

HOW TO GIVE

prompts & practices for
deepening our devotion to
wealth distribution for a more
just & equitable world

created with love & solidarity
by nic antoinette

Let me start by saying that the title of this mini workbook is misleading, because of course there isn't just one "right" way to give.


There is no one way, but that doesn't mean there isn't a way that is best aligned for me personally, and for you personally as well. Each of us live with different intersecting identities, different privileges and oppressions, different histories, different access to resources and networks, and so of course what we are able to give (and how) will be different, too.

I'm [Nic Antoinette](#) — a writer, long-distance hiker, and anti-capitalist tiny biz owner, and I am obsessed with the question of how we close the gap between what we say we want and what we actually do.

For a long time I felt overwhelmed at how to close the gap between my values and my actions when it came to wealth redistribution, mutual aid, and community care. Who do I give to? How much do I give? How regularly do I give? Is money the only thing that's useful to give? Should I give even if I don't consider myself wealthy or rich?

These questions were further complicated by the ways in which my ability to give had been impacted by my own money trauma, scarcity fears, and conditioning under capitalism that tells me I'll never have enough so I must therefore hoard as much as I possibly can for myself.

(Getting right with my money and being able to give in alignment with my values has been, and continues to be, way more of an emotional healing journey than I ever expected!)




I want to name, right up front, that I am not some kind of financial expert. I am not a leader of any kind in the work of wealth redistribution and reparative justice — not even close. I am constantly learning, and am about eight years into grappling with these questions in a deep and intentional way, educating myself, taking imperfect action, making mistakes, learning from others, course-correcting, trying again.

So please know that the journaling prompts I share in the pages ahead are simply ones that have helped me to make sense of my role in this work. My aim for myself in using these questions was to create a framework so that my own giving didn't feel quite so random, quite so subject to decision-fatigue and perfectionism. I didn't want to give only once in a while, in response to a highly publicized tragedy. I didn't want to give out of social pressure or guilt or because I "should" give.

Instead I wanted to really dig into a deeper understanding of my own intersecting privileges, so that I could have a more objective and less emotionally reactive grasp on what giving as an ongoing, joyful, life-long practice could look like for me.

This deep dive was informed by so many of my friends, mentors, and teachers — Bear Hebert, Cody Cook-Parrott, Amy Kuretsky, Mariame Kaba, Mia Birdsong, Raechel Anne Jolie, Alex Franzen, Melissa Fabello, Ericka Hart, Alexis J. Cunningfolk, and many others.



As a result of the education and lived-examples of these folks, I have deepened my belief that we have a responsibility to each other, to community care, and to dismantling the systems of oppression that hold us all hostage.

I have also come to understand that reparations must be systemic and institutional (links to read more are included at the end of the workbook). Wide-sweeping change is crucial, and advocating for it on a legislative and policy level can and should be part of our practice. But as a beneficiary of systemic oppression, I also believe that it is my responsibility to redistribute a meaningful portion of my assets in acknowledgement of the fact that, for example, here in the US white women (like me) earn \$0.79 to a white man's dollar, but Black women only earn \$0.63. And so shifting money directly into the hands of people and communities who have been financially disempowered in a historical and systematic way is also a personal responsibility.

I believe that this responsibility is an honor. Being able to take care of each other and tend to each other and keep each other safe, invest in each other's joy, that is a precious gift. Voting with our money, our time, our voices, and our actions for the kind of world we want to live in is what heals us.

I hope that these prompts I've compiled for you (informed by my teachers) can provide a gentle starting point, a springboard into developing your own wealth redistribution plan according to your specific identities, privileges, and the dreams you hold for your community and for the wider world.

Understanding Class Privilege

My first real education in understanding my own class privilege came from Resource Generation, "a multiracial membership community of young people (18-35) with wealth and/or class privilege committed to the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power."

While their mission is focused on younger folks, I have found their teachings and principles to be applicable to those of all ages.

To start, I recommend reading [this breakdown of class characteristics and income brackets](#), which will help you to situate yourself more objectively.

Sam Killermann's list of [30+ Examples of Middle-to-Upper Class Privilege](#) is helpful too.

Spending time on the Resource Generation website prompted me to make my first concrete commitment to wealth redistribution, particularly after reading their encouragement to those who are currently acquiring wealth through work (that's me! I work in exchange for my money) to give 1-10% of our income. Great, a tangible number. A starting point. A place to begin!

That first decision, about how much to give, can feel tricky and impossible to get right. But remember: there is no one way to fund social movements for equity. Don't let the fear of doing the wrong thing stop you from taking action. As Resource Generation reminds us: "as long as you are moving money in the direction of social change efforts led by people most impacted by injustice, you're headed in the right direction."

To start, I chose to give away 3% of my take-home pay each month, and decided (somewhat arbitrarily) that I would increase my giving by 1% with each \$500-per-month increase in salary.

This was an amount, based on my salary when I started practicing wealth redistribution, that I knew would make me feel in greater solidarity with the people and movements I was giving to, an amount that would make me feel proud of acting in alignment with my values — not just a tiny token of my disposable income but an amount that felt significant and real (but that wouldn't prevent me from meeting my own needs).

So I started at 3%, committed to the 1% per \$500 raise, and I am now at 10%. I just needed a clear system for myself, you know? Something to base my next steps on. Somewhere to begin. Then, once I had the amount of my monthly redistribution set I used the questions that you will find on the following pages to help me determine where I wanted that money to go, and I still use these questions to reevaluate my giving every quarter. I hope this framework helps you to get started, too!

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A note on being public about what we give/do for social change— I have been hesitant to put together this resource in fear of it appearing like I think I am somehow good/right/perfect, or like I am seeking external praise and validation for my choices.

There is an inevitable aspect of being performative when we talk publicly about the actions we are taking, and this is no exception. But I feel so indebted to the folks who have shared this type of thing publicly before me, whose choice to do so really helped me to learn, interrogate, and act with consistency, that I have decided to contribute (imperfectly) to the conversation as well.

"Solidarity Not Charity"

In the prompts that follow you will be guided in thinking about where to give funds. For me, this involved the discomfort of unlearning what I had been taught about what "giving back" should look like — namely that money should only be given to a 'well-run' non-profit, and that in exchange I would get a tax write-off.

I don't want to dismiss all non-profits, but there are some valuable critiques against the ways these types of organizations co-opt movements and yet don't get funds to the people they say they serve. (to read more: [*The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*](#), by INCITE!)

As such, I would be remiss in not naming the enormous value of giving directly to individuals or grassroots groups. As Dean Spade says in the "Solidarity Not Charity!" chapter of [*Mutual Aid*](#):

"Charity makes rich people and corporations look generous while upholding and legitimizing the systems that concentrate wealth. Charity is increasingly privatized and contracted out to the massive nonprofit sector, which benefits rich people more than poor people.... For example, the funder may favor nonprofits that make sobriety a condition of receiving a spot in a homeless shelter, because rich people would rather believe that homelessness is caused by poor people's drug use than that it is caused by a capitalist housing market.... Elite solutions to poverty are always about managing poor people and never about redistributing wealth."

Instead, we can redistribute our money directly to marginalized people and communities, trusting in the power and dignity of self-determination that happens when folks have cash to meet their own needs.

**"If you are dedicated to
change, let it cost you
something."**

- Viola Davis -

Question 1: Which identities of privilege do I hold?

From Nic: I have unearned privileges due to being white, cisgender, thin, currently able-bodied, middle class, college-educated, an English speaker, US-born, etc. Situating myself within my privileges helps me to focus on redistributing my wealth to those who have been systemically marginalized due to having different identities from mine.

Question 2: Which identities of marginalization and oppression do I hold?

From Nic: Under patriarchy, my identity as a woman has been historically and systemically marginalized. Paying attention to our privileges so that we can name them, understand them, and dismantle them is crucial, and it is just as important to understand the ways in which various aspects of our identities lead to oppression.

Question 3: How might my own marginalization inform the ways in which I want to redistribute wealth?

From Nic: I am oppressed as a woman while also being the oppressor as a white person — both are true. And knowing what I know about the experience of being a woman might inform the ways I give. For example by focusing on redistribution and support that specifically uplifts Black women and Indigenous women.

Question 4: Whose land am I on? (native-land.ca is a great starting point for learning more!)

From Nic: I live in the so-called United States, and my ancestors and I are not indigenous to this place. Therefore I pay what I think of as monthly rent/land tax to support Indigenous Roots Forever Food Access: a tribal community micro-farming program developed by the Indigenous People's Network of MA and RI.

Question 5: What am I deeply grateful to have access to? What do I have enough of?

From Nic: There are so many resources that I am grateful to be able to access, but the first two that come to mind right now are therapy and books.

Question 6: Who is already working to create access to these same things for folks who are more marginalized than me? Who might I support with my wealth redistribution?

From Nic: In regard to therapy and books, I could redistribute money to The Loveland Foundation to support therapy access for Black women and girls, or to my local Prison Book Program.

Question 7: Which injustice makes me seethe with anger and rage on a regular basis?

From Nic: I often fall into the trap of feeling overwhelmed by how many issues we are all facing. But inaction due to overwhelm is not useful, and so I constantly remind myself to pick something, start somewhere, and dive deeper from there. Over the past few years the injustice about which I have felt the most constant rage is police brutality and the harm caused by the prison industrial complex, particularly to Black and LGBTQIA+ folks.

Question 8: Who is already doing work on the ground to right this injustice? Who might I support with my wealth redistribution?

From Nic: I currently prioritize giving to both National Bail Out and Black & Pink.

Question 9: Which communities do I currently belong to? Where do I spend my time?

From Nic: I am an avid long-distance hiker, which means that I belong to that community. I am also a solo self-employed creative, a writer, a podcast host, and a former part-time van dweller — each of which make me a part of a different community.

Question 10: Who is already doing work to make these spaces more inclusive, more just, and more accessible for all?

From Nic: Outdoor Afro, Diversify Van Life, the Venture Out Project. Writing residencies with grants for BIPOC writers, direct contributions to the Venmo or Patreon of Black and Indigenous creatives, buying exclusively from these makers during holiday gifting season, etc. — the list of ways to uplift marginalized people within our own niche communities is almost unlimited!

Question 11: Who is within my sphere of influence?

From Nic: There are some people I can impact more than others. For me that includes the readers of Wild Letters, my podcast listeners, the folks who join my workshops & group programs. Offline it means my circle of dear friends, the family members with whom I am in close relationship, and my partner.

Question 12: How might I bring others who share my privileges along with me as I commit to wealth redistribution and reparative action? Who will I start with?

From Nic: This work needs to be done in community. Acting together, the impact of our efforts are compounding. Talking honestly to the folks with whom we share privileged identities is, I believe, a necessary part of this work. I initially started with my partner and my mother, who are both white like me.

3-Month Wealth Redistribution Plan

My current (approx) monthly take-home pay is: _____

For the next three months I commit to redistributing _____%

of this income, which is: _____

Based on what came up for me in using the journaling prompts, I have decided to allocate this money in the following specific ways:

- I have set it up so this money comes out of my account automatically wherever possible
- I have put a note in my calendar to reevaluate this wealth redistribution plan in 3 months
- I have scheduled conversations with at least 3 friends, colleagues, or family members to ask them to do this with me, thereby multiplying our collective impact!

Rooting for you!

You did it! You made a plan for the next three months of wealth redistribution! I am so excited for you and proud of you.

More than anything, my hope is that claiming responsibility for your own part in building an economically just world will help you to feel purposeful, invigorated, and deeply connected to others.

Trying to close the gap between what we say we want (in our lives, in our families, in our communities, in the world) and what we actually do to make those dreams a reality can be the hard work of a lifetime, and so I just want to end by saying that I am rooting for you.

The commitments you have made within the pages of this workbook really matter, and I hope that each time you take action on the promises you made to yourself today you will remember that so many of us are doing the same right alongside you.

We're all in this together.

Here we go!

Nic

Links & Additional Reading

Class Distinctions & Income Brackets:

<https://resourcegeneration.org/breakdown-of-class-characteristics-income-brackets/>

30+ Examples of Middle-to-Upper Class Privileges, by Sam Killermann:

<https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/10/list-of-upperclass-privilege/>

Freely: an anti-capitalist guide to pricing your work:

<http://www.bearcoaches.com/freely>

Indigenous Resistance homework:

<https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Indigenous-Resistance-Homework.pdf>

Land Back movement

<https://landback.org/manifesto/>

The Case for Reparations, by Ta-Nehisi Coates

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

What Is Owed, by Nikole Hannah-Jones:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/24/magazine/reparations-slavery.html>

[*Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis \(and the Next\)*](#), by Dean Spade