the cost of trying to hold on:

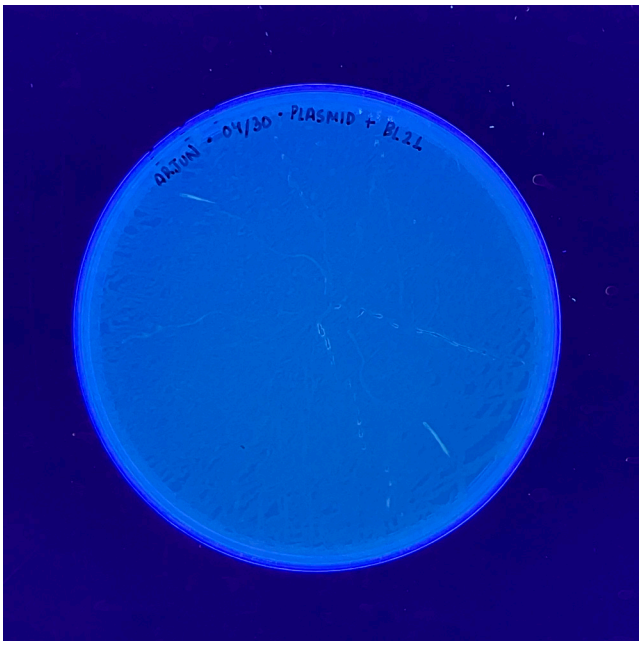
arjun; april, 2026.

mitochondrial-dna (or mtdna) in human-beings is inherited by a child exclusively from their mother. therefore, as a single male child, my mother's mtdna is fatefully destined to die with me.

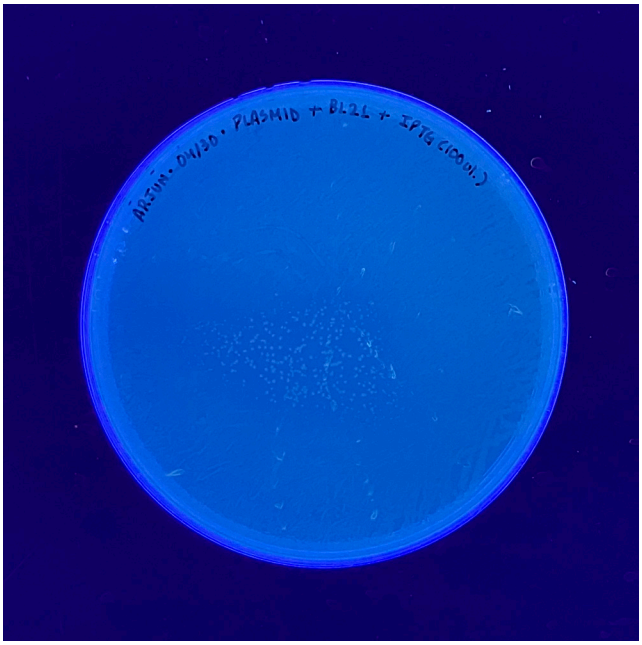
as an offspring with little to no tangible inheritance, learning about this instinctually made me want to preserve & keep this dna alive, and see it passed it down to future generations. through genetic-engineering with dr. ellen d. jorgensen at biotech-without-borders, we addressed this desire, and successfully managed to express some of my mtdna into e. coli. bacteria cells — a commonly used organism in many biotech-labs.

however, the moment we did so, we killed them. millions of them — living peacefully in small colonies on a petri dish — wiped out by a human-desire to preserve a piece of maternal inheritance. analogous to a world where people increasingly preserve more — data; objects; spaces; genomes — i wonder how many such organisms will bear the price for the human inability to let go.

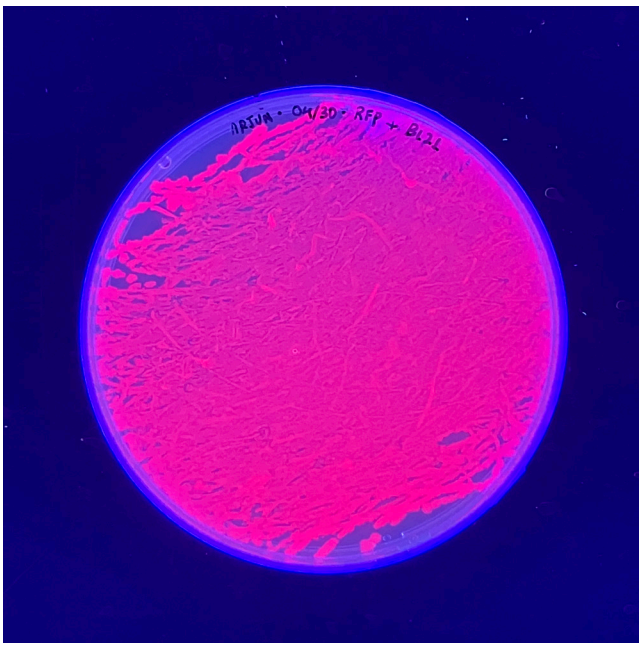
acknowledgements:
dr. heather dewey hagborg; dr. ellen d. jorgensen; biotech without borders; bioart-as-biopolitics cohort spring-2026.



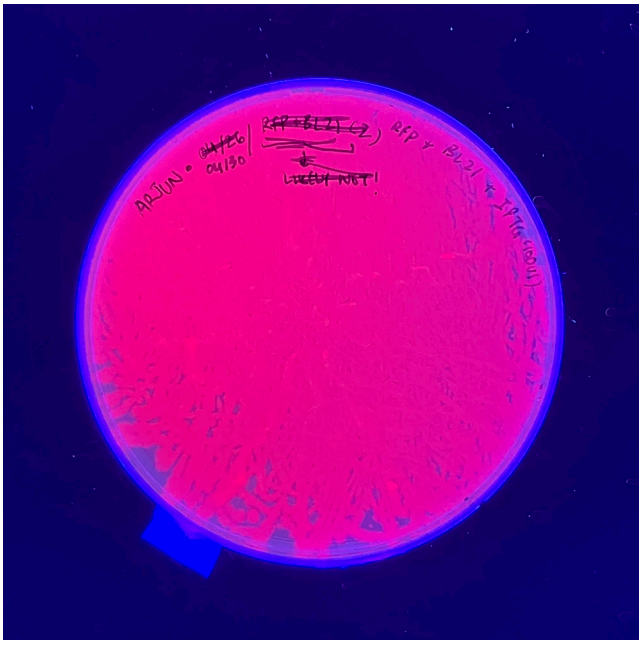
plasmid (green-fluorescent-protein + my mitochondrial-dna + pet28a) + e. coli. (bl. 21)



plasmid (green-fluorescent-protein + my mitochondrial-dna + pet28a) + e. coli. (bl. 21) + iptg (activator for bacteria to use plasmid)



plasmid (red-fluorescent-protein) + e. coli. (bl. 21)



plasmid (red-fluorescent-protein) + e. coli. (bl. 21) + iptg
(activator for bacteria to use plasmid)