

**THE STORYTELLER'S GRANDDAUGHTXR: (RE)ENVISIONING
METHODOLOGIES FOR HEALING AND LIBERATION**

By

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ABSTRACT

THE STORYTELLER'S GRANDDAUGHTXR: (RE)ENVISIONING METHODOLOGIES FOR HEALING AND LIBERATION

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My dissertation is an arts-based embodiment, in the form of an exhibition in the LookOut Gallery of Snyder-Phillips Hall at Michigan State University (MSU). This exhibition is the culmination of my interdisciplinary auto-ethnographic dissertation study, within which I utilize Black feminist-womanist storytelling methodology (Baker-Bell, 2017) and Black womxn's literacies of critical self-reflection, art-making, and Afrofuturist dreaming to articulate my own Black womxn's standpoint (Collins, 2002). This collection is an inquiry, a piecing together of quilting, collage, speculative fiction, my story, and the intergenerational stories of other Black womxn and femmes to consider the ways our ancestors, identities, and embodied knowledges inform our method(ologie)s of sustainability, healing, and liberation.*

Keywords: womanist, Black feminist, storytelling, interdisciplinary, auto-ethnography

*Throughout my work, I use an “x” in words such as womxn, mothxrs & othermothxrs to disrupt binary conceptualizations of gendered identities, and to be inclusive of the diverse range of queer and gendered identities and experiences.

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It is because of all of you that I am here today, not only surviving, but also learning to thrive. It is because of each of you that I have learned to fly once more and take flight.

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INTRODUCTION

Bio

Figure 1:

Photograph: Portrait of Liv



Olivia “Liv” Furman (they/them) is a Black non-binary womanist artist//educator//researcher//doctoral graduate studying on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – the Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. Their work currently explores the significance of embodied knowledges, memory, storytelling, and the arts in practices of teaching, learning, critical self-reflection, self-healing, and self-expression. Each piece they create artfully stories the fluidity and intimate complexities of their identities, difficult emotions, memories, and interactions with other people and/or artifacts. In this process of piecing together they utilize digital and textile materials, including collected/recycled paper, personal photos, ceramics, poetry, symbols, quotes, and other materials to make meaning, to share stories, and to heal. Their primary mediums include multimedia and digital collage, ceramics, quilting, and the written and spoken word. Liv is also an avid gardener, singer, and practicing musician.

A Letter of Introduction

Dear Community,

First, I would like to thank you all for joining me in this dissertation journey. My interactions with each of you, in your office hours, impromptu conversations, classes, and your engagements with my art/scholarship/work, has helped me become the scholar I am today. Thank you for teaching me and supporting me throughout my time at MSU. I appreciate you! More than you know.

I take up this practice of letter writing as a celebration and embodiment of Black womxn's ways of being and knowing, inspired by Marcelle Haddix, Sherell A. McArthur, Gholnecsar E. Muhammad, Detra Price-Dennis, and Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, the incredible Sista scholars of the Black Girls' Literacies Collective. In this letter, and throughout the exhibition, I use an "x" in words such as womxn, mothxrs & othermothxrs to disrupt binary conceptualizations of gendered identities, and to be inclusive of the diverse range of queer and gendered identities and experiences. Similarly, I use the term Black rather than African American, to be inclusive of the experiences and identities of those within the African diaspora.

The remainder of this letter will provide some background and an introduction for my dissertation study. It is important that I note that the following stories include topics of self-harm, depression, and anxiety.

I will start by telling you a story from my youth.

Throughout my childhood I was identified as a Black girl. I have always been a blue child. I was typically quiet (unless I was in the company of trusted loved ones), introspective, and showed my emotions without restraint. I felt free as I used my thick, sturdy limbs to climb up trees, on monkey bars or swings, and walking through my granny's garden. I loved exploring

the world through my messy encounters outdoors, or through the pages of a book. I hated the feelings of being controlled, coerced, or forced into compliance. Unfortunately, and largely (I think) informed by my upbringing in a Black, conservative, Christian family in the American South, I felt the structures of control being enacted on my body and life daily. This often led to outbursts of pain and sadness; I cried more days than I could count. I distracted myself from the overwhelming feelings of sadness by putting my hands to work with tinkering and making things, wandering outdoors, or with wonderful stories of other people having their own adventures. But every now and again, the heavy feelings would bubble up, pierce the surface of my exterior, and make themselves known.

One day in particular, when I was 15, in a moment of overwhelm, frustration, and sadness from some emotional encounter with my parents, I took a sewing needle from the kit in my room and held it over a lighter's flame. I waited until it turned red hot, then pressed and dug the searing metal into the skin and meat of my left wrist. I dug that needle in my flesh again and again, until the pain I felt on my arm matched the festering agony I felt within my spirit.

I was not ready for the pain of hot metal on flesh and fingers, nor was I ready for the sound that met my ears. I learned that day that human skin sizzles, crackles, and pops like meat in a skillet when it is branded. Some days I can still hear the sound when I look down and graze my fingers across the fading scars left on my arm.

I heated and dragged that searing hot needle across my wrist seven more times that day. In the end I was left with bloodstained tools and the question plaguing my mind now branded and cut into my skin..."Why?"...

I sit here today with the same question in my mind. My troubles have changed, but the question has remained the same. Why? Why do I feel this way? Why will the words not come?

Why can't I overcome the thoughts in my mind? Why can't I write anymore? Why does everything seem so hard? Why is this happening... to me...AGAIN?!?! I believe that my reason for asking, begging, the question of Why? was the same over a decade ago as it is now.

14 years ago I felt unseen, unheard, and silenced by those who had authority over my life. All I wanted to do was read what I wanted, play in the band, make music with my friends, and dance in the colorguard. Then suddenly, I felt they were all stripped from me by my parents in the name of a Christian education. This overwhelming feeling of loss, coupled with the depression I have experienced since I was a child, left me feeling helpless and alone. So, I did what I always do. I put tools in my hand and made clear the thoughts, feelings, and emotions in my mind.

I think it is somewhat ironic that I used a needle to harm myself and burn that word into my skin. My body knew I needed that tool, but the pain within me drove me to take it up for another purpose. Today, I still take up my sewing needles and words express my thoughts. But, now I use them to create and embody the truths and love I have come to know, in a different way.

In this study, I return to literacies taught to me in my childhood; the literacies of reading, writing, sewing, quilting, making and listening to music, dancing, and cooking to care for myself and my loved ones. These literacies were taught to me by the Black womxn in my life. My first teachers were my mother, Nettie Lee Doss, and my grandmother, Mary Frances Furman. I learned from countless other teachers through my engagements with personal life encounters, written and visual stories, and various forms of media. It has been my practice//embodiment//development of these literacies within my daily life and scholarship, as well as my relationships with loved ones, that has enabled me to not only continue living, but also to learn to flourish, thrive, and even fly.

In this dissertation study, I am purposefully and unapologetically embodying//connecting// developing//exploring these literacies so that I may care for myself and once again take flight in my teaching and learning. Within this study I will engage with the people and artifacts who/that have been most influential in my development of a Black womxn's standpoint, grounded in Collins' (2002) conceptualization of Black feminist epistemologies and Black woman's standpoint.

Within her critical conceptualization of Black feminist epistemology, Collins (2002) engages the experiences of Black feminist women scholars and identifies a disjuncture between our epistemological standards and the standards forwarded by dominant groups within the academy. Collins (2002) continues by positing that all Black feminist women scholars who experience this disjuncture of epistemological standards face the same dilemma within their scholarship. This dilemma, she states, is that "a knowledge claim that meets the criteria of adequacy for one group and thus is judged to be acceptable may not be translatable into the terms of a different group" (Collins, 2002, p. 268). In short, some truths just don't translate between the epistemological realities of different, and often conflicting, worldviews.

For Black feminist and womanist womxn scholars in Teacher Education Programs (TEPs), this conflict of epistemological translation often occurs within our learning, teaching, and research. For me, this conflict exists between my unique embodiments of Black feminist and womanist epistemologies and the dominant Eurocentric, colonial, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal epistemologies that ground mainstream notions of teaching, learning, and research. Within my graduate studies here at Michigan State University, this conflict has not only disrupted my scholarship, but has negatively impacted my physical, mental, and emotional health as well; my participation in this space has come at a great cost.

While trying to embody myself within dominant frameworks of educational writing and research, I spent countless hours fruitlessly trying to articulate personal knowledge claims into the dominant epistemological constructions of research using analytical academic language, sprinkled with my stories. Ever a perfectionist, I struggled when I was unable to find the words to describe the truths I knew and embodied daily. Each time I confronted this dilemma of conflicting epistemological standards, my struggle progressed to frustration, my frustration fueled my anxiety, and in turn my anxiety fed my depression. I missed countless due dates, cried in almost every empty corner of Erickson Hall (and at a few office desks too), and experienced panic attacks and insomnia regularly for the first time in my life. Throughout the worst of it, I barely left my bed. I closed myself off from my friends, my family, my studies, and most of the world. I endlessly asked myself, how could I, or even would I, go on?

After identifying the dilemma that Black feminist women scholars face within dominant Eurocentric, colonial, white supremacist, capitalist, and patriarchal spaces of academia, Collins notes that this dilemma is only that: a dilemma. A dilemma is a difficult situation, but not an impossible one.

Moreover, Collins (2002) writes that once this dilemma is faced, more fruitful opportunities are able to materialize. Specifically, Collins (2002) posits:

Once Black women scholars face the notion that on certain dimensions of a Black women's standpoint, it may be fruitless to try to translate into other frameworks truths validated by Black feminist epistemology, then other choices emerge. Rather than trying to uncover universal knowledge claims that can withstand the translation from one epistemology to another (initially, at least), Black women intellectuals might find efforts to rearticulate a Black women's standpoint especially fruitful. Rearticulating a Black

women's standpoint refashions the particular and reveals the more universal human dimensions of Black women's everyday lives. (p. 268)

With this statement, Collins highlights the possibilities that are afforded to Black womxn scholars who face the dilemma of translation, a dilemma of incongruous worldviews//epistemological-foundations, and decide to unapologetically embody their own truths, without translation. When Black feminist womxn scholars work toward articulating our own Black womxn's standpoint, we are able to fully embody the universal truths that defy translation, and more intimately engage the particular, the aspects of our daily lives which embody universal truths about humanness, life, and being.

That is exactly what my dissertation is about: returning to and reflecting on the people, things, and ideas that comprise my developing Black womxn's standpoint, so that I may speak truth, bear fruit, and do the work my soul must have. Within this educational inquiry, I utilize Black feminist-womanist storytelling methodology (Baker-Bell, 2017) and Black womxn's literacies, namely my identity informed literacies of storytelling, journaling, collage making, and quilting, within the content and form of each stage of my methodological process. I invite and make space for the womxn who agree to join me in this journey, during virtual storytelling conversations, to take up these literacies, as well as their own unique identity informed literacies, so that they too can engage in their own processes of knowledge building and sense making. Thus together, we will follow in the footsteps of our sistax who used their unique ways of being and knowing to care for, liberate, and heal themselves and their communities.

I end with a word of truth from Audre Lorde (1984):

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. (p. 112)

Much love,

Liv

Figure 2:

Photograph: Picture of the Letter of Introduction Quilt in the LookOut Gallery



Reflection Question:

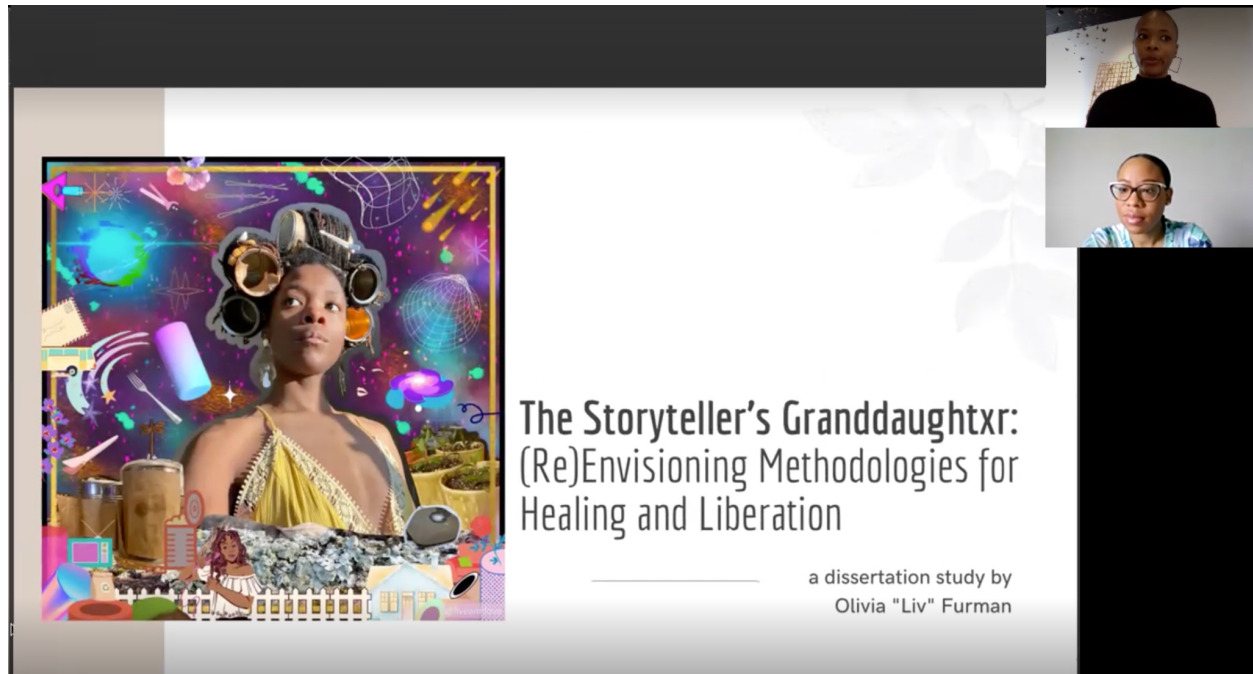
Consider your own experiences within school spaces. How have these experiences informed your conceptualizations about what it means to be a learner, teacher, and/or researcher?

[illegible]

Method(ologie)s, Background, and a (Re)introduction

Figure 3:

Photograph: Screenshot of Storytelling Conversation Video with Dr. Candace Smith



Storytelling Conversation with Dr. Candace Smith: Video Description

This video is a storytelling conversation between Dr. Smith and I. In this conversation I provide an in-depth overview of my work as we story our experiences within spaces of higher education. Links to the video and supplementary materials have been listed below.

- Link to Video: (Video Length: 1:59:44) https://michiganstate-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/r/personal/furmanol_msu_edu/Documents/Dissertation%20Work%20Overview%20Storytelling%20Conversation%20with%20Candace.mp4?csf=1&web=1&e=9hgEWJ
- Slides Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1su-YFNJuAzTz5gbxsQ-SJosDE5W8ydCi/view?usp=sharing>

The questions guiding this educational inquiry are as follows:

- What does (my) teaching, learning, and research look like when grounded in Black womxn's ways of being and knowing, specifically Black feminist and womanist epistemologies and ontologies?
- How can engaging this question contribute to my own self-healing and experiences of joy and care within my teaching, learning, and research?
- (In what ways) Can engaging this question forward joy, care, and/or healing for other Black womxn and girls, and others, within school spaces?
- What are the unique affordances of utilizing my artful//art-based literacies within each state of my methodological process of research?

The epistemologies, ontologies, literacies, and methodological frameworks, or -ologies, grounding this educational inquiry are as follows:

- Methodologies
 - Black Feminist-Womanist Storytelling Methodology (Baker-Bell, 2017)
 - Critical Race Theory, Storytelling & Counterstories (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002)
- Epistemologies & Ontologies
 - Womanism (Walker, 1983)
 - Black Feminism (Combahee River Collective, 1977; Collins, 2002)
- Literacies
 - African American Female Literacies (Richardson, 2003)
 - Black Girls' Literacies Framework (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016)

STORYTELLING CONVERSATIONS WITH 5 BLACK WOMXN//FEMMES

The body of my interdisciplinary auto-ethnographic dissertation study, within which I utilize Black feminist-womanist storytelling methodology (Baker-Bell, 2017), is in response to 2 primary forms of *engagements* (as opposed to data collection): 1) storytelling conversations with 5 Black womxn//femmes, and 2) auto-ethnographic critical self-reflection. Within this section is a collection of texts and images created in response-to/conversation-with my storytelling conversations with 5 Black womxn//femmes. Each of the artfully crafted storytelling artifacts on the pages that follow are sensemaking outgrowths from these conversations.

Reflection Question:

What sensemaking processes, or literacies, do you utilize to reflect on your life experiences?

Storytelling Conversation with Camille: Schooling Experiences & Self-Care

The two creative artifacts//embodiments, *Second Rising: Tarot Card* and *Test Day*, were created in response to my storytelling conversation with Camille. Each artifact artfully embodies truths and ideas from our conversation, past experiences, and our current, past, and (speculative) future sociopolitical realities.

Second Rising: Tarot Card

Figure 4:

Digital Collage: Second Rising: Tarot Card Inspired by Storytelling Conversation with Camille



Test Day: A Speculative Fiction Artifact

My legs are dragging slowly under me and I do not know why. It's as if I'm wading through thick cloying mud up to my knees. I want to run but can't seem to pick up my feet with enough force to make them move any faster. I'm late to class today, pushing through crowds and crowds of students. No one seems to want to let me by and panic starts to set in as I realize that I can't find my classroom and that time is running out.

I look down to beg my legs to pick up the pace. "Please move!" I whisper, trying not to draw attention from anyone around me. All the while, the thought, "I can't be late. I can't be late!" pulses through my mind. As I'm looking down pleading with my legs, I bump into a guy on his phone and he drops it on the ground. He bends to retrieve his precious device, then looks back up at me with glaring eyes. "Watch it, stupid," he sneers, and suddenly the students around him start to stare at me angrily as well. I offer a genuine but awkward apology and back away from the growing mass of peering eyes.

I move on as quickly as my legs will carry me and begin to rummage through my backpack looking for the homework that is due in class. If I can get to it before the bell rings and get it turned in, everything will be fine. As I rummage through my bag and continue trying to find the classroom door, my mind drifts back to last night's dinner. My mom had decided to read an email reply she received from my teacher, Mrs. Straight. Mom read every scathing word of the email in front of my dad and brothers at the dinner table, her usual method for delivering family updates, hoping it would give me a wakeup call to do better. She had her sights on getting all three of her kids into elite, preferably ivy-league, colleges with full-ride scholarships. This would make us the first Black family from our school to achieve such an accomplishment. She

was determined that nothing could get in the way of her reaching this self-imposed goal. Especially not me.

In the email, Mrs. Straight made reference to my failing grades on the last two tests and blatantly told my mother that I did not belong in the class. The message was short and curt. One sentence exactly. After reading the notice from Mrs. Straight, Mom not-so-lightly recommended that my older brother help me study for the class so that I could perform better on the tests and class assignments...just as he did. I winced at Mom's reminder of his endless brilliance, feeling the sting of purposefully spilled salt on my already wounded ego.

I remind myself that I need to prove them wrong as I rummage for my homework in my bag. At the very least, I need to do well on this test so that I can keep my scholarship to college in the fall and get the heck out of here. I have to make it! I just have to.

I finally find the paper and zip up my bag just as I make it to the door of my science class. I quickly scan the handwritten page for any last-minute revisions. Satisfied with my answers, I take a deep breath and reach out my hand to open the classroom door. In the same moment I hear the school bell ring twice, its shrill tone reverberating throughout the halls, marking the start of the class period. Damn it! I think to myself. Now I'm in real trouble.

As I pull open the door, the whole class falls silent. I watch as every single student in class turns in unison and stares at me unblinkingly. The collective pressure of their probing gazes stops me dead in my tracks. It only takes half a second for me to feel a familiar tingle and twinge as my armpits start to sweat and push out the tears I wouldn't dare let fall from my startled eyes. Another second passes, maybe two, then I suddenly find my feet again and shift the weight of my textbook laden bag on my shoulders. I realize that I should have remembered not to wear a shirt that hugged so tightly on my pits the day of a test. Too late now...

All eyes are still on me as I walk in the classroom and shut the door as quietly as I can. Before I sit down I hurry over to the homework station and try to turn the slightly crumpled sheet in my hand into the drawer labeled with our class name. But before I can get the sheet into the thin slot, the teacher, Mrs. Straight, walks over and calls my name. “Tiffany!” She asserts loud enough for the class to hear. “The bell rang 37 seconds ago,” she reads, looking at the thin, black leather-strapped watch at her wrist. “That means you’re late,” she added matter of factly.

In one swift motion she picks up the small key dangling on the end of a long gold chain around her neck, inserts it into the key slot at the top corner of the homework lockbox, and turns it in its place. I hear a loud clicking sound and see the doors of each homework box snap shut, not to be opened again for the remainder of class. “Go sit down child,” she tells me in her firm, commanding voice. Still speaking loud enough for the class to hear, she adds, “Duds and toads don’t make it in this class. Remember that.” I sit in my seat, the middle desk in the second row, and hang my head as I drop my bag to the floor with a muffled thud. Her words ring back-and-forth in my ears. “Duds and toads don’t make it in this class,” my thoughts echo. I stare with an empty gaze at my homework page, complete and now slightly crumpled on the desk before me, willing the tears building up in my eyes and the lump in my throat to return to their hiding places, safely away from judgmental eyes and Mrs. Straight’s endless stream of condescending remarks. They will not see me cry today. Never again.

“Class, it’s time for our midterm!” Mrs. Straight calls. The silence in the class is broken by the sounds of desks clearing and students shoving last minute notes into their bags and under their seats. I crumple up my homework into a tight ball and shove it to the bottom of my bag. The sheet contained nearly two hours of tedious work, and it’s all useless now. I feel the perspiration moistening the fabric creasing under my arms as I try to brush the exchange with

Mrs. Straight from my mind. I don't have time to think about it, I remind myself. I need to pass this test!

I spent hours studying last night, even though I didn't make it home until 9:30 PM and had to sit through that forced and humiliating dinner with my family. Mom always waited until all of us made it back home before she would serve dinner, no matter how late. Then she would read out our test scores, notes from teachers, and such...across the table for everyone to hear. Damien only ever got praises and accolades. Woo hoo for him. He was practically the hometown hero and had already gotten a full ride guaranteed in his name to Princeton. He could do no wrong. At least not to my parents. Matthew was similarly deemed as brilliant, but decidedly refused to apply himself in any classes he thought were "boring" or "full of stupid kids." He mostly stayed on his phone during these dinners, keeping it out of sight and off the table, away from mom's peering eyes. I always hated the nights when she would focus her attention on me. She never praised my high marks in history or writing. Instead, I would constantly be chastised for my low scores in Calc, or Trig, or some science class. Last night's dinner was no different. Afterward I locked myself in my room determined to study all night if that's what it would take to pass this test and finally get a passing grade.

As I sat at my desk, I repeated to myself my deepest desire: I will do well. I will make it. I will prove them wrong! When Mrs. Straight laid the thick text packet on my desk I signed my name, the date, and class neatly at the top of the page. I knew she took off points for illegible handwriting and I wasn't going to let a small mistake like that pull down my score. This class was notorious for breaking kids down and pushing others off the edge with all the tedious rules, regulations, and challenging material. No toads or duds allowed.

“I will make it! I know the material this time.” I repeat the words over and over in my mind. I flip through the test quickly to see which questions would need the most time. As I scan the pages, the already low pit in my stomach begins to sink deeper and deeper and deeper. My flipping becomes more frantic as I realize that each page is written in some unknown script language that I can’t read. Are these hieroglyphs or something? I think to myself. What the heck?! I look up and scan the room to see everyone else’s reactions to the test. But every other student in the class has already started filling in answers, not a panicked face in the room. Clearly, I am the only one here confused.

Maybe I have the wrong test? I think. But, how? I look back at the test pack and the script-like symbols morph and change right before my eyes. All of a sudden, the symbols on the pages turn into the head of a formidable dragon with razor-sharp scales and spikes, all made of thick black ink lines. I use the tip of my thumb to turn through the test pages like a flip book, and feel a slight breeze across my face as each sheet passes before my eyes. As the pages turn I see the black inky dragon head strike out to devour a tiny brown figure at the bottom of the page and toss its head up with a finalizing gulp. Immediately after, the terrifying dragon turns its head in my direction and stares me directly in the eyes. As I flip to the last pages, the dragon suddenly strikes out to devour me just as it did the tiny drawn figure. I feel a scream start to rise in my throat and my fingers begin to loosen on the pages of the test as I move to cover my face and shrink back from its hungry gaping jaws. Just as it reaches close enough for me to feel its hot rancid breath on the freckle laced skin of my nose, I hear the school bell ring it’s shrill sounding tone once again. I jerk my head back in surprise. It’s the end of class.

“Shit...shit...shit..shit...shit!” I think to myself as I pick up the test once more and flip back through the pages. The test pages are no longer filled with inky black dragons and symbols.

Instead, they have somehow changed into legible science questions, pulled from our recent chapters. I look up again and see that the entire room is empty of students except for me. Mrs. Straight is standing beside my desk and without a word she takes the test pack from my hands and considers its pages with a few quick-tempered glances. Her pursed lips tighten at every blank page.

Mrs. Straight's eyes flick from the test pack back to me. When her eyes lock with mine I feel every hair on my body stand on end. The taut bun of curls at the nape of my neck suddenly feels so tight that I can feel my heartbeat in my scalp and ears. Mrs. Straight holds my gaze as she slowly begins to turn around, and in her always-stern voice, she dismisses me with a phrase I've heard her say all too often, "If you had worked harder all semester, you would have done better. Tsk, tsk, child." Then she takes my test, folds it in half, and walks away.

I don't know how this could have even happened, I think to myself. A confused murmur escapes from my trembling lips. How could this even happen?! My mind frantically scrambles this way and that as I consider when I could have studied more for this test. "But I have been working hard!" I mumble weakly. I'm taking three AP classes. I'm an active member in the BSU. I'm on the varsity cheerleading team, and our season *never* ends. I get to school at 6 AM every damn day for AP reviews. And most days I don't leave school until 9 or 10 PM from all of my extracurriculars and clubs, all of which were necessary to show colleges how much of a "well rounded" student I am on college applications. And she wants to tell me that I'm not working hard enough?!

I look down and see that I am now standing in the center of the empty classroom all alone. There are no longer desks or chairs or posters on the walls. Just me. By myself. Knee-deep in still, cloudy water.

I turn around and call out nervously, “Hello?” I hear nothing but the ticking sound of a clock from somewhere far off. My breathing starts to quicken and I feel myself becoming more anxious and unsettled by the second. “Mrs. Straight?” I mutter weakly. “Where is everybody?” I wonder aloud. As I wade through the murky water I feel things below the surface bumping into my shins and feel my shoes become heavy, sopping weights, pulling laboriously at my feet and ankles. I trip over something in the water and fall to my hands and knees with a lukewarm splash. In that instant I hear Mrs. Straight’s voice echo loudly throughout the room, “If you had tried harder all semester you would have done better.” Out of nowhere, the door to the classroom slams shut behind me, with the intensity of a small explosion. BANG!

I wake up with a start to the sound of my alarm, muttering the thought last on my mind in the dream. “Can’t you see me?! I’m doing so much!” My entire body is covered in sweat and I feel the sheets and pillow below me are wet and cold to the touch. I haven’t set foot in a school in years, but I have one of these dreams at least once or twice a month, sometimes less if I’m lucky. I wipe the sleep from my eyes and shake my head a bit to wake myself and wipe the dream from my mind. Then I pick up my phone, switch off my alarm and walk to the bathroom to get ready for my day. I still feel a bit unsettled as I walk groggily through my morning routine. I repeat my new life affirmations, posted in bright pink and yellow Post-it notes on my bathroom mirror. I am grateful. I love and I am deserving of love. I am not timid. I know my power.

My mood lifts as I continue through my morning routine. I listen to Janet in the shower, and throw on Yonce’s Homecoming soundtrack for good measure as I make a quick breakfast of a banana, a bowl of granola, and Greek yogurt. On my walk to my usual coffee shop, I decide to take the longer route through a park. I look up at the trees and breathe deeply as I feel my legs grounding with every step. Surprisingly there is no line when I arrive at the shop, and I do a little

dance after I take my familiar first sip on the way to the office. As I walk, I sip my coffee and feel my body fill with warmth. I take another sip, then exhale deeply with a satisfied “Aaah!” I swear, they make the best cup of coffee in town! Being only a five-minute walk from my front door makes me never want to move.

I repeat my most recent affirmation as I reach the door of my building: I am not timid. I know my power. With the words fresh on my mind, I slip my facemask on and walk through the revolving door. By the time I settle into my workspace, this morning's dream is only a distant memory.

Later in the day I laugh when Malik, my team leader, teases me and calls me a “loudmouth.” After lightheartedly correcting him for perpetuating damaging tropes about Black women, a memory floats across my mind of my younger years. In my years from middle school to college I was often too scared to even raise my hand in class or ask a question. I was so stuck in my mind, weighed down by the opinions of others and judgment from my parents, teachers, and peers. Loudmouth would never have been a term used to describe me in those days, not even close. Today, I laugh hard from deep in my belly when I remember those words. Not only do I kinda like being called a loudmouth, but the very notion of it tickles my spirit.

On my walk home, I take the long stroll through the park again as I did in the morning. On the way, Mom calls to tell me about Damien’s newest job promotion. It’s a big step up, and hearing about his hard work paying off warms my heart with pride. “I’m just so proud of my baby!” Mom croons excitedly, “All of my babies! Y'all remind me how blessed I am every day.” She gives a few more family updates before rushing off to run some errands. After the call, I shoot Damien a text congratulating him for the big promotion, then I unplug my earbuds and put my phone on silent so I can disconnect and enjoy the rest of my walk home.

Another chuckle escapes my lips as I recount my day, including this morning's dream, and I think about how far I've come to be comfortable in my own skin, working in a top-tier company where I ask questions, speak, and lead projects daily. I inhale deeply and repeat my affirmations once more as I come closer to home. I open the door, peel off my facemask and announce myself to my roommates. "Hey, ladies!" I call out, "Who's home?"

Inspiration for this Story

Test Day, a speculative fiction artifact, was inspired by and created in response to a storytelling conversation with Camille. A QR code and link to a clip from our conversation has been listed below.

Reflection Question Guiding Our Storytelling Conversation:

Schooling: Describe your experiences within school(s). What schools have you attended?
How did/do you feel in school spaces?

Figure 5:

QR Code: QR Code to Sound Clip from Storytelling Conversation with Camille



Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RsaYBeWc8xlHTOUV4m0wV4S70MElO_ni/view?usp=sharing

*Note about this text: This Afrofuturist speculative fiction dream narrative was created in response to a storytelling conversation with a research participant. Although details of their story were used as the inspiration for this narrative, the story and its characters are imagined and should be understood as speculative fiction.

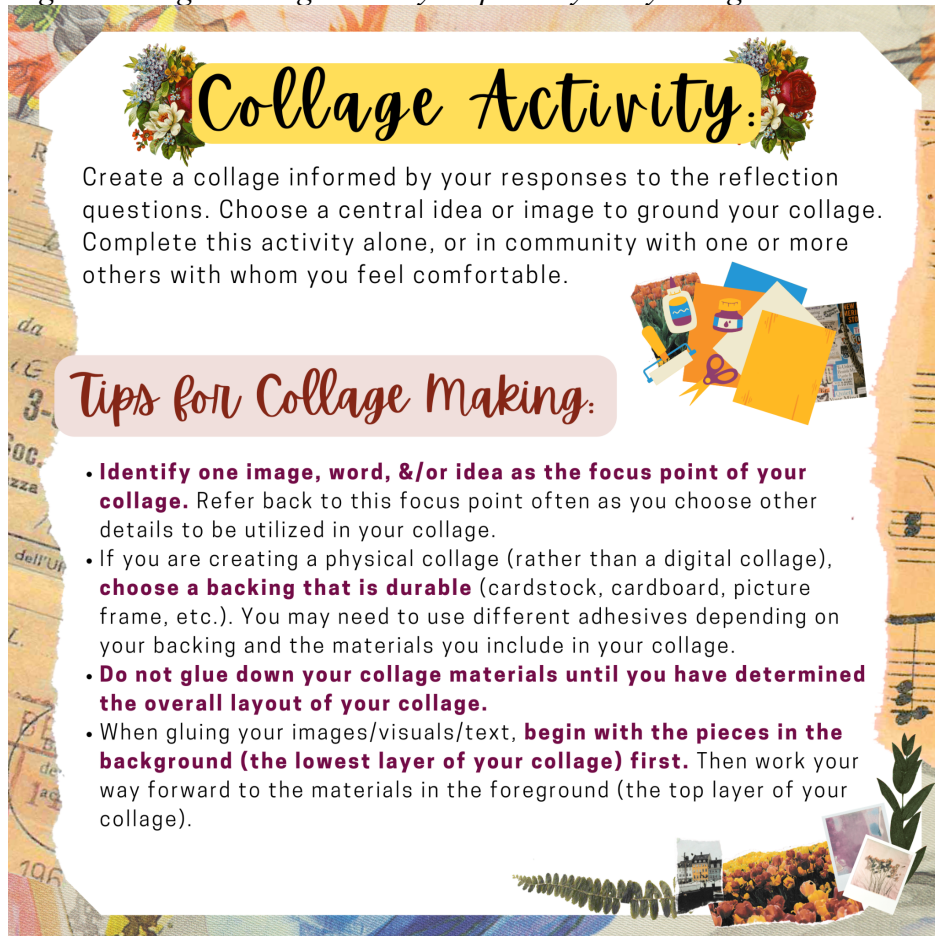
Storytelling Conversation with May: Mothxrs, Othermothxrs, & Curations for Healing

The three creative artifacts//embodiments, *Collage Activity*, *Healing Affirmations*, and *Reflection Questions*, were created in response to my storytelling conversation with May. Each artifact artfully embodies truths and ideas from our conversation, past experiences, and our current, past, and (speculative) future sociopolitical realities.

Collage Activity

Figure 6:

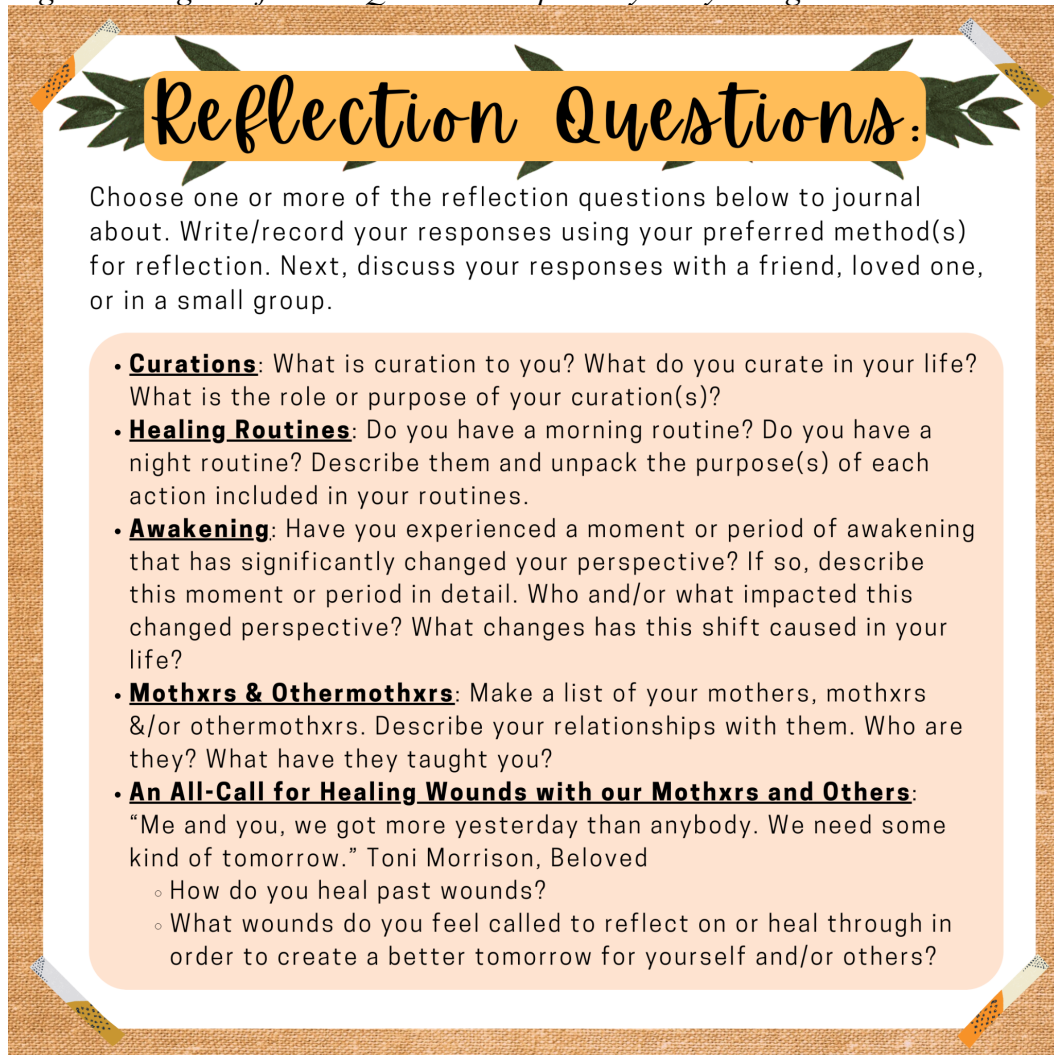
Digital Collage: Collage Activity Inspired by Storytelling Conversation with May



Reflection Questions

Figure 7:

Digital Collage: Reflection Questions Inspired by Storytelling Conversation with May



Healing Affirmations

Figure 8:

Digital Collage: Healing Affirmations Inspired by Storytelling Conversation with May

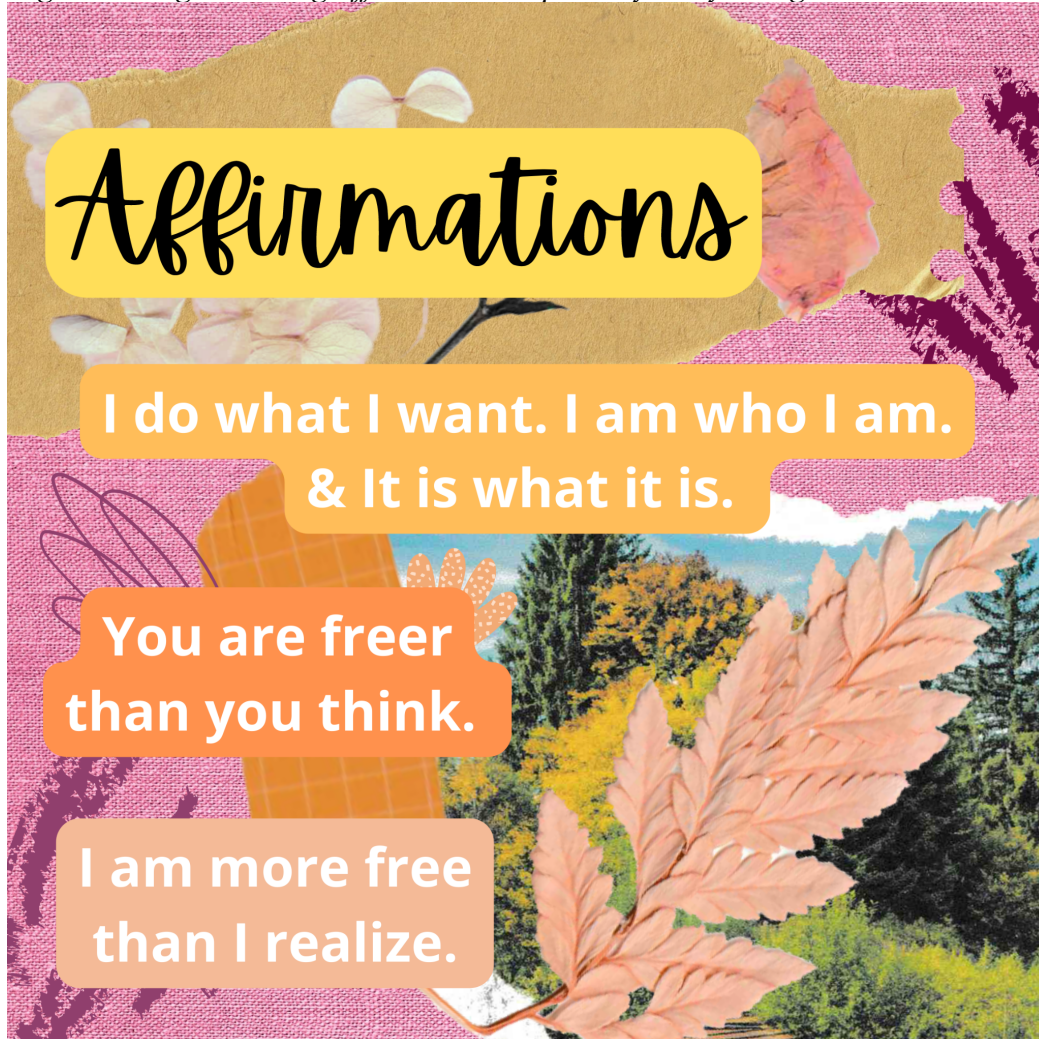


Figure 9:

QR Code: QR Code to Sound Clip from Storytelling Conversation with May



Storytelling Conversation with Diondra: Embodied Identity, Identity Informed Scholarship, and Relationships

The two creative artifacts//embodiments, *Diondra: A Collage* and *Paper Moons: Mixed-Media Collage Installation*, were created in response to my storytelling conversation with Diondra .

Each artifact artfully embodies truths and ideas from our conversation, past experiences, and our current, past, and (speculative) future sociopolitical realities.

Diondra: A Collage

Figure 10:
Digital Collage: Digital Collage Featuring Diondra



Paper Moons: Mixed-Media Collage Installation

Figure 11:

Photograph: Paper Moons Mixed-Media Installation, Image 1



Figure 12:

Photograph: Paper Moons Mixed-Media Installation, Image 2



Figure 13:

QR Code: QR Code to Clip from Storytelling Conversation with Diandra



Storytelling Conversation with Candace: Embodied Wellness Journey

The four creative artifacts//embodiments, *Embodied Wellness Journey: A Collage*, *A Reading List*, *Significant Locations*, and *Reflection Questions*, were created in response to my storytelling conversation with Candace. Each artifact artfully embodies truths and ideas from our conversation, past experiences, and our current, past, and (speculative) future sociopolitical realities.

Embodied Wellness Journey: A Collage

Figure 14:
Digital Collage: Embodied Wellness Journey Digital Collage



Embodied Wellness Journey: A Reading List

Figure 15:

Digital Collage: Digital Collage of the Embodied Wellness Journey Reading List



Embodied Wellness Journey: Significant Locations

Figure 16:

Digital Collage: Digital Collage of Significant Locations Visited on the Embodied Wellness Journey



Embodied Wellness Journey: Reflection Questions

Figure 17:

Digital Collage: Reflection Questions Inspired by the Embodied Wellness Journey

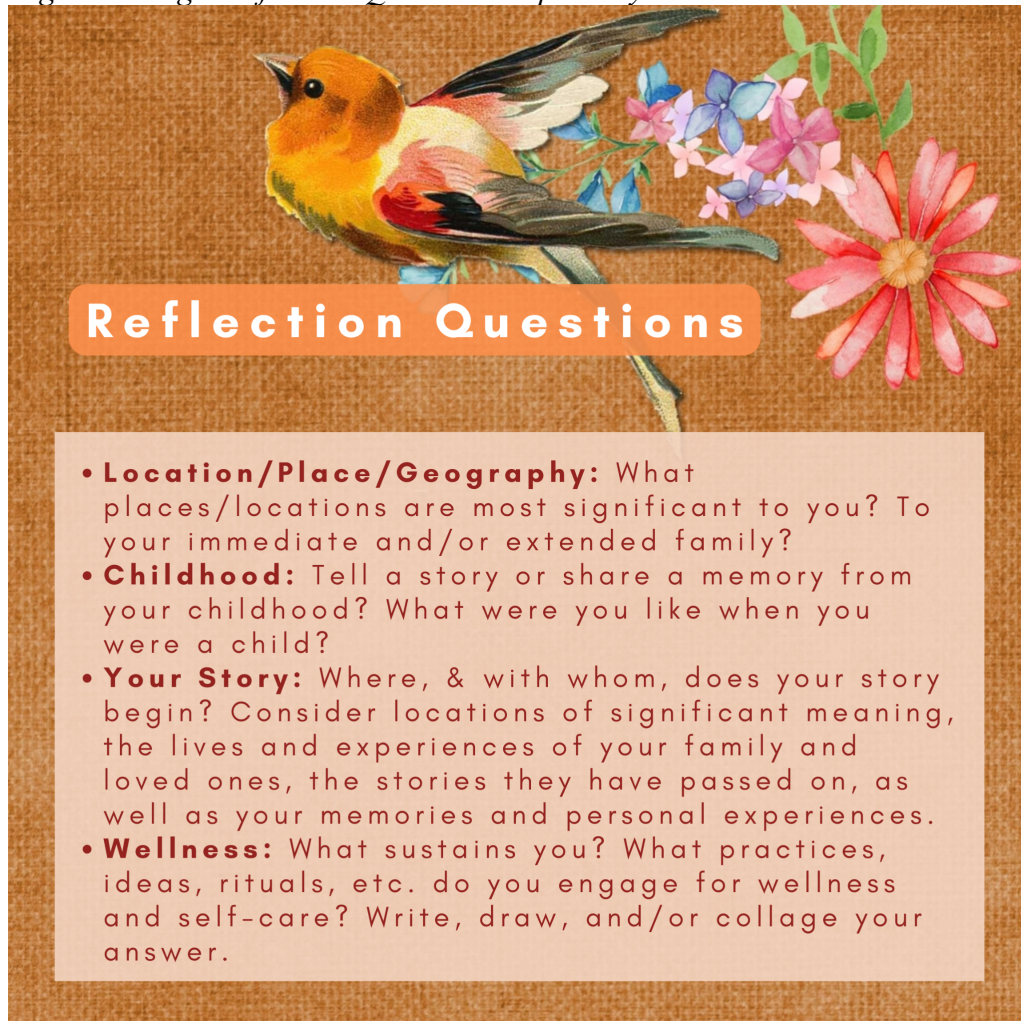


Figure 18:

QR Code: QR Code to Sound Clip from Storytelling Conversation with Candace



Storytelling Conversation with Myia: Embodied Dreams

The two creative artifacts//embodiments, *Myia: A Collage* and *The Deletion Procedure*, were created in response to my storytelling conversation with Myia. Each artifact artfully embodies truths and ideas from our conversation, past experiences, and our current, past, and (speculative) future sociopolitical realities.

Myia: A Collage

Figure 19:

Digital Collage: Digital Collage Featuring Myia



The Deletion Procedure: A Speculative Fiction Artifact

When I regain consciousness, I feel as if a small charge has exploded inside my skull. Waves of intense pain pulse through my head as I open my eyes. In their wake I am dizzy and disoriented. My typically racing thoughts are now stagnant and belabored. With each piercing wave of pain, my vision blurs and I feel like I may be sick at any minute. I try to move, but realize I cannot. It takes a moment before it sets in that I am in a cold metal chair, trapped in place by tight restraints around my neck, waist, lap, ankles, and arms. Where am I? As the question pulses sluggishly through my mind, I feel warm vomit bubble up from my throat and dribble heavily from my mouth. My head slumps forward from the nausea and I watch the vomit pool thickly in the gap between my thighs, then drip heavily onto the concrete floor.

I look around the room and see that I am not the only one who has been captured. There are at least a dozen of us or more in the room strapped to these heavy metal chairs. A thick blue smoke fills our room, inundating the air with a thick sickly taste I feel clouding my mind. This must be the aerosol drug the gov liked to use to quiet down protests and sedate those who dare speak out against them, especially those involved in the uprisings or train lootings. In the community we call it blue haze. As I gain my consciousness, a memory of the city streets obscures my present mind, and I begin to remember the last place I was before I was taken.

I was a few blocks from the church, keeping to the shadows as usual, trying not to stir up any noise or unwanted attention. All about me, I could see the aftermath of recent explosions. The roads here were rough, littered with fresh craters and mounds of broken, displaced cement. Sometime in the last five years, the fearful novelty of the New War had worn off and we began to accept the charred debris and burnt-out, crumbling shells of buildings and abandoned cars as the new normal. The government usually didn't send forces out this far west, but recently the

protests and government actions of control had ramped up and things were beginning to get more chaotic closer to home. Too close. I can't exactly remember how I was taken or what happened after that, but somehow, I ended up here.

My mind fades back to my current position in the room with the others. I know they are also common citizens from the way they are dressed in shabby clothes, soiled and slightly torn in places from dirt and debris. The room is dark and I feel a cold dampness about me. The blue haze is lit only by a single flashing light in the rear of our room. I cannot move my body at all, but manage to turn my gaze enough to my left to see an adjoining room. In the room two technicians in full hazmat suits sit in suspended chairs behind a wall of expensive looking screens. A thick transparent wall separates their room from ours. I've seen that type of wall before, it looks like glass, but it's not. Whatever it is, is as strong as titanium, and bullets do nothing but ricochet off its surface. Behind the two technicians I see an older man with pale white skin in a three-piece suit, hands casually in his pockets. He gazes blankly at the screens before him, and checks a pocket watch on a thin gold chain ever so often. My lip twitches involuntarily into a weak snarl; he is one of them. The Hoarders. They are a conglomerate of predominantly white billionaires who amass and guard most of the world's wealth. Before the war, they began to stockpile medical tools and vaccines for themselves and buy up priceless land in the most secure locations, near the last remaining reservoirs of potable water. These days they don't need hazmat suits to keep safe like most of us. They have recently even begun experimenting with genetic sequencing that makes their offspring immune to the common diseases ripping through the common citizen communities, like the toxic brown sludge that wiped out the makeshift shanty houses near the old river last year.

The pulsing pain in my head suddenly returns, somehow stronger than when I first woke. I slowly begin to taste the rancid tang of bile building up in my mouth and I am sick again. I strain against the tight strap on my neck as the thick foamy spew slips languidly from my mouth. I surely would have choked, suffocating in my own mess, if the strap were any tighter.

When the pain eases, I look back at the technicians in the adjoining room. I see the buttons and actions they type displayed on a suspended virtual screen in front of them. After a moment, the older man clicks a button on the watch hanging from his chain, then slips it back in his pocket. Immediately he begins to give commands. "Start the program," I hear him say, the words slightly muffled by the thickness of the transparent wall between us. The technicians follow his order and they both flip the row of switches at the top of their command stations in unison. Just as they flip the last switches in the sequence, I am suddenly blinded by a bright light. When I regain my vision, I see a strongly lit room before me, on the other side of another thick transparent wall. I had no idea it was there until now, as it was completely shaded in darkness. Deep in my throat comes forth a strained, barely audible, gasp as I take in the scene before me.

It takes a second for my eyes to adjust to the brightness. I squint heavily, trying to shield my eyes from the glaring ceiling lights in the other room. They remind me of the recessed rectangle ceiling lights we had in the old schools. The ones we had before the fallout began. But the lights in this room are twice as big and emit a light so bright it is almost impossible to look at them directly. As I squint my eyes, I feel my body straining to lean forward to take in more of the room. My mind paces sluggishly through my thoughts, suppressed by the blue haze they are pumping into the room where we were being detained. Another shrivel of my memory returns to me, and I instantly became grateful for the training sessions with crazy ass Troy. His radical

nature and paranoia were a bit much for me to sit comfortably with, but his crash course training on interrogation in capture had introduced me to this drug and its effects.

“When you remember this shit, breathe deep and slow and keep your eyes open and just fuckin listen.” He half screams the command directly into my ears, mugging my head with his middle finger with each phrase. He smells like bootleg liquor and rotting teeth, and I try to resist my urge to cover my mouth and nose. Troy hates this, and vocally marks it as the sign of a bitch-ass-bitch. “They can steal your movement but not your memory.” Troy’s words echo through my muddled thoughts and I suddenly feel my chest and abdomen tighten and expand with the fullness of a good drag. I refocus my eyes on the scene before me, compelled by the command now pulsating through my entire body. “Remember what the fuck you see!” Troy commands. I open my eyes as wide as they will go. I must see. I must remember.

The walls of the room are a sterile bright white and reflect the light from the ceiling in every direction. The entire floor of the room looks like a scaled-up version of the industrial metal grates on the central city streets. I always avoided walking over them for fear of falling in or some trouble lying in wait below. Some of the street crews had taken to using them for surveillance and surprise attacks. In the middle of the room a large red circular bullseye was painted on the thick metal grated floor. In the center of the bullseye stood a man whose skin was a few shades darker than my own. When the light cuts on he shields his eyes, momentarily blinded by the brightness. As his sight returns, he looks as surprised to see people being held in the adjoining room as I am to see him. The man’s squinting eyes search the holding chamber, a look of confusion frozen on his face. I strain to keep my focus on him and to remember the details of his face and appearance. A second later I see the look on his face change from

confusion to unbelief to sheer terror as his eyes adjust enough to the light for him to see the dimly lit control room next to ours, and the masked men within it.

“Darius,” I force an intelligible mumble through my unresponsive lips as I finally recognize who he is. I’ve seen him before at the bread basket run by the church. They force volunteers and those who come for food to wear those corny reusable name badges to “build community.” My grandmother was vocal about her understanding of this practice as a tool for surveillance and control. She was aware that I attended these gatherings, sometimes even volunteering to hand out food among the displaced, and she advised me countless times not to share my real name with the people there. So, I began to use a pseudonym, Rosemary; a nod to my herbal healing tools and training. But Darius always used his real name. He figured we all already knew who he was. His family had been on staff at the church since he was born, having received support when the church began opening its doors to members displaced by the New War.

“It’s Darius!” My mind slurs the words like a good wine, and my vision begins to fade. I feel my body slump and relax. I can still see the cloud of blue haze hanging in the room as my eyelids begin to push themselves together, resigning to the cloying pull of the drug’s physical effects. “Remember what you see!” Troy whispers into my present memory. “You must remember!” I focus all of the energy I can command to my eyes, willing them to remain open. I cannot give in. I must remember. I must breathe.

My blurred gaze refocuses on the scene before me and I feel my abdomen tighten and expand with breath once more. I see that Darius’ room is now being filled with the same drug-filled blue smoke that permeates ours. As he sees the smoke appear, he begins to panic and bang on the walls of the glass barrier between him and the control room. Darius is yelling something I

cannot hear. The room must be soundproof. I hear the man in the control room say something, some command, to the technicians. A keystroke flashes on the screen projection before them with the words “Begin Delete Procedure.” I hear a loud click as the technicians confirm the system command in unison at their stations. In the same instant, a series of red dots, like rifle sight lights, begin to appear all over Darius’s body. He begins wiping frantically at his clothes, trying to wipe off the lights, and as he does so he stumbles back to the center of the room. The drugs are starting to slow his movements, but he is large and strong and fueled by his terror. I see him screaming, pleading with the men behind the glass. Then he falls to his knees. I cannot hear his shouts, but everything in me can see and feel his fear.

The man in the suit continues to dictate commands, and I see Darius’s vitals and life history flash across the screen in the control room. A few seconds later, I hear footsteps receding toward some near distant place as the man in the suit begins to walk away. I hear him give a final command, “Delete him.” Then I hear the closing of a heavy door and locks tumbling into place. There’s another synchronous click by the technicians, then silence. Everything seems to freeze for a moment, even the blue fog lingering in each holding room. Seconds later, the silence in my room is pierced softly by a familiar gentle whirring. The whirring sound pulsates gently and rhythmically. As the sound continues to get progressively louder and faster, I see Darius look down into the grate below him. He must hear the sound too. He sticks his fingers into the grate and pulls himself closer to the floor’s metal surface unsteadily. After a few seconds I see the smoke in his room being pulled up into a huge circular vent in the ceiling of his room. The shape of the vent echoes the red circular bullseye painted on the floor directly below it. I continue to look, to command my eyes to stay open, and focus on the only actions that my body could manage: breathing, seeing, and remembering.

The smoke continues to move strangely upwards towards the vent. The whirring sound in our room becomes louder and louder and the pulsing rhythm begins to pick up speed. As the rhythm changes I begin to see, to realize, that the smoke was being pushed up by something, not pulled up by the vent as I initially thought. My eyes refocus on Darius, who now seems to be frozen in fear, eyes unwavering from the grate and whatever he sees below it. “Darius” I think aloud, struggling against the tight restraint at my throat.

By some God-ordained miracle or chance, Darius looks up and meets my gaze through the thick transparent wall of the holding room divide. The intensity of his eyes sends a shiver down my entire spine. I feel our connection somehow transfer his feelings of terror, panic, and fear to me. I can almost physically feel his body quaking and the nervous sweat building around his arms, throat and abdomen. He speaks a single phrase aloud. I cannot hear him but the movement of his lips is clear. It is something I have seen and heard countless times before at our local resistance gatherings. I know his vocalization is meant for me and only me. I repeat the phrase to him as best I can in the sluggish chamber of my mind. I wish I could call out to him, I wish I could go to him and wipe away his fear. But something deep within me tells me that this is the last time I will see Darius alive.

Suddenly a warning siren, like the incessant blaring horns of government trucks moving in reverse, begins to sound. Darius’ gaze intensifies and shifts to the west wall of the room adjacent to the far wall of the control room. Something is happening. I follow his gaze to the end of the room. As I do, I see that the entire grated floor below Darius’s room has begun to separate from the wall. The widening gap between the grate and the wall begins to illuminate all that is below. The bright lights in his room, no longer impacted by the thick metal grate, show down on a huge revolving metal-bladed fan, larger than any fan I had ever seen before. This must have

been what Darius was staring at moments ago. In that instant, the reality of his situation seems to hit us both simultaneously. Our eyes lock again and I draw forth as much energy as I can to mutter the same phrase that he had uttered only seconds ago, “No fear,” my brother, “No Fear.” The words come out as a whisper, barely audible to even my own ears, but I mouth them as strongly as I can. Darius’ head jerks downward in a nod of recognition. He must understand.

We both hear another siren and the floor begins to move even faster. I see Darius throw his head back and see him open his mouth as if he is screaming. As he screams he pulls himself off the floor and onto his hands and knees. Now that the fan has pushed most of the blue smoke from the room, he must be regaining some of his strength from the sedation. He crawls to the side of the wall furthest from the widening gap in the floor, aided by the direction of the grate’s movement. When he reaches the wall, he places his hands on its surface and uses it to push himself upwards unsteadily. I see him running his hands along the wall and his gaze looking, searching for something. I think he’s looking for something to hold onto. Anything to hold on to.

By this time, only a few yards of the grate remain, its surface area shrinking by the second, vanishing into the floor of the wall under him. Darius takes a final glance over his shoulder, and seeing the dwindling surface behind him, his movements become more frantic. All the while I see his mouth opening and closing in inaudible screams. Maybe 5 feet of the grate are left. The exposed metal from the fan blades are so loud that I can hear their pulsing intensity permeating my holding room, sending vibrations into my limbs and legs. Darius’s shirt and clothes are now being blown by the strong wind created from the blades. Now only a foot or two of the grate is left to save him from the giant blades below. He is still trying to grab hold of anything he can, but his hands can’t find a place to catch hold. I see his head whip from side to side then suddenly he lunges a few feet to his left. I see that he has found the edges of a door

frame painted the exact color of the room walls, all but hidden until this very moment. He's tall enough to reach his fingers to the top of the door frame and he manages to get a grip on the tiny sliver of a ledge as the last inches of the grate vanish into the wall below him.

Now nothing is left between him and the deadly fan blades a few yards from his dangling feet. "Hold on!" I whisper in my mind. Maybe he can hold on long enough, I think. As the words ring through my mind, I feel my body slump once again. It seems that each time I speak or get caught up in thought, my energy is drained and my control over my eyes begins to weaken. "Just breathe you butch bitch!" I hear Troy's commands in the muddled shell of my mind, words echoing between my ears.

I inhale once more and beg my eyes to stay open. To remember. When I refocus my gaze, I see Darius is now only holding on by the fingers of his left hand. He's losing his grip and I sense he will fall soon. He swings his other arm back upwards towards the minuscule ledge, but the shifting of his weight causes him to lose the grip of his left hand and he begins to fall.

"No!" I whisper, and my vision begins to blur once more. I am too weak to keep fighting, but I am determined to see, to be with Darius, until the end. The second it takes for him to fall into the blades seems to last for a short eternity. He falls in slow motion, mouth agape in a terrible shout. All at once I see him overtaken by the razor-sharp blades. I swear I can almost hear his final piercing scream as his flesh and bones are decimated, shredded into nothing, and sucked up into the vent. Somehow in the process his head is dislodged from his body and sent flying into the air. As it arcs midway in the room, its centripetal motion flings a thick red spray of blood and entrails across the entire transparent wall before me, before it falls back into the blades and is crushed and ripped apart like the rest of him.

“No!” I cannot help the thought that comes to my lips, as my sight begins to cloud once more. I cannot fight it any longer. Seeing Darius’ body torn and shredded like overripe fruit in a blender has weakened my spirit even further. I begin to feel hopeless and cold and give in to the sedative, pulling me into unconsciousness.

As my eyes begin to close for the final time, I hear the siren's tone changing and see the edge of the floor grate begin to creep its way back across the base of the adjoining observation chamber. The rhythmic vibrations of the fan blades begin to slow and from my half-closed eyes I see strong steady currents of some liquid being pushed out from revolving spouts in the ceiling. Is that water? My mind slurs the question as my eyes seal themselves shut, and my mind begins to dim. How do they have that much water?

“You must remember!” Troy’s voice reminds me, as I drift off.

“Remember...” The word drips from my lips like a leaking pipe. I hear the door to our holding room chamber open and hear the familiar squeaky sound of protective hazmat suits before I pass out, stranded in the dark fullness of unconsciousness.

Inspiration for this Story

The Deletion Procedure, a speculative fiction artifact, was inspired by and created in response to a storytelling conversation with Myia. A QR code and link to a clip from our conversation has been listed below.

Reflection Question Guiding Our Storytelling Conversation:

Dreams: What dreams, or vision, do you have for your life? Do you dream while you sleep? What do you dream about? Recount one or more of your dreams in detail.

Figure 20:

QR Code: QR Code to Sound Clip from Storytelling Conversation with Myia



Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qWs80C01ihs5dH40yOZ6bmFTX8dfW5ML/view?usp=sharing>

*Note about this text: This Afrofuturist speculative fiction dream narrative was created in response to a storytelling conversation with a research participant. Although details of their story were used as the inspiration for this narrative, the story and its characters are imagined and should be understood as speculative fiction.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: EXPLORATIONS OF IDENTITY, EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE, TEACHING, LEARNING, AND RESEARCH

The following creative artifacts//embodiments were created in response to my own auto-ethnographic data collection and womanist praxis of critical self-reflection. Each artifact artfully embodies truths and ideas from my reflection, past experiences, and our collective current, past, and (speculative) future sociopolitical realities.

Critical Race Theory in Education: Reflections on My Identity & Experiences in School

Spaces

Imaginings: (Re)envisioning Embodiments of Identity (Poem)

Who am I?
I have been considering this question for many years...
the entirety of my life, it seems.
But how can I put into words
every aspect of my being
and
what keeps me alive each day?

I have tried to embody these thoughts,
tried to capture
the joy I get from being in the same space as my loved ones,
or from the tickle of my spine
as projected rhythms cause gyrations to
flow forth from my body
like tongues from holy lips.

I try to enunciate properly
the feelings of pain, of unworthiness
from being unpublished,
accolades unsung
among academic folx who tell me
I must keep up.

I try speaking clearly
of the stimulating fascination
discolored at times by the spirit-wearying effects

I feel while in spaces,
socializing tools and oft dehumanizing institutions,
we call schools.

I have tried to show many examples of the things and people who
have informed the complexities of my self-actualization.
I tried to weave together countless stories of Mary & Nettie,
Shug and Sofia too.
Wild women who refuse to be tamed.

I recounted the activist lessons I learned from Marsha and Fanny,
who remind me the cost of freedom
and the importance of feeding
my community,
my mind, body, and spirit.

I tried to echo with personal vocalizations
the blessings whispered in my ear
from Jazmine, Chika, Amber, and Tracy,
who tell me
they Dream
and sometimes feel things
just like I do.

I promise you
I have tried my best to answer this question,
of articulating my being.
I've thought about
all that I come from:
from Black women and laughter,
and scratch biscuits left in offering on kitchen counters,
covered by sacred blue cloth.
I come from stories around full tables, overflowing,
from my mother's hands,
and her mother's too.

I come from willow tree switches and hand-sewn quilts,
laid out on well-used beds and floors...
I come from not having,
but not knowing,
because what we had
was just enough for me.

I come from what they and others have taught me,
Black folx, brown folx, allies, and our seeds.
I come from unlearning

and growing
and changing my mind too.

I come from rivers washing,
from hymns of liberation,
and collectives of Black womxn and femmes
who fought for my todays and yesterdays and tomorrows.

I come from intersections, disruptions, and disjunctures,
from memories
and dreams,
spaces of transformation,
spirit-breaking pain on blue days,
and bliss.

I still can't always put into words,
my answer to the question:
who am I?
But I embody myself and these truths nonetheless.

I wonder,
is this what you see when you look at me?

Reflection Question:

Who are you? Where do you come from?

[illegible]

Imaginings: (Re)envisioning Embodiments of Identity (Ceramic Embodiments)

Figure 21:

Photograph: Bound (Terracotta Paperclay & Multimedia) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 22:

Photograph: Communion (Paperclay & Multimedia) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 23:

Photograph: Textured Identities (Terracotta Paperclay & Multimedia) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 24:

Photograph: Graduate School (Terracotta Paperclay & Multimedia)

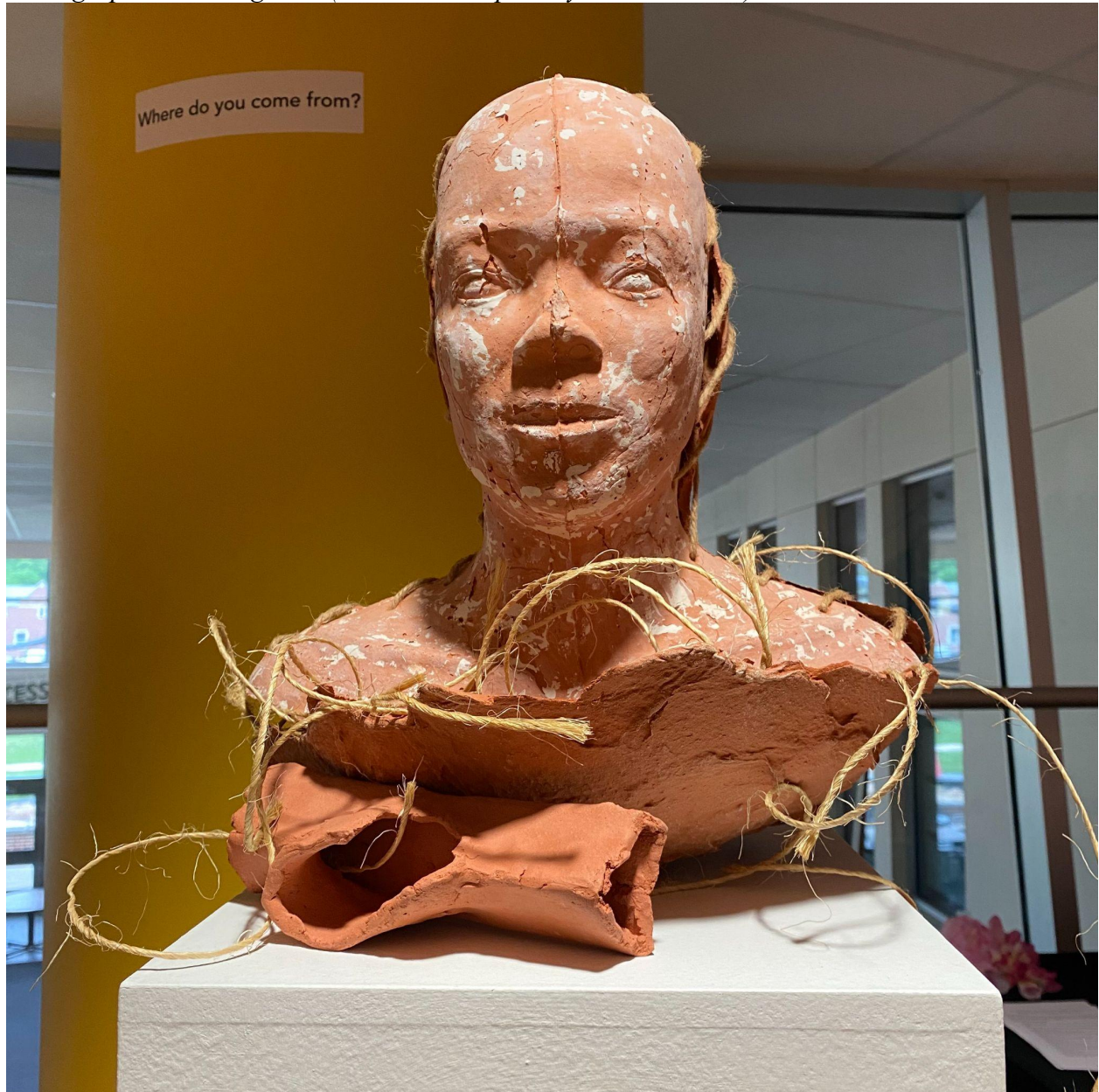


Figure 25:
Photograph: Faces//Masks (Paperclay & Multimedia)



Figure 26:

Photograph: Sewn Together (Terracotta Paperclay & Multimedia)



Quilt

Quilt: What Do You See?

Figure 27:

Photograph: What Do You See? (Quilt) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Reflection Question:

What do you see?

Creative Self-Portrait

A Communion with Black Butterflies: A Ceramic & Multimedia Installation

Figure 28:

Photograph: A Communion with Black Butterflies (Terracotta, Origami Butterflies, & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Multimedia Installation: Embodied Identity, Experience, and Praxis

Lost Ones in the Garden: (Re)envisioning Black Futures After the Rain

Figure 29:

Photograph: Lost Ones in the Garden: (Re)envisioning Black Futures After the Rain (Ceramic Mosaic, Origami Butterflies, Books, & Multimedia Installation) Photo Credit: Alex Nichols



The following texts are displayed/included in the installation:

- Alvarez's (2020) *Already a Butterfly: A Meditation Story*.
- Baszile's (2021) *We are Each Other's Harvest: Celebrating African American Farmers, Land, and Legacy*.
- Bell's (2008) *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*.
- Danielle & Onifade's (Eds.) (2021) *SISTORIES LITMAG, Issue 2: Correspondence*.
- Drew's (2020) *This is What I Know About Art*.

- Drew & Wortham's (2021) *Black Futures*.
- Elle's (2020) *After the Rain: Gentle Reminders for Healing, Courage, and Self-Love*.
- Freeman's (1996) *A Communion of the Spirits: African-American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories*.
- Head's (1968) *When Rain Clouds Gather*.
- Jones' (Ed) (2021) *Mouths of Rain: An Anthology of Black Lesbian Thought*.
- Kantawala, & Crabbe's (Eds.) (2021) *Art Education*, 74(3).
- Kincaid's (1999) *My Garden (Book)*:.
- Knauer's (2019) *Why We Quilt: Contemporary Makers Speak Out About the Power of Art, Activism, Community, and Creativity*.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis' (1997) *The Art and Science of Portraiture*.
- Love's (2019) *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*.
- Mazloomi's (1998) *Spirits of the Cloth: Contemporary African American Quilts*.
- Mazloomi's (2015) *And Still We Rise: Race, Culture, and Visual Conversations*.
- McBride's (2013) *The Good Lord Bird*.
- Monet's (2017) *My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter*.
- Paris's (2017) *The Forgetting Tree: A Rememory*.
- Pierce's (2021) *In My Grandmother's House: Black Women, Faith, and the Stories We Inherit*.
- Rankine's (2014) *Citizen: An American Lyric*.
- Richardson's (2003) *African American Literacies*.

- Rothman, Goren, & Cole's (2016) *Ladies Drawing Night: Make Art, Get Inspired, Join the Party*.
- Shafon's (2002) *Dream-singers: The African American Way With Dreams*.
- Sharpe's (2016) *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*.
- Taylor's (Ed.) (2017) *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*.
- Taylor's (2018) *The Body is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love*.
- Walker's (1983) *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.
- Wolff Architects' (2019) *pumflet: summer flowers*.

Multimedia Installation: Embodied Explorations of Method(ologie)s

Piecing It Together: (Re)envisioning Methodologies of Healing and Liberation

Figure 30:

Photograph: Piecing It Together: (Re)envisioning Methodologies of Healing and Liberation (Quilts, Ceramic, Collage, Photographs, Found Items, & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Quotes from the following texts are displayed/included in the installation:

- Baker-Bell's (2017) "For Loretta: A Black Woman Literacy Scholar's Journey to Prioritizing Self-Preservation and Black Feminist-Womanist Storytelling."
- Lourde's (1984) *Sister Outsider*.
- Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-Dennis, & Sealey-Ruiz's (2016) "At the Kitchen Table: Black Women English Educators Speaking Our Truths."
- Seeley's (2011) "Uncharted Territory: Imagining a Stronger Relationship Between the Arts and Action Research."

Digital Installation: Identity Embodied

A Piecing Together: Artifacts of Memory & Healing

Figure 31:

Digital Collage: A Piecing Together: Artifacts of Memory & Healing (Digital Collage Slideshow Cover Image)



Link to full slideshow:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1YH3qeEtnyrefiVyLB5CF5yJMgBnUIbK8/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=114624486856041166244&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Moon Meditations: Decolonizing Time & Embodying Afrofuturist Imaginings

A Moon Reflection

I have always been fascinated by the moon. As a child I would stare in amazement as it followed us on long car or bus rides home, amazed by its ability to always keep us in sight. Later, on a family road trip to Florida, I vividly remember driving into the moon, and being awe-struck by its magical luminescence. More recently, I have begun to note the impact of the moon's changing phases on my emotions and moods. It started a few years ago, when, in a conversation with a friend, I noted that I'd been feeling a type of way for the last few days. "Must be the moon," I joked casually. I dismissed the thought until a handful of weeks later I noted a similar rising swell of emotions. I glanced at my calendar and saw that there was a full moon days before. Somewhere along the way I started doing my voice-journaling, and made sure to make note of any full moon or new moon during the recordings. Later, I came across a few astrologers online who made videos unpacking the changing moon phases, planetary transits, and their possible impacts on our feelings or emotions. I found myself returning to one woman in particular who provided journal prompts informed by the moon phases and astrological happenings. After watching each video I would go on a drive, or find a secluded place to reflect and talk through my responses to the journal prompts I connected with. In conjunction with this, I began to have tarot readings with a friend on each full moon. We utilized these readings to prompt more reflection and to help us remain grounded in our journeys of healing and self-discovery. I used an unfinished quilt square as the table covering for my readings using a deck inspired by the moon. The culmination of these readings and reflections have informed the creation of this piece: Moon Meditations.

Reflection Question:

What is your relationship with celestial bodies such as the moon?

[illegible]

Moon Quilt

Figure 32:

Photograph: Moon Quilt Photo credit: Alex Nichols



Moon Meditations: Afrofuturist Imaginings

Figure 33:

Photograph: Moon Meditations: Afrofuturist Imaginings (Ceramic, Wood, Flowers, & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 34:

Photograph: Moon Meditations: Afrofuturist Imaginings, Moon 1 (Ceramic, Wood, Flowers, & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 35:

Photograph: Moon Meditations: Afrofuturist Imaginings, Moon 2 (Ceramic, Wood, Flowers, & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 36:

Photograph: Moon Meditations: Afrofuturist Imaginings, Moon 3 (Ceramic, Wood, Flowers, & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Paper from printed copies of the following research articles were utilized to create the 3 large paperclay forms in *Moon Meditations: Afrofuturist Imaginings*: Anderson, J. (2017); Ansari, A., Pianta, R. C., Whittaker, J. V., Vitiello, V. E., & Ruzek, E. A. (2019); Babinski, L. M., Amendum, S. J., Knotek, S. E., Sánchez, M., & Malone, P. (2018); Bastian, K. C., & Marks, J. T. (2017); Beck, B. L. (2019); Bertram, C., Wagner, W., & Trautwein, U. (2017); Bilal, M. (2019); Caraballo, L. (2019); Carter Andrews, D. J., Brown, T., Castro, E., & Id-Deen, E. (2019); Cimpian, J. R., Thompson, K. D., & Makowski, M. B. (2017); Clements, D. H., Sarama, J., Baroody, A. J., Joswick, C., & Wolfe, C. B. (2019); Cohen Kadosh, R., & Sella, F. (2017); Cordes, S. A., Schwartz, A. E., & Stiefel, L. (2019); Davis, B. W., Gooden, M. A., & Bowers, A. J. (2017); Doan, S., Schweig, J. D., & Mihaly, K. (2019); Donato, R., & Hanson, J. (2017); Fish, R. E. (2019); Foster, E. M., & Marcus Jenkins, J. V. (2017); Frankenberg, E. (2017); Estrada, P., & Wang, H. (2018); Galindo, C., Sanders, M., & Abel, Y. (2017); Galla, B. M., Shulman, E. P.,

Plummer, B. D., Gardner, M., Hutt, S. J., Goyer, J. P., ... & Duckworth, A. L. (2019); Garcia, G. A. (2017); Givens, J. R. (2019); Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J. M., & Theobald, R. (2017); Goldhaber, D., Quince, V., & Theobald, R. (2018); Goldman, S. R., Greenleaf, C., Yukhymenko-Lescroart, M., Brown, W., Ko, M. L. M., Emig, J. M., ... & Britt, M. A. (2019); Gordon, E. W., & Watkins, L. T. M. (2017); Gottfried, M. A., & Plasman, J. S. (2018); Graham, J., & McClain, S. (2019); Hakuta, K. (2017); Han, S. W., Borgonovi, F., & Guerriero, S. (2018); Heinrich, C. J., Darling-Aduana, J., Good, A., & Cheng, H. (2019); Henry Jr, K. L. (2019); Hillman, N. W., Hicklin Fryar, A., & Crespín-Trujillo, V. (2018); Hong, Y., & Matsko, K. K. (2019); Hopkins, M., Gluckman, M., & Vahdani, T. (2019); Hora, M. T., Smolarek, B. B., Martin, K. N., & Scrivener, L. (2019); Johnson, C. C., Sondergeld, T. A., & Walton, J. B. (2019); Kana 'iaupuni, S. M., Ledward, B., & Malone, N. (2017); Koedel, C., Li, J., Springer, M. G., & Tan, L. (2017); Lareau, A., & Jo, H. (2017); Le, V. N., Schaack, D., Neishi, K., Hernandez, M. W., & Blank, R. (2019); Lee, C. D. (2017); Lee, T. S. (2017); Leath, S., Mathews, C., Harrison, A., & Chavous, T. (2019); Li, Y. Y. (2017); Luke, A. (2017); Mangual Figueroa, A. (2017); Marsh, J. A., & Hall, M. (2018); McCarty, T. L., Mancevice, N., Lemire, S., & O'Neil Jr, H. F. (2017); Mensah, F. M. (2019); Miller, P. M., Scanlan, M. K., & Phillippo, K. (2017); Morris, A. K., & Hiebert, J. (2017); Núñez, A. M. (2017); Orfield, G. (2017); Osborne, J. F., Borko, H., Fishman, E., Gomez Zaccarelli, F., Berson, E., Busch, K. C., ... & Tseng, A. (2019); Pierce, C. (2017); Poteat, V. P., Calzo, J. P., Yoshikawa, H., Rosenbach, S. B., Ceccolini, C. J., & Marx, R. A. (2019); Powers, J. M. (2017); Reardon, S. F., Fahle, E. M., Kalogrides, D., Podolsky, A., & Zárate, R. C. (2019); Rhodes, A., & Warkentien, S. (2017); Roth, K. J., Wilson, C. D., Taylor, J. A., Stuhlsatz, M. A., & Hvidsten, C. (2019); San Pedro, T., & Kinloch, V. (2017); Snell, J., & Lefstein, A. (2018); Sosa-Provencio, M. A. (2019); Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J.,

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Growth: Identity, Celestial Bodies, and Embodied Afrofuturist Narratives

Figure 37:

Photograph: Growth: Identity, Celestial Bodies, and Embodied Afrofuturist Narratives (Terracotta & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Figure 38:

Photograph: Growth: Identity, Celestial Bodies, and Embodied Afrofuturist Narratives, Image 2 (Terracotta & Multimedia Installation) Photo credit: Vivek Vellanki



Reflection Question:

What are the implications of this work?

[illegible]

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