

Declaration of Dependence: Heather Davis

Mel Chen writes in their beautiful book *Animacies* that the fiction of independence and inviolability is one that only a few bodies can sustain. By this they mean that independence and inviolability can only be achieved through the practices of barricading: through wealth, power, through an abiding refusal to acknowledge the interdependencies of mammalian life, through a willful denial of the ways in which we are always indebted to others, to the workers who build and maintain infrastructures, to our loves and to our nonhuman kin, to the bacteria who compose most of our bodies, to the air that moves in and out of our lungs, to water that sustains us, to the earth. We are the product of multiple generational unfoldings across human and other-than-human worlds. We are composed of all these others, as through our metabolisms we take them in, just as we rely upon endless expressions and talents of the other humans with whom we share the world.

Individualism, as Jacob Wren has aptly noted, is a mistake. It is a philosophical mistake. And this mistake has had so many ripple effects outwards, from the belief that toxicities pumped into the environment will stay in one place, to the mass extinction events that we are now witnessing, to the demoralizing and debilitating ideas that we are in this alone. Embracing our dependence opens up paths for recognizing that we are always in relation, that we need to learn how to cultivate good relations with each other and other-than-human kin. We need to do this hard work of reparations, of reconciliation, of reconstituting our enmeshment within the rest of the world.

