BLACK BOARD

THE SOLIDARITY ISSUE

WINTER 2021

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THE SOLIDARITY ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR FAMILY,

I cannot believe it has been a full year since I last saw all of you in person. Isolation has long been the new normal, but I am still not used to it. There are moments in the day when I am sitting at my desk, eyes glazing over as I futilely try to pay attention in virtual classes, and all I want in the world is to turn back time to the days of FMO barbeques, Sunday nights spent at BMP meetings over dinner at Allison, walking to Cahn Auditorium to see the State of the Black Union address, and Black-Board meetings in the Black House. Yet, as hard as it is to be physically apart from the Black community I adore, I am heartened by how much we have been able to remain in community with one another despite the distance.

Which brings me to the central theme of this quarter's issue. So many times, we have seen public support for the Black Lives Matter movement spike in times of crisis, then gradually lose momentum until the next George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, or Eric Garner comes along. With the dawn of a Biden-Harris administration, there is a real risk of this country falling into a second era of post-racial self-delusion. With that, it is up to us to keep up the fight, to keep the focus where it ought to be — but you already knew that.

When BlackBoard's exec team reconvened at the beginning of winter, we immediately decided that we needed to continue centering the themes we touched upon last quarter, of dismantling, abolishing, rebuilding. With that, I give you our Winter 2021 issue: The Solidarity Issue. I want to extend a sincere thanks to the entire exec team and to all our wonderful writers, designers, models and photographers.

With love,

Imani Sumbi
Print Editor-in-Chief
BlackBoard Magazine

DEAR FAMILY,

The world has shifted so quickly in the past few months, but very little feels different. We have a new President, who continues to lead our nation poorly as he bombs Syria and deports our loved ones. Some of us have been able to access the vaccine while others remain isolated from this pandemic. And we've seen how our university has finally responded to our demands but has not truly done anything about them.

Our worlds have the potential to make full transformations, they do not need to just slightly shift. We have a duty to destroy, to rebuild, to create anew. We do not need to live in this world. So I ask you all, what are you doing to transform the world you live in? Who are you leaning into? What are you reading?

What are you doing?

Most of all, how are you taking accountability for what you do? As we grow and transform, it calls on us to think about the worst and hardest parts about ourselves. We cannot expect the world to change for the better if we do not also change, unlearn, and do what feels hard. Push into those difficult conversations, take those risks, and love each other deeply. We will need it to win.

I am so grateful and honored to have served as your Coordinator.

Mari
FMO Coordinator

FROM THE FMO COORDINATOR LETTER

BRIEFS

So many say the same things—
"We call the cops"
"No loitering"
"Trespassers will be prosecuted."

When you're passing by,
and all the passersby
pass you
a look to say
I see you.

When the lady in the car
across the street
stays in her car
until you cross the street.

When the Charger
right on your tail
makes a right
to stay on your tail.

When the security guard
watches you
watching the art,
with every move,
you know he sees you.

So I know what it means
when the part of town
police tear gassed you to stay out of
hangs signs and banners
saying
"Black lives matter"
and
"I see you."

BLACKBOARD EXCELLENCE:

THE RELAUNCH OF THE BLACK PERFORMANCE COMPANY

WRITTEN BY **CHIDERA OLEWUENYI** // DESIGNED BY **KACEE HASLETT**
PHOTO FROM THE DAILY NORTHWESTERN VOL. 117 (APRIL 4, 1996)

Eden Strong has been doing theatre since they were around five or six years old. Inspired by their aunt, an artist herself, and "bored with school," Strong participated in high school productions that eventually inspired them to pursue theatre in college. Now a third-year theatre major at Northwestern, Strong has dedicated themself to making the school's performing arts scene more inclusive of a diverse student body.

Feeling out of place in a majority-white theatre department, Strong joined together with other junior theatre students to create an affinity space for Black students to build community and foster creativity.

These students were inspired by the work of the African American theatre Ensemble, which was founded on Northwestern's campus in 1971 and was dedicated to "producing and performing African American dramatic works." This theatre board, that was originally a part of STUCO (The Northwestern Student theatre Coalition), featured programming like The Ritual, "an annual production of skits, songs, dance, and poetry" meant to welcome first years and send off seniors, Cafe Noir, an open mic night for Northwestern student performers, and Out Da' Box, a sketch comedy show written, produced, and performed by the cast, to name a few.

Strong has Northwestern alumni in her family who were part of AATE, and was looking forward to joining when they arrived on campus -- only to discover that it was no longer active, and hadn't been since the early 2010s. Instead of lamenting the void AATE left behind, Strong set out to launch a new organization in its image, a feat which would eventually become the Black Performance Company. It is now the university's only Black student interest performing arts group.

"Wirtz itself is notoriously white and so is the theatre program," they said, recalling that there are only a handful of Black people in their whole grade within their major. "I really just wanted a space for Black people to be able to be themselves in performance spaces."

Strong reached out to Black students within their major to garner interest and eventually brought fellow third-year students Jay Towns, Olivia Pryor, and Maya Schnake on board to bring their idea to fruition. Each member had similar reasons for joining this project, as they are all heavily involved in Northwestern's theatre department. Pryor, a double major in theatre and statistics, had a similar experience to Strong in that she was made aware of positive alumni experiences with AATE, as she was browsing Facebook and found alumni inquiring about whether AATE was still in operation. Schnake, a theatre and psych major, cited the turbulent summer of 2020 as her main incentive for getting involved with the Black Performance Company initiative.

"Especially with the Black Lives Matter Movement that's been gaining traction this past summer, I think it was especially important now to relaunch the group so that Black artists have a space on campus specifically for them to produce their work and work that matters to them with other Black artists," she said.

Though none of these students expressed outright negative feelings toward or experiences with Northwestern's theatre department, all of them recognized, as musical theatre major Jay Towns put it, "a gap in a community that doesn't really have a lot of representation or Black voices being lifted up intentionally." And he should know — Towns is the only Black male third-year student in his major.

While the Black Performance Company was modeled after AATE, the founding members did acknowledge some changes that needed to be made from its predecessor. By rebranding as the Black performance Company, the members demonstrate their intention to open up the scope of students served by this organization.

"We want to be not just a theatre space, but a performance space...not just a space for African Americans but for all Black people," Strong said.

Changing the name and exchanging all of the "African American" references in the original AATE mission statement to "Black students" signifies a shift away from being exclusive to Black American theatre students, instead inviting Black performers of all kinds to occupy the space. While talking to the founding board members, it was evident that they intend for BPC to serve the black community first and foremost. In Olivia's words, "We want it to be a Black space first and a performance space second...We would like it to be about being together, being together through performance."

"We want it to be a Black space first and a performance space second," Pryor said. "We would like it to be about being together through performance."

Though much of their programming has been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift towards digital learning, BPC has promising hopes for the future. Some potential events include a reestablishment of Cafe Noir and more mainstage performances including plays and musicals, concerts, dance shows, and script readings by Black students. The founding board placed heavy emphasis on the program being guided by the interests of its members and even intend to step back once the program is on its feet in order to elect a new executive board that is not entirely made up of theatre majors (More information about the executive board elections can be found at the following link: BPC Powerpoint). Evidently, the work of the Black performance company is something to look out for.

If you would like to keep up with the Black performance company's journey, they can be found on Instagram at @blkperformanceco.nu and on Twitter at @blackperfco_nu.

INSIDE OUT

Why We Have to Bridge the Connection with our Incarcerated Comrades

WRITTEN BY **ADRIANA MARTINEZ-SMILEY**

DESIGNED BY **EMANUELLA EVANS**

AT Northwestern University, students are learning about the adverse effects of policing. Specifically, the ways that it undoubtedly terrifies our BIPOC student population, police's impunity when it comes to accountability and the fact that police often escalate the very situations they're meant to de-escalate, ultimately causing more harm than good. But what about those that have the closest proximity to state violence—our incarcerated comrades?

We need to do more work to support our incarcerated friends. The state doesn't want them to organize, learn or be a part of their own liberation. Contacting prisoners and including them in our organizing efforts is vital to learning how to abolish all forms of state violence.

During this year's Martin Luther King Keynote Address from organizer and prison-industrial complex (PIC) abolitionist Mariame Kaba in January, she introduced 9 Solidarity Commitments to/with Incarcerated People for 2021. She also read an excerpt from King recounting his own time in prison: "You will never know the meaning of utter darkness until you have lain in such a dungeon, knowing that sunlight is streaming overhead and still seeing only darkness below."

Eliza Gonring, a SESP senior and PIC abolitionist at Northwestern, says that there's more emphasis put on abolishing the police than there is on abolishing prisons.

"I still think that some people believe that some people deserve to be in prison," she says. "To be supporting police abolition but not prison abolition is a very selfish goal."

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, a prison scholar and abolitionist, considers prisons to be a form of "organized abandonment," because the state does nothing to make it a space for rehabilitation. Illinois, for example, has no parole system (the early release of an incarcerated person) in place, meaning some sentences mean death by incarceration, where people will spend a majority of their life in jail.

Alex Ding, a PIC abolitionist who was formerly involved with Parole Illinois, an inside-outside organization working to end death by incarceration, says we should uplift the work and knowledge of incarcerated people.

"The folks who are most close to the ways that incarceration shows up in our society are the folks who are currently incarcerated, and they have the solution," says Ding. "I think there are really brilliant strategists and really brilliant writers and organizers inside."

Gonring says that she's likely spent between $300 to $1000 sending books, letters and emails, along with pay-per-minute phone calls to her incarcerated penpal.

"They're profiting every step of the way," she says. "[Prisons] make communication with those on the inside inaccessible."

Beyond the monetary obstacles that the state puts in place, prisons regulate the number of phone calls prisoners can make, monitor and limit family visits and dictate prisoners' placement into solitary confinement based on arbitrary disciplinary tickets. All mail is searched and the delivery is discretionary, so if you try to send a political zine to someone on the inside, they might not get it.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, prison phone companies have a state-sanctioned monopolistic stronghold over pricing per call, making it an absurdly profitable industry. Timmy Châu, managing director of the Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project (PNAP), a visual arts and education project that connects artists and scholars to incarcerated students, says that because he's a registered volunteer at Illinois' Stateville Maximum Security Prison, he's not allowed to contact the family members of anyone at the prison.

Châu says that letters to incarcerated people can mean everything to them.

"Just being able to interact and develop relationships I've heard is really meaningful and appreciated and sought after," he says. "Meeting new people and building relationships—it's one of the few opportunities that still exists as an entryway into building community in a space where the entire premise is to take away community."

> "MEETING NEW PEOPLE AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS—IT'S ONE OF THE FEW OPPORTUNITIES THAT STILL EXISTS AS AN ENTRYWAY INTO BUILDING COMMUNITY IN A SPACE WHERE THE ENTIRE PREMISE IS TO TAKE AWAY COMMUNITY."

Prison abolition is necessary if we want to further divest from state violence and a judicial system that's inherently biased. But in the meantime, we need to keep our incarcerated comrades in the loop of the revolution—whether it be through political education, arts programs, letter writing, phone calls, emails or sending books.

Ding says it's okay if someone feels like they can't sustain a relationship with an incarcerated person through penpalling, and how much information you want to share with them about your life is up to you.

"But the other piece of this is encouraging folks to think about the way that the state criminalizes. It's a very racialized process too, this idea of a 'violent criminal' and what it means to unpack some of the ways the label of a 'violent criminal' actually doesn't do the work that people say it does," says Ding. "There are a lot of ways that those labels are actually untrue for a lot of folks and also do more harm and just reproduce more racist ideas that exist to criminalize Black and brown folks. I think there's some interrogation to do."

RESOURCES:

9 Solidarity Commitments to/with Incarcerated People for 2021: https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/e/2PACX-1vRR6IALSI7L16B0AdDwQ4EZ2W3cKhRh2jE_OFcli13S-G3mLy3DzTjRehX-erTM7HP2rjclR2SJpV5ML/pub

Mariame Kaba MLK keynote: https://www.northwestern.edu/mlk/

Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project: http://p-nap.org

A NORTHWESTERN STUDENT'S GUIDE TO LIVING RESTORTIVELY

WRITTEN BY **KARINA KARBO-WRIGHT** // DESIGNED BY **KARINA KARBO-WRIGHT**

How do we hold each other accountable without policing one another? These are the questions changemakers are tasked with when crafting a new society while still existing in America. Criminologist Howard Zehr, in a 2009 article, "10 ways to live restoratively," lists antidotes to that struggle. He presents examples of restorative and transformative justice as ideological frameworks to mend harm and conflict outside of punishment and the state. These frameworks are important for the Northwestern community. As we work to defund our campus police, we must begin to imagine together how we want accountability and harm reduction to function on our campus. Below, I talked to Northwestern community members about what these steps mean to them and how they practice them at NU.

1. ENVISION YOURSELF AND YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AS PART OF A WEB

"Relationships have to matter," said Soteria Reid, a senior in SESP. "They're not transient and not transactional." In order to live restoratively, you must focus your energy and time on relationships. Relationships are often transactional—we make connections so that we can receive something in the future. But viewing yourself as part of an interconnected web as opposed to an individual directly challenges this system.

Practice at NU: Don't view your peers as networking opportunities. Focus on building relationships to sustain one another through this time.

2. BE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL & ACTUAL IMPACT OF YOUR ACTIONS

Often, we avoid accountability when we excuse it with good intentions. The guide "***Intent vs Impact: The Seeds of Microaggressions***" from Rogue Community Colleges distinguishes impact from intent as "what we mean" versus "how the message is received." Often, intent is shrouded in our own privileges, and our impact becomes harmful. For example, when someone refers to Black people's hair as "ethnic" or "exotic," their intent may be to express admiration, but in reality, they are perpetuating the fetishization aspect of anti-Blackness

Practice at NU: Take a self-awareness/self-identification workshop at Northwestern through ***Peer Inclusion Educators*** or Sexual Health and Assault Peer Educators (***SHAPE***). Or, read more about it in ***Readings for Diversity and Social Justice.***

3. ACKNOWLEDGE & SEEK TO REPAIR HARM

Reid laughed and said she had a lot to say about this subject. "To me, that means to act with honesty, integrity, and humility," she said. "I think it emphasizes and highlights how important it is to value other people more than your own comfort." Check out ***the comfort zone, learning edges, and danger zone toolkit*** at socialjusticetoolkit.com to chart your own comfort zones.

Practice at NU: Participate in ***restorative dialogues,*** but remove yourself if your presence might be harmful. Try to avoid using the police or reporting systems to handle harmful situations like COVID violations, discrimination, or group disputes, and lean on your community to protect you.

4. INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DECISION-MAKING

The decision-making process can feel much like the myth of trying to get a seat at the table. What really matters is practicing ensuring equity throughout the decision-making process.

"Determine who's going to be affected by the decision you're making and let them know what's going on," Reid says. "Do your best, with the best intentions, to make sure those who are going to be the most affected by these decisions are deeply involved in the process."

Practice at NU: Do more than just having a Diversity and Inclusion chair. Make decision-making more accessible to people outside your exec boards. If possible, move to a more horizontal leadership structure— move away from hierarchical positions like executive boards and presidents and begin to share the load with all consenting group members.

5. VIEW HARMS IN YOUR LIFE AS OPPORTUNITIES

It seems counterintuitive for us to view potential traumas through a positive lens. To Mao, this frame resembles the "I hope you can get over this or let this go defense."

The wording here could use an update think of recovering from trauma, as more of a moment of acknowledgement for the ability to move forward. "Don't shy away from thinking about harm and process it. Try to experience times of strife and address it," Reid said.

Practice at NU: Find time to sit with yourself and process life experiences. Follow people at Northwestern like Zaria Howell (@earthmamaa) or Liz Curtis (@ccurtise), who practice radical care, mindfulness and healing.

6. TREAT EVERYONE RESPECTFULLY

Treating everyone respectfully, especially when they harm you, is a difficult task. When abolitionist Mariame Kaba spoke at Northwestern, she spoke about how the ability to forgive is radical: "Real community safety is not created by increasing criminalization. Different harms need different responses." Kaba developed the transformative justice framework to advocate for and encourage forgiveness in the face of interpersonal harm, abuse, and violence without relying on the state. One example would be building community members' skills to interrupt violence while it is happening.

Practice at NU: Check out ***Bystander Intervention training*** and practice calling folks into accountability.

7. LISTEN DEEPLY AND COMPASSIONATLY TO EVERYONE — EVEN THOSE YOU DISAGREE WITH

Rob Brown, the director at ***SJE*** and trained restorative dialgoue moderator, espeically resonated with this point. "Listening to those we are in disagreement or conflict with compassionately is important to invite in divergent points of view that disrupt utopian and performative notions of inclusion," he said. "Sometimes this notion is critiqued. But to reject carcerality is to acknowledge that there is value in all of us and no one is worthy of disposability."

Practice at NU: Try to listen in groups, relationships, and even class to those speaking without thinking of a response ahead of time. Try going to ***CAPS events*** to enhance your listening and sharing abilities through being vulnerable.

8. ENGAGE IN DIFFICULT DIALOGUES

Eden Strong, a junior in the School of Comm, had questions about how we mitigate harm: "We all have to be on the same page and operating with similar core principles." They continued, "So how do I go about and maintain an abolitionist lifestyle even when I'm engaging with people who don't have my best interest at heart?"

How do we move forward from difficult dialogues? Honestly, we need to have the dialogues first to find out. Each conversation will go differently and we have to question, is the goal of these to mitigate harm or repair it?

Practice at NU: Participate in programs like ***Sustained Dialogue*** or ***Active Listening*** workshops with NU Listens. Practice just listening to those in your community without thinking of something to say in response while they speak.

PHOTO FROM @NUCOMMUNITYNOTCOPS ON TWITTER

9. DON'T IMPOSE YOUR "TRUTHS" ON OTHERS

"I think we are starting to see that with people reporting people for COVID stuff to people who are essentially police." said SESP senior Eliza Gonring, "And it's because they wanna have complete control over another person's actions. In a sense, that's people imposing their truths and their views on to people. That's why people default to 'I'm going to hold people accountable—' you can't. You can tell people how they impacted you or others… you can't force them into accountability, because then that's not accountability."

Practice at NU: Check in with folks on all sides of a conflict, not just yours, in order to proceed in a way that's healing for everyone. Use the community as support, call on folks who are willing to shut down COVID violations as opposed to the police.

10. SENSITIVELY CONFRONT EVERYDAY INJUSTICES

White supremacy, the patriarchy, classism, and all other forms of oppression (sizeism, ableism, nationalism, transphobia, heterosexism, etc) pervasive systemic inequities. Identity and power dynamics determine what folks need for healing to proceed. Understanding how these dynamics cause harm brings us one step close to liberation from the categories society forces us into.

Practice at NU: Support groups like NU Community Not Cops Fossil Free NU NU Abolition, Students Organizing for Labor Rights Northwestern Graduate Workers and NU Dissenters,as well as groups working for liberation in Evanston and Chicago.

IT'S MORE THAN VENMOING FOR MUTUAL AID (BUT CONTINUE TO DO THIS). WE NEED LEARNING THAT LEADS TO ACTION AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING, AND THEORY THAT LEADS TO PRACTICE. HOPEFULLY, THIS GUIDE PROVIDED SOME STEPS THAT YOU CAN START TAKING TOWARDS A STATE-LESS, MORE RESTORATIVE LIFE.

FEATURES

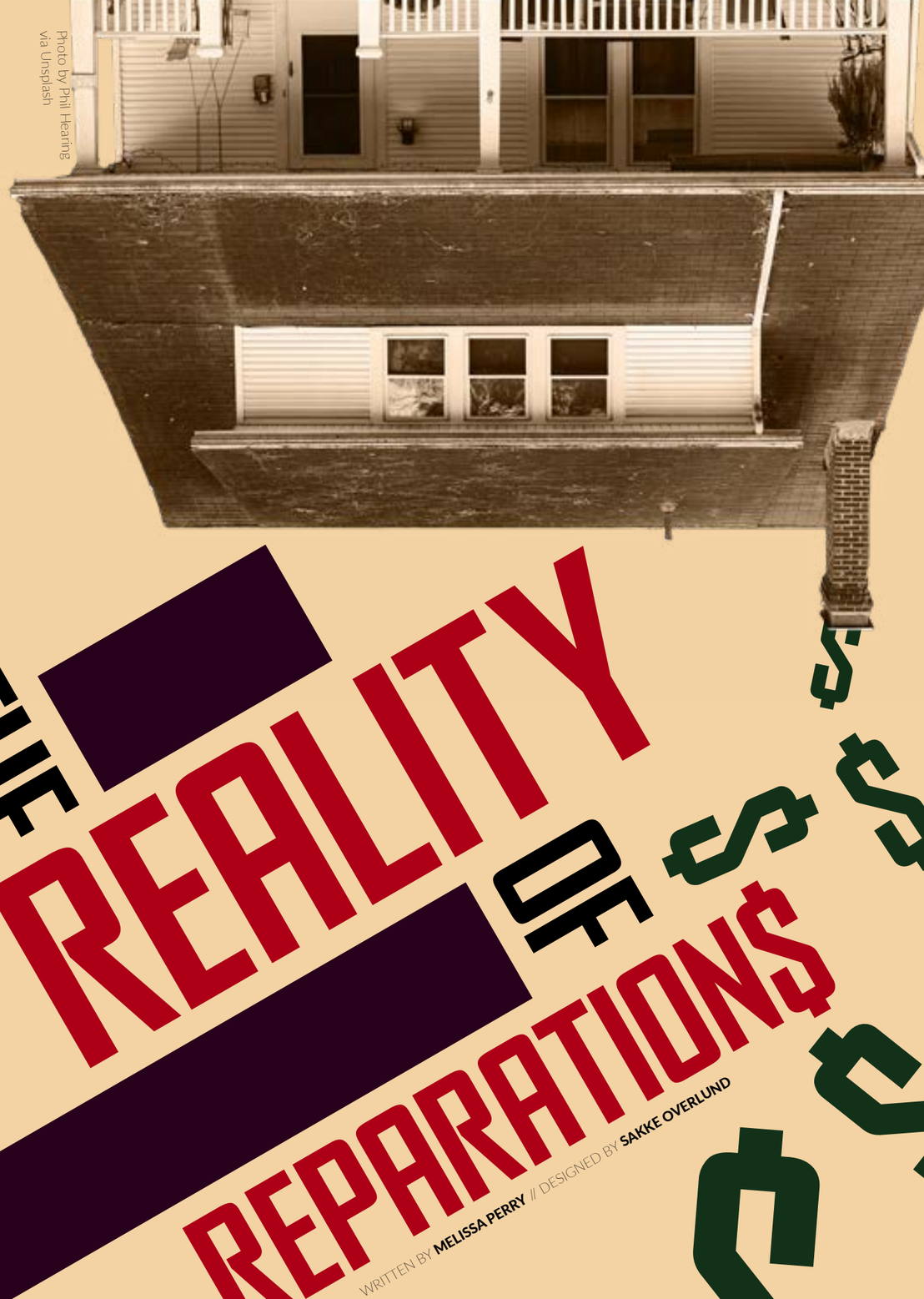


Photo by Phil Hearing via Unsplash

THE REALITY OF REPARATIONS

WRITTEN BY **MELISSA PERRY** // DESIGNED BY **SAKKE OVERLUND**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines reparations as "**the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury.**"

Photo by Austin Kehmeier via Unsplash

Since the mid 1800s, there has been a persistent call to award federal reparations to Black Americans as amends for the generational harms of slavery and systematic racism.

Following the Civil War, the Republican Party attempted to make these amends by distributing "40 acres and a mule" to every former slave family. This proposal was swiftly vetoed by President Andrew Johnson, which set the precedent for the federal government to continuously ignore reparation demands in the following decades.

In recent years, calls for reparations have picked up steam. According to a 2019 poll from the Associated Press, 74% of Black Americans are in favor of reparations. In 2014, author Ta-Nahisi Coates was widely praised for his piece in The Atlantic, "The Case For Reparations" which addresses how the legacy of slavery resulted in generational harm through an analysis of Chicago's discriminatory housing practices. In this piece, Coates writes that reparations would require "a reconciling of our self-image as the great democratizer with the facts of our history."

On January 3, 2019, Rep. Shelia Lee (D-TX) introduced the bill H.R. 40 to the House of Representatives. This bill would establish a federal commission dedicated to studying and developing a reparation proposal that addresses the generational harm of slavery. Currently, the bill remains unpassed by Congress.

However, one midwestern city of 74,587 is leading the charge as it becomes the first US city to implement a funded reparations program. That city: Evanston, IL.

Evanston, which was named the fourth wealthiest city in the midwest in 2016, might not be the first place that comes to mind as a city in need of a reparations program. But this northern Chicagoland suburb has a dark history of redlining and segregation that has led to consistent underinvestment in its Black community. For Robin Rue Simmons, alderman of Evanston's 5th Ward and the leader behind this initiative, it was time for the city to pay up.

"I thought we might do something bold and different, something as bold and as radical as the Jim Crow-ing and the redlining and the various forms of oppression that we have right here in Evanston," she said at a virtual town hall on January 31.

The origin of the oppression Simmons references dates back to 1900, when Evanston's small Black population began to steadily increase. According to a 2020 city-commissioned report by local historians Dino Robinson and Jenny Thompson, white residents quickly took notice of their new neighbors and feared the gradual erosion of Evanston's racial homogeneity. A 1904 Chicago Tribune headline reads, "North Shore Towns Aroused: Influx of Negroes alarms the Residents of Evanston, Wilmette, Winnetka, and Glencoe."

White residents soon began implementing real estate policies, homeowner's associations and public segregated practices that pushed Black residents into a small, dense region of West Evanston, now known as the 5th ward.

"You had landlords refuse to rent to Black families, banks that refused lending to Black families to buy a house," Robinson says. "If you did want to buy a house, the real estate agencies would only show you a certain area in Evanston."

To dislocate Black families living outside these boundaries, white Evanston homeowners formed the West Side Improvement Association to buy homes at risk of being bought by a Black family or to "buy back" homes that had already been sold to Black residents. In 1921, the city passed a zoning ordinance that designated almost every area outside of the 5th Ward for commercial use.

These tactics proved successful. According to Andrew Weise, historian at San Diego University and author of Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the 20th Century, of the 1400 homes constructed in Northwest Evanston between 1920 and 1930, not one was occupied by Black residents. A prime example of the impact of these policies lies within the demographics of Foster School, which was located in the 5th Ward and closed in 1979. When the school opened in 1905, the student body was 100% white, but by 1945, it was 99% Black.

According to Robinson and Thompson's report and many Black residents with generational ties to Evanston, these practices resulted in an inequitable landscape for the Black families that can still be seen today.

"Those conditions and those actions obviously stripped away wealth, real earned wealth," Alderman Simmons says. "It created barriers for the Black community and it is in part responsible for a wealth gap, which includes $46,000. We have a life expectancy difference between the average Black and white Evanston resident of 13 years."

In June 2019, the city council formed a reparations subcommittee after passing a resolution that committed "to end structural racism and achieve racial equality." The following November, the city established a reparations fund—which comes from the first $10 million in sales tax revenue from legal cannabis.

"It's sort of fortuitous that this idea of reparations came forward just as Illinois marijuana legalization happened," says Melissa Wynne, Alderman of the 3rd Ward. "So this is a way of using funds from something that is legal that was once illegal and was used to really punish people in the Black community."

In the summer of 2019, the city held multiple public meetings, and housing was a consistent issue that residents recommended that the reparations fund address, according to Alderman Simmons. In the past two decades, Evanston's Black population has dropped from 22.5% to 16.5%, which has often been attributed to a lack of affordable housing and high property taxes.

The first monetary focus of the reparations fund, pending a vote from the City Council, will be directed toward housing in the form of a direct benefit of $25,000 to 16 Black residents. To be eligible, applicants must have lived in Evanston between 1919 and 1969 or be a direct descendant of someone who did. According to Simmons, this benefit can go toward any housing related expense, including mortgage payments, a down payment on a new property or renovations.

Despite its historic significance, the execution of this reparations plan is being met with criticism from Black residents who would prefer direct cash payments. Ndona Muboyayi, founder of the Black Evanstonian, a Facebook group for legacy Black Evanston residents, says the scope of the reparations bill is too narrow.

"So many people are disheartened about the fact that the current initiative does not meet the needs of the community," she says. "Many of our legacy families already own property, so they're not going to buy a home."

Muboyayi says that many eligible Black residents reside in senior living centers, making a housing benefit impractical.

On March 1, some community members published a Facebook page titled "Evanston Rejects Racist Reparations" to air their grievances with the program's housing initiative, and on March 6, the group held a demonstration against the program outside of the MadMen Dispensary. A key complaint from the group is that all Black community members should be eligible for reparations, regardless of residential history. In a statement released March 2, the group stated that "the lack of community input has resulted in a reparations plan that would be detrimental to Black people and the larger movement."

City council members, such as Alderman Wynne, say that while they acknowledge the criticism, the city is bound legally to connect reparations payments to a specific harm in order to avoid legal challenges.

"The tricky part is that there are equal protection laws so that you have to treat people equally unless you tie it to a particular harm," Wynne says.

"I know we're a model and it's not perfect. And we have more work to go. This is just one step," says Kimberly Richardson, Evanston's deputy city manager.

The local and national response to this initiative is undoubtedly complex. On one hand, Evanston is gaining national recognition for a historic program for which it has been given no blueprint to follow in the midst of federal inaction. But within the city, there are community stakeholders that stress that this execution of funds is not enough. Many residents like Muboyayi refuse to stop speaking up until the city proposes a reparations program that sufficiently makes amends for the cumulative, generational harms that have been inflicted upon Evanston's Black community.

"If I have to calculate every single relative who owned property who, after a period of time, their mere existence and well-being and ability to amass wealth was contingent on the color of their skin, we would be in the billions," Muboyay says. "It is not enough, it's insufficient. We've had to come over insurmountable barriers to be able to survive under acts of constant terrorism and extremism generation after generation."

> "MY DREAM IS THAT MY GREAT-GREAT GRANDKIDS COME BACK TO EVANSTON AND SEE A REPARATIONS PROGRAM THAT HAS ENOUGH MONEY THAT EVERY BLACK KID THAT GRADUATES FROM ETHS HAS A FREE RIDE SCHOLARSHIP TO WHATEVER UNIVERSITY OR TRADE SCHOOL THEY WANT TO GO TO. THAT IS AN IMPACT." — Dino Robinson

THE -ISMS WITHIN VEGANISM

WRITTEN BY **ARI CROCKETT** //
DESIGNED BY **JACQUELYNE GERMAIN**

On February 23, That Vegan Teacher was banned from TikTok after sparking controversy around her rhetoric in videos advocating for veganism and animal rights. Some of the terminology she used in her advocacy includes "holocaust," "slavery" and "murder." The ban came as people from marginalized backgrounds expressed outrage at the comparison of human oppression to the suffering of animals.

With over 1.6 million followers on TikTok, That Vegan Teacher, or Kadie Karen Diekmeyer, was a hugely popular creator on the platform, making educational videos about veganism and animal rights activism. However, she soon grew infamous due to her conduct both online and off, embroiling herself in petty spats with Minecraft YouTuber and Twitch streamer TommyInnit and celebrity chef Gordon Ramsey.

On YouTube, commentary personality D'Angelo Wallace made two 10-minute videos addressing Diekmeyer's problematic conduct and messaging, especially regarding race and victimization. In one TikTok, Diekmeyer insists that a hatred of vegans, or "veganphobia," is prevalent on the platform. She posits, "If we can get rid of racism here, if we can get rid of homophobia, surely we can get rid of the cruelty that animal rights activists are exposed to on a regular basis."

Racism and homophobia are far from being eliminated on TikTok and in the world at large. In addition, there is no comparing "veganphobia" to systematic and structural oppression. Unlike one's race or sexual orientation, Wallace states, you opt in to being vegan.

"It's racist, sexist, homophobic, insert bigotry, to compare these issues to animals in any way shape or form," Wallace says.

Soon after Wallace's first video, Diekmeyer responded with a video on her own YouTube channel. In it, she repeatedly mispronounces Wallace's name as "dan-ge-lo" rather than "d-an-ge-lo", which could be considered a microaggression. She ignores most of his arguments in favor of chastising him for not talking enough about veganism and animal rights. In the process of comparing the oppression of humans with that of animals, she trivializes the suffering of minorities.

"Those who claim to be oppressed should not stand on the windpipes of animals and expect sympathy while they themselves are the oppressors...We need to teach this to all of these minority groups who claim that they are victims."

Diekmeyer's belittling of minorities and infantilization is a recurring issue. In an earlier TikTok, she responded to a Black commenter by using the commenter's racial identity and heritage to shame them for criticizing her.

"Do you know how your ancestors were treated, enslaved? Do you not know what you do to the animals right now in the industry?" Diekmeyer says in the TikTok. "It would be great, even if you're not saving the animals and if you don't give a [expletive] about anyone but yourself, you at least don't make it worse for people like me."

In another YouTube video, Diekmeyer published an original song called, "I Can't Breathe", named after George Floyd final words, with the caption "All Lives Matter" and apparently composed it on the day of his death. She took the dying words of an innocent Black man and somehow made it all about animal rights, which is disgusting and racist.

At one point she sings: "I am a Canadian woman with a protest sign, your Auschwitz truck has run over me. I can't breathe." This is in reference to animal rights activist Regan Russell, who was run over and killed by a truck driver transporting pigs to a slaughterhouse last year. Diekmeyer compares pigs going to slaughter for food, to Jewish people being trucked off to be killed at the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Holocaust.

> **"THIS EXTREMELY WHITE WALL YOU'RE FIRST GREETED WITH WHEN YOU FIRST COME TO VEGANISM PUSHED ME AWAY FROM THE MOVEMENT ENTIRELY"**
>
> — **Happy Black Legends**
> *Queer Black Vegan YouTuber*

Most charitably put, That Vegan Teacher's rhetoric is overtly problematic. Her comparisons of human and animal suffering are not thoughtful analogies but ill-explained false equivalences. It feels disingenuous and disrespectful.

There is a reckoning within the vegan community on the befuddling racism that permeates vegan advocacy and animal rights activism. This toxic atmosphere has persisted since the beginnings of the vegan community online, according to vegans of color.

"This extremely white wall you're first greeted with when you first come to veganism pushed me away from the movement entirely," says Happy Black

Legends, a queer Black vegan YouTuber.

Legends responded to some ideas presented in a video of Cheap Lazy Vegan aka Rose, another popular vegan YouTuber. In the video, Rose acknowledges the offense that minorities take to their suffering being compared with that of animals, expressing that words like "holocaust", "slavery," and "murder" to describe the slaughter of animals, are often "thrown out, willy nilly, without consideration of who is listening on the other side."

"IT'S RACIST, SEXIST, HOMOPHOBIC, INSERT BIGOTRY, TO COMPARE THESE ISSUES TO ANIMALS IN ANY WAY SHAPE OR FORM"

— **D'Angelo Wallace**
Commentary Youtuber

However, Rose asserts that it's "speciesist" to think of animals as less valuable than humans, defining speciesism as "the differing treatment or moral consideration of individuals based on their species membership." When marginalized groups find comparisons to animals offensive, the assumption is dehumanization, becoming "lesser than" human. Rose wants to get away from this assumption, and says there is nothing inherently wrong with using terms like "slavery" and "holocaust" to refer to the treatment of animals in the meat and dairy industry.

Happy Black Legends, admitting that they hold speciesist attitudes, points out that those comparisons not only hurt minorities, but also turn people away from veganism.

"People see you saying shit like that and they think you're fucking crazy," Legends says, "You're playing into the white… out-of-touch, stupid vegan. "

This stereotype of vegans is challenging for vegans from marginalized groups, like Savion Jean-Pierre, a junior in SESP who has been vegan for six years.

"Veganism is synonymous with whiteness and privilege," Jean-Pierre says. "It's very rare for me to meet any people of color who also pursue a plant-based diet."

Jean-Pierre used to watch and respect vegan YouTubers like Freelee the Banana Girl and Unnatural Vegan, and had zeal to participate in the "pro-plant", "pro-veg" lifestyle. However, he now describes them as "crazy", and has completely lost his passion for the increasingly toxic community. He attributes this toxicity, by and large, to these white women creators.

"They bring this stance of 'it's all veg or you're an unethical, immoral person that doesn't know what they're doing." Jean-Pierre says.

Upon first hearing the comparisons of inhumane conditions for animals to the Holocaust or slavery, Jean-Pierre "thought it was way too much."

"I just thought it was insanely insensitive, and it was mostly from the people who were not Black people, which really turned me off," he says. Jean-Pierre also dismisses the "veganphobia" that some vegans claim to experience. "To even say that, I think, is very tone-deaf."

In a video, Happy Black Legends raises the issue of vegan influencers piggybacking off of BLM to profit socially off of supporting them, or tear the movement down to prop their own agenda up. Legends says some vegans took to their social media to post, "Yes! #BlackLivesMatter, but what about the pigs, what about the cows, and the chickens! #PigLivesMatter" and "If this was BLM, this would have more notes, this would be getting more attention." This opportunism speaks to a deep problem with vegans not allowing other kinds of advocacy to exist.

"I don't understand why there's so much passion instilled into creating ethical ways and practices of treating animals before Black folks," Jean-Pierre says. "I think that really speaks a lot to the rhetoric behind veganism, that you would value animal lives as opposed to Black lives first."

Happy Black Legends encourages people of color who wish to go vegan to get their information and support from other vegans of color in their community, as well as small vegan content creators.

"A lot of the big creators fail to make the intersectional importance of activism," Legends says. "I feel like smaller creators put a lot more care and have more interesting perspectives."

The lack of intersectionality or acknowledgement of social issues outside the vegan bubble are enormous problems in vegan and animal rights advocacy. Some vegans accuse minorities of being oppressors of animals, while they contribute to an industry that exploits indigenous and immigrant farmers and strips vitality from the land. They claim

Youtuber Unnatural Vegan

"THERE IS A RECKONING WITHIN THE VEGAN COMMUNITY ON THE BEFUDDLING RACISM THAT PERMEATES VEGAN ADVOCACY AND ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISM. THIS TOXIC ATMOSPHERE HAS PERSISTED SINCE THE BEGINNINGS OF THE VEGAN COMMUNITY ONLINE."

veganism is accessible and affordable, while the existence of food deserts make this assertion false.

"I wish we were grounded more in reality with a lot of vegan-based arguments," Jean-Pierre says. "The real world is much more dynamic than what variables you control in your vacuum environment."

All those clicks and views on wildly offensive content amount to people dismissing veganism, because they are too busy ridiculing its delivery. With real effort toward incorporating intersectional politics into veganism and animal rights advocacy, the message of humanity, kindness and environmentalism at the core of their activism would draw people in.

UNDER MY SKIN:

Mapping Black/Asian Solidarity Across My Family, My Neighborhood, and My Body

WRITTEN BY **IMANI SUMBI** // DESIGNED BY **SOLOME BEZUNEH**

I am perpetually uncomfortable with my racial identity. For me, to be mixed race is to stand always at an intersection, facing in different directions depending on the circumstance. My parents built this intersection, but they are helpless to assist me in navigating it.

I have, at different times throughout my life, called myself Black, African American, Kenyan, Pacific Islander, Guamanian, Chamorro, and any hyphenated combination of one of the first three and one of the latter three. When I was younger, I used to say absurd things like "I'm half Black and half Pacific Islander," or even "I'm half Chamorro and all Black." I say this is absurd because imagine if we used similar language to talk about actual colors. When you mix red and blue, the result isn't "half red and half blue." It's fucking purple. Maybe it's frivolous of me to place so much emphasis on the words, but it's difficult to find direction or fight for justice when you don't even have a vocabulary to name yourself or your community.

By the time I got to college, I had mostly defaulted to calling myself Black. Due to my name, my physical appearance, my upbringing in a historically Black L.A. neighborhood, and the lingering residue of America's one-drop rule, I was accustomed to being seen as a Black girl, and I walked in the world accordingly. It was like my Chamorro identity had been completely subsumed by my Blackness, and I felt further and further unmoored from it. I settled uncomfortably into this one-sided identity, feeling fragmented, feeling at once too Black and not Black enough.

Last quarter, I took a class on Black Feminist worldmaking, and the professor said something about racialization that has never left me. When we come to the conclusion that gender is a construct, she said, the possibilities become infinite. There's excitement and wonder in the ways we can define ourselves, how we can embrace the fluidities of our identities and continually shift the ways we've been taught to perform them. But when we arrive at the realization that race is a construct, we do not feel the same excitement. There is no sense that this realization opens up new possibilities for how we might identify ourselves, that it might free us from the rigid categories we were raised to occupy — that race, too, is a spectrum.

There are a few words that try to get at this middle ground — "mixed," "multiracial," "biracial," "polyethnic" — and perhaps you could say such terms are the closest we've gotten to a racial equivalent of a term like "nonbinary." But those terms do not function in nearly the same way. If a person is mixed, they are "two or more races," something plus something else. There is no whole, only parts placed side by side. On the contrary, if a person identifies as nonbinary, that does not mean they are some combination of existing socially-sanctioned genders. Nonbinary is its own whole rather than a sum of parts.

So where is my whole?

The answer to this question has begun to reveal itself in a way I didn't expect. It has not come in the form of a new word. (Although, I have since discovered some inventive terminology that I kind of like. Sam Alexander's "racially nonconforming," for instance, brilliantly borrows from queer nomenclature in an effort to queer the notion of race.) Instead, I am discovering the whole within the pieces by studying histories of solidarity between Black and Asian American communities. This is largely thanks to the courses and professors in Northwestern's Asian American Studies Program, which I have made my second academic home after Medill.

In the fall of my sophomore year, I took the

"THERE'S EXCITEMENT AND WONDER IN THE WAYS WE CAN DEFINE OURSELVES."

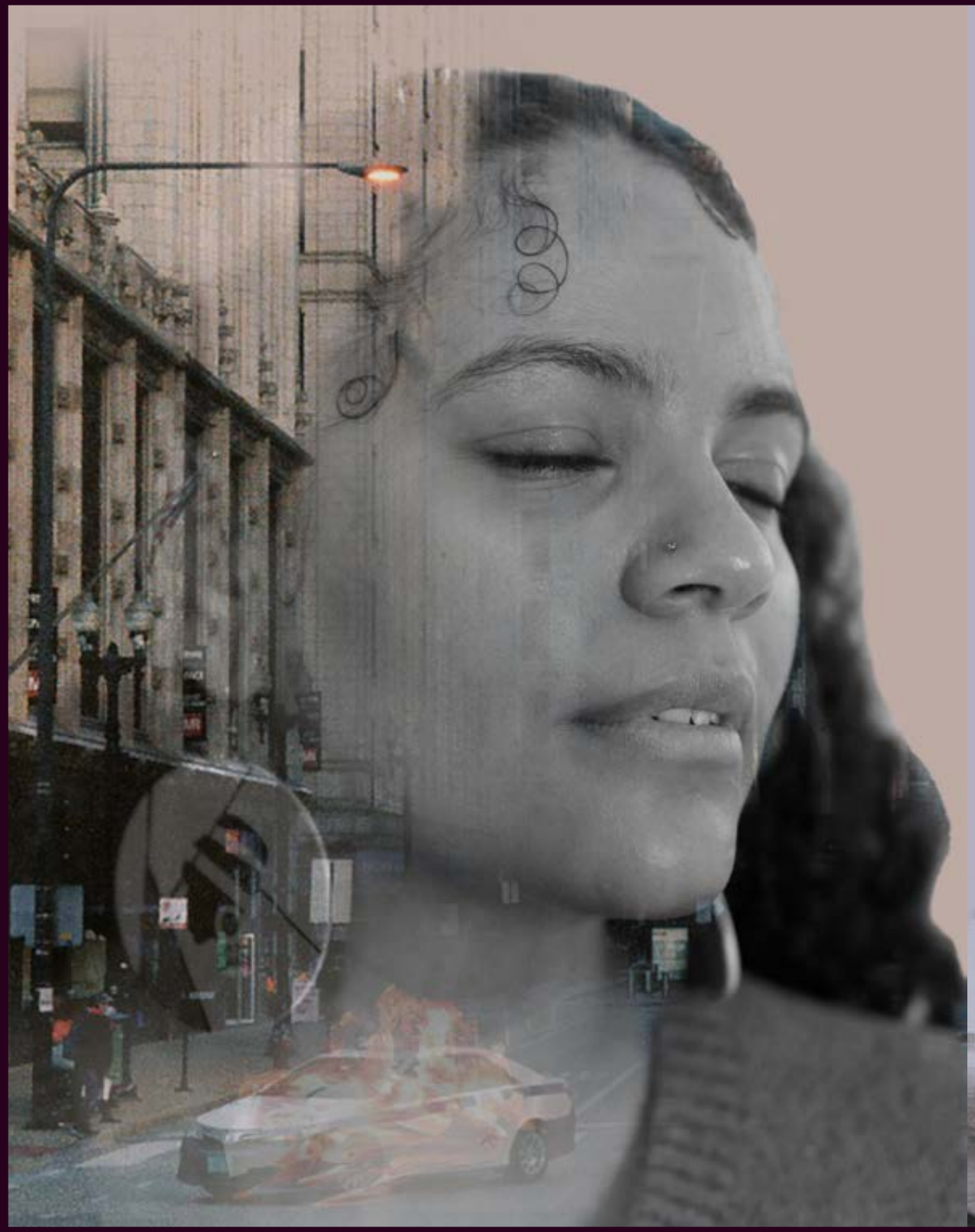
intro courses for African American Studies and Asian American Studies simultaneously with the intent of selecting one of those fields as the basis for a minor. At the same time, I had fashioned a hyper-detailed plan for my remaining three years at Northwestern that would not allow me to double minor. Once again, I felt caught between two identities. And while I thoroughly enjoyed both courses, there was something special about Introduction to Asian American Studies: it didn't make me choose.

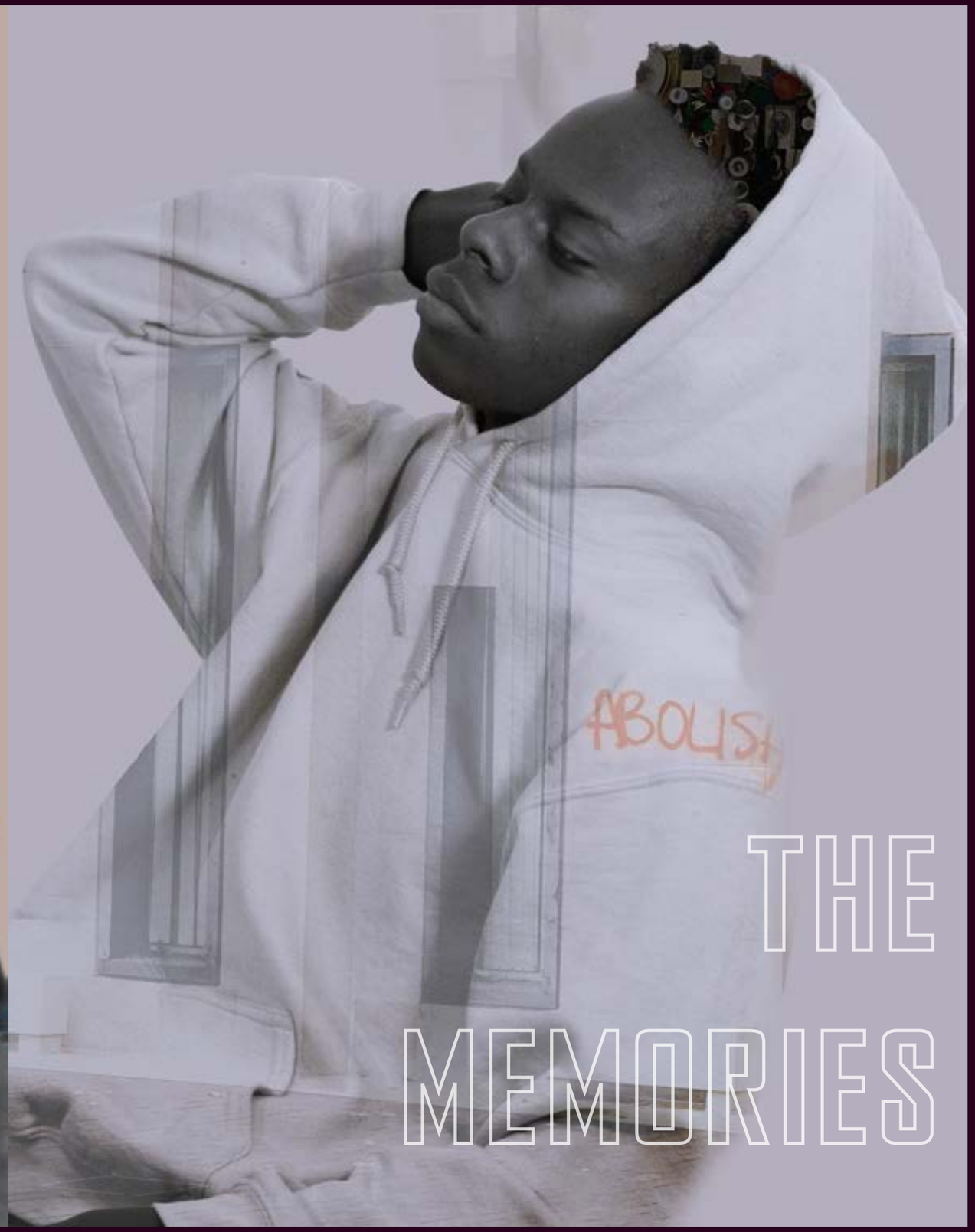
It was in that class that I first encountered historical narratives that brought interracial coalition-building to the forefront. I read about the 1968 San Francisco State University student strikes, wherein the university's various ethnic student unions united to form a Third World Liberation Front that demanded an education more suited for and accessible to their communities. I learned about Black resistance to the Vietnam War, the revolutionary partnership of James and Grace Lee Boggs, and countless Asian American activists who fought tirelessly to dismantle the model minority myth that was driving a wedge between the two communities. I even located sites of solidarity in Crenshaw, the predominantly Black neighborhood I grew up in. It was once home to Gidra, a revolutionary Asian American student publication, had been the site of Asian American protests for Black Lives, and was even described by one scholar as a model of postwar multiracial integration after World War II.

What's more, the Asian American community at Northwestern welcomed me with just as much warmth and kindness as the Black community did. I found myself in APIDA spaces where I was often the darkest-skinned person and almost always the only Black person, but no one ever looked at me funny or questioned me about my ethnicity or in any way treated me like I didn't belong. We had candid conversations about Black-Asian community relationships and how we could better promote solidarity. I was heartened by stories of other APIDA students addressing anti-Blackness in their families and standing firmly with Black lives in the wake of the George Floyd protests.

I still don't have the right word for "what" I am, no singular term that succinctly captures the whole of my racial identity. Maybe I never will. But it doesn't bother me as much as it used to. I've made peace with the namelessness because I've come to realize that what's important is not the box I check on a Census form, but the wonderfully diverse communities I surround myself with and fight alongside. The intersectionality of my identity has enabled me to embrace a politics of solidarity, of breaking barriers, of extending love and compassion to everyone around me. And that gives me more joy and validation than a label ever could.

PHOTO FROM 1968 SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY STRIKES, COURTESY OF SFSU PHOTOGRAPHIC TIMELINE PROJECT





THE MEMORIES

OF RESISTANCE

THE MEMORIES OF RESISTANCE

Photos by
Onyekaorise Chigbogwu

POETRY

GROW IN MY ROOTS AFRICA

DESIGNED BY DANIELLA ASAPOKHAI

My roots are ingrained underneath solid asphalt of Detroit
They stretch vastly, across seas and bridges, into the island of Barbados
These roots are eternally writhing,
Longing to reach their origin someday
This origin is Barbados
I grew up listening to Soca
Eating sweet plantain
Drinking rum hot-toddies when I caught a cold
When sick with nausea, I'd drink Vernors
Grooving to Detroit techno and '90s rap
Snacking on hot pickles from the ice cream truck...

My roots stretch from the island to the block
Encircled by other children who looked like me, laughed like me,
danced like me
My Black roots continued to spread; I blossomed into a Black rose
That embodied the characteristics of a morning glory
The way I could express myself completely when I returned to my
Black haven!
Attending a predominantly white high school meant I was
suffocated by the evils of tokenism during the day
Oh how I could breathe again when I returned home
to my neighborhood of Black people or attended
dance rehearsal at my studio,
a field full Black dancing roses like myself
If Black children are Black roses, then let
white spaces be parasitic dodder vines.

At college, these vines released me
My university was practically a sea of whiteness,
yet I felt more proud of my Blackness than I ever had before
Being here, at first, felt out of place
Now, I was finally speaking my truth
No longer associating m
And embrace every single thorn
Forever growing, feeling my roots spread far and beyond, intertwining with others
Without the tokenism that was ruthlessly stamped upon me throughout my
primary and secondary education
I would soon be unapologetic in my Blackness!
Mystical in my Blackness.

Aware of it
Bathing in it
Embracing it
Knowing what it means to be Black and magical
Finally learning about my history--

And not a Black history pedagogy tainted by contributionism and erasure
I mean the truth about it
Because there is endless strength in my Blackness and endless beauty
To be a black rose
Our petals proliferate
Connecting, we grow to envelop enormous fields
Fields full of Black roses
Breathtaking and bold.

–

By Cameron Simpson

My roots grow in Africa, in the bustling, dusty streets of Dakar.
I sip on piping hot mint tea and listen to my grandmother's
gossip.
My grandfathers and great-uncles nod off to sleep on the porch
outside.

My feet tread the streets of a sleepless city;
this life is the only one I've ever known.
I hear my mother chatting in her native tongue,
laughing with her siblings on the phone.

My mother was born in Senegal
in a small town called Fatick in 1975.
We are the Serer people;
we eat in large bowls together as a family,
we search the shallow ocean floor for clams to cook,
we dance and swing our arms to pounding drums
under the speckled night sky,
the moon our only audience,
our cheers and claps the only noise.
We live alongside our ancestors,
their spirit within us as we
breathe and sleep and live
like they did many years ago.

It is their ink that writes our story.

My soul, it rests in Dakar,
breathing in the only air
on this Earth that feels like my own.
In the green pastures and the baobab trees,
whose curved branches reach out towards the beating sun.
It waits patiently for me to return
to plant my feet and wiggle my toes
in the soil that created me
but did not raise me.

My mother came to New York in 1999 a free woman,
her history untouched by the sins of the American past,
the cold and thrashing sea of whiteness.
But we would not be here without the revolution and uprising
of our
fellow black kin
They turned their shackles into swords,
their tears into a flood,
their voices into a melody of freedom.

Their outrage and diligence overturned
the perverted ways of slavery.
The history of Black America is written in their blood.

My mother and I continue this fight,
because it is ours to share.
The shadows of prejudice and racism
follow us all, regardless of where
we came from.

Our skin, beautiful and rich,
is both a target and jewel.
But we as black people
will not live as a shell of ourselves,
drowning in our oppression.

We will smile, and laugh,
and dance to beating drums,
and scavenge for clams,

and keep marching for our lives,
screaming for equality.
We will bask in the sun,
and show off every shade of the diaspora.

Our hair will kink and curl,
our skin will glow in every color,
our voices will sing and rap and riff
every melody.
We will act, we will write, we will paint,
We will be doctors, and lawyers,
teachers, lovers, friends.
We will exist and share and connect
with our roots,
proudly show off our origins,
teaching black people
the beautiful different cultures
within our diaspora.

My mother and I,
we will one day return to Senegal,
to bask in our sun and lay with
our ancestors.
In the meantime,
we will discover and study
the rest of our continent,
the lands where our kin reside.
Because that is how we continue this fight:
understanding, appreciating and loving
our black siblings.

our different cultures

–

By Chiara Dorsi

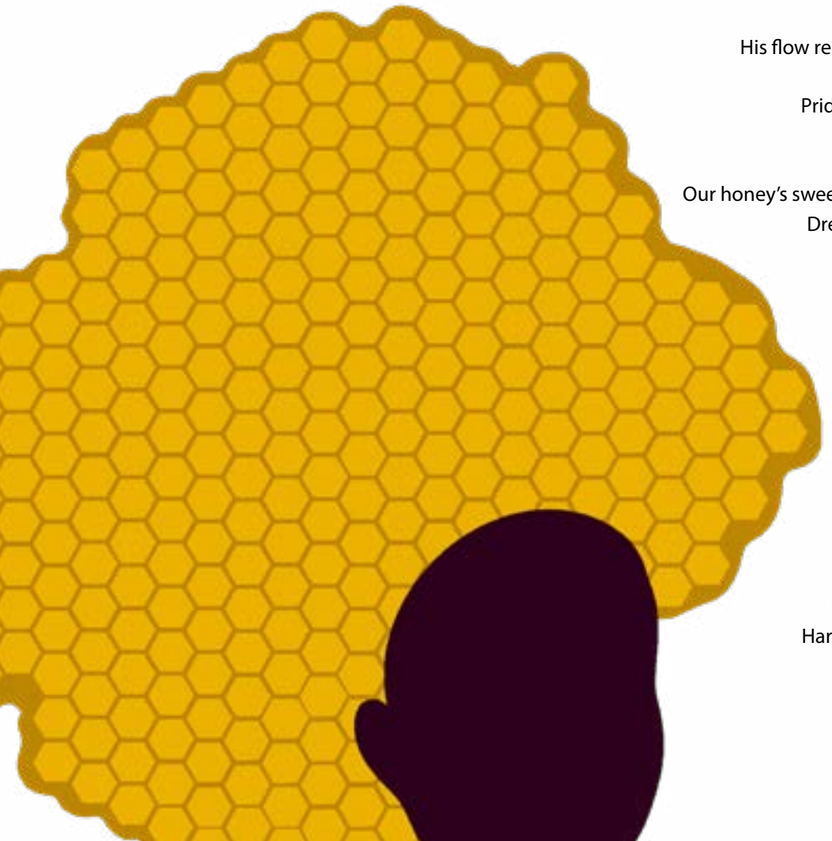
BLACK HONEY

WRITTEN BY **IRE AROGUNDADE** // DESIGNED BY **DANIELLA ASAPOKHAI**

Her fro like the stunning bliss of the soul
Holds your breath as its taking control
She's the beauty, her eyes say hello
Honeycomb holds more than you know

Curly girly singing on the dance floor
He's makin' music we're all gonna stand for
Their breaking boundaries, leavin' a future
A sweet fine delicacy

Gritty, golden, sun-kissed delicious
Harmonies from our honey's existence
I know



His flow reps the rhythm and he sets the tone
Vibin' high off the culture alone
Pride in the sky and love on the phone
Star in the scene and in the zone

Our honey's sweet not sour mixed with some power
Dressed with the rest in Sunday's best
Our honey's eminent
Gives strength
Follows through
Our joy is evident

Our honey is such a rarity
Love to see that she a queen
The wannabes, tryna be the king
Our heredity's lined with royalty
Recipe for sweet tea
Our honey's powerful sweety

Gritty, golden, sun-kissed delicious
Harmonies from our honey's existence
I know
I've got Black Honey

I've got Black honey and it tastes so sweet
Honestly, we know our hearts are glowin'
With our bodies showin'
Melanin is a blessin'
Our honey's flowin' in our veins
It tastes so good
It's understood
We've got Black Honey

ABOLITIONIST RESOURCES

EDUCATION:

Abolitionist Futures | *Study and Struggle* | *Critical Resistance* | *Hood Communist* | *Project NIA's "Defund Police" Video* | *massive reading list* compiled by *joshua briond* | *Following the Money of Mass Incarceration* | *Mariame Kaba MLK Keynote*

CALL TO ACTION:

9 Solidarity Commitments to/with Incarcerated People for 2021 | *Project NIA* | *Big Door Brigade* | *Abolition University* | *Don't Call The Police* | *SOLR* | *NU Dissenters* | *Asian Americans Advancing Justice*


SOLIDARITY
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SOLIDARITY
SOLIDARITY
BLACKBOARD
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