

A MODEST PROPOSAL BY LIBBY CLARKE

The Culture Doula Collective

A Movement to Change The Nation

I am an artist who is 15ish years from my MFA; I have a couple long-term day jobs and a child. My creative practice is stretched so thin as to be a bare gilding on my everyday life—it is constantly put at the bottom of my list of daily priorities if it enters the fray at all. I now belong to an artist's collective and have noticed many others in my position so I wondered: what if we got together and created a collective specifically structured for parents with culturally productive tendencies? I have a friend who is a self-styled Art Doula, and my conversations with her developed into the obvious variation of the **CULTURE DOULA**. Let's put together a creative collective movement wherein we help each other get back into the swing of making while being parents!*

THE IDEA

- Find a rough warehouse space to rent cheaply and build out as a collective work space.
- Include a variety of storage and workspace options from small cubbies to full studios of various sizes. If possible, reserve space for shops and have members bring in all those tools they had in storage. Sign lease contracts and safety waivers so everyone can use the tools.
- Build out one area where children could safely play when supervised by adults. If possible, include a safe outdoor space as well.
- Recruit Cultural Producers who are parents at any level of their career, as long as they are out of school and have children. Be sure to target and welcome people whose work has foundered beneath the pressures of parenting.
- Recruit Culture Doulas: successful cultural producers who have conquered the challenges of parenting and who are looking to develop their careers as curators, advisors, consultants, life coaches, cultural critics, and general mentors.
- Develop the overall organization as a non-profit, volunteer-run collective wherein members apply with a portfolio and take turns maintaining the space.
- The mission is to create a symbiotic cultural refuge and work space that maintains itself through affordable rental and membership fees and low overhead for our target population.
- Our members will be encouraged to produce the best work as their individual trajectories allow. We will promote our members and seek input from external resources relentlessly.

THIS COULD WORK! WE CAN DO THIS!

If we work hard, this sort of mutually-beneficial organization can easily come to be. We could become horizontally integrated, working together to find, cultivate and support cultural producers who would otherwise flail under the pressures of parenting. If we build in checks and balances to ensure as much transparency as possible, we would be unstoppable cultural institutions in no time.

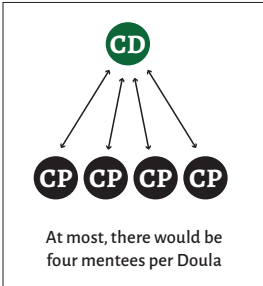
At the very least, we can start a conversation and a virtual community to help each other.

*Her name is Susan Vander Mellen, and she is pretty awesome.

WANT TO ADD TO THE IDEA? VISIT CULTUREDOULAS.COM

HOW WE COULD DO THIS

A Dream Program What We Could Build



DOULA TO CULTURAL PRODUCER DISTRIBUTION

We would like to recruit a core group of Culture Doulas whose expertise covers a wide range of skills. Then we would recruit up to 4 cultural producers for each Doula, aligned by disposition and discipline as much as possible. The Doulas would be carefully screened to ensure they are active, engaged professionals dedicated to helping their mentees develop and succeed in their individual creative practices. Each person in this cohort would benefit from this altruistic structure: if one succeeds, we all benefit in turn.

DOULA / MENTEE RELATIONSHIP

Each cultural producer would meet on a regular basis with her/his doula. Workshops, shows, demonstrations, and other events would be developed and held to help to meet the needs of our members so each member makes progress. Members would be asked to produce actively each year, according to their individual trajectories. Inactive members will be placed in supported stasis so they can get their footing or choose to end their tenure and make room for new members.

FUNDING

We would charge the lowest membership and rental fees possible in order to keep the actual space running day-to-day. Then, we could hold key events throughout the year to bring in key funds for capital improvements and membership subsidization. Ideally, a Grant Writing Doula would concentrate on finding funding streams to support us further. No one would make money from this venture directly, but members would all be far more prepared to compete and succeed.

CHILDCARE

It would be imperative to have regular childcare hours in a safe area, staffed by members who have been trained according to state regulations. These members could be granted space on a work-study basis. Members who choose to use the childcare option would be charged a nominal maintenance fee (at this point, we are considering \$10/hr). Childcare would be available as long as the distribution of adults to children is acceptable, given the medial age of the group present. Childcare would only available to cultural producers working within the space.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

We founders would be investing in the future of our community. The idea started out of an impulse to help ourselves and our friends, but we have found there to be an enormous lack for this sort of holistic, proactive support for parents with creative careers. The larger culture has a hard time understanding the creative processes in which we find our life's work, much less the need for support we specifically need. This is a workable plan to take care of ourselves and the successive generations. The more we help each other succeed, the more influence we will all have in the culture around us.

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