PEDAGOGIES OF BLACK AGRARIANISM: A CULTURAL PROCESS OF RECOVERY

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Community Sustainability – Doctor of Philosophy

2019

ABSTRACT

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Black agrarianism is a pedagogical thought, praxis, and social movement. Black agrarian pedagogies are the processes by which we teach and learn with one another through the exchange of knowledges that range from basic survival necessities on how to feed, shelter, and cloth ourselves to cultural stories that affirm our identities and value as dignified human beings. The abundant literature citing black agrarianism as a form of social, economic and political liberation skims the surface of educational processes in black agrarian spaces. In response, this inquiry explores the historical, contemporary and self-reflective pedagogies of black agrarianism.

The historical pedagogies of black agrarianism are interrogated through a two-part historiography: a historiographical essay and an oral history theatrical representation. The historiographical essay illuminates the mothering of black agrarian pedagogies that creatively crafted black agrarian educational environments through the late 19th and 20th centuries in institutions such as Tuskegee University and the Black Panther Party. In the tradition of African storytelling, the oral history theatrical representation performs the life history of Wendell Paris, a black agrarian organizer and educator, in dialogue with historical black agrarians such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver and Fannie Lou Hamer to portray the importance of culture as the first and most important teacher where every day acts of shelling peas, organizing for black voting rights and

learning how to survive were some of the primordial lessons that captured the Black Freedom Movement of the mid-to-late 20th century.

Relatedly, the ethnographic case study of D-Town Farm of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) explores the contemporary contours of black agrarian pedagogies. Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with 12 farm volunteers and 7 D-Town farmers and interns and content analysis via internal documents and social media postings, I interpret D-Town Farm pedagogy as a spiritually-driven praxis that exists in a culturally-representative community village striving toward self-reliance. By bringing everything full circle, the farm facilitates a culture of belonging (hooks, 2009) through African-centered culture as a pedagogical agent. Lastly, the self-reflective pedagogies of Black agrarianism are contextualized via an autoethnography where I reflect on my understandings of how black agrarian pedagogies has impacted me as a researcher.

Dedicated to my family, Robertson Tyler, Deborah Tyler, Stephanie Tyler and Shayla Gardner-Tyler, who has continually held me in unconditional love and support since my emergence into this earthly realm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Starting with the highest source of truth and peace, I thank the Creator and the cosmos who birthed me, guide my footsteps and entrust me to the knowledges that work through me for worldly knowing. I am the deepest gratitude to my family who has provided endless physical and emotional support. My higher educational journey as a first-generation college student could not have been possible without them. Specifically, Robertson and Deborah Tyler (my grandparents), Shayla Gardner-Tyler (my daughter) and Stephanie Tyler (my mother) have all been invaluable pillars of support as they provided financial assistance, childcare, words of encouragement, warm hugs and kisses, laughter and much more. They all have literally made me into the human being I am and I am forever indebted.

I must also thank my advisor, Kyle Whyte, and my committee members – Kim Chung, Laurie Thorp and Wynne Wright of the Department of Community Sustainability – who has also provided momentous support and encouragement throughout my graduate career in the Department of Community Sustainability. Immense gratitude must also be given to the various groups for rooting me and contributing to my evolving development as an organizer, educator, activist, artist and more. Namely, the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), the Black Dirt Farm Collective (BDFC), Organización Boricuá de Agricultura Ecologica, the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) have all influenced my outlook on the world and how I choose to show up within my intersectional beings. A special thanks to everyone else who believed in me and my work that was so important to me and the communities with whom I stand in solidarity.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AANCL	Association for the Advancement of Negro Country Life
BPP	Black Panther Party
BUGS	Black Farmer Urban Gardeners
CJA	Climate Justice Alliance
DBCFSN	Detroit Black Community Food Security Network
FFC	Freedom Farm Cooperative
FQB	Freedom Quilting Bee
FSC	Federation of Southern Cooperatives
FST	Freedom Southern Theater
HEW	Health, Education and Welfare
LVC	La Via Campesina
LCFO	Lowndes County Freedom Organization
MAC	Mississippi Association of Cooperatives
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terras – Landless Rural Workers Movement
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women
NNHW	National Negro Health Week
OCS	Oakland Community School
SAAFON	Southeast African-American Organic Farmers Network
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
TAL	Tuskegee Advancement League
UNI	Urban Nutrition Initiative

USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

ARTICLE 1:
A HISTROPGRAPHICAL ESSAY OF MOTHERING IN HISTORICAL BLACK AGRARIAN PEDAGOGIES

Abstract

Black agrarianism is a pedagogical thought, praxis, and social movement. Black agrarian pedagogies are the processes by which we teach and learn with one another through the exchange of knowledges that range from basic survival necessities on how to feed, shelter, and cloth ourselves to cultural stories that affirm our identities and value as dignified human beings. Mothering, as a nurturance process, guides the interdependent wellness of the mind, body and spirit to ensure the survival of the people – the cultural continuance. The mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies illuminates the cultural labor of women, specifically "community othermothers" who creatively crafted Black agrarian educational environments based on responding to felt community needs to convivially promote political and academic education under Black women's leadership. These pedagogical processes are chronologically outlined within the framing of five Black agrarian institutions – the Tuskegee State Normal School, the "Negro" Farm Home Demonstration in Florida, Freedom Farm Cooperative, the Freedom Quilting Bee and the Black Panther Party – who all pursued the ultimate goal of racial upliftment, self-reliance and freedom through land and food matrices throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Black Agrarianism

Black agrarianism is a pedagogical thought, praxis, and social movement. Black agrarian pedagogies are the processes by which we teach and learn with one another through the exchange of knowledges that range from basic survival necessities on how to feed, shelter,

and cloth ourselves to cultural stories that affirm our identities and value as dignified human beings. Mothering, as a nurturance process, guides the interdependent wellness of the mind, body (Collins, 2002) and spirit to ensure the survival of the people – the cultural continuance (Reagon, 1987). The mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies illuminates the cultural labor of women, specifically "community othermothers" who creatively crafted Black agrarian educational environments based on responding to felt community needs to convivially promote political and academic education under Black women's leadership. These were the pedagogical processes by which a group of people organized institutions and organizations by teaching and learning with the ultimate goal of pursuing "Negro uplift" (Rickford, 2017) and self-reliance through land and food matrices.

As not fully captured in the historical scholarship, Black agrarian histories extend far beyond the periods of 19th century enslavement, de jure Emancipation and Reconstruction through 20th century Jim Crow, Civil Rights and Black Power. This article intends to illuminate how Black agrarian social movements used Black agrarian pedagogies to establish, evolve and sustain themselves through the strategic oppressions of land dispossession and displacement (Daniel, 2013), systemic discrimination (Farquhar and Wing, 2008; Tajik and Minkler, 2007; Tyler et al, 2014), economic exploitation (Nembhard, 2014; Ali, 2012; Lee, 2000), starvation (White, 2018; Lee, 200), poor health (Lee, 2000) and inequitable education (de Jong, 2000). This analytical history centers Black women's work in agrarian educational environments throughout the magnetic movement building of the 19th and 20th centuries. The Black agrarian discourse "suggests the resilience of the search

for a place where Black people could be made whole" (Rickford, 2017, pg. 960) and this wholeness has intrepidly been led by and through Black women.

Mothering

Drawing from contemporary Black feminist philosophy, specific pedagogical processes reveal the prominent role of "mothering" in the theory and practice of Black agrarian pedagogies. Historically, the diversity of Black motherhood (Collins, 2002) as a concept has been of central importance in the philosophies of people of African descent, particularly African Liberation Movements (Ichile, 2018). It facilitates education as a channel for empowerment and 'racial uplift' rather than focusing solely on technical skill development for employability and symbolizes "important connections among self, change, and empowerment in African-American communities" (Collins, 2002, pg. 210). As community othermothers have contributed to building different types of communities in often hostile political and economic surroundings (Reagon, 1987), this building occurred through the "mothering of the mind [body] and soul" (Collins, 2002, pg. 215) as a process of cultural continuance. In "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers," Reagon (1986) posited a mothering generation as a community organizing tool to nurture the present and future communities for cultural continuance. She maintained:

> Among all living things in the universe, there is a nurturing process. It is holding of life before birth, the care and feeding of the young until the young can care for itself. This process is called mothering. When applied to the examination and analysis of cultural data, it can reveal much within

> the historical picture of how culture evolves and how and why changes occur in order to maintain the existence of a people. It is important, as you review the data, to look for the nurturing space or ground. Look for where and how feeding takes place. Look for what is passed from the mothering generation to the younger generation."

Following this formulaic analysis of the cultural data, I understood the creatively-crafted pedagogical spaces such as family homes, one-room schoolhouses, churches and other family and community gathering places as the nurturing sites. As I looked for how the feeding took place, I recognized the transfer of information occurring by way of women's leadership, responding to felt community needs, conviviality and political and academic education. Through this particular feeding process incubated in these nurturing spaces, what was passed on was the mind, body and soul skill sets needed to resiliently survive the violence perpetuated by the "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2013, pg. 12).

Relevance

The underemphasized lens of pedagogy within Black agrarian perspectives prompted a needed assessment on how teaching and learning occurred in these spaces often contextualized through other academic lenses. While not a summation of all historical Black agrarian pedagogies, this article provides insight into historical eras not commonly analyzed for the agrarian educational processes that contributed to their significance as impactful social movements. I argue, mothering as an essential component in the

pedagogical construction and maintenance of Black agrarian movement building. In the remainder of this essay, I examine the concept of mothering through "community othermothers" (Collins, 2002) as the birthing art of how Black agrarian communities shared, understood, retained and catalyzed knowledge into action. These women, in most instances, in collaboration with others, committed to the educational development of Black agrarian communities by philosophically and practically mothering the communities into "Negro uplift" (Rickford, 2017) "so that vulnerable members of the community will be able to attain the self-reliance and independence essential for resistance" (Collins, 2002, pg. 208).

Methodology

All histories are selective. This historiography uses historical literature and contemporary literature of the past to (re)interpret the pedagogical history of Black agrarianism in ways that question assumptions about the present. This is what "history of the present" (Fendler and Foucault, 2010, pg. 43) means, to be more critical and effective than objective. To capture the multiple and complex purposes of the historical landscape of Black agrarian pedagogies, I used a grounded theory approach where the recurring themes emerge out of the historiographical data rather than an already existing framework. The employment of grounded theory supported the "open coding" process that remained close to the data categorized (Maxwell, 2008). I systemically retrieved peer-reviewed literature and organizational archival documents and catalogued the data sources according to type (book, article, archive) and the emergent themes. I collapsed the emergent themes into more explicit categories. Across all six categorical themes, Black women notably played

central roles in the pedagogical processes as exhibited in the literature. The centering of Black women arose from the methodical sense making during data collection and analysis. The themes unrelated to the exclusive role or work of Black women are beyond the scope of this article. While I aim to excavate the often forgotten and ignored work of women in Black agrarian pedagogical processes, I acknowledge the partiality of my lens because "no history can include everything that happened in every day in every place" (Fendler and Foucault, 2010, pg. 42). This history, like all histories, is a (re)interpretation of Black agrarian pedagogical history that addresses the erasure of Black women from the historical record.

In the effort to rewrite Black women back into the historical record, the historiographical analysis unfolds in four main parts. First, I provide an overview of historical mothering in Black agrarian pedagogies. Second, I chronologically outline five institutions – the Tuskegee State Normal School (subsequently named "Tuskegee" in this article), the "Negro" Farm Home Demonstration in Florida, Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC), the Freedom Quilting Bee (FQB) and the Black Panther Party (BPP) – that develop from the early through the late 20th century using secondary and tertiary sources of academic journal articles and books. Third, I highlight the thematic traces of "mothering" within Black agrarian pedagogies as they relate to each institutions' development. Instead of analyzing each case individually, I choose to analyze the institutional cases thematically to prevent repeating information. Finally, I conclude with how these institutions employed mothering in Black agrarian pedagogies in their quests for economic self-sufficiency, social cohesion and communal empowerment.

Historical Mothering in Black Agrarian Pedagogies

Historically, Black women were assigned the mission of promoting the consciousness and practice of resistance (Davis, 1971). In "Black women's role in the community of slaves," Angela Davis theorizes the consciousness of women's oppression and needs of unrelenting resistance as sustained through their sense of community, which had to be removed from the most immediate area of domination – the plantation fields, the master's house, and other public spaces. It could only be located in and around the living quarters, the area where the basic needs of physical life were met (Davis, 1971). While the women were out in the fields plowing and planting just as the men, it was also the women's responsibility to nurture the home front through child rearing, cooking and cleaning, based on the male supremacist ideology of white America and patriarchal traditions in certain parts of Africa (Davis, 1971). Since the women dominated the home space, the exact space where resistance was incubated, women have always been endowed as the pedagogical experts in Black communities. Reagon (1986) confirmed this theory in her observation of women throughout the African Diaspora arguing that women were central to the continuance of many traditional practices, as heads of our communities and the keepers of our traditions. Our lives were defined by our culture, the needs of our communities, and the people served. As a central part of the community structure and process, there is an element of transformation in all of our work to resolve conflict and "maintain, sometimes create, an identity that was independent of a society organized for the exploitation of natural resources, people and land" (Reagon, 1986, pg. 79). Through their unconditional care and nurturance and creative protection and resistance, women became the keepers and

teachers of agrarian cultures. This, essentially, is the mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies.

From 1881 to 1992, select historical Black agrarian institutions and their pedagogical practices utilized the praxis of "mothering" through responding to felt community needs to convivially promote an educational ethic of political and academic education under Black women's leadership. Majority of Black educational spaces and practices were agrarian in origin given the dominating and inescapable rural lifestyle during the early to mid-20th century. In times of Post-Emancipation sharecropping, peonage, tenancy and land ownership, Black women were often the backbone of Black education which continued throughout Jim Crow segregation, Civil Rights desegregation and Black Power socialism. While not all institutions were women-centered, the philosophy of mothering is present through visible and invisible women's work. Reid (2012) argues that there were a variety of "personal agendas, grassroots politics, educational initiatives and economic strategies that helped Black landowning farm families challenge white agrarianism and white supremacy" (pg. 15). I intend to show how many of these were pedagogical processes of mothering the community through agrarian pathways. The following are brief background profiles of Black agrarian institutions of the late 19th and 20th centuries who exemplify the mothering pedagogies that facilitated community upliftment and empowerment.

Institutional Background Profiles

Tuskegee State Normal School and the wives of Booker T. Washington

According to the account in Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*, Miss Olivia Davidson joined the emerging Tuskegee, as it was called in 1881, as co-teacher with Booker T. Washington. Four years into her eight-year commitment to the school, she became his wife and went on to Tuskegee to help build the foundation of the Institute through her "valuable and fresh ideas as to the best methods of teaching, as well as a rare moral character and a life of unselfishness" (Washington, 1901, pg. 60). Davidson, classroom teacher and "Lady Principal," and Washington soon realized that books alone would not suffice for training at the Institute. The students' lifestyles indicated their lack of opportunities to learn body care in the home, so they taught them what to eat, how to eat it properly and how to care for their room. The goal was to "teach them how to study actual things instead of mere books alone" (Washington, 1901, pg. 61).

After the transition of Olivia Davidson in 1889, Washington married his second wife, Miss Margaret James Murray, in 1893. She came to Tuskegee as a teacher and later became "Lady Principal." She also organized the "Mothers' Meetings" in Tuskegee and the "Plantation Settlement" as pedagogical sites of Tuskegee.

"Negro" district home demonstration in Florida

The Smith-Lever Act, passed by Congress in 1914, united the demonstration work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture with the land-grant colleges of the states, forming the Extension Service. By the end of 1915, various phases of the Negro Extension work evolved into home demonstration carried on with women and girls to capture the importance of

socially constructed traditional women's work, exclusively in the home and community. In "Justifiable Pride:" Negotiation and Collaboration in Florida African American Extension, Minor (2012) tells the story of Black women's home demonstration work provided through the federal extension program in Florida. The whole premise of home demonstration was to empower rural women by involving them in the decision-making process and teaching them skills necessary to improve their own garden lot and to improve their families' well-being (Minor, 2012). Home demonstration acted as a vehicle for "integrating worlds wedged apart by both official and self-segregation" (Minor, 2012, pg. 223) as well as a vehicle to preserve rural populations. These rural, university trained and government appointed women learned that success as an agent meant diplomatically negotiating and collaborating with the women who were deemed recipients of the extension services.

Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC)

On 33 percent of the Black-owned land in the Sunflower County, MS (Lee, 2000), FFC "institutionalized a structure and process for low-income and destitute rural people (Black and white at first, and then primarily women and Black) to feed themselves, own their homes, farm cooperatively, and create small businesses together in order to support a sustainable food system, land ownership, and economic independence (Nembhard, 2014, pg. 181) for one dollar per month membership fee (Lee, 2000). This community prosperity developed through mutual aid and joint ownership at the community level, connected to nationwide advocacy and philanthropy" (Nembhard, 2014, pg. 182). FFC targeted women, especially women head of household and women farm laborers and such probably reflected the needs of her community being that Sunflower County had more female-

headed households than ever before at the time (Lee, 2000). As a "long-term scheme for Black rural survival" (Nembhard, 2014), five projects drove the operations of FFC: 1) the "pig bank" that allowed any FFC family to receive a pregnant pig from the bank and donate two female pigs from the first litter to another family while returning the mother pig to the general bank, 2) building a sustainable food system via land ownership, food preservation and donations, 3) the affordable housing co-op initiative which taught FFC families how to take advantage of low cost Federal Home Administration (FHA) and farm mortgages, 4) providing educational grants and scholarships to FFC students to assist with educational fees, and 5) the business development plan which supported Black-owned businesses such as a sewing co-op, laundromat, and the African Fashion Shop (Lee, 2000).

Freedom Quilting Bee

The Freedom Quilting Bee (FQB) of Alberta, AL began in 1966 when women in sharecropping families began making quilts and selling them to augment family incomes. The cooperative bought 23 acres in 1968 to build the sewing plant and also to sell land to sharecropping families who had been evicted from their homes for registering to vote and/or participating in civil rights activities (Nembhard, 2006). By 1992, the 150-member cooperative, the largest employer in town, owned a daycare center, and operated an after-school tutoring program and a summer reading program (Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, 1992, as cited in Nembhard, 2006). With minimal academic education due to working the cotton fields majority of the time, the quilters work steady jobs "in their own business in their own community." As skilled artisans and self-styled business executives, they keep aflame an artistic endeavor that extends back in the

Black culture of Wilcox County for 140 years through their own determination, vision, and pride (Callahan, 2005). In her book, *The Freedom Quilting Bee: Folk Art and the Civil Rights Movement*, Callahan (2005) shared personal profiles of key FQB members and the following descriptions highlight education in their life as a way to provide insight on how their educational environments shaped the organization.

Black Panther Party

One of the most legendary institutions to emerge from the Black Power era was the Black Panther Party (BPP), a community-based organization headquartered in Oakland, California dedicated to socialist radical politics, unapologetic armed self-defense and creative racial self-determination. While urban in progression, the organization was rural in origin. The roots of the BPP lie in the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), also known as the Black Panther Party, which was started in 1965 under the direction of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Though the Oakland chapter is known as an urban violent revolutionary organization, its rural agrarian roots solidifies its validation as a Black agrarian organization. The Marxist politics that condemned capitalism and demonstrated how socialism could work came in the form of the Free Breakfast for Children Program, free health clinics, Liberation Schools, and legal aid seminars. In 1969, the Free Breakfast for Children Program served a hot breakfast of eggs, sausage, and collard greens to thousands of "ghetto" kids a day focused on meeting the children's nutritional needs and was "concerned with building greater inroads into the African-American community." (Kirkby, 2011, pg. 38). They targeted hunger and poverty through multi-faceted programs for community survival which included "food, clothing, shelter,

shoes, and meaningful education" (Potorti, 2014, pg. 48) understanding that hunger couldn't be tackled in vacuum without addressing racial and broader socioeconomic inequality.

Findings of Mothering in Black Agrarian Pedagogies

Based on the historical accounts detailing the philosophy and activities of these profiled institutions, education is the inter and intra-sharing of information to improve the social, economic and political conditions of the oppressed communities under the strangles of racism, classism, capitalism and urbanism. Black agrarian pedagogies constructed an educational environment based on responding to felt community needs to convivially promote political and academic education under Black women's leadership. Strategically, by centering agrarian lifeways, the pedagogical strategies orchestrally worked to mother the mind, body and soul. This mothering encompasses the ways the pedagogical occupancy of Black women influenced the philosophy and set of practices carried forth by the community institutions committed to expressing ethics of care and personal accountability rather than domination and control to ultimately "bring people along" (Collins, 2002, pg. 208). The mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies, via a historical lens, strategically emphasizes the power of "positive self-definitions and self-valuations (Collins, 2002, pg. 198) through the creative struggle of empowering the 'power of a free mind'" (Collins, 2002, pg. 219). A thematic discussion is contextualized below with how the profiled historical institutions illustrate how mothering has been an important aspect in the pedagogical construction and maintenance of Black agrarian movement building.

Responding to felt community needs

The institutional cases demonstrate how mothering meant building educational climates around the needs of the communities because working on behalf of the community means addressing the multi-faceted issues within it (Collins, 2002, pg. 208). Tuskegee built an ameliorated educational environment in response to exploitative agricultural labor, other low paying jobs and limited educational opportunities. This was a common problem addressed by many rural Black agrarian institutions that aimed to provide better lives for children in the name of "Negro upliftment" (Rickford, 2017) through quality education. While the literature isolates Booker T. Washington as the school's primary architect, his wives, played a significant role in developing the school curriculum. Margaret James Murray started the "Mothers' Meetings" and the "Plantation Settlement" as pedagogical sites of Tuskegee. The former was established in Tuskegee and spread to other parts of the state to "interest the women in the condition of their families and their homes, to suggest methods for helping their husbands, in caring for their children, and to encourage those who are making an effort to improve and lift themselves out of the prevailing conditions" (Mayberry, 1989, pg. 65) The "Plantation Settlement" was established in Spring of 1898 to "adapt the methods of the 'University Settlement' to the needs of the people who live in the primitive conditions that still prevailed on the large plantations in the Black Belt" (Mayberry, 1989, pg. 64).

The Florida "Negro" district home demonstration also endogenously created responsive educational environments, which employed Black women as extension agents because they were part of the community they served. This insider perspective caused the women to

bypass state or national prescriptions for rural reform for the more relevant and necessary work for "practical, customized improvements chosen by farm women and implemented in their own backyards and kitchens" (Minor 2012, pg. 207). The programs were more closely tailored to women's needs and interests and the agents' teaching strategy simply offered knowledge without demanding they do something meaningless and impossible. The women cared less about the work being done in other states or what the USDA annual goals were and put their "farm economy and their family needs" (Minor, 2012, pg. 215) first.

In parallel terms of responsiveness, the FQB cooperative's daycare center provided needed cooperative childcare for the women working in the quilting facility. As Collins articulated, the Black cultural value placed on cooperative childcare traditionally found institutional support in the adverse conditions under which so many Black women mothered and arose from how African-influenced understandings of family have been continually reworked to help [Black] communities collectively cope with and resist oppression" (Collins, 2002, pg. 197). The necessity of cooperative childcare contributed to the successful educational environment of the institution which appeared to be centered on experiential learning.
As a similar women-centered institution, FFC was established out of community necessity, providing housing, health care, employment, education, and access to healthy food that the white power structure of rural Mississippi denied them (White, 2018). It illuminated how a movement had little meaning or relevance if it did not address the everyday needs of people (Lee, 2000). The moral pragmatism in the civil rights movement directly addressed the needs alongside the task of tearing down the walls of Jim Crow and Hamer as a moral

pragmatist understood the most pressing community needs determined one's political agenda" (Lee, 2000) as did the BPP.

The BPP's free socialist-type programs in the areas of human sustenance, health care, education, and criminal justice were central to the party's identity and ideological composition and the ideology directly connected to the needs of the people through informal community classes sponsored weekly by local branches focused on the ten-point program (Kirkby, 2011). The survival programs, such as the Free Breakfast Program, operated under the guises of food injustices being addressed interdependently with other human needs (Potorti, 2014, pg. 48). Responding to felt community needs for the BPP was the core of their educational development and delivery. According to Kirkby (2011), "when stripped of the niceties that went along with serving hot breakfasts to children, teaching adults how to read, and providing free medical care, the survival programs… were ultimately consciousness-raising devices to reveal the structural inequities of American capitalism" (pg. 50). Black women have asserted "black education as a means of empowering a black community to assert the community's different needs and concerns" (Berry, 1982, pg. 300). A huge component of building awareness and recruiting communities into the social movement processes was political and academic education, sometimes intertwined and other times separately facilitated in a variety of spaces.

Political and academic education

Academic education combined with political education or the political delivery of academic education has been important to Black agrarian pedagogical continuums across rural and urban spaces. Many of these self-help and upliftment spaces prioritized academic or literacy education out of the sentiment of 'racial upliftment' which meant gaining access to literacy in order to navigate the societal structures based on literacy measures. In discussing "The Impact of Black Women in Education" in the *Journal of Negro Education*, Smith (1982) stated, "[t]he history of black education in America begins with the struggle of antebellum slaves, who were willing to risk their lives to learn how to read and write" (pg. 174). Learning how to read and write possibly led to increased autonomy in feeding, sheltering and clothing communities. Such was the goal of Tuskegee that was founded on an industrial education to freedom platform meant to alter the political locations of the "Negros" at the time through the development of a Black-owned educational system" (White, 2018). Liberal arts in addition to common trades of the time like brick-making comprised the experiential educational curriculum that was implicitly yet illicitly co-crafted by the Olivia Davidson and Margaret James Murray.

As Collins (2002), stated, Black women have long integrated economic self-reliance and mothering. In the process of learning literacy, lifestyles improved with greater access to resources. Within the "Negro" home demonstration, attaining the skills necessary to control their well-being was a political education process. Allowing "the women choose what the service would become in their communities" (Minor, 2012, pg. 205) was a political pedagogical process in an era when Black women were often dictated tasks and

held very little control over their lives as Black people struggling to gain autonomy in a white dominant societal system. The ways in which the women were inspired and encouraged to pull from the traditional agrarian knowledges (composting and natural fertilizers) passed down through generations was also a political process that stressed the value of inherited practices extending back to enslaved cabin gardens (Minor, 2012, Glave, 2003). In another instance, the FQB chose to implement a summer reading program and after-school tutoring program for the community children and became the largest employer in town (Nembhard, 2014). This was "mothering the mind…" (Collins, 2002, pg. 215) not only through literacy measures, but also through political education of becoming more aware of the realities and the reasons behind the existence of the realities.

The BPP also provided critical skills of reading and writing in addition to lectures about party ideology (Kirkby, 2011, pg. 45). The intertwined academic and political education design uniquely demonstrates how the academic supported the political. Understanding that political education was vital to unveiling the reasons behind hunger, the Panthers read Mao, Fanon, and Marx (Patel, 2011). The Free Breakfast for Children Program was also founded at the academic and political intersections. The connection between undernourished bodies and underdeveloped minds was understood in ways that children must be fed each morning if they were to feed their minds at school during the day, to establish fundamental skills in math and reading necessary for socio-economic mobility and political mobilization (Potorti, 2014). In order to decipher the politics within the text, reading skills were fundamental and mothering the community into literacy within agrarian ideals became the survival tactic of the Black Power Era.

In the case of FFC, members organized land workers while they actively participated in political education campaigns to educate residents of Sunflower County, using flyers and pamphlets that informed residents about their right to participate in the political process by voting" (White, 2018, pg. 73). Facilitating more food security through the farm cooperative positioned the institution to educate the community on the politics of voting rights and what it meant towards their freedom as a non-voting populace. Cases such as these "illustrate the importance of political education in building the capacity of grassroots communities to pursue strategies that lean toward freedom" (White, 2018, pg. 146). Another critical capacity building tool was (re)building conviviality in the mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies.

Conviviality

Conviviality was the affable aspect in community building that often manifested through churches as inconspicuous sites of social, political and cultural communion. White (2018) shared DuBois's perspective on how the church as a social institution acted as a cornerstone in Black community building. The church functioned as safe spaces, as places where people could talk about and exercise spiritual, religious, and economic cooperation. It was the site of insurrections and interracial efforts and encouraged literacy through Sunday school. The ways that Tuskegee, "Negro" district home demonstration programs, Freedom Farm Cooperative and the Black Panther Party used churches as tools of knowledge sharing and networking also points to another significant aspect of mothering in that Black women's lives revolved around churches as sociocultural sites of knowledge

production and transmission. Churches were a “homeplace” (hooks, 1990), that acted as sites of resistance created by women of color in intimate spaces such as kitchen tables and church basements for the purposes of conducting anti-oppression work. She illustrated:

> Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world. (pg. 42)

An example of this lies in how Black women’s creativity could be expressed through music, much of it within Black churches (Collins, 2002). Black women's activities in families, churches, community institutions, and creative expression mitigate pressures stemming from oppression (Collins, 1986) by facilitating knowledge exchanges under the guises of sociocultural survival, preservation and empowerment. A church served as the initial educational site of Tuskegee where a handful of students aspired to learn all there was to know about building higher quality of lives through agricultural and industrial education. As the first “Lady Principal,” Olivia Davidson often used the church for local fundraising efforts in addition to regularly scheduled school sessions (Washington, 1995). Churches also played a significant role not only as the community focal point that the “Negro” district home demonstration women prioritized rebuilding rather than their individual homes but

the local financial support for the home demonstration program often came from churches in absence of national and state funding (Minor, 2012).

As for the BPP, the close practical alliances with community churches allowed the Panthers to house the Free Breakfast Programs and receive donations for events such as the "Survival Conferences" in the Spring of 1972 (Potorti, 2014). Women's leadership of positioning churches as incubations for social movement resistance towards education for economic empowerment, self-sufficiency, self-improvement and racial uplift birthed a kind of mothering rooted in the gregariousness and well-being of the community where the mind, body and soul became centered in the pedagogical practices of agrarian struggles and triumphs.

The convivial spirit is also captured the BPP Liberation Schools organized in June 1969 as a replacement for the Free Breakfast Program during the summer months. It was used to create genuine relationships with the people they were serving and to establish stronger connections in the community, which meant interacting with the children through games, songs, and general chit-chat (Kirkby, 2011). New York Panther Assata Shakur stated: ''We were all dead set against cramming things in their heads or teaching them meaningless rote phrases'' (Kirkby, 2011, pg. 39). It was less about schooling them on history facts and more about light-hearted yet invigorating content that was offered in artistic manners. Erica Huggins, director of the 1973 Oakland Community School (OCS) mentioned, "It was more than a school. It was a community within itself… We cared for the total child" (OCS Brochure, as in Kirkby, 2011). This caring for the total child meant mothering of the mind

through academic education, mothering of the soul through cultural history and mothering of the body through nutritious food which culminated in a conviviality that seemed to be rare beyond the school walls. It became like a church, a convivial "homeplace" (hooks, 1990).

The FFC also became a church-like site as Hamer was often celebrated for her singing and preaching about joining the movement for Black liberation, in and outside of literal church spaces. Most of the movement songs impelled people to action by their visionary, empowering lyrics that foretold the drawing of a new society. Freedom songs like "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round," "We Shall Overcome," "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," and "This Little Light of Mine" emphasized individual perseverance, while encouraging steadiness of purpose and the elimination of fear (Lee, 2000). These freedom songs contributed to a convivial environment that bonded people together and facilitated a learning through heart to heart connections on cooperatively-owned land built to preserve the agrarian knowledge base of the Black agrarian communities of the MS Delta. These convivial-crafted climates rooted in felt community needs and stressed academic and political education were all developed under Black women's leadership.

Black Women's leadership

Women's leadership visibly and invisibly influenced the educational and overall organizational development of Black agrarian movement building throughout the 20th century. According to Deborah King (1988):

> "Black women often held central and powerful leadership roles within the black community and within its liberation politics. We founded schools, operated social welfare services, sustained churches, organized collective work groups and unions, and even established banks and community enterprises… we were the backbone of racial uplift, and we also played critical roles in the struggle for racial justice" (pg. 54).

This is what Patricia Hill Collins (2002) coins as "spheres of influence" in that crafting independent and oppositional identities for Black women embraces a form of identity politics which catalyzes a worldview valuing lived Black experience as important to creating a critical Black consciousness and crafting political strategies. I argue this was a pedagogical act that understood the relationship between land, labor, and love to the liberation or "upliftment" of the Black communities surviving hostile political climates, economic impoverishment and voluntary and involuntary social alienation during the Post-Emancipation white terrorism, the Great Depression extreme poverty and the Civil Rights Movement white reprisal.

For example, Olivia Davidson, first "Lady Principal" of Tuskegee, often led fundraising efforts hosting festivals and "suppers" in the small town of Tuskegee. While canvassing the white and Black families door-to-door for cakes, chickens, breads, pies and other things that could be sold to raise money for the penurious school, she also traveled North to secure funds from white philanthropist and Black churches. Giving birth to two children as she simultaneously dedicated herself to the school operations, divided her time and

strength between the home and school and demonstrated the duality of passions as horizontal rather than vertical.

In the case of the "Negro" district home demonstration in Florida, Flavia Gleason, the FL State Home Demonstration Director, was one of the most instrumental in creating, securing and funding the Black home demonstration agent position and insisted that the work be free from "male control" (Minor, 2012, pg. 214). In another example, the FQB was inevitably led by women through the traditional women's work of quilting. When their Alberta, AL sharecropping community needed greater financial resources to gain more self-reliance as landowners, the women led the way via their endowed artistry of quilting. Other women led through alternative artistic measures.

As a leader of the civil rights movement, Hamer of the Freedom Farm Cooperative used songs to teach and inspire which positioned her as a charismatic leader and dynamic mobilizing force for the movement (Lee, 2000). As a committed SNCC organizer, Hamer believed in "local autonomy [as] the basis of sustained militancy," as well as its belief that the movement was best served by building pockets of community leadership (Lee, 2000, pg. 23). The women-led and primarily women-served FFC aimed to do this by engaging the community in survival projects and out of all the FFC initiatives, "the pig bank seems to have done the best, perhaps because it was the best capitalized, was relatively self-contained, was not capital- or labor-intensive and was run by women…" (Nembhard, 2014, pg. 186). Women's leadership is also reflected in the National Council of Negro Women's (NCNW) role as a key funder of the cooperative during FFC's inaugural year (White 2017).

In the NCNW 1968 review: "The important part is that the people themselves have a stake in it; they are not relying on hand-outs; they are enhancing their own dignity and freedom by learning that they can feed themselves through their own efforts" ("Self-Help Campaign Against Hunger" in White, 2018). This sentiment is reified by Ella Jo Baker, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizer, who asserted, "strong people don't need strong leaders." When she helped spark the beginning of the SNCC, she did so to discourage the egotism among the older, exclusively male leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) because she knew one person – no matter how principled, intelligent, or charismatic – should be the central focus of a movement (Ransby, 2003).

Women's leadership in the food arena, in particular, suggests how food has been used as a historical tool of consciousness-raising and mobilization. In instance of the Black Panther Party (BPP), women made up almost 50 percent of the total membership base, by 1973, and their influence within the organization was amplified due to their highly–educated status as a group (Spencer, 2008). BPP Erica Huggins argued that "behind the scenes women ran almost every program, were involved in every level of the party, even the most behind the scenes" (Spencer, 2008, pg. 103). The police particularly targeted male Panthers because they assumed that they were the leaders and this targeting of COINTELPRO created an organizational crisis that, ironically, provided fertile ground for women's leadership (Spencer, 2008).

The tenth point of the BPP Ten Point Party platform included the tangible gains it sought for America's "black colonial subjects," (Potorti, 2014) declaring, "We want land, bread,

housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace." Organizing around the basics of bread while working towards long-range goals of freedom, justice, and peace proved to be a necessity to avoid empty bellies while striving towards the ultimate goals of societal transformation. Under Black women's leadership, the BPP food programs, which began with a single breakfast program in Oakland, exploded to over 36 sites nationwide by 1971 (Potorti, 2014). Joan Kelley, national coordinator of the Free Breakfast Program, said: "We try to teach children not so much through indoctrination but through our practice and example about sharing and socialism" (Potorti, 2014, pg. 46). Mothering one of the most vulnerable of the community – the children – with basic nourishment is undoubtedly a praxis of mothering as a demonstration of the women-led nurturance that occurred through the Free Breakfast Program. According to Collins (2002), the institution of Black motherhood consists of a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that Black women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger Black community and with self. The way that the BPP frequently used the party newspaper, community centers, and churches to enlist the assistance of ''Mothers, Welfare Recipients, Grandmothers, Guardians and others who are trying to raise children in the Black Community,'' encouraging them to ''come forth to work and support this needed program" (''Breakfast for School Children'', in Kirkby, 2011, pg. 40) points to the significance of women's roles and "mothering" associated with the Free Breakfast for Children program as an agrarian response to a pervasive impoverishment.

Similarly, the "Negro" home demonstration clubs in FL prioritized health clinics for local families and schools became vehicles for extensive health initiatives such as National Negro

Health Week (NNHW), a movement started by Booker T. Washington in 1915 to galvanize health care by and for Black people (Minor, 2012). Though it was steered by men nationally, women powered it on the ground through the home demonstration work topics on health and sanitation, and in 1931, 1,000 families reported receiving immunizations through home demonstration club activities (Minor, 2012). This was the praxis of mothering that displayed how community othermothers model a value system in leadership, which is based on connectedness with others and ethics of caring and personal accountability that are intended to move communities forward (Mogadime, 2000). The same way that the "personal becomes political" (Lorde, 2012), Black women have continually used the cultural work as political work to build alternatives to the oppressive system. These were the "spheres of influence" that guided the inception and development of Black women's leadership.

Conclusion

Based on the historical accounts detailing the philosophy and activities of these profiled institutions, education is the inter and intra-sharing of information to improve the social, economic and political conditions of the oppressed communities under the strangles of racism, classism, capitalism and urbanism. In historical eras when the denigration, terrorism, and exploitation of Black agrarian communities persistently prevailed, as they continue to do so today, the mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies constructed a system of education as ways of re(building) grounded self-identities and uplifted thriving communities. This process was led by the cultural labor of women who fearlessly mothered for the survival and thriving of the communities for whom they were accountable to and

took responsibility. Through the lenses of historical Black agrarian institutions of the late 19th and 20th centuries, "mothering" was woven into the pedagogical strategies that birthed Black agrarian institutions and organizations forming the social movements epitomizing historical Black agrarian values, community development, racial upliftment, economic autonomy and cooperativism. These particular Black agrarian pedagogies were birthed from matriarchal lineages that have traditionally incubated cultural traditions and mothered the mind, body and soul into community wellness.

This pedagogical praxis mothered the Black agrarian movement by responding to felt community needs to convivially promote an educational ethic of political and academic education under Black women's leadership. Tuskegee and the unsung work of Booker T. Washington's wives, "Negro" district home demonstration in Florida, Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC), the Freedom Quilting Bee (FQB) and the Black Panther Party (BPP) all prioritized the convivial sharing and acquisition of agrarian knowledges – both political and academic – in direct response to community needs. These were anti-oppression pedagogies led by mothering spirits to manifest socioeconomic, sociopolitical and sociocultural transformation. The mothering of Black agrarian pedagogies nurtured the historical movement building that continues to cradle the liberation praxis through the feeding of knowledge as not merely power alone, but overall dignified wellness.

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ARTICLE 2:
"THE LESSONS OF LIFE WERE LEARNED SHELLING PEAS:" A BLACK AGRARIAN ORAL HISTORY OF THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT

"Oral history can give us the heart's dream, the soul's cry."
- James V. Hatch[1]

Abstract

In the tradition of African storytelling, the oral history theatrical representation performs the life history of Wendell Paris, a black agrarian organizer and educator, in dialogue with historical black agrarians such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver and Fannie Lou Hamer. It portrays the importance of culture as the first and most important teacher within black agrarian communities where everyday acts of shelling peas, organizing for black voting rights and learning how to survive were some of the primordial lessons that captured the Black Freedom Movement of the mid-to-late 20th century. These were lessons innately embedded within the cultural communities and exchanged through storytelling and everyday living.

Oral History

Oral history is memory and memory is history (Brandon, 2004). More specifically, it is the recovery of memory and narratives previously left out of the historical record (Seedar, 2015). It "translates subjectively remembered events into embodied memory acts, moving memory into remembering" (Pollock, 2005, pg. 2). According to hooks (1990), it is

[1] Hatch, J. (1979). "Retrieving Black Theater History or Mouth to Mouth Resuscitation", Black Theatre 1979 July-August. The Black Scholar, Vol. 10, No. 10, pg. 58.

"a politicization of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as once it was, a kind of useless act, from remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present" (pg. 147). These spoken memories (Brandon, 2004) are often seen as the coproduction of stories with different people involved: the ones who ask, the ones who tell, the ones who listen (Allemann and Dudeck, 2017) and the ones who do not listen. All these roles underscore the premise for this oral history inquiry and it's chosen representation, especially as it helps those not listening to remember the importance of it. "What is true for written stories is even more true for the spoken performance" (Allemann and Dudeck, 2017) and performing our histories are pedagogical processes that could catalyze remembrance. It helps to collectively search for the recovery of our truths that have been forgotten so deeply that we have even forgotten that we have forgotten (Alexander, 2005).

History in all of its fluid complexity and subjective significance is needed to better understand oneself and the surrounding world (Brandon, 2004). In the spirit of Sankofa, we return to the source through our oral histories. Acting as a cultural tutelage, this oral history and its representation is a process of Sankofa-nizing Black agrarian pedagogies through an intentional act of remembering by unlocking a part of history hard to find in government documents or the papers of prominent men and women (Fousekis in Pollock, 2005). As a performance representation of Black agrarian historical pedagogies, the theatrical script narrates the life history of Reverend Wendell Paris, an agricultural cooperative coordinator and Black agrarian educator. His words are placed in dialogue with other historical voices resting in power through their archival presence. Through this performative dialogue, I intend to show how Black agrarian pedagogies thrived at the

intersections of historical movement building among Black social movements, namely the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement and Black Arts Movement which can be couched within the broader Black Freedom Movement.

Methodology

If science is about the value-free systematic "context of discovery" (Harding, 2003), this is not science. However, the question, "is this science?" is often posed from a so-called objectivist lens (Falcon, 2016), that operates as if science is a monolith with singularly and commonly understood criteria that serves everyone neutrally. According to Santos (2014), there is an invisible abysmal line that divides those who have the "scientific knowledge" and those who have not. Dualisms within educational research, or scientific spaces more broadly, emphasize the value of rationality over emotion, objectivity over interpretation, mind over body reflecting analogous value hierarchies that remind us that ways of knowing aren't neutral.

Science *should* not be reduced to the search for truths by means of our cognition alone. Because we live in a modern world, it is very difficult for us to "see" social science assumptions. Like a fish, we may not see the water in which we swim. Critiques of this particular social science lens provide vantage points for us to see the water in which we swim. Seeing the water is perhaps a "stranger's" social position (Harding, 2003). Collins (1986) develops this understanding into the "outsider within" position of trained

researchers from marginalized social groups – a position that is capable of detecting aspects of social relations not accessible by those who are only outsiders or only insiders. Such is in line with standpoint logic advanced by other feminist researchers such as Harding (2003). In *How Standpoint Methodology Informs Philosophy of Social Science*, Harding stated, "[i]t takes both science and politics to see the world 'behind,' 'beneath' or 'from outside' the oppressors' institutionalized vision" (p. 297) and the standpoint claim argues that these political struggles that are necessary to reveal such institutional and disciplinary practices are themselves systemically knowledge producing (Harding, 2003).

Thus, this performative representation of research is not a deviation from the production of knowledge because as Foucault (2013) stated: it is the discourse, not the subjects, which produces knowledge. This particular form of knowledge production and representation *can* be more inventive than discoverable, more subjective than objective, more unique than generalizable, more meditative than methodological. In essence, epistemological pluralism is more valid and more ethical than epistemological fundamentalism. Science is plural. Truths (capital T) are impossible. And, research and it's representations are political. While this is an attempt to push back against epistemic violence that centers and consistently re-centers the West, I am well aware that one of the greatest challenges with these intentions is to prevent research from reproducing the very categories it is seeking to critique and dismantle (Castleden, 2017). Perhaps this process of knowledge representation and thus production may reify the systems I am speaking against, and still I try.

Less of a polemic on the tyranny of Western truths, this is more of love offering to Black agrarian social movements to whom I am most answerable (Patel, 2015) and illuminates the epistemic divide by asking how do we (re)imagine intellectualism to challenge academia to sustain pluralistic productions of knowledge. This is the science we direly need in this era of insidious and unprecedented wealth inequities, the political saturation of fascism, loss of natural ecosystems, loss of indigenous languages and the rise of racialized state-sanctioned murders and suicides. All of this in the effort to "Make America Great Again." As Santos states, there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice (Santos, 2014). I do not write to further insulate the academy walls that have sustained tools of mass emotional, cultural and spiritual destructions. I write to imagine a better world beyond the one we currently have and I am doing that not only writing about pedagogy but producing scholarship as pedagogy as well.

In this way, I don't have to choose between the aesthetic and the *t*ruth, for many (African) "Indigenous" research paradigms adopt a holistic approach to strive towards balance between different and inseparable areas of life – intellectual, social, political, economic, psychological and spiritual (Tuwe, 2016). I see Western truths as tyrannical and "othered" truths as beauty deeply felt through imagining holistically, intersectionally and unapologetically. As Audre Lorde stated, "Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge" (Lorde, 1984).

Performance Ethnography

If "[a]rt is the search for truths by means of our sensory equipment" (Boal, 2006), then such representation could more adequately speak to the various sensory tools involved in the production of knowledge. Knowledges are not just thought, as a Cartesian ethic would suggest. According to Million (2009), "we feel our histories as well as think them" and a felt analysis creates a context for a more complex "telling" (pg. 54). Rather than subscribing to "I think therefore I am" (Descartes, 1990), "I feel therefore I can be free" (Lorde, 1977). "When you live theatre, you live in emotion" (Boal, 2006) and emotions are attached to our bodies and interwoven in our culturally-erased histories, identity (mis)formations, survival strategies, knowledge productions and ongoing oppressive conditions.

Augusto Boal, Brazilian theatre practitioner, used Paulo Freire's work of critical pedagogy, to enact theatrical forms as a means of promoting social and political change in alignment originally with radical left politics and later with center left ideology. First elaborated in the 1970s in Brazil and eventually spread to parts of Europe, it is now used as a "popular education" (Freire & Macedo, 1998) tool by radical social movements far and wide. A member of the MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terras – Landless Rural Workers Movement) shared: "The Theatre of the Oppressed is wonderful because it enables people to learn everything that they already knew." Learning aesthetically, it broadens the knowing and launches the knower in search of further knowledge (Boal, 2006).

The contextualization of this work with creative and performative storytelling underlines the important socio-cultural and historical contexts of oral tradition. In an effort to avoid reductionist analytic procedures where thematic analysis fail to capture depth of discourse in *how* people spoke; I choose theater. Theatrical productions and representations of knowledge are pedagogical tools (Chinyowa, 2001) that reflect cultural practices and forms of expression in research. This is important, for once decontextualized, stories lose their meaning and become merely "dead voices" (Petrone, 1990). In an attempt to keep the voices of the work intact with integrity and rooted with cultural dialogue, a theatrical script seems to be the best way to tell this story filled with so much emotional and intellectual wealth. Our oral histories possess a powerful significance for cultural production and reclamation given the scarcity of written texts during times when Black communities were denied literacy through de jure and de facto means in an effort to maintain the oppressive structures. Often seen as an essential source of “history from below” (Thomson, 2007), oral history is about memory work and memory work is best manifested through storytelling.

"...Storytelling is an intimate and universal art form that is over 50,000 years old!" (Sheppard, 2009, cited in Tuwe, 2016). This is an example of African storytelling in theater form. Every human culture in the world seems to create stories as a way of making sense of the world (Achebe 1958) and the telling of stories are inherently performative (Pollock, 2005). Ancient writing traditions do exist on the African continent, but most Africans today, as in the past, are primarily oral peoples and their art forms and stories are oral rather than in written form (Achebe 1958, Chinyowa 2001). Traditional African storytelling explains the following three elements: why we tell stories, what makes a story worth telling and

how stories are told (Tuwe, 2016). This story, this oral life history is being told to facilitate an act of remembering, recovery and reclamation. It is worth telling because Black agrarian pedagogies thrived at the intersections of historical movement building among Black social movements, namely the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power movement and Black Arts Movement. And, it is being told by way of a theatrical script with the hopes of capturing not only the thoughts, but the feelings of the characters and acting as a bridge among past, present and future generations (Chinyowa 2001). This "living history" (Pollock, 2005) about pedagogy serves as a pedagogical tool in itself. African storytelling and theatre performance are closely linked to the African people's humanistic philosophy and functions as a central medium of social, cultural, mental and emotional edification (Chinyowa, 2000).

As a powerful tool in communicating the people's knowledge (Chinyowa, 2000) and with no written language (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1964), stories kept the history alive. These kinds of stories are told about the many gods and goddesses worshiped by their ancestors, their heroes and heroines and leaders and kings who fought and won great wars and battles (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1964). The stories were narrated subjectively with singing, drumming, percussion instruments, clapping, and dancing (Achebe 1994).

Given the communal and participatory experience of African storytelling (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986), this theatrical work creates a performative dialogue between the spoken oral (life) history of Wendell Paris, his Tuskegee institutional childhood memory – George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington, his teacher Fannie Lou Hamer, his community organizing with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and his perspective on culture as a pedagogical agent. This "oral history is a process of *making history in*

dialogue" (Pollock, 2005, p. 2) on an imaginary stage. "Good history may not only make good theater but good theater may make better history" (Gordon in Pollock, 2005). This is a history – gloriously told, deeply forgotten, and viscerally performed.

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Scene 1 – Sankofa staging

David Abduli (1995):

How can we know what we don't know,

If what we don't know, we ought to know,

And what we now know is "his-story"

But what we should know is "our-story."

How can we tell "the-story" of our-story, when "his-story"

Is now "our-story?" How can we even begin to tell "our-story," When we are ignorant of "our-story," or have forgotten "our-story?"

No, we cannot, and should not, ought not Accept "his-story" as "our-story."

Then to revisit our past we must.

To reclaim "our story" for posterity is our task. So "abibiman *Sankofa*."

"Se wo yirefi na se wo *Sankofa*, yen kyi."

It's not a shame to revisit the past when you have forgotten. Neither is it forbidden to learn from the past.

It's not a crime to borrow from the past.

Neither is it a taboo to emulate aspects of the past.

So “abibiman *Sankofa*.”

“Se wo yirefi na se wo *Sankofa*, yen kyi.” (p. 49)

Imagine sitting around a fire, after a hearty village dinner, allowing the tantalizing drum to penetrate the body, causing your skin to ring in rhythm of the vibrations. The drum calls more people to gather around the fire. The drum beat dances between the spoken words and subtle laughter of circle gatherers. The men gather more wood to feed the sultry fire while the women pass out blankets and shepherd the children into the circle. Children huddle together on the ground, sharing blankets, inching closer to the fire for greater warmth. Mama Hatsheput burns frankincense and myrrh to energetically cleanse the space. The elders place sacred offerings in the center of the circle near the fire to honor the ancestral presence – okra and sorghum seeds, water from the local river and soil under the tree soaked in the blood of past generational lynchings. Conversations progressively fade as the drum rhythm shifts and escalates in sound. All eyes turn inward to the spirited fire with the crescent moon and winking stars hanging above. The village begins to listen to the sound of itself. The memory is remembering.

The ceremony has begun.

Wendell Paris: “I claim dual citizenship in Alabama and Mississippi and that's because I been in Mississippi for the last 27 years but prior to actually moving to Mississippi I guess the better part of my life was spent in Sumter county, Alabama. I am very familiar with… the Alabama Black Belt. So named for its fertile soil type not because we are into any martial arts... The term Black Belt was coined by Dr. [Booker T.] Washington.”

John O'Neal: "My assertion about the South is based on the view that the Black Belt is the historic name of the Afro-American people. As such, the Black Belt has played a tremendously important role in shaping our history and will play an even more important role in the culture."[2]

Creative muse: Culture as a pedagogical agent.

Wendell Paris: "…see the lessons of life were learned for us shelling peas when we were with our aunts and uncles and our mothers and our aunts and our grandmother because everybody on the porch shelling peas so all of the family history comes up. Who did what? Why did they move to Detroit? Why did they move to New Jersey? What precipitated that? Usually it was some white people messing with them in some kind of way and they had to slip out of town. And so you sit there and you first learn your individual family history. What is it about your family that's unique, who in your family had the backbone to stand up? Who in your family had the business acumen to establish, to break away from the economic cycles that kept people tied? Who in your family got the education, why and what did they do with the education that they got? Were you getting old enough now to start courting? What girls in this community are you gonna court? How you gonna treat them? Some of the girls you can't court because you kin to them so you need to know who all your relatives are. I'm saying that's what you learn when you on the porch with your grandmother and aunts and them. And you know so that's where you learn to appreciate

[2] O'Neal, J. (n.d). The Afro-American Artist in the South. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

your religion and stuff to because inevitably somebody will start singing a hymn and not only do you start singing the hymn but eventually they call on you to sing some of those hymns… SO those are the lessons you learned while you were shelling peas on the front porch with your folks… …you learned a sense of morality there."

Creative muse: shelling peas… like storytelling with hands.

Wendell Paris: "I have canned and cooked with my mother and aunts… Every summer we had to shell peas we had to pick the blackberries, we had to pick the pears so those were jobs that we as children did and all children that grew up on the farm understood that they had a role to play. If you were making watermelon rind preserves, pear preserves, plum preserves… whatever was in season you picked you prepared it you processed it and you preserved it… So I knew how to do that. Largely it was the work of the women in the community… we had to help out with the hogs, with the animals that we killed every year that we ate. If you killed a hog, everybody had a job that they had to get out there and do. Someone to clean the chitlins. You know I've scraped the hog, I've done every job there is to do with the wild animals that I've hunted that we ate and was a part of the social fabric of our community."

Creative muse: Comm-unity. We are… Ubuntu!

Wendell Paris: "Not only did we kill and eat the wild game but we gave fresh meat to other people in the community. Just like when we kill a hog we give other people in the

community other pieces of the hog. When we milk the cow, we give some of the people in the community some of the milk."

Creative muse: We are only as strong as our kin spirits in need.

Wendell Paris: "So that's the type of lessons you get when you sitting on the porch talking with the old folks. And that's how you get the engrained experience of not only history but knowing you have a part to play."

Creative muse: We – our minds, bodies and spirits – are history.

Wendell Paris: "You right there with everybody. You shelling peas right along with everybody else and you know sometimes those lessons get so hot and so heavy you be saying well my goodness I'll be glad when I finish shelling these peas so I can get up and go. You just finish shelling peas and somebody throw some more peas in your lap, say naahh you got some other stuff to learn here… that served more than anything to ground you and give you a sense of who you are and to know that you are a human being more than anything else and as a human being and as a person and member of this particular family there were some things you could do and some things that you could not do. Those things were morally or socially acceptable to us to our family so you couldn't do that. And… some things were socially acceptable that weren't necessarily legal. We had three uncles involved in bootlegging but they used that money to send our mother to school. I'm saying you learn all of those things by being in those types of environments."

Creative muse: Emic. Shared history. Culturally rooted. Relationship-based. Lived experience at the core. Learning in the womb – the inside.

Wendell Paris: "One discussion we used to always have was...my father was working in Tuskegee and we were living in Sumter county but we had an aunt that lived in Montgomery so whenever daddy would drive back to see us on the weekend, he would stop in Montgomery to find out what's going on with the Montgomery bus boycott. So when he come on Friday and we sit down for dinner that was our discussion around the dinner table. What was happening with the Montgomery bus boycott. We had an uncle over there who was engaged in it. The UAW had sent down I think it's like 10 station wagons, brand new station wagons to help with the boycott. They had people driving all around the community to pick up folks and take them different places and everything, just giving them a ride so they didn't have to ride the buses. My uncle said, they tried to give him a car and he said no I don't want that UAW car, I'll drive my own car and that's what he did. So when he got off work at the VA hospital he would pick up people take them back and forth to help to support the boycott. We heard all of those things with people helping to support the boycott… our daddy gave us first-hand knowledge of it."

Creative muse: Lessons that cannot be learned anywhere and everywhere. The home is the first and most important school.

Wendell Paris: "But you know I also had other folks to help with my mentoring. James Foreman who was the executive director of SNCC. He would just come spend the week with us sometimes and you know just to talk about stuff and walk up and down the streets in

our fields or in the woods. Grant Brown used to come hunting with me every year. Not in particular about any political stuff but just hanging out having fun and establishing relations with folks that had an appreciation for the movement that you did. And so you know you relate to folks based on that level. My SNCC brothers… you don't forget those folks, you got to stay in touch with them… because you know people that you had to ride the roads with and sometimes they were responsible for saving your life or concealing you or helping you to ward off these attacks coming from these racist white people… so Tuskegee offered me that because Tuskegee also served as a refuge point for the civil rights worker. They would come there and rest. So they could come to the library and do their research. Tuskegee has more extensive collection on black legends than does any other school in this country."

Creative muse: Homes away from home are the second most important. Tuskegee – the home, the heart, the haven. The Mecca of all things Black, agrarian and pedagogical.

Scene 2 – Tuskegee model

"One of Dr. Carver's Favorite Poems" (n.d.)

Figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You've all that greatest men have had;
Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes,
And a brain to use if you would be wise,
With this equipment they all began.

So start from the top and say, “I can.”

Look them over, the wise and the great,

They take their food from a common plate,

And similar knives and forks they use,

With similar laces they tie their shoes,

The world considers them brave and smart,

But you’ve all they had when they made their start.

You can triumph and come to skill,

You can be great if you only will. You’re well equipped for what fight you choose; You have arms and legs and a brain to use,

And the man who had risen great deeds to do

Began his life with no more than you.

YOU are handicap you must face,

You are the one who must choose your place; You have say where you want to go,

How much say where you want to go,

How much you will study the truth to know;

God had equipped you for life, but He

Lets you decide what you want to be.

Courage must from the soul within

The man must furnish the will to win.

So figure it out for yourself, my lad,

You were born with all that the great have had,

With your equipment they all began,

Get hold of yourself and say: "I can."

- Anon

Blistered toes slowly trample the dirt roads riddled with stones – sharp and round, dark and light, above and beneath the surface. One by one, two by two, the feet trudge in diametric unison with blankets, water, food, clothing and family ornamentals in tow. The hearts carry a yearning to feel what it is like to be seen, loved and respected as a whole human being. The head, in psychological prison, thirst to learn all there is to know about the world beyond the plantation. From the roots up, a physical, mental and emotional load is carried – miles upon miles – by young men and women to the Mecca of what is known as dignity and purpose dressed in meaningful labor of self-reliance and self-help. The journey to the Tuskegee model is a long and self-determining one.

They walk with their dreams tightly clenched between the liminal spaces of where they are and where they are going.

C.P. Zachariadis: "…contribution of academic institutions to the alleviation of social ills can be very limited."[3]

Creative muse: And, then there was Tuskegee. Walking to a different rhythm. Academia done differently.

Carver: "[E]ducation is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom to our people… mighty campaign of education… will lead the masses to be students of nature."[4]

Booker T. Washington: "No race can prosper til it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top."[5]

B.D. Mayberry: The school was "directed to advance the interest of scientific agriculture through experimentation, to provide 'the colored race… an opportunity to acquire intelligent practical knowledge of agriculture in all of its branches' and to educate and train Negro students in scientific agriculture."[6]

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[3] Zachariadis, C.P. (1979). Clearinghouse for Community Based Free Standing Educational Institutions. "Recommendations to Promote Community Based Education in the United States." Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[4] Ferrell, J. S. (1995). *Fruits of creation: a look at global sustainability as seen through the eyes of George Washington Carver*. Macalester Park Publishing Co., pg. 98.
[5] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 107.
[6] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

Carver: "[E]ducation is understanding relations." It is understanding "[w]e have everything we need."[7]

Wendell Paris: "My father would take me with him as he visited farmers with his work with USDA Farmers Home Administration (FDA). My daddy is probably responsible for more black people on the land in Alabama than any other single person… But as children we had this opportunity to travel all over the state of Alabama and really all over the south. Every summer we would go on vacation to visit our family up North… but the Tuskegee experience allowed that. We came to appreciate Dr. Washington's statement that there is as much dignity in the tilling of the soil as there is in writing a poem. The Tuskegee experience is if you work for an honest living than there is dignity associated with that, regardless what the work is that you do. The fact that you have a good work ethic is most important and that's what we kind of lost these days is we no longer have a good work ethic. Folks don't want to work and want to do everything but work. But Tuskegee taught that you know and that was born out of the Tuskegee community."

Carver: "This old notion of swallowing down other peoples' ideas and problems just as they have worked them out without putting our brains and originality into it and making them applicable to our specific needs must go, and the sooner we let them go, sooner we will be a free and independent people."[8]

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[7] Ferrell, J. S. (1995). *Fruits of creation: a look at global sustainability as seen through the eyes of George Washington Carver*. Macalester Park Publishing Co., pg. 83.
[8] Kremer, G. R. (Ed.). (1987). *George Washington Carver: in his own words*. University of Missouri Press, pg. 84.

Wendell Paris: “That's kind of what Dr. Washington said when he came to Tuskegee you know he was met at the train station by about 13 ministers. And these 13 ministers were the folks who were engaged in Alabama politics during the Reconstruction period so they got him early on to understand that they wanted that institution to be able to educate people in every fashion. So that's where a lot of Dr. Washington's statements on work and the type of curriculum that would be established at Tuskegee would be around what those needs were in those local communities. Like my daddy graduated from Tuskegee and his minor was in mattress making... People learned carpentry, they learned masonry, they learned veterinary medicine and nursing, architecture. All of those schools that were established at Tuskegee were in direct response to the needs of the people in the community and what have you. Not just in terms of liberal arts but what are the trades that are required. That's what they were saying, that’s what was going on with Booker T. when he went to Atlanta for the Atlanta Exposition. What later became called the Atlanta Compromise. If you read carefully what he was discussing there he says drop your buckets where you are. He wasn't just saying black folks do that he was saying white folks do that to. To let us work together economically he understood that we couldn't work together socially at that particular time. But there were things that we could do to empower everybody. Because the South had been devastated by the war so he's speaking to all of these folks at this Exposition. Read it carefully and see what he's saying and it will help you understand the philosophy of Tuskegee… It was that you understand the culture you are involved in and how do you make changes to the culture you are involved in…”

Booker T. Washington: "Of one thing I felt more strongly convinced than ever, after spending this month in seeing the actual life of the coloured people, and that was that, in order to lift them up, something must be done more than merely to imitate New England education as it then existed… To take the children of such people as I had been among for a month, and each day give them a few hours of mere book education, I felt would be almost a waste of time."[9]

Carver: "…God has blessed you with as much intelligence as the spider. Use your intelligence as the spider uses hers."[10]

Creative muse: There is no higher learning and living than with and through nature.

Booker T. Washington: "Mental development alone will not give us what we want but mental development tied to hand and heart training will be the salvation of the Negro."[11]

Creative muse: A whole body intelligence drawn from intuition. Unfractured. Nurtured. By experience.

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[9] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 57.
[10] Thomas, H. (1958). *George Washington Carver*. Putnam. p. 108.
[11] Washington, B. T. (1900). *The future of the American Negro*. Small, Maynard & Company. pg. 75.

Booker T. Washington: "All the industries at Tuskegee have been started in natural and logical order, growing out of the needs of a community settlement. We began with farming, because we wanted something to eat."[12]

B.D. Mayberry: "It was noted that much greater progress was achieved with Negro farming when they were in communities which came under the influence of such outstanding Negro educational institutions as Tuskegee University and Hampton Institute… Booker T. Washington, who opened the school on July 4, 1881… [t]hirty men and women from Macon and neighboring counties gathered the first day to attend Alabama's first normal school for the training of black teachers."[13]

Booker T. Washington: "We found that the most of our students came from the country districts, where agriculture in some form or other was the main dependence of the people. We learned that about eighty-five per cent of the coloured people in Gulf states depended upon agriculture for their living. Since this was true, we wanted to be careful not to educate our students out of sympathy with agricultural life, so that they would be attracted from the country to the cities… We wanted to give them such an education as would fit a large proportion of them to be teachers, and at the same time cause them to return to the

[12] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 67.
[13] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

plantation districts and show the people there how to put new energy and new ideas into farming, as well as into the intellectual and moral and religious life of the people."[14]

Benjamin F. Payton: "Initial curriculum was built on meeting the needs of rural people as gleaned from studies of the people of Macon County, Alabama… Dr. Booker T. Washington, its first President, recognized the need to extend the influence of the institution to the larger community... his initial activities included a series of trips throughout the surrounding rural communities to do informal needs assessment studies… [i]t was his initial intent to teach the very rudiments of living to craftsmen, farmers, homemakers and other people."[15]

Booker T. Washington: "Before going to Tuskegee I had expected to find there a building and all the necessary apparatus ready for me to begin teaching. To my disappointment, I found nothing of the kind. I did find, though, that which no costly building and apparatus can supply, - hundreds of hungry, earnest souls who wanted to secure knowledge."[16]

B.D. Mayberry: "The first four years of Tuskegee University were devoted mainly to on-campus academic training integrated with practical training based on the concept of 'learning by doing.' At the same time, emphasis was placed on encouraging the students to

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[14] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 61.
[15] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.
[16] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 52.

return to their generally impoverished rural communities to help less fortunate families… One of Dr. Washington's first objectives was to visit the homes of the rural poor to secure first-hand information as to their needs in order that they could be taken into consideration in planning the course of study for the students, families, and the communities from when they came. Throughout the Black Belt Counties in Alabama and other Southern states could be seen ramshackled cabins – occupied by poverty-stricken blacks who year after year struggled in cotton fields trying to eke out a miserable existence. After long day's work, they came home to rest in the crude one or two room log cabins of rough pine slabs. In these shacks there were as few as one or two beds with many of the families having a dozen persons ranging from infants to the old and decript. Pig pens were often at the door and a well from which they obtained water was down the hill below these pens. Windows, screens and steps were practically unknown. Many shacks had no toilet facilities whatever."[17]

Booker T. Washington: "… in the teaching of civilization, self-help and self-reliance… I was determined to have the students do not only the agricultural and domestic work, but to have them erect their own buildings… while performing this service, [they were] taught the latest and best methods of labour, so that the school would not only get the benefit of their efforts, but the students themselves would be taught to see not only utility in labour, but beauty and dignity, would be taught, in fact, how to lift labour up from mere drudgery and toil, and would learn to love work for its own sake. My plan was not to teach them to work

[17] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

in the old way, but to show them how to make the forces of nature – air, water, steam, electricity, horsepower – assist them in their labour."[18]

Creative muse: Work is only as meaningful as we define and implement it. For whom do we work? Why do we work?

Wendell Paris: "…Washington said, I live in the south, I'm of the south. Tuskegee is not gonna move and I'm not gonna move from Tuskegee so I gotta develop an educational system around what the needs are in the south at this particular time. So that's what he did."

B.D. Mayberry: "He found that too many of the people who really needed help were not being reached. To meet his need, in February 1890, he began holding little farmers meetings on-campus once per month to discuss their problems. However, many of the farmers would not attend. One of the reasons they did not attend was that they felt out of place and uncomfortable among 'educated Negroes.' In addition, it was difficult to obtain transportation. To solve this problem, Dr. Washington organized what he called an informal Extension Department of the school. Within the framework of the Extension Department, Dr. Washington went out, himself and also sent his teachers, to contact black

[18] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 71-72.

farmers at their churches, in their homes, and on their farms. This effort was designed to show the black farmers how to live in their own environment."[19]

Booker T. Washington: "One man may go into a community prepared to supply the people there with an analysis of Greek sentences. The community may not at that time be prepared for, or feel the need of, Greek analysis, but it may feel its need of bricks and houses and wagons."[20]

Allen Jones: "On his buggy trips into rural areas of Black Belt Alabama during the 1880's, Booker T. Washington witnessed the extreme poverty and ignorance of the black farmers who had never enjoyed the benefits of education. Washington was impressed, however, by 'the unusual amount of common sense displayed… (by) the uneducated black man in the South, especially the one living in the county district. Any people with such 'natural sense,' said Washington, 'could be led to do a great deal towards their own elevation.'"[21]

B.D. Mayberry: "Dr. Washington began his work of bettering conditions by holding monthly group meetings with farmers and other workers to come and talk over their problems… [these] meetings led to the first annual Negro Farmers Conference which was

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[19] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.
[20] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 75.

[21] Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, *60*(2), 252-267.

held in early 1892. The aim of the conference was to bring together for a quiet conference – not the politicians – representatives of the common, hard-working farmers and mechanics and the ministers and teachers. There were two objectives: first, to find out from the people, themselves, the facts as to their information on how the young men and women now being educated could best use their education in helping the masses."[22]

Allen Jones: "…he issued an invitation to about -seventy-five representatives of the masses – the bone and sinew of race – the common, hard-working farmers with a few of the best ministers and teachers' to come and spend the day of February 23, 1892 at a Negro Conference on the campus of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. The purpose of this meeting was to arouse public sentiment among the farmers and create among them a real interest in the common good, mundane and practice affairs of life. To the surprise of Washington, over 400 men and women, mostly farmers, 'of all grades and conditions' attended the First Tuskegee Negro Conference. In order to find out the 'actual industrial, moral and educational conditions of the masses,' delegates were urged to speak. They spent the morning telling about their problems of owning and renting land, living in one-room log cabins, mortgaging crops, paying debts, educating children, and living a moral and religious life. The farmers reported frankly and simply that four-fifths of them lived for food on which to live. Their three-months schools were conducted in 'churches or broken-down log cabins or under a bush arbor. The afternoon portion of the conference focused on remedies. After an extensive exchange of views on how "to lift themselves up in their

[22] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

industrial, education, moral and religious life,' the delegates adopted a very optimistic ten-point declaration which recognized the problems and evil conditions facing rural black people and pledged support to a program of self-improvement."[23]

Creative muse: Pulling ourselves up with little to no bootstraps. We rise from our own strength.

Allen Jones: "At the monthly meetings in the school's agricultural building, simple lectures and demonstrations covering the principles of agriculture were given by the faculty, and the farmers were encouraged to relate their personal experiences in applying these methods and principles. In other words, it was a one-day-a-month schooling for the farmers and their families at no cost to them. Such subjects as the culture and value of sweet potatoes, practical farm economy, the care of young chickens, the value of deep plowing, the proper preparation of corn and cotton land, and women's helpful influence in the home were discussed at the meetings which attracted from 25 to 75 farmers from Macon and adjoining counties."[24]

Washington: "It is believed that such a meeting of workers for the elevation of the Negro, held in the Black Belt, with the lessons and impressions of the direct contact with the

[23] Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, *60*(2), 252-267.
[24] Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, *60*(2), 252-267.

masses of the colored people fresh before them, can only result in much practical good to the cause of Negro education."[25]

Allen Jones: "Out of the Farmers Institute movement grew community and county fairs which did much to stimulate Black farmers to improve their efforts. The first Farmers Institute was held in the fall of 1898 on the campus of Tuskegee Institute. It provided the farmers an opportunity to display their products and show what they had accomplished. At first the farmers' products exhibited at the fair were few and of poor quality. But each fall thereafter the samples of their crops and livestock and of the women's needlework, quilts and canned goods were more abundant and of the best quality and variety. The fairs developed into educational and social gatherings for the black farmers in each county. They came to the fairs, listened to lectures by experts on agricultural subjects, examined the exhibits, received suggestions about how to improve their farming, watched the parades, and took part in the races and other amusements that were available."[26]

Creative muse: Fellowship. Conviviality. Social cohesion. The art of community.

B.D. Mayberry: "Booker T. Washington was not satisfied with his limited contact with the more progressive farmers but felt a definite need to reach directly the most backward

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[25] Thomas Campbell speaking Washington's words in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

[26] Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, *60*(2), 252-267.

Negro farmers who were disinterested or afraid to mingle with the 'educated people' at the Institute. He succeeded in interesting Morris K. Jesup of New York in his plans for a properly equipped wagon to carry sufficient tools and material for demonstrations of methods of improved farming and living to the very doors of the Negro farmers. In 1906, the Jesup 'Agricultural Wagon,'… began its educational work under the guidance of a teacher…. Prior to 1906, most of Washington's extension activities had centered on bringing the uneducated black farmers to Tuskegee Institute to drink from the fountain of agricultural wisdom. As he rode through the countryside recruiting students for his school, Washington realized that there was little hope of advancement for the isolated farmers unless modern agricultural training was carried to their doorsteps."[27]

Carver: "I landed at Tuskegee Institute in a strange land among a strange people. I also found devastated forests, ruined estates, and a thoroughly discouraged people, many just ekeing out a miserable sort of existence from the furrowed and guttered hillsides and neglected valleys called farms. It was easy to see that the first and prime essential was to build up the soil and demonstrate to the people that a good living can be made on the farm. This had to be done by actual demonstration…"[28]

[27] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.
[28] Carver, G. W. (n.d.) "A Gleam Upon the Distant Horizon" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

Wendell Paris: "My father was in agriculture. He was an agriculture agent so he worked directly with the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and he was kind of like an extension agent. It was that extension agency of the USDA basically it was patterned after what took place at Tuskegee which was patterned after what Dr. Carver would do when he went out to the farmers in what they called a rolling store. I guess the Ford Foundation gave him one of those old T Model Fords and prior to that he had a wagon that he would go out and visit with farmers and help them to do better practices so they would have better crops and a more variety of crops to grow. So that's kind of engrained in the education fabric of Tuskegee."

Thomas Campbell: "The 'Jesup Agricultural Wagon,' also known as the 'Movable School' or the 'Farmers' College on Wheels'… "became a major resource to facilitate the growth and development of Negro extension work… it is fitted up with improved implements such as may be used on any up-to-date farm; for example, a cream separator, a milk tester, a revolving hand churn, a two-horse steel-beam plow, a one-horse steel buster, a set of garden tools, a crate for the purpose of carrying the best breeds of livestock, such as Berkshire and Poland China pigs, Jersey and short-horned calves. The real object of the Jesup Agricultural Wagon is to place before the people concrete illustrations, and to prove to the farmer that he can do better work, make more produce on a smaller number of acres of land at less expense. It is also designed to visit as many centers of influence as possible.

The agent personally shows what is meant by deep cultivation and thorough preparation of the soil."[29]

B.D. Mayberry: "During the summer of 1906, the school on wheels reached over 2,000 people a month and attracted attention all over the state."[30]

Thomas Campbell: "In conducting these schools there is no sounding of trumpets or ballyhooing, and very little lecturing or other formal proceedings. The time is given to actual demonstrations. The farmers are not only told how to do the work but actually do it themselves, under the supervision of competent instructors who accompany the school. Instead of demonstrating at churches and school buildings in a community, we go directly to the farmer's home. Most people who do not know about the work think that the school force picks out the best home in a community through which to work, but we make it a practice to select one of the poorer homes, which is the average, and for the scheduled period this house and its surroundings are used as a veritable classroom for the people of that community to learn how to do many simple and yet very vital things so that they may go home and put what they learn into practice."[31]

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[29] Campbell, T.M. "The Alabama Movable School" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

[30] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

[31] Campbell, T.M. "The Alabama Movable School" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

Creative muse: Knowledge without practice should be interrogated as knowledge at all. Praxis strides the strength of knowledge.

Thomas Campbell: "In conducting these schools the man agent takes the boys and men of the community, organizes them into groups, and gives them practical instructions in, for instance, making doorsteps, mixing whitewash paint, building sanitary toilets and poultry houses, sharpening saws. When in season, instruction is given in curing and storing sweet potatoes, pruning the orchard, terracing land, and inoculating hogs against cholera. An effort is made also to give various groups as nearly as possible what they would like to know individually. Simultaneously the women are organized into groups by the home demonstration agents and given instruction in cleaning the house. They wash the cast away rags, and from them make rugs and mats; they learn to make useful articles from shucks and pine needles; they are given instruction in cooking, remodeling old garments and the making of new ones. Joint instruction is also given to all in attendance in poultry raising, gardening, and home dairying."[32]

Creative muse: Everyone has a lesson to learn and a role to play.

[32] Campbell, T.M. "The Alabama Movable School" in Mayberry, B.D. 1989. The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793).

Thomas Campbell: "The rural nurse makes a survey of the community to be worked, looking into various homes and gives first-hand information on home sanitation; with special attention to child welfare, screening the homes, caring for the patient in the home, the eradication of vermin, and directing severe cases of illness to the community physician. No one can go into the rural districts and mingle with the people without being conscious of the fact that there exists among them a kind of empty and depressing loneliness. Especially is this true with the young people. This problem is being met by the Movable School force and county agents in the communities where they work. They not only carry tools and implements with which to teach farmers how to work out but, in addition, have a supply of athletic equipment with which to teach those isolated people organized play. At the close of the day, the whole group of 'students' is brought together, at which time they play volleyball, dodge ball, tug-o-war, and engage in foot races, potato races, jumping hurdling, and many other simple games directed by the Movable School force. It is interesting to notice how these simple people, old and young, unused to these games, after some little coaxing forget their timidity and join in the exercises."[33]

Wendell Paris: "He [Washington] was able to help folks all over the south. He set up… the National Business League, NBL probably. He was one of the principle persons in establishing that all over the United States businesses for black people to get in. In fact Tuskegee did a hundred-year economic development plan for the city of Mt. Bayou,

[33] Campbell, T.M. "The Alabama Movable School" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

Mississippi. Mt. Bayou was a city that was an all-black city at one time and it was founded by black people. Tuskegee went over there and worked with Mr. Jones who established the Piney Wood school. All of those independent institutions that were being established throughout the South they were based kind of on the Tuskegee model. You know drop your bucket where you are. What can you do to help yourself? What are the power realities, the economic realities? How can you diversify your farming operation to be successful where you are? That comes from the Tuskegee model."

Creative muse: Do what we can in the ways we can. Grow where we are.

Wendell Paris: "You understand Tuskegee is one of the few schools that has never had a white person as president… Tuskegee is a grassroots… blackest of the black schools… what we get here is the unique experience of black people establishing the institutions that they own, they control, they manage, they take responsibility for. That was always the case in the Tuskegee community."

Booker T. Washington: "I have sought to impress the students with the idea that Tuskegee is not my institution… but that it is there institution, and that they as much interest in it as any of the trustees or instructors. I have further sought to have them feel that I am at the institution as their friend and adviser, and not as their overseer."[34]

[34] Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 83.

B.D. Mayberry: "When the 1918 replacement of the Jesup wagon needed expanding… "[t]he Negro farmers of Alabama proved to be the 'men of the hour' when 30,000 of them and their friends throughout the state contributed a total of $5,000 to purchase a new truck, named the 'Booker T. Washington Agricultural School on Wheels,' and its equipment… Among the equipment carried were spraying outfits, farm levels, a set of carpenter's tools, a milk tester, an inoculating set, a lighting plant for the farm, a moving picture projector, kodaks, a sewing machine, an electric iron, a baby's bathtub, a set of baby clothes, a medicine cabinet, kitchen utensils and playground apparatus for recreational games. The new truck, like the old one, carried trained workers; a man to demonstrate the use of the farm equipment and to teach improved methods of farming; a woman to show how to make and use home conveniences, how to care for poultry, cook, sew, can, and conduct the home on a more healthful and economic basis; a trained nurse to give demonstration in simple practices of home sanitation and hygiene, and care of the sick."[35]

W.E.B. DuBois: "Education must not simply teach work-- it must teach life."[36]

Creative muse: Agrarian education – teaching and learning what we need and want to know to not only survive, but to thrive.

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[35] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

[36] DuBois, W.E.B. (2013). "W. E. B. Du Bois: Selections from His Writings", p.60, Courier Corporation.

B.D. Mayberry: "An essential ingredient in the process of providing 'education for a people' is the ability to read and understand the printed page. Ironically, however, millions of the black farmers of the South who were destined to be served by the Negro extension effort were variously characterized as uneducated or illiterate. This, of course, limits the probability of reaching them by way of bulletins, pamphlets, farm journals or newspapers. This situation neither discouraged nor hindered Tuskegee University from attempting to reach and serve the farmer by way of printed materials."[37]

Allen Jones: "One of the department's major responsibilities was the distribution of printed bulletins, circulars, farmer's leaflets and pamphlets that were issued by various departments of the school… most of the publications were very elementary and simple in character. They contained information about the scientific methods of agriculture such as rotation of crops, the uses of fertilizers, the advantages of the garden, nature study, and business economy for the farmer… In another attempt to reach Black people of central Alabama, Washington established a newspaper, *The Messenger*, in September 1905… the paper was devoted to 'improving the general condition of the people' in Macon and surrounding counties by encouraging the work of the public schools and instructing the farming community in agriculture. It reported all extension activities, advertised farm equipment and farms for sale, and printed 'Suggestions to Farmers' written by the school's

[37] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

agriculture faculty… In January 1914, the *Negro Farmer* was founded in the 'interest of Negro landowners, tenant farmers and those who employ Negro labor.'"[38]

Creative muse: Education for us, by us. Community-centered and community-controlled literacy.

Carver: "Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower or to the little peanut they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people they give up their secrets also – if you love them enough."[39]

Wendell Paris: "…he made that whole lab, his laboratory he went to the trash pile and picked up stuff. That's where he got stuff to set up his laboratory. You know he locked himself in that laboratory for 6 weeks fasting and praying and that's when god gave him the 300 products he would get from the peanut."

Carver: "I am not a medical doctor. I am not practicing medicine…I am simply a scientist looking for truth."[40]

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[38] Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, *60*(2), 252-267.
[39] Clark, G. (1939). The Man Who Talks with the Flowers: The Life Story of Dr. George Washington Carver. Macalester Park, Shakopee, Minnesota.
[40] Kremer, G. R. (Ed.). (1987). *George Washington Carver: in his own words*. University of Missouri Press. p. 143.

Creative muse: Truth tucked away in the land.

Carver: "I love to think of Nature as wireless telegraph stations through which God speaks to us every day, every hour, and every moment of our lives."[41]

Creative muse: We learn and come to know by way of our spiritual understandings of the world.

B.D. Mayberry: "Tuskegee University – a center for learning and service – founded for the good of a people developed into an instrument of discovery and transmission of knowledge devoted to a total society. From these dimensions the student becomes the University's reason for being. His role is a high one, for he plays major part in molding and becoming the world community. Moreover, the vitality of our democracy requires that education be directed toward facilitating this role by helping people mature as individuals and as citizens of their local and world communities, fully prepared for living and serving in an ever-enlarging world."[42]

Creative muse: The Diaspora.

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[41] Ferrell, J. S. (1995). *Fruits of creation: a look at global sustainability as seen through the eyes of George Washington Carver*. Macalester Park Publishing Co.., p. 62.
[42] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

B.D. Mayberry: "…in Tuskegee conviction was growing that its philosophy had a very special role to play in this form of educational pan-Africanism."[43][F]rom Vocational Education in Indonesia to the Rural Teacher Training Institute in Liberia to the Guyana Livestock Management Program to the West African Poultry Project to the Cotton Project in Togo to the Evaluation in Rural Community Education in Jamaica and many more…[44]

Emmett J. Scott: "…the chief reason why graduates have been induced to go to Africa and students from Africa have been led to come here is because both the white men who rules in Africa and the natives who are ruled there have come to believe that in this school a method and a type of education has been evolved which is peculiarly suited to their needs."[45]

Carver: "The thoughtful educator realizes that a very large part of the child's education must be gotten outside of the four walls designated as classroom. He also understands that the most effective and lasting education is the only that makes the pupil handle, discuss and

[43] Mayberry, B.D. 1989. The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.
[44] Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.
[45] King, K.J. (1971). "Pan-Africanism and Education – A Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa Clarendon Press Oxford in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

familiarize himself with the real thing about him, of which the majority are surprisingly ignorant."[46]

Wendell Paris: "That's one reason I could sit down with miss Hamer because I was comfortable sitting down with my grandma and my mother and all the women in our community who taught me a lot about myself."

Toni Cade Bambara: "The revolution begins with the self, in the self."

Fannie Lou Hamer: When I was I a child, I asked my mother "why I wasn't white, so that we could have some food." She responded, "Don't feel like that. We are not bad because we're black people.[47] She said, "I want you to respect yourself as Black child, as you get older, you respect yourself as a Black woman… if your respect yourself enough, other people will have to respect you."[48] "…a lot of people is ashamed of this old Baptist teachings, but my mother used to sing a song, it was a hymn that said, 'Should earth against my soul engage, and fiery darts be hurled, when I can smile at Satan's rage, and face this frowning world.'"[49]

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[46] Kremer, G. R. (Ed.). (1987). *George Washington Carver: in his own words*. University of Missouri Press, pg. 84.
[47] Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO, pg. 20.
[48] "Fannie Lou Hamer Speaks Out," 53 as cited in Lee, C. K. (2000). *For freedom's sake: The life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press, pg. 13.
[49] Hamer, F.L. (1969). "To Tell It Like It Is," Speech Delivered at the Holmes County, Mississippi, Freedom Democratic Party Municipal Elections Rally in Lexington, Mississippi, May 8, 1969 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Scene 3 – Mrs. Hamer as teacher

"It's Time"

(no author, no date)

It's time to burn that wig and pour miss Clairol down the drain and by all means throw the frying comb away.

It's time to stop wearing mini's and start wearing dashikis.

It's time to forget about diamonds and be happy with a tiki.

It's time to get up off the Tchaikovsky shit and start digging trane, Coltrane.

It's time to take face powder, lipstick, eyeshadow, mascara, rouge, and false eyelashes and flush it, flush it, flush it down the toilet, now flush it one more time make sure it's gone…

Sisters it is time to quit bullshitting and quit faking and be real. Be just what you are. Be Black.

It's time to come out that Lilly white world and be Lilly Black.

The hot summer afternoon surrendered to the humid moonlit air. A caravan of young Black students traveling from near and far sit in silence as they drive along the bumpy roads of the Mississippi Delta. Sweat hangs from their eyelids. The crickets' song drowns out the faint music from the radio. The eyes and ears are on alert, peeled wide open, for harm in any form – mainly white terrorism. Ahead of them, lie the lessons awaiting to fill their hearts knowing of what is and what is not. The things hidden in plain sight. What couldn't be learned from stealthy books, snooty lectures and full dinner tables. School is in session.

Wendell Paris: "…Alabama at the time had what is called an academic curriculum and I was in that general academic curriculum in high school and I found that most of my education the real education that I had was not what I learned in formalized education settings... I spent 2 weeks with Mississippi's Fannie Lou Hamer. She was a renown civil rights worker that worked on a plantation in Mississippi. I spent 2 weeks with her in 1965 doing voter registration where I learned more than I did in all of my years of farmer education in both high school and college. Mrs. Hamer was my instructor and I say I have a PhD from Mrs. Hamer, a university education from Mrs. Hamer."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "And you see people can say that you've got to have a PhD degree to live. But you see my Holy Bible tell me that He was taking from the wise and revealing it to babies…"[50]

Wendell Paris: "Mrs. Hamer, her foundation, her real relationship [was] with God through Jesus Christ that is what she relied and depended on because she certainly could not depend on the white power structure. She couldn't depend on the Black so-called elite because they considered themselves above Mrs. Hamer as well. She didn't have anything to do with people who looked down on her. No matter what your social or education level was if you weren't working to liberate black people then she didn't have much time or much talk for you. So she taught us that, that's engrained in those folks who were engaged in the

[50] Hamer, F.L. (1967). "The Only Thing We Can Do Is to Work Together," Speech Delivered at a Chapter Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women in Mississippi, 1967 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

movement experience especially in Mississippi. You don't defer to people because of race or socioeconomic class. Everyone works together for the common good."

Fannie Lou Hamer: I want to "tell you what it is… like it is…"[51] My family was some of the poorest people that was in the state of Mississippi, and we were sharecroppers. Now, sharecroppers is something; it's out of sight… Number one, you had to plow it. Number two, you had to break it up. Number three, you had to chop it. Number four, you had to pick it. And the last, number five, the landowner took it. So, this left us with nowhere to go; it left us hungry… We never had so many days in my life that we had cornbread and we had milk and sometimes bread and onions. So, I know what the pain of hunger is about."[52]
"Sharecropping, halving… you split the cotton in half with the plantation owner. But the seed, fertilizer, cost of hired hands, everything is paid out of the cropper's half. My parents tried so hard to do what they could to keep us in school, but school didn't last but four months out of the year and most of the time we didn't have clothes to wear. I dropped out of school and cut corn stalks to help the family."[53]

L.C. Dorsey: "Survival was a combination of hard work and skill for everyone. The black families supplemented their incomes by taking from nature whatever was available. They

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[51] Hamer, F.L. (1971). "Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either," Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[52] Hamer, F.L. (1971). "Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either," Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[53] Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO, 21-22.

used their home remedies, because they could not always be assured that the bossman would let them use the doctor's services. They hunted, fished, and picked wild berries and wild greens to stretch the food."[54]

Fannie Lou Hamer: "I seen my mother go out in the garden and she would get the tops off of the greens; she would get the tops off of the white potatoes. She would get the tops off of the beets and all this kind of stuff. And she would cook it."[55]

Creative muse: Alchemy as survival.

L.C. Dorsey: "The art of sewing and quilt making was taught to all the girls so that they could clothe their families and keep them warm. The thrift women also used the printed feed sacks to make dresses for the children, aprons and blouses for themselves, and curtains for their homes. Preparing the cotton sacks involved removing the bottom which was covered with tar, and boiling the remainder in a lye solution to whiten and soften the material. The sacks were then sewn together to make bedsheets, curtains, and tablecloths… Little children were taught to grow vegetables and to fish. Ladies Birthday Almanac and MacDonald Almanac were the handbooks for these important lessons. The children learned from their mothers and grandmothers the different moon signs. There were signs for root crops, and signs for above-ground crops. There were signs to avoid in order to prevent insect-damage and ones to avoid prevent excessive flowering in vegetables. The trusted almanacs also listed the best fishing days and the days when the fish were spawning and

[54] Dorsey, L.C. (1977). Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 10.
[55] Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

not apt to bite. The boys (and sometimes the girls) were taught the basic hunting techniques and gun safety rules, often as early as twelve or thirteen. Their survival lessons included how to look for signs of game, how to flush out small game, and how to identify game that was unfit either because of disease, parasites, or pregnancy. During the long Winter evenings, the families learned from each other. Children learned to read and shared the wonderful books with their parents, many of whom had never managed the skill. In return, the children were taught by parents or grandparents how to make a rug from scraps of cloth or how to put a bottom in a chair using green tree bark."[56]

Creative muse: Survival as alchemy. These were the lessons learned from the inside.

Wendell Paris: "When I graduated Tuskegee institute high school, I went directly into college at Tuskegee institute. I graduated in 1966 with a degree in agriculture sciences. And, while I was in school there I became engaged with the formal Civil Rights Movement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee or SNCC… I started working with a group called the Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program, T-I-C-E-P… I ran into a lot of the problems that were symptomatic of the region itself and that largely stemmed from the absence of a good education system. So, the TICEP program from Tuskegee sent students out into the rural communities to supplement, enhance and sometimes bring new vision to the education system that were established there by the state of Alabama. The state of Alabama has always had difficulty with putting good education systems within the Black Belt because of the percentages of blacks that live in the region… I was largely

[56] Dorsey, L.C. (1977). Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 10.

engaged in direct action campaigns as well as voter registration campaigns. That has given me a lot of understanding of how impoverishment works not only in that region but impoverishment is one of the main tools used by powers that be to prevent folks especially minorities from moving forward…"

Creative muse: The race is rigged. We lose before we start.

Wendell Paris: "Our local student org called the Tuskegee Advancement League (TAL) that identified politically with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and we got a call in March of 1965 to come to a Sunflower County Mississippi to assist Ms. Hamer with voter registration… this was unique in that we are talking August 1965 which is prior to passage of the Voting Rights Act in November 1965. So here we were doing registration with Mrs. Hamer in Sunflower County, Mississippi because she had won in the federal courts the right to get black folks registered to vote in Sunflower County."

Clayborne Carson: "…[T]here were some ideas about how to mobilize people by getting them to recognize the sources of their own oppression talking to people at the state that they were at then and now, and convincing then that not that the leaders have the answers about how to identify their sources of oppression and how to move effectively against them… During the 1960s, Black people moved quite effectively without leaders… remarkable circumstance. Movements and struggles were initiated without leaders, found leaders as they developed, developed their own leaders from within the struggle, and that

this became one of the most unique features of the strongest movements of the 1960s, the ones that were able to sustain themselves the longest."[57]

L.C. Dorsey: "…it [Mississippi] became in consequence a decisive field of testing and struggle for the civil rights movement."[58]

Creative muse: Storms make trees take deeper roots.

Fannie Lou Hamer: We the "ruralest of the ruralest and poorest of the poorest."[59] "We're excluded from everything in Mississippi but the tombs and the graves. That's why it is called that instead of the "land of the free and the home of the brave," it's called in Mississippi "the land of the tree and the home of the grave."[60] "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?"[61] "…is this America, the land of the free and home of the brave? Where people are being murdered, lynched, and killed because we want to register to vote?"[62] "A

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[57] MS Freedom Summer Reviewed Genesis of the MS Summer Project. Oct. 30, 1979. Tougaloo College. AU 842.
[58] Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 10.
[59] Lee, C. K. (2000). *For freedom's sake: The life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press.
[60]Hamer, F.L. (1964). I'm Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired", Speech Delivered with Malcolm X at the Williams Institutional CME Church, Harlem, New York, December 20, 1964.
[61] Hamer, F.L. (1964). Testimony Before the Credentials Committee at the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 22, 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[62] Hamer, F.L. (1964). We're On Our Way," Speech Delivered at a Mass Meeting Indianola, Mississippi September 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

house divided against itself cannot stand; America will crumble. Because God is not pleased. God is not pleased at all the murdering, and all of the brutality, and all of the killings for no reason at all. God is not pleased at the Negro children in the state of Mississippi suffering from malnutrition. God is not pleased because we have to go raggedy each day. God is not pleased because we have to go to the field and work from ten to eleven hours for three lousy dollars."[63]

Wendell Paris: "Mrs. Hamer helped us to understand that, she helped us to understand that all of the entities of government, state local as well as federal were all working against the liberation of black people. Here we are getting people registered to vote thinking that will give them one of the first tenets of citizenship… the greatest right that we know under a democracy is the right to vote. And here is the 1965 voting rights act which is a temporary act. It didn't give us full-fledged voting rights. We still don't have them to this day so we are temporary citizens of the country of our birth because we do not have our full voting rights… We still don't have the permanent right to vote in this country."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "I've heard several comments from people that was talking about with the people, for the people, and by the people. Being a black woman from Mississippi, I've learned that long ago that's not true; it's with the handful, for a handful, by a handful. But we going to change that, baby. We are going to change the because we going to make a democracy a reality for all of the people of this country."[64] "And I'm not only fighting for

[63] Hamer, F.L. (1964). "We're On Our Way," Speech Delivered at a Mass Meeting Indianola, Mississippi September 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[64] Hamer, F.L. (1969). "To Make Democracy a Reality", Speech Delivered at the Vietnam War Moratorium Rally Berkeley, California, October15, 1969 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D.

myself and for the black race, but I'm fighting for the white; I'm fighting for the Indians; I'm fighting for the Mexicans; I'm fighting for the Chinese; I'm fighting for anybody because as long as they are human beings, you white or black, is to work together.[65]

Wendell Paris: "The main thing is finding out you have a common bond with them. That's how you organize. What are the things that we have in common because most often what we have in common is our oppression from white people."

Creative muse: Interwoven struggles. Sacrificial victories. They are we.

Wendell Paris: **"**2 carloads of us, all Tuskegee students went to Sunflower County to assist Mrs. Hamer. At our first day in her house the morning where the voter registration office opened we had breakfast at her house about 7 o'clock that morning and she said you know, you all, I am rich. She had 5 cups, I think she had around 6 plates, we drank out of mayonnaise jars as glasses and she said I'm rich which was a relative term to what other people in her community owned and had… So she explained that to us and as we were in conversation with her she flung open her shutter. She didn't have a window; it was just a wooden shutter at her kitchen window and she said do y'all see this red brick building over here. She said that is the hospital. Okay. She said the surgeon over there is a dentist, the surgeon is a dentist and any black women of childbearing years comes back terrible. And, it

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W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

[65] Hamer, F.L. (1967). "The Only Thing We Can Do Is to Work Together", Speech Delivered at a Chapter Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women in Mississippi, 1967 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

dawned on us here, these folks practicing genocide on these people in the United States. This hospital was receiving what was called Hill Burton funding which provided funds from the federal government to assist local hospitals in making sure that all the folks needs were met. So here is a Hill Burton hospital funded by the federal government Department of Health, and at the time, I think it was H-E-W… Health, Education and Welfare but later on they separated out education and health. So it was HEW that was funding this hospital for these medical professionals that were practicing genocide on our people.

Fannie Lou Hamer: "But the shame that we have before us today is whatever happened to us have to be legislated. But you can't legislate love. That's one thing that you can't do."[66]

Wendell Paris: "So Mrs. Hamer helped us to fully better understand these types of things and what was necessary for us to do as young college students to do our very best to bring some constructive changes to these regions. So that's what we learned straight on in a week's time.... One time that I visited her when she had finally gotten a better home and she had a huge deep freezer and so she had a lot of foodstuff. Vegetables, all types of food stuff, meat and vegetables and fruits in her freezer. But above the freezer she still had all of these canned goods and she canned everything. She canned peas, pig feet, all types of preserves and jelly and everything. And she made some of the best chow chow you would ever run across. I said Mrs. Hamer, why do you keep canning all this stuff when you got this freezer here now. She said to me, 'Wendy,' that was my nickname, 'What am I gonna do when these

[66] Hamer, F.L. (1976). "We Haven't Arrived Yet" Presentation and Responses to Questions at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, January 29, 1976 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

white folks cut my lights off. Not IF they cut them off but WHEN they cut them off.' I don't know if they did cut off her lights but I know that one month she received a water bill for over $4000. So, I'm saying when you run onto these things face on and they right in your face it gives you an educational perspective that you just don't get in a traditional academic setting. Those are things we learned not by sitting in the classroom but just by being engaged with people. How do you address those type of situations? How do you get the courage to tell a plantation owner that I am getting ready to go down to vote knowing that if you do that he is going to expel you from your plantation? So not only did we run across situations like that in Mississippi but basically all over… In Alabama, in Sumter county, the county where I grew up when they registered to vote and when they demanded their fair share of the price support payments from the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service, they weren't giving the checks to the folks who were supposed to be receiving the ASCS price support payments. They were giving those checks to the landowners so the landowner was getting both checks whereas the tenant was supposed to be able to get a check. So how did this fella solve that problem? He paid 'em maybe half of the money that he owed them from taking the price support check but he then evicted him with 24-hour's notice that they had to get off the place in Jamesville, Alabama. So here are people who been on the plantation all their life who didn't understand any other type of work but to farm on the plantation and all of a sudden they get up the courage to vote and they get evicted."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "The first time I was aware that Mississippi had a constitution was when I tried to register to vote, and they gave me a section of the constitution of Mississippi to write, to copy, and then to give a reasonable interpretation of it. I didn't know that we

had the right… Freedom Schools taught about the constitution and about citizenship and voting... some of the white kids and the blacks, was teaching in these Freedom Schools and holding citizenship education classes because in this Delta it's a high rate of illiteracy. It's a lot of people still here that can't read and write."[67]

John O'Neal: "The most important single point the students in MS Freedom Schools can learn is that the world that they live in is a world that can be changed."[68]

Wendell Paris: "There was a lady in her community named Mrs. Annie Lee Jones. I'll never forget her name because there was a woman where I grew up and was one of the matriarchs of our community in Alabama, Sumter County who was named Annie Lee Jones. And, Mrs. Jones was one of those getting registered to vote. We took her down for like 2 days and she would sit there all day and every time she would write her name she would erase it and write it again. So after she had sat there for 2 days and hadn't been able to get registered to vote I asked her Mrs. Jones, 'what is it?' She said I just can't write my name. I said well I'll come over and help you learn to write your name… after we had finished registration… I went over to sit with Mrs. Jones and just went over and over with her writing her name and she could write her name very well but it was the fact that she had to go to that all white government in Indianola, Mississippi and sit before that all white board of registrars with all of the entrenched racism that she had known for all her life before she

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[67] Hamer, F.L. (1972). "Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen," April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi" in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

[68] O'Neal, J. (n.d.). On an approach to the teaching of arts and crafts in MS Freedom Schools. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

got in there to write her name. She couldn't write her name so she just sat there and sat there so Thursday night all into the night I was over there with her to try to give her enough courage and enough support and enough strength to know that she could write her name and could write very well. She just couldn't write when she got in front of white people but one of the things that I'm most proud of is that Friday on the last day to get her registered to vote she wrote her name and got registered to vote. But the next morning she came over to Mrs. Hamer's house… and said Fannie Lou they didn't come get me this morning. So Mrs. Hamer says well Mrs. Annie Lee don't worry about it and she reached up on her shelves got her some preserves, reached in her pantry got her some grits, got her some flour, got her some staples. I know she went in her refrigerator and got her some bacon and she said here is 5 dollars, I'm giving you this money and giving you something to eat… those folks will understand that you are more an asset to them and they really have hurt themselves by not...I think they were paying her something like 25 dollars a week. That's for her to be the maid, the chauffeur, the cook, the nurse, 5 or 6 jobs that she was doing for 25 dollars a week. They paid her cash money so that there wasn't no way, they wouldn't have to pay her any social security or anything. So, here was how America was really working. Not how it was in papers, not in the grand announcements that folks made but here was how it played out in Sunflower County, Mississippi in the 1960s which was a system that reflected all of the tenets of slavery because of the psychological imprisonment that was still in place there."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "I'm getting sick and tired of seeing the power structure talk about qualifications."[69] "Whether you got a degree or no degree, all wisdom and knowledge come from God. And if you don't have that, I'm afraid we won't make it."[70]

Wendell Paris: "My life experiences like these and others are really what has given me the education. A committed learning experience more than I learned at Tuskegee or any of those schools. But you know at Tuskegee we generally say we copied out of the white people books over there. So I copied out of the books at Tuskegee and I copied out of the books at Atlanta university. What I'm saying is that wasn't my real education, my real education came from getting to know indigenous people, later became an indigenous organizer but basically for folks that had no formalized educational setting who were involved along with me in bringing about constructive economic, social, cultural and other types of changes in the Black Belt."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "…the purpose of education is to expand the mind, to enable free young minds to become even more free and creative. It is not the regimentation of minds or

[69] Hamer, F.L. (1968). Speech on Behalf of the Alabama Delegation at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, Chicago, Illinois, August 27, 1968 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

[70] Hamer, F.L. (1967). "The Only Thing We Can Do Is to Work Together", Speech Delivered at a Chapter Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women in Mississippi, 1967 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

the quantitative absorption of facts. It must assume the creative nature of man, and seek to allow that nature to expand, to equip itself, and to put into action its dreams."[71]

Creative muse: Building upon what is already there.

Fannie Lou Hamer: "The type of education that we get in the state of Mississippi will make our minds so narrow it won't coordinate with our big bodies."[72] "But as sick as it is, I wonder do I want the kind of education that's going to really rob me of having real love and compassion for my fellow man? We got to start, we got to start in every institution in this country because the history that we been getting, baby, had never happened and it never will. And we got to change some curriculum and in making the change, we can have more peace, and real democracy…"[73]

Wendell Paris: "…[W]e politically educate people and change economic conditions… sometimes those things overlap but your job as an organizer is to work yourself out of a job. To prepare people to carry on after you leave. That was the philosophy of SNCC as

[71] Position Paper on Education. To Delta Ministry Staff, as a basis for argumentation, no date. Fannie Lou Hamer, 1917-1977 papers. Microfilm.
[72] Hamer, F.L. (1964). We're On Our Way," Speech Delivered at a Mass Meeting Indianola, Mississippi September 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[73] Hamer, F.L. (1969). "To Make Democracy a Reality", Speech Delivered at the Vietnam War Moratorium Rally Berkeley, California, October15, 1969 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

opposed to the other civil rights organization that believed in mobilization when we studied organization to prepare the people in the communities to become self-sufficient and do things for themselves. You don't have to do it for them forever and you don't just come in and have a march and leave the conditions as they are. The reason you march is because you are protesting something that is wrong in the community so you gonna stay there to make sure that even if you leave, the work continues. So that's what we learned from Mrs. Hamer and from the SNCC experience is to work yourself out of a job."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "We have to work to make this a better place and we have to deal with politics and the history of this country that's not in the books. You know we've been reading about what was in the book, you know about 'Columbus discovered America.' And when he got here there was a black brother walked up there and said, 'Let me help you, man.' And there was some Indians here too. So how could he discover what was already discovered? The education has got to be changes in these institutions…"[74] "These white teachers and white niggers can't teach black children to be proud of themselves and to learn all about the true history of our race. All I learned about my race when I was growing up was Little Black Sambo who was simple, ignorant boy. I guess that's all they ever wanted us to know about ourselves. We have gone through too much blood and grief in this movement to let our children be educated to still thinking Black in inferior."[75] "And what

[74] "Hamer, F.L. (1971). "Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either," Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[75] Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

kids are saying to you throughout the country is why didn't you tell us that we have the longest history of civilization of mankind? And why didn't you tell us it was a black man that made the alphabet? And why didn't you tell us it was also a black man that discovered science? And why didn't you tell us something about Dr. Drew, the man that learned to save blood plasma that died out in the hall because he couldn't get a blood transfusion? And all we to know is all that stuff you've hid from us, bring it out…"[76]

Creative muse: We are the only ones who can draw out what is already inside of us.

Fannie Lou Hamer: "Being from the South, we never was taught much about our African heritage. The way everybody talked to us, everybody in African was savages and really stupid people…I saw black men flying airplanes, driving buses, sitting behind the big desks in the bank and just doing everything that I was used to seeing white people do."[77] "A lot of things they do over here I've done as a child. Little common things, like they boil peanuts with salt when they're real green. It just looked like my life coming [all] over again to me." Similarly, the music resonated with familiarity: "Like the songs, I couldn't translate their language, but it was the tune of some old songs I used to hear my grandmother sing. It was just so close to my family I cried."[78] "Just to see Africa – we had learned and heard so many things about Africa. We got on a Ghanaian flight and went to Conakry, Guinea. I had never

[76] Hamer, F.L. (1970). "America Is a Sick Place, and Man Is on the Critical List", Speech Delivered at Loop College, Chicago, Illinois, May 27, 1970 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[77] Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.
[78] Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

seen a Black stewardess on a plane. When I saw a man come out of the cockpit who was black, right away then this meant that it was going to be different from what I had been [used to], what had been taught to me… I had never seen where black people were running banks… I had never seen nobody black running the government in my life… it was quite a revelation for me. I was really learning something for the first time. Because then I could feel myself never, ever being ashamed of my ancestors and my background. I learned a lot."[79]

Wendell Paris: Well I'm saying it was the most enlightening experience that I've had and I got a university education. The highest education that you can get coming from the community as to what is needed. I wouldn't change that for the world, I learned more in those two weeks than I ever learned in my lifetime in a period like that and I've been through some trying times living in Alabama and Mississippi all but two years of my life. So I'm saying just by going and sitting and talking with Mrs. Hamer you learn so much because it was just an intense education experience by being engaged in the movement at all. Because less than 2 percent of the black population was involved in bringing about change in the civil rights movement. Everyone else was either scared or indifferent or both of them. So you are part of a special breed of people when you say you are a civil rights worker. So you were ostracized not only by white people but by portions of the black community as well. So, here was Mrs. Hamer who served as a matriarch of the community in the Mississippi Delta…

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[79] McMillen, Neil. (1972). "Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen," April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi" in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Fannie Lou Hamer: My mother "would express herself and other people would express themselves by sanging some of the songs and look like we could work harder."[80]

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

Let is shine, let it shine,

Let it shine.[81]

[80] Hamer, F.L. (n.d.). "Songs My Mother Taught Me," 5, as cited in Lee, C. K. (2000). *For freedom's sake: The life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press, pg. 14.
[81] Dorsey, L.C. (1977). Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 25.

Wendell Paris: "She started a cooperative called Freedom Farm and just numerous civic and community orgs that she was engaged with in addressing the needs of not only the state of Mississippi but also the needs that should be addressed by the United States as a whole. Let me give you an example of that. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Freedom Democratic Party was comprised of people that didn't have the right to vote. So how do you make a political party with people who don't have the right to vote? How does that political party move to change politics in the whole country? You can trace the direction of Barack Obama as president to what took place with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party."

Creative muse: But electoral politics were a means to an end for the movements.

Ezra Cunningham: "A Ballot is not to be Confused with a Dollar Bill."[82]

Fannie Lou Hamer: "We must feed people for hunger is the enemy. Land is food and food feeds people… Most people have nothing to live on, nothing to eat, no jobs, no place to stay…"[83]

Wendell Paris: "Well yea you could see that connection because I'm saying they were evicting people from plantations so one way that you would move to help people who were

[82] 50 Years of Courage, Cooperation, Commitment and Community." (2017). Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, retrieved August 2017.
[83] Northern Sunflower County Memorandum (ca. Nov. 1971), 6, as cited in Lee, C. K. (2000). *For freedom's sake: The life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press.

being evicted or get them out from under economic exploitation was to establish businesses or organizations that people control that did not have them absolutely dependent on the local white establishment for their livelihood and for their being."

Ezra Cunningham: "You Can't Eat Freedom![84]

Fannie Lou Hamer: "And this land is organized and founded in '69 is called Freedom Farms Cooperative… So now what we plan to do is grow our own vegetables, is to grow our own cattle, and to grow our own pork and have a hundred houses in that area. Now, it's no way on earth that we can gain any kind of political power unless we have some kind of economic power. And all of the qualifications that you have to have to become a part of the co-op is you have to be poor. This is the first kind of program that has ever been sponsored in this country in letting local people do their thing their selves."[85] "I had been going around a lot of areas and folks just not having enough to get food stamps and all of this kind of stuff. We just thought if we had land to grow some stuff on. Then it would be a help to us. Because living on the farm, on some plantation, they still don't give you a place to grow

[84] 50 Years of Courage, Cooperation, Commitment and Community." (2017). Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, retrieved August 2017.
[85] Hamer, F.L. (1971). "Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either", Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

stuff."[86] "… the main purpose is to feed and build the economic standard up."[87] "…the purpose of that program was to get some land that we could grow vegetables that people wouldn't have to leave Mississippi because our whole thing was, you give a man food he can eat for a few days, but if you give us the tools we can produce for ourselves."[88]

Wendell Paris: "So I'm saying you learn all of those things and you do all of those things. You don't be reflecting on it at the time but once you can take a rest from the work and recuperation from the work you begin to understand the significance of what was taking place. So I'm saying that's why I say my university education came from Mrs. Hamer because I understand much more thoroughly the significance of the work that she was engaged in. How do you transform from being a person who chops cotton on a plantation to becoming one of the most respected political organizers in the country? And, you do that in a 1 or 2 year period of time. I'm saying if you run across people like that who can make that type of transformation and can stand their own with the so called educated and learned people of the country… Mrs. Hamer could hold her own in the political arena… But I'm saying the educational process that we learned by being engaged with Mrs. Hamer helped

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[86] McMillen, Neil. (1972). "Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen," April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi" in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

[87] "McMillen, Neil. (1972). "Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen," April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi" in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

[88] Hamer, F.L. (1976). "We Haven't Arrived Yet" Presentation and Responses to Questions at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, January 29, 1976 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

us to later on hold our own with in terms of folks who consider themselves well educated anywhere in this country. I'm just saying regular folks some of us who haven't been to school at all some of them but they weren't crazy and they had good sense. And, based on just the innate understanding of things, their God-given resources they were able to make a lot of changes that would not have been made if they didn't step up to the plate and demand that changes occur."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "…it's poison; it's poison for us not to speak what we know is right."[89]

Wendell Paris: "…we went back and did voter registration in Macon county where Tuskegee is located and we elected the first Black sheriff since reconstruction. We can tie that directly to what we learned from Mrs. Hamer… it's just that you are inspired and instilled and almost commanded to get to work to make changes in whatever communities you are involved in once you had that experience with Mrs. Hamer or people like Mrs. Hamer… everything you learn in one community you try to apply to other communities…"

Fannie Lou Hamer: "Land, too, is important in the 70s and beyond, as we move toward our ultimate goal of total freedom. Because of my belief in land reform, I have taken steps of acquiring land through cooperative ownership. In this manner, no individual has title to, or

[89] Hamer, F.L. (1963). "I Don't Mind My Light Shining", Speech Delivered at a Freedom Vote Rally in Greenwood, Mississippi, Fall 1963 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

complete use of, the land. The concept of *total individual ownership* of huge acreages of land, by individuals, is at the base of our struggle for survival. In order for any people or nation to survive, land is necessary. However, individual ownership of land should not exceed the amount necessary to make living. Cooperative ownership of land opens that door to many opportunities for group development of economic enterprises, which develop the total community, rather than create monopolies that monopolize the resources of a community."[90]

Albert Turner: Co-ops were the "economic arm of the civil rights movement"[91]

Wendell Paris: "Israel Cunningham down in Alabama was one of the stalwarts of the cooperative movement said that when we finally did get these hotels and cafeterias desegregated, we didn't have the money to go in there and buy nothing to eat and we didn't have no money to spend the night. So you had to look at how you pool your resources once again to come up with some economic alternatives. Some ways that you could move to self-sufficiency in the economic arena and the cooperative movement was the best way to do that because it is democratically controlled. It gives everyone who is a member of the cooperative equal voting rights. So you can have some advancements when you have

[90] Hamer, F.L. (1971). "If the Name of the Game is Survive. Survive," Speech Delivered in Ruleville, Mississippi, September 27, 1971 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
[91] 50 Years of Courage, Cooperation, Commitment and Community." (2017). Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, retrieved August 2017.

people working together like that especially at the grassroots level because it means that you are drawing the supernatural powers available to you. God himself steps in when he sees people working together across racial across social across educational lines. Because when you put all of those things to rest and come forward with the issues you are addressing and utilize the skills and abilities that people have in the most economic and useful fashion that's when things begin to occur, when everyone is included instead of rulings taking place just from the economic and political elite."

Wendell Paris: "There are basically in this county now two sets of folk who impact not only politics but other tenants of living. You have organized money and organized people. Organized people will always out rule organized money… See the idea is when you not organizing people and you just mobilizing people than folks don't get an understanding of why it's important for them to participate. But when you organize people… you organize people around what their felt needs are. The greatest skill you can have as an organizer is to listen. So you come in and you listen to people because there are always issues that people will rally around if they see them as being their interest, if people know their self-interest then people will organize around it because it's something that they see vital to them. But if they don't see how an issue is vital to them they won't organize around it."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "Community living and group decision-making is local self-government. It is this type of community self-government that has been lost over the decades and thus created decay in our poor areas in the South and our northern ghettos"[92]

Wendell Paris: "…that's the education you get from the cooperative movement. You share with folks the problems that you are facing in your local community to best be addressed by some type of political action… because they have a self-interest in what's going on in the political arena, that's how you gonna hold onto your land and how you gonna gain some independence. When you own your own land, when you own your own businesses than you don't have to accept all of the racism and economic exploitation that folks bring at you. My uncle used to say, own your own land shoot we self-sufficient and growing what we need to eat, we go to the store to get some salt and buy something that maybe we want but we don't have to have it because we have what we need right here that's on our own land. Well, I learned in Israel in studying cooperative economics over there. The Jews would say our wine may be bitter but it's our wine. So you have something that you own and you control, this is yours. Unless you have that sense of ownership, that sense of engagement involvement then people don't organize so that's the reason you seeing the downturn in political participation because people haven't been taught or come to the progressive realization… we don't have folks participating at the levels that they once did because all of

[92] Hamer, F.L. (1971). "If the Name of the Game is Survive. Survive," Speech Delivered in Ruleville, Mississippi, September 27, 1971 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

the entities that we used to have folks get some political understanding are not being used these days for those purposes."

John O'Neal: "Our strength is the product of our relationship to the grassroots community efforts all across the South. Our major weaknesses are the result of the fact that most of us have not built our programs on the basis of philosophical and economic self-reliance."[93]

RNA: "Can you teach? Man a saw? Build a generator? Tend an infirmary? Drive a tractor? Finish concrete? Lay pipe? Run a press? Tailor a dashiki? Shoot a gun? You can help make Black people's most important dream – our most important necessity – a reality by serving in Mississippi as we build a model community."[94]

African Proverb: "When spider webs unite, we can tie up lions."

Creative muse: We are the pedagogy!

[93] O'Neal, J. (n.d). The Afro-American Artist in the South. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[94] RNA advertisement, (n.d.). Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

Scene 4 – Black Arts and Pedagogy

Wise I

Amiri Baraka (2007)

If you ever find

yourself, some where

lost and surrounded

by enemies

who won't let you

speak in your own language

who destroy your statues

& instruments, who ban

your oom boom ba boom

then you are in trouble

deep trouble

they ban your

oom boom ba boom

you in deep deep

trouble

humph!

probably take you several hundred years

to get

out!

Everyone hunches over digging the dark brown clay soil with whatever tools they can find – a shovel, a bucket, a spoon, their hands. A child approaches the group and stares in curiosity. Instead of probing, the child joins in without a word, using her hands to dig. She scraps so hard the soil digs deep beneath her nails, scratching her permeable skin. She spots a worm and smiles. The panting breathe of the diggers create rhythmic cadence that usher the hands and in feet into diametric unison. Digging holes. Digging crevices. Searching. As they dig, a man approaches asking, "what y'all looking for?" The child shouts in a commanding voice, our "oom boom ba boom."

The soil rests.

Free Southern Theater: "…art and culture are every bit as vital to the total health of the community as are good health care and education."[95]

Creative muse: Paradoxically…

Gwendolyn Brooks: "Art hurts. Art urges voyages – and it is easier to stay at home."[96]

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[95] O'Neal, J. (n.d). Preliminary Plan for a Functional Integrated Community, Cultural, Early Childhood Pre-school education – Medical Service Center, pg. 3. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[96] Brooks, G. (1967). The Chicago Picasso. *CUNY Composers*.

Free Southern Theater: "to assert that self-knowledge is the foundation of human dignity… It is then our struggle for the freedom to make art/theater relevant to ourselves and to people; the freedom to shape, create, the space around our own expectations; to take part in determining how we as a society shall think and live."[97]

John O'Neal: "Our work as artists derives its significance from its relation to the process of history." (John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. The Afro-American Artist in the South). "…we should work to strengthen our relationship to our respective audiences by taking more serious interest in trying to understand the problems they face and then trying to find the point of connection, between the people, their concerns and our work."[98]

T. David Watson: "The role of the relevant or "revolutionary" Black artist is to increase the collective consciousness of the struggling Black masses through the vehicle of culture." "…alone knowledge of historical facts have in the facts of history been proven to be insufficient – outside the creative motif – to sustain a level of awareness sufficient to mount a continued movement. For instance the vast majority of Black folk are well aware of the atrocities practiced on them throughout their history yet this information in itself has failed to form a sufficient impetus for the viable mass involvement to the correct the situation. So to knowledge we must apply a correct analysis that will enable Black people to see and to

[97] FST Company Statement. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[98] O'Neal, J. (n.d). The Afro-American Artist in the South. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

understand their condition, the interrelation of what is happening to both individually and collectively and how to go about correcting the problems thereof. Thus, we will be enabled, to wage a successful struggle to liberate the minds of the masses which in turn will find the means to eliminate their oppression."[99]

Junebug Jabbo Jones: "…art and culture are like weapons. In the struggle for the liberation and independence of the Afro-American nation, they will be used for us or against us. If our art and culture are to serve and support our struggle, then our artists must make a conscious effort to understand the history and terms of the struggle against oppression and exploitation."[100]

Wendell Paris: **"**Like your generation is into music. You know rap music doesn't help people understand that they need to be participating in the political system. Rap music basically all it does is denigrate black women. So all the way back to slavery our music steered us to positive progressive action. I got shoes you got shoes, oh gosh we got shoes. When I get the help I'm gonna put on my shoes I'm gonna walk all over God's earth. That was a political statement. White people said that heaven was segregated so they said everybody talkin' bout heaven ain't going there. That was a song. Steal away, steal away home, I ain't got long to stay here. Steal away home, where is home? Home is across the Mason Dixon line. Home is Canada, home is out of the South. So our songs, all of the

[99] Watson, T.D. (n.d.). Functions at this Junction. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[100] O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

institutions that we had some modicum of control over said to us you ought to be trying to make better the conditions that you are living in… the folks who got the money from rap they don't try to change the conditions of the people at all. You see what I'm saying?"

Creative muse: Yes. But rap is not all bad. Conscious rap. Hip Hop, in essence, is conscious and empowering.

Wendell Paris: "So that's what we have to do, we have to put in place institutions, we have to have a cultural understanding of what's engaged here in making progressive change. The cultural revolution precedes the political revolution so until you get people involved in a cultural understanding of what's going on you won't have a chance at getting them involved with political change. So that's what your generation should figure out. How do you transform that industry that you have some modicum of control over to really begin to address what are the greater needs of the society?"

John O'Neal: "The artist is an instrument of the people.

- 'The dancer gives shape to the… fears, joys, hopes and aspiration in space and time with their bodies.
- The musician – the ear from that deeper pulse that gives but to rhythm
- The painter – eyes of the people
- The singer & poet – the voice of the people[101]

[101] O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

Wendell Paris: "That's the reason we couldn't have the drums when we came over from Africa because it served as a communication tool for us. It was ingrained in our culture so they had to take that away from us to take away that cultural longing of the people. That's one of the best ways to cripple folks is to separate them from their culture. So white people don't mind us having rap because they know it separates us from our culture."

John O'Neal: "The original African was extremely lucky to have the drum and, with the way things are going in the United States, Black people may just have to go back to the roots as we are going to receive valid information and a perspective which will aid in our survival."[102]

John O'Neal: "The aim of our work is to influence people; to influence how as well as what they see, hear, touch, taste, smell, feel; to influence their emotions; to influence their thinking."[103]

Wendell Paris: "They had this refrain in that rap, hotel motel holiday inn if your girl start acting up then you take her friend. Ok and I mean that was the biggest rap, the first rap that I know that really hit big especially in the South. But I'm saying that music that cultural entity that you can control, you have to use it in a progressive manner to address the issues of our people and I'm saying that's not happening. It's not happening, it's not requiring

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[102] O'Neal, J. (n.d). Preliminary Plan for a Functional Integrated Community, Cultural, Early Childhood Pre-school education – Medical Service Center, pg. 3. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[103] O'Neal, J. (n.d). "The Free Southern Theatre Living in the Danger Zone", pg. 12. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

people to think independently. It doesn't require people to address the commonality of the problems that we have, it just makes you feel good, I reckon. I don't know what you feel. I'm saying in our days that's how the movement got in touch with Mrs. Hamer. Mrs. Hamer had appointed people to go around singing all over so she is renown throughout the movement for just singing with enough fervor that people would say well look if this lady is singing this loud and this melodious tune on voting than I'm gonna get up off my sorry behind and go get registered to vote. I don't care what the political ramifications may bring, I'm gonna vote, I'm gonna be somebody, I'm going to move towards changing my social condition. Not only for myself but for the people around me."

Fannie Lou Hamer: This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

Let is shine, let it shine,

Let it shine.[104]

Wendell Paris: "Well the music is what really sustained us. You walk up to an office and say we are here to register to vote and you have the deputy and all his officers out there saying he consider this a demonstration and you have to disburse. So here you are standing up there and the sheriff may have just a gun he may have Billy sticks or police dogs, he may have horses. Your side breaks out in a song, you don't even know who led it. I'm gonna do what the spirit says do, I'm gonna do what the spirit says do. If the spirit says move, I'm gonna move, Oh Lord. I'm gonna do what the spirit says do. If the spirit say vote, I'm gone vote if the spirit say register I'm gonna register, if the spirit say run, I'm gone run, whatever the spirit says do. So that music is what served as a tool of empowerment for the people. It always has and it always will."

Fannie Lou Hamer: This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

[104] Dorsey, L.C. (1977). Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 25.

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine,

Let is shine, let it shine,

Let it shine.[105]

Wendell Paris: "I'm driving down the street and here are our young women playing music that denigrates them. God dawg, these folks talking about you and if they not talking about you they talking about your sister. The men playing that stuff you talking about your own sister your own mother. I mean that's just one example but it's clearly one that all of us can identify with because we have seen down through the years, all of our generations prior to this one understood the importance of us advancing the cause of the race and not just advancing ourselves. And when you just have a limited understanding of who you are as a people… folks will always be able to colonize you or keep you under subjection to them. But I'm saying that's the part of that education that I have that came from being engaged in the Civil Rights struggle and the cooperative struggle and my personal relationship with my God that helps me to better appreciate what has happen, what has taken place and what is taking place. And to know what needs to take place in order to move us to the next level."

[105] Dorsey, L.C. (1977). Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977, pg. 25.

John O'Neal: "As a weapon is to warfare… soul is to our movement."[106]

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones): "The black artist's role in America is in the destruction of America as he knows it."[107]

John O'Neal: "The essence of the matter is that the movement was a success for those who did the leading and a failure to those who did the following."[108]

Ella Jo Baker (SNCC organizer): "Strong people don't need strong leaders."[109]

Creative muse: Why must we be strong?

Haki Madhubuti: Because "[w]e can't grow food on all this concrete."[110]

John O'Neal: "We have learned that the interests of Black people will best be served by a revolutionary politic, and that revolutionary politics requires revolutionary art."[111]

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[106] O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[107] Baraka, A. (April 1965). Negro Digest, vol. 14, no. 6, p. 65.
[108] O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.
[109] Ransby, B. (2003). *Ella Baker and the Black freedom movement: A radical democratic vision*. University of North Carolina Press.
[110] Madhubuti, H. (1970). "Land and Power," *Black News,* p. 12.
[111] O'Neal, J. (n.d). "The Free Southern Theatre Living in the Danger Zone" (pg. 13). John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

Creative muse: Well, what is revolutionary art? And, how do we create it?

Freedom Southern Theater: "theater is the most effective medium to combat 'the degradation effect of inferior education.'"[112]

Creative muse: The drum calls. The dance rhymes. The song sings. The voice sparks the ears, widens the eyes and parts the mouths. Who is it?, they ask. She responds, the culture. The people not only know, they understand.

John O'Neal: "The most important single point the students in MS Freedom Schools can learn is that the world that they live in is a world that can be changed. Not only is it possible, but it is more likely that this point can be communicated more tangible in the arts and crafts program then in any other aspect of the total Freedom School curriculum."[113]

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[112] FST Company Statement. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

[113] O'Neal, J. (n.d). "On an approach to the teaching of arts and crafts in MS Freedom Schools". John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

Creative muse: We are, forever more, the pedagogy of our transformation. Our memories. Our bodies. Our hands. Our imaginations. Our love for ourselves and our community. Freedom is school when we learn from the inside.

Wendell Paris: "…lifting the veil of ignorance"

APPENDIX

Appendix
Theatrical characters in script

Albert Turner of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) served as a catalyst for Selma to Montgomery March by insisting that the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson be publicly addressed.

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), former Black Nationalist and third world socialist, became a primer poet and theorist of the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.

B.D. Mayberry, former Associate Provost at Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program and Direct Carver Research Foundation. He served more than forty years in various capacities in teaching, research and administration and assisted in the development of permanent legislation for the 1890 Institutions.

Benjamin F. Payton served as president of two historically black universities: Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina from 1967 to 1972 and Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama from 1981 to 2010.

Booker T. Washington Carver is known as one the most dominant and influential leaders, educators and orators given his leadership – as founding Principal – in developing the then named Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute as the one of the first Black agrarian educational institutions to trailblaze systemic education of self-reliance and self-help in a formal educational setting.

C.P. Zachariadis worked with the Clearinghouse for Community Based Free Standing Educational Institutions. No further information can be found on this institution.

Carol Prejean is part of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives family as a former co-op developer and volunteer. She is the co-founder of the Federation of Greene Country Employees (FOGCE) Federal Credit Union. She is also co-publisher of the Greene County Democrat Newspaper, a weekly publication created to educate the Black community.

Charles Prejean, FSC's first Executive Director, worked in cooperative development in Louisiana prior to moving to Atlanta, GA to led FSC for 17 years.

Creative muse is the academic author, shakara tyler, who interviewed Wendell Paris and extensively studied the literature and archival information cited in this scholarship.

Ella Jo Baker worked with a slate of civil rights organizations – the NAACP, SCLC, CORE and SNCC. As a primary leader of SNCC, she understand the purpose was not to lead people but to draw out and train the leadership already present in the community.

Emmett J. Scott, journalist, founding newspaper editor, government official and envoy, educator, and author, served as the Tuskegee Institute secretary under Booker T. Washington and was the highest-ranking African-American in President Woodrow Wilson's administration.

Ezra Cunningham served as the Alabama State Association of Cooperatives Coordinator and worked with the Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association. She worked closely with the FSC.

Fannie Lou Hamer, as a civil rights activist, organized voter registration campaigns and co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party prior to organizing around felt needs in the community through the Freedom Farm Cooperative in Mississippi Delta.

George Washington Carver blazed trails as an educator, chemist, botanist, entomologist, and mycologist at the then named Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute where he managed the (underfunded) first all-Black agricultural experiment station in the U.S..

Haki Madhubuti (Donald Luther Lee), Black arts movement poet, founded numerous institutions to serve the needs of black writers. Third World Press, *Black Books Bulletin*, the New Concept School, the Betty Shabazz International Charter School, the International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent, and the National Black Writers Retreat.

John O'Neal, playwright, actor and civil rights activist, founded the seminal Free Southern Theater and co-founded the integrated Tougaloo Drama Workshop at Tougaloo College, Mississippi.

Junebug Jabbo Jones, conjured as a (fictional) folk hero of the civil rights movement, he represented the wisdom of common, everyday black people, how black people have used wit to survive.

Free Southern Theater (FST), a mobile repertory theater presenting plays in rural towns of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, was the nexus of music, drama and political activism and often served as an educational tool in Black movement building using theater to stimulate self-expression. It was "theater for those who have no theater."

Republic of New Afrika (RNA), founded in Detroit in 1968, sought social independence through purchasing land in Mississippi to build an independent black state along the

Mississippi River from Memphis to New Orleans. In the name of black nationalism, it was a priority to establish a land base for the black community.

T. David Watson was a member of the Freedom Southern Theater (FST).

W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) DuBois was an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, author, writer and editor. He is considered to be the father of Sociology as an academic discipline with his 1899 study, Philadelphia Negro, which identified social problems in the Black community.

Wendell Paris (72 years old) has been living in MS for the past 27 years. His father worked as Negro agent for the USDA Farm and Home Administration (FmHA) in AL. Upon graduating from Tuskegee Institute in 1966, he started working with Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program, TICEP, that sent Tuskegee students into the rural communities to supplement, enhance and bring new vision to the poor AL educational system. His commitment to the civil rights struggle in AL and MS led him to work with Fannie Lou Hamer at the Freedom Farm Cooperative in the MS Delta where he did direct action and voter registration campaigns through the Tuskegee Advancement League (TAL) and SNCC. He saw this work as a direct resistant to the impoverishment used as a tool by the white power establishment. He co-established the Southeast AL Self-Help Association which led him to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) where he worked as the agricultural cooperative coordinator to establish and maintain cooperatives in AL and MS. In an attempt to understand the role of religion in Black advancement, he studied at the interdenominational theological center in Atlanta, GA. He proclaims his community experiences in the civil rights movement as the most impactful educational experiences in his life.

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ARTICLE 3:
"LET THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN:" THE BLACK AGRARIAN PEDAGOGIES OF D-TOWN FARM

Abstract

Black agrarian pedagogies, as told here, are the stories of recovery, remembrances, relationships and how they connect to evolving culture and spiritual community. To gain insight into the Black agrarian pedagogy of D-Town Farm, I use ethnographic case study methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews with 12 farm volunteers and 7 D-Town farmers and interns and content analysis via internal documents and social media postings. D-Town Farm, as a case of Black agrarian pedagogy, is the tale of (Black) land work as (Black) pedagogy building a (Black) culture of belonging through/with/on collectively-worked land. Through human-land concentric knowledge exchanges, D-Town Farm pedagogy is an intergenerational praxis that exists in a culturally-representative community village striving toward self-reliance, survival and healing through enacting spiritual ways of knowing, nature as a teacher, learning by doing, dialogic relationship building, and literally showing and telling knowledge. By bringing everything full circle in a process of cultural recovery, the farm facilitates a culture of belonging (hooks, 2009) through African-centered agrarian culture as a pedagogical agent that centers the continual renewal of the African spirit forming an unbroken circle of human and land regeneration.

Introduction

Somewhere in the struggles and triumphs our stories get lost in the stories other people tell about and for us. Black agrarian pedagogies, as told here, are the stories of recovery,

remembrances, relationships and how they connect to evolving culture and spiritual community. To gain insight into the Black agrarian pedagogy of D-Town Farm, I use ethnographic case study methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews with 12 farm volunteers and 7 D-Town farmers and interns and content analysis via internal documents and social media postings. D-Town Farm, as a case of Black agrarian pedagogy, is the tale of (Black) land work as (Black) pedagogy building a (Black) culture of belonging through/with/on collectively-worked land. Through human-land concentric knowledge exchanges, D-Town Farm pedagogy is an intergenerational praxis that exists in a culturally-representative community village striving toward self-reliance, survival and healing through enacting spiritual ways of knowing, nature as a teacher, learning by doing, dialogic relationship building, and literally showing and telling knowledge. By bringing everything full circle, the farm facilitates a culture of belonging (hooks, 2009) through African-centered culture as a pedagogical agent. Throughout this article, community and culture are defined within educational terms. The use of community connotes the source of hope and where passion to connect and learn is constantly fulfilled (hooks, 2003). The use of "culture" signifies the intergenerational resources passed on and through which novel constructions occur which is essential to human development (Lee, 2008).

This article proceeds in four parts. First, I introduce Black agrarianism and Black agrarian pedagogy as a theoretical preface to the narrative of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) that includes a brief history of Detroit. Next, I situate D-Town Farm as the site of inquiry and develop the rationale for a case study ethnographic

methodology. Then, I flesh out the pedagogical narrative of D-Town Farm via the qualitative data weaved with relevant literature. Lastly, I further summarize D-Town Farm's African-centered pedagogy in conversation with other literature and draw connections to broader implications and conclude with a summary of the results, analysis and implications.

Black Agrarianism

Black agrarianism is a pedagogical thought, praxis, and social movement. It reflects the fierce determination to define freedom in terms of agricultural self-sufficiency and the consciousness involved in achieving it (Ochiai, 2004). It highlights the connections between social justice and environmental stewardship (Smith, 2004) and it is an ancestral legacy of resistance to oppressive systems (White, 2011). As a food sovereignty praxis, it is an anti-oppression pedagogy that honors the "ecological agency" (Ruffin, 2010) that has always been relevant to Black experiences. As articulated in Freedom Farmers (White, 2018), during the Black Freedom Movement of the 20th century, "Black farmers used land as a strategy to move towards freedom" (p. 4) that holistically extended beyond food and addressed housing, transportation, education, employment, childcare, health care and cultural commitments broadly. This, she argued, was a demonstration of collective agency and community resilience (CACR) in using the land and community process built around the land as an agentive process of freedom. In terms of food justice, Smith (2018) explain how Black communities engage in the dual process of food justice that simultaneously dismantles oppressive forms of food power while building emancipatory forms of food power that encompass race, land, self-determination, and economic autonomy. These Black

agrarian ideologies sow Black agrarian identity formations that are fed through the fluidity Black agrarian pedagogies which serve as a process of deciphering our past, present and future connections to agrarian pathways.

Black Agrarian Pedagogies

Black agrarian pedagogies are how our communities shared, understood, retained and catalyzed knowledges into action through inter and intra-knowledge exchanges. As cultural traditions, they are the processes by which we teach and learn with one another through the exchange of knowledges that range from basic survival necessities on how to feed, shelter, and cloth ourselves to cultural stories that affirm our identity and value as dignified human beings. It centers the reality of *how* we strive towards our purpose and dignity through food and land, specifically. We use pedagogical tools such as seeds, farm cultivation tools, stories, and literature to exchange with others across experiences, ideologies and goals.

There is a long agrarian history— as well as the history of racism and enslavement — that came with the Great Migrations who arrived in urban centers in volumes throughout the early to late 20th century. After fleeing the southern plantations, the agricultural knowledge was applied in kitchen gardens, backyard gardens, windowsills, and farms in the countryside on the banks of urban centers. This knowledge planted many of the seeds that have bloomed into the urban agriculture movement today that is undoubtedly built upon people of color caring for the land and growing food in urban areas for autonomy (Touzeau, 2019), community engagement and job creation (DeLind, 2013),

entrepreneurship and livelihood (Gallaher et al, 2013) and self-determination (White, 2011). D-Town Farm of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network is a story of when Black people commune on collectively-worked land in the midst of ongoing assaults on our humanity.

Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN)

Founded in 2006, D-Town Farm is one of the self-determination practices of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) that grew out of a backyard gardening team, the Shamba (Kiswahili word for small farm) Organic Garden Collective – started in 2003 – at Nsoroma Institute Public School Academy. The African-centered school, co-founded by DBCFSN's Executive Director, Malik Yakini, implemented a food security curriculum as a way to think about how Detroit's Black community can exert greater control over the system that provides food. The school garden became an educational tool for each class where at least one lesson a week took place in the garden. Shamba Garden Collective was started to help school families and teachers start gardens at their homes and in vacant lots next to their houses. The "Groundbreakers" played the role of doing majority of the grunt work to plant the home and community gardens by preparing the ground for planting (tilling, weeding, etc.).

At this time, the reverse white flight of gentrification ushered in well-intentioned white people working in the budding urban agriculture and 'foodie' movements. The onslaught of white surbanites and gentrifiers taking up more space than necessary in the food security

spaces aimed at developing solutions without input from Detroit's majority Black population birthed the enclave of resistance to the white savior mentality in the urban agriculture movement or what Yakini coined as a "disturbing trend" (Yakini, 2012). In a Detroit Metro Times article, he stated, "What we're trying to do is a fundamental shift in power, not just take the existing system and make it browner by having more people of color involved, but to put people of color at the center of our own reality" (Allnutt, 2017). With the first few meetings of about 40 people from the Nsoroma community and beyond occurring in Yakini's Black Star Community bookstore, the mobilization and organization around food and land justice began with pedagogical roots. The African-centered learning community of Nsoroma Institute guided by "academic excellence and cultural integrity" was transplanted into DBCFSN as an African-centered learning community actively practicing self-determination through growing food. Nsoroma Institute is held in the institutional memory of DBCFSN. These efforts were not an anomaly as the Black freedom struggle repeatedly fought for the cultural and political significance of food, calling attention to interlocking systems of oppressions embedded in the politics and culture of food as shown through Black Panther Party (Potorti, 2014) and Freedom Farm Cooperative (White, 2018) other historical institutions. Such an understanding is the grounding of food justice where historical inequities are connected to food accessibility, affordability, marketability among other aspects. Ripely, urban agriculture addresses these realities through more than what meets the eye.

Detroit Urban Agriculture

The many Native names of Detroit speaks to the pedagogical orientations of culture, language, and the natural environment. The Wendat Native peoples, refer to Detroit as "Oppenago" meaning "where the waters meet." The Ojibwe Native peoples refer to Detroit as "Zagajibiising" meaning "where the waters go around" (Antonio Cosme, 2017). What is now known as Detroit, formally established by French settlers in 1701, little area between two large bodies of water or the "strait" in French colonial terms. Prior to knowing this small land mass sitting between two large bodies, it is first and foremost, Anishinaabe land that came to be on Turtle Island. The Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, as well as Ojibwe and Potawatomi peoples, all had strong ties to the land and were cultivating crops such as squash, maize, sunflower and beans thousands of years prior to French colonization. From the Detroit "ribbon farms" of the 18th century to the Pinegree's Potato Patches of the late 19th century to the Detroit Thrift Garden program during the Great Depression to the Farm-A-Lot Program of the late 20th century, Detroit's urban agriculture has, traditionally, been utilized within the possibilities of addressing poverty, food access and vacant land issues (Rushdan, 2017).

In the 1950s, Detroit was the world's industrial giant with 1.8 million people and 140 square miles of land and infrastructure used to support the booming Midwestern urban center (Davidson, 2017). By 1960, more than 400,000 African Americans had moved to Detroit as part of the Great Migrations. Now, today a half century later, Detroit is known as a poster child for urban decay due to 'white flight' and the auto industry collapse eroding the city's tax base. With the loss of more than half the population since 1950 and more than

25% since 2000, nearly one-third of the land in the city is open space (Howell, 2014). What was previously a city with the highest Black homeownership has been strategically gutted by illegal tax foreclosure policies, land grabs and the emergency management needed to bolster these austerity policies into a 'New Detroit' or 'Detroit 2.0, the comeback' plagued by divestment, displacement and removal of people who have been in the forefront of developing new ways of living in places long abandoned by capital (Howell, 2014).

Interrogating the so-called white saviors of Detroit and the broader white supremacist narrative of the revitalization of Detroit led by the "creative class" of predominantly white artists, designers, educators, etc., Yakini (2014) proclaims who the real "creative class" is by lifting up the "cultural/creative/revolutionary Black community in Detroit…a community of Kujichgulia-type, under-resourced, boot-strappin' kinda Black people." During the Motown era, Smith (1999) coins, this creative class as the "amateur singers, autoworkers, preachers, musicians, poets, business leaders, community activists, and politicians [who] all participated in an elaborate 'dance' to reclaim the city for African-Americans" (p. 18). This involved seeking public office, organizing political action groups, publishing a newspaper, broadcasting a radio show, singing a song, opening a business, forming a union or buying a home (Smith, 1999). For others, this also meant working the land under their feet as a way to build a successful social movement that was "at one and the same time *a political, economic and cultural movement*" (Cruse, 2005).

As one of the most segregated cities in the country and with 70% of Detroiters obese and overweight, fast food restaurants, convenience stores or gas stations are more accessible than full service grocery stores where many have followed the exodus of the people and

money. However, the asset of an extraordinary amount of open land has positioned Detroit in a unique position to be something close to a food sovereign city. As one of the Blackest city in U.S. with 80% of Black people and a population of 672,662 (U.S. Census, 2018), it is uncoincidentally known as a "food desert" (Budzynska et al, 2013) or more accurately speaking, food apartheid, and has in many ways become an exemplar locality of urban agriculture. With over 1600 farms and gardens growing over 300,000 pounds of healthy food (Keep Growing Detroit, 2018), Detroit is a prime leader in the international urban agriculture and land justice movements because Detroiters began working together to advance their shared sociopolitical and socioeconomic ideas about the lack of affordable, healthy, culturally-appropriate food.

The popular rationale of building a so-called "food sovereign city" (Keep Growing Detroit, n.d.) where 5,000 acres need to be converted into active cultivation is a valid one (Colasanti et al, 2010). Food security and justice in Detroit is unrealistic with a small margin of the population actively growing food. Even with available land, the number of growers needed to operationalize this scenario do not exist. How do we get more people engaged and committed to food production in a majority Black city? One of the many needed approaches are Black agrarian pedagogies; the processes by which we teach and learn with one another through the knowledge exchanges aimed at reclaiming power, dignity and humanity by starting with the active toiling of the land. In addition to the building economies of scale argument with 5,000 acres of food production within the city (Colasanti et al, 2010), this feat requires approaches that can't be readily measured through statistical data sets and land use projections. Underscoring the radical potential of the food justice movement, Romer (2014) argue, "the more we build organizations of trust and shared

experience, communities of learning and analysis, experiments in structure and action… the more our movements will sustain us in the future" (p. 6). D-Town Farm pedagogy, as an "African-centered" pedagogy explores the (re)building and recovery of Black agrarianism in a majority Black city laced with southern agrarian roots.

D-Town Farm as Site of Inquiry

With 7-acres of agricultural production, renewable energy, apiary, composting operation, rainwater collection system and community fellowship space, the farm hosts volunteer days every Saturday and Sunday throughout the growing season to engage Detroit residents in the recovery of Black agrarian pathways focused on food production, wholisitc health and community building. Building upon the needs of D-Town Farm, as articulated by Yakini, who also serves as the interim farm manager, this inquiry practically asked, how can the farm increase community engagement and investment via volunteers and customers? A more bird's-eye view question asked, what does a Black agrarian pedagogy look like at D-Town Farm?

A basic premise undergirding this question is shared by Tiffany Harvey, a frequent farm volunteer for the past 3 years. She stated: "…what has happened to Black people as the colonization and the destruction of knowledge of who we are, existing at the root is a lack of knowledge. Whether it's lack of knowledge of a language or lack of knowledge how to take care of your land or lack of knowledge on how to build your own house." Thus, this inquiry not only explores knowledge and the lack thereof. Necessarily, it grapples with the processes of how knowledge becomes operationalized into understanding. With certainty,

Lorde and Rich (1981) assert, "what understanding begins to do is make knowledge available for use, and that's the urgency…" (p, 736). The process of converting knowledge into understanding is a pedagogical one and this inquiry explores this process through the case of D-Town Farm.

Ethnographic Case Study Methodology

This inquiry reflected an "ethnographic" case study methodology where the intrinsic case of D-Town Farm is approached from multiple methods over time. According to Stake (1995), "[c]ase study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). It is intrinsic because it is interested in the people and places in their locality (Stake, 1995). It is ethnographic because it – in a typical sense – uses open-ended, narrative interviewing of social actors to learn about their personal experiences and their views on social practices (Calabrese, 2013) along with fieldnotes gathered over a specific duration of time. This is a political process. As Denzin (1999) state, "Ethnography like art is always political" (p. 512). Viewing culture as a complex process of improvisation, it seeks to understand how people enact and construct meaning in their daily lives (Denzin, 1999, pg. 510). And, this particular ethnographic inquiry sought to recover cultural traditions embedded in Black agrarian theories and practices in a specific geopolitical location.

Ethnographic Methods

As an academic researcher, DBCFSN board member, and frequent farm volunteer, I have both an emic and etic perspective in this work. From Spring 2017 to Spring 2019, I have

used the following ethnographic case study methods: 1) participant observation at the volunteer farm days, farm staff meetings and other special events at the farm, 2) semi-structured interviews with 12 farm volunteers and 7 D-Town farmers and interns and 3) content analysis via internal documents and social media postings. The semi-structured interviews – with 17 Black and 2 white farm volunteers – probe the educational experiences at D-Town Farm from the volunteer and staff perspectives, the meaning/value of their experiences, their experiences in other farm educational settings, their past and present in-school and out-of-school experiences (i.e. universities and community organizing meetings), and their perceptions of recovery as it relates to Black agrarian culture. I conducted a "thematic analysis" as a way to identify the meaningful commonalities across the data by familiarizing myself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report or representation of the inquiry (Braun et al, 2019).

I, along with another researcher, inductively generated the codes through what could be called a "grounded theory" approach where the recurring themes emerge out of the data and grounds the experiential perceptions in the context as explained above rather than an already existing framework. To be clear, this work has traces of grounded theory based on the data generating the theory rather than a theory usurping the data for greater build out. Interviewees were chosen for this sample using a "purposeful sampling" (Patton, 1990, p. 169) technique, a process in which "...the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study." This strategy is best used for information-rich cases,

which can be studied in depth (Patton, 1990). Tape-recorded semi-structured interviews with 19 D-Town Farm volunteers and staff persons lasted from 60-130 minutes; interviews took place at D-Town Farm, the DBCFSN office, or a Detroit establishment (café, library, etc.). The consistent focus of Black agrarian pedagogies emerging as a process of cultural recovery remained as a focal point throughout the data collection and analysis.

Validity

While I agree with the practical orientations of grounded theory, disagreeably theory is not the foundation of practice as argued by some (Oktay, 2012). Research and general lived experience teaches me that practice is the incubator of theory. Thus, the employment of grounded theory supported the "open coding" process of the data that remained close to the data categorized (Maxwell, 2008). Yet, the "open coding" is attentive to descriptions of education or trainings in settings such as farms and organizational offices. With these codes, I developed data matrices (Maxwell, 2005) to identify patterns, comparisons, trends, and paradoxes.

Triangulation, or more aptly, crystallization (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005), inter-reliability coding and member checks serves as validity measures for this inquiry. In alignment with "transgressive validity" as a type of undogmatic validity frame challenging epistemic lenses to assert it as more "multiple, partial, and endlessly deferred" (Lather, 1983, p. 675) than not, this inquiry is more crystalized than triangle*d* honoring the multitude of sides of which to approach the world beyond a simple three (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005). The three ethnographic qualitative methods employed in this qualitative case study research offer much more than a triangular lens and, in fact, *crystallizes* the

narrative understanding that iterative nature of research lenses and the contextual inquiry itself. This analysis strengthens the data credibility due to the fostered acuity and sought counter patterns and convergences (Thorp, 2006), producing a nuanced and multi-dimensional view of the data (Lather, 1986). The multidimensionality was also sought through inter-reliability coding. An independent-researcher, who has also served on the D-Town Farm staff, played no part in the design and implementation of the study co-coded the interviews using the coding matrix I developed to ensure the reliability and of the codes I generated from her particular point of view. 'What we see depends on our angle of repose" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005, p. 968) and inter-coder reliability, in this case, has demonstrated a synthesis of lenses in ways that have produced an insider-outsider (by both coders) analysis[114].

To ensure their voices were reflected as desired in the research, I implemented "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by openly sharing the interview transcripts with the interviewees along with the data matrices I constructed to identify patterns, comparisons, trends, and paradoxes in the interviews. Though this is often considered to be a core part of ethically sound and responsible research, the invitation to review 20-80 page long transcripts and decipherable data matrices failed to solicit enough interest to authentically " member check" the information. While notable for research methodical reflections, such is beyond the scope of this article. This inquiry on Black agrarian pedagogy explored the community-centered education models that engages the city's residents in the Black agrarian culture of D-Town Farm.

[114] A special thanks to Teal Harrison who co-coded this qualitative data set with me and offered valuable feedback on the stories that crafted the narrative as written here.

D-Town Farm Pedagogy

Gun shots from the nearby Detroit Police Department shooting range pop in the air. A mixed-race group of volunteers from a Midwestern university enters the farm gate pathway cut out of the 12-foot-high deer fence surrounding the perimeter. “Peace. Peace,” said Yakini. “What up doe?” is how we greet each other here in Detroit. This is D-Town Farm where we are practicing self-determination through urban agriculture.” The volunteers smile as they look around in awe of the land and infrastructure adorned with collard greens, okra, tomatoes, Adinkra symbols, African Proverbs and Black people with soiled hands, full hearts and critical minds. Well into the farm tour, Yakini stated, “We are against three things here: white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy.” The pedagogy is growing more than food, it is growing consciousness.

Just as White (2018) coin “collective agency and community resilience” (CACR) that amplifies the social movement constructivity of everyday resistance strategies such as farm cooperatives and collectively-managed urban farms to serve as an alternative to the dominant power structures, Pacheco (2012) also describe how learning in/through everyday resistance practices occurs as a set of enacted political actions that negotiate demands of politically charged contexts. These everyday resistance practices are the pedagogy of D-Town Farm as interpreted through my ethnographic, emic/etic lens. Cultural representation, self-reliance and survival, nature as teacher, spirituality as knowing, healing, dialogic relationship building, show and tell, learning by doing and a sense of community village drives the place-based pedagogical process of D-Town Farm.

In the midst of these themes, self-determination serves as the endogenously organized pedagogical umbrella that encapsulates everything else. The D-Town Farm community plays a critical role in creating needed systems and infrastructure for and by us by resisting what Saleem Rushdan, D-Town Farmer, calls "colonist educational models." Yakini who sees the farm as an example of self-determining urban agriculture beyond a "PowerPoint presentation" and an example of actual "work and not words" (personal communication, 2018) stated, "If you got people on all these different levels and… we're not a typical organization where people come in and we just give them directives and say do this, do this, do this. We're empowering people to make decisions and that process...is not always neat and nice… it's not always the most efficient. But it's building, ultimately within us, the ability to be self-determining. And that's what's most important."

Thus, D-Town Farm is a place that is nurtured through the active practice of self-determination where the Detroit "creative class" alchemizes oppressive food and land relations to resist, reclaim, recover, regenerate and reroot in the Black agrarian ethic that hides in the shadows of our consciousness, some more visibly than others. Most Black Detroiters have Southern roots of which agrarian knowledge sets are deeply engrained. Enduring the roles of sharecroppers and tenant farmers endowed creative agricultural know-how that were brought to urban centers through the various migrations or immigrations. Speaking to this "creative class," Yakini (2014) stated:

> "We use our creativity to make things more beautiful and beneficial. We use our creativity to challenge the domination of our craniums by Western

Europe and her children. We use our creativity to challenge systems of oppression. We use our creativity to survive in an often-hostile environment."

In the same way, the Funk Brothers used anything from tambourines to tire chains to create the gritty backbeat of Motown songs (Smith, 1999), D-Town Farm has built on the cultural assets of the community, the perceivably mundane – cultural lingo, relationships and the natural environment – to capture the attention of volunteers, by-standers and committed movement comrades to cultivate a culture of belonging in a what has traditionally been considered a hostile and unreceptive environment within Black communities. As the "creative class", we insist not only on feeding the community but nurturing the community through the facilitation of cultural, spiritual and emotional growth. Each theme is prefaced with a "Nsoroma Nugget" to uplift the institutional memory of Nsoroma Institute's philosophies and pedagogical practices that have been transplanted into D-Town Farm. In the words of the African Proverb, "let the circle be unbroken."

Cultural Representation

Nsoroma Nugget: "…solidified inside of them was this understanding that their learning was not just for their advancement as an individual. But it is tied to the advancement of our people as a whole. So that project based learning was an important part of what we did. We did a lot of what they now call differentiation. Understanding that every student is a unique human soul who comes here… having studied you know different African spiritual systems, Ifa in particular… this understanding that each of us is born with certain gifts, attributes, talents,

dispositions, and the gifts, talents, attributes, dispositions that you're born with are not the same as me. So the education can't be a cookie cutter approach. That we have to understand who is this unique individualized... manifestation of spirit that we're dealing with and how do we create an educational experience that helps to nurture that individual within the context of what's good for the group?" (Yakini, personal communication, 2017)

Cultural representation speaks to the visibility of people in spaces that are often unrepresentative or non-inclusive of a population or group. D-Town Farm serves as a necessary space where Black people can see themselves reflected in agricultural and self-determining land work more broadly in a system that often excludes portrayals or depictions of Black people. Touzeau (2019) who explored the lived experiences of young Black farmers cited representation on top of the "obvious challenges of being a young farmer in the modern agricultural age" (p. 46). He grew up gardening with his grandfather who moved to Detroit from Georgia in the 1920s, Yakini urged the importance of Black voices in the work that intends to impact Black lives (White, 2011). Highlighting DBCFSN's participation in the food justice movement 6 years later, he still argued for the importance of people seeing Black leadership and collective work in a movement that is often fraught with white food and farm missionaries dictating the work that impacts mostly Black people and other people of color (Yakini, personal communication, 2017).

Underlying the importance of representation for cultural affirmation and political consciousness purposes, Karanji Kaduma, multi-year D-Town Farm volunteer, stated, "the biggest thing is those non-African centered agricultural spaces don't really address white

supremacy and racism on a global level or as it relates to agriculture… I don't think people realize how important it is for ourselves and our children to see examples of ourselves in greatness. Just the imagery… we have been so conditioned...as a people... to not think that we are worth anything or that we don't have any value." This is a learning process as shared by Dr. Jesse Brown. He expressed:

> "It is different in that Black people tend to gravitate towards things and people that look like them and understand our culture and understand our background. For D-Town Farm to be a Black agricultural entity, is changing the picture of what farming and growing looks like. For the most part when you see depictions of farms, it's not Black people. So it's important for the children to see. Every time a child sees someone who looks like them doing something different that helps to give them the belief that they can do it too."

Lottie Spady, a community herbalist and farm volunteer, named the importance of African-centered pedagogy at D-Town as a reflection of the pedagogical environment. She said, "…in a non-Black ag space they're definitely not getting the African centered learning… everything from Adinkra symbol, symbology, to fabric, to principles, cooperative economics is not bein' talked about as a thing, as a way of life." She recognizes while some farm spaces may be justice oriented, the leadership dynamic is unreflective of the population it intends to impact like "white mayor and all Black city and white corporate America, Black consumers." During farm tours, Yakini often shared how the symbols on display embody the work and this is important because liberation is about retrieving aspects of indigenous cultures and African cultures as indigenous. Moving beyond the Eurocentric dominance of

society is a pedagogical process through which everyone benefits. An example of this symbology, is the Bese Saka, an Adinkra symbol, meaning affluence, power, abundance, plenty, togetherness and unity in the Ghanian cultural symbol system. It also serves as the logo of DBCFSN and rightfully epitomizes the spirit of the organization that uses a Black agrarian pedagogy to promote affluence, power, abundance, plenty, togetherness and unity.

Figure 1: Bese Saka: The figure shows the Adinkra symbol meaning "abundance" in the Ghanian symbology system.

From growing food to drafting policy to "foodie" entrepreneurship, the pedagogy of alternative food, food justice, urban agriculture or the like can be presented as a mostly white-middle class endeavor" (Burdick, 2014). D-Town Farm pedagogy as a cultural energy center resists that white normativity pedagogy through being and knowing, not only as a Black institution but a African-centered "pedagogical homeplace" (Marr, 2014) where cultural imagery and political teachings matter. "Kazi", Kiswahili term for work, is posted at the front of the farm every weekend as a reminder for how it is used as a mechanism for building self-determination and self-reliance.

Self-reliance

Nsoroma Nugget: "The first being that it's important for us to know how to be self-reliant. You know, and this idea of self-reliance and self-determination was infused into everything we did at the school… on the mundane level we wanted, we thought it was important to teach students how to be more self-reliant by producing our food. On the deeper level, what we were tryna teach student by this gardening experience was their connection to the rest of Creation. And, we were much more rooted in the Black Nationalist legacy as related to food. So that

framed our thinking much more. So we were much more concerned about Black self-reliance than we were at that time about building a general local food economy. We were much more focused, specifically focused on Black people. Um… And not so much focused on how do we influence the larger food system but how do we of our own accord and usin' our own energies create a situation for our self that break our dependence" (Yakini, personal communication, 2018).

Self-reliance and survival surfaces as a kind of motivational learning to ensure basic necessities to live and exist can be met in extreme and non-extreme situations. D-Town Farm becomes a site of survival ethic and self-reliance as an institution practicing self-determination through food production. A common Black agrarian dictum is, "when we feed ourselves, we can free ourselves" and Yakini added, "…it helps to keep our resources more internally rather than us paying out to other people for things that we need for our own survival." For this reason, Brown assured that the "status, importance and necessity of the farmer is elevated in the community as opposed to de elevated." Many historical Black agrarian institutions specifically aimed at farmer training arose from the desire and need for self-reliance such as the Association for the Advancement of Negro Country Life (Schultz, 2012) founded in 1928 as an economically viable farming community, Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute founded in 1881 as a Negro training school in scientific agriculture (Mayberry, 1989; White, 2018), Freedom Farm Cooperative founded in 1967 as an anti-poverty strategy (Lee, 2000; White, 2017; White, 2018), Federation of Southern Cooperatives (Nembhard, 2014; White, 2018), and many more. Like these institutions, Rushdan believed, "It's nothin' like bein' able to be around yo' own...and cultivate the first

rule of survival and the first rule of controllin' your own self and yo' family and the people around you is through food."

Within the context of nation building, Kaduma stated, "D-Town is like a microcosm of what Black nationalism should look like. If we're gonna have our own nation and have a level of solidarity, as a people we have to be able to grow our own food on our own land… D-Town Farm is the epitome of Black nationalism and Black solidarity unapologetically as well." While food security may be the preferred term for some, self-reliance and survival is a motivation to grow food often times because of the literal lack of food availability in what is known as food deserts and what is more accurately defined as food apartheid. Securing a food source is the most important aspect of self-reliance and the farm staff and volunteers understand it to be critically necessary to learn because as Aisha Ellis – former D-Town farmer, mentioned, "we actually have a government that prioritizes industrial things over living things, people, quality of life, quality of water and quality of air. Industrialism is takin' precedence over common sense…" Essentially, learning through self-reliance and survival is a necessary part of self-determining community agriculture.

Nature as teacher

Nsoroma Nugget: "... so by having student participate in gardening, they became more aware of the weather patterns, they became more aware of the relationship of insects to plants, they became more aware of the relationship of humans to plants. And kind of how all those factors worked together." (Yakini, personal communication, 2017).

Nature as teacher is the process of learning with and through the natural environment on the basic level of observing and experiencing nature to gain insight on what happens, why it happens, and how it happens. D-Town Farm has become a learning lab or outdoor classroom through the existence of nature sustaining itself as it knows how. Speaking to the pedagogical orientations of nature, bell hooks (2009) state, "Nature was there to teach the limitations of humankind… Nature was there to show us god to give us the mystery and the promise" (p. 43). Explaining the experiential learning process at D-Town Farm, Yakini stated:

> "the plants are teaching us certain things… you can do certain things and see oh that plant's not lookin' quite as vibrant, or quite as happy… kinda observation and experiencing and connecting with the plant… I haven't heard anybody say like George Washington Carver… the plants have talked to them yet… but there's some communication that's occurring. Some learning that we're getting from the plants and the rest of the environment as well."

The dominant anthropocentric constructs of humans as separate from or above nature in the societal order is challenged through the disposition of nature as teacher in the horizontal knowledge exchange. Just as, the dialogic relationship building occurs between people, as articulated above, it also occurs within a "nature-culture relations" or the ways human activity is in relations with the natural world (Latour, 2012). Within the D-Town community, nature acts as a teacher that teaches infinitely and unconditionally. When

Aisha Ellis stated, “As long as nature is teaching, I will be learning”, she is aware of the intimate relationship with the spiritual and physical elements of creation that are at the center of a life-long learning journey (Deloria, 2001). Chris Jarrett, a past farm volunteer, experientially learned and overcome his skepticism of proper planting techniques just by observing the plants rather than listening to what he was advised to do. He explained:

> “The first day I came in and they wanted me to transplant kale. They said, ‘all you have to do is put the kale, and plant along the rows.’ And I’m like… ‘this is gonna be easy.’ And, then, I start planting and KJ stops me. And he’s like, ‘no you have to kinda like make sure it’s firmly grounded but not too firmly. You have to make sure you plant it deeply, but not too deeply.’ And he’s tellin’ me all these things, all these rules. And I’m like, ‘it’s not gonna matter. You’re just putting these plants in the ground, they’re gonna grow how they grow.’ And a couple weeks later I take a look at the ones I planted, I take a look at the ones he planted and they’re like night and day. His were growing a lot more than mine have, so now I know it does matter.”

Emphasizing how being close to nature and being open to nature as a teacher, Bandele, current D-Town Farmer, stated:

> “the insects are critical to the success of your crops which I was completely unaware. We used to go and try to figure out ways to get rid of these insects before they eat up the crop. But come to find out that there’s certain insects that

> you need there. And I learned you actually feed the soil and you actually feedin' the insects, and the insects feed the plants. So, I became aware of what's taking place… As opposed to just growin' food and not knowing what's actually takin' place there… And I learned also that if there's no insects in the soil, then the soil is dead… And if you can't bring 'em back then you not gonna have a successful crop… it's more technical that I learned at D-Town."

Understanding the importance of experiential learning with nature, Rushdan stated, "So the educational piece is about understanding… what, when, and why...things were growing or not growing. Was it the soil? Was it the sun? Was it not enough water? So it really put me in a much more experimental place." In his observations, he noticed the abundance of mugwort, a medicinal herb, growing wildly during the 2017 growing season, where the previous season lambs quarter grew more abundantly. Considered to be a detox herb, he equated this shift in the growth to the need of 'our people' to detox our minds, bodies and spirits. His observation of nature growing without intentional human intervention served as a signal to be attentive to nature as a kind of wellness guide subtly suggesting what the human body needs. This pedagogical connection to nature can be interpreted as a spiritual journey as spoken by George Washington Carver (Ferrell, 1995, p. 62): "…nature in its varied forms are the little windows through which God permits me to commune with Him, and to see much of His glory, by simply lifting the curtain, and looking in. I love to think of nature as wireless telegraph stations through which God speaks to us..." D-Town Farm is also a place where learning is a spiritual journey.

Spirituality knowing

Nsoroma Nugget: "There was always this kind of spiritual aspect that we understood, too, because...even in our approach to science we didn't approach it from the Western scientific viewpoint that says there's living and non-living things and that a rock is a non-living thing but a frog is a living thing. So we approached it more from a much more maybe African, Eastern, mystical viewpoint that said that everything is composed of energy. And even those things that we consider to be solid material things… everything is composed of this energy that is vibrating at different levels… in a sense everything is everything. The only thing that separates, or gives the illusion of separation of one thing from the next is it's rate of vibration. And so we rejected this notion that somethings are non-living things. It's all alive. This is much more akin to the African view where Europeans came and said they're worshipin' trees and mountains and rivers. And, no, they're not worshipin' the tree and the mountain and the river. They're worshiping the life force that manifests in everything, including the tree, the mountain, the river.... So in our approach to gardening, this kind of understanding to of our connection spiritually to the Earth was always part of what we did." (Yakini, personal communication, 2017)

Spirituality is apparent when the knowledge acquired and shared amongst the people is incorporeal or inward-focused transcending notions of materiality. The soul or the spirit is honored as a sacred or divine way of acquiring knowledge and attaining insight on self and the world as it is and as it could be. D-Town Farm becomes a facilitator in people recovering innate knowledges within themselves as a way to make sense of the broader world around us. A spiritual lens on agriculture is often argued in terms of honoring the relationships between all living things and departing from a profits over people

agricultural model supported by a Cartesian ethic (Kirschenmann, 2005). In "Let the circle be unbroken: the implications of African spirituality", Marimba Ani (1997) posit the strength and depth of African spirituality that has allowed for the survival of Black people as a distinctive cultural entity in North America or New Europe. Engaging an Anishnaabe intellectual tradition, Whyte (2018) articulate this reality as interdependence defined as reciprocity between humans and nonhuman spirits/elements as a central feature of existence.

Yakini also highlights this as part of the spirituality of D-Town Farm pedagogy. He stated, "the spiritual reciprocal relationship that human beings… have with the Earth itself. There's the reclaiming of that." At Peace Makita Taylor, a former Nsoroma parent and who has volunteered her meditation and yoga services at the farm, mentioned the "ancient ancestral feeling" she connects with the farm which is a draw her given her passion around using spiritual power in communion with nature. She stated, "that's the only thing that will save the species at this point is our spirituality. Old school spirituality is the only thing that's gonna save us right now. No money, no president, none of that." Agreeably, bell hooks (2009) posited, "[t]his spiritual bond with the earth is one of the many counter hegemonic beliefs that sustained exploited and oppressed Black folks during the years of slavery and reconstruction" (p. 62). Shimeyon shared how the work at D-Town Farm was so familiar to him because it was a form or worship and work at the same time. For whole body synergy, he insisted that "work should be seen in worship and worship in the work."

Within the context spirituality as type of pedagogy, decisions around learning are in essence an agreement between individuals and the spirit world with humility and agency

at the center (Simpson, 2014). When Lottie Spady said, “Our souls are starved,” she spoke to the precariousness of living in a Western-dominant society driven by spiritual warfare through what Martin Luther King, Jr. coined the three triplets of evil in 1967: materialism, militarism and racism. Thus, spiritual warfare requires spiritual artillery based on teaching and learning through the spirit and the systems it conducts. Within the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe epistemology, Simpson (2014) argue via Geniusz (2009, p. 67), “the process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature. Jess Robinson, former D-Town Farm intern, stated, “Formal education can tend to be a little spiritless. It's very objective and tends to take the emotion and the passion out of why you are even going to school. But at D-Town it was all about spirit, the spiritual, the excitement and passion and that passion is what drives you to learn.” This passion is understood as the knowledges – emotions, intuitions, etc. – already inside that can be drawn out, rather than being inserted or supplanted with something foreign or unconnectable to the innate knowing believed to drive many non-Western educational systems. “Knowledge of self” becomes a key thread in the D-Town Farm pedagogical process.

Such speaks to how teaching and learning occurs by tapping into innate knowledge sets for greater self-awareness and self-development. Lottie Spady mentioned how “our DNA gets reminded or awakened to a thing that is a part of us. That that’s what places like D-Town and, interacting with nature, does for us. And, it reawakens some very ancient...ways of being and thinking and doing that we may not be able to see.” According to Carter G. Woodson (1933), this awakening can be considered “real education… to inspire people to live more abundantly; to begin with life as they find it and make it better” (p. 29). Rather

than a “mere imparting of information” (Woodson, 1933, p. viii), education is by derivation and in fact a drawing out of human powers, as theorized by DuBois (1973).

Speaking as a guitar player who sees his musical journey as a process of unlocking secrets to knowledge within him, Yakini said, “we focus too much on appealing to people’s intellect. And there’s so many deeper parts to our consciousness... that unlock this knowing. And, again it’s going back to this idea of the human being is already complete. And so it’s not really, we’re not really putting an idea into them, but we’re kind of pulling back the layers of muck… so they can remember that it’s already there.” Though Freire (1970) doesn’t define it within spiritual terms, this idea is also the condemning of the “banking” style of education that assumes the learner is a blank slate waiting to be filled with knowledge. In opposition to this, Rushdan spoke about his innate capacities to learn based on intuition. He stated, “bein’ able to observe, watch, usin’ those same skills that’s innately in me to look at landscape, to read without readin’ words. To read nature without havin’ a book... That’s what tapped me into gettin’ more intuitive about growin’ stuff.” This is a kind of spiritual activism that honors human beings, “as spiritually infused energy transformers, both respond to and create morphogenetic fields…[and] we become able to use this ability toward social change ends” (Maparyan, 2012, p. 124). As a spiritual transference of knowledge, D-Town Farm pedagogy straddles the honoring of and actively retrieving the sacred while learning how to grow food in communion with nature. Eminently, this becomes a healing process.

Healing

Nsoroma Nugget: "It represented how we are all that we need to love and be loved by one another." (Hanifa Adjuman, personal communication, 2019)

Healing is the curative process of becoming or returning to a whole, sound or healthy state. D-Town Farm facilitates experiences of physical, emotional or spiritual restoration through agricultural learning as a kind of apotheosis of self-determination. Reassuringly, bell hooks (2009) state, "Black people must reclaim a spiritual legacy where we connect our well-being to the well-being of the earth... this is a necessary dimension of healing" (p. 40) because healing begins with self-determination in relation to the body that is the earth and the body that is our flesh" (p. 47). Robinson vocalized this sentiment by stating, "…it was beautiful… nestled in the park and you have all these trees… I just enjoyed watching the process of planting something, watching it grow, seeing it die, planting again and having my hands in the dirt… I felt like I was able to breathe for the first time in a few months and kind of just let things go from having been a little stressed out during school. It was a very healing space." Kerrie Trahan, who offers yoga classes at the farm periodically, also expressed a similar feeling. She stated, "I'm very grateful for D-Town Farm, it's such an inspiration to have a sacred space for healing in the community… you just feel so empowered to take care of yourself, and others… somewhere you can go to as like an emotional safe haven... ecological, therapeutic, safe haven." Speaking explicitly to learning through deep healing, Lottie Spady explained:

> "workin' the land should be involved in every recovery effort. Like if you're a returning citizen, if you are trying to release yourself from addiction, if you are trying to heal from grief, if you are trying to repiece yourself back together after violence and abuse… to be able to nurture somethin', to feel that you had a part in somethin' comin' alive is very healing on a deep, cellular level. Some things can't be...psychotherapied… when you go work out, it's when you rest that the muscle actually builds. So, it's the spaces between the talk and the whatever that contribute to you makin' new synapses. New experienced relationships… And I think that the quiet time in nature and the fact that you're devoting your attention fully, just for a moment that you can contribute to makin' new synapses, new experienced relationships. It is what allows the mind to rest and to form new neuropathways that allow the options of new problem solving, new creativity around it."

Affirmatively bell hooks (2009) posit, "Healing the psyche must also mean restoring our connection to the natural world" (hooks, 2009, p. 39). The D-Town Farm pedagogy illuminates the "importance of coming in contact with the soil and understand the healing nature of that and the necessity of that", as shared by Brown. Recalling her Kentucky childhood growing up in the mountains and on her family's farms, bell hooks (2009) proclaim, "Nature was truly a sanctuary, a place of refuge, a place for healing wounds" (hooks, 2009) because "[w]hen we love the earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully" (hooks, 2009, p. 34). If the land is where the wound lies, for some, given the calculated

tactics of the white supremacist establishment, healing as a learning process must involve returning to the wound, the site of trauma. D-Town Farm facilitates the process of healing cultural trauma through cultural pedagogies laced with "coming to know" the land.

Acknowledging the dialogic process of healing after trauma, Robinson affirmed, "There is a lot of trauma in this world, historical trauma especially for Black people and all types of people… I think understanding trauma and helping each other heal from it is part of that recovery process. And it's so much easier to do that in a community setting where you feel comfortable sharing with other people how you feel." An anecdotal reification to this statement is reflected in one of Lottie's stories. Lottie Spady gave thanks to D-Town Farm for being the "healing space, a refuge" she needed when her father passed into the ancestral realm. She shared how a woman she was working with at the farm encouraged her to cry and she worked the soil as a form of healing. In a similar instance, Tiffany Harvey shared about the healing refuge she experienced at D-Town Farm. At a volunteer celebration at the close of the season, when everyone was asked to share their experiences at the farm, she gave a stoic response of "good and fun." It wasn't until she saw how others were opening up about the farm being a healing space for grief that she mentioned the farm helped her heal after the death of her grandparents. Others' vulnerable mention of learning at the farm and healing at the same time inspired her to open up in similar ways. These kinds of dialogic processes often leads to teaching and learning through relationships.

Dialogic relationship building

Nsoroma Nugget:" all those people attracted there, that community that developed around that, I think is where the magic occurred. You know the, the...it's one thing to have consciousness yourself as an individual but when you can function in community with other people on a day to day basis it creates a synergy that just doesn't exist in many places." (Yakini, personal communication, 2017)

Dialogic relationship building is the active asking, listening and participatory decision-making in the pedagogical process. D-Town Farm is an open space where convergent and divergent perspectives are navigated as indispensable components in fostering fellowship, social cohesion and, ultimately, reliable relationships for community building and healing. What is considered to be "dialogic teaching", mainly in classrooms, possesses six main components (Reznitskaya, 2012): flexible power relations, and shared authority over the content and form of discourse, relies on questions that are "fundamentally open or divergent" (Burbules, 1993, p. 97, as cited Reznitskaya, 2012) provides meaningful and specific feedback, engage in meta-level reflection (Splitter and Sharp, 1996), lengthy and elaborate explanations and collaborative co-constructions of knowledge. Many of these facets relate to dialogic relationship building within this context, outside the traditional classroom. Yet, as Freire seminally articulated, dialogue is not just a mere tactic for student engagement, it is a social way of knowing within an epistemological curiosity (Freire and Macedo, 1995). While asking questions, encouraging meaningful responses to questions, engaging in reflection and collaborative knowledge constructions are all critically present in D-Town Farm dialogic relationship building, the epistemological curiosity is the heart of

the process that works to hold and nurture contradictions rather than erase, silence or ignore them.

Rushdan stated, “When it comes to agricultural education. I think it's about the collective bein’ able to educate through navigatin’ the differences that’s already geographically there. Building on this notion, Yakini state, “It is primarily a learning and teaching experience where staff and volunteers are learning how to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs, and all that goes into that… But we’re also growing our human relationships. Learning how to function with each other in a way that is fair, just, respectful, and largely democratic.” These relationships are important because as Kaduma exclaimed, “Havin’ a relationship with your community is like one of the most...important things for me. It’s like you’re living the solution. You’re living... progress.” (Re)building relationships is often posed as a way to build a better world because unhealthy relationships with the natural environment intimately link to our unhealthy relationships with each other (hooks, 2009, Finney, 2014).

Explaining the dialogic relationship building occurring among the farm staff, Bandele stated:

> “it’s a science to agriculture and there’s also an art to agriculture… science meaning A+B=C. But sometimes A+B does not equal the C… you have to balance that out. And, sometimes it takes a decision maker to be able to make a decision when you can’t really weigh out the odds here until you actually put it into action… we rely heavily on Malik as the director to make those type of decisions. But because of the atmosphere at D-Town, you’re not reluctant to

> make a suggestion that we do it differently. You not hesitant to come forward with a new idea. And of course, if you put the idea on the table it's gonna be scrutinized, not just by the director, the entire staff makes a contribution. And, then sometimes as a result of that, you put one idea on the table and when you leave it has evolved to another idea. Because you have everybody's input now… helps to facilitate progress."

This is an very important facet in the farm pedagogy because as Yakini stated, "the larger value is in building the capacity of this group to collectively make decisions… so this is learning how to function collectively and how to value others opinions even if you disagree with them. And, how to see the nuances in other people's views… it is probably the most valuable part of what's happening at the farm, even more valuable than what's happening with planting the food. This is an incubator that we're producing, building this way of relating to each other. And building a way of operating collectively and making decisions collectively. And they just manifest in the growing of fruits and vegetables." Uplifting radical or critical pedagogy, Freire argued along similar lines insisting that the task is to clarify the nature of tensions and how best to cope with them rather than dismiss them (Freire and Macedo, 2003). The strong emphasis on managing human relationships as a core part of the work saliently works towards tight knit social bonds.

A historical connection to this phenomena is how the 1974 Farm-A-Lot program encouraged cooperation and unity among garden participants. In 1974, Detroit's first African American mayor, Coleman A. Young addressed vacancy in the city and rising food

prices by instituting the Farm-A-Lot Program, which gave gardeners a lease on property, seeds, and tilling support, as well as classes at neighborhood city halls. Ann Beser, the Farm-A-Lot director, shared that an unexpected benefit of the program was the cooperation and unity developed among its participants who farmed over 500 lots (Rushdan, 2017). Quinn Gordon, a former D-Town Farm intern from Montana, shared his experience that was largely based on cooperation. He stated:

> "I have a lot of knowledge that I have bought from Montana as well as they have a lot of knowledge that they know how this land works. So it's been informal in the fact that we have been sharing the knowledge. It's not like a dictatorship, it's a group decision of how we run the farm. I don't feel like I have been just around here learning, it's been a collaborative experience. Sharing my experience and them sharing their experiences… Different ways of viewing some things… For example using the neem oil and cayenne pepper to fight pests on the collards. That's something that we don't even use in Montana."

Recalling the staff efficiency achieved during the 2017 farm season, Rushdan shared, "we only had three staffers and we got more accomplished than the year before when we had interns and five staffers because we always were havin' a dialogue about what we weren't doin' and what we were doin'." Robinson affirmed this perspective as a farm intern during the same time, "it was just a curiosity shared amongst everyone to just engage and teach everyone that there is no one teacher, everyone is learning together and sharing learning

together and it's a co-educational experience. Rather than one person with credentials talking at you for an hour… if you are teaching and you learning from another person you should be able to give information and receive information openly with an understanding that we are all different people and we all learn differently." This was also seen in how the farm staff interacted with farm volunteers. Diamond Curry, past farm volunteer, who organized a group of Girls Scouts to volunteer at the farm spoke about the conversational nature of the farm pedagogy. She stated: "…the younger girls were with Baba Malik and he kind of engaged with them and asked them questions about what he said or what they think it should be or what they think it was… they asked questions with their wandering eyes like 'what's this and what's that'… It's not structured like 'listen to me right now'… It keeps them more engaged instead of feeling like school on a Saturday." Through this process, teaching becomes a two-way street. Dialogue shifts the traditional teacher-of-the-students and students-of-the-teacher to blurred roles of the false dichotomy.

Brown who co-facilitates the Medicinal Herb Walk every year at the farm emphasized the importance of questions and conversational educational processes. He shared, "…we talk about the herb, what it does, where it's from, where it's grown and time of year, the part of plant used and what it's used for... when people say, I have high blood pressure what can I do for that? Those are the questions that people ask about. They don't always ask about the things that are scripted or in the book. So some of the most profound and impactful learning comes less formal." Tellingly, this kind of dialogue is, essentially, an inquiry. For knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention with hopeful inquiry we pursue in and with the world and with each other (Freire, 1970). Necessarily, education

becomes more about the learner's goals rather than the goals identified by an external hierarchal structure.

Conveying the importance of dialogic relationship building to healing, broadly and conflict resolution, specifically, Robinson mentioned, it is necessary when we were "understanding where people are coming from, the various backgrounds and histories in a community and how they bring history with them, understanding the variety of perspectives and the hurt and the pain that all people have with them, so that they can help each other." Like the grapevine information sharing through beauty salons, barbershops and other culturally-rooted places of belonging, often times the knowledge that exudes creativity, growth, trust and connection is that which comes from casual conversations and open dialogue in unstructured or semi-structured settings grounded in the working of relationships and discourses. This is the engraving of a culture of belonging that affirms and celebrates differences (Lorde, 1980), for when differences enter the world of beloved community it can find a place of welcome, a place to belong (hooks, 2009). This kind of pedagogy ultimately becomes about facilitating people attaining the necessary tools to tell their story, their (un)hidden truths to each other to cultivate new, emerging truths. Part of this process is showing and telling the knowledges that guide our truth telling.

Show and tell

Nsoroma Nugget:" we did a lot with project based learning. We had multiple events per year where students would have to produce projects that we encouraged them to do collectively. We discouraged individual projects. So we had a science expo each year that we did in

conjunction with African, other African centered schools. We had a math fair, we had a Black reading month fair. And in later years we had what was called the African world language fair in which students would produce projects related to a particular African language and the culture from which that language comes. And so these were chances for the students to do pretty deep study in a guided but independent way collectively, and to share that with the community which they were a part of. With the other students, with the teachers, with the parents, and with the larger community who were supporters of the school. So we'd have these public events where hundreds of people would come and view the projects and students would talk to them. And so it situated their learning within community." (Yakini, personal communication, 2017)

Show and tell is intentionally fashioning, depicting or enacting a concept or phenomena. D-Town Farm is place where the explicit and implicit modeling of agricultural principles or theories produce greater insight into the topic at hand. In her anthropological study, Margaret Mead describe this process through Manus children piloting around their elders in outsized canoes, Arapesh children engaging in a hunt with miniature bows and arrows Balinese children learning to dance (Mead, 1964, as cited in Scribner and Cole, 1973). Through this process, rules or principles are rarely formulated as the teaching tools, rather the demonstration itself serves as the teaching. As revealed through personal observations and validated through explicit mentioning by other comrades in the movement, D-Town Farm has been a model for other Black-led and Black-founded food justice and food sovereignty institutions such as Soul Fire Farm. Literally seeing the building and operation of the institution, demonstrated the possibilities for others to follow suit. The actual

demonstrations are believed to facilitate the empowerment of people doing it themselves. To this point, Yakini who identified the main teaching tool as "modeling," stated:

> "it's a little liberated zone… where people can actually enter… So it's one thing to stand on the corner and maybe have flyers and shout out to people and say, 'Black people should do this.' But it's another thing to have a space that people can enter and kind of begin to see in the physical form what these ideas look like. Because I'm absolutely convinced that most people don't see with their third eye. They don't see the world of possibilities that doesn't yet exist on the physical plane. Most people see with their physical eyes. And so, for most people you have to present the thing to them so they can say 'oh, okay, that's what it is…' we have the potential and the right to produce the things that we need to sustain our own lives. We're producing tomatoes and onions and squashes and all kinds of stuff that actually people are eating. And it's sustaining our lives… just the symbolism of that. For people to see a possibility, ignites a fire inside of us that I think has been dormant for a long time. People coming out, putting seeds in the ground, seeing it grow into a fruit that they can then eat. It speaks to the so-called subconscious in a much deeper way than just words."

Also reinforcing the power of seeing as believing, Kaduma stated, "D-Town farm is definitely a living example of us recovering from our trauma… we've been conditioned to think that farming and workin' the land is slave work… it can be seen as a recovery solution to changing the paradigm of what we have been conditioned [to see as] farming and

agricultural work." Re-framing of agricultural work in the Black community beyond the lens of enslavement or share cropping requires a reframing of agricultural work as an act of self-determination that has the potential for community upliftment through the tangible modeling of the place itself and the offerings such as "workshops and 'learnshops'… teachin' recipes…. show them how they can live healthier by growing and eating certain foods" (Aisha Ellis, personal communication, 2017). A related pedagogical strategy is the hands-on work often involved in showing and telling knowledge.

Learning by doing

Nsoroma Nugget: "So the garden became a huge teaching tool and we were able to use that in a way where we could use all the academic subjects...we could incorporate all the academic subjects. So for example, one teacher Mama Dada, I remember… She had her students harvest tomatoes, peppers, and somethin' else from the garden and they brought it to the classroom and made salsa… they had to write the recipe out, they had to do measurements… she incorporated math, she incorporated language, she incorporated history. So, we were able to kind of use this gardening to pull together various elements of the curriculum." (Yakini, personal communication, 2017)

Learning by doing is how tactile experiences drive the pedagogical process. D-Town Farm is a strategic learning space where actively embodying theoretical concepts is the norm and the practical application of knowledge is upheld as a necessary process of self-determination. In "The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture," Wilson (1999), a practicing neurologist, describe how he became fascinated with

the role of the hand in the evolution of the human race and the development of the mind because of his experiences as an adult trying to learn how to play the piano and as a doctor working with patients who have difficulty using their hands. He argues one of the major reasons for the crisis in our schools is that we have underestimated the role of the hand and our society has made such a sharp separation between the mind and the body and because we are so prejudiced against manual labor, we have created a brain-centered educational system based on the illusion that we can educate the mind by itself. This insidious concept of the mind/body split also pervaded among newly 'freed peoples' in the Post-Emancipation era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As described by Booker T. Washington, "freedom from slavery brought it freedom from hard work, the other that education of the head would bring even more sweeping emancipation from work with the hands" (Washington, 1904, p. 4-5).

Speaking specifically to D-Town, Mohammed stated, "…the best experience is experiencing… that's the type of learning style that I enjoy from D-Town." Critically, Kaduma stated, "good thing about agriculture… 50 percent of it is, is application if not more… you have to apply what you learn everyday… bein' a farmer." Speaking to the moral value of hand work and training for the conditions of "freed people", Washington (1904) asserted, slaves were worked and freed people have to learn to work, the difference between the two are clear. Being work is degradation, working is civilization. This is what the practical application of agriculture means at D-Town Farm: "work, not words," as stated by Yakini. Affirmatively, Bandele stated, "…that's the most important aspect of D-Town is food security… my consciousness cannot just be verbal… it has to be hands on… D-

Town is like the laboratory… I didn't start off learnin' it from a scientific standpoint.. Just as you throw some plant some seeds and grow some food, you actually learn what's goin' on in that soil."

Beyond just working with the hands, learning by doing also speaks to the necessity of engaging various types of learning modalities. Spady observed "kids were learnin' about stuff that may not resonate with them." She stated, "there was a way they could be taught about compost in a hands on way, in a fun way, where they were getting the information." Ellis reified this observation, as a former staff member who had worked closely with the children often. She stated, "They are exposed to those type of learning modalities, that hands on, the eyes on, the hand eye coordination. Touch the plant. Touch the surface. Touch the stem, the leaves, the flowers..." Literally, activating other senses in the learning processes impacts the acquisition and retention of knowledge, especially for children.

Wilson (1999) insist the inadequacy of the brain-centered educational system because it violates the way that learning actually takes place. Biologically, the head and the hand evolved together and the brain works most efficiently when information is funneled through the hand acting on objects or from tactile and kinesthetic perception (Wilson, 1999). For these reasons, Brown ensures the herb walk experience is as experiential as possible because he "understands that people are visual, auditory, kinesthetic and experiential learners… our senses we relate to the colors and varieties and the textures and all of that." Learning is a whole body experience. He goes on:

> "Even the physical walking around in discovery and looking… and helping people with distinctions is very helpful. What's in your environment? Can you see it? Now I can point things out but what are you seeing? As adults, we have essentially become blind to these things, walking right past it. A lot of the things we need to have and a lot of things that will help heal us that are beneficial and growing without effort are all around us and if we can make those distinctions than we can share that with other generations. I've taken some little people and just walking around the block with a few, I check things out with them and we don't just stop and smell the roses, we stop and smell the dandelions or the red clover, echinacea and so they start seeing things in ways they didn't see before."

This kind of approach to education aligns with the Pan-African nationalist ideologies of education. In seeing classrooms as "the placenta of the nation" (Rickford, 2014, pg. 4), Pan-African nationalists believed in educating the next generation to contribute "technical expertise to the cause of 'national development' wherever in the African world they were called to serve" (Rickford, 2014, pf. 4). This kind of education avoids the "insidious, 'Western' distinction between physical and intellectual labor" (Rickford, 2014, pg. 9). Washington (1904) posit we must put brains into the labor of the hand. Relatedly, Wilson (1999) theorize, intelligence cannot be independent of the behavior of the *entire* organism. What hands do, the heart learns and what the heart learns, the head remembers. Overall, these themes facilitate a sense of community or village as the site of D-Town Farm pedagogy.

Sense of community village

Nsoroma Nugget: "Nsoroma was Wakanda… It did not matter. Everybody had each other's back. If you needed a ride, if your child needed a ride, if your child needed some shea butter, if your child was hungry. We looked out for each other's children. Period. It was important. Who needs what? We were total solutionaries over there. It was truly Wakanda" (Aisha Ellis, personal communication, 2017).

A sense of community is visible when teaching and learning occurring within spaces often considered to be village-like or deeply rooted community spaces where children and elders are the main pedagogical actors in the culturally-centered environment that fosters a sense of belonging and cultural identity formations via the utility of community norms and languages and building upon the lived experiences. In a 2011 study of D-Town Farm, White (2011) articulate how farming is used as a strategy of resistance while building community through social, economic and physical transformation of the environment. This transformative community is what many D-Town lovers call the "village." Ani (1997) bolster this ideology by asserting how we came from a culture with a viable belief system which guided behavior and moral interrelationships. She describes it as, family closeness, participation in communal structures, sacred rituals, communion with ancestors, and contact with ancestral land meant everything.

Describing the unique importance of learning in the village, Trahan stated, "Being in communities teaching… it's taken differently… with my grandma, my aunts, their close friends, a village tellin' me somethin'. It's almost like I believe it more. I don't question as

much. But in the academic environment I was just questioning everything." The village educational environment of D-Town Farm is "like a family… the leadership isn't like, 'you do this, you do this, this, this.' It's more organic… people know their roles...they want to do it.. They're involved because they want to be there, they see the mission, they believe" (Trahan, personal communication, 2017). This is akin "informal education" with distinctive traits being: 1) it occurs in the family, it is particularistic, the value of information is closely related to who imparted it, 2) it fosters traditionalism (cultural norms and practices) and 3) it fuses emotional and intellectual domains (Cohen, 1971, as cited in Scribner and Cole, 1973). This is the kind of "informal learning" Lottie Spady recalled at the farm when working with the children. She shared:

> "I had a group of young people, we were havin' our little lecture around the beehives. And then this bird flew up above and one of the Baba's who was there was like, that's a hawk. We just had this learning moment… That's how we're supposed to be learnin'. Have our elder, a Black male. It felt so rich in the moment. He said, that's a spotted blue heron. And, the kids havin' that experience. Of gettin' that nugget of wisdom, from an elder… that learnin' at the knee… That village life… it's a priceless learning experience." (Lottie Spady, personal communication, 2018).

This intergenerational aspect of valued cultural learning was seen as a way to move toward community-well-being (Bang et al, 2016). Agreeably, it is an intentional act of "restoring" healthy intergenerational relations and forms of activity. White (2011a) also emphasize the

intergenerational relationships nurtured in the farm space that contributed to the direly needed communality after the after the slashing of social programs at community centers and other places. Intergenerational learning serves as one of the most salient elements to D-Town Farm pedagogy immersed in the village because as Simpson (2014) articulate, young people might understand literally and as they grow, they draw in the conceptual and metaphorical meanings and apply the meanings to their everyday lives. After six or seven decades of lived experience and shifting meanings, they communicate their lived wisdom that is generated from the ground up. Everyone, particularly children, learning at the feet of the elders ushers a full circle pedagogy where oral traditions of storytelling act as "mobile pedagogies of walking, talking, and storying the land" (Pugh et al, 2019).

An exemplar of this is when Malik guides a group of 10th grade students through the farm. He'll point to plants growing in the walkways and he'll say, "these are medicinal herbs… can you say, 'medicinal?" They loudly respond, "medicinal." This call and response process – rapid verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which calls (statements) are punctuated by responses (expressions) (Foster, 2001; Smitherman, 1977) – helps the students to retain knowledge of the term by vocalizing it, initially. While some reduce to a practice of teaching basic skills (Cazden, 1999), others uplift it as a culturally-relevant instructional practice rooted in an "African-derived communication process" (Smitherman, 1977). Considered to be a distinctly Black communicative style and a notable component of African-American English (AAE), it is often seen as cultural asset and "indigenous interactive style" in traditional classroom teaching (Foster, 1995). Cazden (1988) categorize it into four functions: expressing attitudes, expressing identities, conveying

information and establishing and maintaining relationships. Thus, this practice transcends beyond cognitive development to include the social and emotional experience of dialogic relationship building.

Call and response is an example of the many common Black pedagogical traditions used as learning tools to convey messages at D-Town Farm. It is through our cultural discourses and overall work – be it music, dance, ceremony, or the like – that we recover and (re)produce unbounded knowledge about ourselves in relation to our cultural frameworks. To this point, Malik shared:

> "Food is one of the most basic indicators of culture generally… many things revolve around food. For example, many of the dances and rhythms that I've learned from West Africa relate to either planting, harvesting, preparing or eating food. So... food is an essential building block of culture. And, so as we reclaim our food ways, we also reclaim in a sense our larger culture."

In the process of reclaiming our food ways, we use cultural scenarios and terms to connect with unfamiliar concepts and terminology. For example, Lottie Spady was leading a herb walk at the farm and she pointed to a plant growing wildly everywhere and said, "that's called all heal or self-heal." A woman responded, "heal yourself." Lottie responded, "That's right! I've always loved the Latin name, Prunella Vulgaris… sounds like my homegirl around the way." In this instance,

scientific name of a plant was connected to a cultural reference as a way to foster remembrance of the term or a basic connection to the plant, in general.

In Dancing in the Streets, Smith (1999) posit how cultural politics took many forms in Black Detroit through newspapers, churches, radio shows, nightclubs, poetry collectives, and recording studios all worked to promote the culture and to articulate the needs of the city's Black community. In doing so, this "cultural infrastructure instigated social change and created community identity" (Smith, 1999, p. 8). D-Town Farm catalyzes Detroit culture in the ever-evolving construction of a Detroit Black agrarian identity using cultural colloquialisms, placed-based lived experiences, personal memories and overall cultural references. The feelings of social cohesion and conviviality are present in these processes and act as a bonding glue of histories, perspectives, habits, personal and professional goals and so on. Reinforcing this notion, Shimeyon, past farm volunteer, stated: "There is a very high sense of family, unity and purpose, meaningfulness… definitely was a learning experience and the learning experience was the togetherness and the refreshing vibe of working together and being able to produce real foods."

A significant part of this togetherness is the D-Town Farm closing circle that usually closes out the end of the farm volunteer days to facilitate the spirit of building community through the building of the farm. Forming actual circles are not happen stance. Metaphysically, circles often represent impenetrability, perpetuality and interconnectedness. Within the closing circle process, everyone is usually instructed to share their name, what we did for the day and any reflections we may have on the experience. In this way, we learn more

about each other based on what is shared in the circle and such processes often lead to connections beyond the farm, thus building community on and beyond the pedagogical site.

As a D-Town Farm staff person and former intern, Rushdan stated:

> "The collective has been a real thing for me because I really hadn't had any community based anything prior to D-Town… it really reminded me of what I remembered about the power of community and the farm is such a community-oriented space… whatever part of the community you in Detroit, be it a Muslim community, African-centered community, or just the agricultural community… you have a place."

This sense of community or village building cultivates a heuristic pedagogical environment that facilitates a recovery of culture, self and community through growing food. Emphasizing heuristic undertones of true education, Carter G. Woodson asserted, "What we are merely taught seldom nourishes the mind like that which we teach ourselves" (Woodson, 1933, p. 82, quoting [unnamed] "philosophers"). And, we teach ourselves through the recovery of our cultures of which food and land are central. Hence, the D-Town African-centered culture is a pedagogical agent for the recovery of Black agrarian identities and ways of knowing.

African-Centered Culture as Pedagogical Agent

Challenging the very notions of space and how they become pedagogical places, D-Town Farm interrogates who belongs, who has the knowledge and where does the knowledge lie through Black pedagogies of food as political work (Burdick, 2014). It uses cultural ways of knowing and being to re-envision realities based on self-determining land work. As a pedagogical village, D-Town is an illustrious example of building a "culture of belonging" (hooks, 2009) where collectively Black-worked land becomes a Black village pedagogy. According to hooks (2009), the departure of the" agrarian past meant leaving cultures of belonging and community wherein resources were shared for a culture of liberal individualism" (hooks, 2009, p. 22). Recovering communality is a Black agrarian pedagogical process. It is like learning from inside a cultural enclave where traditions, norms and languages take precedence. For D-Town Farm, this Black agrarian pedagogy occurs within a culturally-representative community village striving toward self-reliance, survival and healing through enacting spiritual ways of knowing, nature as a teacher, learning by doing, dialogic relationship building, literally showing and telling knowledge and learning by doing. Building on the way Meek and Tarlau (2015) propose critical food systems education – as an alternative to the "unbearable whiteness" of food systems education – that is inherently a political and economic process mediated by racial and ethnic histories and identities as a process of "education for liberation" (p. 4), D-Town Farm pedagogy reclaims Black agrarian identity through African-centered traditions crafting a "culture of belonging" on the land. This also reflects what McCune et al (2014) offers as agroecology used as a building block to create spaces for dialogue, reflection and learning.

Similar to the case of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) who employ "social(ist)" pedagogies (Tarlau, 2013) in the uplifting the Brazilian peasantry as a political subjects who are actively transforming their realities through the incorporation of manual labor into public schools, promotion of collective learning, counter-cultural production and linking schools to concrete political struggles, D-Town Farm catalyzes the power as the "creative class" to revision and rework the image and processes of land work and community building through Black agrarian pedagogies unapologetically centering the reclamation of cultural agrarian identities and processes as teaching tools. DuBois (1973) argue the industrial problems of the modern state must be settled before the cultural problems are addressed because the world must eat before it can think. Disagreeably, D-Town Farm demonstrates how culture and the recovery of it can be used as a pedagogical agent where the eating and thinking are done in simultaneous communion. It is the epitome of the multiplicity of ways we can rebuild a Sankofanized Black agrarian community where a pedagogy of cultural remembrances act as "organs of radical imagination and products of the effort to fashion a new peoplehood… fashioned through a transformation of consciousness" (Rickford, 2014, p. 4) resembling contemporary Indigenous "survival schools", Chicano heritage academies and more (Rickford, 2014, p. 8).

Nsoroma Institute, like many "Pan African nationalist schools strove not simply to bolster the academic skills and self-image of inner-city African-American youth but also to [liberate] minds, to nurture the next generation of activists, and to embody the principles of self-determination and African identity" (Rickford, 2016, p. 2). Similarly, this African-

centered spirit transplanted into DBCFSN and D-Town Farm, specifically, speaks to the centering of culture as a pedagogical agent that creates an environment in which teachers and learners can simultaneously see themselves in the knowledge being shared and produced with one another. In her discussion of reimagining Black people's relationship to the great outdoors, Finney (2014) argue, for the imperative engagement of cultural work – be it popular culture, art, or music in all its myriad forms – because it is in these spaces that people are able to produce work about themselves without boundaries that can inhibit their voices and unable to accommodate cultural frames of reference (Finney, 2014).

Morgan & Ziglio (2007) argue focusing on positive, protective or "assets" of a community or neighborhood, or population in building resilient and food sovereign communities for alleviating food insecurity. In agreement, this work centers on the power of the community principles, norms, languages and experiences as fertile foundation to building solutions. In the process of striving towards food sovereignty, D-Town Farm prefigures Black cultural and political sovereignty by creating dignified spaces of (re)building convivial community rooted in the reclamation of the unbroken spirit of the people. Continually renewed in the face of chaos and trauma, the African spirit of humanism prevails. As symbolized in the Bese Saka, power, abundance and unity are attained in the synthesis of it all. "Let the circle be unbroken."

While it is not my place to air dirty laundry of grassroots organizational processes, it is imperative to note the challenges that are associated with the Black agrarian pedagogies of D-Town Farm. The cultural-laden components of the pedagogical processes while crucial

do not connote the entire picture. A stronger emphasis on the reality of surviving in an oppressive system while continuing to resist and heal from the very same system is necessary to strengthen cultures of belonging situated as positive aspects to Black agrarian pedagogies. The process of unconsciously internalizing the oppressions actively resisted through some of the pedagogical processes explained above and beyond is a complicated concern that has to be granted more attention via community-centered empirical and philosophical research and reflections. It is also worthwhile to explore the weaving of other aspects of Detroit culture (art, activism, social services, etc.) into the farm pedagogical model to cultivate connections among various generations of Black agrarians.

Conclusion

The single qualitative case study of D-Town Farm has illuminated the contours of Black agrarian pedagogy through the lens of urban Black farmer education. The main goal of the inquiry was to gain insight into the pedagogical model of D-Town Farm and use the insights to inform the farm development as a pedagogical site of community self-determination committed to securing and returning to the hands of Black people the power to define and determine our own lives and to reintroduce our people as the subjects, the makers and shapers of their own destiny. D-Town Farm Black agrarian pedagogies emphasize the relearning of traditional and cultural ways of relating, something already present within, something to be drawn rather than newly acquired. It illuminates the cyclical and generational nature of learning as a recovery process. Nothing is new, even when it has been forgotten. The circle remains unbroken when cultural identities and practices are centered in the spiritual (re)building of community within an agrarian ethic.

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ARTICLE 4:
SANKOFA-NIZING THE SELF THROUGH "LAND AS PEDAGOGY"

"We do not become healers. We came as healers. We are. Some of us are still catching up to what we are.

We do not become storytellers. We came as carriers of the stories we and our ancestors actually lived. We are. Some of us are still catching up to what we are.

We do not become artists. We came as artists. We are. Some of us are still catching up to what we are.

We do not become writers, dancers, musicians, helpers, peacemakers. We came as such. We are. Some of us are still catching up to what we are.

We do not learn to love in this sense. We came as Love. We are Love. Some of us are still catching up to who we truly are."

~ Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes "Simple Prayer for Remembering The Motherlode"

Abstract

This autoethnography are my reflections systemically gathered and analyzed as a scientist that has undergone empirical and philosophical research through and beyond the PhD dissertation. I narrate myself through a Sankofa lens by illuminating how my past continues to rework my present and future along the trajectory of my intersectional

identities. I reflect on how my life experiences within and beyond the academy are related to the "Land as Pedagogy" framework articulated by Simpson (2014) portraying my personal Black agrarian journey through four frames: chasing my humanity, using research as a mothering process, feeling my memories and affirming my intersectional identities understanding through a dialogo de saberes (dialogue of knowledges). This is a personal story of how the recovery of Black agrarian pedagogies is also an autoethnographic journey where self-reflective pedagogies lead to greater knowing and understanding of self and the work that define and determine where I've been, where I am at and where I am going.

Introduction

I was 10 years old, sitting on my grandfather's lap, as he shared his stories about growing up on a farm in Accomack, Virginia. He says, "the sun rises and sets on the land, ya know." Not fully appreciating the power of those words, I naively took his words in literal turns to mean the sun rises and sets on the land. What became clear 24 years later, what he really meant was "we cannot be ourselves without our land" (Walker, n.d.). Our agrarian pathways are the soul of being and knowing. This remembrance was the beginning of my Black agrarian journey that awoke my heart and hands to the (real) work of learning in community with and through land. This is the work that producing and consuming books, research articles, PowerPoint presentations and the like could not teach me. My academic research was the overly intellectualized seed that grew into a whole embodied tree primarily fed through chasing my humanity, using research as a mothering process, feeling my memories and affirming my intersectional identities understanding through a dialogo de saberes (dialogue of knowledges). This is my Black agrarian journey. Laced with felt

histories (Million, 2009), calloused hands, reflective notes and the love of the land and the community that I found with it, I Sankofa-nize myself through "land as pedagogy" (Simpson, 2014). This is a personal story of how the recovery of Black agrarian pedagogies is also an autoethnographic journey where self-reflective pedagogies lead to greater knowing and understanding of self and the work that define and determine where I've been, where I am at and where I am going.

Just as Gloria Ladson-Billings identifies as an "educational anthropologist" (2014, pg. 75), I, too, consider myself to be an educational anthropologist that explores how teaching and learning occurs in Black agrarian spaces as I learn from and with Black communities through asset and resilience lenses honoring the cultural fluidity of Black agrarian spaces. In "Racializing ethics and bearing witness to memory in research," Dillard (2009) insisted on the intentionality of many scholars of color choosing to explore research about connections to or within some version of an ancestral heritage, culture or homeplace due to feelings that imply a certain racial/cultural memory that make you ache "to desire to find the marriage of meaning and matter in our lives, in the world (Mountain Dreamer, 2005, p. 42, as cited in Dillard, 2009). Affirmatively, Madison (1993) extended this notion through her assertion that for life lived, people of color root our beginnings and root our understandings in the concrete pavement of inner-city streets or in the backwoods of a rural southern community and the early quotidian experience of the people we knew were our "first sight" and it is through them that we began to name and theorize the world. My grandfather's storytelling of sharecropping and farming in Virginia serves as the basis of theorizing my entry way (back) into Black agrarianism and the pedagogies that decode it.

I truly believe I did not fully appreciating the power of my grandfather's words until I began to embody the theories and methodologies that prior I had only been taught to think about – read and write about to make sense of what history books and empirical data told me. The feeling of incompleteness of my academic learning led me to hear a call that was probably sounding way before my hearing of it. Through the seeing with more than my eyes and hearing with more than my ears, for the first time during my academic training, I *felt* that call… to fully understand, not just know the "land as pedagogy." Following the prophecy of Audre Lorde, I recall that "what understanding begins to do is make knowledge available for use, and that's the urgency…" (p, 736). I was inundated with knowledge that I didn't fully begin to understand until I made room for my heart and hands within my inner pedagogy that was colonized by my head. Arguably, this is a process of gaining knowledge, or 'education', as a radical action or an act of defiance against conventional reality, in turn, defining the warrior (Alfred 2005).

Education stems from the Latin word "educarce", which means to draw out. So implicit in that definition is that there's something already in the learner and the learner is not a blank slate (Malik Yakini, 2017). Educating ourselves as retrieving our past selves is a process of coming into wisdom within "land as pedagogy" (Simpson, 2014) as part of an indigenous methodology and Sankofa as a diasporic methodology of "go back and fetch it" as a way to reconstitute the fragmented cultural past (Temple, 2010). The emphasis on "re" stresses going back to go forward. Ultimately, that is what research is, re-searching or re-examining what we think we may know or not know. Approximately mid-way through my academic

training, I realized through all the (over)intellectualizing, I did not know who I was or who I needed to be to the do the work that I thought needed to be done. Thus, I diligently and reflexivity narrate myself to continually find myself in the iterative spaces of time, place and space as an academic, mother, agrarian, artist, educator and organizer. This is a (re)creating because as Toni Morrison (1994) stated, "Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created."

Autoethnography as Method

Autoethnographies are highly personalized, revealing stories about authors' lived experiences, relating the personal to cultural (Richardson, 2003). Displaying multiple layers of consciousness, zooming forward and backward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred beyond distinct recognition (Bochner, 2000). The process of bringing readers into the author's text to interact with the narrative has been termed "autoethnographic vignettes" used to enhance representation and reflexivity in qualitative research (Humphreys, 2005, p. 840). First person voice is used to dispose of the norm of the anonymous essay by the voice from nowhere (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) theorizing abstractions for a passionate, personal and emotional portrayal of the real life experiences of the topic under inquiry: the author/researcher/participant/observer.

Fieldnotes that either unpack the baggage that researchers bring 'in the field' or the baggage accrued after being in external sites of inquiry are usually the focus of the method of analysis. Anthropologically speaking, the "*institution* of fieldnotes" (pg. 52) are the textual corpus produced by fieldwork and constituting raw or partly cooked descriptive

database for later synthesis (Clifford, 1990) and represents didactic instructional process of understanding how to transform lived experience into written text (Emerson, 2011). Positionally speaking, fieldnotes can represent the liminal balance between being an insider and outsider, being in the field and never of the field, the "betwixt and between" (Jackson, 1990, p. 9). Like the anthropologists in Jackson's (1990) study, my fieldnotes are a memory aide that helps to retrieve the graphic qualities that become the analysis rather than the fieldnotes themselves. After all, field notes are basically selective stories about what happened written from a particular viewpoint for a particular purpose (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

Unlike the "'[t]hick' ethnography" that provides a proxy experience for living in *another* culture, engaging its richness, picking up the threads and doing what members do which is supposed to generate new meanings from the same cultural repertoire (Gomm and Hammersley, 2001, pg. 3), this autoethnography is based on my standing in solidarity with *my* Black agrarian culture – the emic – and still on the margins – the etic. I (re)learn myself and my community through our cultural tropes. And, this is happening precisely at the very moment of my writing because "…writing is not just a mopping up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of "knowing" – a method discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it…" (Richardson, 2003, p. 923). In this way, it becomes an open place, a method of discovery (Richardson, 2003) and an opportunity to develop sense of self or voice in the process of research. In good faith, I fold in and out my fieldnotes to narrate myself.

The validity of narrating myself

The project of Black agrarian pedagogy as an inquiry of culturally-rooted, community-based education starting with and in the self-situated prompts making myself visible within the text. Making myself visible means narrating myself as I have narrated others throughout the inquiry. And, narrating myself leads to what Gloria Anzuldua and Cherrie Moranga (2005) call "theories of the flesh" considered to be the root metaphors and ideas about the world that both emerge from and "bridge contradictions of experiences" (p. 25). Theories of the flesh mean that the cultural, geopolitical, and economic circumstances of our lives engender particular experiences about epistemologies that provide philosophies or theories about reality different from those available to other groups (Anzaldua, 2005).

Similarly, Isasi-Diaz (2004) coined *"lo cotidiano"* as the everyday lived experience of Hispanas/Latinas to be the heart of a liberative praxis. Within the context of this "*mujerista* theology", it is clear though the narrative centers womxn, this is not womxns' knowledge alone, rather it is about an everyday, instinctual knowledge that stems from surviving and flourishing in the world. And, when we center our lives and our survival, we can use our knowledge of the erotic as power creatively (Lorde, 1984). The erotic is the nurturer of our deepest knowledge, the lifeforce of women that question not what we do, but actively and fully feeling in the doing. And, the doing of how we reclaim our languages, our histories, our loving, our work and our lives (Lorde, 1984). Thus, my personal experience of organizing and participating in agrarian educational spaces, writing my reflections of these experiences and learning about myself and others in the process became a central focus of the inquiry, for it has informed how I have theorized and analyzed the work at hand.

Through a Black feminist lens, Collins (1997) posited "standpoint theory" to explicate how knowledge – specifically group consciousness, self-definition and voice – remains central to maintaining and changing unjust systems of power within historically-shared group experiences located in hierarchal power relations. The validity of narrating my Black agrarian self hides under the wings of these methodological theories that insist on the power of personal lived experiences and cultural meaning making within and across groups as knowledge production.

In "Narrating the Self," Ochs and Capps (1996) theorizes narrative as bringing multiple and partial selves to life, interfacing self and society, constituting a resource for socializing emotions, attitudes, and identities, developing interpersonal relationships and constituting membership in a community. Prior to embarking on the 2 year period of what became my dissertation research, I meditated on a variety of questions that has informed my narrative: What is my burning desire? What do I want to know about myself? What can working with others teach me about myself? How does my story change as I take in and interact with their stories? These questions were the basis of me coming to understand myself in a way that will help me gain clarity on my role in social movements and how my intersectional being - as a mother, farmer, organizer, researcher - can be best utilized in struggles for a more loving world. Similar to the way Kwezens was affirmed by and through her Nishnaabeg community, I came to find myself and my connection to the work that sustains me and my community simultaneously.

I have come to construct meaning of the world and myself throughout my 9-year graduate training of learning academic theories and methodologies and simultaneously learning in community with grassroots organizations such as D-Town Farm of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), the Black Dirt Farm Collective, the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC), the Southeast African-American Organic Farmers Network (SAAFON), the Black Farmer Urban Gardeners (BUGS), the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC), Organización Boricuá de Agricultura EcologicaI and the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA). In all of my training time spent between the academy and the community, the knowledge I have acquired through working with and standing in solidarity with grassroots communities and their organizational mobilizing, strategizing and organizing pales in comparison to all my academic training. Similar to Wendell Paris, "a student of Fannie Lou Hamer University," my real education came from sitting at the feet of my community elders, clearing land for okra plantings, alchemizing food scraps into wholesome meals and learning to meditate conflict in community circles.

While developing my dissertation into a research journey, something that was meaningful beyond an ordinary project, my dissertation committee encouraged me to explore autoethnography as method. Through this process, I aim to write a narrative text where my self-teachings become an evocative text for others to explore how to teach themselves. The personal as political is the grounding for theory (Richardson, 2003) and my political voice, culture and experience became the site of inquiry.

Sankofa-nizing Myself

According to Julius Nyere in *Education for Self-Reliance*, "Our education must therefore inculcate a sense of commitment to the whole community and help the pupils to accept the values appropriate to our kind of future, not those appropriate to our colonial past." This educational process causes me to interrogate dualisms within educational research that emphasize the value of rationality over emotion, objectivity over interpretation and mind over body which reflect analogous value hierarchies that pit human crises against planetary distress. Through the inscription of and about myself in relation to others (land included), I regenerate myself beyond these false dichotomies by engaging in education as a recovery process, a regenerative reclaiming and an act of remembering. The critical need of such is voiced by Grace Lee Boggs (2012): "We are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great change in our ecological, economic, political and spiritual values." The ecocide and genocide crisis that settler agriculture has created prompts an educational process in which those most affected – and most resilient or more commonly known as "underserved" or "marginalized" – are connected to epistemic pedagogies that lead directly to ourselves as cultural workers and (re)creators. For "the revolution begins with the self, in the self" (Bambara, 2009) and "there is no other work but the work of creating and re-creating ourselves within the context of community" (Alexander, 2005, p. 283). How I Sankofa-nize the self through "land as pedagogy" (Simpson, 2014) poignantly couples how we come to know through remembering and returning to ourselves as cultural workers adorned with whole body self-determination of our head, heart and hands in pedagogical communion. For it is because, we lack sovereignty over our bodies that we often operate in a Cartesian,

unemotive state. In fact, Western ways of knowing ad being remain dominant in our brokenness.

The Black agrarian pedagogy of D-Town Farm, as an ethnographic case study, has illuminated this phenomena in multiple ways along with other reflective community experiences. Thus, the codification of this self-inscription is embellished with stories from my ethnographic memories, or methodically speaking, ethnographic fieldnotes. Memories are valid here as they are intimate, personal, shapers of identity and deeply embedded in teaching and research (Dillard, 2009).

An overarching motif within the variously described autoethnographic themes is the process of "Formación" driving my personal Sankofa-nizing process. My knowledge of this concept comes from my brief encounters with the agroecology and food sovereignty movements in Cuba, more specifically the organizers with La Via Campesina (LVC). It translates literally into English as training or formation and involves a deep social vision of strategy that refers to the construction of a better human being through the cyclical dialogue of "critical reflections and actions" (Snipstal, 2015). This form of training is centered upon the constant and consistent elevation of the political and critical consciousness of activists and leaders. Just as the land became both the context and process (Simpson, 2014) in the pedagogical act of "coming to know", my mind, body and spirit became the context and process through which I Sankofa-nize myself. This cyclical dialogue has been an iterative journey of chasing my humanity, using research as a mothering process, feeling my memories and affirming my intersectional identities understanding

through a dialogo de saberes (dialogue of knowledges). With each acting as a bread crumb, each thematic experience synthesize into a trail that ultimately led to Sankoa-nizing myself through the indigenous process of "land as pedagogy."

Chasing my humanity

As Angela Davis stated, to be radical means to grasp things from the root. I've come to see how not only centering the grassroots' goals, ideologies and ways of knowing but literally opening up my head, hand and heart to fully understand the research topic and the world surrounding it meant undergoing the research process as a journey of chasing my humanity. In describing the reimagined relationship of Black people to the great outdoors Finney (2014) posited, stories of Black life often reflect the experiential struggle to be full human beings in spite of the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. More than anything else, my experiential learnings working in community with Black agrarians has demonstrated the praxis of humanity, or what it means to be authentically human through our intellectual, emotional, physical and psychological pursuits of knowledge and well-being.

During the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC) Agroecology Encounter, during the summer of 2017, Janie Dickson, a Black farmer in Mississippi, shared about "going through together," as a prime Black agrarian tenet based on her experiences as a child and young adult. She explained how the lack of money and lack of knowledge created circumstances that necessitated farm families to develop systematized work shares in the farm community. For example, during tobacco season, families routed labor through each other's farm. Monday at one farm, Tuesday at another farm and so on. When making quilts,

the women would go around to each other's houses sewing quilts and the hosting house provided food. The women quilted while the men chopped wood. The men would go from house to house cutting wood ensuring each family had what they needed to get through the winter. It was a way to help each other and build each other up. This concept of "going through together" characterized relationship building in Black agrarian communities. It also spoke to the pedagogical environment that emphasized collective work and knowledge sharing through convivial comradery and reciprocity.

After learning about this process through the powerful stories the farmers shared about that often sustained the farm, I began to think about how humanity was so present in the historical Black agrarian pedagogies. Synchronously, I had been thinking about my humanity (or lack thereof) in relation to my research and desiring to learn more about participatory research methodologies as a way to be more fully human. What did it mean to do research, not just morally or ethically, but to really do research in ways that materially translated to building trust and reciprocity and facilitating joy and pleasure in (academic) systems that may not, by default, be designed for such? This desire and interrogation led me to chasing my humanity through the research paradigms that I subscribed to and how I chose to do 'the work.'

Notably, TallBear (2014) argued for building knowledge beyond dualistic and hierarchal relationships to more reciprocal ones through shared conceptual ground. Critiquing the liberal research model in the imperialistic academy through a feminist-indigenous approach to inquiry, she urged this as process of "standing with" rather than "giving back."

Even within social justice or 'alternative' research paradigms like participatory research methodologies and the like, the charity model of giving back to communities through one-off actions that draw clear lines of delineation between academic researchers and the grassroots permeate even the most radical, well-intentioned spaces. This is why Sylvia Wynter (1984) argues our academic disciplines are not enough and we need to re-write the academic order to reflect humanism and "the ceremony must be found after humanism" (p. 19). The findable ceremony she speaks of is about the sacred re-writing of the order of inter-relationality and the epistemes 'below' Eurocentrism.

Like how the radical thinking and action, and ultimately learning, that accompanies "land as pedagogy" stories where the intuitive observation, curiosity and reciprocity take place within the reproduction of a loving web of Nishnaabeg networks (Simpson, 2014), the chasing and repetitious retrieval of my humanity meant doing anything and everything that needed to be done to move the work forward that may or may not be directly tied the research goals and objectives. For example, my role as a researcher could not constrict me to presumed tasks of administering surveys, writing grants or drafting reports. Standing in solidarity or to "stand with" (TallBear, 2014) communities of inquiry also meant entertaining young children while their parents completed a task, providing car rides to those in need, preparing meals for community gatherings when we didn't have the funds to hire catering, making phone calls to obtain quotes for marketing materials or just giving a hug to someone in need. In these ways, I can only hope that I have grasped at the root by responding to the felt needs of my communities I am not merely researching but actively building knowledge and relationships to extend into broader life networks beyond what

the academy has deemed as valuable – signed interview consent forms, rich data matrices and published journal articles.

In the words of Toni Cade Bombara, it's the community who I want to name me and it's the community I want to be accountable too." Teaching myself how to be accountable and trustworthy to the communities that I stand with is not just about learning to progress upward in the mythical meritocratic ladder, rather it's about giving my heart to the communities that I work with understanding that this work is an emotional investment and a "labor of love." Just as the mechanics of reducing maple sap to sugar may be part of the "land as pedagogy" story, it's not the underlying value or meaning. Relatedly, the pedagogical relationships and remembrances gained through the research is what is most important.

In a society that is predicated on my inhumanity, working, researching and overall learning with and through the land in community with others radically leads me *back* to my humanity. The sentiment of humanity is explicitly expressed by Simpson (2014):

> Education comes from the roots up, from being enveloped by land… You can't graduate from Nishnaabewin; it is a gift to be practiced and reproduced… Human existence is ultimately dependent upon intimate relationships of reciprocity, humility, honesty and respect with all elements of creation, including plants and animals (p. 9).

Through the experiential process of chasing my humanity, learning about practical theories such as "going through together" and cyclically reflecting through writing, I've come to know that my work is not to prove my worth but simply revel in my own humanity and divine nature, moving in and towards what affirms and salutes my wholeness in any way I can. My narrative has lead me to more authentic feelings, beliefs and actions and ultimately to a more authentic sense of life (Ochs and Capps, 1996) and has helped me remember love as both a way of being in the world, and as a principled response to the social and ecological problems we face (Analayo, 2015; Makransky, 2007). Chasing (my) humanity as a pedagogical tool has led me to research as a mothering process.

Research as Mothering

In "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers," Bernice Reagon (1986) theorized the connection to mothering, as she sees in nature, to that of cultural work and research. She stated:

> Many times when we think of nurturing life, we think of a healthy mother who comes with food that is best for her baby… Utilizing the mothering mode as a way of analyzing data for the quality of a relationship is good because it affords the researcher the potential of examining the phenomenon from the range of the ideal… It can also handle the situations of exploitation, where the experience in which a group might find themselves is like a baby taking milk from the mother's breast that might seem that in using the mothering process as a method of analyzing data...

> Black women from the Diaspora, with our PhDs, who used the struggle and history of our people as data to get our Ph.D.'s, who offer our people's stories up for the highest salary, for assistant, associate, and full professorships, for tenure… We can choose to be mother, nurturing and transforming." (Reagon, 1986, pg. 86 & 88)

Chasing my humanity and ultimately using research as a resiliency building tool for those of us most affected by societally-crafted ills, sort of shepherded me into understanding mothering as transformative research process for myself as the researcher. Mothers creatively balance between providing affirmational and transformational love (hooks, 2000). Not only did I strive to mother others through research, but I also learned to mother myself by feeding humanity back to myself.

During one of the D-Town farm staff meetings, I experienced, for one of the first times in my relationship with the D-Town Farm community, what it meant to be lovingly held as I strived to lovingly hold others in and through my research. I was struck by how open and intimate everyone's check-in was at the beginning of the meeting. Some shared about the grief of their first-born leaving home to attend an out-of-state college and working through relationship problems with their girlfriend and being overwhelmed with wearing too many hats between personal and work life. This was a testament to the trust and comfort that existed between the farm staff and it was a bit uncomfortable for me at first given how different it felt from academic and, even some other community organizing spaces. Rather than surface-level, overgeneralized check-ins like "I'm well" statements. The emotional

depth within what people shared as their introduction to the community space literally took my breath away. There was no fear in being themselves and sharing their deepest thoughts and emotions. I saw this as a form of storytelling that bonded people not just in the head, but the heart as well.

In response, I reciprocated by opening up about my struggle of vulnerably sharing given my socialization to remain guarded as a survival tool, to not show any weakness to those who could use it against me. Such has been my experience in the academy and other spaces and reflects, again, our lack of humanity. In contrast to this feeling of individualism and stoic relations, the D-Town Farm community among others such as the Black Dirt Farm Collective have taught me how being vulnerable and showing appreciation and gratitude for one another nurtures and transforms us. Thus, this is how my research and community work, generally, has mothered me *back* to my humanity.

Like Kwezens who came to learn and *came to know* maple sugar in the context of love by learning *from and with the land* with the support of her family and "Elders" (Simpson, 2014), I came to learn and know what it truly meant to build loving community through the intentionality of building trust, reciprocity, intimacy, cooperation and conviviality. Perhaps I could have only learned about the feeling of cultural solidarity where self, community and land are center because as W.E.B. DuBois stated, "what the Negro needs, therefore, of the world and civilization, he must largely teach himself; what he learns of social organization and efficiency, he must learn from his own people. His conceptions of social uplift and philanthropy must come from within his own ranks..." (DuBois, 1973, p. 56). Learning from

the inside with others who I can identify with – mothers, farmers, organizers, educators, etc. – took me further than any other pedagogical process of teaching myself about myself would have done.

With tremendous humility, I continue to strive towards mothering myself and my community through and in research. In the spirit of "lo cotidiano," and "standpoint theory," I believe in the recovery of ourselves, our communities and collective work to be a mothering process, a rematriation, rather than repatriation. In the midst of massive ecocide and genocide, "…we can choose to be mothers, nurturing and transforming a new space for a new people in a new time" (Reagon, 1986, pg. 89). The pedagogical mothering has been key in my narrative because as the feminist poet, nayyirah waheed, tweeted (@nayyirahwaheed): "the greatest teacher will send you back to yourself." Sometimes, within teaching and learning myself, to go back meant honing the power of memory.

Feeling my memories

The radicalness of grasping at the root escorted me to my feelings, not just thinking my memories but literally embodying and feeling them as fully as possible. "We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering. Memories offer us a world where there is no death, where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection" (hooks, 2009). Essentially, memories are a form of spiritual knowing, reclaiming the past in the present towards the future. Arguably speaking to this phenomena, Simpson (2014) discussed Nishnaabeg knowledge originating in the spiritual realm, coming to individuals through dreams, visions, ceremony. These are the places where ancestors reside, where spiritual

beings exist, and where the spirits of living plants, animals and humans interact. Ceremony, ritual and the embodiment of the teachings grant access to this ordered knowledge (Henderson 2000 as cited in Simpson, 2014). Thus, our memories guide us to what "we have collectively forgotten so deep that we have even forgotten that we have forgotten" (Alexander, 2005, pg. 14).

Just by living in the white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy (hooks, 2013), I had forgotten what it meant to fully feel as a source of knowledge. A Cartesian socialization taught me that emotion had no place in the discourse and representation of knowledges. Initially operating under the premise of learning by doing as a way to fully feel the work proved in adequate with my first job post-undergraduate studies where I finally had the opportunity to apply my degree in agricultural sciences as an urban farm educator in my hometown of Philadelphia, PA with the Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI). This practical agricultural education considered to be a learning-by-doing experience for all and a "[d]ynamic educational process based on experiential learning and community problem solving" (UNI, 2002 Quoted in Nembhard 2014, pg. 229) didn't quite help me understand and fully feel the knowledge I had acquired within the goals of meritocracy. In all of the grassroots power and practical application of knowledge, I still wasn't feeling. And, I didn't start feeling until I began to connect the work to my ancestral memories – my grandfather's words. I began to embody the work through the active tilling of the soil or emotively investing in the work beyond what research protocols advised while building knowledge and community through a whole body self-determination. Reassuringly, Dillard (2009) argues for our unlimited capacity for all kinds of memory: sensory, physical, spiritual,

emotional, and cultural. Catalyzed by my grandfather's words as physical memory, the emotional and sensory grounded me in the spiritual that induced deeper meaning for the cultural. Some would argue this as an imaginative act.

Andreotti (2018) discussed the health of imagination in the midst of "Western humanism" – the house. She stated,

> This is another problem of the house, that it numbs our senses. We don't have five senses, we have 99. That's the idea that we can sense and feel much more than we are allowed to within the house… then you need also intellectual surrender – the best way I think we can talk about it is allowing the land to dream through you, so allowing the imagination to open to the collective entanglement with things, and not thinking it's an individual task. It is something that comes through you. Indigenous people would say it's through your ancestors, but the ancestors are not only human, and they are not only those who have come before. They are also those yet to come, because it's a cyclical thing.

Through the feeling of my memories facilitated by the explorations described above, I became reacquainted with my imagination. Memory is an awakening, an opening to the spirit of something that has been asleep within (Dillard, 2009). Parham (2009) coins this a type of "rememory" that haunts us. She argued this is a processes of the "self unconsciously

accepting the self in its arrival from another time and from another place" (2009, p. 8). My personal experience taught me that this inheritance can only be "rememoried" in a ghostly experience of deep reflexivity of collectively working the land and seeing beyond what my eyes literally see and feeling beyond what my hands literally feel. Million (2009) theorized felt experiences as community knowledges that interactively inform her scholarly position because histories are felt just as much as they are thought. In 'talking back' to the Cartesian philosophy of knowledge production, Audre Lorde (1984) stated: "The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us – the poet – whispers in our dream: I feel, therefore I can be free" (p. 38).

Drawing upon "felt knowledge" awakened me to things I might have knew but not fully understood in theory and practice. So much remembering is embodied and embodiment functions as a pathway to knowledge "whose intelligibility relies on the social – the spiritual expertise of a community to decode Sacred knowledge" (Alexander, 2005, p. 298). Iteratively, these memory processes guided me to places where I needed to (re)affirm my intersectional identities through a "diálogo de saberes" (dialogue of knowledges).

Affirming my intersectional identities through a "diálogo de saberes" (dialogue of knowledges)

People's lived experiences, identities and values aren't distinct academic categories and rarely fit into singular theories of human behavior. "We come to know ourselves as we use narrative to apprehend experiences and navigate relationships with others" (Ochs and Capps, 1996, p. 21). My intersectional identities that evolve over place and time informed

how I engage in research with Black agrarian communities. My identities shape the work and the work shaped my identities. According to Madison (1993), it is the work we do that defines our existence and contributes to our cultural and self-identity which fulfills us as we believe we are creating something "through transforming our labor" (Freire, 1970, as cited in Madison, 1993, p. 229).

The transformation of my rote, intellectual work into embodied, emotionally meaningful work was also catalyzed by recovering parts of myself that have been silenced and ignored in my academic training. For instance, recommitting to my artistry as a violinist and a poet has breathed new life into how I view, position and value myself in and beyond the academy. I am not just a researcher or a researcher first with everything falling behind that. I am everything that I want to be in horizontal relations – mother, agrarian, artist, researcher, educator, organizer and more. Reviving the artistry within myself has opened up baggage I didn't realize I was carrying. I have (re)learned the intersections between musical creation and soil work, poetic writing and climatic seasonal attunement and academic research and knowledge of self. Actively practicing these coupled tropes has been a dialogic process, more specifically a "diálogo de saberes" or dialogue of knowledges (Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2014).

Originating with the transnational rural social movement, La Via Campesina (LVC) that I learned about while building with agroecological peasants in the country sides of Puerto Rico and Cuba, it serves as a horizontal dialogue among different ways of knowing and experiences. Essentially, it promotes commonality in various ways of knowing and being as

ripe ground to build unified visions and action plans while still retaining the plurality of perspectives feeding the container. In "Land as Pedagogy," Simpson (2014) confirmed the room for all kinds of knowledges necessary in a communal and emergent balance. She stated, "If bell hooks or Frantz Fanon speaks to my heart as a Nishnaabekwe, as both do, then Nishnaabeg intelligence compels me to learn, share and embody everything I can from every teacher that presents themselves to me" (p. 16). Differences or divergences – cultural, personal, ideological, political – are often perceived to be contentions. However, they are only contentions when not understood as sources of strength to be celebrated and honored (Lorde, 1980). According to Tuck (2008), contention is a process of individual and collective self-education. When attentive to multiple temporalities and materialities, we provoke complex instantiations for wholeness.

For example, 'Standing with' D-Town Farm in line with my various identities often reminded me of the "we, not I" relationship that exist between myself as a researcher and the farm community. At moments when I would say "y'all", I received loving correction and critique from the farm staff about my internal, diverse membership in the circle. I was continuously told, "You are part of us!" The "diálogo de saberes" helped me fully understand what it meant to straddle both emic and etic positionalities within the "we" framework that validated my continuing, dialogic and non-essentialized aspects of identity. I no longer mistake the "we" for the "I." In the spirit of self-liberation, we should never have to choose between who we need to be, in any given moment. Abundantly, my intersectional identities nurtured through dialogic reaffirmations have been key in remembering,

knowing and being in a Black agrarian world sowed with struggles and triumphs of land as liberation.

- Chasing my humanity
- Research as Mothering
- Affirming my intersectional identities through a "diálogo de saberes" (dialogue of knowledges)
- Knowing Through Self, Land and Community

Knowing Through Self, Land and Community

My self-reflected and self-inscribed journey has been laden with the present being an egg laid by the past that had the future inside its shell (Hurston, 1939). I continue to be in deep gratitude to my humanity that evades me continuously, my emotive memories that have reminded me endlessly, my mothering that has nurtured me unconditionally and my identities that have constituted me creatively. Sankofa-nizing myself through "land as pedagogy" meant "coming to know" who I am in relation to the communities that have held me. As a learner-led and spiritually-oriented (Simpson, 2014) process, it is the intervention of shifting from knowledge to understanding (Lorde, 1984). Like Kwezens in the "land as pedagogy" (Simpson, 2014), I learned from and with the land as I learned to trust myself and my communities in the pursuit of a whole body intelligence of "coming to know" (Simpson, 2014). This whole body intelligence is connected to what I see as kind of whole body self-determination where our minds, bodies and spirits actively and fully commune to teach us the old and new, familiar and unfamiliar. I diligently work to not be 'one of those' academics too busy reading than revolting, developing theories *about* revolutions for

someone else to fight, keeping quiet and smiling back to those who we claim to lift up. There is another way, another knowledge that presents itself to me every time I chase my humanity, use research as a mothering process, feel my memories and affirm my intersectional identities through a dialogo de saberes (dialogue of knowledges).

Like Kwezens, I come to know myself as a "cultural worker," preparing ourselves to recover the lost, stolen and ignored wisdom rooted in our relations to each other and the land. This is coming into wisdom within a Sankofa methodology as a way to historicize the past, present and future simultaneously with the land – as teacher – held lovingly in our heads, hearts and hands. In this way, the land becomes both the context and process (Simpson, 2014), seen and unseen, know and perhaps not fully understood.

My allegiance is and will forever be to the communities that have brought me to where I am now. It was working the soil and the relationships cultivated while working the soil that I am here doing this work in this particular way. They are my muse and by seeing myself part of them I understand the evolving meaning of a transformed world predicated on myself as a transformed individual. Within my Black agrarian pedagogical praxis, I am learning to teach from a place of knowing myself more confidently and reassuringly, for the recovery of Black agrarian pedagogies can start with the recovery of the self. It is because of deeply rooted selves that cultures and traditions thrive and can be recovered at all. Thus, within my personal Black agrarian pedagogical praxis, I incessantly ask myself, "who am I?"

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