



**ATGENDER** Spring Conference 2020

## **Caring in Uncaring Times**

**DATE:** 13th-15th May, 2020

**Venue:** Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, NW4 4BT, London, UK.

The 2020 ATGENDER Spring Conference will explore the possibilities for and necessity of embedding care in policy and activism. Adopting a broad approach to the concepts of care, policy and activism, we invite proposals from researchers, activists, practitioners, carers, archivists, artists and others from a range of backgrounds and disciplines.

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“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”  
(Lorde, 1988)

Audre Lorde demands we recognise the political power and revolutionary potential of care and caring. Reflecting on Lorde’s defence of self-care, Sara Ahmed (2014) considers the privilege of being cared for, and the necessity of self-care for those who are not: ‘Some have to look after themselves because they are not looked after: their being is not cared for, supported, protected.’ Care, being cared for, caring about and self-care, are necessary political acts and therefore are imbued with power relations (Toronto, 2010). Burton and Turbine, 2019 argue that ‘care is, most of all, a constant vigilance as to your power and how you wield this’.

The absence of care operates across lines of privilege and inequality. This is demonstrated, to take an example, by the uneven effects of the UK government’s withdrawal of care during almost 10 years of austerity measures. UK austerity measures have cemented a lack of care in government policy and a state withdrawal of the provision of and responsibility for care. Austerity measures across Europe have had

similar effects. Bassel and Emejulu (2018 and 2017) argue for the role of care as a radical means of solidarity and survival in minority women's activism against the cuts. Overall, there needs to be more attention given to the diversity of care (Bartos, 2018 and Raghuram, 2016) and understanding of it in a transnational context (Naire et al., 2017).

This conference seeks to explore care and caring in all its diversity and invites participants to reflect on the devastating consequences of an uncaring state (across a range of time and places), and the vital work of activism and policy that centres care.

**Questions and concerns to consider include (but are not limited to):**

- What does it mean to enact careful activism?
- How can we develop and implement policy founded in care?
- What strategies and practices can be used to embed care in policy and activism?
- How can performing acts of care operate as a form of activism?
- What are the dangers when the terminology of care is co-opted, commodified, or used as a means of control?
- How are certain group marked out as deserving or undeserving of care?
- How do professionals embed care in their practice?
- How is the practice of care being challenged by neoliberalism and its individualising effects?
- How are practices of care performed along lines of privilege and inequality?
- State practices of care/uncaring states
- How to respond to uncaring activist spaces
- Conceptualising care across paradigms, disciplines and practice
- How can we attend to the emotion and ethics of care?
- How can care and care activism be (re) imagined in relation to new and digital technology?
- How is care and caring represented in the media, film, television and the arts more broadly?
- Critical engagement with the economies, space and places of care

**We welcome proposals for a range of formats (papers, panels, roundtables, workshops, performance, posters, artistic submissions etc.).**

**For individual 15min paper proposals please submit:**

- Title and abstract (200 words max)
- Short biography (75 words max)

**For 45 min or 1.5hr long roundtables, interactive and participatory workshops, performances:**

- Type of activity
- Title and abstract - including details of the format, structure and preferred time - 45min or 1.5hr (350 words max)
- Short biography for all participants (75 words max each)

Please submit your proposals to [atgender2020con@gmail.com](mailto:atgender2020con@gmail.com) by 16th December 2019. Proposals must be sent in a single file as an attachment (Word Doc).

### **Fees**

The conference will have a sliding fee scale tbc in November 2019. A number of travel bursaries for AtGender members will be available to apply for later in the year.

### **Access requirements**

Hendon Central Underground and Middlesex University Hendon Campus are both fully accessible. For more information and a map [see here](#). Attendees will be asked about any specific access requirements at registration, but please get in touch if you need more details about the venue and facilities before this point.