities can be formed outside of institutional structures; pockets of virtual breathing space.

Instagram in particular operates as a tool for sharing perspectives not available in traditional media spaces. It was on Instagram that a friend recently re-shared a story — a screenshot off an iPhone note — arguing that non-government donations are especially important to directly support communities in need, and to resist the colonial and capitalist government structures responsible for the climate crisis. It was more nuanced than anything I'd read elsewhere, and its circulation through linked online networks allowed people in crisis to slow down, to survive better and more meaningfully.

In this summer of heightened climate awareness, the internet also operates as a highly practical means of redistributing money to directly useful community activist projects. Queer community activist Bhenji Rha, @newgenderwhodis on Instagram, recently launched the On The Ground emergency relief fund directly aiding South Coast families and community members affected by the bushfires. She has used Instagram to promote the fund, share highlights of the results, and give progress updates. In her strategy of "micro-personal and local level" community action, the internet becomes a space suited to effective urgent action.

I find that these aspects of the internet as a community space operate together to render it one of potentiality and utopian hope. Perhaps digital existence in the time of climate crisis can be viewed as an archival response, especially for people of colour and other bodies least welcome in systemically violent physical spaces. In allowing for the creation of virtual selves alongside real and impactful community, does digital space meaningfully protest the apocalyptic threat of physical death?

Existing in an in-between space of virtual and physical space, internet bodies speak to the black feminist contemporary art theorist Tina Campt's notion of 'still-moving-images': "images that

hover between still and moving images...that require the labor of feeling with or through them." Campt lays out a 'practice of refusal' to consider the ways that by sitting and engaging with a loud silence of Black pain, "negation can be generative." Campt's practice of refusal is a form of archive; one that wishes to document loss, pain and crisis in ways that force engagement, reckoning and fluidity. It demonstrates the promise I locate in internet space: the ability to create an archive that is liminal and contingent, as uncertain as the climate crisis itself.

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Virtual existence, in this capturing of a shifting, blurry reality, is not without its flaws. The internet remains a capitalist hellscape operated by multinational corporations which are governed as much by oppressive structures as any other estern institution. Nonetheless, the internet provides a tool for sitting with a survival politics that centres the most marginalised, and for archiving the messy process it takes to engage with that politics.

It opens space for the creation of real, physical communities in its wake; moments of community that are needed now more than ever.

*Kiki Amberber has logged on.*



# THE INTERNET ARCHIVAL PEOPLE OF COLOUR AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS