"'Ain't Nobody Checkin' For Us":

Race, Fugitivity and the Urban Geographies of Black Girlhood

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DISSERTATION

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SUMMARY

My dissertation explores the dialectical relationship between Black girlhood in Chicago and the oppressive processes such as the neoliberal-carceral state to examine Black girl resistance in this context. Chapter one, grounds the work in using Black girlhood and Black geography to provide a lens to trace the mappings of Black girls in Chicago and their scenes of resistance, which in turn informs a praxis of liberation. Chapter two of the project explores the dominant discourses that connect race, space, and neoliberalism in sustaining the neoliberal carceral state. The chapter displays my literature review that I have divided into two sections, "'Homeplace': Neoliberal Projects, Displacement and Carcerality" and "Black Girls in Danger." Section one critiques mainstream neoliberal literature that omits non-traditional writings and critical intellectual labor by Black scholars. Section two delves into literature that highlights institutional attacks on Black girls. It engages current literature that assesses their positioning in the school to prison nexus and Black girls' connection to interpersonal violence.

The following chapter examines my methodology and methods. Rooted in Black feminist ethnography, the chapter explains my methodological approach to engage, document and analyze a summer leadership institute for Black girls. Utilizing art as activism to address violence against women and girls, the process includes reflective conversation with staff, challenging notions of traditional open-ended interviews. The last two chapters discuss the structures, characteristics and values that made the leadership institute a fugitive space for Black girls and the intentionality of leadership in fostering that environment.

ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the intimate relationship between racialized state violence, gender-based violence, and Black girlhood. By studying a national nonprofit based in Chicago that runs an art and activism leadership program for African American girls, my research examines how working-class black girls use their voices, bodies, and stories to navigate and contest the socio-economic and political structures that lead to their and their families' disposability and displacement. In turn, building on the work of Saidiya Hartman, Fred Moten, and Stefano Harney, I identify those contested sites as "fugitive spaces" in which black girls put forth nuanced self-narratives that unpack the multi-layered operations that render them invisible to themselves, their communities, and the various apparati of the state. Additionally, it provides a framework for a pedagogy of care as we engage with Black girls from a place of solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

It's a gloomy Sunday on November 17, 2017 and I am here with a new outline for my dissertation, three months in as the interim program coordinator at a youth organization. Despite my progress, I'm still hesitant to transfer my thoughts to the pages. Overwhelmed and inspired by what I have been learning, I still feel limited by language to truly articulate the magic of Black girls (BGs) through a lens that views them in the same way they see themselves. More importantly, I want to convey what I already know to be true about Black girls as both witness and as a former insider. This means challenging my own education (or mis-education) and the value system that creates dominant structures and standards to which rigorous research is measured. While I hope that this project encourages a different praxis of care and reading of Black girls while deeply challenging our own praxis and radical imaginations, this labor of love is a long acknowledgement to Black girls for continuing to create new possibilities for living, loving and struggling.

I entered the world of education and youth development concerned for Black boys' lives. I too put the cares and needs of Black girls to the side because, like many Black women and girls (BWGs), I was taught that Black women are super women and that we must cast aside our own matters to struggle for our brothers even if they do not struggle for us. Contrary to my own beliefs at the time, as I began to unlearn and relearn Black womanhood through building with Black women and girls, I also found me. I found the good and bad me that I had forgotten long ago because I was too busy caring for everyone else or performing to be seen as respectable. However, when I found me, I was able to see Black women and girls more fully, beyond the pain they endured. I was able to read them and myself in a more nuanced way. I was able to stop being ashamed for showing up

different, unapologetic and sometimes loud. Every time I entered spaces where people

were grappling with gun violence in Chicago by passionately voicing their concerns for

Black boys, we failed to say the names of Black women and girls that labored for all of us.

In fact, we dared to silence those who did, calling them selfish or divisive. Although we have

never been naïve enough to wait for superman, the love and strength of other Black women

teaches us how to take something so bitter as a lemon to continuously make something as

refreshing and sweet as lemonade. In recognition of their continued commitment to

reclaim themselves, this project is a labor of love that recognizes the brilliance of Black

girls that have begun movements, curated culture, and asked "Where is Sasha?" when none

else was looking for her[1].

Black Girls in the City: Curating New Identities and Sites of Resistance

During the Great Migration, many men and women relocated to Chicago and the

surrounding suburbs after being recruited to fill industrial jobs. With hopes to improve the

financial situations of their families and to find refuge from the hostile segregated South,

adults would often come alone, leaving their children with other family members until they

accumulated enough money to send for the rest of their family. Historian Marcia Chatelain's

(2015) book *Southside Black Girls* gives a more in-depth history about the campaign for

Black girls to come to Chicago, a campaign that framed them as vulnerable bodies to be

protected and "fixed." By incorporating this perspective, many Black women saw the

opportunity to cultivate "race women" or women that would uphold the standards of

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[1] References to Sasha Obama from a speech by Melissa Harris Perry about always checking

for Black girls.

respectful Black women capable of leadership and educational attainment. For these reasons the development of Black girlhood in Chicago should be placed within a historical and spatial context. As the city changed, they too changed. Unfortunately, few narratives of Black women and girls have been produced that take historical, spatial, and racialized experiences into account. Given this reality, an aim of this dissertation project is to pair the legacy of voices of the past with contemporary perspectives as Black girls are living and to redefine Black girlhood in the now. As anti-Black, colonial, and neoliberal policies facilitate the removal of Black families from urban space, the Black girls in this study are still here reclaiming space and negotiating their identities outside of the white, patriarchal gaze.

This project situates Black women and girls as witnesses to the restructuring of Chicago as a function of the neoliberal carceral state   As Chicago is reimagined as a global city, this dissertation seeks to interrogate three areas: 1) the process of how geographies shape our identities, 2) the ways Black women and girls survive (create fugitive lives), and 3) how we are moved to resist. Because displacement, gentrification and spatialization are integral to chartering the places Black girls call home, it can also restrict their access to physical spaces that allow them to see themselves as integral contributors to the life of the city.

Since the migration of Black people to large cities, urban revitalization projects have been anti-Black and hostile to disenfranchised communities. Simultaneously, the process of "development" has forced many Black girls to renegotiate their identities as a form of survival. For these reasons, this project is about expanding an idea of liberation that is more inclusive, where even the most marginalized can become the authors of a collective freedom dream. From these observations, this project also allows me to pose a guiding

question for the remainder of this document: How do the realities of race and gender facilitate the relationship of Black girls to the state, their communities, their families, and themselves? Rather than solely curating a monolithic narrative of Black girls as sites of pain and struggle, I also aim to capture their engagement in resistance, pleasure and joy.

Viewing 'ChiRaq' Through an Intersectional Lens

Black women and girls (BWGs) are a diverse demographic, yet our experiences connect us across national and international borders. We have sacrificed our lives in pursuit of liberation for the entire human race and have raised communities and children who biologically have not belonged to us. We have labored physically, mentally, and emotionally for justice, only for our contributions to be erased or compartmentalized in the silos of our homes, communities, and academic institutions. Our position as BWGs subject us to sexism and racism for just existing, promoting an intersectional understanding of the world. Through this intersectional lens, Black feminists have not only interrogated oppression as it disrupts the lives of BWGs but have expanded these notions to incorporate other identities that influence our social positioning in the world (i.e. class, sexuality and ability). Zora Neale Hurston (1937) stated that BWGs are the mules of the world. More recently, Malcolm X's remarks in 1962 on BWGs have been widely circulated: "*The most disrespected person in America is the black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America is the black woman.*" Our exclusion from dominant discourses is always contested while the inclusion of our narratives facilitates a more in-depth understanding of oppression and the human condition as whole. These conditions force us to expand our ideas of struggle and freedom.

This is particularly true as we continue to conceptualize the positioning of Chicago's Black communities as "ChiRaq," given the specific aggressive implementation of anti- Black neoliberal reform over the last 47 years (dating back to the 1971 rollout of the Chicago 21 plan).   Enforced and maintained by the colliding forces of militarization and the police state, the renaming of Chicago's Black communities as "ChiRaq" advances a neoliberal agenda that falsely positions the need for militarized operations to occupy urban terrains. Under these conditions ChiRaq should be understood as part of a long-standing tradition of using popular culture and war signifiers to legitimize the containment of Black communities by the State.

Mainstream media and city political leaders understand the term to describe the gun violence plaguing disinvested communities of color in Chicago. Popularized by rapper King Louie, the term was coined in response to the claim that more people died in Chicago than in the Iraq War in 2009. Unfortunately, mainstream media has used the term to capitalize on gun violence in Black Chicago, giving credence to the neoliberal project by way of excessive policing and community disinvestment. Although the term "Chi-raq" is commonly associated with the dominant narrative on gun violence in Chicago's communities of color, there is variation in the way people identify with the term. For some Black youth, it describes their experience with state violence. For others, it articulates their fear of gang violence while living under war-like conditions, which includes state and community violence. In all of these instances, it is important to note that perceptions of the term are much more complex across Black communities than the media's singular depiction of Black Chicago.

The aforementioned conditions allow me to center the knowledge production of BWGs similar to the role of expert witnesses in relation to state-sanctioned violence. This context makes space for BWGs to articulate the shaping of their identities in relation to their physical neighborhoods. By centering their expertise on living under these conditions, they are also able to identify their perceptions of community assets and challenges on their own terms.

Chapters Overview

Chapter one, grounds the work in using Black girlhood and Black geography to provide a lens to trace the mappings of Black girls in Chicago and their scenes of resistance, which in turn informs a praxis of liberation. These frameworks ground us in critical discourses to examine the nexus of neoliberalism, carcerality and spatial inequalities through a Black feminist lens. Chapter two of the project explores the dominant discourses that connect race, space, and neoliberalism in sustaining the neoliberal carceral state. The chapter displays my literature review that I have divided into two sections, "'Homeplace': Neoliberal Projects, Displacement and Carcerality" and "Black Girls in Danger." Section one critiques mainstream neoliberal literature that omits non-traditional writings and critical intellectual labor by Black scholars. It expounds on racialized and gendered structural violence that is continuously overshadowed by violence experienced by Black men and boys. That section unpacks the intentionality in disrupting Black communities and "homeplace" in order to suppress resistance. Section two delves into literature that highlights institutional attacks on Black girls. It engages current literature that assesses their positioning in the school to prison nexus and Black girls' connection to interpersonal

violence. The remainder of the chapter engages the data on Black girlhood more concretely, shedding light on the impact of the neoliberal carceral state in policing Black girls' bodies.

The following chapter examines my methodology and methods. Rooted in Black feminist ethnography, the chapter explains my methodological approach to engage, document and analyze a summer leadership institute for Black girls. Utilizing art as activism to address violence against women and girls, the process includes reflective conversation with staff, challenging notions of traditional open-ended interviews. The last two chapters discuss the structures, characteristics and values that made the leadership institute a fugitive space for Black girls and the intentionality of leadership in fostering that environment.

CHAPTER 1: A CHICAGO TALE OF BLACK GIRLHOOD

Over the course of the last 16 years, nearly 200,000 Black residents were pushed

out of the city. During the same period, over 90% of the schools impacted by school

closings were in Black communities despite Black people only representing about 39% of

the city's population (Stovall, 2015). These processes physically change the architecture of

neighborhoods, while changing the identities and spirits of the people. Shabazz's (2015)

genealogy of the productions of Black masculinity in Chicago follows the geographies of

Black families that migrated into Chicago's Black Belt in the early to mid-twentieth century

to the years that followed when mass incarceration moved thousands of Black people in

and out of the criminal legal system.   While the phenomenon of mass incarceration

provides explanations for the display of toxic masculinity by Black men frustrated by the

daily constraints placed on them by the state, we ignore another relationship to state-

sanctioned violence. This includes a process that inexplicitly normalizes Black women's

ability to adjust to untenable conditions as "natural" and neglects to discuss the danger that

toxic masculinity poses to Black female bodies. In the current moment, Black women and

girls' experiences have been silenced or are only recognized as relevant when it supports

the dominant narrative that centers Black male subjects. As a result, we are left with more

questions than answers concerning the influence of hostile neoliberal practices on

reshaping the lives of BWGs. Black male youth remain in the center of the discourse,

resulting in a focus on correcting their behavior through proposed job placement

opportunities, stricter gun legislation, and aggressive policing tactics. Many community

leaders and politicians purport solutions of more employment and educational

opportunities for Black men in good faith, but none of these approaches will undo the daily

community- and state-sanctioned violence Black women and girls are subjected to. The lack of an intersectional approach that centers the lives of low-income and working-class BWGs reveals the short-sightedness of initiatives and solutions that seek to provide long-term, critical relief to Black communities.

By centering Black girls in my research, I seek to examine their location at the intersection of state, gender and racial violence. In recognition of Shabazz's work to spatially map the geographies of the development of Black masculinity, my project shifts the gaze to ask:

- How do Black girls' experience racial and gender violence within the neoliberal carceral state?
- How do Black girls engage in fugitivity or resistance?
- How do Black girl's resistance contribute to a praxis of liberation?

My attempt to address these questions seeks to provide insight into the radical imagination of Black girls to inform current and future formations concerned with building a praxis that is both intersectional and liberatory.

Fugitivity

My use of fugitivity theoretically articulates the epistemic trajectory of Black diasporic people in the context of the U.S. where Blackness is posed as a perpetual problem to be fixed or contained. When I reference fugitivity, I am calling on the work of Hartman (2007) and Harney and Moten (2013) to theorize the on-going subjugation of Black bodies, highlighting the dichotomy of captivity and fugitivity. While Black bodies operate under state control and surveillance in what Beth Richie (2012) identifies as the "prison nation,"

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this process is dependent upon neoliberalism and carceralism to expose certain bodies to premature death (Gilmore, 2007). In response, Black people continue to choreograph acts of resistance inside and outside of the purview of the state. For these reasons, fugitivity in this document speaks to the individual and collective acts of marginalized people to use self–determination to collectively build alternative spaces that are in opposition to the state while using resources and privileges from the state to invest in sites of freedom.

Fugitivity in this form is located historically through the material sacrifices made by enslaved Africans in order to ensure some proximity (although extremely limited) to peace and joy. Inspired by the work of Harney and Moten (2013), my project explores Black girl fugitivity, including my own fugitivity, in my writing and research. In both spaces, the lives of the Black girls and women uplifted throughout this dissertation and my own understanding that getting free is difficult and filled with contradictions that demand unlearning and relearning what we know about ourselves and the world.

Fugitivity is the act of refusal to engage with the state on its terms. My embrace of fugitivity in this project examines the way a group of Black girls claim space while using art to respond to the violence they have experienced, expressing their "wishes for Black girls." Through their dance, visual art, singing and photography they construct and reimagine images of themselves and their community as a form of healing.

Theoretical Frameworks

Butler (2018) profoundly introduces the praxis-oriented framework of Black girl cartographies as a way to physically and socio-politically locate research on Black girls in educational spaces. She asserts that both the mapping of Black girls and the engagement of

Black women cartographers requires self-reflection in that we are in conversations with our "younger selves and future selves" (p. 33):

> Mapping as a method generates questions such as: What is the narrative behind why the researcher selected this town, city, or neighborhood? What are the girls saying about the town or city? Where is the research "site" in relation to the spaces/places where the girls avoid or spend time? How are girls making use of a place? In answering these questions, we can begin to see how Black girl research relies on the social geography—frequency of movement, entering and exiting, spaces of inclusion and exclusion—of Black girls. This also begins to reveal how a place may or may not welcome Black girls, and how that informs the girls' practices. (Butler, 2018, p. 32)

As I join other fellow Black girl cartographers (including Black girls themselves) who have to negotiate moving their bodies in and between spaces, I look to Black girlhood and Black geographies as theoretical frameworks and guides to map the fugitivity of Black girls in Chicago.

Black Girlhood

Black girlhood studies has just celebrated ten years as an intellectual site created for and with Black girls where their stories serve as testament to what it means to get free. It was ten years ago that Ruth Nicole Brown invited us into Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths (SOLHOT). She describes "SOLHOT as a space to envision Black girlhood critically among and with Black girls, who. . . "are often the people least guaranteed to be centered as valuable in collective work and social movements" (Kwakye, Hill & Callier, 2017). Her work, and that of many others who followed like Aimee Cox, reminds us that Black girls are

curators, leaders, artists, freedom fighters, but most are Black girls—beautiful, complicated, magical, and survivors.

Black girls are often denied the opportunity to be just girls at early ages where their humanity is denied through the process of adultification. They often go in between being invisible, where their humanity is ignored, or their visibility often leads to the hyper-surveillance of their bodies. In the age of social media, responses to the objectification of Black women and girls provides us with a broader fugitive platform to create and control our own images and find community amongst other Black women and girls.

Black Girlhood Studies is interdisciplinary and intersectional in theorizing about the experiences of Black girls while operating in collaboration with them. Formerly, Black girlhood has been blurred in Black feminist studies. The positioning of girlhood has been discussed through the lens of Black women's remembrance of girlhood. Contrasting this dynamic, Black girlhood studies and Hip Hop feminist pedagogy introduce new language and approaches to exploring the lives of Black girls in acknowledgment of their agency and collective uniqueness. These identities serve as an amalgamation of various responses within the context of an anti-black, racist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, classist and sexist society. Our commitment to engage theories of praxis centering Black young women is particularly important in disrupting the adultification of Black girls that assign developmentally inappropriate expectations to them. Scholar Monique Morris (2016) asserts,

> Black girls are treated as if they are supposed to "know better", or at least "act like" they know. The assignment of more adultlike characteristics to the expressions of young Black girls is a form of age compression. Along this truncated age continuum,

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Black girls are likened more to adults than to children and are treated as if they are willfully engaging in behaviors typically expected of Black women-- sexual involvement, parenting or primary caregiving, workforce participation, and other adult behaviors and responsibilities. This compression is both a reflection of deeply entrenched biases that have stripped Black girls of their childhood freedoms and a function of an opportunity- starved social landscape that make Black girlhood interchangeable with Black womanhood. It gives credence to a widely held perception and a message that there is little difference between the two. (Morris, 2016, p. 34)

In the context of the state and institutions, the result of adultification is the objectification and criminalization of Black girls. This feeds into the policies in educational institutions that target Black girls with the intentions to correct their presumable inherited lack of girlhood as defined by white, patriarchal, middle-class standards of femininity. Within the colonial logics of taming the Black female body, these policies aim to suppress sexual deviance and pleasure that is deemed immoral and threatening. In light of this dynamic, Black girlhood is about affirming Black girls' autonomy over their bodies and sexuality.

Research by Linda Burton (2007) recognizes the implications of adultification on youth from low-income backgrounds, particularly in their homes. This is often based on the needs of the family that sometimes demand children to step in to "adult" roles or require them to mature faster because of their socioeconomic status. Black girlhood studies wrestles with this dynamic in its interrogation of the convergence of racism, sexism and classism in stripping Black girls of their childhood and their vulnerability to exploitation at a young age. While "boys will be boys," there is an over reliance on girls to sacrifice

themselves for their families. Cox's (2015) discusses the living instability of two sisters who were part of her program, "As crowded or uncomfortable as a house could get with adults and their children, it always seemed to be the teenage young women who were displaced." Although I won't use this project to theorize about disproportionate displacement of Black young women within the context of family, Cox's observation weighed heavily on me as I thought about the back and forth movement of the Black young women I worked with between their family's and friend's houses.

I understand Black girlhood as an identity, a culture where young Black women and girls connect their shared experiences and curate spaces where Black girls matter. While displacement is part of their narrative, reclaiming space and fugitivity is as well. Their ability to create fugitive spaces is imperative to their survival. Black girls in Chicago have shared experiences with Black girls in Detroit that are racialized and gendered, but the manifestation of Black girlhood looks different across locations. For this project, I draw from the intersections of Black girlhood in conversation with Black geographies to contextualize the narrative of Black girls from the Chi whose stories and leadership remain invisible amidst the structural removal and social engineering of violence in Black communities. I write this at an exciting moment where Black women and girl's resistance has become louder while at the same time many are involved in projects of remembering Black women's activism in Chicago.

Black Geographies

The Transatlantic slave trade transformed the notion of Blackness, forcing many enslaved African people to create non-biological kinships to shape new meanings of culture

and identity (Spillers, 1987). This required these formations to assume new gender values and roles that were constructed under subjugation. Given the shift in roles and values, the recorded stories of enslaved Black women are still too few, yet they continue to shape our current positioning in the world where our womanhood is measured under the scope of a white, patriarchal lens. The work of Spillers (1987) and Hartman (1996, 1997, 2007) excavate the untold stories of Black enslaved women to provide analysis of the struggle of Black women to assert agency historically and in relation to the "fugitive" lives they navigate in the now. Much of their work interrogates Black subjugation and the denial of personhood beyond the normalized visuals of brutal physical abuse, broadening the scope of how we understand control and coercion in the context of Black lives.

Traditional geography finds the Black experience and the spatial terrains that we occupy as '"ungeographic" and/or philosophically underdeveloped" (McKitrrick, 2006, p. XIII). Mainstream geographers' acknowledgement of race within the discipline does not extend beyond identifying the demographics of the population(s) occupying an area. However, critical geography engages place through a socio- historical and political lens, understanding the ideological construction of anti-Black racism as a process aimed at de-legitimizing Black people's epistemological approaches to create new spatial concepts (McKittrick, 2006). Radical writings about geographies and spatialization complicate concepts of indigeneity and land rights, understanding that both constructs can borrow from colonial standards of ownership that reinforce anti-Black racism. In her entry *To Lose Her Mother*, Saadiyah Hartman (2007) encapsulates the tensions of belonging "here and there" as a Black American that leaves an unsettling friction about our capacity to belong, self-determine and make a claim to land.

Black geography extends beyond depictions of Black bodies that only occupy areas designated to be "the ghetto." It disrupts the discipline to include the use of performativity through music, visual art, dance and writing to analyze the embodiment of space and makes room to imagine space as part of the intellectual project of understanding Blackness. From these imaginaries emerge the nexus of human geography and Black Studies that highlight the possibilities of a critical exploration of the Black diaspora. In this document Black geography allows me to include the geographies where Black women's place-making and fugitivity "push up against the seemingly natural spaces of subjugation, disclosing, sometimes radically."

My dissertation foregrounds the narratives of Black girls, centering their process of "talking back" to the institutions that are committed to silence and displace them. It engages the ideas of fugitivity and "homeplace" in articulating Black girls' curation of alternative sites that counter gendered and state-sanctioned violence. In the context of Chicago, mapping becomes a tool for liberation rooted in the embodied experiences of Black girls. Their survival relies on their skills to negotiate navigating throughout their city and the capacity to reclaim space.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: PUTTING OUR STORIES IN CONTEXT

Black girls dancing, getting low, twerking, foot working in a circle, yelling "do your thang sous" (do your thing Sis), each taking a turn in the middle as those on the outside cheer them on, and sometimes jumping in to battle. Then one comes and grabs my hand as I am setting up chairs and checking off my to-do list in preparation for the big event leading me to the middle of the circle and now I am expected to "do your thang sous," so I give a quick two step just to show them I still got it. We are on the Westside down the street from many of the girls' homes, across the street from their school, steps away from where Rekia Boyd was murdered by an off-duty cop and the house he currently resides in with an American flag that hangs out front. This description is very much the image of Black girls finding Black joy as they lie at the intersection of gender and racial violence in the U.S. and the image of the sisterhood with other Black girls that is crucial to their collective survival.

These girls are the descendants of sharecroppers that migrated here from southern states like Mississippi in search of starting new and better lives with their families. They are the daughters of the young Black women recruited from southern plantations to pursue opportunities in education with the responsibility to uplift the race. Like the enslaved Africans who ran North in search of freedom, they too came seeking to build a home of their own away from Jim Crow laws and racial terror. Owning a home and/or land and being in community with other Black people gave us a place to be fully human after navigating contexts in which our humanity was always in question. While white folks do not want to live with us, white interests have historically sought to contain Black space or disrupt it. Like on plantations during slavery, Black gatherings outside of the white gaze or

white surveillance is deemed potentially dangerous to the establishment of white supremacy.

Particularly, we do not talk enough about the migration of BWGs also being tied to escaping the dangers of sexual violence in the South by white men (Chatelain, 2015) or Rosa Parks as a leader in the anti-rape movement (McGuire, 2010). To recall these painful stories, we conceptualize the violation of the Black female body, which reminds us to mind our manners, and reminds Black people collectively of their inferiority. As you move along in this chapter, I discuss the readings of BWGs within the neoliberal carceral state and the strategic enforcement of coercive consent that forces marginalized people to assent to harm sanctioned by the state.

This chapter leads down a pathway of reviewing the neoliberal carceral state to provide context to the process and ideologies that shape the lives of Black girls in Chicago spatially by way of urban revitalization projects. In response to the dominant carceral discourse that centers prison systems as sites of captivity, I incorporate Black feminist analysis of carcerailty as a construct of Black subjugation that uses the Black female body to establish racial and gender violence. The remainder of the chapter illuminates the interplay between forced coercion, the disciplining of the Black female body, and the necessity for a fugitive space to redress the harm.

Neoliberal- Carceral State

Historically, Chicago has remained a contested space for the recognition of Black citizenship and lives. It is a city complacent in its "hyper-segregated" identity and the disproportionate push out of Black communities since developing the Plan for

Transformation in 1995 (Lipman, 2011; Smith & Stovall, 2008). Yet, there is a long rich history of activism in which marginalized communities fought back against oppressive policies and institutions in refusal to leave this place they now call home. For the purposes of this study, I am particularly interested in the narration of Chicago as home by Black girls. I believe their stories deepen our analysis regarding fugitivity and Black subjugation within the context of a political economy that legitimizes state violence enacted on Black bodies as part of a larger political agenda for white interests to sustain power. This requires viewing these issues through an intersectional lens to better understand the current political conditions of low-income/no-income/working-class Black people in cities. Consideration of these conditions pushes us to understand the need for Black space, specifically fugitive space for Black girls to inquire about what has contributed to the "un-safeness" of BGs in Chicago and "the erasure of said violence" (Butler 2018, p. 28).

Approximately 150 public schools have been closed or subject to school turnaround, with 90% of those schools located in Black communities on the South and West sides of Chicago. Forty-nine of those schools were closed in one sweep during the summer of 2013, making it the largest single set of school closings in the nation's history. In 2012, six of 12 mental health clinics were closed in majority Black communities, leaving thousands without service. Lipman (2011) articulates this phenomenon by describing the three Ds: disenfranchisement, destabilization, and disinvestment. These 3 Ds conceptualize the operations of Chicago School Reform. In this context, disenfranchisement is the enactment of new rules by the appointed school board to shift power by excluding communities from having autonomy over their own self- determination. Specifically, the board relegated the power of Local School Councils, comprised of parents and community

members, to centralize decision- making processes, making it less democratic and lacking transparency. Moreover, the school board has created chaotic conditions, forcing schools to respond to the implications of new reforms, mismanagement of funds, and high turnover of leadership. The implications of destabilization, which has forced the under enrollment of schools and the low academic performance of schools becomes the justification for education reformers to drawback money and resources from certain schools facilitating disinvestment.

Furthermore, the three Ds not only provides theoretical assessment about school reform but overall contributes to a discourse of "restructuring" in Chicago that has disproportionately pushed out Black residents. The labeling of Black communities as "ChiRaq" depicts them as "undeserving" and incapable of leading their own lives in line with colonial logics for invading indigenous lands and "saving" the savages. The displacement of Black folks and the cramming of Black students into receiver schools coupled with disregard for historic gang lines and/or neighborhood boundaries is an enactment of socially engineered violence. Stovall (2015) argues, "Instead, we should understand it as a moment of retrenchment to the Dred Scott decision of 1857 when the Supreme Court decided that Black people had no rights that Whites were bound to respect" (p. 23). For example, in Chicago, the neighborhoods with the highest gun violence rates coincide with the communities that experienced unequivocal rates of disinvestment, including school closings, destruction of mental health clinics, and decline of affordable housing. Over the last 20 years, Chicago has dislocated over 800,000 Black residents and has dismantled over 80% of its public housing stock (Stovall, 2015).

These circumstances have led to organizing for a "safe" city that in some spaces

advocates for more investment in policing to restore order, including the support of a $95

million-dollar police academy[2]. This perspective does not consider the conditions that have

instigated hostile community relations that facilitate gun violence or the violence police

inflict in our communities. Opposing views have challenged those ideas and organized

around the city re-directing the $95 million dollar investment to support better schooling

in Black communities, access to healthcare/ trauma centers, and affordable housing and job

opportunities (Anspach, 2018). Safety has been centered on ending gun violence or police

violence with Black young men at the center of these initiatives. In all of this organizing,

there are very few sites that employ an intersectional lens that addresses gun violence

while interrogating the cultivation of toxic masculinity within these untenable conditions,

which in turn incites gender violence. Few sites assure a Black girl that she will be seen

and heard or acknowledge the risks she takes as she commutes long distances to school in

her Black body that is wrongly sexualized. I return to this concept later in this chapter as I

discuss what it looks like for BWGs at the intersections of racial and gender violence.

As an organizer in Chicago, I have come to learn about neoliberalism first-hand from

working with teachers, communities, and students as I joined in the education movement

to end school closings that targeted Black and Brown communities. Coalition building

became crucial to making larger connections to the multiple assaults that had been waged

on our communities and addressing these issues at the root. This meant understanding the

neoliberal-carceral state, a process by which privatization of public institutions and the

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[2] See NationAction 2017 to learn about the proposal from Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

growth of the prison industrial complex (PIC) are central to new capitalist ventures for the rich to become even richer and sustaining a exploitative workforce.

Some scholars introduce neoliberal carceralism as a new concept of eurocentric political economic operations, void of its roots in colonialism and slavery, and as a strategy used in capitalist societies to maintain and increase opportunities for the powerful to accumulate wealth. In the public sphere, we speak of neoliberalism as if there is some puppet master pulling strings or that there are distinct sides, yet it permeates society in a way that we are compliant, willfully or not, but the benefactors remain wealthy white men. Lipman (2011) contends that "neoliberalism is an ensemble of economic and social policies, forms of governance, and discourses and ideologies that promote individual self-interest, unrestricted flows of capital, deep reductions in the cost of labor, and sharp retrenchment of the public sphere" (p. 6). Brenner and Theodore (2002a) describe this value as "the belief that open, competitive and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development" (p. 2). Although neoliberals believe in market freedom and deregulations from the state, they also depend on the state to "bail" out their institutions when experiencing massive financial woes due to their own speculative investments and high risks. This was apparent in the "bail out" of the banks by the U.S. government in 2008 (Herszenhorn, 2008), yet individuals that were affected by the banks irresponsible management of money were left to recover on their own. This is an example of one of core values of neoliberalism that promotes competition and individual responsibility as necessary to sustaining a productive society.

The intellectual expansion and collective organizing by Black feminists happened alongside the growth of the neoliberal-carceral state (Dillon, 2012). Although white women have been the greatest benefactors from welfare programs, Black women became the face of "welfare queens" and the scapegoats in legitimizing the shrinking of social services offered by the government. The intellectual labor of Black women remains lodged at the margins of neoliberal discourse when in fact Black women's epistemologies reflect the embodiment of surviving the State time and time again. The Combahee River Collective (1974) documents a collective refusal to accept social and literal death by state- sanctioned violence stating,

> The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.
> (p. 1)

This formation of Black feminists developed a mandate to address oppression through an intersectional lens as necessary to dismantling oppression to fully recognize the state as a primary actor in sanctioning violence and to avoid replicating systems that are based on the exploitation of others. Furthermore, Angela Davis and Assata Shakur's intimate relationship with the prison systems, particularly as captives themselves, encouraged rich analyses that are foundational to critical carceral studies. By positioning the prison system within the lineage of Black subjugation, the carceral state is also understood to operate as an extension of the living conditions of Black people in isolated ghettoes (Shakur, 1978).

From their inquiry, I am inclined to wonder, what would we have learned and how we could have planned for the over haul of the neoliberal-carceral state had we centered Black women and girls' narratives?

Within the critical Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) or carceral studies literature (Alexander, 2012; Camp; 2016; Davis, 1998; Gilmore 1999, 2007), there remains a debate around the events that offset the rise of mass incarceration that rely on the convergence of racial logics and capitalism. To explain the rise of the PIC, popular explanations were often situated in the "tough on crime" and "war on drugs" discourse during the Nixon and Reagan eras or deemed a solution to deal with the failure of the Keynesian welfare state (Alexander, 2012; Gilmore, 1999, 2007). Other interventions have argued the boom of the PIC during the Cold War counterinsurgency efforts that targeted political activists (Camp, 2016). Although scholars may disagree about prime moments that influenced the expansion of the PIC and its justification, they have consistently revealed the use of policing to repress social movements amongst Black, Latino, laborers, women and poor communities and to sustain gendered racial capitalism (Camp, 2016; Davis, 1971; Gilmore, 2007; Jackson, 1994).

Analyses that foreground racial capitalism to explain the emergence of state investments into mass incarceration explore this phenomena as a source of revenue during a time of "crises" and response to counterinsurgency. Critical geographer Ruthie Gilmore applies a global analysis to the issue to draw connections to the implications global crises have in ordering domestic possibilities. She argues, "In my view, the expansion of prison constitutes a geographical solution to socio-economic problems, politically organized by the state which is itself in the process of radical restructuring" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 174). In

her analyses, "the crises" the state must remedy was the surplus of capital, land and finances. Particularly, in California, the state had invested in prisons yet did not have enough bodies to fill its capacity. At the same time, counter-hegemonic resistance challenged the instability of the economy, lack of job opportunities and police brutality. Gilmore (2007) explains how "law and order" initiatives defined these uprisings by marginalized people as disorderly: "The more that militant anti-capitalism and international solidarity became everyday features of US anti-racist activism, the more vehemently the state and its avatars responded by, as Allen Feldman puts it, 'individualizing disorder' into singular instances of criminality, that could then be solved via arrest or state-sanctioned killings rather than fundamental social change..." (p. 176). Simply put, White elites' investment shifted from social programs during the decline of the Keynesian state once the civil rights movement's legal victories forced those social programs to extend their services to marginalized groups to building up the PIC. The funding allocation for social service programs decreased and was redirected to expanding policing (Gilmore, 1999; Meiners, 2007; Camp, 2016).

Jordan Camp (2016) traces the rise of mass incarceration during the neoliberal state from its emergence from the Cold War to the State's response to Black political and labor movements. His research insists that the application of prisons and carcerality was to serve as racialized crisis management. The expansion and investment into the War Department, because of the fear of Communism spreading across the U.S. and globally, increased the capacity for counterinsurgent desires to actively dismantle key organizing groups like the Black Panther Party, labor unions, and socialist groups.

In Chicago, schools and housing represent key sites to expand and reinforce the neoliberal-carceral agenda. Public and private entities have co-conspired over several decades in seizing opportunities to capitalize off of large city school districts by removing resources and funding from schools while forcing schools to comply with education reforms embedded within a free-market ideology that prioritizes money over people. David Harvey (2006) describes these strategies as accumulation by dispossession in which assets are stolen from one group and put into circulation in the market for profit by another group. In this realm, culture, land, and resources are put up for grabs by hegemonic forces.

Neoliberal-carceralism thrives off of the practice of indoctrinating society in an ideology that centers meritocracy, individualism, and freedom (Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011, 2015). Simultaneously, it depicts inclusive imagery that argues that all people, regardless of race, class, gender, sexual-orientation, age and ability distinctions will benefit from this way of life. Much like social Darwinist rhetoric (Ossei-Owusu, 2012), it identifies those who are able to achieve the American dream as "hard workers" while those who are struggling are failures due to their own shortcomings. It ignores historical contexts of racial degradation, genocide, slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, and operates to make us believe we live in a "post" racial society. Given its racist and classist origins, it conveniently relies on past racialized and gendered tropes to legitimize policies that further marginalize historically disadvantaged communities. The emergence of neoliberalism in the U.S. during the post-Keynesian welfare era in the 1970s advanced during the rollout of welfare reform and law and order politics. While using "neutral" or coded economic policy terms, collectively the new orders affirmed consensus from the public through anti-Black

depictions of the Welfare Queen and the hyper-vigilant Black male criminal (Haymes, 1995; Roberts, 1997).

Applying a color-blind lens to assessing this phenomenon limits our ability to fully comprehend the strategic use of cultural politics to move the neoliberal agenda forward, while marginalized communities who already are economically dispossessed of resources have been forced to struggle with even less. Neoliberals use broad, dog-whistle language to obfuscate its intentions (Duggan, 2003). Duggan recalls,

> Welfare reform and the law and order politics of the past two decades clearly illustrate the dense interrelations among neoliberalism's economic vision and its cultural projects. The goal of raising corporate profits has never been pursued separately from the rearticulation of hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality in the United States and around the globe. Neoliberals, unlike many leftists and progressives, simply don't assume that there is any important difference between material goals and identity politics. They make use of identity politics to obscure redistributive aims, and they use "neutral" economic policy terms to hide their investments in identity- based hierarchies, but they do not fundamentally make the mistake of fundamentally accepting the ruse of liberalism- the assertion between the clear boundary between politics of identity and class. (p. 14- 15)

Lipman (2011) discusses race as central to "constructing consent for privatizing public goods, including schools" (p. 12). Haymes (1995) breaks down the racial coding of the words "private" and "public" altogether. The legacy of over 400 years of white-supremacy, settler-colonialism, and racial formations have imprinted our schemas to read Black as "bad" and white as "good." He expands this analysis to argue that "public" gets read as

Black and "private" as White in this context. Public represents the exaggerated, stereotypical images of lazy, dependent Black people (e.g., Black welfare queen). While the "private" represents access to exclusive spaces, high quality services for the "deserving." This results in poor whites fighting against their own political interests to abstain from being associated with the "undeserving." Moreover, critical educational theorists further assess accumulation by dispossession to ask questions about the dialectical relationship between white accumulation and Black de-accumulation (Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Harris, 1993; Picower & Mayorga, 2015).

Feminist Perspectives on Carcerality Beyond the Bars

My framing of anti-Black racist scholarship is based on Black intellectuals who theorize about Blackness and the peculiarities about Black life without articulating these theories through a practice of exceptionalism and essentialism. In the interest of my project, I incorporate the work of those whose theorizations map Black subjugation in the U.S. as foundational to establishing the carceral state alongside the political economy. It is through the early work of people like W. E. B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer and others that we have come to witness the captivity of Black people manifest through the use of policies, social contracts, and aggressive policing. I find that their own epistemic embodiment of being Black enriches notions of carcerality as they develop alongside the relocation of Black bodies in society. Their inquiries tell us more about the ontology of Blackness that exceeds what can be seen or felt for those not Black. They also grapple with carcerality as a complex institution with alliances and partnerships between unlikely friends. These collaborations are created to uphold white supremacy through a process

where white bodies are "deputized in the face of black people, whether they know it (consciously) or not" (Wilderson 2007, p. 25).

Scholars like Simone Browne (2015) encourage us to think about the slave ship as the initial site to survey and monitor Black bodies that were transported to the Americas. She asserts, "Sociogeny, or what Wynter calls "the sociogenic principle", is understood as the organizational framework of our present human condition that names what is and what is bounded within the category of human, and that fixes and frame blackness as an object of surveillance" (Browne, 2015, p. 7). She locates surveillance studies within the Middle Passage to map the genealogy of technology that was employed to watch over Black bodies, from the branding of enslaved bodies to former slaves having to carry freedom papers to prove their status. Her interventions expand Foucaults' Panopticon theory that is regarded as the "archetypical power of modernity," by adding, "then it is my contention that the slave ship too must be understood as an operation of the power of modernity, and as part of the violent regulation of Blackness" (Browne, 2015, p. 24). Most importantly, she pinpoints how most approaches in surveillance studies do not name Blackness in its concerns about the production of monitoring technologies in a racialized society despite the fact that the existence of Blackness structures the lens by which the society is created.

Particularly, I found it important as Browne discusses racialized gender politics in airports as a contemporary example of the reading of Blackness within the scope of modern technologies that are presented as subjective, race-neutral inventions. She begins with a story about Solange Knowles[3] on twitter exclaiming that she experienced "Discrim-fro- nation" a play on the word discrimination and state "my hair is not a storage drawer"

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[3] Solange Knowles is a well- known Black American singer and artist.

as a critique to TSA searching her hair. Although this practice has since been found to be discriminatory (Craven, 2015), as a Black woman with natural hair that travels often I can assure you that this practice is still very much employed. Disturbingly, Black U.S. women were less than 50% likely to be carrying contraband compared to white U.S. women, yet a report released in 2000 by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that we had the highest likelihood of being strip-searched and nine times more likely to subjected to non-intrusive searches (i.e. pat downs, x-rays) (Browne, 2015). These examples alone highlight the dangers of the Black female body, including her hair, and the scenes of subjection (Hartman, 1997), which I return to later in this section, that these public and private interactions evoke, reminding us that our bodies are criminal and failure to comply justifies any physical violence that may occur as a result.

From a privileged stand-point in a post-racial society, I am sometimes asked about my response to TSA wanting to check my hair or violate what I think are my rights at the airport as if I have the autonomy to do something that does not lead to something more dehumanizing. Outside of just leaving the airport or refusing to travel I am in the realm of the state and forced to consent or comply. I have travelled with ten Black girls on an airplane and, in anticipation of the scrutiny, I found myself violating their privacy as I had them show me what was in their luggage in an effort to lessen our interactions with security. The conveyor slowed as they watched through the x-ray what was in each bag and then pulling them to the side to verify objects they were not able to identify.

This treatment at the airport and observations provide another angle by which to examine the neoliberal-carceral state's force of consent in concordance with the modern surveillance methods employed to discipline the Black body. Interestingly, technology

created for the protections of others or normalized bodies are applications to confine another group of people. Ironically, despite distrust of Black people, what is to be to observed by those who assume roles as state agents like TSA agents, security guards, or police officers? Paradoxically, how can Black women operate from a space of power and be untrusted by the state simultaneously? Most importantly, what becomes evident as you move along this document is that everyone is "deputized" to scrutinize, restrain and assault the Black female body as an exercise of citizenship. This includes critically challenging the role of teachers within the school to prison nexus as part of the network of those given authority over Black girls and reflecting on the role of white women who could have a Black woman working for her as part of their sentencing during the 1900s (Haley, 2016).

Hartman (1997) contributes to setting the stage for the scenes of subjection that occurred on the slave plantation to engage "forms of violence and domination enabled by the recognition of humanity, licensed by the invocation of rights, and justified on the grounds of liberty and freedom" (p. 6). Similarly, she details the "double consciousness" of enslaved Africans' forced engagement in performing entertainment and amusement as sites of terror in which the white imagination used Black bodies to demonstrate its dominion. Claudine Rankine (2015), a poet and profound contemporary voice, wrote in her book *Citizen* about Darren Wilson, the officer that killed Mike Brown, "Because white men can't/ police their imagination/ black men are dying" (p. 135). These statements affirm the dangers of the white imagination that operates not from a place of what is but the fear of what could be. Therefore, public acts of physical violence or torture are just as much about instilling fear in those that watch as it is about punishing the target of the violence. Other demonstrations of power consisted of "changing the names of slave children on the whim

to emphasize to slave parents that the owner, not the parents, determined the child's fate, and requiring slaves to sing and dance for the owner's entertainment and feign their entertainment" (Hartman, 1997, p. 8).

Through this lens Hartman both critiques the melodrama and minstrel shows as performances of domination while humanizing the emotions of the enslaved and acknowledging the agency in that while engaging in the act from a place of fear in which they found pleasure in "puttin' on ole massa." This could look like them turning their gaze on the white spectators to critique the inhumanness of the white folks in the confines of their living quarters. Moreover, her analysis depicts the demand for Black bodies to forcefully consent to their degradation and to appear joyous or at least content with the notion that it could be worse.

Regularly, these sentiments are expressed as Black folks are expected to be grateful that things are not as bad as they were in the recent past. My incorporation of Browne (2015) and Hartman (1997) complicates emphasis on prisons in carceral studies that do not recognize this nation as an enclosure for Black people and the necessity of reinventing technology as a dialectical process to continually suppress fugitive lives. The searching of BWGs' hair at the airport is an explicit reminder that we are inherently read as criminal and perpetuates the innocence of whiteness. However, these spectacles of public degradation of BWGs can either subdue us to tolerate these behaviors or motivate us to resist these conditions. Under these circumstances, there is not a denial of pain, but the objective is to humiliate and incite suffering.

Gendered racial capitalism goes back to 1908 to recall not the end of convict leasing but the emergence of the chain gang and the Black women that were captured into these

systems (Davis, 1998; Haley, 2016). Within these constructs, private companies and

individuals were intertwined with the prison system, and Black women were sent to work

for private white families to meet the qualifications to be released from prison. These

relations reconfigured both the status of white women and Black women establishing "a

public-private partnership whereby both state employees and ordinary women become

wardens, controlling the social lives, labors and futures of imprisoned women" (Haley,

2016, p. 4). This arrangement constitutes Black women's servitude as part of the natural

order to which Black women were reminded of their "place" in society.

The Color Purple film (1985), an adaptation of Alice Walker's novel (1982), depicts

these public-private partnerships between white interests when Ms. Sophia is brutally

beaten by a white mob after talking back to a white woman who cheerfully suggests she

could be her maid. After a verbal exchange with Ms. Minnie, white men step in to protect

white womanhood from the threat of Black womanhood by beating on Ms. Sophia in front

of her children. That scene alone invokes strong emotions of anger and sadness, but seeing

Ms. Sophia years later working off her sentence as maid a for Ms. Minnie revealed the

internal losses of Black subjugation that caused tensions between the flesh and the spirit as

you could no longer see the sassiness and joyous depiction of her character.

Economical formations intentionally adjust the configuration of hierarchies of race

and gender to evolve with the changing systems globally and locally to sustain white

wealth. Hegemonic gender politics disrupt many cultural representations and

embodiments of gender, yet depend on traditional, white, patriarchal, Christian,

heteronormative family structures that are foundational to maintaining these processes as

moral obligations. These contradictory beliefs are manifestations of patriotic and

nationalistic belief and value systems. Particularly, the intersections of race, class and gender or intersectionality applies a lens to analyze the inter-locking oppressions that are a result of power structures (Crenshaw, 1989). Historically, Black women and girls have been placed at the center of political theater in the U.S. through the use of controlled images that advanced political agendas on both ends of the political spectrum. For example, during the civil rights era, little Black girls carried the responsibility to integrate public schools in the face of violent mobs and institutional hostility while still having limited access to educational and labor opportunities. Years later, the image of the brave little girl (Ruby Bridges) integrating an all white school[4] has been replaced by the image of the Welfare Queen; an un-educated, un-wed young Black mother with many kids and dependent on government funding. On the other end of the spectrum is the super Black woman, like Oprah and Beyoncé, who are read as exceptional, supporting an individualistic and merit-based ideology. However, these individual achievements do not translate to collective advancement anymore than representations of Black political leaders extend to more political power. The upholding of "respectable" images of Black women and girls are positioned as symbols of progress for both liberals and conservatives, continually overshadowing the structural violence they are susceptible to.

Framing the Black Female Body

Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. "Peaches" and "Brown Sugar,"" Sapphire" and "Earth Mother,"" Aunty,"" Granny," God's "Holy

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[4] In 1960, at the age of six, Ruby Bridges was the first African-American child to desegregate William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.

Fool," a "Miss Ebony First," or "Black Woman at the Podium": I describe a locus of

confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the

national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I

would have to be invented. (Spillers, 1987, p. 65)

I was about 17 years old when I came across the book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

(1861), the autobiography of Harriet Ann Jacobs, for my senior project. I looked forward to

playing Josephine Baker for Character Night, but someone had done her three years before.

I went on a search looking for another Black woman's story to re-enact in the school

program that was less told when I stumbled upon Harriet's story. For me, it was more than

just another slave narrative, but at the center of the story was a Black girl recounting her

experiences as an enslaved girl. While these stories about the experiences of enslaved Black

girls remain scarce, both Harriet[5] and Celia's[6] stories provide profound insights to the

framing of the Black female body. Particularly, they represent early examples of the

adultification of Black girls and the over sexualizing of their bodies to which they were

reasoned to have no right to defend. Although it was socially accepted that enslaved

women had no ownership to their bodies, Celia's conviction legally supported these social

contracts.

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[5] Harriet Ann Jacobs wrote her autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Her

account was groundbreaking in highlighting the experiences of Black enslaved women and

girls and the threat of sexual exploitation.

[6] Celia v. Missouri, an enslaved girl was executed after being found guilty for murdering her

master for trying to rape her. See Hartman (1996, 1997) for the significance of the case.

While there are few accounts concerning the value of BWGs before enslavement, even those that acknowledge the existence of matriarchal societies, they have reduced the value of Black Bodies to immoral, bestial beings (Spillers, 1987; Fanon, 2005; Hartman, 1997). Although they were treated as inferior, because they were also feared, they were the recipients of excessive physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual assaults intended to repress Black people. Hartman's (1996) analysis of Celia's court case goes a step further to discuss how the rape enacted by her master was more of a concern because it exposed the power of seduction in manipulating the dominant. She states, "In positing the black as criminal, the state constituted itself as the embodiment of the law, thereby obfuscating its instrumental role in terror, by projecting all culpability and wrongdoing onto the enslaved. The black body was simply the site on which the "crimes" of the dominant class and of the state were externalized in the form of a threat. The criminality imputed to blacks disavowed white violence as a necessary response to the threatening agency of blackness" (Hartman, 1996, p. 540).

In these examples, the use of sexual violence was established early on where the seductiveness of the Black female body was to blame for the sexual deviance of white men while rape was used to demonstrate power over her livelihood. Their status as enslaved women and girls inevitability subjected their bodies to forced coercion while any attempt to exert their agency was a punishable offense. In juxtaposition to that image was the mammy that operates as a de-sexualized image of an older large BW that was characterized as a soft, loving caretaker for white folks and their babies (Collins, 1990; Harris-Perry, 2011). Although additional images emerge across different contexts, these controlling images (hooks, 1992; Collins, 1990) maintain control over the ways BWGs move in and out

of spaces, infringing on their right to self-determination. The limitation of our agency forces us to consent to sacrificing our bodies in exchange for our survival.

The use of BWGs' stereotypical images, whether the welfare queen or jezebel, not only sustained logics for rolling back federal and state funding for social programs, it also deployed new strategies to criminalize and police Black women (Richie, 2012; Roberts, 1997). Historically, Black women's reproductive rights have been under the control of social legislation where the bearing of Black children constituted more wealth and laborers for the slave master. Once the slave trade ended in 1807, the reproduction of Black children became even more central to sustaining slavery in the U.S. Previously mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter, part of the project of neoliberal-carceralism is "constructing" consent or suppressing dissent. In reference to the reproduction of enslaved children, Dorothy Roberts (1997) writes, "Here lies one of slavery's most odious features: it forced its victims to perpetuate the very institution that subjugated them by bearing children who were born the property of their masters" (p. 24).

Post-slavery, Black women's ability to reproduce children no longer serves the interest of the state, but rather has been framed as a form of degeneracy because traits of inferiority are believed to be passed down by the mother (Spillers, 1987; Roberts, 1997). The emergence of the trope of the strong Black woman, Sapphire, to explain the destruction of the Black family becomes central to racist rationales where she is to blame for running off Black men by emasculating them and being un-wed, promiscuous mothers dependent on the State to care for their children. Studies like the Moynihan Report (1965) perpetuate pathological readings of the Black family that blames the absence of men in the home on Black women's independence. The white imagination's fear of degenerate Black children as

products of Black women's immoral behavior continues to jeopardize the reproductive rights of Black women (Roberts, 1997). Additionally, within these contexts lie narratives of Black women experiencing forced sterilization and other state-sponsored initiatives to control birthrates. Therefore, the work to secure reproductive justice rights must be in opposition to the invasive policing of Black women's bodies and their right to bring new life into the world.

Yet, these notions about BWGs sanction schools and communities to aggressively respond with implementations of policies and social interventions to subdue Black girls. In a prison nation (Richie, 2012), one's whose values rest in gendered racial capitalism (Haley 2016; Robinson, 2000), the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and genocide continues to rely on Black subjugation and the exploitation of laborers. Particularly, the neoliberal-carceral state entails the expansion of prisons, surveillance, and militarization as a means to gain profit and control over "othered" bodies to ensure public consent to the newly oppressive structures set in place. The coercive state is interwoven with the carceral state, contributing to the involuntary exposure to death and forced participation in upholding structures that contribute to the fatality of marginalized communities. Anti-Blackness, gender theories, and constructs of racial capitalism lend us language to critically assess the intersection of neoliberalism and carceralization in proliferating the "after-life" of slavery[7] .

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[7] Hartman (2007) says, "because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery – skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration and impoverishment."

Intersection between State and Gender Violence

>   I was grown before I understood the many dangerous transactions that Black girls
>
>   and women are forced to make to avoid standing and sleeping outside. And maybe
>
>   that was just compartmentalization so I didn't have to think about the many
>
>   dangerous transactions I watched Black women and girls around me make. So I
>
>   didn't have to think about the many dangerous transactions I made. (Thurman,
>
>   2018)

This revelation was expressed by a writer after reflecting on a recent episode of *This is Us*[8], as we watched Black girls navigate the foster system. Specifically, one of girls was angry with the other for revealing to their social worker that they were experiencing abuse in the foster home they resided in. She felt things could have been worst and thought taking a few hits now and again was the price she was willing to pay to have the stability of sleeping in one bed after being moved around so much. Aimee Meredith Cox (2015) found in her experience working with Black young women that there was a trend within Black families navigating poverty and homelessness where Black young women are left to figure out their housing situation on their own whether being explicitly told to go or being given indirect messaging that let them know when they over stayed their welcome and needed to find somewhere else to stay for awhile. These examples are testaments to the ways Black girls are forced to use their bodies to navigate space and gain access to institutions at the expense of being exploited to survive and the risks they take in resisting dehumanization.

Additionally, the state-sanctioned violence Black women and girls are subjected to intersects with the gendered violence they face in their communities and homes. The State

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[8] Critically acclaimed television show.

invokes "toxic masculinity" and a culture of violence against women, specifically in the case of Black women and girls who are deemed inherently immoral. In the most recent cases with Marissa Alexander[9] and Bresha Meadows[10], it reaffirms that Black bodies have no right to defend themselves (Hartman, 1996; Kaba, 2019; Richie, 2012; Ritchie, 2017; Spillers, 1987). It normalizes rape culture or "boys being boys" through legal and social contracts and upholds structural barriers that impede Black women and girls' daily survival. One of the leading causes of death for Black women between the ages of 18-26 according to the CDC is intimate violence (Hill, 2017). In an ongoing study, researchers at the Black Women's Blueprint found that before the age of 18, 60% of Black girls have experienced sexual abuse (Cabrera, 2011). These forms of intimate violence are typically carried out by a person known to the survivor. Research conducted by both Richie (2012) and Ritchie (2017) provides us with statistics and incidences of violence against Black women and girls by law enforcement. Whether intimate violence or police violence, the survivors tend to be under-educated and/or under-employed where the combination of race, gender and class puts them at a disadvantage, particularly in the case of sex workers where transgendered and incarcerated women are disproportionality represented in this data.

In the context of theorizing the social engineering of violence, our analysis must extend to recognize the interrelatedness of state violence, community violence and

[9] A Black woman prosecuted for aggravated assault after shooting warning shots to fend off an attack by her abusive husband in Florida, a "stand your ground state."

[10] A 14-year-old Black girl who killed her abusive father and was charged with involuntary manslaughter.

intimate partner violence, particularly the ways they manifest themselves in historically

marginalized and isolated neighborhoods (Hooks, 1984; Richie, 2012). Richie (2012)

asserts, "A Black feminist analysis can easily account for how community violence layers

onto intimate partner violence when the forces associated with the buildup of America's

prison nation are operating" (p. 138). This requires an understanding of poverty as a

condition of structural violence, followed with inquiries on how the lack of access to basic

needs can heighten the plausibility of violent reactions to the aforementioned conditions.

Unfortunately, the struggle for power in these instances comes at the expense of violence

against those deemed even more marginalized in these communities. This recognition also

articulates a relationship to space or location that "results when households and

neighborhood dynamics in disadvantaged communities converge to create dangerous and

degrading circumstances for Black women" (Richie 2012, p. 138). Particularly, the

connectedness between intimate, community, and state violence uncovers the complicated

relationship between perpetrators and survivors of violence, especially within

marginalized communities where everyone is deeply impacted by structural violence.

Western models of gender hierarchies and standards of manhood and womanhood

are rooted in Christian, white supremacist, heterosexual, patriarchal, middle-class values

seeped in U.S. policies and structures. Even the most respectable Black bodies are unable to

neatly fit into these racialized and gendered archetypes of "real" men and women.

Regardless of the second-class treatment Black Americans are afforded and the

reimagining of slavery in the afterlife that pre-determines even the lives of our un-born

children, blame is still placed on Black men and women for failing to act human or living up

to the "American Dream" according to the conventions of the State. In a cycle of violence,

contentions that un-fold at a place like the workplace often perpetuate violence that occurs in the home (Hooks, 1984). Hooks (1984) theorizes that violence amongst heterosexual intimate partners was fostered by the inability of Black men to respond to the dehumanization in the work environment for fear of losing employment, so they would return home and enact violence on their spouses to restore their masculinity. Some scholars use that same framing to discuss the power relations that also motivates child abuse (Hooks 1984).

The dominant framing of Black women as inherently immoral beings excludes them from systemic rights and protections of their personhood and at the same time expands the liberties of others to commit violence against them. Historically, the denial of the humanity of Black women and girls has legitimized nonconsensual interpersonal and institutional assaults and fuels dangerous assumptions about our ability to tolerate high thresholds of pain. Black girls receive this messaging and are characterized as hypersexual, aggressive, loud, and/or "ghetto" early on. When Black girls do engage in acts that are deemed a deviation from the social norms that define female behavior according to a narrow, white middle-class scope of femininity, they are deemed non-conforming and thereby subjected to criminalizing responses (Morris, 2012; Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011; Holsinger & Holsinger, 2005). These images have perpetuated images of Black women that have been damaging to how society interacts with them (Collins, 2004). For fear of how society receives the "ghetto" Black woman and girl, she can even experience Black men and women trying to tame her behavior and teach her to be a "lady" through the socialization of Black respectability. They will experience this type of respectability policing in church, schools, and in other public and private spaces by encountering unsolicited criticism on the

way they dress, talk, and walk. The Black body is already marked as criminal, and defending itself against the control of whiteness is considered a crime. The dehumanization of Black women and girls is a must in maintaining the logics of racism and sexism that is steeped in the fabric of the U.S.

Black girls were the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population between 1985 and 1997 (Puzzanchera, Adams, & Sickmund, 2011). By 2010, Black girls were 36 percent of juvenile females in residential placement (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, & Puzzanchera, 2011). Some scholars would argue that the school-to-prison pipeline has contributed to the increase of Black girls being pushed out of schools and into juvenile confinement facilities. A large number of Black girls that enter the juvenile justice system enter these arrangements as a result of protecting themselves from assault or being sex trafficked (Morris, 2016; Ritchie, 2017; Wun 2015).

Black girls have the highest rate of sexual victimization and are more vulnerable to being forced into sex trafficking (Crenshaw, 1994; Richie, 2012; Morris, 2016; Wun, 2015). Young Black women forced into sex work are pushed out of school or restricted from attending by their "pimp." Schools fail to support Black girls that have been sexually violated or exploited, which is reflective of society's response to raped Black women. Jezebel stereotypes that continue to hyper-sexualize Black women's bodies assume that they are naturally seductive and sexually deviant (Collins, 2004; Morris, 2016).

Here we are witnessing the intersection that Black girls lie in, between homes and communities that have yet to recover from generational and intergenerational trauma and schools that are structured to stifle Black girl genius. I began more broadly in this section to identify the ways Black girls' bodies are problematized and criminalized to look at the

challenge of protecting their bodies while also being punished like Celia for doing so. Unfortunately, schools are an extension in the school to prison nexus of state violence, and up until recent years the educational experiences of Black girls were ignored or rendered not an urgent matter because they seemed to be academically achieving. Moreover, I felt it was important to incorporate BGs' schooling experiences because school is a dominant part of most of their lives and has played a central role in restructuring a less Black Chicago, enforcing forced coercion and accepting oppression. Lastly, it has been a site of resistance for Black girls as they resist conditioning of the neoliberal carceral state and are punished for doing so.

Black Girls Experiences in Education: Pushed Out and Pushed Around

Throughout the U.S. the demographics of some of the cities with the highest populations of Black people are rapidly changing as the cost of living has soared, and redevelopment projects invest in modeling communities to appeal to the white elite. This has occurred at the expense of displacing whole communities by dismantling affordable housing and public schools. In cities that are already hyper-segregated, charter school expansions have disguised the legality of segregation using "school choice" rhetoric as if to empower Black parents. Although former educational policies reeked of racism, sexism, and classism, and traditional education institutions have an "educational debt" (Ladson-Billings, 2006) owed to Black students that extends back to slavery, current school reform policy maintains those oppressions and, in some cases, roll back "progressive" reforms.

Academic excellence, "world class" education, and competition rhetoric along with literacy rates of U.S. children lagging behind other developed countries created

opportunities for corporate reformers to impose market ideas in education. In 2002, the Bush Administration enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), tying standardized test scores to school funding. The infamous report titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*, published under the Reagan Administration in 1983, alarmed the nation about the poor quality of education in the U.S. and marked the beginning for the implementation of neoliberal ideas in education. In the beginning stages these ideas subtly showed up in school policies, but NCLB brought those ideas to center the "business" of education (Lipman, 2011). Under the Obama administration, the federal government implemented Race to the Top, the reform to improve NCLB and its shortcomings. Lipman (2011) writes, "Thus unfolded two decades of restructuring public education through new forms of top down, punitive accountability and prescriptive standards, increased business involvement, and school leadership redefined as (corporate) managerialism." Schools that have historically been disenfranchised are now expected to meet these new academic standards exceedingly and compete with more affluent schools for funding and opportunities. Failure to do so has justified the disproportionate number of schools closing and restructuring initiatives in Black communities in cities like Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia and others. Hurricane Katrina presented an opportunity for corporate interests to dismantle the entire public school district in New Orleans, making the school district 100% charter schools (Buras, Randels, & Salaam, 2011).

In this theater of operations, students and their families are reduced to consumers, and the profession of teaching is de- professionalized, allowing for alternative teaching pathways like Teach for America that recruit predominantly white, middle-class college graduates to replace certified, more experienced teachers. The restructuring of labor

relations relies on docile, low- wage workers, facilitating the assault on labor unions. Particularly, bad teachers have become the scapegoats for poor student performance, and, in some instances, tying teacher pay to student achievement (Kumashiro, 2012). Black teachers, who only make up about 7% of the workforce in Pre-K through 12 schools, tend to work vastly in large urban school districts that serve predominantly students of color (Jones, 2015). In urban schools districts that have faced school closings and school turnarounds, there has been a major decline of Black teachers since their positions were not renewed upon a school's closure or turnaround. Lipman (2011) notes the ways education reforms have transformed teacher identities stating, "Centralized accountability and education markets have produced deep changes in teacher's work, including increased regulation and surveillance, narrowed curricula, competition through differentiated pay-scales and performance- based pay, and the emergence of a new teacher subject-- teacher as entrepreneur" (Lipman 2011, p. 127).

Anti-blackness interventions into Critical Race Theory led educational discourses to apply a specific lens to grapple with the nuanced racism that is distinctly an attack on Blackness although "color-blind" language is articulated (Sexton, 2010). Dumas (2014) refers to schools as "sites of Black suffering,"

> I contend here that, for many black children and families in the United States, Britain and elsewhere, schooling is a site of suffering. Schooling is not merely a site of suffering, but I believe it is the suffering that we have been least willing or able to acknowledge or give voice to in educational scholarship, and more specifically, in educational policy analysis. To be sure, researchers have documented inequitable educational opportunities and disproportionate outcomes, and have offered incisive

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analyses of the relationship between educational policy and broader social and

political forces (Anyon 1997, 2005; Gulson 2011; Lipman 2011). We have even

elucidated the impact of policies on the lives of specific racialized populations

(Nolan 2011; Scott 2011; Smith and Stovall 2008). However, even here, our work

has largely focused on policy as a set of interventions, regulations and institutional

and societal consequences. With an audience comprised primarily of policymakers,

educational leaders and other researchers, we have been less concerned with how

policy is lived, and too often suffered, by those who have little hand in policy

formation or implementation, and more to the point, have not been invited to weigh

in on how we who research policy should assess the deep impression of policy on

flesh, bone and soul. (p. 2)

This analysis asserts the same sentiments of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in recognizing that

racism is endemic and entrenched in school policy to a point that it cannot be reformed. At

the same time, it parts from CRT not to offer a solution but to avow the suffering of Black

folks while embracing them through a humanizing lens. This becomes the crux of anti-

Blackness theory in education that makes some uncomfortable as it allows Black people to

be seen as humans who hurt and suffer despite the refusal of others to recognize their

humanity.

Scholar Damien Sojoyner's (2016) analysis of the interconnectedness of schools and

prisons through the lens of enclosures is important. This analytical tool emphasizes what

Beth Richie called a prison nation to conceptualize "both the importance of Black

communal traditions and the reactive tendencies of the nation-state" (Sojoyner, 2016, p.

xii). Enclosures is a framework that draws on historical conflicts to unpack the trajectory of

oppressive structures in the present that include both physical barriers and "unseen" oppressive forces that impede the freedom of communities. His work expands the school to prison nexus discourse to account for the less overt dimensions of educational enclosures that suppresses Black culture and resistance. Similar to Haymes (1995), he theorizes the manifestation of Black public space, in his case schools with Black children, as sites where Black political thought emerges and culture is maintained. Sojoyner (2016) states, "Black manifestations of cultural autonomy ranging from music to visual art have been systematically eliminated from public education" (p. 57). For the purpose of my project, this intellectual offering reinforces the relationship between school and communities within the context of neoliberal- carceral state in a cycle to cripple resistance and critical thought.

Research over the last ten years has interrogated the relationship of schools to the prisons in creating the school to prison nexus (Meiners, 2007; Project Nia, 2012). Scholars have followed newly implemented discipline policies and curriculum trends that infiltrated schools alongside the No Child Left Behind Act allowing for new allegiances with law enforcement to punish "troubled" youth. Disproportionately, Black boys were the most targeted by these new policies in which their behaviors routinely instigated more aggressive responses by administration that involved the police. Research that seemed to broaden the scope to identify these issues as a trend in schools criminalizing Black youth assumes that this was based on the narratives of Black girls as well (African American Policy Forum & Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies [AAPF & CCISPS], 2014; Grant 1992; Morris 2012; Wun, 2015). The overrepresentation of research

on Black boys' schooling overshadows the nuanced processes that lead to the criminalization of Black girls.

About a year ago, I attended a public hearing facilitated by Mariame Kaba and Kimberle Crenshaw where Black girls testified about their schooling experiences. One of the many stories that resonated with me was about how Black girls sought help from their teacher after being consistently sexually assaulted by their male classmates, and the teacher blamed the girls for playing "too cute" for the boys. Black boys smacking Black girls on their butts goes unchecked, and Black girls are left having to defend themselves.

A 2007 study found that teachers perceived Black girls as being "loud, defiant, and precocious" and that Black girls were more likely than their white or Latina peers to be reprimanded for being "unladylike" (Morris, 2007). A study by Grant (1992) observed that the emphasis on social skills was less apparent for white girls, Black boys, and white boys. Furthermore, the study emphasizes how educators express more interest in promoting the social, rather than academic, skills of Black girls. Behaviors that may characterize young men as assertive is read as disrespectful for young black women. Morris (2007), like many other education scholars, is fixed on the cultural dissonance that occurs between white teachers and Black students. Over 80% of the teaching workforce is comprised of white women, and the percentage of Black teachers has declined immensely as neoliberal education reform displaces them from the profession.

In 2014, one study found that Black girls expressed that teachers spend a profound amount of time correcting their behavior rather than helping them learn (AAPF & CCISPS, 2014). Morris's 2007 study explains how the cultural disconnection between female teachers and Black girls leads to their disproportionate disciplining. Grant's 1992 study

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emphasizes how educators express more interest in promoting the social, rather than academic, skills of Black girls. Some Black women teachers also play an active role in trying to correct Black girls' behaviors that are deemed stereotypical, but with the consciousness of the implications of these stereotypes (Tyson, 2003). In other words, they are trying to protect them from being reprimanded for not being "lady-like" according to white middle class standards and subjected to criminalization in other spaces.

In examining data from the 2011-2012 academic year, the Department of Education (2014) found that Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls. During that academic year, Black girls represented approximately 12% of the suspensions compared to the 2% of white girls. The research report, "Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected," reported statistical evidence that revealed the overrepresentation of Black girls in school discipline compared to white and Hispanic girls in New York and Boston school districts (AAPF & CCISPS, 2014). Black girls make up 34% of school enrollment in New York; however, they are ten times more likely to be disciplined and 53 times more likely to be expelled than their white and Hispanic counterparts. In Boston, the results found that Black girls are 11 times more likely to be disciplined and ten times more like to be expelled. In Chicago, 23% of Black high school girls and 14% of middle school students received out-of-school suspensions (Morris, 2016).

Using an anti-blackness and Black feminist lens, Dr. Connie Wun (2014, 2015) challenges the concept of the school-to-prison-pipeline by critically analyzing the implicitness of anti-Black racism in structuring educational institutions. Influenced by the work of scholar Sadiyah Hartman (1996, 1997, 2007) and her contextualization of anti-Blackness post-slavery in the United States as the "after-life of slavery," she interrogates

the operation of schools as prisons for Black students by centering the experiences of Black

girls as captives. Wun (2015) asserts, "Through slavery and its afterlife, Black lives are

constructed as captive, confined, and subject to the whims of the master's fantasies."

Hartman further writes, "the enslaved were required to sing or dance for the slave owner's

pleasure as well as to demonstrate their submission, obsequiousness, and obedience"

(Hartman, 1997, p. 8). Drawing from Black feminism's analyses of slavery and its afterlife,

Dillon (2012) contends, "Slavery's afterlife surfaces in the gaps between the recorded, the

forgotten, and the never will be" (p. 121). Informed by these frameworks, I contend that

school discipline operates as an instrument in the "afterlife of slavery" that positions the

Black girl as perpetually and involuntarily open to surveillance and control. She is denied

access to self-autonomy, which includes feelings and forms of self-defense. Empathy does

not apply to her life and narratives. Her stories disappear and are disavowed. Through

school discipline, she is constituted as a "captive object," one that is ever-observed yet

without recognition" (Dillon 2012, pp. 8-9).

Dillon's (2012) study affirms the former literature findings that reveal that majority

of Black girls are disciplined for non-violent behaviors arbitrarily deemed deviant that seek

to control one's body movement and expressions of agency. At the same time, her research

pushes us to reflect more deeply on the reasons for the targeting of Black girls in school

policies and to understand the control and surveillance of Black students as an apparatus of

slavery with a longer history than the construct of the school-to-prison-pipeline (STPP) and

to understand how that apparatus is interconnected to all other parts of U.S. culture that is

permeated by anti-Blackness.

I do not think approaches to understanding Black girls' experiences in educational institutions have to solely subscribe to either Black feminist thought or Anti-Blackness, but both contributions provide an understanding of educational spaces as problematic institutions while recognizing the contradiction that schools often represent one of the most stable pillars in Black communities. In public school districts where a high percentage of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch and economic deprivations have increasingly heighten the populations of homeless families, schools at least guarantee that students will get two meals and hopefully warm shelter for a few hours a day. Nevertheless, because schools warrant much critique, the relationship between Black children and schools are much more nuanced and should be approached as such. While the Black girls in my study were not born at the offset of these processes, understanding these concepts contextualizes the world they were born into and are now required to thrive in. Critical analysis exposes the illusion that more opportunities would result in upward mobility as if they could undo years of disinvestment in their families. Unlike the older women in their families, they have come into a world where they do not have to look so far for #BlackGirlMagic in dominant culture because their representation is the center of analysis. In so doing, their counterstories about being punished and/or criticized for embracing their Black girlhood to resist the politics of respectability remains the focal point.

Finding Home/Place

> For many, prison is not that much different from the street. . . . For many cells are
>
> not that different from the tenements . . . and the welfare hotels they live in on the
>
> street. . . . The fights are the same except they are less dangerous. The police are the

same: The poverty is the same. The alienation is the same. The racism is the same. The sexism is the same. The drugs are the same and the system is the same. (Shakur, 1978, p. 1)

Assata Shakur, Angela Davis, Black political prisoners and other observers have made links to the resemblance of prison structures to the living conditions in urban housing units. These sentiments were often articulated in Black performances. A myriad of films, music, books and plays portrayed the feelings of containment experienced physically and mentally by Black families, particularly Black male characters. For example, Walter Younger spent the entire play obsessing over his mother's inheritance with hopes of breaking his family from the bondage of urban poverty in *A Raisin in the Sun*. In the context of my research, the neoliberal coercive state describes the peculiarity of the politics of containment and surveillance in this current moment. The logics of the carceral state provide a broader historical analysis for us to grapple with the many forms of Black subjugation across time and space. Neoliberalism has relied on the expansion of the carceral state beyond actual prison structures to repress activism with the purpose of creating a docile working force. Placing the conceptualization of the carceral state in a historical text outlines the legacy of controlling the Black body while encouraging us to recognize the evolution and adjustments made by systems of oppression to contain, police and marginalize Black people. These "innovations" are due to the dialectical nature of justice movements that force the state/system of domination to recreate itself. In doing so, neoliberals have co-opted the language of the oppressed and misrepresented itself as a process committed to "freedom" and "choice." It has convinced us that in order to ensure freedom for all of us, heavy surveillance and policing is necessary in protecting us from the "other."

Urban spaces become prime locations for the testing of neoliberal ideas. The rolling

back of public services become crucial to the expansion of privatization and the shrinkage

of democracy to shift power from the state to big corporate players. However, shady

politics in places like Chicago unveil the blurred lines between the state and corporate

influence, a space in which politicians make back door deals with corporate executives.

Across the nation, corporate executives and Wall Street "heavyweights" assume political

leadership to ensure corporate interests. Peck, Brenner and Theodore (2008) wrote,

> Cities (including their suburban peripheries) have become increasingly important
>
> geographical targets and institutional laboratories for a variety of neoliberal policy
>
> experiments, from place-marketing and local boosterism, enterprise zones, tax
>
> abatements, urban development corporations, and public-private partnerships to
>
> workfare policies, property redevelopment schemes, new strategies of social
>
> control, policing and surveillance and a host of other institutional modifications
>
> within the local state apparatus. The overarching goal of such experiments is to
>
> mobilize city space as an arena both for market-oriented economic growth and for
>
> elite consumption practices. ("City as Lab")

Urbanism and redevelopment initiatives are racialized projects in which white interests

are prioritized while restrictive covenants aim to contain Blacks subjects to blighted areas

in the city. The increase in the demand for more geographical space by white interests

additionally decreases the value of Black lives as they become more disposable and

displaced. The disregard for Black neighborhoods reflects the disregard for Black life. So

much so that traditional geography studies find the Black experience and the spatial

terrains that we occupy as "ungeographic" (McKitrrick, 2006).

Haymes (1995) and McKittrick (2006) provide a critical analysis of Black urban struggle beyond the wounds caused by disinvestment, gentrification, and police terror. Destruction of public housing can then be challenged as an attack on the empowerment of Black culture and Black resistance for low-income and working-class Black families. This is not to romanticize their living conditions but offers a more nuanced depiction of Black resilience and survival that includes more than just pain and suffering. bell hooks (1990) describes the "homeplace" as,

> The task of making homeplace... was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination. We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in the "homeplace" that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits. (p. 42)

In discussing the transformation of Black public space to private, Haymes (1995) asserts,

> If within Black inner-city communities networks of survival and self-reliance produce public spaces, the converting of those spaces into private spaces of middle class consumption interrupts their continuation... This means that profit making is protected from public accountability because it is believed to be within private domain, even though it depend on conditions that are publicly provided. The conclusion is that the bourgeois public space developed as a way for private interest to control "public activity". One major implication being that the private use of black public spaces represents an attempt to control the political dialogue about how the ghetto territory should be used and defined. (p. 19).

Simply, this imposes on Black communities' rights to self-determine even within the space they have been forced to occupy due to redlining and fraudulent housing practices.

Shabazz (2015) provides a historical context to the project of containing Black people as he traces the architectures of confinements in Chicago, interrogating the intentionality of urban planning in spatializing Blackness. The situating of Black folks within certain limits and boundaries has proven to be necessary when targeting an entire population using discriminatory laws and ethics to secure white interests. Neoliberalism places the blame on Black folks for the failure of their communities depicting them as "underserving" and incapable of leading their own lives. Neoliberalism uses racist logics of Blackness, equating it to inferiority to justify the community's inability to govern themselves, and colonial logics of "saving" the savages to maintain control over Black space.

In the context of my research interests the entanglement of neoliberalism and carcerality are imperative to providing a lens to the coercive power that oversees Black communities and extends to educational institutions. Carceralization secures neoliberal interests, profits off of violence, and suppresses the dissenters from interrupting its operations. These concepts are necessary in critically examining the criminalization of Black women and girls where schools as apparatuses of the state reinscribe state-sponsored violence onto Black young women.

Fugitive Space for 'Sous'

Fugitivity or "stealing away" additionally theorizes Black spaces in the after-life of slavery in which Black people navigate outside of the spectrums of the white gaze and surveillance. Sometimes, it is a physical communal space or a collective gathering that

disrupts public "white" spaces. In the context of slavery, this sometimes happened in plain view as enslaved Africans disguised political and/or cultural gatherings as traditional Christian religious ceremonies. Similar to bell hooks "homeplace" explanation, these communal spaces exist in opposition to and as a result of the dehumanization experienced by Black people. Often, the concept of fugitivity explores the navigation of Black bodies within white supremacist and anti-Black contexts. Black Girlhood Studies highlights the misogynoir and sexism in Black spaces and homes that force Black girls to create additional spaces that affirm their wholeness. Black girls even have repurposed digital social networks to reflect the representation of Black girlhood that has been disregarded in mainstream popular culture. These spaces take on a radical identity in enacting new terms of citizenship and a praxis of care that they are denied elsewhere, yet they are still committed to fighting against and with their communities in the name of justice. Aimee Meredith Cox (2014) writes,

> the young women are also somewhat surprised themselves to be talking so candidly about how excluded and vulnerable (an odd mix of invisibility and hypervisibility) they often feel in the public spaces of a city that they simultaneously talk about feeling as though they need to protect them. (p. 15)

They interrupt neoliberal- carceral processes by acting on their desire to implement their freedom dreams, and even while they curate fugitive spaces in opposition to all the places they have been pushed out, they "define themselves as central to how social transformation will occur for both youth and adults in their city" (Cox, 2014, p. 14). Despite the stereotypes of Black women's over reliance on the State to care for them, Black women and girls have developed innovative practices to care for one another in the absence of institutions that

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have historically denied adequate service to this demographic. For example, on the Southside of Chicago, Black young women have been central to organizing for a trauma center to treat gunshot victims with a collective formerly known as Fearlessly Leading the Youth (FLY) and building an organization to train community members to treat gun shot victims on site know as Ujimaa Medics.

In fugitive spaces, Black girls do not have to adhere to respectability politics nor explain their hair, loud laughter, or language. If we are listening, even their simple chatter theorizes about larger systemic and social issues. They do not have to have things figured out in the ways that other settings demand them to act as adults. They can twerk and flaunt their bodies without judgment from onlookers or objectification by admirers. These spaces allow Black girls to replenish their strength and maintain resiliency in the face of adversity.

Conclusion

This chapter begins with deconstructing neoliberalism and the many moving parts that have enacted anti-Black policies, mapping a new Chicago that is increasingly pushing Black families out of the city or to more blight neighborhoods in the city. As discussed above, the use of surveillance, prison systems, and educational takeovers enforces a violent relationship between the state and Black bodies. It evokes socially engineered violence that influences interpersonal and domestic acts of violence committed against one another. The experiences of Black girls illuminate the intersection between gendered violence and state violence to expose the root causes of violence. While faced with much adversity, it is through our struggle to survive where we provide a framework for alternative, liberated possibilities anchored in love, collectivity, and creativity. These realities manifest

themselves in the work of Black queer women who have been at the forefront of the Movement for Black Lives (Black Lives Matter). In Chicago, Black girls and teens have initiated a youth-led Black Lives Matter collective and other organizations like Assata's Daughters, Black Lives Matter, Good Kids Mad City, and BYP100 to demand that the funding of the Chicago Police Department be redistributed to education, affordable housing, and health efforts.

My reference to activism extends beyond reductionist discourse that solely defines it in the framing of protests, marches, vigils, and picketing. Instead, my understanding of activism envisions acts of resistance and daily acts of refusal that include (but is not limited to) situations like Black girls choosing to wear their natural hair in "professional" environments. Although, these behaviors may be embraced to be oppositional, often times these acts are expressions of self- love and are often criminalized when expressed by Black girls. This was apparent by the news reports over the last two years where Black girls made headlines for being sent home from schools for being out of compliance with policies that inexplicitly targeted Black youth.

In the context of my work, activism is about Black girls unapologetically taking up space on their own terms. Sometimes, this looks like the girls making visible the names of BWGs that were killed by police, and other times it is them choosing to gather at sites that were not typically created for them in locations like downtown Chicago. Black Girl Free (BGF) was built for and with Black girls as a fugitive space to counter their toxic encounters in their neighborhoods and schools. Even within my findings, the girls often identify school as a "site of suffering" where they are subjected to dehumanization and lack of protection. Unfortunately, the same institutions built to protect vulnerable populations can operate as

sites of violence for Black women and girls, prompting them to avoid interacting with the

State while inspiring them to construct non-traditional means of survival.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS: INQUIRY FOR FREEDOM RESEARCHING

Incorporating the narratives of Black girls in mainstream discourses is a project of making claim to our humanity and expanding notions about the human condition (Wynter & McKittrick, 2014). Our identities are constantly being negotiated and transformed as we figure out how to move through this world. Unfortunately, the needs and desires of BWGs to exist openly, unapologetically, and freely have to be acted out in the "place they look last" (McKittrick, 2006) or "outside the realms of surveillance" (Brown, Carducci, & Kuby, 2014). With this in mind, the objective of this project is about centering the production of knowledge that BWGs possess while interrupting the power of the academy to try and define their lives through inaccessible jargon and complex concepts that often result in further marginalization. Instead, this project is not an appeal to the academy, but an appeal to those of us who are in community with each other to trust our collective knowledge and experiences as legitimate structural critique.

Conventional analysis of neoliberal carceralism in urban planning and policy would traditionally frame this study as a sole interrogation of money and power. To the contrary, the aim of my project is to provide a deeper analysis of the significance of how the project of neoliberal carceralism is centered in breaking the souls of Black folks despite a demonstrated ability to resist. For these reasons, I am interested in exploring the fugitivity of Black of girls by applying intersectional methodologies to excavate the nexus of race, class, and gender in relation to the continued policing and containment of Black bodies.

Collaboratively, I teamed up with Dr. Sophia Duffy, psychologist and scholar at Dominican University who researches the ways Black girls develop coping strategies, to

share resources that included financial and outreach support when building our initial relationship with Black Girl Free (BGF), which contributed to our individual research projects. Black Girl Free Leadership program is a component of the organization Healing is Resistance Inc., a national non- profit organization with the purpose of using "*art to educate, inspire, and mobilize young people to end violence against girls and women*." Uniquely, their work uses healing and art/activism to encourage Black girls using a practice of care informed by Black feminism to address the needs of those at the intersections of gender and state violence. There are many youth programs here in the city, but many of these organizations operate from a deficit-based, anti-Black approach, with few centering Black girls as experts on their own lives and as leaders in our communities, schools, and homes. A unique component of BGF is their co-collaboration with Black girls in creating a place of love, healing, and activism.

In consideration of the frameworks shaping my project, Black girlhood and geographies or what Tamara Butler (2018) conceptualized as Black girls' cartographies to name the physical and sociopolitical mapping of Black girls in education (p. 29), I was interested in programs that celebrated Black girlhood that did not replicate programming fixated on Black respectability politics and disciplining the Black body. I was interested in a site engaged in freedom work or manifesting a fugitive space with Black girls. With these interests, I turned to critical feminist hip-hop pedagogy (Lindsey, 2013) and its concepts of Black girlhood empowerment to guide me in setting a standard for identifying a program that represented my values as a Black feminist and critical educator. Those standards include, but are not limited to:

1. Resistance to respectability politics—engagement with Black girls that is not centered in altering their behavior and appearance to align with white middle -class women's standards or patriarchal expectations of womanhood.

2. Raising consciousness—encourages students to become politically and socially engaged in issues of inequality and aids in strengthening their critical thinking skills.

3. Agency—affirms student decision-making and supports their leadership.

4. Models a praxis of love—attends to their student needs and aims to create an inclusive space where everyone feels appreciated and cared for.

Over 20 years ago Healing as Resistance Inc. developed as an organization within the anti-rape movement committed to elevating the stories of Black women and girls that were continually erased from mainstream movements both in white feminist and Black liberation movements. The organization was originally conceived as the outgrowth of photo-voice multi-media production based on the story of a survivor and her sister's healing process. It is a national organization located in Chicago, which extended this work to initiate a Black girls leadership program ten years ago when one of the co-founders was inspired by her work as a rape counselor and sex educator in a school on the west side. What began as individual mentoring and class sessions became a program for Black girls to strengthen their leadership skills to address gender violence through healing. Originally operating as a school-based program, BGF was pushed out of their operational school base six years ago after one of the girls organized to get a teacher dismissed for sexual harassment. In response to her organizing, the school's administration continued to withdraw support from the program before removing it altogether in 2013. Currently, the

program partners with different institutions (schools, community organizations, etc.) to assist with programming needs.

From the beginning of my pursuit of this project, I knew that I would draw from a constellation of methodologies that would be critical to affirming my discomfort with the narrow, deficit-based applications of traditional, mainstream positivistic research. I also knew from previous research projects that nothing ever goes as planned. With few models to look to, I challenged myself to put into praxis a decolonizing approach that relied on Black feminist thought to coordinate this ethnographic project. Throughout the process, I remained committed to conducting a critical feminist ethnography (Cotera, 2008; Cox, 2015; Hurston, 2018; Visweswaran, 1994) that valued Black girls' knowledge while utilizing the frameworks and approaches of activist scholarship. Simultaneously, I also seek to critique traditional methodologies through the inquiries of Black feminism and antiblackness. Both theorizations guided me to apply radical inquiries (methods) that consider the vulnerability of the overly researched Black body to illuminate Black girls' resistance without pathologizing the mechanisms they employ to survive the state. I consider this work to be in opposition to the disfiguring of Black bodies via neoliberal carceralism and connected to the embodied truth, which Patterson, Kinlock, Burkhard, Randall, and Howard (2016) summarize as,

> the embodied knowing that black women acquire as a form of wisdom, which speaks to and with bell hooks's articulation of critical consciousness as a politicized understanding of the world and one's positionality that fuels action and activism. The evolution from knowledge to resistant action is essential to black feminism. Through our interpretations of the world from black female positionalities, we resist

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by disallowing dominant, mainstream interpretations of who we are to overshadow, minimize, or discredit our truths. (p. 58)

This meant acknowledging other ways of knowing (Dillard, 2000; Smith 2012), which began with affirming the epistemologies of youth while disrupting the idea of a universal truth or research replicated to test the accuracy of a theory. This also includes witnessing the different ways people communicate that knowledge verbally or non- verbally (Brown, et al., 2014). While I had my own truth about growing up as a Black girl, each of the Black girls in the program entered with their own truth, an embodied truth that was expressed in multiple ways.

Black feminism has always been about activism and continually inspires acts of resistance through grassroots organizing and scholarship to challenge the positionality of Black female bodies (Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1978; hooks, 1984). Although we have individual truths, we share collective realities that allow me to be seen as an insider/outsider in my role as a researcher (Smith, 1999). This allows me to establish genuine relationships with the organization that seeks to dissolve power imbalances that sometimes occur between colleges/universities and community sites to build an ethical collaboration with adult allies and young people at BGF.

The inquiry into the lives of the Black girls represented in this document is as much about them as it is about me, which requires always seeing myself in relation to our youth and the Black women in BGF (Butler, 2018; Patterson et al., 2016). During this time, I shifted from inquiring about creating a fugitive space for Black girls to working with them as we labored to create such a space. Therefore, I did not interact with subjects objectively

but participated in building community and healing with Black young women as part of a larger political project to create safe space for Black girls.

The stories of these Black women and girls are not monolithic, but instead are intersectional. For these reasons, Black feminism offers an authentic and genuine way to conduct humanizing research. It upholds ethics about entering sacred spaces and the accountability I hold to the community of women and girls involved, which means negotiating the disclosure of information that is revealed (Cotera, 2008; Tuck & Wang, 2014). Most importantly, this project is about Black women and girls creating a safe "fugitive" space to reflect, heal, and to imagine our liberation here and there, which is very much in line with the praxis of Black Feminist Theory and in concordance with the framing of BGF's pedagogical approach to cultivating radical space for Black girls. Mutually, we were able to discuss my strategic incorporation into the space to maintain the sacredness of entering the environment.

As an invited member into the community, I often deferred to the leadership in integrating the best approaches to building with their youth. While they would not casually use "fugitivity" to identify their space, they did recognize it to be a sacred, healing space that mirrored Black women and girls' interactions in Sister Circles (Neal- Barnett et al., 2011). Although the space was much more than a sister circle, it embodied the sacredness and collective healing that manifests from such spaces like Sister Circles to conjure a fugitive space occupied by Black women and girls "that build upon existing friendships, fictive kin networks, and the sense of community found among them" (Neal- Barnett et. al, 2011, p. 2). It's a place where Black women and girls can gather together to break bread, laugh, cry, and just be. It is within these gatherings that Black feminist thought was birthed,

and critical feminist ethnography was imagined. Leadership at Healing is Resistance Inc. pulled from their collective epistemologies as Black women to develop a space much like Sister Circles in which Black girls felt supported and empowered in claiming space.

These communal engagements and storytelling rituals that replicate oral traditions connect us to Black folks across the diaspora and our African roots (Banks- Wallace, 2002). Whether intentional or unintentional, such convening between Black women and girls happens while quilting, over brunch, in church missionary groups, at book clubs, or while in the kitchen as our mothers, aunties, and grandmas are cooking up food for our souls. In the sister circle, Black womanhood/girlhood is affirmed and challenged from a place of love. Through this process we are "tellers and transcribers" of our own narratives and "talk back" to dominant perspectives as an act of resistance and healing to those in and outside of the community (Cotera, 2008; hooks, 1989). It allows for participants to engage more intimately and organically to create a collective vision to work towards a communal transformation that inspires healing and activism. Variations of sister circles as a method have been utilized in Black feminist research, as well as, in the medical field to facilitate health interventions (Gaston, Porter, & Thomas, 2007; Neal- Barnett et al., 2011), and as a way to combat isolation for Black women on college campuses (Winkle-Wagner, 2009).

Sister Circles heavily influenced my understanding of my role and strategies to conduct an ethnography with this group of girls, but this language does not fully articulate relations between these Black girls outside of the actual circle performance, which explains my use of *Critical Sis Interactions* to illustrate the political and social commentary that is casually exchanged between Black women and girls, including the powerful use of lower frequencies like a sideeye (Hartman, 1997) or the many meanings of "girl" depending on

the tone. For example, a young Black woman responding to questions about the outcome of her day at work with "I am just happy I have a job to go to," with continued conversation could lead to a critique of the limited employment possibilities for Black women in the scope of patriarchy and capitalism. These dialectical exchanges and the performance of Black girlhood/womanhood that manifests within BWGs engagements expose the influence institutions and social processes have on shaping the identity of communities while curating the terms of survival for marginalized people.

Even with this knowledge, I had planned on conducting interviews with the adult allies to have an in-depth discussion of their epistemologies in relation to working with youth and their perspectives on facilitating a youth program with this demographic of girls. While conducting the second interview, I felt uncomfortable about the way we both became so formal and mechanical in our interactions. Moments before we were on the sofa catching up and laughing, and once the interview began we both acted out our conditioning of what it meant to be interviewed. Once I internally recognized this, I changed the position of my body to be more relaxed, and rather than ask questions and wait on her answers, I started dialoguing with the participant as we were before the interview began. The exchange influenced responses that got more personal and was more dialectical in that we were sharing information and challenging one another through dialogue. From then on, I conducted reflective conversations instead of interviews (Patterson, et al., 2016).

In understanding the formation of Black girlhood within the context of living in a settler state and exploring spatial relations with them at the center, I found anti-Blackness theory most articulate in naming the complex identity Black Americans have to the United States. One that marks it as inherently too inferior to have agency over our own bodies and

an inability to live, thrive, claim, and create independently without white approval. To resist this social contract is an attempt to abandon our position of captive in exchange for attaining more liberatory ways of living, thus becoming a fugitive of the state.

In positioning Black bodies as fugitives under the constructs of the after-life of slavery or extension of slavery, fugitive people to explore the "after-life" of slavery for Black Chicagoans and critical geography to better assert the spaces in which current struggles against the dehumanization of Black bodies are contested. Saidiya Hartman (2007) and Hortense Spillers (1987) intently explore the dehumanization of Black women under the conditions of slavery and the "after-life of slavery" that animates anti-Blackness today. Their work forces us to wrestle with our "captive" or enslaved African experiences and the ways those experiences shape our identities and all sectors of Black life, including educational institutions. I recognize that as we influence these social processes, they also shape and alter our identities and perspectives. In the context of the U.S. and globally, Black lives are relegated to being captives under the white gaze. I expand on this concept to address the limitations that negate the resistance and autonomy that Black people make claim to in spite of the attempts of the dominant to subvert us. It is about facing the hard truth that the abolishment of slavery was not an end but was the beginning of another model of Black bondage. This project starts from a place of naming Black bodies as captives, a people removed from our native land to situate the suffering of Black folks in a historical context, exploring their fugitivity, moments they resist or develop alternative ways to exist (Harney & Moten, 2013; Hartman, 2006). From my perspective, concepts of captivity and fugitivity depict the dichotomy of navigating Black life. Therefore, I employed research methods through this lens to conceptualize the making of fugitive space in

collaboration with Black girls in the program. In my engagement with the youth, I

witnessed them adapting and negotiating their relationship to people and space that

informed their conceptualization of fugitive space that was expressed through words, body

language, and/or silences.

To impart antiblackness as a theory of research, particularly locating Black bodies as

fugitive and BGF as a fugitive space, challenged me to be conscious about the policing of

Black bodies. This required me to intentionally develop a research plan devoid of

surveillance of staff and participants in BGF. More specifically, observation of the Black

body as fugitive within the after-life of slavery (Hartman, 2016; Spillers, 1987) guided me

in considering accountability and ethics in conducting research with a population of people

under siege (Tuck & Wang, 2014; Smith, 2012). This meant continuously reminding our

young people and their loved ones about my role as a researcher, including a discussion of

the data I collected and the ways this data would be used. Additionally, before sharing any

story disclosed to me by staff or young people in BGF, I checked in with the person to get

consent on whether or not to use their story. While consent is important regarding the

work we do to address gender violence, I also find consent to be just as important when

checking in with participants irrespective of their signing of the required institutional

research board consent forms in the beginning of the study (Tuck & Wang 2014).

Research Plan

Building Community

As a silent follower of Healing Resistance Inc.'s work, I approached them about partnering with me for my research project to explore Black girlhood. My first step was to meet with the executive director and program coordinator. In our first meeting, we exchanged our intentions and love for working with Black girls before transitioning to the specifics of the project. During this meeting, we collectively decided that before any interviews were recorded or transcribed, I would serve as a research fellow (the title given to me) on a volunteer basis. Through my volunteering from February 2017- May 2017, I was able to learn about the program and the key components in sustaining the organization. This included joining the adult allies and youth at a rally and attending the multimedia performance about the co-founder's rape survivor story. This allowed for the organization's leaders to assess my authenticity and politics in supporting the development of Black girls while providing me the opportunity to learn more about their programming and structure. As they learned more about my qualifications by witnessing me in action, we were able to co-create my role in the organization during the summer when I used my time with the girls to learn about Black girl fugitivity.

I formally stepped into my role as research fellow at the parent orientation at the end of June 2017. During the event, I was able to introduce the research to the youth and their families and talk about the consent process. It was helpful that parents were able to ask me questions face-to-face about the research and myself. I had mixed emotions about revealing myself as a doctoral student although I knew it was important to be transparent. While I knew my positionality as a graduate student gave me "creditability" to do research,

I also knew it had the potential to create a power dynamic in situating me as an "expert."

Because my intent is to center the narratives of Black women and girls in Healing As

Resistance Inc., it required me to share, listen, and explicitly express my gratitude for what

I was learning. I often did this when participating with the group in the morning during

their check-ins and reflection time.

Methods

The methods I found most useful in this process were action-oriented engagements

(taking on primary role as adult ally) and reflective conversations with summer adult allies.

In trying to address my research questions that inquire about embodied ways of knowing

(Collins, 2000; Dillard, 2000; Patterson et al., 2016) and Black girls' survival, I have come to

know that these relationships are complex. Often these embodied ways of knowing are not

regarded as something significant but as something Black women and girls do out of

necessity. In the context of BGF, where art was intentionally woven into the curriculum to

explore issues of Black girlhood, it was imperative that I employed research methods that

robustly captured the multiple modalities Black girls use to produce and share knowledge

(Brown et al., 2014). In the same vein, the objective of my research is to work in

collaboration with a community of Black women and girls that seek to celebrate Black girls

while co-creating a transformative space. This political project is "a research, educational

and action- oriented activity" (Nabudere, 2008, p. 67), in which my existence in the

community may be as a researcher but also includes working alongside the community in

pursuing our collective vision (Hale, 2008; Patterson et al., 2016). As a community, we are

interested in the freedom dreams of Black girls and working towards fulfilling their desires.

The other method I applied after the summer was reflective conversations with some of the summer adult allies. I identify these interactions as reflective conversations rather than interviews because what was intended to be an interview often turned into a dialogue or "conversational interviews not marked by linearity and unidirectionality" (Patterson et al., 2016). In our conversations, we theorized and recalled childhood memories together. Unlike traditional interview processes that emphasizes a power structure between the researcher and the person being researched that can seem more interrogative, this approach facilitated what Madison (2012) describes as a "partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning, and experience together" (p. 25). This naturally occurred once we got into the groove of the interview. Often these were continuations of conversations had at team meetings or in the office as we often reflected with one another. I was informed by my participation in the program in constructing the semi-structured interview questions (Madison, 2012) although our dialogues would send us into deeper conversations about supporting Black girls and Black women. We were able to talk about our own experiences as Black girls in relation to our passion for doing this work. Showing up for these Black girls in some ways was us showing up for the Black girl that lives in all of us (Butler, 2018). This was also a moment for the allies to reflect more thematically about their pedagogical approach that is both conscious and unconscious. Two of the participants offered dual perspectives as allies and program alumnus. Due to location, half of the dialogues were conducted in person and the other two were done over video chat lasting from 30 minutes to two hours.

Data Collection

Participants

Youth

There are 11 girls, ages 12-17, who are represented in the study. The majority of the girls are from the westside of Chicago, and two girls lived in a western suburb of the city. Ten of the girls racially self-identified themselves as Black, and one of the girls self-identified as biracial. Although I did not record socioeconomic status, from my conversations with the girls, many provided markers that would locate them within low-income and working-class families. Eight of the girls were new to the program, and two were returning girls who had been part of the program in previous years.

Adult allies

Four out of the seven primary summer staff participated in the reflective conversation. Those that participated self-identified as Black and classified their socioeconomic status from poor to middle class. Two of the participants also were alumnus of the program and from the westside of Chicago, and one was attending college while the other was a recent graduate. The other two staff members had master's degrees in art therapy.

Action-Oriented Engagements

I conducted my research from June 2017 to May 2018. However, the summer was the most intense because of the time we spent together over the course of the four-week leadership institute. During the tenure of the summer program from the end of June to the end of July, I co-facilitated and participated in activities through the use of art, reflexive

exercises, facilitated discussions, self care, field trips and community engagement while providing them with resources to address violence against women and girls. After the summer, our girls attended the after– school programming about twice a week. Unfortunately, the other full-time staff member was transitioning out of her role after the summer to take on another job, so I was asked to take on her position temporarily because of the relationship I had with our youth and my experience as an educator.

In engaging in action-oriented research, I made sure to be fully present in the daily activities while serving as an adult ally to the young women in the program. While I aimed to write-up ethnographic notes every night, most evenings I found myself exhausted and would recap events from the week that included memorable moments and my reflections regarding all that I was learning from the youth and adults as well as the childhood memories that were evoked throughout the week. Inspired by the art the youth created to name their truths, I also used spoken word poetry to process and reflect on my own feelings (Brown, et al., 2014). By week three, I switched from written notes to recording audio files due to exhaustion. The reflexive dialogues allowed me to have more organic and raw dialogues with myself. All memos, written and recorded, were uploaded to a password-protected site to protect the privacy of the participants. Audio memos were delivered with recorded interviews to be transcribed with an external trusted company.

Students were given culturally oriented pseudonyms to be referred to in documents. This was particularly important in honoring the significance of the naming of Black girls, which is integral to their experiences and central in shaping their identities (Smith, 2012). The Black girls in this study were not shy about correcting anyone about the correct pronunciation of their names or spelling. Looking back, I would have built in time to allow

the students to choose their own aliases and process with them their desires around the name chosen. Additionally, this would have expanded on the perceptions the youth had of themselves and the ways they believe others see them.

Initially, I did not realize how prominent of a role I would play in the summer leadership institute and had intended to implement supplemental lessons to help me better understand the participants' relations to their community. This originally included places they would identify as fugitive space to explore their freedom dreams, identity, and community engagement, like the community asset mapping activities we engaged during the program. However, the ambitious curriculum and timing did not allow flexibility to add extra activities, but conversations organically emerged during discussions or *Critical Sis Interactions*. This also meant that part of being present and protecting the sacredness of the site meant every conversation and interaction was not for me to record or analyze. In positioning Black girls as fugitives, reporting this information within the context of academic scholarship can do more to harm them than emancipate them from the structural harm they are subjected to that the academy has too been complicit in inflicting on their communities (Smith, 2012; Tuck & Wang, 2014). I remained conscious about protecting the fugitive lives of Black girls and the ritualistic practices they engage in outside the surveillance gaze.

Reflective Conversations

At the end of the summer program, I conducted semi-structured recorded reflective conversations with the adult allies that were on the summer staff. These individuals included the summer staff that was comprised of four Black women ranging from ages 18-

39 and staff that are also alumni of the program. The reflection conversations lasted from

approximately 30 minutes to almost two hours. The questions I asked were centered in

retrieving the adult allies' knowledge about their vision for the organization, their freedom

dreams for Black girls, and their ideological approach to working with Black young women.

For example, one questions was "what has contributed to your ideological approach to

structuring the organization?"

Although, my research primarily focuses on the impact of young Black women,

intergenerational dialogues bridge the history of Black women and inspire new

understandings of our ancestral roots. Taking this into account, I found that Black women

co-creating space is just as important as their personal experiences that have brought them

to the work. Most importantly, the program recognizes the importance of these

intergenerational interactions in supporting positive youth development for young people

(Ginwright, 2010). Additionally, their voices offer context to their reasons for coming to do

this work and information that is important to implement a praxis of care for Black girls

(Reynolds & Hicks, 2016).

Accountability

As mentioned above, this is a collaborative project with Healing as Resistance Inc.,

and it has been important for me to maintain transparency while finding ways to keep the

staff and participants in BGF informed about the writing process in a way that is accessible.

Since the summer, I have had the opportunity to process with participants in which I

discuss my approach to the work and been in conversation with them about the story that

should be told about Black girls in Chicago. These dialogues happened at meetings in the

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office and during the recorded conversations in which we were reflecting together about our work in relation to the larger conversation about Black girlhood. Throughout the process, we have shared and discussed resources that we believe are imperative to working with Black girls (Patterson et al., 2016). They have given me feedback about presentations I have given about researching Black girls while also providing me opportunities to talk about my research with the cohort of youth during their 2017-2018 after-school programing. My interactions with staff and participants allowed me the space to engage creative approaches on how to make my dissertation accessible to the participants and community.

Data Analysis

All conversations were recorded and transcribed by an external trusted company, and were coded by me using the qualitative research software Atlas.ti,. Once the transcriptions were completed, they were verified by following along with the audio recording and pairing all identifying information with the pseudonyms I created. I began with codes that I identified while reflecting on my experience with the girls after the summer and recurring concepts that emerged during the reflective conversations. Subsequent codes were developed following a second read of the transcripts. I began with about 30 codes that were ultimately reduced to 20 by plugging the less frequent codes into more popular codes that they were directly related to and created a codebook that listed the codes and definitions. After developing the codebook, I revisited the codes and referred back to the transcripts to generate themes to "illuminate the tensions and overlappings that take place 'within' and 'between' cultures, ethnicities, nations" (Cotera,

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2008, p. 10). The primary themes were pedagogy, politics of place, loss, transformational

moments, and Black girl magic. These themes primarily shaped my discussion sections.

Limitations

While I gained many insights from my project with our girls about Black girlhood

and their dialectical relationship to Chicago and healing as resistance, I did not get to spend

time following up with our girls about stories they shared nor was I able to learn more

about their schooling experiences. Institutional barriers made it particularly challenging to

get approval in a timely manner, and the restrictions of these institutions trumped our

organization's ability to engage young people for research purposes. Overall, the project

sparked my desire to facilitate more reflective conversations with our girls individually and

collectively to explore more intently their relationships to their bodies and the ways their

bodies are read in different contexts. Initially, I was concerned with the ways the Black

female body moved in and out of spaces, but reviewing my data revealed to me the

centrality of the body as being both a site of loss and healing.

The constraints of limited resources are also present throughout the project. Given

more time and resources, I would have developed a team of both Black girls and women to

take part in designing the research project from beginning to end. This would have

centered Black girls' knowledge production while providing a self-authored framework to

be used as reference for those facilitating research with this population of young people. As

we move the field of Black Girlhood Studies forward, it is crucial that we employ innovative

and culturally responsive strategies to include the narratives of Black girls who may not be

part of formal settings like after-school programs and/or school but may navigate the world by way of non-traditional (fugitive) spaces.

Conclusion

In the next chapter, I use a non-linear thematic approach to narrate the stories and experiences of our youth and BGF's role in providing a fugitive space for them. As part of the larger political project of Black subjugation, the data exposes the interconnectedness of race and gender in the context of the neoliberal carceral state. Throughout the process, we are also able to learn more about Black girls' resistance to the state and their assertion of self-determination. BGF curates a pedagogy of care for Black girls and expands on the importance of fugitive space as both a site of fugitive planning and redress.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS: LOSS, SURVIVAL & HEALING

My intro to Black Girl Free was at a youth development summit some years ago when I attended their workshop. I cannot even remember the topic of their workshop, but I do remember being excited because it was youth-led by Black girls. Years later, I was in the company of its members and youth at a town hall led by Kimberle Crenshaw in which young Black girls testified about the lack of protection and compliance of rape culture in their schools. Yet, it was not until I made my way to one of their end of the summer exhibitions where Black girls commanded the room as they rolled their hips to Beyoncé to open the program. Some entered smiling, some channeled their inner Beyoncé to give us diva attitude, and others were frustrated from the start. At the front of the room were loving Black women waiting to receive them as they were. While there was obviously structure, that structure was not founded on values of policing Black girls or trying to get them to fit neatly in a box nor trying to save at-risk-youth from the West Side. This was the beginning of my journey to building with Black Girl Free and a transformational moment for me in shifting my own work to center the brilliance, and radical imagination of Black girls to tell their side of the story about the contested city Chicago or Chiraq. Overall, this chapter demonstrates the messiness of engaged or activist scholarship and makes visible the narratives of Black girls as nuanced and reveals the intersections of gender and state violence.

The structure of this chapter unpacks themes that came out of the individual dialogues I conducted with the summer staff in conversation with my journey as the research fellow during from June 2017 to May 2018. I present my findings or significant

moments from the program using a thematic arrangement to weave together themes and stories and their relation to one another in the context of exploring the nuances of Black girls' survival and the pedagogical response of BGF that models a "fugitive" space that operates as both a site of healing and resistance. Specifically, I open with the parent orientation to provide context to my initial introduction to the summer program and the influence this event had on shaping my understanding of the family dynamics and "loss" as a generational matter that the girls and their families inherited as a result of anti-Black state violence. From here I move to talk about the retreat, which I would identify as Rites of Passage into the program between our girls and staff as we size up one another or try to figure out what's really good with the next person as we slowly lower our walls. Part one of the chapter is primarily the findings that came from my role as an adult ally in the program and field notes that are centered on my perspective and re-telling of the girls' narratives. Part two highlights the reflective conversations with staff, and my recollections of programming to examine the pedagogical approaches of a program that works with Black girls.

Although I conducted a yearlong study, my data primarily reflects on the summer portion of the leadership program. During the after-school program, my role changed and my ability to reflect was limited when I shifted to permanent staff and became enveloped in the intense whirlwind of working at a small non-profit while balancing personal responsibilities. Stepping into a permanent position also shifted the power dynamics where I had access to certain information that may not have been shared with the entire group, as well as a role in setting standards and distributing stipends. Due to this change in

power relations, the summer remains the primary site of the stories I shared to maintain the confidentiality of those stories only shared with me.

The "Conversations"

Initially, I began the first two dialogues using the traditional interview format of me asking questions and listening to their response. This approach felt forced and formal, and lacked the depth of conversation that organically transpires when there is a dialectical exchange. By the second interview, I began with a more conventional format for interviews and felt myself breaking script to engage more honestly with my colleagues as we continued to get more comfortable in the conversation. My final reflective conversation carried over to two dialogues and was conducted in Black Girl Free's administrative office that is decorated with artwork by youth from over the years that contributed to the executive director's memory of the trajectory of the program which had entered it's nine years of existence. Eight months after the program ended I had the opportunity to be in conversation with four out of the seven permanent summer staff within weeks of one another. Through these reflective conversations, I learned a lot about the intentionality behind the pedagogy enacted and created space for my colleagues to reflect on their engagement with Black girls and ending violence, something they are not often privy to because of the lack of capacity. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, BGF is a small non-profit organization staffed with two full-time employees, temporary part-time positions and significant support from volunteers. Like other organizations of this size trying to sustain in the non-profit industrial complex[11] from meeting the demands of securing

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[11] See Incite (2017) for more detailed information.

funding to the actual physical, mental and emotional labor working within marginalized communities, the opportunity for staff to reflect extensively on the work is often limited. There are many moments when our reflections are relegated to conversations in the car after taking the girls home to recap on the programming and exchange information about our youth that is relevant to their well-being.

The structure of this chapter and vignettes describe significant moments that shaped the summer, the pedagogical approach working with our girls in this capacity, transformational moments that detailed our assessment of the impact the program was having on the girls and the on-going project of securing freedom dreams for Black girls. The vignettes provide a roadmap to navigate my thematic approach to presenting the data or storytelling that weaves together these concepts rather than a chronological orientation.

Parent Orientation

Parent orientation night was the first evening where the summer staff met the parents/loved ones as they accompanied the new cohort of Black girls and for some, their siblings/cousins as well. The summer staff still getting to know each other, set-up the space, while we eagerly waited to greet our guests. We had music playing to set a warmer atmosphere in an art classroom located on the West Side in their community. As the first guests arrived, you could tell who had come before and who was new by their openness to engage in the beginning. I was nervous as I thought through how to explain my project accurately, but concise. I also was still unsure about what my involvement with the parents and youth should be. As we waited to get started parents and their children were quiet or had very little conversation. We served dinner, and people reluctantly made a plate, which I

was surprised by because it was dinnertime and I, myself, was starving. As we opened up with introductions, parents/guardians were asked to say their name and relation to the youth they were representing and to name what made their participating girl sparkle? Most came with their mothers, there was an aunt their to represent her niece, two of the girls came with their father, and one was accompanied by her boyfriend. This moment shifted the uncertain and anxious energy, to a powerful moment where some of them for the first time heard their mother, father, aunt, big sister and/or boyfriend publicly avow their positive characteristics. This moment caused some to tear up and become emotional as they looked into their child's eyes and often named multiple positives about them. Other proclaimed confidently as they looked at the staff their babies' assets. A parent of a girl that had been in the program for two years highlighted the programs influence on the transformations she observed in her child which included more confidence and leading marches. While, we did not know all of the back story about the living arrangements of the new cohort that had now become our girls as well, we knew at best that they had someone in their life that loved them.

Then the program moved along with introducing the summer staff and our roles, and the history of the program. You could see from the parents' expressions that some of them weren't sure what their child really signed up for. The evening included a board member facilitating a condense presentation on a liberatory parenting praxis, that invited parents to think differently about raising a Black child in a violent world. She stated, "she wanted to say less no's and more yeses." One parent was very outspoken about her fear for her children's life and her over bearing parenting even though it has not worked for her son. We then transitioned to a parent talking about their experience with the program and

how their child has been positively impacted by the experience. Kelli took over to talk more in-depth about what the girls will be doing all summer and the objectives. In conclusion of the program, we ended in a circle and we did Wishes to Black Girls. Which is a significant closing we often do at the end of public events and at orientation where we all participating in putting out in the world our freedom dreams for Black girls. Those wishes ranged from wanting Black girls to be safe from harm to a desire for self-determination for Black girls to become who they want on their own terms. As the program closed out early, families lingered a bit and proceeded to ask the director and program coordinator additional questions. In particular, the more outspoken parent approached Kelli stating she didn't realize she signed on for her daughter to stay over night some where and that normally she wouldn't but that she would honor the contract because she trusts us.

The introduction to the summer program, youth and their families though brief provided some context about the homes our girls were coming from. Although Black parenting is criminalized and deemed insufficient particularly in low-income/working class communities, the mere presence of loved ones in attendance at the parent orientation defied stereotypical discourse about the lack of educational involvement of Black parents in their children's lives. The presence of "non-traditional" or alternative familial representations affirms the claim that conservative notions of family do not align with the realities of the formations of family in the U.S contemporarily[12]. Historically the notion of family or kin in Black families have existed outside of the Eurocentric concept of family,

[12] See Livingston (2014) for more information on the non-traditional family make-up in the U.S.

particularly, amongst descendants of African slaves whom relied on "fictive kin" relations[13]

to create familial structures after being stolen and separated from their biological/nuclear

families. Throughout the summer I would learn more about current issues in which parents

are being stolen from their families by way of incarceration or violent death. Much of this

is due to the work of Chicago activist Bella Bahhs and her organization Sister Survivor's

initiative to center incarcerated Black women's stories. This informed our approach as

adult allies in the space in shaping who are the other people we are in communication with

as it relates to the girls and their emergency contacts. Unlike other institutions, we did not

make assumptions about their families nor shame them for having "nontraditional" family

structures. With this understanding we adjusted to accommodate who they saw as part of

their "family" that was not tied to biological or legal definitions of family.

Additionally, the desire for the safety of Black girls reflected in the hesitation the

outspoken mother had about her daughter attending the overnight retreat illuminates the

juxtaposition between the hyper-visibility of violence against young Black men and the

invisibility of violence against Black girls. The silence that permeates our communities

deems violence against Black girls as a topic we are not yet ready to address because in

most cases this means holding the beloved men in our community accountable.

Coincidentally, the parent orientation was the day before the one-year anniversary of

Jessica Hampton's death[14], the 25-year-old Black woman killed on the redline by her ex-

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[13] Fictive kin are extended family not related biologically or through marriage that are

recognized socially and emotionally as kin.

[14] Details of Jessica Hampton's story are found in the *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 2016.

partner. Her name, as well as, Rekia Boyd's[15] name was mentioned during the

organizational presentation at orientation as examples of the work the organization is

engaged in locally to end violence against women and girls. Both of these women or

freedom fighters as we refer to them, continue to be pillars in the organization during the

leadership program to unpack the intersections of gendered and state. For instance, Rekia

was gunned down by an off-duty police officer in the girls' neighborhood just steps from

where many of them attend school, and a location they too have walked by or hung out at.

This location is steps away from the birthplace of Black Girl Free and it's first protest

against the sexual assault of a young Black woman in the park. This site becomes significant

as I return to it later in my findings as reclamation of space as an act of healing and

resistance.

Overnight Retreat

Most of the activities consisted of icebreakers. During the Speed Dating icebreaker,

in particular, one question asked participants to talk about a transformational moment

with their partner. That is when I learned that Brittni's father had passed when her mother

was five months pregnant with her, and then her stepfather died a day before in a car

crash. In revealing this to me, she spoke about these events nonchalantly. This worried me,

as well as, reminded me of the ways I presented myself after the passing of my own father. I

revealed to her that I had lost my father and let her know if she wants to talk about it at any

point in time that I am here for her. Because the day was moving so fast I failed to pass this

information along to the other staff members until the following day. The most powerful of

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[15] See Momodu (2017) for more information.

the events, was during the art sharing in Ameera and Kelli's room that evening. We all entered the dimly lit living room area with electric candles dispersed throughout the room anxious and anticipating the serious moment. Mandala, one of the youth staff person and alumni of the program started by sharing a picture of her, her mother and two brothers sitting on porch steps looking somber. This picture represented a photo taken by her to express life in her home as they missed her father, who at the time was incarcerated. Her sharing set the tone for the rest of the evening that welcomed vulnerability and tears. Others went on to share poetry, photos, drawings, dance and a film to express their art form and the inspiration for the art they shared which was typically tied to a difficult moment in their lives. It was powerful and intriguing the connectedness of everyone's art to the ways they grapple with self and those around them. This led to many tears and heartfelt sharing. This revealed to me the need for this space, and that they (Ameera & Kelli) had done an amazing job creating a safe space in which they felt comfortable being vulnerable so early.

This moment was magical and affirmed the sacredness of the gathering. While I have participated and facilitated at many retreats, this had been a rare moment even for me to be collectively surrounded by predominantly Black girls willing to be vulnerable. I have yet reached that level of vulnerability they expressed, but the space pushed me and the other adult allies as well. Many of the stories presented that went along with the art projects the girls presented detailed some type of loss. Whether it was loss of a person, body autonomy, confidence and/or loss of childhood, this commonality threaded their stories along with the ways their loss was connected to their Black girlhood.

Black Girlhood and Structural Violence: Surviving the Perpetuity of Loss

I know from my own experience and the experiences of Black women and girls around me that there are few spaces where we feel we can be vulnerable and supported as we expose our truths. In a world where our lives do not matter, being the "strong Black woman" stands in as a defense mechanism as we are expected to care for everyone else around us. In the lives of our young people, adultification or the presumption for Black youth to act adult-like is a result of state disinvestment in their communities that is directly linked to financial instability and lack of access to affordable public institutions like daycares, and the dehumanization of Black bodies. The art sharing during the retreat revealed a "loss" of childhood for many of the girls who either were caretakers for their younger siblings, and/or of a parent/relative. This sometimes showed up as guilt as the girls recognized the privilege they had over others by being part of this program. The concept of "loss" in these girls lives also included; loss of body autonomy whether by some type of violation to the body through physical, emotional or mental harm, loss of a loved one whether as a result of death, incarceration or neglect, or loss of confidence that is entangled with the other losses they experienced and a society that devalues Black girls. While it is evident that they come to this space in search of a place to share their uncensored truths, they also come hopeful that they can heal and be restored. They come unsure about all that they may gain but convinced that they will gain something for themselves as well as their families.

Loss of childhood

Mapping our youth's loss exposed the intersection of oppression that burdens Black girls in a neoliberal city like Chicago that deems them invisible. While the role of caregiver often falls on Black girls because of sexist ideas in our families about gender roles, it also directly relates to the lack of affordable and accessible childcare, as well as, employment instability. Another aspect to loss of childhood impedes on our youth's capacity to play, or engagement in imaginative performances. The politics of play highlights the blighted public areas in their communities that are un-kept or are used as sites for illegal transactions, to the criminalization of Black youth gatherings by police and the impact of gun violence on the entire community. These conditions force parents to assume responsibility for protecting their children from community violence and police violence, although both issues are due to structural realities. I learned about these politics through the youth's responses to an activity that asked them to tell a story about a memorable day that they had a lot of fun playing. Some are stumped by this question and needed clarification about what we meant when we said "play." They made statements like "that was a while ago" as if they were so far removed from being children. Some struggled with thinking about a time of "play" because they rarely engaged in such activities, particularly outdoors due to fears community violence. Commonly, the favorable memories they shared about play included something done with others, and evoked feelings of laughter, freedom and fun.

Loss of body autonomy

Loss of body autonomy analyzes the assault on Black girls' bodies whether from sexual, physical or emotional abuse that caused shame, a feeling of no control over their body and un-comfortableness in their body. Due to the nature of the work at BGF, the program automatically attracts sexual assault survivors or witnesses, however the terms by which youth choose to disclose differs. Aside from the vulnerability displayed during the art sharing activity, the first photo assignment, in which our girls were tasked with capturing self-portraits of themselves, was an emotional story-telling gathering that allowed us to learn more about the perspective the girls had about themselves. We learned about the wounds that society had cut into the psyche of some of our young people about beauty standards from the ways they avoided pictures of their faces and substituted images of their face for an object(s) or pictures of loved ones that represented them. Amazingly, some bravely presented vulnerable images of their bodies with subdued expressions where the eyes and lack of smile told a story on their own. I was intrigued to hear the ways our girls viewed themselves and their ability to camouflage their insecurities, because some of those same youth walked with such confidence, all the while embodying the tensions with enacting self- love when you are not considered the standard. Yet, it seemed these photos represented their willingness to work towards loving themselves more and their attempt to silence the haters.

One photo was an image of a young woman standing in front of the camera looking up, arms hanging at her side, wearing all Black, including a black cropped top that showed off her mid-drift. This was her courageous response and reminder to herself that she is not what people have said she is, which have included harsh criticism from her step-

grandmother and the men in her family about dressing like a "hoe" or being "too fat" to wear cropped tops. Furthermore, her description about the narrative she was telling through the photo taught us that her consistent wearing of cropped tops was her "talking back" to oppressive standards that tried to police her body. Many of our students attended schools with mandated uniform/dress code policies and even within the program ironically there is a suggested dress code with emphasis on professionalism when on field trips and as presenters and board members visit. While BGF dress code is not extensive nor enforced, it does highlight the contradiction with creating a fugitive space for Black girls and the presence of our respectability politics that present themselves from a place of our own epistemologies of navigating access and opportunities in hegemonic institutions. Regardless, in the context of this young person, the regulation of presentation via dress disrupted her process of self-love. In educational institutions the dress code policies claim to be rooted in inclusivity and an anti-bullying initiative, so that dress codes camouflage the class discrepancy present in schools. Discussed extensively in Chapter 2, these policies are rooted in racist, sexist and homophobic values that criminalize Black girls and youth of color, including queer and non-gender conforming youth. In her family and community, her dress elicited body shaming, stereotyping and victim blaming that affirmed Black girls' bodies as problematic. This positioning of Black girls' bodies perpetuates rape culture that still find her as "un-rapeable" and at fault for violence committed against her.

Engaged in writing workshop as we read poems by Lucille Clifton, we got to a conversation about our bodies. Iesha, who would be read as "rough around the edges" from the outside, painfully shared her recent experience on the train that made her cover her body as a man and woman openly questions her age by the shape of her "grown" body. The

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man proceeded to tell her to put his number in her phone and she covered her body with her hoodie before getting off before her stop due to the harassment that left her feeling ashamed. I had seen Iesha vulnerable before this and I learned early on that her heart was bigger than her, but this was the first time I saw her shrink as she spoke. From the tone of her voice to the way she continued to hide her body as she got smaller. After sharing her story, she was not as present in the writing workshop. I sat there infuriated on the inside, but later that night I had to release all the heaviness I was feeling and, so as part of my field notes that day I wrote a poem to express my frustration with the assault on Black girls' bodies (see Appendix II). Surprisingly, I was even angrier with the woman that failed to intervene and joined in on shaming Iesha. I was frustrated with the way Black girls are punished for having a "body" or appearing curvier than their female peers.

The murder of Jessica Hampton on the train, a public place, reveals the normalization of violence against women, particularly Black women and girls, and the ways public spaces do not assure their safety other than that there may be more spectators to witness the violence. Reports recall Jessica's ex-boyfriend followed and harassed her on the train before stabbing her to death multiple times in which no one intervened. Iesha's storied echoes the everyday struggles of the unpleasant encounters women experience while commuting on public transportation. While public transit companies and partners invest so much in increasing police presence and purchasing more surveillance technologies to prevent terrorism, women and girls are responsible for implementing their own safety plans for navigating the terrains of banal assault by men. Her story was one of many of the stories the girls casually told over the summer when navigating on public

transit. Therefore, being introduced to Tatyanna Fazlalizadeh's[16] "Stop Telling Women to Smile" public art campaign was a visual representation of the things they have said to cat callers or wish they could have said to their perpetrators. Particularly, this artist had worked with a former BGF cohort in creating the project and incorporated an image of one of the girls from an earlier cohort into the final pieces.

Loss of loved ones

Loss of loved ones was another category that presented itself as more conversations around family carried on throughout the summer. It was through these dialogues that I was able to better understand their familial structure through their lens. While the category loss of loved one(s) is inclusive of non- biological intermediate family members, significantly, eight out of ten of the girls had reported a loss of a biological parent in their short lifetime. These numbers included the loss of someone due to temporary circumstances that included being kidnapped by the state (incarcerated), drug use or absent for another reason other than death and loved ones that had passed on. As the summer staff, the presence of grief was not lost on us because some of us too had experienced a significant loss of a loved one.

Pathologies about Black families assume the absence of Black fathers as a result of incarceration and/or willful neglect. As a research assistant on another project about Black fatherhood, we found that Black father involvement was exceedingly more active than mainstream depictions presented, and later I saw an additional article that affirmed what

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[16] A Black woman artist from NY that creates art to speak back to sexual harassment.

we found in our study[17]. As an educator, I was interested in the lack of outreach schools did

to keep them engaged and was concerned about the racist and gendered assumptions being

made about Black fathers' involvement with their children's academic journey. Amongst

the girls I worked with, eight out of the ten described their fathers as involved; in two of the

families, the primary caregiver was the father.

Out of the eight girls that experienced a temporary or permanent loss of a parent,

three had permanently lost a parent. Brittni lost her birth father to gun violence while she

was still in the womb and then her stepfather who had been her life since the age of 3 died

in a car accident that summer. Another student's father died due to gun violence, and one

student's mother passed on from a terminal disease. These losses, whether temporary or

permanent, must be understood within the context of disparities in the criminal legal

system, the social engineering of violence, healthcare disparities and environmental justice

that devastatingly puts Black families in proximity to premature death. All of these barriers

to well-being are deeply facilitated by way social policy in the form of state-sanctioned

violence.

While some created art in memory of loved ones in their process of grief and

healing, some of the girls took images of their families that embodied love and joy, or

gratefulness. In contrast to the imaginings of the broken Black family, their images

demonstrate that strong family relations or kinships still are foundational in our

community and are central to their lives although those relations may be complicated.

Iesha's images interestingly were a compilation of the men in her family through a softer

scope where they appeared vulnerable, which included her father smiling while playing

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[17] See Fisher (2018) for more information about CDC study.

with her little sister, or the photo of her brother sitting on the front porch idle and looking

deep in thought. Other dominant images the girls took were photos of their siblings that

were reflective of the significance of their sibling relationships. Jocelyn captured a powerful

photo of her older sister that struggles with lupus that can be manageable one day and on

another can find her gravely ill. Her story of battling lupus at such a young age must be

understood in connection to living in a disinvested Black urban community. Many of these

photos were displayed in the final exhibition where images of themselves and family

covered the white walls of the lobby of a predominantly white art institution located in

downtown Chicago. Many of the photographs caught the eye of onlookers as it disrupted

the typical high art or whiteness that decorates that part of the city. Later I will return to

the exhibition as part of the process of reclamation in which we purposefully return to

certain spaces as part of our right to the city and resistance as we use our art and bodies to

make Black women and girls visible.

Loss of confidence

Loss of confidence is strongly connected to the other "loss" the girls identified and

the invisibility they experience as Black girls as they move through different contexts. The

self-portrait project unveiled the body image issues they were working through, and the

returning youth emphasized the impact the program had on their confidence. As

mentioned in the description about the parent orientation, Elise's mother was very proud

of witnessing her daughter lead marches and finding her voice. Lack of confidence was

expressed as shyness and or being introverted, which accurately described a few of the

girls, while with others it seems as if they have not been in spaces where their voice

mattered. This was apparent in observing the differences between the girls that went to an African centered social justice elementary school that affirmed student voice and those that did not. Although those youth were typically the youngest in the room, they were very informed about social issues and confident in engaging in critical dialogue. These observances showed the influence of centers that cultivate leadership from Black youth compared to the overly-disciplined institutions that others attended.

To witness "loss" in the girls' lives was to witness the failures of public policy and the contestation of space in a hyper-segregated city. Statements about place and its impact on the livelihood of the girls were a reoccurring theme in the interviews that I coded as the "politics of place" includes sub-themes of reclaiming space and creating safe space. While there is great pride amongst the girls and the alumni staff about being from the West Side of the city, this space also represents trying moments and hard memories of survival. The relationship is complicated, but it is also apart of who they have become. Both alumni youth workers comment on the significance of having this program located in their neighborhood. Specifically, Mandala commented,

> "I think it means a lot because you bring up (omitted) to someone that's not from (omitted) or not from black communities you'll see, 'Oh.' You'll get the statistics of young teen pregnancy and all those really negative statistics and then for (BGF) to be in a neighborhood like that that's so corrupt with a lot of violence and stuff, it makes me feel proud."

Unfortunately, the contrasts between the disinvestment in this neighborhood was illuminated even more when recruitment expanded to a predominantly middle-class, multi-cultural West suburb that is only one street over from the city boundary of Chicago.

This group of girls' proximity to whiteness, or liberal white families in particular, afforded them privileges that Black children right across the street in Chicago were actively restricted and penalized for daring to take part in. Although all of the girls faced many challenges, those challenges looked different in the two communities.

BGF provided hope in the midst of despair during a historical moment of school closings and the exposure of a Chicago Police Department Black ops site, which is across the street from a school, the Boys and Girls Club, and is also steps away from an alderman's office (Ackerman, 2015). At the same time, what did not receive mention was the closing of the rape center, where one of BGF's founding members was formerly employed and fostered her connection to that neighborhood. While these challenges inspired the development of the leadership institute for girls, it also informed the structure of the program in assuring that it met the needs of the population they were working with. This meant responding to the closing of the rape center, as well as other events that destabilize the community's and the girl's well-being. Ameera, a staff member, in her reflective conversation identified the most recent disappearance of social services from this community as well as the ones that go unnoticed due to the invisibility of gender violence. She recalls,

> "And so I think the west side of Chicago particularly, [omitted], especially when we began [BGF] people talked about food deserts a lot in [omitted], but they didn't really talk about the social service deserts and resources available for these young people. And they often talk about the violence, but they don't really talk about the sexual violence and it has the third highest sex crime rate in Illinois at the time that we began the program. So we have high rates of violence, but then we don't have

services available for these people... And so we were kind of like how are people

getting help? People are thriving and surviving in different ways. And young people

were like absolutely, who are four times more likely to experience sexual violence and

dating violence, a targeted age group, weren't calling the hotline. Like there's some

stats out there that when we began the program too is less than one percent of young

people called the rape crisis or domestic violence hotline. So it's like these

institutional spaces that exist for resources, again they can't volunteer there, they

can't, weren't really for them. They weren't using them and they weren't really for

them. And so what are the things, how are they doing things?" (Ameera)

Ameera's reflection critiques the accessibility of programs to engage their targeted

population, as well as, the removal of such programs. However, it is her curiosity and

recognition of the community, coupled with her passion for young people that drives her to

employ solutions to address the issues identified in her reflection. Her perspective provides

evidence on the importance of expanding our analysis of violence to include gender

violence in connection to state violence, illustrating the impact of violence on those of us

pushed even further to the margins.

Black Girl Magic: Healing, Restoring and Thriving

"... it was important because so often you know they all came with their own

experiences whether there were survivors or secondary survivors, they all

experienced some form of trauma, and all shared that like, it wasn't talked about or

they didn't feel comfortable talking about it within their immediate communities...

because you know they had to be the person to take care of them or they weren't

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ready to talk about or process through that trauma. And, so part of that was just

acknowledging the trauma that they've experienced or someone around them has

experienced because I think often times that it isn't even acknowledged that like you

went through this and it was hard or you knew someone who went through this and

it was hard, and I think community violence is something that like we forget that

like you know if a person has raped, it impacts that person it also impacts the

community that surrounding right? and, so I think part of that was honestly just

acknowledging all of the traumas that they may or may not have experienced… was

a huge and essential thing to be able to begin this work…" (Kelli)

Sitting with the loss Black girls experience is uncomfortable and indicts us all for

mapping their lives as a by-product of the Black experience in opposed to central to.

Historically, the invisibility of Black girls has left a gap in conceptualizations of the Black

experience that do not recognize the centrality of the role Black girls hold, all while

navigating state and community violence. In our complacency we must come to realize that

when we choose not to interrupt it, much of the violence enacted on Black girls continues

to deny them childhood. For this, our efforts to get free Black boys has happened at the

expense of Black girls who endure similar violence, albeit unrecognized. The magic that lies

in Black girls is not because of their ability to endure pain, but rather their ability to love

and fight while in pain. Because we do not restore ourselves innately, we must

intentionally engage in rituals and practices of self-care to replenish what has been taken.

There is no "one-size fit all" formula, and the history of self- care for Black folks does not

necessarily resemble traditional or Eurocentric approaches to care. On the other hand, BGF

sees Black girls and women beyond the lens of trauma, pain and suffering, inspiring us to

look at our ancestral lineage like our grandmothers, grandfathers, aunt, uncles, mothers

and fathers to remind us that we have the capacity to survive over and over again. BGF

introduces the girls to models rooted in ancestral knowledge and Black feminist

epistemologies that affirm the possibility of healing. Although there is something magical

about having Black women and girls in a shared space at any moment, the pedagogical

approach exhibited by BGF is intentional, culturally responsive and seeks to be

transformational. The collaboration between the adults and the girls in the space provide a

framework that affirms the possibility to operate from a trauma-informed lens where the

girls are not seen as at-risk of being deviant or needing to be corrected, but they too are

leaders and survivors.

Black Feminism as Praxis

"We're not trying to be black feminists, we are black feminists. So we're cultivating

black feminists whether they say that's what they are, that's the theory, that's the

groundwork of how we do self-care, how we do counseling, how we do education.

Day one, this is what we are, this is who we are. So I think whether a counselor, it's

part of the work. And I think that we're looking for people that see themselves as

activists too. So black feminists, I've had someone who didn't see themselves as, and

I'm like we are activists. So if you're doing, if you're a counselor and you're doing it

in social justice framework, if you're an educator or you're doing it ... you're thinking

about that. It's this continuation of you're not just educating you're thinking about

how you're organizing for something larger than what's in this classroom or you're

preparing them for something larger too." (Ameera)

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During our conversation, Ameera talked about the importance of Black woman leadership in the organization, even though there are non-Black staff and interns that were employed, she went on to discuss what Black feminist praxis looked like for BGF in all areas of the work they do. Particularly, in such a small organization we are all called on to engage or assume a role that may be outside of our responsibilities at any moment. Their model encourages the fostering of community in that they do not only see the counselor during crisis, but that the counselor engages in activities outside of traditional one-on-one counseling that includes them sharing and building relationships. This method shifted the ways the girls understood therapy and the stigmas associated with seeing a therapist.

Our embodiment of Black feminism is an intellectual discipline constructed from Black women's epistemologies while trying to make sense of our connected experiences. Our embrace of this type of pedagogical practice is what leads us to working with Black girls in this way. Our epistemologies heavily inform our practice from being Black women to witnessing and experiencing violence to shape a program we wish we had when we were younger. This program is sustained by Black women who have taken their own healing seriously in that they are able to work from a place of empowerment rather than solely from a space of fear. The reflective conversations, which deeply influences our praxis, reveals the differing, but connected experiences that brought all of us to BGF. During the conversations with girls and staff, I witnessed them process how they make sense of habits that have led them to move in particular ways that show up in the program. Below I included text from my conversations with Ameera and Kelli discussing their personal journeys to doing gendered work as Black women and victims of violence:

"In '97 my sister told me that she was a rape survivor of sexual violence and as you know, I've told you this before, but I was the first family member that she ever told. So it was a very significant moment, it's also four years after the sexual violence took place. And my mom's a survivor of sexual violence and so when my sister told me it was just like a really incredibly hard moment and I just didn't know what to do with that sense of wanting to do something but not knowing…

because I interned at a domestic violence shelter my senior year in high school. But I got to volunteer for six months at a domestic violence shelter and I taught young kids art my senior year. So I think that was the beginnings of transforming what my personal experience is, what I was growing up with. I was growing up in a very domestic ... domestic violence was very prominent in my home, especially my high school year, and doing something with that. Transforming it, some of the work that was going on into other outward work. So I think that was the beginning. I think (BGF) was the beginning of using art for, not teaching art, but using personal art to kind of ... My entry point of sexual violence work I think. But I think that high school year, and that was also my first time taking photography was my high school year too." (Ameera)

For Ameera, being a witness to her loved ones sexual and domestic violence has contributed to her intimate understanding of gender violence and how it disrupts one's life, including those who are in community with a survivor. These unfortunate occurrences have drawn her to first using art as medicine to cope through navigating what she was observing in her home to using photography as a transformative practice to visually capture taboo topics about interpersonal violence. Photography gave her and her sister a

medium that allowed her to make space during a difficult time after one of the sisters disclosed that she had been raped twice in college. This painful revelation became the beginning to capturing her healing journey on camera and their walk through the non-linear perils of healing, with sisterhood being foundational to the process. The photo project later evolved in to a multi-media performance that travels nationally to colleges/universities.

During the summer program, viewing the performance is a special event that gives our girls the opportunity to see the show in an intimate setting. The beauty and sadness of the show conjures a strong emotional and physical response that triggers others, while also drawing them in as the story shifts from suffering to recovery. Due to the heaviness of the material in the show, our young people have a shorter programming day. The next day they return and reflect on the performance collectively and then take part in the Dear Sister activity that is facilitated by the co-founder whom the story is based on. She introduces them to the book *Dear Sister* to show them examples of love letters people have written to themselves to deal with the shame of being sexually assaulted, and letters people have written to others to uplift them. Most of our girls opted out of sharing, but for those that did, their disclosures were powerful. Some revealed that some in the room were survivors.

Photography continues to be one of the foundational art mediums in the program. Students are introduced to the discipline as a site of memory and restoration to capture their truths about themselves, with the agency to create new truths about themselves through the lens:

"Well I think personally what contributed to my work was that I also identify as a survivor which was something that I did not openly talk about prior to coming to

[BGF]. I think part of that was because it isn't… necessarily talked about within my family or in the communities that I was a part of, and this was the first time that I saw someone, specifically an african-american woman…one of the cofounders of BGF openly talked about her survivorship, and the various stages of healing that she went through, and I saw that as really, really, really powerful. And, so I began to really think about all the different experiences that I've had as an individual and how they have kind of really shaped how I navigate, and how I kind of show up in the world, so personally it was my own experiences of trauma…" (Kelli)

A mentor recommended that Kelli do her art therapy internship at BGF when she was in graduate school. Her introduction to the multi-media performance that launched the organization, created a dialectical relationship where she was supporting other survivors, while being confronted with her own survivorship and need for healing. Like many, the fact that the multimedia production centered on a Black woman's survivor story gave permission to others, particularly Black women and girls, to not have to suffer in isolation.

While Kelli's mediums of transformative art are writing and mosaic art, it is more accessible for her to teach spoken word to the girls in the program. Her poetry powerfully illuminates some of the most vulnerable parts of herself that resonates with the group and honestly confronts those parts that have yet to be reconciled.

In sorting the data, I coded for transformational moments and vulnerability in association to pedagogy. Both presented significant moments for staff and the girls to examine their personal selves that are indeed political and the entanglement of the two in upholding the stories of Black girls that they have been taught to swallow with shame. Like the first time having a Black teacher or sitting in the office with a Black therapist, the truth

telling by the Black women allies and expressions of vulnerability invited the misunderstood, adultified, invisible Black girl to be seen and cared for. Objectivity as a researcher in this sacred space was not an option for me, not only because of my non-traditional research journey, but I knew I was there because I loved Black girls. At any given moment, there is nothing neutral about how I showed up in the space. However, I was not ready for the level of vulnerability that was going to be exhibited in the space and the need for all of us to release something, but I understood the importance of me sharing my story in the most raw and vulnerable ways possible. I understood that they needed to know that I was one of them, a survivor of some kind, to gain clarity about my presence there and to assess whether I could handle all of whom they presented themselves to be. The art sharing circle that resembled a sister circle that occurred on the first night was the first of these tests as both the girls and staff was still learning about me. As I mentioned before, it was a rite of passage into the program that felt very ceremonial and sacred.

Rather than just claiming to be a "safe space," both Ameera and Kelli thoughtfully converted their hotel suite into a healing sanctuary smelling of essential oils, dim lit with candles, with blankets and chairs set in a circle as all five senses were warmly stimulated. Throughout the program it became very clear that the aesthetics of the rooms we occupied most often were just as important to establishing a space to affirm Black girlhood. Everything was intentional, from images of Black women and girls that were posted on the white walls to the couch in the back surrounded by books by Black photographers and writers and the playing of music during in-between time. While the institution where the sessions were was predominantly white, it was important to the retreat leaders to reinforce to the girls and to the administration of the institution that they belonged there.

During the reflective conversations, I learned more about both Ameera's and Kelli's thought

process in considering what it meant to take Black girls in and out of spaces. Most

importantly, they understood they could not shield them from being policed, but took

action to protect the youth's Black girlhood, and when needed intervened discreetly to

lessen the harm for the girls. This meant having conversations up front with staff at the

retreat hotel about bringing Black girls into the space and our expectations of the staff's

engagement with them. The same went for trying to regulate the presence of the security

guards at the public events we held at the college and using those moments to educate

institutional staff about the conflict of police/security presence and the Black community:

> "Well, just like a list in my head and a checklist about how youth friendly they are,
>
> access to the pool. Like this space is their space as well and it's kind of like what I
>
> tried to do with ... as well. It's like how do we make sure that they feel comfortable
>
> in this space. I was thinking about when we were at the exhibition and how they
>
> wanted to have more security guards at our exhibition and we said, "We want no
>
> security guards." It's like this is for the people and how those things are a barrier.
>
> So it's working with, culturally seeing how certain things ... I guess we do this
>
> instantly and not thinking about it but they said, "Oh thank you for telling us. We
>
> wouldn't have even thought about that with exhibitions because when we have this
>
> amount of people, more than a hundred people, we have extra security." And I was
>
> like, "No, we're having a bunch of black families. I want them to feel comfortable in
>
> this space and it's going to be a barrier for them." They already have to come
>
> downtown, this is already not their space, they feel like this isn't their space, how do
>
> we make them feel it's their space?" (Ameera, staff)

BGF's rootedness in Black feminism as practice influences all aspects of the work and is an intervention that challenges the practice of therapy, art, youth development and organizing. While all of us have been educated in traditional educational institutions, our work responds to the limitations and critique of our traditional training. As I alluded to in the previous paragraph, counselors are encouraged to use their professional training along with culturally responsive practices to engage the girls. From my position, this looked like the counselor joining us for Black Girl Play, leading self-care workshops, engaging with families and participating in protests. Kelli spoke directly in our conversation about approaching therapy, particularly art therapy, from a critical feminist perspective.

> "we think therapy as like I'm going to sit down and talk to you and you know I'm just sit here and you lay on my couch like all these myths about like what psychotherapy is, and I think the expressive arts, art therapy, dance movement therapy, music therapy, drama therapy all does that also. That kind of throws a wrench and what we perceive to be traditional therapy, but also like the traditional things that we're creating who were they made for? And, I think that that is like something that I'm constantly asking myself was who was this designed for, like what community was this design for, and oftentimes it's not for communities of color right? And, so then thinking more critically about okay what are those things, what were things that were done in the past that they did to cope Negro spirituals… Hair Braiding as a way to distinguish passages right for the Underground Railroad, like they were already doing those things prior to this kind of traditional language of therapy that we're kind of throwing our way. And, so I think I began to really try to ground myself and understanding what these young people were doing and I think it disrupts it

because then that's creating something outside of a system, but it's also

understanding that the system wasn't made for them like the traditional, so it's not

going to fit, and working outside of that, I think part of it is working within it to

create more accessibility and create more visibility and to have more black

therapists or therapists of color so that they you know young people can see

themselves and want to go and feel seed in her. I also think it's working outside of

that in affirming the things that were already done and the alternative means of

survival too." (Kelli, staff)

Kelli's analysis applies a communal outlook to healing, addressing trauma, and a critique

about systems while an acknowledging the power of the community to make a way out of

no way. This envisioning of healing or restoration guides BGF as we engage in reclamation

and art activism to address violence against women and girls, while introducing the girls to

additional resources to utilize as leaders in their communities. Kelli posed the question,

"And, I think that that is like something that I'm constantly asking myself was who was this

designed for, like what community was this designed for, and oftentimes it's not for

communities of color right?" This question directly speaks to the unlearning and

reimagining many of us have done while trying to interrupt Eurocentric paradigms

imposed on us through formal schooling. In genuinely meeting people where they are and

decolonizing their own praxis often meant going "off script" and challenging others to do so

in this Black girl affirming space as our epistemologies clashed with dominant theories in

our disciplines.

Frankly, my training as an educator and with a master's in youth development has

never incorporated trauma-informed or survivor-centered training from a cultural

perspective or what it meant for us too to be survivors. Collectively with other colleagues of color, I engaged in critical discourse about radical healing through the intellectual work of Dr. Shawn Ginwright. Although it has been years since I have read his work closely, words from his book and a talk he did in my department reappeared throughout the summer as I often had to go "off-script" to engage the girls as the supportive adult. This meant being adaptable and responsive to the energy in the room to hold space for the young people in that moment. I found that learning experience to be necessary and challenging, as I had to navigate through my own inabilities to be vulnerable to make sure our girls were cared for when they needed to cry or be angry.

Black Girl Play

Black Girl Play is one of my favorite sessions. We talked about the denial of Black girls' childhood and adultification with them during the morning lesson and ended the lesson by actually engaging in a play day that consists of double dutch, blowing bubbles, playing in the water fountain, hop scotch, and re-enacting music videos.

> "We rolled up 20 deep Black, loud and proud at about 11am to set up our spot near the water fountain in Millennium Park as predominantly white mothers with toddler children played and tourists passed through. It was a very hot and humid day, and some of the girls were over play day before it began, as they did not want to be out in the heat or sweat out their edges. The white mothers intensely watched us with performative or forced smiles to hide their underlying thoughts. As we began to break out the double dutch ropes, bubbles and chalk, their gaze shifted from confusion to enthused about the entertainment they thought we were there to

provide. Once they were assured that our girls were there to play like their children they allowed their children to invade our space as they came over snatching bubbles and chalk and running between them. Even a "hip" white woman came over to join in on jumping double dutch. After a little over an hour, we began to pack up our things to head to lunch, but not before being approach by the Black women security guard, who was unable to determine who was an adult versus youth as she wanted to address us about the chalk writing. As the adults intervene to ask what the issue was, she proceeded to say that the space was privately owned and that the owner was warning us that we could not vandalize in this area. The year before, the music was the problem."

Many photos and videos document the fun we all had and the Black joy we imparted on in that white space. I also remember the ways we, the adults, kept laughing while trying to shield the girls away from the white spectatorship and policing that they were subjected to. I wrote one line in my note taker on my phone to describe the day, "the games we play and the white folks that watch." While the youth went off to grab lunch on their own, the staff sat together trying to process those moments collectively and reminded of the radicalness of Black girls playing.

Unfortunately, interactions with a Black woman security guard at the park and white mothers were not isolated incidents. We found ourselves in small confrontations with Black women security guards or white folks in and outside of the art school who felt entitled to disrespecting them. Unlike many other contexts, in our space Black girls were believed and encouraged to advocate for themselves. Black girl play embraces playfulness, taking up space and resistance. From the politics of place, where there is strong messaging

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that they do not deserve to exist in this part of the city as is to spectatorship of those watching that included surveillance and an unfamiliarity with depictions of Black children being children. This was a daily occurrence as our girls interacted primarily with Black women security guards at the site of the summer program. Even as other non- Black children passed through those spaces loudly and playfully, those Black women understood that the terms and conditions of their employment was to keep in order the people they once were.

BG Magic /Transformational Moments

In being apart of this experience, I was interested in the analytics used to evaluate all that the program was doing in the lives of the girls that could not simply be fully accessed through surveys and packaged into neat charts. This is extremely difficult for an organization to do when their aims are more concerned with the process of personal growth and wellness. However, these numbers and statistics are required to secure funding resources that operate from a deficit-based lens to gage the validity of your work by the number of youth "served" by the program. During my coding process, the informal and formal evaluation of the impact of BGF on the girls overlapped between transformational moments and Black girl magic.

One of the surveys that were given to parents during orientation inquired about their exposure to violence in family whether it be in the form of sexual violence or domestic abuse. For staff of the program, it was informational in contextualizing the history of violence and revealing the survivorship of their loved ones. I found through the testimonies of the girls' in the program that they were more likely to talk about its impact on their

confidence and feeling like they belong more than the leadership skills or knowledge they attained over the course of the program. The alumni summer staff responses during their reflective conversations, both described the impact the program had on them or continues to have on them and expound on their assessment of the program on the girls.

> "It made me speak up more and made me more confident in the things that I'm saying. It made me more confident in myself in a sense that the things that [BGF] taught us like self-care, reiterating it to my own life and putting my best foot forward in situations and then becoming a leader and trying to speak up and different aspects in my life besides [BGF] as well. It was a real confidence booster."
> (Mandala)

Nola and Mandala both were able to speak to the personal growth BGF provided for them as youth and now as college students. Other alumni of the program that was on staff or volunteered expressed these same sentiments about the impact of the program.

Many of the young women still looked to the program for emotional and material support as they navigated college, employment and motherhood. Other insights provided by the summer staff that participated in the reflective conversations provided examples of shifts they noticed in the new cohort from being more confident and vocal to their decisions to focus on topics we discussed in the curriculum as part of a class project or to study a particular major in college. Although our girls enter the program with their own objectives about what they want to achieve and a variety of needs that calls for individualized attention, the sisterhood and bond the girls form also are evaluated as a reflection of the effectiveness of the program.

In the next excerpt, Nola reiterates this during our conversation as she talks about being pleased to see the integration between the girls from different schools. Additionally, she mentions the check-ins in the morning, which is a moment when we go around the circle to see where the girls are emotionally and then to review using both art, journal writing and dialogue to review the content we learned the day before. This activity most importantly gives us some feedback about our young people's mood and/or needs at that moment. It also lets us know whether to check-in with someone individually, or the barriers they encountered trying to get to the space in the morning and their energy levels. Secondly, we are able to gain immediate feedback about the effectiveness of the lesson the day before and the information they retained to inform strategies for tackling that day. Ameera repeatedly emphasized that after hearing a young person from a previous cohort express their gratitude for the check-ins because sometimes summer counselors in BGF are the only people to ask them about their day. From her realization she highlighted the significance of having some variation of a check-in activity each gathering:

"Oh my gosh. I guess I assess it by--formally--just by the feedback that they give when we have next day check-up or the responses they give when we ask, "Who's this artist?" or "Who's the inspiration you got from this photo?" and they can say the name like, "Oh yeah, this person. Here's my book. Here's a photo that I saw. I wanted to get this chair to match it, too, and I did this extra detail there." Formally, we can see every day throughout the day. But informally I guess we see it when the Girl A who didn't want to talk to Girl B every day in the beginning and now they're best friends at the end. You see it when one girl that was kind of like scared or ashamed or frightened for whatever reason about anything, now we're loud and happy and

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more present. You can see it in the transition over time. Like the new things they're willing to do, the new art skill they're willing to try, the things that they're hearing in their neighborhood, they want to do something about." (Nola)

The last parts of her statement starts to discuss Black Girl Magic or the viewing of Black girls stepping up in their leadership or their willingness to try new things. Uniquely, I want to highlight where she mentions that seeing a timid girl "loud, happy and more present" depicts the influence BGF had has on some youth, as well as, her own standards for the outcomes she hopes they walk away with.

One of the outcomes Kelli valued as evidence of the impact of the program was watching the girls, specifically, the sexual assault survivors take ownership of their story. She states,

"And, then informally like I think for some of the girls that were in the program, like you know maybe when they started they were not talking about being a survivor, but by end of the summer they're now kind of with the group saying you know like I experienced this thing, I experienced sexual assault, seeing that shift I think was also like something that we were looking for. And, what spaces did they feel comfortable talking about their survivorship, and not… and maybe not even survivorship like I know that there was a young woman who was in the program for three years before she openly started to talk about her having a parent that was incarcerated. And, so and the moment that she decided she wanted to start talking about it was when she got a panel in Philly right? And, so all the work that she had been doing for the last three years was building up for her to be able to feel empowered, to be in front of an auditorium full of people that she did not know, and share her story with them. And,

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so I think those are some of the things… to have a young person who had been about a part of our program for four years… to be an insight and read a dear sister letter that she wrote to herself. This was a young person who struggled immensely right? But, to be in front of a group of people, again, that she did not know and share such very raw, vulnerable piece that she had written. And, to know how much it took for that young person to be able to do that, I think is also something that we were assessing, so like their growth, their interpersonal growth, from when they were starting the program, so you know just throughout like…" (Kelli, staff)

Although some survivors may never rightfully choose to disclose their stories, my interpretation of her analysis communicates those moments to be breakthroughs in their individuals healing process. These breakthroughs come full circle to how the organization began and the importance of the multi-media production as modeling healing through the arts.

Ameera assesses the program's impact on the girls based on their "comfortability" to tap into their Black girl magic in the space and show up in the space authentically. She reflected on moments during a red line take over demonstration where she witnessed one of the younger girls at the time yell out chants during the protest over the megaphone the entire time. Throughout the year BGF youth get invited nationally to represent on panels at conferences and convening that allows them to observe the girls apply their leadership skills in other contexts. For Ameera, witnessing the girls trust us with their stories and show up as their full selves affirms the fulfillment of the intentions set in creating the program:

"... And then I think the comfortability in terms of shining, but I also think also in comfortability. I know they're safe when they also, you see the joy, you see the playfulness, you see the smiles, the laughter, their ... I mean I guess just like any other human being, when you laugh with people or when you show a range of your authentic emotions you feel safe. And so I think how do we create spaces for all of those doors of ranges of black girl moments to happen: the laughter, the joy, the vulnerability, the processing of healing, the shine or their leadership. I think it's when I see and I really see it." (Ameera, staff)

Collectively, these alternative standards for evaluating the program are more interested in the wellness of our young people and understanding the program's influence in other areas of their lives. This approach deviates from traditional standards that represent tools used to generate generalized data to tell single narratives about populations deemed deviant. Like any other organization operating in the non- profit industrial complex, BGF collects data to secure funding, while recognizing those measurements do not fully align with our envisioning of healing and freedom for Black girls.

After-school Programming

Although, the exhibition represents the close of the summer, it is also the arrival of the third theme of the curriculum that encourages the girls to walk in their magic by applying all the knowledge and the skills they cultivated throughout the summer. In this part of the program they engage in activism in pursuit of attaining their freedom dreams. We took about a month and a half off, before we returned back for the nine-month after-school program and were thrown right back in the work with an invite to present at a

justice for girls' conference in D.C. In returning back to the office, majority of the summer staff, particularly the alumni returned back to college and I transitioned into a staff member. Kelli, the only other full-time person transitioned out to pursue a new career and I was temporarily stepping into a role to support the girls temporarily that eventually become more permanent.

Preparing for the conference in D.C. included two weeks of gathering permission slips, submitting a workshop proposal, budgeting and deciding to take half the group to making it reunion with all the girls in the new cohort and even one of the summer alumni staff joining us for added support. For some girls this would be their first time on a plane and/or to D.C., and most of their first time at a conference. Preparation for the workshop with all the girls were two hours spent before our session assigning roles and reviewing the agenda. I was sitting on my bed in a cramped room nodding off from all of my exhaustion. While I never doubted the brilliance of our girls, I was a bit worried about to what extent would we pull of this workshop and somehow I forgot their ability to think quick on their feet to like they had done at the exhibition despite the attitude-filled rehearsals. Our girls instantly were ready to command the room as they greeted attendees as they entered the room, and then the show began. I noticed some of the quieter girls stepping into leadership roles, and their sisterhood gave them confidence to be seen. I was intrigued by some of our girls choosing to disclose their survivor stories, and the shock on some of the other girls faces who were also hearing their stories for the first time.

For the remainder of the year, we presented our girls with opportunities to be apart of exceptional moments and to take up space in places that do not traditionally center the voices of Black girls. We wanted them to continue to have exposure to Black women artists,

which led to me experiencing some of my firsts with them. For example, we experienced the National African American History and Culture Museum while in D.C. together, and I accompanied some of our girls to their first Alvin Ailey dance theater. Connecting back to Politics of Place and the embedded practice of reclamation, navigating through these spaces attracted on-lookers, some proud to see Black girls and others annoyed, yet we wanted to affirm our girls' rights to exist in these public spaces.

Unlike the summer, the limited time during gatherings did not allow for us to check-in individually with our girls as often as we liked or for them to collectively check-in with each other. For this reason, the counseling program became even more critical to providing the emotional support in their healing journeys, and the conversation happening in therapy gave us insight on who we needed to follow-up with one-on-one or the structuring of the next meeting. For many of the girls, the gatherings served as a place to escape the violence and surveillance they are subjected to daily and a place to vent about the violence they have witnessed against Black girls and women. For example, when Kanneka Jenkins[18], a young Black from Chicago, was found dead in a freezer after partying at a hotel, and police failed to properly investigate, there were not many safe spaces for our girls to be in conversation with others that were not blaming her for her death. As our girls reached out to us frustrated and sad about the loss of this person that they could see themselves in, we collaboratively assisted them in developing the Black Girls Respond: 6 Ways to Stop Killing Black Girls document (See Appendix III) in response to a post about six ways Black girls can better protect themselves. This document in concordance with their manifesto is a call and

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[18] See more about her story in the *Washington Post* (2017, September 11).

response much like the Combahee River Collective to providing a mandate to achieving freedom for Black girls.

Freedom Dreams

"We do this a lot I guess with wishing freedom. It's how we end our marches and how we end our...time with ... with wishes for black girls, right? I guess my overall freedom dream is for freedom for black girls is true liberation. For them to be able to be whole, for them to have a community that supports them and nourishes them. For them to be able to dream and those dreams become true, and to dream with no limits. No gender or racial limits that sometimes we dream within those parameters that we can actually dream cause we're so used to not be able to dream. For them to be able to be in a world where their bodies and their minds are valued that they can walk and be safe in their homes and in their schools and in the streets." (Ameera, staff)

At the core, the program facilitates healing through reclaiming their stories, childhood, bodies, space and forming sisterhood in response to "loss." Though the art sharing session provoked many emotions and vulnerability, it was the beginning for some to embark on a non-linear healing journey and the continuation for others who had already been tending to their trauma before hand. The days were heavy and ended with self-care activities where we were given the space to release some of what we carried using movement, art making, singing and laughter.

The dreams articulated for Black girls often included love, protection and a place they can be themselves. "Wishes for Black girls" is a radical imagining activity where we

call in the room with Black girls their desires and needs to become all they want to be in a world that does not yet exist. It is during this affirming moment that we remind them and ourselves the work that is unresolved. Our freedom dreams for Black girls are a pedagogical mandate to hold us to standards to create what does not exist in the mainstream and build the alternative, to stand in the gaps of the failures of the institutions and political agendas that have forgotten us.

For as much as we cried, we laughed and loved even more deeply. We loss and we recovered, or at least began roads to recovery as we find our way back to home in our bodies. While the politics of place exemplified our proximity to privilege just based on location in the city, our similar stories and thirst for change reminded us that one, it's hard out here for a Black girl anywhere. Secondly, it is through their sisterhood that they will withstand the obstacles and continue to build beautiful things.

The end of the summer exhibition is the manifestation of the emotion filled four weeks we spent together. For me, this moment represents my coming full circle from the moment I thought this is the program I want to work with to the thought actually coming to fruition. It is during the ritual to conclude the summer when they present before their loved ones their Black girl magic. In this very white space with white walls, photographed and painted Black bodies adorn the space as the main feature and Black girls were the artists as they ran around the room in matching "Got Consent" t- shirts. The audience is, well in the words of Solange, "this shit is for us," a room full of Black girls, families from the West Side of Chicago and allies. Family and friends enter the room to find pictures of beautiful Black girls depicting the multi-dimensions of Black girlhood, or they find themselves posted across the wall as the model or representation of an important story the

photographer chose to tell through the lens. Unlike, other art show openings, it is loud with laughter and Black girl play is at the entrance as we engage our audience in double dutch, hop scotch, African ritual face painting and dancing as they reclaim the very white art space and enact a new imagining of museum settings. It was an invitation to invite our guests to reclaim their childhoods and a performance of Black joy as resistance to the everyday oppression we face.

After about an hour of Black girl play, the more formal part of the program began as the adult allies in collaboration with the youth shared the mission of BGF and the highlights from the program. As the guests were seated, the dancers, singers, rappers and spoken word artists took the stage to present the other medium of art the girls developed. Sometimes, this is the first time their loved ones witnessed their artistry, and although the girls may have repeatedly seen each other's gifts, they are the supportive "girl, yaaaaassssss" section seated off to the side. All the stress induced attitudes and side-eyes from rehearsing are put behind us as the girls walk confidently walk into their power.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION + CONCLUSION: REDRESSING THE BLACK FEMALE BODY THROUGH RADICAL SELF-CARE

From my literature review to engaging in my project on the ground, I have tread lightly in using the term "resiliency" to describe the genius of Black girls. Often the usage of resiliency romanticizes an "innate" strength that marginalized people have inherited rather than paying attention to the development of strategies accrued over time from interacting with oppressive institutions. It dehumanizes Black bodies in depicting a hyper- strong archetype or a beastly being in which horrid conditions are located as sites of building character. In fact, I would argue that many theorizations about resiliency align with the anti-Black sentiments that uphold neoliberal-carceralism in which the celebration of Black womanhood and girlhood glamorizes the "mammification" (Collins, 2000) or "representation" looks like a seat at a table never meant to serve us. In this process, Black bodies are awarded with material and social gain that uplifts the individual rather than the entire community essentially still never indefinitely escaping restrictions placed on Blackness. It applauds Black bodies for our ability to endure pain and respond sensibly or peacefully to violence enacted on us. It maintains conservative views that suggest that the starvation of certain communities encourages innovative solutions independent from support from governmental social programs or the racist ideologies that support that Black bodies have a higher tolerance of pain compared other races. It also reproduces liberal ideas about working within a broken system. Interestingly, the exclusion of Black girls in society because of race, sex, class and age inevitably excludes this demographic from traditional participation in politics like voting and challenges them to find their voice creatively. In opposition to the limitations of resiliency concepts, I employ the imaginings

of redress of Black girls' bodies through the engagement of healing as resistance. From my findings in the previous chapter, engaging healing is an ongoing project to address trauma lodged in our bodies while refusing the systemic conditioning that sustains such violence.

This chapter collectively unpacks three prominent themes highlighted in chapter 4: 1) the 4 variations of loss connectedness; 2) the broader conceptualizations of state violence as a spatial project; and, 3) the dialectical relationship to the narratives the girls articulate about the perception of the Black female body. My engagement with the Black girls in my study reveal both a need for care and the need to pay attention to the ways fugitive space acts as a site of redress for their bodies. Initially I used the term, recovery, but after thoughtful consideration, "redress" as Hartman (1997) suggests, more accurately articulates the inability to restore the body as if the scars do not exist, but provides a framework to acknowledge the politics of the Black body "in and against the demands of the system, negotiating the disciplinary harnessing of the body and counterinvesting in the body as a site of possibility" (p. 51). In BGF, the development of the **Six Ways to Stop Killing Black Girls** (Six Ways; See Appendix III) document serves as an indictment of how we collectively fail Black girls and a call for us to re-write those wrongs through resistance. From the Six Ways treatise the redress of their bodies comes by way of resisting the conditions placed on the Black female body while reimagining Black girlhood on their own terms. To shift our analyses from resiliency to redress is to recognize that Black bodies have not survived anti-Blackness and genocides by happenstance, but that people had to actively oppose such violence by using various tactics for us to see us in the now. Although the girls engage in traditional protest tactics from marches to using their art as activism, they began with the first revolutionary act of recovering the Black female body. For these

reasons, I understand the making of fugitive space with Black girls as a celebration of Black girlhood and a dwelling of care that redresses the Black female body from being everyone else's to her own.

In recognition of the Black female body, I finally developed an in-depth understanding of how the abolishment of slavery only ended de jure slavery, but did not undo the harm inflicted on the Black body by way of conditioning. Even in the absence of the "master," the body was self-disciplined to operate within the realms of subjugation. As I embarked on this research journey, I am intrigued by the critiques of neoliberal-carceral discourse and remain concerned about the under-theorization of its impact on Black people beyond material loss. Once I took time to analyze my findings, I found that material loss is deeply connected to the other losses identified in chapter 4. This brought me to reflecting on the body, specifically the Black female body. In this moment I was trying to make sense of the girls in BGF's relationship to their bodies, while trying to make sense of my own. I began to listen and take inventory of my own as I observed theirs and paid closer to their non-verbal communication, specifically the ones that occurred at lower frequencies (i.e. smirks, sighs, side eyes, etc.).

Our girls' frustration with the portrayal of Black girls alluded to an understanding of their rejection of a white gaze in relation to their bodies. As resistance and redress, the photography projects afforded them reflective and intimate moments with their cameras to share those photos with the group to make creative decisions about the counter or dominant narrative they wanted to invoke in response to the normalized white gaze on their bodies. For them, it was not always about denying an image, but sometimes it was about embracing an image like one of the girls recreating a picture by Carrie Mae Weems of

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her carrying a watermelon (See Appendix IV). In doing my research from a place of solidarity and love, I felt it was my duty to conspire with them in their undoing of being conditioned, which challenged me to resist my own conditioning. This included the process of defending the way they wanted to show up in the world rather than having them conform to constraints placed on them by mainstream society.

In the after-life of slavery, I find that the study of Black subjugation often rests solely on the relationship between Black bodies and historically oppressive institutions like police departments which counts as an overt depiction of the surveillance of Black people. Witnessing the girls' surveillance when moving through different spaces throughout the time of the program illuminates the deputizing of white folks to act on behalf of police officers in the presence of Black bodies (Wilderson, 2007). In addition to the deputizing of white identified bodies, non-white bodies are also conditioned to participate in the act of policing Black bodies. In one particular instance, an aggressive tension between Black women security guards and Black girls revealed itself. From our context, when we could hear the guards preparing for the girls to act out or the interaction at Millennium Park over the chalking on the ground it alerted us to a particular relationship and contradiction. Similar to the concept behind the school and prison nexus, the contradiction encapsulates the authorization of all other actors or individuals privileged to police "othered" bodies. Therefore, the girls shared negative attitudes about police and expressed anger and fear when in their presence, while at the same time, they spoke of little to no personal interactions with police. Much of the surveillance they were under was experienced in places like home, school, work or in the community. In this instance Black girls' bodies present a different type of danger where the more visible she makes herself, the more

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dangerous she becomes, especially when her visibility embodies her comfort with herself. I even recognized a difference in the ways the girls moved through the world when wearing their school uniforms, compared to wearing non-uniform clothes they coordinated on their own. In light of the historical process of conditioning, the critiques on our girls' bodies that were deemed most harmful to them were often the voices from loved ones and those within the community.

Jessica Hampton's and Iesha's stories took place on public transit in which their narratives converged with conceptualizations of violence against the Black female body to depict the public disregard for Black women and girls. When traveling in particular areas in their neighborhood, the girls were able to point at streets, corners, and stores that they were more susceptible to experience sexual harassment or areas they avoided for fear of lack of protection. Particularly, Iesha's encounter with the older man on the train that acknowledged her being young while continuing to harass her for her number is a more common occurrence of the disregard of Black girlhood or **loss of childhood** that normalizes private and public interactions with Black girls. It represents the larger issues with systems that exploit the Black girl body and marks them as 'un-rapeable' because of dominant depictions that locate them as sexual deviant beings that are owned by male identified persons or prematurely as adults. While child sexual abuse is more likely to occur in the home, for those of us interested in the school experiences of Black girls, we are continuing to uncover the participation of schools in criminalizing girls that have been sexually abused and the prevalence of sexual abuse in the school itself.

Currently Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has been exposed for their negligence in effectively addressing reported sexual abuse claims from students about teachers and staff

as covered by journalists at the *Chicago Tribune* in the report "Betrayed" (2018). Yet, over four years ago I attended a Black girl town hall meeting organized by Kimberle Crenshaw where girls from BGF gave testimonies about sexual harassment going un-checked at their school. Most disturbing was the victim-blaming that followed when they looked to an adult to step in when the harassment incident was between students. Last year, myself along with the executive director found Iesha in the hallway frustrated about the new male teacher that openly talked about his sex life during a visit to the school. When we saw her, she just finished sharing her anger with someone in the administration and let them know she refused to return to class until they removed him. My own reading of her frustration that day alluded to the inappropriateness of his remarks as a teacher and a climate of fear he was creating that would make the classroom more hostile for Black girls. These events are just a few examples of the ways schools continue to operate as sites of suffering for Black girls, detailing the connection between "troubled" girls and violence in school spaces (Wun, 2015).

In many instances, our girls were unsettled by not having body autonomy. From our conversations, the same ways they knew to be cautious about travelling through certain streets and neighborhoods because of gun violence, they demonstrated similar awareness in trying to avoid sexual violence. The entanglement of loss, whether of childhood, body autonomy, loved ones or confidence manifested itself in different contexts for the girls of BGF. At the same time, I was also able to observe their ability to thrive in certain settings. Given this dynamic, their relationship to space was not something that existed in black and white but revealed the ways Black girls' relationships with their families and community remains layered and complex. In a similar vein, using a spatial and intersectional approach

may provide us with greater insight on the missing and murdered Black girls[19] that received minimal acknowledgement at the beginning of the summer of 2018. Mentioned at length in the previous chapter, insights from our girls revealed that this phenomena was not new news and alarmingly is an on-going occurrence that never gets the attention it deserves. In fact, my observations reveal that the more attention brought to Black girls who have experienced gender violence, the more the policing of their sexuality and behavior to correct the problem becomes amplified. For example, some of the girls were frustrated with their schools responding to incidents of sexual assault by enforcing stricter dress codes for girls despite the fact that the list was already more exhaustive for the girls than the boys. Ultimately, Black girls disclosing being sexually assaulted often shifts the loss of body autonomy they experience at the hands of the assault to losing their right to their body. Due to a perceived inability to protect themselves from violence, this often legitimizes the policing they experience at the hands of their families and communities. This practice is part of the ongoing cycle of trying to correct the Black female body, instead of addressing the violent behavior exhibited on it.

Initially, I did not plan to do a project that focused so heavily on mapping the Black female body and centering resistance around care. Nevertheless, what transpired in the sacred space orchestrated at BGF were collective experiences that provoked strong bodily reactions that sometimes preceded words or stood in for words. For example, the art sharing gatherings often took the form of healing circles or sister circles. They revealed so much about the conditioning of their bodies and the beauty of their bodies when no longer held captive by its traumas. My own issues with crying or vulnerability have often been

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[19] See Nasheed (2018).

taken up by white women as exhibiting a deficiency in my womanhood, yet our girls'

bravery in being vulnerable mirrored back to me the ways my body is conditioned and the

un-safeness we shared in being our full selves outside of the space. Hartman identified

these conditionings as mundane acts of violence that are not overtly visible but are just as

impactful in controlling the Black body. Such fears are deeply embedded in the psyche,

given the possibility of blatant violence. The unresolved redress of the Black female body

from the slave ship withstands the troubled legacy of the marker of our body that our girls

were able to name for themselves. For example, the topic of entertainer/musician R. Kelly's

repeated sexual abuse and psychological torture of Black women and girls instantly ignites

a strong reaction from them. In many instances, this has left them to grapple with

messaging from his supporters, understanding them to be in the same group of people that

do not care about Black girls.

In opposition to resiliency frameworks, the vulnerability that ensued in the space

created at Black Girl Free amongst the collective was necessary in acknowledging our pain

and trauma that we were carrying in our mind, body and spirit. Seeing one another's pain

openly reflected back to us our own struggles, triggering an offset of recognition of our own

grief that often was expressed through crying or anger or the need to leave the room to sit

in silence. In these moments, resiliency looked more like the suppression of feelings and

the lodging of emotions that sat in our throats with nowhere safe to release them. We may

have been glad that we made it through many trials and tribulations, but we also knew

those things were inevitable. As our relations deepened, I was able to identify more

concretely the "scenes of subjection" as we actively resisted captivity or embraced our

fugitivity. In the context of the after-life of slavery the "master" seems invisible, yet still maintains a gripping control over Black bodies and emotions.

The parent orientation unexpectedly contributed to my re-thinking of the role of family, making me more attentive to the ways the girls identified family. Understanding family life and relationships was fundamental to contextualizing the girls' lives. Additionally, it framed the approach to our work and my research. Recognizing **loss of loved ones** gave insight into the reasons why many of the girls' family were structured in the ways they were. The formation of their families were deeply intertwined with systemic issues that did not begin with the adoption of neoliberal-carceral practices, but instead were sustained within these processes that remain disruptive to family relations. For example, in a country where we are clear about the ways mass incarceration disproportionately affects Black communities, one in 9 African- American children have an incarcerated parent, which is approximately double the percentage of white and Hispanic children combined (National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, 2014). The causes of death of the parents of the girls in the program included one due to a chronic disease, and three due to gun violence. The intersections of premature death (Gilmore, 2007) and the social engineering of violence (Stovall, 2015) situates these mortalities to be examined with in the larger context of Black death that exposes the poor medical treatment of Black patients, and the conditions proliferated in this political economy that have turned certain neighborhoods into war zones.

It is through our girls' stories that I was able to better understand that when Chicago folks say, "the west side never recovered from the 1968 riots," more accurately they are describing the opportunity the city saw to create more barriers and marginalize Black

communities. More so, the complicated history that Black people have with state institutions expose the duality of the issue that on one hand reveals a desert of social services and public institutions in the girls' communities. However, many of those public entities operate as co-conspirators in policing and containing Black bodies, with specific regard to the criminalization of Black women and girls. These historic, but deeply troubling relationships have created a fear in seeking help from public services, while also driving communities to use or create internal networks and resources to address their needs.

I began at a place of examining BGF as a fugitive space for Black girls. Initially, I was interested in the physical space and the culture of the environment that gave Black girls permission to show up as their full selves. That gaze then turned to the ways Black girls took ownership of the space and our response to sustaining space that centered their individual and collective needs. While physical space to create "homeplace" (hooks, 1990) is a real desire, fugitive space represents a more relational existence in the face of oppressive systems. The leadership institute being hosted at a local post-secondary institution or the retreat at a hotel allowed for us to create a sacred space under the state of surveillance. Understanding the dangerousness of moving our bodies through different settings and particularly that of our Black girls in the program inspired the questions that I asked during the interview about the ways leadership identified "safe" space for and with Black girls. The intimate moments initiated liberating experiences, but our confrontations with authority frustrated us as program faculty when the girls were deemed "too loud" on the classroom floor or were thought to be "aggressive" in interactions with security guards. These interactions always reminded us of the restraints we operated under. In some cases, these experiences made our girls want to be louder and more visible. The refusal to be

conditioned, or to engage in a process of "talking back" was continually affirmed by the collective. The co-creation of the fugitive space itself becomes radical in the face of loss and exhibits something that cannot be destroyed merely by lack of access to space. In our case, fugitive space or fugitivity represents something more relational. The work with our girls in BGF is redressing the Black girl body from the slave ship and respectability politics as a Black feminist project of liberatory praxis to heal the body.

BGF is one of the beautiful experiments[20] manifested with and for working- class Black girls in era of retrenchment. Before women collectively and bravely shouted "me too" after the initial call of movement founder Tarana Burke, Ameera and Shayla were already in formation to center Black girls in the gender justice movement, which later extended to engaging the interconnectedness of gender and racial violence. This work is necessary in the world of Black girlhood, as I have sat amongst those invested in showing up for Black girls, yet unsure of what critical approach to take. As Ruth Nicole Brown's scholarship and leadership sets the standard in modeling a critical feminist approach to elevating Black girlhood studies intellectually, her illustration of the work as a pedagogical intervention remains groundbreaking as we seek to create space for Black girls. Particularly in creating a fugitive space in which they are not beholden to ascribing to white patriarchal cultural norms, but where they exist as the standard. For these reasons, we must continue to cultivate our intellectual work while working with Black girls on the ground. This ensures that caring for Black girls does not stagnate as a theoretical intervention, but instead challenges us to remain active.

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[20] See Hartman (2017).

Conclusion

There is no nice way to wrap up the insights I've gathered from an examination of the lives of Black girls under the neoliberal carceral state. There is not a one-size-fits-all fix to the nuanced conditions that persist. Despite our failures, the work continues, and even then, we must assess and try something else. For myself, a shining example was when the adult allies were called on to intervene in conflict amongst the girls. During this moment our own blind spots and biases prevented us from intervening deliberately and with the care needed for the issue. Our girls called us out rightfully, and we listened and went back to the drawing board to address the harm. This is no easy feat when we all are constantly under siege, but it is necessary. Although we know structural oppressions evolve in complex ways, a glimpse of our girls' lives offers more transparency into the ways people are directly impacted, coupled with the everyday resistance that their survival depends on.

Collectively, the Black women and girls at Black Girl Free created space to manifest a pedagogy in which Black girls thrived. In this context #BlackGirlMagic was not a nod to Black girls for being resilient nor was #BlackGirlGenius measured on a Eurocentric metric system. Instead, it operates as a celebration of all the ways Black girlhood exists on its own terms. In these spaces embracing fugitivity or non-recognition by the state more so represents the threat of just how powerful we, Black women and girls, are when we no longer look for validation for being human through a white, hetero-normative frame. Through this experience of participating and witnessing the behavior evoked by others in watching Black girls show up authentically, I have come to realize that they mirror back to us our own conditioning as adults. Their daring to be free makes us uncomfortable when they stand up to that cop harassing people in their neighborhoods or jump to the rescue of

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another Black girl being viciously attacked by a security guard in her school. When we ask them to be quiet or more respectful, we are more worried about the ways they make us look weak for being submissive. Even in their silence we become concerned about the revelations that lie in her imagination. Our fear is that if she realizes the power she holds and what that means for the rest of us, it would break our practice of only loving her when she was mindful of her manners or put race before her gender and sexuality.

Unfortunately, these historical dehumanizing readings of Black girls are not new inventions in all the ways we deem her needs and desires invisible while perpetually reducing her to a sexually deviant body. Despite these realities, I conducted this project with the same love and intentions as the pioneers of Black girlhood studies, to examine how much more magical Black girls become when they are able to thrive. I remain committed to this work and our girls, as my role shifted from research fellow to a staff position as I remain in the struggle with them despite the closing of this academic milestone.

When I thought I had the three-step plan to doing better for Black girls, our girls in the program already completed the task by creating the "Black Girls Respond: Six Ways to Stop Killing US" document. The mandate may appear to be simple asks, but my fear is that we will miss the opportunity to consider the ways we are implicated in the practice of impeding the self-determination of Black girls. For adults, the first step includes reflecting on our own conditioning that has constructed our participation in invisibilizing the experiences of Black girls. Just as the Black women security guards that serve in a role that requires their hostility towards Black girls as a measure of keeping things in order, the same rules apply in educational settings. In both instances, the school and other external

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institutions depend on teachers/youth workers to take on similar responsibilities. Our participation in keeping order or disciplining Black girls, whether it is to deter them from teen pregnancy or being dependent upon welfare demonstrates the progression in Black communities to end defiant cultural practices or proving our worthiness as humans under the constructs of white supremacy. On the other hand, to unlearn these roles we must become co-conspirators with Black girls in their refusal to ascribe to respectability politics or "whiteness" to measure their humanity. Additionally, from my positionality as an academic researcher, the ask is not for us to use our scholarly work to intellectualize their ways of being to justify who they are, but that we use our privilege to hold accountable the people and institutions that criminalize their genius while applauding others that appropriate Black girl culture.

Interestingly, while our girls remain frustrated about the silencing and lack of empathy extended to Black girls, they too acknowledge that they are punished for "talking back" within their homes and communities because of the adults' lack of access to radical space to redress their harm. Their insights reaffirm that we must invest in Black girls while simultaneously investing in their communities to disrupt the matrix of violence that places them at the intersection of state and gender violence. For example, Black Feminist praxis is not just for Black women and girls to apply, but it is a critical framework we all must employ as a way of doing better to address these issues at the root. To be better to Black girls, we must pull from our critical toolbox to integrate Black feminist epistemologies to dismantle the master's house in which our envisioning of liberation is not about attaining the same power as white men.

Last year, a video circulated across the internet where a squad of Black girls and their Black female teacher were talking in class in what seemed to be an after-school program (@Valencia_valencia, 2017). From the clip of the video released, the girls were talking about being beautiful, to which one of the dark-skinned girls painfully expressed not feeling beautiful as a dark- skinned Black girl. The other girls and the teacher immediately started showering her with affirmations and love. A year later, that video sits with me as a visual representation of Black girls' radical imaginings of us all winning and the collective care we must embrace to resist the separation of our mind, body, and soul that Black subjugation depends upon.

In conclusion,

May our

Wishes for Black Girls

>>>>Come to pass

May she be

the standard

For freedom

And

Our Humanity

For she is

<<<Our past

Present and…

Future>>>

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I.

Blk Girl Soldier

Jamila Woods

See she's telepathic

Call it black girl magic

Yeah she scares the gov'ment

Deja Vu of Tubman

We go missing by the hundreds

Ain't nobody checkin for us

Ain't nobody checkin for us

The camera loves us

Oscar doesn't

Ain't nobody checkin for us

Ain't nobody checkin for us

They want us in kitchen

Kill our sons with lynchings

We get loud about it

Oh now we're the bitches

Look at what they did to my sisters

Last century last week

They put her body in a jar and forget her

They love how it repeats

Look at what they did to my sisters

Last century last week

They make her hate her own skin

Treat her like a sin

But what they don't understand

(But what they don't understand)

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But what they don't understand

(But what they don't understand)

See what they don't understand

See she's telepathic

Call it black girl magic

Yeah she scares the gov'ment

Deja Vu of Tubman

And she she she she she

Don't give up

Yea yea yea yea yea

She don't give up

She don't don't don't don't don't give up

No no no no no

She don't give up

Rosa was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Ella was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Audre was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Angela was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Sojourner was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Assata was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Rosa was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

Ella was a freedom fighter

And she taught us how to fight

See she's telepathic

Call it black girl magic

Yeah she scares the goverment

Deja Vu of Tubman

But what they don't understand

But what they don't understand

But what they don't understand

See what they don't understand

And she she she she she

Don't give up

Yea yea yea yea yea

She don't give up

She don't don't don't don't don't give up

No no no no no

She don't give up

Between the Train and Harassment

By Aja Reynolds

To the man and woman on the train who felt the need to ask my age after seeing how my developed breast and hips swayed. To the dude who proceeded on as pulled my jacket over my body to shield me as I played on my phone children's games and you asked was I taking your number. So I went out of my way to get off at the next stop even though it really wasn't my stop because you gave two cares less about the fear in my face and the discomfort in my body language that you couldn't help but stare down and I'm mad and scared wanting to be invisible but visible enough for an on looker to be braver than me and make him stop. I wish it was just one of those days but this ain't the first time I was made to feel this way after walking past boys in the hallways at school or past security guards as I'm just trying to make it to homeroom with predatory eyes or the men who catcall on corners and at the park as I keep my headphones in still on alert to hear them call me lil mama or a b*$%h when I don't respond, hoping I don't have to run if he actually begins to follow me, because you know he just being consistent and forcing myself to smile as apologize for having a boyfriend. Because Black girls in short shorts and crop tops always want attention, begging for it to be taken wanting it to be rough as we try to resist, because we always want it. And if I wasn't so afraid I'd say...

Forget you!

No I don't have a boyfriend and if I did I wouldn't apologize for it.

APPENDIX III.

Black Girls Respond: 6 Ways to Stop Killing Black Girls

Despite having the full details surrounding the death of Kenneka Jenkins', a 19-year-old Black woman whose body was found in a freezer at Crowne Plaza Chicago O'Hare Hotel & Conference Center in the early hours of September 9 in Rosemont, IL, this case has been a reminder of the many Black girls and women that die everyday and whose names we forget to speak. The mishandling of the case by those who are suppose to "serve and protect" and public commentary that places the blame back on Black girls for failing to protect ourselves in a world that is consistently violent with us has really pulled at the heartstrings of those of at [omit organinization] Our youth, wanted to offer another response to the victim-blaming approach Black girls are subjected to, which includes six points listed below.

1. **"Do not blame Black girls for living in world that not safe for them (us), but instead try to make the world safer for us to live."**

   Rather than blame Black girls for the harm they encounter, work with others in creating non-judgemental spaces for Black girls to express themselves and just be freely.

2. **"Stop killing Black girls."**

3. **"Even in the death, society lacks empathy for lives of black girls."** Show compassion for ALL Black girls, by listening and believing their stories.

4. **Care About Black Girls:** "To tell you the truth, I do not even feel comfortable being in the house by myself. I really connect to her story; I felt like it could have been me. She was with some of her best friends. Why did she die if she was with people who she trusted?"

   This means disrupting structural and communal spaces that dehumanize Black girls, and respecting their agency.

5. **#SayHerName**

   "Two week later, I have not heard very little about Kenneka Jenkins's case. Black girls stories are so invisible; It is hard the media to feature our stories for more than a sound bit." Although, we cannot count on the police to bring justice, we as a community must uplift the names of Black girls who are victims of state and community violence.

6. **Accountability**

   As a community, we must hold each other to higher standards of caring for Black girls and addressing those who violate them whether they be police officers or those in the community.

BLACK MAN WITH A WATERMELON

Photo by Carrie Mae Weems

APPENDIX V.

Dark Phrases from For Colored Girl
 by Ntozake Shange

dark phrases of womanhood
of never havin been a girl
half-notes scattered
without rhythm/no tune
distraught laughter fallin
over a black girl's shoulder
it's funny/it's hysterical
the melody-less-ness of her dance
don't tell nobody don't tell a soul
she's dancin on beer cans & shingles
this must be the spook house
another song with no singers
lyrics/no voices
& interrupted solos
unseen performances
are we ghouls?
children of horror?
the joke?
don't tell nobody don't tell a soul
are we animals? have we gone crazy?
i can't hear anythin
but maddening screams
& the soft strains of death
& you promised me
you promised me…
somebody/anybody
sing a black girl's song
bring her out
to know herself
to know you
but sing her rhythms
carin/struggle/hard times
sing her song of life
she's been dead so long
closed in silence so long

she doesn't know the sound
of her own voice
her infinite beauty
she's half-notes scattered
without rhythm/no tune
sing her sighs
sing the song of her possibilities
sing a righteous gospel
let her be born
let her be born
& handled warmly.

Aja Reynolds

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EDUCATION

PhD in Educational Policy Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, Present

Masters of Education in Youth Development, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012

Bachelor of Arts in Crime, Law & Justice, The Pennsylvania State University, 2008

Advising Experience

Graduate Mentor, Urban Public Planning Fellowship, Univeristy of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (August 2017- Decmebr 2017)
- Supervise undergraduate fellows and coordinate with their internship sites.
- Coach mentees to complete a research project and poster presentation.
- Assist with processing payroll for student fellows.

Program Coordinator/Supervisor, Commuter Student Resource Center, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (August 2015- August 2017)
- Coordinate academic and social events to engage commuter students.
- Facilitate professional development for the staff members.
- Develop workshops to accommodate the needs of students.
- Manage the operations of center including the maintenance of the facility and employee supervision.

Student Program Coordinator, Chance Program, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (June 2014- August 2014)
- Supervised and mentored high school students enrolled in the summer institute sponsored by the Illinois Dept. of Transportation.
- Engaged students in college related enrichment activities.

Graduate Assistant, University of Illinois College Advising Corps (August 2010- May 2012)
College Retention Coach
- Hosted college preparation workshops for first-year college students and senior high school students.
- Developed resources on college related topics.
- Collected data on students and their college success.

Project Specialist

- Assisted with coordination and implementation of programs.
- Researched grants and funding opportunities.
- Assisted in developing monthly professional development.

College Adviser, Pennsylvania College Advising Corp- Pennsylvania State University
Stationed at Steelton- Highspire High School (August 2008- June 2010)
- Advised & assisted students through the college process.
- Developed and implemented the after-school SAT College Prep Class.
- Collected and analyzed data on students' progress.
- Developed & hosted college related workshops and programs.

Tutor Mentor, Upward Bound: The Pennsylvania State University (Summer 2006)
- Tutored, supervised and mentored students in grades 9-11 during the six- week summer program.
- Planned social and educational events to engage students after their morning classes.

Teaching Experience
Adjunct Professor, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL (January 2019- Pesent)
- Facilitate a historical and philosophical foundations undergraduate course.
- Engage students in critical text and other mediums to collaboratively discuss the course's content.
- Create a transformative educationcational setting for students to thrive.

Program Coordinator, A Long Walk Home Inc., Chicago, IL (September 2017- Present)
- Coordinate programming for youth and co-write curriculum.
- Implement strategies for assessment to evaluate the youth programming.
- Assist with research initiatives and goals.

Teaching Assistant, Educational Policy Studies Dept., University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (January 2017- December 2017)
- Co-taught sections of a lecture size graduate course in EDPS 480: Youth Culture and Community Organizing in Education.
- Assisted with students' class assessments.
- Coordinated the syllabus with the lead professor.

Teaching Assistant, African American Studies Dept., University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (January 2015- May 2015)
- Facilitated two discussion groups with undergraduate students.
- Assisted with grading assignments and exams.

- Developed methods to engage students that assist them with better understanding the key concepts discussed in lecture.

Intern Co- Facilitator, MIKVA Challenge: Farragut High School (January 2012- May 2012)
- Assisted in developing and organizing leadership development activities with youth in the Peace and Leadership Council.
- Partnered with youth in carrying out an action plan to address race relation issues in their school and student involvement in Local School Councils.

Intern Co- Facilitator, Chicago Freedom School (September 2011- March 2012)
- Served as an adult ally for the Healthy Communities Youth Group.
- Engaged youth in community organizing and campaigning for healthy food access in the Chicago area.

Teacher, Steelton- Highspire School District/ New Beginnings (Summer 2010)
- Taught life skills to students from ages 14-18 from the Harrisburg/ Steelton area.
- Developed engaging lessons and activities on social skills and college preparation.

Co-teacher, Steelton- Highspire High School (August 2009- June 2010)
- Co-taught alongside the middle school counselor a 7th grade class titled "Social Responsibility".
- Developed lesson plans and class activities.

Facilitator, Race Relations Project: The Pennsylvania State University (August 2006- May 2008)
- Encouraged and directed dialogue on race relations in small groups with college students.
- Developed and implemented strategies to promote positive race relations on the University's campus.

Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, The Pennsylvania State University (Fall 2005)
- Co-facilitated group discussions on race and ethnic relations in small groups with students.
- Graded student's weekly reflections about the class and group dialogue.

Professional Experience

Graduate Assistant, Social Justice Initiative, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (January 2014- May 2014)
- Assisted with organizing a conference for scholars and activist on campus.
- Coordinated the Faculty Mapping Project to encourage collaborative efforts between faculties.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Gender and Women Studies Dept., University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (October 2014- December 2014)

- Assisted faculty member, Nadine Naber, in researching information on Arab nations for a report for the United Nations.
- Created summaries of cases involving the surveillance of Arab American activists.

Research Specialist, College of Nursing, Fathers of Children in Multiple Households, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (June 2012- December 2013)
- Conducted recorded interviews with participants of the study.
- Assisted in organizing and analyzing data that has been collected.
- Collaborated with the research team on writing abstracts, articles, conference presentations and manuscripts.

Pamela Quiroz, PhD – ED503: Essentials of Qualitative Inquiry in Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (Spring 2011)
Research Assistant
- Assisted the team with developing strategies to best engage participants, which included 4th grade students, parents and teachers.
- Facilitated activities that encouraged students to analyze their communities.
Conducted and transcribed a recorded interview of one of the student interviews.

Eric Gutstein, PhD- Education Delegation to Cuba, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL (Summer 2011), *Extension to CI549: Teaching for Social Justice*
- Conducted observations in K-12 schools, universities & youth programs on the impact of culturally relevant teaching.
- Engaged in dialogues with educators about the formation of the school systems and its impact on the students and the communities.

RELEVANT COURSE WORK

Essentials of Qualitative Inquiry in Education*Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Education *Youth Culture, Community Organizing, and Education

RESEARCH SOFTWARE

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)*Atlas.ti*GenoPro

Selected Conference Presentations

Nickels, Ashley E., Dantzler, P.A., Clarke, A. and Reynolds, A. (November 2017), " Black Lives Matter: Framing an Intersectional Black Liberation Movement", Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action 46th Annual Conference, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Reynolds, A. and Hicks, S. (April 2016) "Developing Carefree Black Girls in a Restrictive World", American Educational Research Association 2017 Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

Reynolds, A. (November, 2015) "Illusion of Love: Dr. King's legacy to mobilize or pacify?", American Educational Studies Association 2015 Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Wheatle, K., Reynolds, A. & Forbes, D. (October, 2015) ""How Did That Happen?": Autoethnographic Accounts of the Doctoral Journey from Black Alumni of PWIs", 3rd Annual Black Doctoral Network, Atlanta, GA.

Reynolds, A. & Juarez, J. (July, 2015) "Sisters in the Struggle: Breaking Ties with Patriarchy to Make Room for Ourselves", Free Minds Free People Conference 2015, Oakland, CA.

Reynolds, A. & Juarez, J. (May, 2013)"It Takes a Village to Raise a Child: Ways to Build a Collaborative Village to Best Serve Students in Schools", 27th Annual Spring Illinois Afterschool Network Conference, Lisle, IL.

Dallas, CM, Reynolds, A., McMahon, P., Dancy, B. & Seryak, C (March, 2013)."Difficult but Doable: Recruiting Low-Income, African American Fatherhood Networks", 37th Annual Midwest Nursing Research Society Conference, Chicago, IL.

Reynolds, A. & Floyd, D. (November 2012)."Recruiting and Retaining Black Adolescent Males in Programs for Success", University of Illinois at Chicago: 3rd Annual Youth Development Summit, Chicago, IL.

Reynolds, A. & Juarez, J. (March 2012)."Creating a College –Going Culture with a Social Justice Framework," Northeastern Illinois University: Creating Grassroots Education: A Collaborative Forum for Educators, Chicago, IL.

"PCAC College Advising in High Schools." Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2010.

Publications

Reynolds, A. D. (2017). First Strike: Educational Enclosures in Black Los Angeles. Damien Sojoyner. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. 288 pp. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *48*(3), 329-331.

Reynolds, A., & Hicks, S. D. (2016). Can We Live? Working Toward a Praxis of Support for Carefree Black Girls. *Black History Bulletin*, *79*(2), 12-17.

Invited Conference Presentations/Lectures

Feminism Lecture, 2018, "Too Nuanced for Academe: Researching Black Girls Beyond the Limitations of Traditional Inquiry", University of Illinois @ Chicago, IL.

American Studies Association Conference, 2017, "Troubling schools+prisons: A troublemakers teach-in", Panel, Chicago, IL.

DePaul University, 2016, "To Lose Her Mother: Curating Black Womanhood in Lemonade", Guest Speaker, Chicago, IL.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS/ Affiliations

American Studies Association, 2017-Present
American Educational Research Association, 2016-Present
American Educational Studies Association - 2015- Present
Free People Free Minds Conference, 2013- Present
Teachers for Social Justice (Chicago), 2011- Present
National College Access Network, 2008- 2012
National College Advising Corps, 2008-2012
Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education, 2008-2010
Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling, 2008-2010

AWARDS AND HONORS

Diversifying Faculty in Illinois Fellowship, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017- 2018
Martin Luther King Jr. Graduate Fellowship, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017-2018
EDPS Travel Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015
Community Engagement Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2014

Professional Service

Search Commitee, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017
CESJ SIG Graduate Committee, American Educational Research Association, 2017
Admission Committee, University of Illinois at Chocago 2016
National Special Events Committee, Free Minds Free People Conferencce, 2013, 2015

References

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