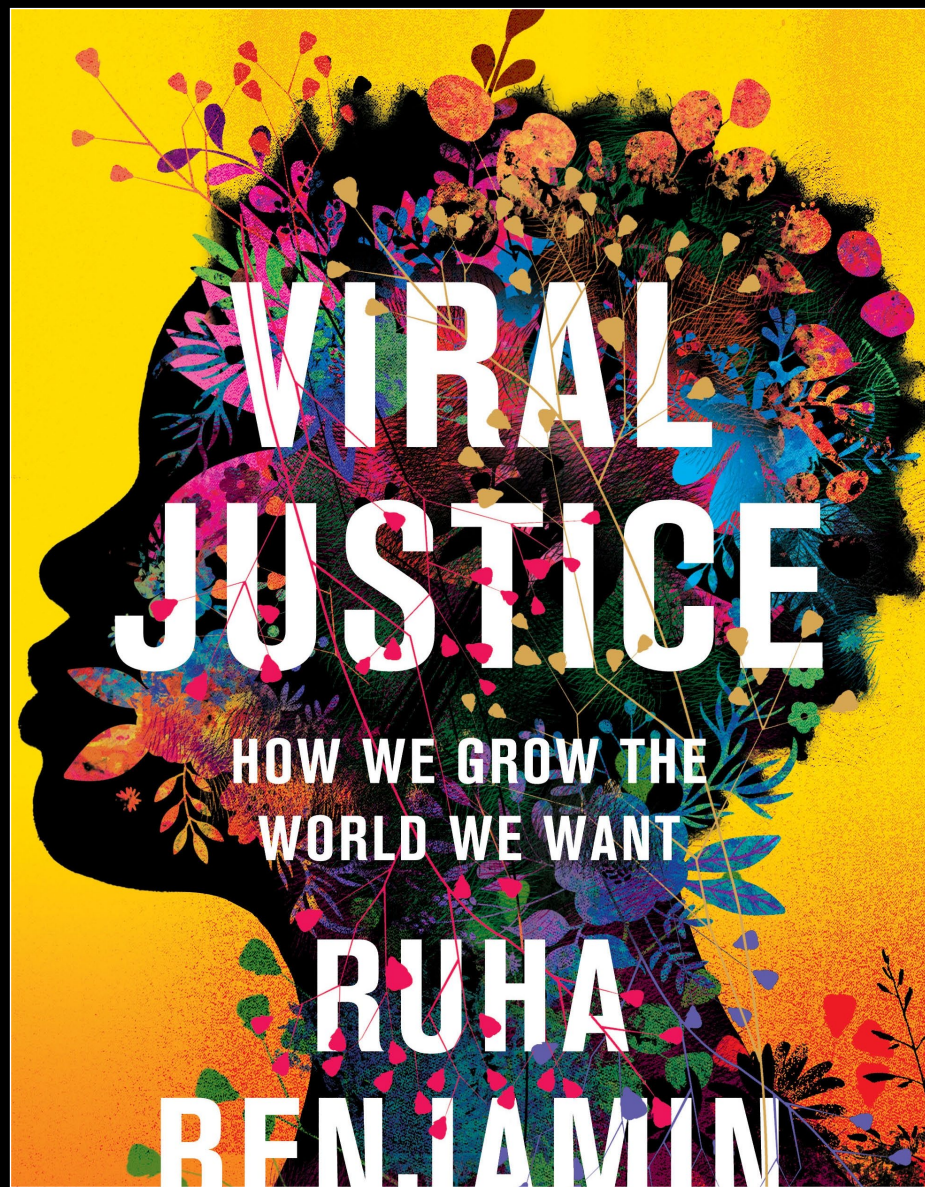
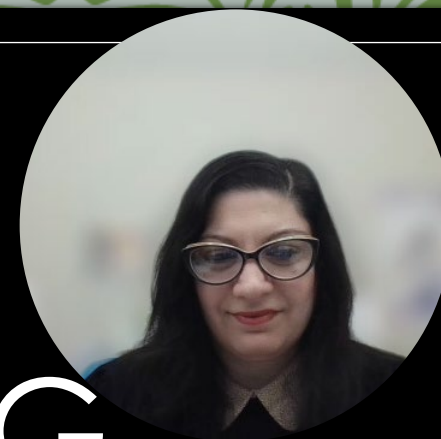




GROWING THE WORLD WE WANT

Dr. Sheiba Kian Kaufman



BOOK TOUR 2022





Organic/Garden Metaphors (rhetoric)



Seeds



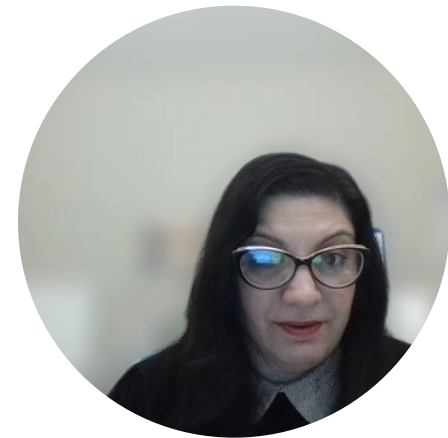
Plants



Growing

- Author's Ethos? In your groups, find evidence from the reading that points to the author's ethos. Write these down.
- What is the central metaphor or comparison Benjamin is making between "viruses" and social change/justice (page 9, 20)? What is the rhetorical effect of this language? How does she use this metaphor to present her argument?
- Provide one example of "viral justice" (pg. 14).
- Explain the ideas of "macro" and "micro" social change Benjamin introduces (pg. 19-20).
- Identify some examples of rhetorical appeals to logos in the reading. What is the effect of such appeals?

Significant Quotes/Concepts



INTRODUCTION

The White House

I grew up in the White House. At least that's what the gold-plated sign hanging on the front door announced. In the 1950s, my grandparents bought a two-story Craftsman house just off Crenshaw Boulevard in Los Angeles. They were children of the Great Migration, the era between 1915 and 1970 when millions of African Americans left the Jim Crow South to search for better futures in the northern and western United States. They sprang from Arkansas and Texas by way of Georgia, then made their way west, first to Watts, and eventually to the Leimert Park area, a little corner of the city where they finally put down roots. These "acts of flight" would later be recognized as a *general strike*—fugitives escaping the newfangled forms of servitude that evolved out of slavery. My grandparents, if you hadn't guessed, were "the Whites."

They raised my father and my four aunts in that Craftsman on Fourth Avenue. By the early '80s, I also found refuge in the White House along with my parents and brother, Jamal. Although this was the side of LA where even the palm trees looked exhausted, in my mind, the entire world revolved around our block: school bells ringing, police helicopters circling, music vibrating from the apartments next door, and my grandma holding court in the kitchen.

Grandma, perched on a tall chair within arm's length of her mustard-yellow rotary phone, seemed to be always on call. As a

*author's
background
(ethos)*

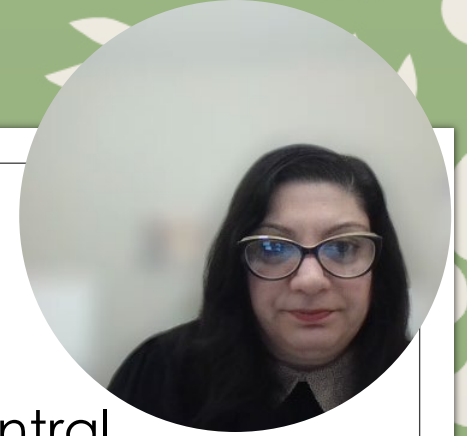
Author's Ethos? In your groups, find evidence from the reading that points to the author's ethos. Write these down.



“What you water grows”

Grandma White, it turns out, was an undercover abolitionist, replacing castigation with care, suspension with connection, shame with encouragement. Rather than making me feel small and bad, she showered me with tenderness, making me want to do better. It was what she *didn't* say, what she chose *not* to shine a light on, that imprinted on me with such force. Rather than parrot the school's reprimand, she chose a different poetics, one guided by the credo that *what you water grows*. And in her unassuming subversion of school punishment, she gave me my first lesson in abolitionist world- making (Benjamin 3).





Viral Justice grows out of my contention that viruses are not our ultimate foe. In the same way that COVID-19 kills, so too ableism, racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism work to eliminate unwanted people. Ours is a eugenicist society: from the funding of school districts to the triaging of patients, “privilege” is a euphemism for tyranny. Any attempt at spreading justice, then, entails not simply “including” those who’ve been disposed of but fundamentally transforming the societies into which they’re included.

In the words of James Baldwin, “We are living in a world in which every body and every thing is interdependent.” It is not something we must strive to be. We *are*. Opposing everyday eugenics requires that we acknowledge and foster a *deep- rooted interdependence*, not as some cheery platitude but as a guiding ethos for regenerating life on this planet.

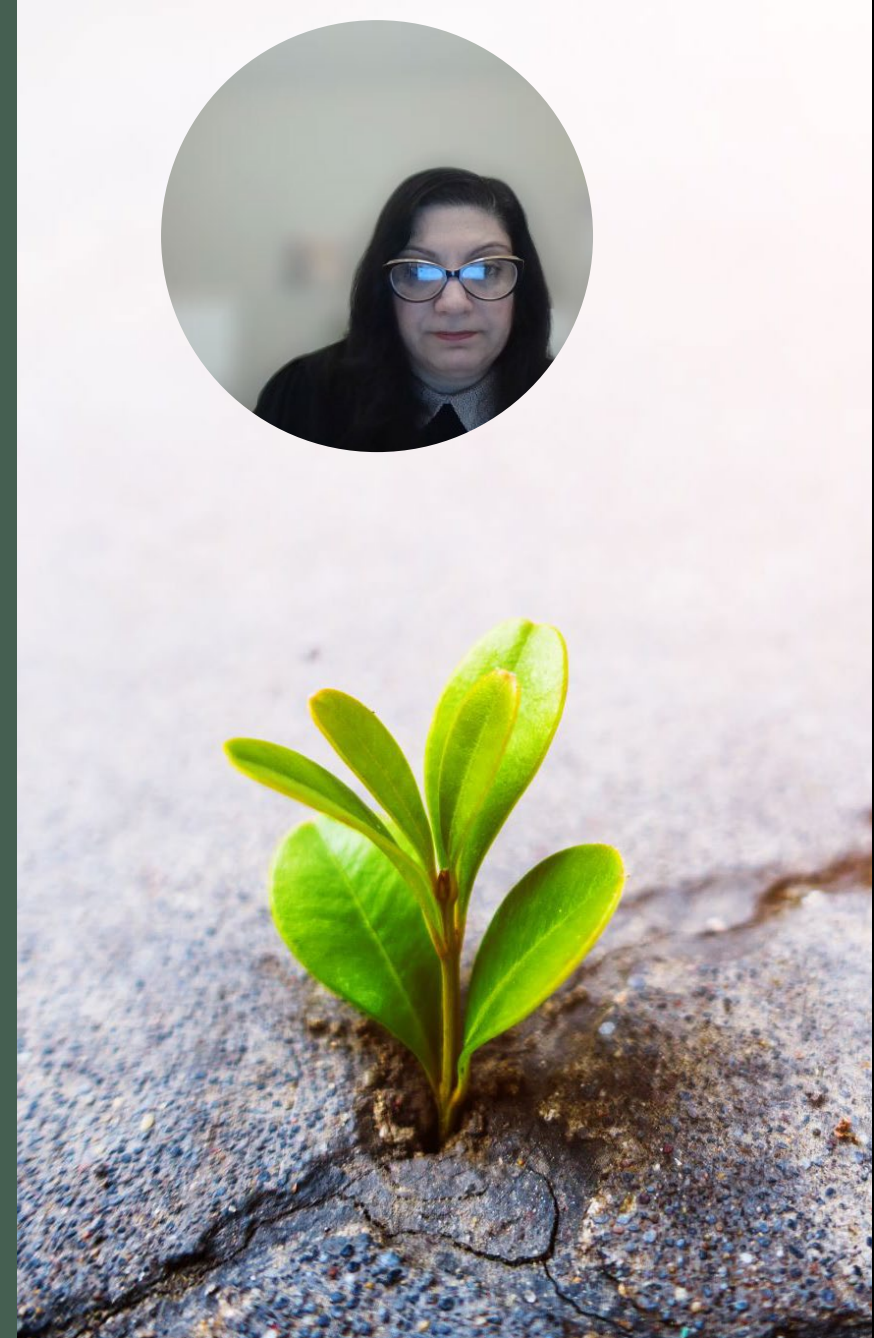
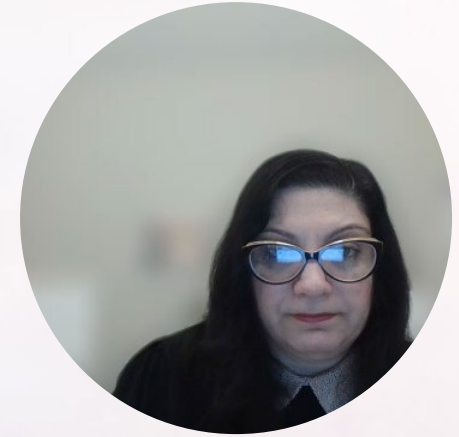
“Vectors of justice, spreaders of joy” (Benjamin 16)

What is the central metaphor or comparison Benjamin is making between “viruses” and social change/justice (page 9, 20)? What is the rhetorical effect of this language? How does she use this metaphor to present her argument?

Seeds and Trees: Micro and Macro Change

“Little by little, day by day, starting in our own backyards, let’s identify our plots, get to the root cause of what’s ailing us, accept our interconnectedness, and finally grow ... Up” (Benjamin 11).

“To that end, I propose a microvision of social change, much like Grandma White’s everyday abolitionism, which we seed in the present as alternatives to our fracturing system” (Benjamin 11).





An Example of Viral Justice

As collectives, viral justice could look like the youths at South End Technology Center in Boston creating masks for frontline workers and other vulnerable groups. For their “PPE for the People” campaign, young people in the community used sewing machines, 3- D printers, and laser cutters to create everything from 3- D- printed N95- style masks and clear face shields to hand- sewn personal masks for everyday use by the elderly, low- income folks, and essential workers. This initiative is just one of many making social change irresistible (Benjamin 14).

Viral Justice....? (argument)



Viral justice orients us differently toward small- scale, often localized, actions. It invites us to witness how an idea or action that sprouts in one place may be adopted, adapted, and diffused else where. But it also counters the assumption that “scaling up” should always be the goal.

Viral justice directs our attention to how groups seek to embody and experiment with new ways of relating— “networks of mutual aid, maroon communities, survival programs, and circles of care.” It shines a light on individuals’ “self- conscious effort to direct energy into practising in the present the future that is sought.”

Viral justice rejects false dichotomies and either-or options when it comes to our goals and dispositions: idealistic or pragmatic, experimental or enduring, spontaneous or strategic, fiery or cool, romantic or gritty, creative or ce re bral, joyful or enraged. Yes, and . . .

Viral justice is a parable of the sower and of the uprooter. Viral justice is invested not only in our material welfare but also our spiritual well-being (Benjamin 19).



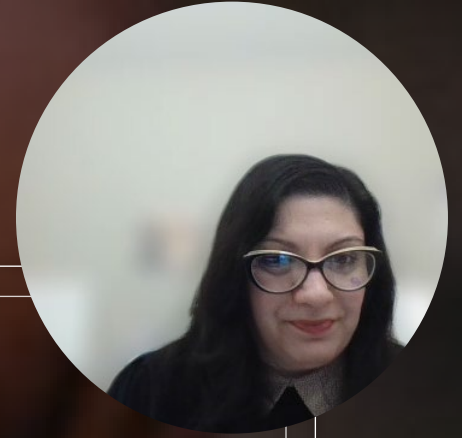
Practicing analysis and close reading to craft arguments



In Ruha Benjamin's book, *Viral Justice*, she uses the language of gardening and organic metaphors to..... (fill in the blank). She writes of how "we seed in the present" to(11).



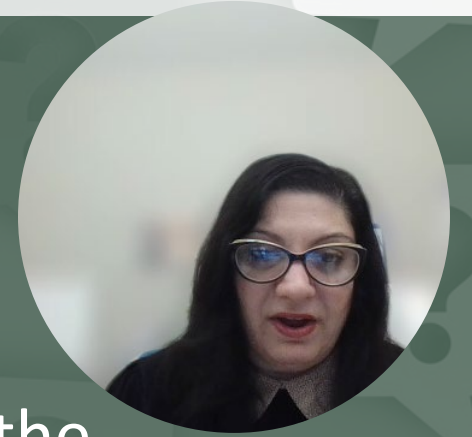
In your groups, fill in the blank with your own analysis and commentary



CONNECTIONS AND CRITICAL THINKING

Ron Finley: How is Finley's work in urban gardening an example of "viral justice"?

Discussion and Analysis



Ruha Benjamin includes a quote from Octavia E. Butler in the epigraph for *Viral Justice*: “All that you touch /You Change. / All that you Change / Changes you.” Consider your own relationship to social change in your community (home, work, school, etc). What experiences and relationships have changed you? What do you believe is your potential to create change in the world?