

Call for Papers: A Revolutionary Archive of 2020

In 2020, we came apart. Our collective “we” became defined as those of us who had been striving for a semblance of stability and justice in a world system that is historically and materially invested in marginalizing us. The womxn who, in isolation, were subjected to increased violence and discrimination, the queers, the non-conforming to gender, sexual, or social norms, the dissidents, the rebels, the migrants who deal with xenophobia and racism, and people with disabilities have all worked to expose the fragility of that system for decades. 2020 propelled our interconnected fights into the transnational limelight: now more than ever, patriarchal capitalism and its politico-economic machinations remains a system that digs its tentacles in our health, education, citizenship statuses (or lack of), and livelihoods. We, alongside 2020, managed to chip at the façade of control upheld by the systems we live under: as we one day woke up to lockdowns and curfews due to COVID-19, the accumulation of capital seemed to come to a sudden halt. But our remaining social connections were further restricted as we faced our vulnerabilities, fears, anger, and helplessness. Globally, millions of workers who were already working in precarious conditions paid a hefty price, and so did those who are at the bottom of the system’s hierarchy. It is that same system that pits us against each other in order to tame dissent and maximize profit. Revolutionary movements were hardly hit by the virus-borne isolation, and individualism ate at us as we attempted to sort our priorities out. Although we are aware of the transnational “we” in what we are experiencing, it is not okay, and we are not okay.

In Lebanon, the oligarchy that has been in power for over 30 years drove us deep into economic collapse. We are the ones who pay the price for the perverse alliance between the corrupt elite, the banks, and the sectarian rulers and their militias. We live in the shadows of a rampant patriarchy that cannot be dissociated from neoliberal economies and structures. In October of 2019, we attempted to revolt, protest our material realities, only to realize that the system is rooted in all aspects of our daily lives; institutionally, the breadth of control we are left with is illusory. As the system felt threatened and cornered, our revolutions only increased its ferocity and monstrous repression. In a way, the COVID-19 pandemic served the system, almost ensuring its survival, since the health situation enabled it to halt completely the street revolution that was already struggling with a deepening economic crisis. Then, on August 4, tons of ammonium nitrate exploded in Beirut port. The damage is still tearing through the city and its surroundings, and so many of us are still in shock. And so, we think of our accomplices around the world whose states are similar to ours, and we hope to link arms despite individualistic drives, trauma, and systemic isolation.

For this issue of Kohl, we welcome articles, texts, and art pieces that archive the way we experienced the multiple crises of 2020 and the realities and conditions that led to it, in Lebanon and transnationally, from an intersectional and queer framework. We particularly encourage those

who position themselves at the margins of systems of oppression (women, trans, intersex, gender non-conforming individuals, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, workers) to submit. We are also interested in tracing back the history of the structures, institutions, and conditions that have the power to instigate crises of this magnitude. Finally, we would like to look critically at the alternatives that have been proposed by popular revolutions around the world and in the regions of West Asia and North Africa. What can organizing look like? How has this year transformed our worldview and outlook? How will we heal, be in communities, and feel joy? How do we survive, if we were never meant to survive*?

The deadline for submission is Wednesday, **March 31, 2021**.

To submit a paper, please send your blinded piece to submit@kohljournal.press as a .doc or .docx file, with “Submission Issue 2020” as the subject of your e-mail.

We accept work in progress, provided full drafts are submitted. If accepted for inclusion, please note that your paper will be translated to a second language by our team.

* In “a litany for survival,” Audre Lorde writes about our fears and silences:
“So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.”

Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research مجلة لأبحاث الجسد و الجندر is produced in cooperation with Heinrich Boell Stiftung, Middle East Office, Beirut.