

**HOHCHV Featured Artist - January 2020**

***Ashley Renne' Gillard*** of Coatesville, Pa - Artist/Mental Health Advocate



“I learned a long time ago the wisest thing I can do is be on my own side, be an advocate for myself and others like me.”

-Maya Angelou

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How y'all doing? Y'all alright? I'm Ashley Renee' and I make it my responsibility to advocate for mental health. Especially mental health in the black community. For so long and still until this very day we have swept these conversations under the rug and pretended as if they never existed. Our community has crafted some of the biggest stigmas surrounding mental health and it's time to lay them to rest. It's time to give name and diagnoses to the things we've for TOO long have suppressed.

Mental health is personal for me. Not only have I recognize it in family members early on but I too was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder. I've seen the darkest of days and striving everyday to remain near the light. I make it a point to be very transparent about my diagnosis and journey because I know I'm not alone.

*What I want y'all to know:*

"I want you all to know... it's okay not to be okay and you do not have to suffer in silence. Know that there are resources out there. Make it a point to educate yourself because it's just that important. "

*Advice:*

"My advice...

Your truth NEVER hide; & ALWAYS listen to the deeper conversation being held inside."

Also... find your tribe. Find People who support your 100 percent. People who embrace your vulnerability and authenticity. People who call and check in when you seem distant or notice when your not yourself.

What has helped you?

Therapy!! Therapy!!! THERAPY!!!!

It helps make all the difference. I wish it was mandatory that everyone had a therapist.

And yes! Black people do go to therapy!

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That and journaling. Journaling has really helped to open doors for me. It has become my voice. It's what keeps me anchored. It helps me to check in with myself. I have made it a daily practice so much so I'm in the midst of turning my journal into a published book. So invest in expressing yourself.

Last words:

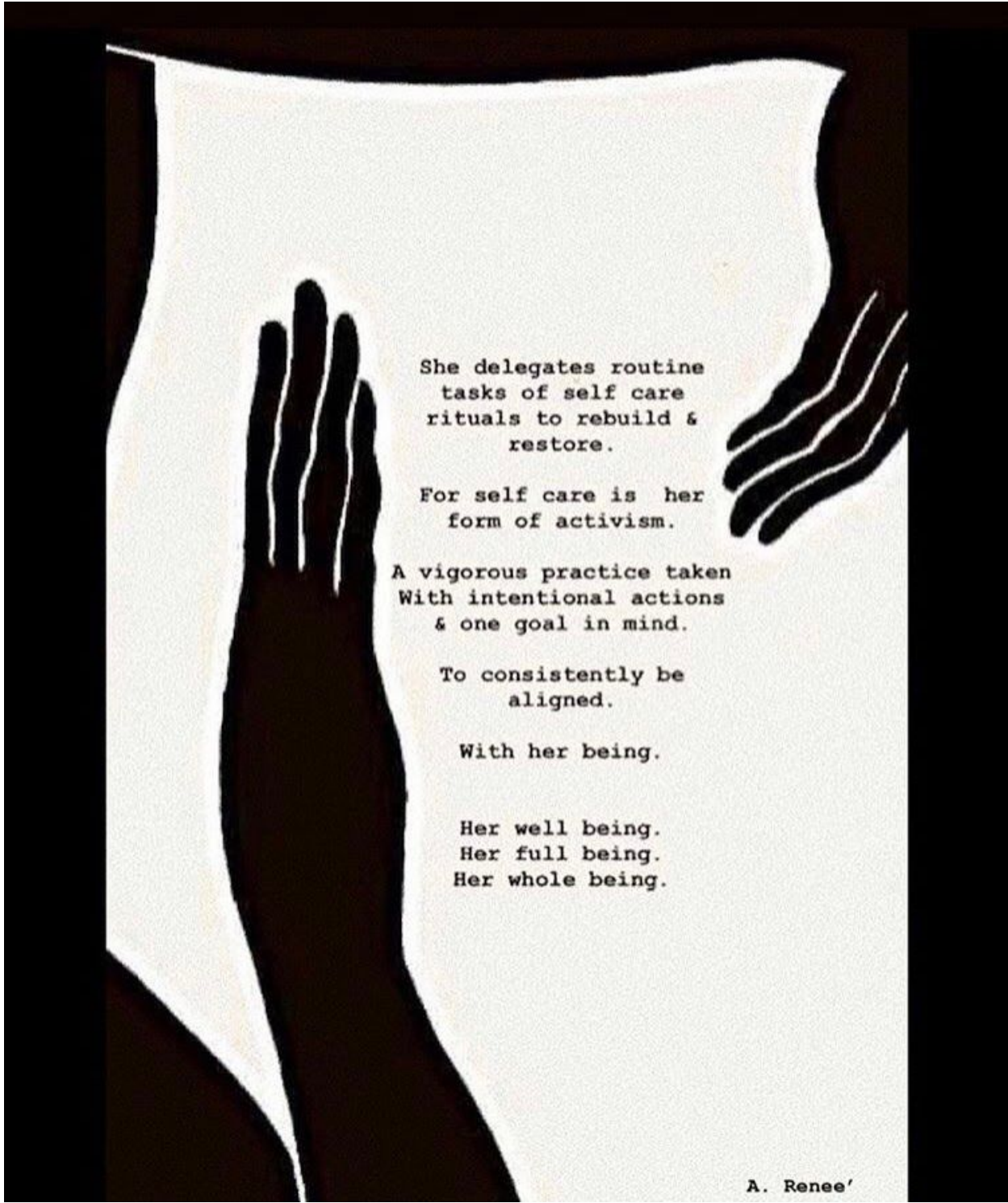
Enclosing find space to be committed to bettering yourself by any means necessary. Health is wealth ( mental, physical, spiritual, emotional).

Also feel free to reach out to me via Instagram @dear\_self\_ . I love sharing my stories, experiences, and always sending positive vibes, light and above all things Love. Look for my up and coming book entitled Dear Self,. Light & Love beautiful people.

-Ashley Renee'







She delegates routine  
tasks of self care  
rituals to rebuild &  
restore.

For self care is her  
form of activism.

A vigorous practice taken  
With intentional actions  
& one goal in mind.

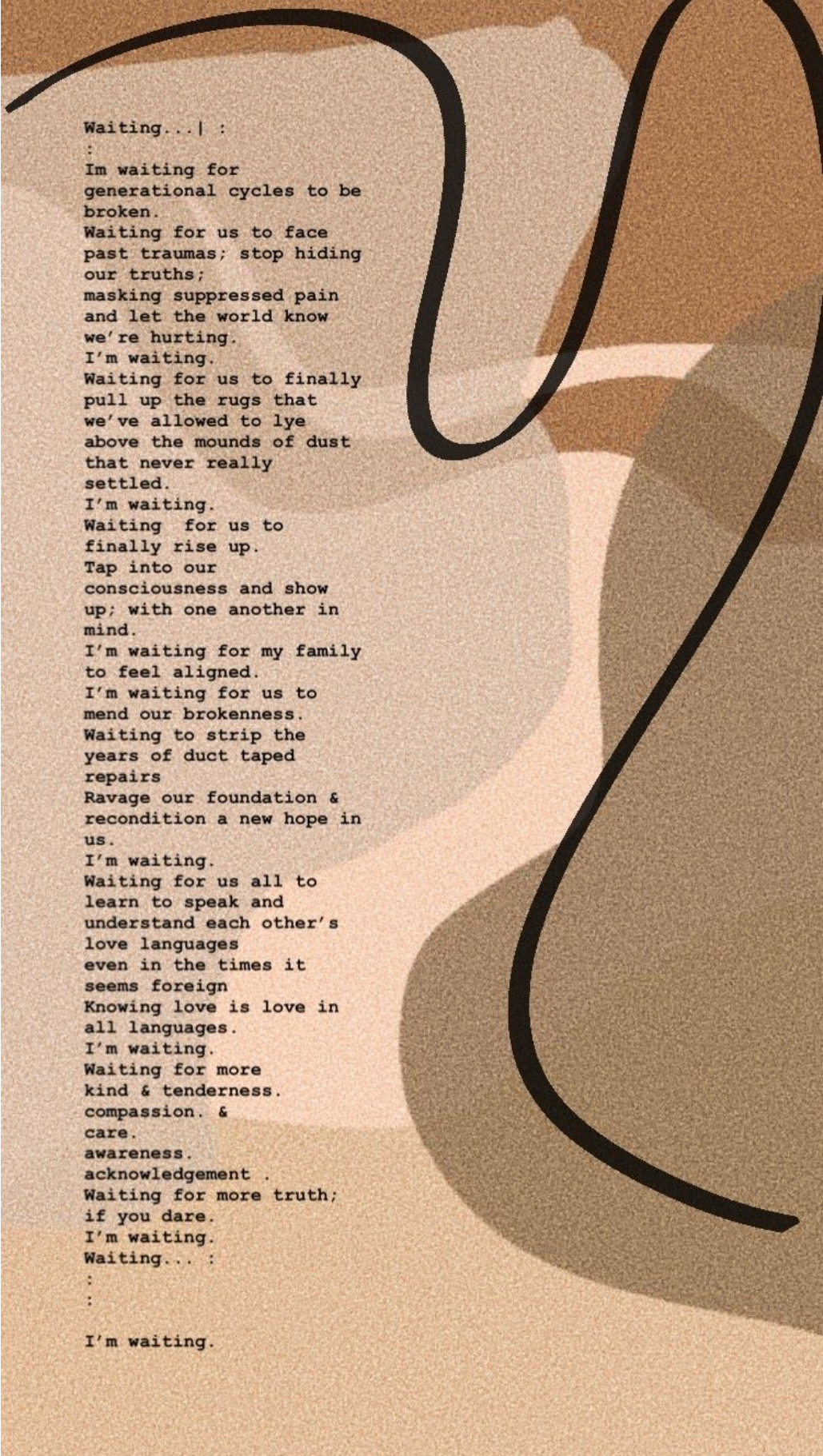
To consistently be  
aligned.

With her being.

Her well being.  
Her full being.  
Her whole being.

A. Renee'





Waiting...| :  
:  
Im waiting for  
generational cycles to be  
broken.  
Waiting for us to face  
past traumas; stop hiding  
our truths;  
masking suppressed pain  
and let the world know  
we're hurting.  
I'm waiting.  
Waiting for us to finally  
pull up the rugs that  
we've allowed to lye  
above the mounds of dust  
that never really  
settled.  
I'm waiting.  
Waiting for us to  
finally rise up.  
Tap into our  
consciousness and show  
up; with one another in  
mind.  
I'm waiting for my family  
to feel aligned.  
I'm waiting for us to  
mend our brokenness.  
Waiting to strip the  
years of duct taped  
repairs  
Ravage our foundation &  
recondition a new hope in  
us.  
I'm waiting.  
Waiting for us all to  
learn to speak and  
understand each other's  
love languages  
even in the times it  
seems foreign  
Knowing love is love in  
all languages.  
I'm waiting.  
Waiting for more  
kind & tenderness.  
compassion. &  
care.  
awareness.  
acknowledgement .  
Waiting for more truth;  
if you dare.  
I'm waiting.  
Waiting... :  
:  
:  
I'm waiting.