

**Dissertation: Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building**

**Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building**

*"A story of youth development and healing"*

by

Andrew Cory Greene, The Youth Organizing Collective and The Greene-Sin Family



H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) in political education session. June 2017. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

**Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building**

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

**ABSTRACT**

Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building

*“A story of youth development and healing”*

by

Andrew Cory Greene, The Youth Organizing Collective and Greene-Sin Family

Advisor: Luis Barrio, Ph. D.

Rooted in Liberation Psychology epistemology, this dissertation was engaged to liberate myself as well as psychology. Positing Healing Justice and Sociopolitical Development as theoretical guides, this dissertation explored a community specific approach of radical healing to develop urban youth’s abilities to sustain (build) spirit and collective hope for grassroots movement building. This dissertation asks, what are the possibilities of bringing urban youth (n=9) together who shared similar realities, dared to dream together (i.e., think tank), and turn those dreams into a Grassroot Movement Building?

The methodological praxis of this dissertation project was politically and theoretically situated to study learnings at the intersections of multiple urban youth experiences, generational knowledge, and community specific approaches to healing. A through-line finding of this dissertation project is the elicited methodological and praxis-based framing of intersectionality within youth development and healing-centered organizing. Critical ethnographic analysis of youth voice artifacts, supported by thematic coding, grounded theory analysis, and participatory methods yield six (6) key findings representing the big picture takeaways of human and healing centered youth organizing to build/sustain grassroots movement: 1) Wisdom from Ancestors and Elders to sustain youth development and healing; 2) Journeying – youth and their community learning they have the ability to heal each other and with each other; 3) Grassroots/Community

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Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing are important for healing youth in the process of building/sustaining movements (i.e., community and society development); 4) The Art of Cultivating Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing; 5) Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement as energy needed to sustain healing, organizing, and interpersonal relationships along the journey (i.e., grassroots movement building and radical healing process); and 6) Building Grassroot Movement in itself was a source of personal and communal healing that spans across generations, identities, social context as well as the visible and invisible worlds.

*Key words: Human Justice, Healing Justice, Sociopolitical Development, Healing-Centered Youth Organizing, Grassroots/Community Specific Approaches, Hope, Spirit (i.e., Ancestors), Radical Healing, Journeying, Grassroot Movement Building, & Vulnerability*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First, I want to acknowledge and thank my ancestors who are always with me/us. I must acknowledge my ancestors as a guiding force. I am a product of their dreams, struggles, gifts, mistakes. I'm there best and worst parts. Particularly - Starr and Enya, Aunty Lynn, our elder - Eddie Ellis, the children who left their parents to soon, the lost fathers, and mothers, the many dreams deferred, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, to Lil Ron, AZ, Uncle Mike, aunty Dora, and to Ella Baker, Fred Hampton, and Fannie Lou Hammer... , cousin Bea, the Betty Smith Sisters and some many more of our ancestors (spirits) that come in good way to guide and teach us/me. This dissertation is dedicated to my ancestors.

### **This is For My Ancestors (Poem)**

*This is for my  
ancestors!*

*Particularly, the  
ones who stand  
with us*

*And plan with us*

*I'm talking about  
a pedagogy of  
patience*

*They still waiting*

*For your  
transformation*

*And for us to heal*

*From all the steel  
waving*

*And generations after generations of living out the plantations*



Cory Greene during H.O.L.L.A!'s visit to the Delta Mississippi. October 2017. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Praxis.

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*This is for our ancestors!*

*Particularly the ones who kill or get killed for us*

*Sacrifice and build for us*

*I'm talking about indigeneity without no regulation*

*Culture is our education*

*Emotional communication*

*Vulnerable is what we embracing*

*This is for our ancestors!*

*Particularly, the ones who love you when they don't got to*

*But love you, because, they got you*

*This is for my ancestors!*

*Particularly, the ones who stand with us*

*And plan with us*

*I'm talking about a pedagogy of patience*

*They still waiting*

*For your transformation*

*And us to heal*

*From all the steel waving*

*And generations after generations of living out the plantations*

Secondly, there are a whole list of people, spirits, relationships, life circumstances, doubts, fears, mentors and dreams to thank and acknowledge along my journey to getting to this point of writing this dissertation. I pull from all those experiences, lessons, practices, relationships and epistemologies to sustain me along the dissertation process.

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Teresa Sin-Greene, my wife and partner in life has been my most consisted, grounding and nurturing rock of love, accountability, and support throughout this dissertation process (and many other processes -including my 8-year prison sentence). In many explicit ways, this dissertation is a story about the knowledge and power nested within relationships built on love. My relationships with Teresa have taught me much about love within a journey of relationship transformation. Our relationship has taught me the importance of journeying with someone before they have reached their full spiritual potential. And the emotional strength and praxis required in co-creating a sacred space of vulnerability for someone else to journey their path of learning themselves while getting to know you deeply. I thank Teresa for the many nights of reading dissertation drafts, and the many nights of holding it down alone because I was off somewhere else writing drafts or engaging in the scholarship process. I thank my wife for keeping me human, reminding me what neighborhood I (we) came from, and who (what people or spirit) showed up in real moments of need. I thank her for being a mother. For being a wife. For being a daughter and sister. And for being one of the best humans in the world, while still being my wife. I thank her for loving me through my mistakes and our hardships. My fat-girl, I'll continue to learn from you. Thanks for helping me/us get through this process.

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Cory is the only child between Teresa and I. Cory was 6 months in Teresa's womb when I was arrested in 2002. Cory was 7, going on 8 years old when I was released from prison. The very first fuel of motivation and inspiration for me to heal, and/or grow, and/or gain the confidence to be more open to spirit happened when my son was born. Cory's existence has been



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a guiding force in all I've done. This dissertation process is no different. Cory existence has taught me and reconnected me to the concept of *legacy*. Similarly, this dissertation is a story of legacy building- and learnings, healing and praxis that is birth from sustaining/building grassroots movement.

### **Mother Greene (My mother)**

My mother, she is the roots of my existence. With deep roots planted in the delta of Mississippi- my mother life represents the journey - from chattel slavery – Jim crow- the prison industrial complex -urban ghettos. She has lived and survived the racist south, the crack epidemic forced onto urban communities in cities such as Chicago and New York. She has severed prison time in the criminal punishment systems. All while raising me as best as she could. The wisdom that comes from the days we spent together, figuring out life, getting hit by life, as well as, how we spent those experiences with each other, they teach me so much about the world, about poverty, about relationship building, and theory development. My experiences with my mother teach me how communities are structured, what many Black women experience, and how those experiences shape how Black women survive, live, grow and rise their next generation. It is my mother's spirit to keep going on anyway - that has taught me the most in all our experiences. Life sometimes hit you! Sometimes spiritual paths are not clear or paved - but some spirits keep going on anyway. Thank you, mother, for teaching me this and so many other lessons about life. The lesson of "keep going on anyway" has been with me throughout this dissertation process. My mother is a mixture of the delta and Jackson Mississippi, South-Side Chicago and Queens, New York wisdom, struggle and journeying. I embody this history with me as I journey.

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There are so many more people and places, experiences and relationships that I know as well as others that I'm not aware of that have provided me energy, lessons, motivation and

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One Love!

Cory (Your Boy)

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**“Preface”**

**Journeying from Multiple Standpoints**

I created this dissertation research from multiple standpoints. All standpoints are integral to this dissertation project’s epistemological orientation. My positionality was grounded in a legacy of being a Black boy raised between Queens, New York and Jackson Mississippi (aunties held me down). Through the 1980-2000s, I was raised by single Black mother impacted by the crack-cocaine epidemic. It is important to underscore that I am formerly street identified and formerly incarcerated. Being of a parent, husband and heterosexual are standpoints, I bring with me in this exploratory process. I’m situated in this dissertation research as a descendant of Mississippi Delta strugglers and resisters. Lastly, I write this dissertation as a co-founder and program facilitator of the human and healing-centered youth organizing training understudy. This dissertation research is birth from a spiritual place of knowledge and healing seeking, that comes from my personal and collective journeying.

**Journeying is a Choice**

Journeying is an intentional movement towards building healthy(ier) relationship(s) with chosen, blood and spiritual family. – formerly/currently incarcerated people, ancestors, queer people, as well as Native/Indigenous people, people from the hood/block, single mothers, and so on. All my journeys are important for personal development; learning how to follow, lead and organize better. As I meet and journey with my people, I learn my people’s struggles and victories. During these journeys, I receive spiritual insights about my connections to others (Dillard et al, 2000). Journeying is a ritual to learn about myself, in relation to other people.

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Journeying is how I cultivated relationships built on trust from imperfect experiences.

Journeying offers opportunities to learn, grow and sustain mutual vulnerability with others (or in some case with many individuals) as a collective need.

The more I learn about who I am, and about my connections with others, the more possibilities of who I can be (with myself and others). How I can grow/transform emerge. Said differently, journeying is a process of knowing myself on a deeper level. An internal space of building knowledge within myself so that collective healing with others can evolve. Healing is tucked within the details of my journeys. In the “*how*” which I reflect on my emotional experiences along the journey. Wisdom attained from reflections informs my spiritual connections to self, and open up pathways of knowledge. Spiritual pathways. This wisdom is for self-healing and knowing how to heal with those I journey with.

### **Journeying to Build Grassroots Knowledges**

My ancestors, elders, and social leaders provide me with (have developed a long list of tools) grassroots knowledges - folklore, narratives, curriculum and oral (her)histories. Through art, poetry and songs; my culture has articulated critiques and dreams for a better tomorrow. My ancestors and elders’ wisdom create the empirical evidence that I tend to lean on to justify my beliefs of impact, practice and research. My peoples have shown me their wounds produced by historical, structural and interpersonal violence. They have organized social movements, homegrown rituals, and epistemologies to teach me of the importance of healing from violence. Their lessons suggest I center healing in my relational engagement of journeying. The connections that emerge through me identifying my people (and them identifying me) and

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journeying with them as a transformation process is not just ethereal experiences of being. Journeying is a how Black and Indigenous people create community change and sustain liberation. It is from this place of journeying that this dissertation is organized to build grassroots knowledge(s). In short, grassroots captures wisdom from marginal experiences and lessons learned by people and communities directly by impacted historical, structural, interpersonal violence.

Journeying is conceptualized as “*the other side*” of movement building- the relational, emotional and spiritual details of the process. This dissertation is about grassroots journeying – concentric circles of healing that open up highways, pathways, and through-ways where multiple individuals, relational dynamics and connections intersect along their journeys with each other. A practice of community organizing needed to sustain individual and collective healing. It is from this empirical back block, where spirit is the driver of knowledge production (Somé, 1997, p. 13), that I explore grassroots knowledge infused in a human and healing-centered youth organizing training as a source of healing for youth development. This dissertation builds on ancestral wisdoms, recognizing spirit to bind energies along our journeys. It is from this ontological space, and my multiple standpoints, that I own my interconnectedness to participants (i.e., energies) within the study – that opens up a theoretical and movement-based space of grassroots knowledge.





## **Chapter1**

### **Introduction: Historical, Structural and Interpersonal forms of Violence**

*Although slavery has long been a part of human history, American chattel slavery represents a case of human trauma incomparable in scope, duration and consequence to any other incidence of human enslavement. — Joy DeGruy Leary.*

The purpose of this research is to engage healing as a response to the problem of violence, which is a large concept to grapple with. Below, I sketch *Historical, Intersectional, Currently/Formerly Incarcerated, and Youth Development* analyses to shape the perimeters of violence within this dissertation. Each sketch describes layers and the interconnected webs entangled within the concept. *Historical, Intersectional, Currently/Formerly Incarcerated, and Youth Development* frames of violence are my entry-point into investigating a grassroots praxis (community specific approach) of healing.

### **(Her)Historical Analysis on Violence**

In *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*, Dr. Joy DeGury (2017) describes how African enslavement was some of the worst physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual violence in human history. Dr. Joy DeGury, says, the enactment of Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, peonage, convict leasing, domestic terrorism and lynching following emancipation of the so-called African enslavement was an extended period of violence. This is known as generational trauma. Dr. DeGury theorizes violence to be historical and structural forces that inflicts trauma over generations; producing hurt that is embodied, psychological, spiritual and social. Dr. Joy DeGruy's scholarship on violence ask an important historical question to the field of psychology: What impacts have African enslavement and its

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aftermath had on descendants of Africans? I further that question to urban youth engaged in grassroots healing-centered youth organizing.

Maria Yellow-Horse Brave-Heart (1995) analysis of Historical Trauma and Disenfranchised Grief provide a theoretical understanding of the unacknowledgement of historical violence. Historical Trauma describes a phenomenon of violence imposed by government structures onto Indigenous people. A violent force that manifest over time and across generations. Children impacted by *Historical Trauma* can still feel the suffering and impacts of parents' (fore parents) previous experiences. *Historically Unresolved Grief*, describes how Indigenous peoples' experiences of violence continues to be denied acknowledgement and/or social accountability (Brave-Heart, 1995). *Historical Trauma* and *Unresolved Grief* are by products from forcing of Indigenous youth into boarding schools; european spread of disease (smallpox) to Indigenous communities; the imprisonment and killing of tribal leaders; the theft ceremonial practice(s), and scared land(s) (Brave-Heart, 1995) that continue to reproduce violence across time.

This dissertation builds on the perspective of *Historical Trauma*, to frame violence as a historical and structural force that violence attacks indigenous people's culture. This form of violence has killed and locked away of community leaders. Further, I frame violence as banding of ceremonial practices, snatching scared land and communal ways of life. This thread of violence, in particular, is an important line of study within this examination – an empirical investigation of culture (i.e., grassroots) as a way to heal from historical and unacknowledged violence.

Maria Yellow-Horse Braveheart's theoretical discussion of *Historical Trauma* (1995) and Dr. Joy DeGury scholarship on *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* (2017), both describe violence

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as a historical force and state apparatus designed to perpetuate harm (i.e., long lasting trauma) on Black and Indigenous communities, across generations. History and structures of violence are engaged as an empirical study to understand the ways trauma and grief manifest. (Brave-Heart, 1995; DeGury, 2017). An understanding *Historical Trauma* (1995) and *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* (2017) is relevant to the experience(s) of urban youth. Honoring the historical characteristics of violence, I examine a community specific youth approach to healing.

### **Black Feminists Intersectional Analysis of Violence**

The Combahee River Collective came together in the early 1970s to re-define their politics. They were a group of Black feminists committed to struggling at the intersections of violence. They were simultaneously engaging in a practice of community organizing (Collective, 1977). Much of their work focused on ushering in a new integrating analysis that asserted studying race, class, heterosexual, and gender simultaneously as more systematic analysis of violence/oppression. (1977, p. 3). They developed an analysis and practice of intersectionality “based on the facts that the major systems of oppression [violence] are/were interlocking.”

Black radical feminist theory, epistemology, and praxis have described how violence works from many different but related formations/structures (Hill-Collins, 2000). Jamila Lyiscott’s (2014) Fugitive Action Framework articulate violence to function within a “system of oppression.” Lyiscott’s framework draws on the grassroots literatures of “Four I’s of Oppression.” Lyiscott’s argument asserts that violence [oppression] works at many intersections. Jamila Lyiscott particularly name four (4) levels:

- 1) *Ideological Oppression –collective consciousness, norms silent beliefs/ideas about historically marginalized identities*
- 2) *Institutional Oppression –the network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages for some and oppression for historical marginalized identities*
- 3) *Interpersonal Oppression –the ways ideological, institutional and internalized privilege play out within interpersonal relationships*

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4) *Internal Oppression* –the process by which members of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the socialization and inaccurate stereotype and myth of society.

Studying the intersections of social identities at multiple levels of oppression provide a more vivid depiction of violence. I assert an intersectional analysis of violence applies to the development of urban youth. I conceptualize violence intersectionally to study “*how*” violence moves across (inter)personal, social and historical relations. I understand violence as multi-scalar: ideological, global, structural, institutional, interpersonal and intra-psychic that is streaming down into the bodies and consciousness of urban youth who are strong and have been traumatized; who are the soul of this dissertation and the activists behind a movement for healing justice.

### **Violence and Interpersonal Relationships.**

*“Mostly women and trans people of color popularize the term [community accountability/transformational justice]. And kind of tied it specifically to interpersonal violence, to explain, to help people understand how interpersonal violence was really connected to structural and systematic form of violence”- Mariame Kaba –*

Historical and structural violence is deeply embedded within the dynamics of our interpersonal relationships. The negative impacts of structural violence on historically marginalized people’s interpersonal relationships is a historical experience (DeGruy, 2017). Not being able to collectively challenge violence as a collective, over time, leads many historically marginalized people to internalizing racism and sexism as their own expressions – by internalizing homophobic, and dehumanized behaviors as normal within their own existence (Griffin, 2012). This violence attacks and weakens the self, and interpersonal relationships.

In *Letters to the Black Community*, Dr. Eugena K. Griffin (2012) breakdowns internalized oppression as Black communities’ acceptance of negative messages about their own

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communities... the incorporating of negative worldviews into their own belief systems, actions, and relationships, (Griffin, 2012). Internalized oppression impacts Black communities' ability to build and sustain interpersonal relationship - bonds between parents and children, men and women, heterosexual, queer and non-sexual persons, partners, indigenous and urban, young and old, this block vs. that block, and so on are severed.

A focus on violence at the interpersonal level is important for youth development. This dissertation engages violence as an understanding that hurt people hurt people. I examine the ways violence move within and across urban youth relationships.

### **Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Analysis of Violence**

The Formerly Incarcerated, Convicted People and Families Movement (FICPFM) is a national movement comprised of over 80 grassroots community-based organizations - all led by formerly and currently incarcerated leaders engaging in community organizing, policy reform, education and healing within their local communities across the country. To name a few locations, FICPFM community spans from New York, California, Minnesota, Florida, Detroit, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Kentucky. FICPFM was created by a cadre of formerly incarcerated elders from the grassroots; Tina Reynolds, Eddie Ellis (ancestor), Deanna Hoskins, Norris Henderson, Vivian Nixon, Daryl Atkinson, Susan Burton, Kenneth Glasgow, and Dorsey Nunn.

FICPFM re-defines the criminal justice system as the *criminal punishment system* – to better describe a system built on the legacy of African slavery, a history of punishment, a system of social control, and a system which profits off the backs of Black and Indigenous labor. The criminal punishment system is framed as a system connected to other structures within society that inflict violence onto Black communities. In particular, the empirical works of the Green

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Haven Think Tank describes the criminal punishment system as a complex system of violence (Rivera, 1995). Below, I review the Green Haven Think Tanks' scholarly connection to this dissertation research.

**The Green Haven Think Tank.** In 1979, with the support of social psychologist Kenneth Clark and the Metropolitan Applied Research Center, *The Green Haven Think Tank* (men serving prison sentences (1960s-2000s) in Green Haven correctional facility) empirically investigated: 1) the racial and geographic demographics of people in New York State prison; 2) where people in New York State prison resided before prison and; 3) where do people exiting from New York state prison return following their sentence. Their research asked:

*How is it that although Blacks and Latinos together comprise less than 28% of the general population of New York State, while at the very same time, they comprise 85 % of the total state prison population, and over 75% of this total state prison population comes from New York City? How can we account for this disproportionate representation? How did this happen? What are the future implications?"*

The Green Haven Think Tank's findings are known as the *seven-neighborhood study*. The *seven-neighborhood study* is often referred to as the *Non-Traditional Approach to Social and Criminal Justice*. The *seven-neighborhood study* yielded results describing that 85% of the prison population (during the time of the study) was of African descent (i.e., Black and Latino/a) and 75% came from *seven neighborhoods* in New York City (Harlem, Crown Heights, East New York, Brownsville, South/Central Bronx, South Jamaica Queens, and Bedford-Stuyvesant). These findings constituted a deep analysis of historical and structural violence. A violence that linked the community- prison, and vice versa.

The Green Haven Think Tank's analysis of violence birth an understanding of *crime generative factors* (Rivera, 1995). Crime generative factors were the historical conditions within communities of color echoed by Maria Yellow-Horse Brave-Heart (1995) and Dr. Joy DeGury

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(2017). Crime generative factors describe historical (i.e., plantation to prison) and structural (i.e., policy, society and prison) factors that continue to enslave, and criminalize Black people; over time, and across generations. These factors operate through government strategies; the development of anti-Blackness, anti-Indigenous, anti-immigrant policies, and institutional mechanisms. Crime generative factors harms human development (Muhammad, 2010). The analysis of crime generative factors draws clear connections between the “war on drugs” and the violence urban youth experience daily in their local communities.

The Green Haven Think Tank titled linkage between community-prison the umbilical cord or the *Direct Relationship* (Ellis, p. 104, 1993). The direct relationship “*is a community specific, racial, cultural... methods of explaining and analyzing criminal justice problems found to be misleading, inaccurate and/or counterproductive*” (Rivera, 1995 p 5). The Green Haven Think Tank understanding the direct relationship derived from an historical analysis that connected the links of slavery to their present-day reality of imprisonment. The *Direct Relationship* – has a long empirical history. W.E.B DuBois studied the *Direct Relationship* in Philadelphia (1899) when he documented the sociological-ecological-historical context, structures and experiences that produced the “The Philadelphia Negro Problem.” DuBois argued the problems faced by Philadelphia's blacks was not a “Negro” problem but indeed a historical and structural problem. Similarly, I situate violence as a historical and structural problem of incarcerating the people.

The scholarship of currently/formerly incarcerated people is an empirical foundation of this dissertation research. Incarcerated analysis of violence challenges traditional notions of expertise points to the historical reality, systematic forces and community conditions. In which youth (of color) development continues to be ontologically developed by social norms (Rivera,



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1995). Formerly and incarcerated people's analysis of violence reveals how the criminal punishment system penetrates violence onto communities of colors, and across generations making obvious the need for healing as a key element of inter-generational/intersectional healing.

### Violence and Youth Development

The scars of historical, structural and interpersonal violence lay thick on the backs of the



Cory Greene being interviewed in the Netflix film 13th directed by Ava DuVernay. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

children and descendants of communities impacted by African enslavement and European settler colonization (Brave-Heart, 1995; Woodson, 1972). Generation after generation, urban youth dreams are snatched away, placed on the back burner. Youth dreams are replaced with fear, drugs/alcohol, heterosexism, interpersonal violence, firearms, sexism,

eurocentric educational institutions, unemployment, poor quality health-care, racism, and social control (i.e., lack of agency). The education, immigration, US government, criminal punishment, health-care, employment, housing/shelter, and economic systems often work in conjunction with each other to oppress and dispossess agency from urban youth (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). These violent structures surveil, incarcerate, push out, dehumanize, traumatize and deny daily opportunities of healthy youth development (Sánchez et al., 2015).

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Historical, structural, and interpersonal violence impacts on youth development, wellness and humanity is long lasting, cumulative and very painful. In addition, the unacknowledged and unaddressed (her)histories of trauma is a growing epidemic (Brave Heart, 1995). Buka and colleagues (2001) research explained, youth who are exposed to violence are generally correlated experiences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, distress, aggression, and externalizing behavior disturbances. Attacks to youth social emotional development disrupts the possibilities for decolonization (Trinidad, 2011), community organizing, and critical consciousness (Ginwright, 2016; Sánchez et al., 2015). Historical and structural violence weakens youth abilities to seek and sustain interpersonal connectedness with each other. To simply put it, violent structures negatively impact youth development, and in particular, urban youth's sense of spirit to practice healing (Sánchez et al., 2015).

### **Summary**

This dissertation examines how urban youth heal from historical, structural, interpersonal violence. This includes, healing from direct and indirect impacts of the criminal punishment system – across ideological, institutional, interpersonal and person (internal) levels. The focus of this dissertation research was to examine a community specific approach to healing-centered youth organizing with a group of urban youth as a tactic to heal from violence.

## Chapter 2

### Community Specific Approach to Healing-Centered Youth Organizing



H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) leading a Healing Justice Circle Process with youth from Bed-Stuy Brooklyn at the Center for NuLeadership office. September 2017. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

#### **Introduction: A Story of Youth Development and Healing**

The two major concepts described in this chapter are *healing* and *youth development*. In the first of half of the chapter, I share social psychological, Black feminists, and Indigenous scholarship to frame healing as a method for organizing, developing knowledges, transforming self/collective, and building relationships. In the second half of the chapter, I review the scholarly transition in youth development: one from pathology to healing-centered in youth organizing. Next, I explain my rationale for this dissertation study. This chapter closing with the dissertation research questions, and articulating a thick description of the research site.

## **Healing**

I review the theoretical and practical works of a selected few empirical examples of healing to uplift alternative/cultural/feminists' practices and ideologies. I centered frames of healing that respond to the multiple layers of violence experienced by urban youth. Below I share droplets of social psychological, Black feminist, and Indigenous standpoints of healing.

### **Social Psychology and Healing**

Historically, social psychology has been dominated by quantitative experimental methodologies. US social psychology generally marginalizes any and all application of social psychological theory. However, Decoloniality methodologies within social psychology are on the rise. Latin American social-community psychology, is highly applied and aimed at macro-level social change. Scholar-activists are common in this field. In the Global South a dual approach of applied social/community psych and liberation psychology have largely merged. In general, social psychology embodies a long tradition of documenting pain and oppression (Fine & Cross, 2016). In contrast to the documentation of violence, the documentation of “*healing*”, receives considerably less attention. As a project of empirical investigation, “*healing*” is marginalized within the social psychological apparatus of scholarship. Still in all, around the rarely looked corners of social psychological text one can find a liberation tradition (Martín-Baró, 1994), critical examples (Fals Borda, 1959) and participatory scholarship (Stoudt et al., 2016). A thread within social psychology committed to studying how oppressed communities cultivate gifts, participant in community organizing, and dream (Halkovic et al., 2013). Below, I offer up threads of *activist*, *critical*, and *street* imprints of social psychological knowledges.

### ***Activist, Critical and Street* Threads of Social Psychology**

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It's through the accumulations of many divergent wisdoms coming together: my training at the Graduate Center, CUNY Critical Social/Personality Psychology program and the Public Science Project coupled with my personal experience(s) of violence, organic engagement in local community organizing and in-depth study of the academic literature, that I uplift a thread of *Activist, Critical and Street* notions that speak to the: 1) epistemological learnings created through research activities that brings multiple standpoints of urban youth, and lived experiences of historical, structural and interpersonal violence together to problematize research agendas; 2) epistemological importance of alternative methodological stances (i.e., designs) rooted in "action/healing," and currently/formerly incarcerated scholarship that guide me as a researcher, as I journey with my co-researchers who have experienced deep pain/harm; 3) epistemological potential of centering currently/formerly incarcerated and/or grassroots and/or street-identified organizers/researchers in systematic study of their own lives as a praxis of healing and movement building.

### **Activist Participatory Action Research**

Brinton Lykes' (1997) empirical scholarship builds on top of the works of DuBois (Green & Smith, 1983) to describe Activist PAR as "passionate scholarship." Lykes theorizes activist participatory action research as:

*a more adequate [research] strategy for understanding and responding to the effects of war as experienced by children and their families... this is a process through which the researcher accompanies the participant or subject over time, participating and observing while resourcing the participants and his or her (they) community who, in turn, resource the researcher.*

In Zeller-Berkman, (2007) Act now, not only later! Taking action seriously in PAR, and Eve Tuck (2009) Re-visioning action: Participatory Action Research and Indigenous Theories of

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Change, they picked up on Lykes (1997) notion of “*action*.” Co-building participatory projects where “*action*” is woven throughout the research theory of change process. As a social psychological strategy, I assert an activist PAR posture: a willingness to journey with urban youth as they’re struggling to heal from violence.

### **Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR)**

Critical within Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) represents an epistemological shift as well as a commitment to challenging power in academic scholarship (Fine, personal communication, CPAR institute, 2014). CPAR leans on “critical race, feminist, postcolonial, queer, Indigenous and Marxist theory to organize against structures of violence and interpersonal harm (group dynamics)” (Sandwick, et al 2018). Inspired by Anzaldúa’s notion of *nos-tras*, Torre (2009) offers an intersectional frame of justice to engage participatory praxis. Torre’s intersectional frame suggests research should complicate individuals’ multiple relationships to power, group dynamics and the research. Critical PAR asks, what does it mean for our lives to be mutual-related? Or ask differently, how does our lives link altogether, particularly in the context of healing and justice? Critical PAR is guided by assumptions, theory and empirical lessons from Liberation Psychology as well as the teachings of structural intersectionality – race/gender/sexuality/immigration/class/disability/decolonizing as multiple key axes of social analysis.

In another sense, *critical* means, critical participation and leadership in the shaping of research agenda by urban youth who paid the biggest debt to historical, structural and interpersonal violence. Urban youth who have systematically and historically been excluded from the academic research process. *Critical* is another signifier that underlines the facilitative

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assumptions, I employed in my empirical processes of co-creating space to engage differences, group processes, and group dynamics as empirical scholarship. I echo Maria Elan Torre (2009), as I engage in *critical* PAR to “*keep people (youth in this case) complicated, not singular, made of many identities and things, that force people (youth and others) to struggle with living freer/better.*”

### **STREET Participatory Action Research**

This research employs a street participatory action research orientation, in which, I explicitly organized with low-income youth, active in or closely identified with the streets and criminal punishment system—to empirically document lived experiences of healing from the prison industrial complex (Payne, 2013; Payne & Bryant, 2018; Payne & Brown, 2016 & H.O.L.L.A!, 2018). Street PAR places emphasis on the research process as a source of “*action.*” In particular, Street PAR is a socio-political intervention in which the research itself is a platform to deepen the bandwidth of street-identified youth. In this dissertation, my co-researchers and I co-constructed a participatory research design in a manner that positions youth to exit the research process with additional social, political, emotional and economical capital to better navigate historical, structural and interpersonal violence. I uplift Street PAR to underlie a tradition of “*action/healing*” or activism that explicitly extends itself to local grassroots community organizing (Payne, 2013).

### **Conclusion: Healing is “*A Practical Task*”**

To investigate the accumulated and constructed meaning of healing in the face of historical, structural and interpersonal violence, I explicitly engaged in a “*practical task*” of empirical study (Lewin, 1946; Lykes, 1997 & Rivera, 1995). This study grounds local

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community as a platform for empirical study, and the benefits of bringing in multiple standpoints to research the possibility of healing. As a discipline, psychology has been limited in its ability and/or willingness to understand and build a community specific response to the long-lasting traumatic experiences of urban youth. More specifically, social psychology (and the social sciences in general) own a long history of being politically irresponsible for developing culturally relevant understandings of urban youth's complex relationship with/to violence (Montero, 2007). Or their desires to heal from violence. For this reason, during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, social scientists in Latin America felt it was necessary to look outside the social psychological discipline to develop a political psychology of liberation (Martín-Baró, Aron, & Corne, 1994; Montero, 2007) with ethical commitments to interrupt injustice (Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012, p. 173). For similar reasons, I venture outside the social psychological literature, to learn from Black feminists and Indigenous' standpoints of healing. I pull from frames of healing who are culturally specific; explicitly political; and stand in as critiques of western philosophies of healing. I make this social psychological cross-over as a strategy to politically and culturally position the concept "*healing*."

### **Black Feminist Standpoint(s) on Healing**

Black feminists, activists and practitioners have long practiced and theorized the importance of healing (Bambara, 1992; hooks, 1993; Lorde, 2017). To survive in white-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchal societies, that socializes various groups, "white men, white women, Black men" (hooks, p.2, 1993), to view Black women as expendable and even servants of the world (service providers). Black womyn have responded to this violence by developing a politic of self-care or what bell hooks (1993) call "inwards love" (p. 142). Developing a decolonized



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love of/for self, Black womyn resisted the institutionalized structures and historical reality of caring for others at the expense of their own healing/growth.

Black womyn's use of "inwards love" does not halt at individual healing. It is rooted, in collectivity, connected to the larger Black community – across time, and generations. hooks unpack this idea further:

*"Before many of us (Black womyn) can effectively sustain engagement in organized resistance struggles...we need to undergo our own process of self-recovery that can heal individual wounds that may prevent us from functioning fully"* (p. 14).

In other cases, Black womyn life is not setup with space or time for a "before." Their reality requires a "now" type of approach. Figuring out the balance between "before" and "now" feels like an important part of self-journeying. Either-way, "Inward love" is an essential political strategy that functions to fuel and sustain social movements to resist historical, structural and interpersonal violence. Particularly, violence aimed to oppress and disempower women of color.

In the anthology, *The Black Women*, Toni Cade Bambara reminds us of the famous feminist trope—the personal is political— "*Revolution begins in the self and with the self.*" In *A Burst of Light: And Other Essays*, Audre Lorde (2017), further remind us of the significance of self-care for Black women when she boldly uttered, "*caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.*" Black Feminists have engaged frames of healing that stands on foundations of truth telling, caring relationships, love for self/collective, spirituality, critical consciousness, identity development, reconciliation, and the dismantling of violence (Combahee River Collective, 1977; hooks, 1993). These frames allow space for individual and collective emotional exhaling; opportunities for socio-emotional development, and opportunities for learning ways to heal within ourselves and between ourselves (community

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members). Black feminist standpoint(s) on healing as framework is critical to this dissertation research praxis with urban youth.

### **Indigenous Systems of Healing**

Indigenous systems of healing remind us healing is spiritual (Aho, 2014). In 2004, Ramirez's essay analyzed an Indigenous spiritual practice. The essay described an American Indian Holocaust exhibit created to represent Indigenous culture from Indigenous womyn's perspectives. Ramirez described the exhibit as a ritual working to dismantle colonial representation of Indigenous women. Each night, before the activities, at the beginning of the exhibit, an Indigenous healer would bless the communal space with herbal medicine. In the essay, Mary Hyatt, an Indigenous spiritual leader, offered blessings to the four directions (north, south, east and west). Mary blessed the exhibit with sage smoke and smudging. Sage is an indigenous herb, recognized by many indigenous cultures as medicine to bring good energy and healing. Smudging – is understood to cleanse the area of negative energy. Burning this herb is understood to move individuals and groups toward peace and good vibes (Ramirez, 2004). After the burning of sage, Mary prayed for all Indigenous women to heal from a history of violence.

In the Ramirez's essay - men, women and children gathered in tears, grieving the violence that is not often acknowledged - the harm towards Indigenous womyn. Mary points to her womb and prayed for healing. Mary's gesture (i.e., pointing to her womb) engages an embodied analysis of history. Using women's body and pain, the womb in particular, to highlight a legacy of continuum (i.e., past, present and potential future) violence against Indigenous womyn/people. Further, Ramirez's scholarship underscores, "*healing that is inextricably linked*

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*to learning about Indigenous women's history and experience(s).*" Healing happens by creating the condition for harm to be shared with community, in community.

There is no healing in denial or un-acknowledgement (Aho, 2014). When historical trauma is not acknowledged, made visible and/or uplifted by the structures, systems, community and/or ourselves, then the pain has no space to heal. Indigenous systems of healing work from the assumption that trauma is passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, the trauma can live within the earth, spirits, hearts and minds of Indigenous communities. And so, Indigenous theorists and scholars link freeing of the spirit to healing. Lawson Te-Aho (2014), teaches us that, "*healing begins with a decision to seek freedom from suffering and oppression of the spirit.*" (p. 190). Spiritual healing is a journey of reliving one's pains and learning about the pains of others.

In this dissertation research, the healing of the spirit, mind, and heart is coupled with reframing historical trauma through a de-colonized lens: An Indigenous and grassroots worldview (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012). This dissertation is committed to telling complex stories that holds the pain produced by trauma side by side with stories of hopes, joys, and resistance (Aho, 2014; Ramirez, 2004). Indigenous theorists (although this varies for different Indigenous people) believe the reclamation of Indigenous worldviews, and an implanting of Indigenous worldviews into their communities' memories, and minds as imperative for healing and cultural renewal (Ramirez, 2004, p. 113). Practicing ceremonial/tribal rituals, connecting to and respecting the earth and other relatives (i.e., plants, animals, water, air) are important practices, and traditions of healing (LaDuke, 2014). This dissertation pulls on this knowledge.

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Indigenous systems of knowing as a framework is critical to my research. I accept the spiritual entities of healing that honors ancestors, rituals and the interdependence of community. This dissertation research centers spiritual healing as a process of reframing the narratives of pain, fear, and inferiority to analyses of critique, survival and dreams of hope and liberation.

### **Conclusion: Black Feminist and Indigenous Standpoints on Healing**

There are important social psychological insights embedded in the study of Black feminists and Indigenous standpoints of healing. Such as, the practicing, preserving, and remixing (updating) practices of healing that incorporate an analysis of gender (Crenshaw, 1997; Curry, 2017; Ramirez 2004; Segalo, 2015), race, and history (Muhammad, 2011), while attending to structures of class (hooks, 1993), heteronormativity (Combahee River Collective, 1977), and constant displacement (Fullilove, 2016), mass incarceration (Alexander, 2011) and settler colonialism (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

The Black feminists and Indigenous scholarship teach that the process of healing is complex, iterative, and continuous with many slants, practices, rituals, histories, and standpoints at play. The above literature on healing, have assisted me in framing this dissertation with bandwidth to hold space for the many interpretations of healing, and across levels of analysis, multiple identities, experiences, and generations. I center healing to be a political project within this dissertation's engagement.

The remaining of this chapter, I turn my attention to the second construct of this dissertation's focus. Youth development – from pathology to healing-centered youth organizing.

### **Youth Development: From Pathology to Healing-Centered Youth Organizing**

Over the last 30 years, the field of youth development has journeyed. Particularly, in regards to sociopolitical development of urban youth. This chapters reviews theoretical findings and frameworks of youth development as a strategy to contextualize the many assumptions, approaches, lessons learned, and shifts embedded within the concept This chapter is to ground the concept of youth development within a history of growth and transformation. This chapter engages readers with the most recent assumptions, ideas, and findings within the theoretical construction of youth development to uplift necessary next steps for the field’s continuous growth. Particularly, in regards to urban youth.

### **Narratives of Pathology, Deficiency and “*At-Risk*”**

In the 1970s and 1980s, academics and social service professionals were tasked with solving “*pathology*” and “*deficiency*” for youth “*at-risk*” of engaging in anti-social, unhealthy development (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 84). Youth development resources (i.e., public and private) were designated towards preventive strategies for youth pregnancy, alcoholism and violence. Nancy Reagan’s “*Just Say No*” campaign in the 1980’s, was one of the approaches.

Back then, the theoretical, empirical, and methodological construction of youth, and particularly urban youth as “*deficient*” and “*super predators*” was an interdisciplinary social science and governmental project. Psychological theories of human development informed and legitimized pathologizing of youth (Fuller, 2016). In the 1980’s, psychology’s (i.e., and many other disciplinary) objective was to develop “treatment” models of youth development to “fix” youth’s (and their families/communities) antisocial behaviors (Compas, Hinden, & Gerhardt, 1995; Patterson & McCubbin, 1987). Juvenile delinquency was used to criminalize and

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pathologize youth (Moffit, 2008). Many of these approaches were (are) individualistic in assumptions and did (does) not consider the socio-(her)historical factors of violence.

Particularly, the factors that inhibit youth development (Rivera, 1995). This line of research imposed a deficit model onto youth.

### **Critiques: It's More Than Just "Pathology"**

Pressure from community organizing grew over the years. In the early 1990s, due to long-standing organizing and advocacy, many researchers, politicians, as well as the political structure were pushed to acknowledge the conceptualizations of youth as "*pathological and deficient*" was flawed. Community and youth were not the problem. Pathology was not a viable theory for conceptualizing youth development. Pathology as a theory no longer held up empirically. At this time the field moved away from a single problem model of labeling youth as "*pathology*" in need of "*fixing*." Research theory started to see the "potential" in youth.

### **I See the Potential in You/Youth (Before I didn't)**

As the political culture and implications surrounding youth development shifted, researchers began emphasizing the importance of uplifting the gifts, capacities, and potential in every youth. Pittman and Fleming (1991) were leaders in this new articulation — conceptual bridging, and perspective shifting, giving birth to a new body of youth development literature — Positive Youth Development (PYD) — research centered on promoting youth assets by placing emphasis on character development (Park & Peterson, 2006). Positive Youth Development (PYD) has roots in developmental, and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The conceptual focus shifted to acknowledging (developing) youth skill sets and strengths. In 1993,

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Pittman and colleagues discussed the political implication for re-conceptualizing the field of youth development:

*Talking about promoting youth development versus preventing youth problems is more than a semantic shift. It is a shift that can bring with it some fundamental changes in the way programs and policies are developed, implemented, and evaluated. It is precisely because most of the strategies used to prevent substance abuse and other problems are, in fact, strategies that promote development—social skills, communication skills, self-awareness, family and community commitment—this shift is needed (p., 117).*

PYD place emphasis on fostering positive relationships. This theory position youth at the center of mutually beneficial relationships with adults, institutions and community. PYD builds approaches build youth's socio-emotional capacities ("Positive Youth Development." *Positive Youth Development* | Youth.gov. <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>). This theory is one of the most widely accepted bodies of knowledge in youth development (National Research Council, 2002). Youth programs in many social settings and institutions continue to incorporate PYD approaches to advance youth development outcomes. Positive Youth Development programs are found in after school programs and community-based organizations. Findings from randomized and nonrandomized controlled trials have shown PYD based approaches to strengthen social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and moral competencies in youth (Catalano, et al., 2004) and to influence public policy (Benson, Mannes, Pittman, & Ferber, 2004; Pittman & Cahill, 1992).

### **Critiques of Positive Youth Development**

Empowerment-Based Positive Youth Development (EMYPD) laments that healthy youth development must account for structural factor (Travis Jr. & Leech, 2014). EMPPD places youth development within a framework of community belonging. EMYPD picks up where PYD leaves off at, focusing on transformative relationships, where teachers and facilitators are more than just

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“mentors” and programs where youth develop are more than just a “program.” (Travis Jr. & Leech, 2014). Critiques of PYD has furthered the field’s possibilities for understanding youth development (Watts, & Flanagan, 2007). Watts and Flanagan (2007) have discussed PYD’s lack of ability to acknowledge or address how historical violence impact youth development—particularly of urban youth. By “*romanticizing hardship*”, these critiques have questioned whether or not PYD’s theoretical, political, and programmatic frames flattens the socio-historical context, in which youth are developed. These critiques suggest PYD’s analyses do not set the proper stage for studying youth navigating historical violence (Ginwright, 2010).

### **Sociopolitical Development**

Sociopolitical Development (in most cases) is particularly concerned with the youth’s (and their communities) ability to think and act socio-politically, particularly, on important issues/crisis within the Black community. Sociopolitical Development (SPD) explores the relationship between CC (critical consciousness, a sociopolitical version of critical thinking), spirituality (the process of internal healing from the harm produced by multi-layers structural-personal violence) (Sánchez et al. 2015 & Watts et al. 1999, p. 259) and social action (individual or collective action(s) to heal self, community and society at large) (Watt, Diemer, &Voight, 2011).

**Critical Consciousness.** Carter G Woodson’s writing (1930) on the dehumanizing effects of the United States of American education system on Black people’s psyche and social position are foundational building blocks of CC tradition. Various freedom fighters (i.e., Sojourner Truth, Malcom X and bell hooks) have contributed to make CC a useful framework in gender, cultural, religious and social psychological perspectives of liberation (Watts et. al.,



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2011). Watts, Williams, and Jagers (2011) write that, “Critical consciousness or psychological empowerment is a necessary building block for sociopolitical development” (p.259). Shawn Ginwright and Jose Cammarota (2002) describes critical consciousness (CC) as an awareness of how institutions, historical and systematic forces limit and promote the life opportunities of particular groups [individuals].

Critical consciousness’ theoretical roots can be traced back to Freire (1970). Freire’s conceptualization of “conscientizacao”— a dialectical process of thought, action, and reflection, in no particular order, and without strict borders. Watts and colleagues break Freire’s notion CC down into three distinct components: **1) *Critical Reflection*** (social analysis and moral rejection of social injustice. **2) *Political Efficacy*** (perceived capacity to effect social and political changes through activism) and **3) *Political Action*** (social justice activism). Understanding the distinctions within CC is necessary to facilitate sociopolitical development (Watts, et al. 2011). As a central feature of SPD framework, CC is associated with many positive youth development outcomes such as civic participation (Diemer & Li 2011), enhanced mental health (Zimmerman et al. 1999; Ramos-Zayas 2003), higher vocational expectations, attainment, and job earnings (Diemer and Blustein 2006; Diemer 2009; Diemer et al. 2010). Critical consciousness-based research has demonstrated empirical ability to promote healthy youth development (Godfrey, Grayman, 2014).

**“Lived” Critical Consciousness.** Scholars have articulated limitations within critical consciousness-based research and theorizing (Guishard, 2009). Recent critiques articulate CC research as lacking the ability to account for the political consciousness participants carry with them into research process (Sánchez et. al., 2015). Critiques have challenged assumptions

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embedded in SPD's stage-based-hierarchical model of development to accurately describe the nuanced processes of political awareness, development and consciousness raising (Watts et al., 2003 Sánchez et. al., 2015). Guishard, one of the co-Founder of *The PAR Collective* (now known as the *Public Science Project*), conducted participatory research on critical consciousness with parent organizers and youth researchers at Moms On the Move (MOM)—a social justice organization led by poor/working class African American and Latino parents dedicated to individual and collective struggles for quality education, and social mobility, against social reproduction, for their children in the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx (p. 103). In search of a “*much needed empirical description of lived critical consciousness*”, Guishard situated her participatory research and exploration of critical consciousness within the context of an already established parent-led community organizing movement for educational fairness, equity, safety, respect and accountability.

According to Guishard, “lived critical consciousness is:

*I undertook this work to understand what critical consciousness looks like on the ground, situated in high levels of injustice and action, to move beyond the practice of conjecturing abstract preconditions and roadblocks to developing social awareness toward providing a much-needed empirical description of lived critical consciousness. I aimed to understand the nuances of its progression, to gather a deeper understanding of the movements between stages, when perception of the inevitability of one's fate crumbles, and internal attributions of the blame for educational inequities (lack of ambition/drive, bad parenting, “cultural lessons”..., etc.) metamorphose into discontent and outrage, structural critique, despair, and a catalyzed sense of agency (P.91).*

Community organizing include activities such as issue meetings, leadership development, trainings, and public accountability and direct-action campaigns. These activities are pedagogical platforms for deeper empirical understanding of ‘*lived critical consciousness.*’ Watts and Hipolito-Delgado (2015) noted, “*Youth community organizing is a promising strategy for*

*bridging the gap between critical social analysis and sociopolitical action”* (p.847). The ‘lived’ context is sought out as a site/platform for merging SPD with youth organizing for social change.

**Social Action: Youth Community Organizing.** *“Oppressed people, whatever their level of formal education, have the ability to understand and interpret the world around them, to see the world for what it is, and move to transform it”-Ella Baker-*

Sociopolitical Development conceptualizes social action to have theoretical and practical dimensions. The first dimension, I describe is *political efficacy*; this captures perceived notions to effect social change (theoretical). The second dimension is *political action*; this captures individual or collective action(s) (practical) to effect social change (Watts et al 1999). Most of my review below will focus on the practical dimensions of social action facilitated by youth community organizing.

Youth Community Organizing (YCO) brings young people together to talk about the most pressing problems in their communities; to conduct research; find possible solutions to problems in their lives; and follow through with social action to create community-level change (Christens & Dolan, 2011). By the mid-2000s, empirical research, and scholarly writings begin making connection between youth development and YCO. (James & McGillicuddy, 2001). The Funder’s Collaborative on Youth Organizing (2010) defines YCO as

*“Youth organizing is an innovative strategy which powerfully engages young people, particularly low-income youth of color, to develop and implement community organizing skills.”*

Youth community organizing draws on PYD and community organizing tactics. Youth community organizing rests on older traditions of youth’s involvement in social movements (Christens and Dolan, 2011). A central feature of YCO is the development of youth-led/influenced social justice campaigns to combat injustice. Ben Krishner and Ginwright (2012) scholarship suggest YCO has goals situated at different levels:

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*“promoting individual members’ civic and personal development, building social and political capital in local communities, and strengthen connections to broader social justice movements (p. 289).”*

YCO is driven by the assumptions that pedagogical activities aimed at holding state powers accountable for their neglect of young people also have the ability to transform youth, and communities (Rogers, Medirtta, Shah, 2012). Youth community organizing has become a platform for youth to participate in the political processes for societal equity and transformation (Krishner and Ginwright, 2012). One example of YCO is The Sadie Nash Leadership Project, based in New York City. Founded in 2001, Sadie Nash promotes leadership and activism among young womyn. The Sadie Nash Leadership Project is designed to empower and equip young womyn as agents for change.

Numerous developmental outcomes are empirically linked to youth participation in YCO activities (Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe, & Laco, 2006). Participation in YCO provides outlets for civic engagement, community leadership, academic engagement, and psychological wellness (Krishner and Ginwright, 2012). Rogers and colleagues (2012) say YCO supports “civic learning” (p.47). Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) findings highlight the ways YCO assist youth with “*framing how power is used and misused in their lives*” (p. 700).

Youth community organizing provide youth with many options and opportunities to develop skills and capacities as organizers. Youth develop as they lead and implement political strategies, and direct-actions to pressure figures/institutions who have access to making systematic change (James, & McGillicuddy, 2001). YCOI is tied to facilitating growth and promoting youth socio-emotional development (Watts, Kirshner, Govan & Fernandez, 2018). B.R.E.A.T.H.E a NYC based collective of Black and Brown womyn and girls committed to developing scared connection. They curating scared space that allows Black and Brown girls and

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womyn to BREATHE. BREATHE is one example of YCO praxis aimed at developing urban youth's socio-emotional capacities.

**Spirituality: The Heartbeat of SPD.** Sociopolitical Development is mostly studied as a cognitive process (i.e., psychological) of engaging and changing the material world. In SPD's framing, spirituality, is situated at the heart of political development (Somé, 1999). The ability to experience movement building, and personal development on a spiritual realm is critical for socio-political development. Spirituality provides needed energy for journeying with others who experienced hurt, and are healing from violence. Questions such as: where do visions for change come from? why are some youth more courageous than others? why is fear so hard to move around? how do youth learn to dream? The visioning, courage, fear, and hope to journey within the SPD process come from where? Is it an energetic force of spirituality (Watts et al. 1999)? Having the ability to dream of a better future in the midst of on-going daily struggle is essential for youth development. Having the know "how" and/or "muscle(s)" to tap into spirit is critical for survival and healing within a socio-political praxis of engaging youth (Vizenor, 1994).

In the past, Psychology was translated to mean the soul. In ancient psychological healing traditions, soul healing was the central interest of psychological work (Duran, et al., 2008). Akbar (1991) said this long ago, "*Liberation is something that must happen to the soul of the human being, not just to our minds and bodies*" Watts and colleagues (1999) knew this as well, "*Education, critical consciousness, empowerment and liberation can take on greater meaning when in a spiritual context*" (p. 260). Black families have long relied on spiritual strategies to survive, resist, and cope with violence (Campos, 2015; Ward, 2000 & Watts et al 1999). Black-led movements (i.e., people) embody a spirit of "*we shall overcome.*" (Washington, 1991).

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“*Freedom Dreams*” and Anna Ortega-Williams notion of “*A Healed Black Future*” (Ortega-Williams, 2017) describes Black people’s historical ability to see freedom in the midst of enslavement. These “*dreams*” echo spiritual energy into future movements like #Black Lives Matter and Healing Justice Movement. These movements are examples of previous spiritual vibrations and “*dreams*.”

## **Critiques of Sociopolitical Development and Youth Community Organizing**

Critiques have targeted the theoretical clarity and inconsistencies of Critical Consciousness (Jemal, 2017). Other feedback points to the imitations CC’s to conceptual youth as intersectional (Jemal, 2017). Very limited YCO research to this point have examined the environmental, cultural, and organizational sociopolitical factors within youth development (Watts, et al., 2003). Much of the SPD research has centered participants development, isolated from ecological learning settings or connection to grassroots movements. This research has not considered the actually learning embedded in space as historical structure, involved in the development of urban youth (Rivera, 1995). The SPD literature points towards to the urgency for future empirical investigations that honor the ecological conditions, transactional experiences, cumulative and dynamic effects of life experience(s) within the sociopolitical developmental process for urban youth. More research on YCO praxis is needed to better understand how social movements’ transactional and ecological features contribute to youth development (Watts, et al., 2003). More empirical clarity is needed on how YCO group settings and cultural rituals promote SPD for youth (Krishner & Ginwright, p. 292, 2012).

Few of YCO approaches address the theoretical significance of suffering, trauma, hopelessness, and spiritual development (Ginwright, 2010). In a White paper titled “A

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Conceptual Mapping of Healing-Centered Youth Organizing: Building A Case for Healing Justice”, Urban Peace Movement (2015) said “*overwhelmingly activists and policymakers have traditionally focused on changing the structures of society without attending to the socio-emotional harm that those structures have perpetuated*” (p. 5). Such analyses from community signified a paradigm shift in YCO. These analyses assert a healing perspective to justice be must include within youth community organizing.

### Healing Justice +Youth Organizing

In the article, Healing-Centered Organizing: What Side Are You On?, Campos (2015) makes a case for the importance of youth-organizing spaces, formations, public policy, and youth development funders to center healing within their praxis.

***Social justice organizing has a long, dynamic lineage, internationally and in the United States. This country was founded on organized, colonial resistance against the British; slaves like Harriet Tubman resisted their oppressors by revolting and struggling for freedom through organizing infrastructures like the Underground Railroad; nonviolent civil resistance reached a peak in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement, Farmworker's movement, anti-war protests, and more. Healing is a major thread throughout this organizing legacy, transforming hate and fear into love and growth every time a slave fought for freedom, a Black student protested for dignity, or a farmworker organized for a fair wage.***

Campos works provides an historical analysis of intertwining healing with a sense of justice in Black -Led Movements. Campos (2015) stitched together a historical thread, tying together the roles organizing and healing has played in past social movements led by Black and Indigenous people. This work reminds us that healing and organizing are not foreign to each other, but in fact, historically connected (Gray & Turner, 1831 & Watts, et al. 1999). Healing Justice comes from this ancestry.

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Healing Justice theoretical-praxis is born from a deep Black radical queer and feminist tradition. Cara Page, the former co-coordinator of the Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective and former executive director of the Audre Lorde Project in New York City, who self-identifies as a Black Feminist Queer cultural/memory worker, expressed her wisdom in regards to the ingredients needed to sustain Healing Justice. Cara says,

*how we choose between **healing and activism**. I tried to tell them that **Healing Justice is not a spa vacation** where we recover from organizing and throw ourselves back to the grind. To me, it means a fundamental—and anti-ableist—**shift** in how we think of movement work—to think of it as a place where many pauses, **where building in healing as well as space for grief and trauma** to be held, makes **the movements more flexible and longer lasting**” (Piepzn-Samarasinha, 2016).*

Over the last eight (8) years, “Healing Justice”, has become a well-known ideological praxis in communities of color engaging grassroots organizing (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015), and empirical scholarship (Ginwright, 2016). Healing Justice braids together notions of healing and community organizing as a method for building hope to create justice within communities of color (Ginwright, 2016). Building from the foundation of Healing Justice has emerged a youth development framework many are naming Healing-Centered Youth Organizing (Campos, 2015).

**Healing-Centered Youth Organizing: A Dual Strategy.** *“The first strategy focuses on building individual and collective health, well-being, and hopefulness by combining emotional and spiritual healing and a range of wellness practices. The second focuses on organizing strategies aimed at changing public policies.” Nicole Lee*

According to Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015), violence perpetuates harm that is “*deeply traumatic, and in many cases, deeply personal..., [to the point] the impacts effects families and community members [not directly injured]*” (p. 4). This reality is exaggerated by the fact that the majority of urban youth (i.e., undocumented, formerly incarcerated or children of incarcerated parents) do not receive the support they humanly (i.e., spiritually) need to heal/develop in the first place. Nicole Lee (2015) the executive director of Urban Peace Movement—a community-



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based organization who assist urban youth in transforming the social conditions of community violence and mass incarceration in Oakland, California was convinced:

*the only way out of this cycle (i.e., historical trauma) is to develop a new model of 'Healing-Centered Youth Organizing' that can help our young people and our communities collectively heal from the shared trauma of deep racial and economic inequality. Such an approach can integrate the "inner" dimension of self-transformation with the "outer" dimension of social transformation to create outcomes that neither could achieve on its own (p. 6).*

Healing-centered youth organizing creates processes to achieve healing and justice by applying a multidimensional approach to community organizing. Grassroot spaces offer wellness approaches to help sustain youth/community (Chavez-Daiz & Lee 2015; Compas, 2015; & Ginwright, 2016).

**Grassroots Spaces and Well-Being.** The origins of “*well-being*” can be traced back to developmental science and psychology. However, youth development scholars have theorized “*well-being*” to work at multiple levels: personal, relational and community. Each level of well-being is interdependent and interrelated (Evans & Prilletsensky, 2007). Well-being is understood as a collective necessity. Grassroots spaces are critical (in some cases) to sustaining well-being for urban youth. In the context of this dissertation, Grassroot Spaces means an articulation of ideas, strategies, learned lessons, and experiences informed by formerly/incarcerated his(her)stories, and their families/communities; a framework of seeing the world led by those most directly attacked and harmed by the criminal punishment system.

Grassroots spaces lean on ancestral heritage to heal, transform and teach (Brave-Heart, 1995). These spaces learn with and from each other through political education sessions, individual and group activities which pull on ancestral knowledge to energize/sustain movement. Grassroot spaces play key roles in facilitating the healing process for urban youth by connecting

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youth to a deep sense of cultural meaning rooted in history, related to themselves, their community and liberation. Communal spaces are outlets to develop care among youth, community, and systems through ethnic, and moral reflections; and through sharing personal stories with each other. Healing-centered youth organizing suggest well-being is cultivated through five features/principles called CARMA (Ginwright, 2016 p. 25). CARMA, stand for Culture, Agency, Relationship, Meaning and Achievement.

CARMA is an example of specific ideas of well-being, clearly stated through a set of terms. Grassroots communities whose curriculum, praxis and frameworks align with the five CARMA principles allow youth to reflect on their struggles, vulnerabilities, pains, dreams and “wrong drafts” (Sadie Nash, personnel communication, 2017) in a communal space with people whose struggles are interconnected (Rivera, 1995). CARMA provides a framework to engage a pedagogy of well-being/hope (Freire, 1992). Christens and colleagues (2013) work suggest “identifying the features of settings that can achieve the delicate balance of critical awareness and hopefulness is an important direction for future research.

**Pedagogy of Hope to Sustain Well-Being (Healing).** Freire (1992) said “*dreams and utopia*” are important elements to carry on the journey of knowledge building for liberation. He continues, “*Hope is an ontological need. Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearings, and become a distortion of the ontological need.*” Freire started here, at this analytical summary, before introducing the need for “*critical hope – hope that demands an anchoring practice.*” Duncan-Andrade (2009) has built a school around the concept of “*critical hope*”. Critical hope is pedagogical method that serves as an accountability praxis for educators to embrace when sharing space with urban youth. Critical hope is a praxis to re-awakening collective dreaming

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stunted by violence. This framework assists educators-learners with facilitating pedagogical engagement(s) important for raising personal and communal transformation (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Critical hope allows space for spirit to grow (i.e., the heart of the people involved) and lead.

Critical hope teaches that It takes intentionality to build hope. The cultivation of hope is one of the most important factors to facilitate healing and justice (Ginwright, 2016). Organizing, relationship-building and co-creating the conditions and/or space necessary for shared learning (i.e., seeing each other) is nothing less than an adventure/a process to unveil the truth, dreams and utopia among urban youth (Freire, 1992). Grassroot community rituals are one mechanism for building/sustaining hope (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015).

**Grassroots Rituals Are a Dance with Spirit (Hope).** *“Rituals are a dance with spirit, the soul’s way of interacting with the other worlds, the human psyche’s opportunity to develop a relationship with the symbols of this world and the spirits of the other.”* Somé, 1999)

Rituals assist in sustaining well-being and hope/spirit. Ritual have ancient (i.e., indigenous) and contemporary (i.e., grassroots) roots. Rituals are ceremonies in which “we” (Black/Indigenous/Grassroots) call in spirit to be the driver, the overseer of our activities (Somé, 2000). Children, elders, youth and adults are all welcome to rituals. Rituals have their own unique energy(ies), spirit(s) and/or ancestor(s) driving the relationship(s), expressions and activities. People in rituals determine the elements needed to make the ritual work.

A key element of rituals are symbols. Symbols help connect the material world to the spirit world. Talking pieces and alters are symbols. Rituals requires intentions and stated purpose(s). As one of the participants said, *“you can’t fake healing.”* Rituals take the form of Indigenous prayer, folklore, religion (infused with indignity), rap ciphery, healing circling,

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poetry, drumming, dancing, radical imagination, movement building/sustaining (i.e., organizing), smudging and ceremony. All rituals aim to engage spiritual healing (Ginwright, 2016; hooks, 1993; Brave Heart, 1995). Rituals are a spiritual because “*Our souls and spirits require rituals to stay whole*” (Somé, 2000). Rituals help people see obstacles they usually cannot see, because of human limitations (Somé, 1999 & Somé, 2000). It is important to recognize what is, and is not a ritual. To participate in ceremony (i.e., ritual), is to know a whole line of ancestors are behind you (Somé, 2000).

There are many types of rituals; personal, community, maintenance, radical (Somé, 1999 & Somé, 2000). In this dissertation, I the define rituals to capture grassroots intention(s) and purpose(s) installed in the healing-centered youth organizing design of trainings, workshops activities, Human and Healing Justice pedagogy, community forums, healing circles and artistic expression to elicit emotional spontaneous. Anytime people gather, under the protection of spirit, that triggers an emotional energy aimed towards bringing them tightly together, a ritual of one type of another is in effect.

The Urban Peace Movement and Dr. Shawn Ginwright conducted semi-structured interviews along with participant observation of healing-centered organizing rituals in Oakland and Central California to understand how local community leaders/healers or “soul rebels” build/sustain hope and healing to urban youth. The rituals listed in **table 1** were observed during the 750 hours of field study (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015). Six (6) healing-centered modalities were uplifted to consider when engaging healing-centered youth organizing as a practice of rituals. The table below summarizes the connections between CARAMA ideas of well-being and rituals of healing (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015).

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Healing Modalities	Key Activities	View on System Change	Understanding of Healing and Well-being	Examples of Organizations
Transformative Organizing	Focus is on increasing the overall efficacy of youth and community organizing efforts to win social justice and systems change campaigns by integrating healing, mindfulness, contemplative practices, talking circles, etc. into the organizing model.	Systems change is brought about by the transformation of humanity in the process of bringing about social justice (mostly through confronting power and winning changes to public policies).	Well-being is the result of healthy and just social systems and relationships in organizations. Well-being also contributes to the collective power and efficacy of social movements who are working to bring about social and political change.	Urban Peace Movement, Black Organizing Project, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), Hunters Point Family, MILPA, United Playaz, Youth Justice Coalition, Forward Together
Restorative Justice	Focus is on conversations and circles that work to restore group trust and make a situation whole after a harm or conflict has occurred in a community, group, or school. May include one-on-one meetings and group circle process.	Restorative Justice is held up as an alternative to the current School Discipline System and as an alternative to the current Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems - all of which are based in models of punishment. Restorative Justice projects have been implemented by public systems in an effort to change from a system of punishment to one of reconciliation.	Well-being is a function of aggrieved parties working together to resolve conflict in humane and affirming ways.	Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY), Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), Community Works West
Contemplative Practices	Focus is on practices that provide pathways to healthy and vibrant ways to see the world. Key activities include: Mindfulness, Meditation, Positive psychology, non-violent communication and self-discovery, and Somatic practices.	Systems change comes from individuals and groups practicing and engaging in the types of change they want to see in the world, which leads to a shift in human consciousness and that shift in human consciousness lead to creating more equitable systems.	Well-being is the result of ongoing balance and awareness of our psychological, spiritual, physical practices.	Niroga Institute, East Bay Meditation Center, Mind Body Awareness Project, Mindful Schools, Challenge Day
Faith-Based Practices	Focus is on a religious faith-based devotion to social justice and key activities may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer Circles</li> <li>• Formal church congregations</li> </ul>	Change is the result of faithful action rooted in the idea that a higher authority will lead and guide individual and collective change	Well-being comes from practicing faith and devotion to a higher authority. Justice is the ultimate expression of	Homeboy Industries, California Lifelines to Healing & Oakland Community Organization (PICO)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith based teaching from conventional religious text</li> <li>• Clergy play key leadership role</li> <li>• Communal gathering and sharing stories of faith.</li> <li>• Protest and direct action</li> </ul>		faith. Often draws from Liberation Theology, etc.	
Cultural & Spiritual Practices	<p>Focus is on ancient ways of knowing that promote cultural and spiritual healing via the following key practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural rituals such as African drumming circles, dance, song.</li> <li>• Indigenous practices such as sweat lodges, elder councils, burning sage, cultural value systems</li> <li>• Healing Circles</li> </ul> <p>Honoring Ancestors</p>	Social and systemic change is the result of re-establishing and reclaiming the links to traditional culture that were systematically disrupted for people of color through the processes of mis-education, forced enslavement and colonialism.	Healing and well-being stems from consistent engagement and practicing cultural and spiritual values. A consciousness rooted in cultural values is itself healing.	CURYJ, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin, Barrios Unidos; MILPA, DetermiNation Men's Circle (Urban Peace Movement & United Roots), and Nat'l Compadres Network, Brotherhood of Elders
Urban Youth Culture & Contemporary Culture	<p>Practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hip-hop writing exercises and writing circles</li> <li>• Performance of Music, Dance, Visual Art, and Spoken Word</li> <li>• Incorporating hip-hop into social justice education or into direct action and organizing campaigns.</li> <li>• Community building cultural events</li> </ul>	<p>Hip-hop is a tool that can be used in youth and community organizing campaigns that aim to win social justice outcomes.</p> <p>Hip-hop can also be used to create well-being through the practices of sharing and self-expression and it can reach youth who may be reluctant to access traditional mental health services and systems.</p>	Well-being comes about through creativity, art, and self-expression. Well-being can also be created by using culture as a platform to bring about social justice and social change.	Beats Rhymes & Life, Youth Speaks, Turf Unity Project (United Roots & Urban Peace Movement), RYSE Center, United Playaz, BAY-Peace, Third Eye Movement

To address the erosion of hope through cultural rituals are critical in the process of social emotional change needed to feeds youth development and societal transformation. Healing rituals mentioned above focus on maintaining collective wellness and spiritual health at the personal, relational and community levels. Grassroots spaces who infuse CARMA principles are

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backed by empirical evidence, highlighting the convergence of healing and activism (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015).

### **Rationale for Further Study: A Community Specific Approach**

Empirical scholarship on grassroots contribution to urban development is limited (Rivera, 1995). There are few empirical investigations that have studied grassroots rituals such as: curriculum, organizing strategies, alongside testimonies of youth voice, artifacts, youth interviews and their praxis collectively. Not enough research to date has followed urban youth within the '*lived*' context, to develop empirically grounded understanding(s) of community specific healing strategies. More empirical study of grassroots rituals aimed at healing spirit and hope are required (Dillard et al., 2000). There is a need for further study on healing-centered youth organizing within an explicit context of grassroots movement building. The field has limited empirical knowledge of the process of healing for formerly incarcerated leaders who employ grassroots standpoints to support urban youth through a sociopolitical process of spiritual development with a focus on personal transformation within a praxis of community organizing.

There is limited research on community specific approaches (Rivera, 1995) that placed reconciliation at the center of youth development. Particularly for urban youth surviving through historical and contemporary effects of the criminal punishment system. In the case of a community specific approach to youth development, there is very limited empirical knowledge of how this approach may or may not improve youth's lives, and/or the field's understanding of healing urban youth. Little to no empirical studies have investigated a community specific approach to developing youth/community as a political right, or a response to the ways violence steals spirit needed for relationship building (i.e., journeying). Scholarship in this area has the

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potential to fill huge gaps within the academic literature (i.e., youth development), practices in service provision, and local grassroots knowledge. This dissertation aims to fill such gaps.

### **(Re)inserting Spiritual and Emotional Development**

Healing from violence, where wounds are internalized over generations and “*become difficult to see and name*” (Aho, 2014), requires a spiritual healing that re-frames violence through a de-colonized lens (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012), or in this case, a grassroots lens. Further research that investigates the socio-emotional properties of youth sociopolitical development is needed. The emotional analysis for urban youth impacted by violence. To date, very few studies have examined the socio-emotional and spiritual aspect of SPD within a ‘*lived*’ context (Watts, Kirsher, Govan & Fernaandez, 2018). There is still much to learn of the relationship between movement building, spirituality and healing. Particularly, in terms of emotional healing for urban youth.

Teaching spiritual knowledge within youth development is a pedagogical and philosophically need. My colleagues and I have urged the field of youth development to re-visit spirituality and healing within SPD frameworks, policies, programs and practices (Sánchez et. al, 2015). At this later date, I assert the importance of emotional analysis and spiritual development as a critical component for urban youth development. Especially when the winds-storms of historical, structural and interpersonal violence are constantly opening new/reopening old wounds of trauma. This dissertation advances the field of youth development by uncovering and uplifting grassroots (i.e., non-traditional) frameworks, (her)histories, experiences and praxis that inform youth, community and relationship building - at the emotional and spiritual levels, that mediates community and society transformations.



## **Research Statement**

The empirical works of formerly/currently incarcerated, Black feminist and Indigenous standpoints provide a historical and ecological perspective of the threats to youth development, as stated above. (Brave-Heart, 1995; Degury, 2017; Rivera, 1995; Hills-Collins, & 2000; Collective, 1977). This study analyzes how a grassroots community-based organization ushered urban youth through a radical healing process – of trainings, movement building, capacity building, and emotional and social support, so that they can heal from violence at multiple levels (personal, inter-personal and social). This mixed-method critical ethnographic study examines the human and healing-centered organizing experiences/praxis of (N= 9) youth participants engaged in interpersonal negotiations, youth community organizing, and sociopolitical development. Secondly, I examine how healing is theorized, practiced and sustained over time in a “*lived/live*” context of grassroots movement building.

## **Research Questions**

This dissertation research uplifts the following questions: (1) *what is the ethnographic story of developing a youth led Human to Healing Justice movement focused inwardly on healing from structural, institutional, spiritual, interpersonal violence and what is the ethnographic story of social change (i.e., healing and justice)?* (2) *What are the lessons from experiencing, engaging and reflecting on community specific rituals? and What are rituals psychological, spiritual, emotional contribution to youth development?* (3) *What are the possibilities of braiding together the tenets of hope and spirit in community specific approaches to healing-centered youth organizing?*

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A secondary aim of this study is to advance grassroots epistemology and scholarship – of the currently/formerly incarcerated people articulated by The Green Haven Think Tank and the Bedford Hills Sisters. A post-hoc exploratory, and inductive analysis that incorporates findings from other research questions will inform this effort. This analysis will focus on gaining insights into the implications of grassroots ideology for youth development program activities, pedagogy and program implementation.

### **“The Legacy”**

In this section, I lean on stories from the streets, prisons, and local currently/formerly incarcerated literatures of knowledge production to highlight the research site (and my) connections to a community specific approach to violence. I narrate a thread of grassroots history and knowledge; wisdom that journeys across years of struggles, generations, reaching people, connecting to hearts, sharpening minds, evoking emotions, hope and courage. Below, I share a glimpse of people serving prison sentences who are teaching, healing themselves and the world around them. I share, how a community specific approach to youth development has been cultivated from over 60 years of prison/community organizing (Rivera, 1995 & Watts, 2006).

### **Grassroots Community Specific Approach to Youth Development**

The same time (1980s) the “*pathology*” perspective on youth development was a dominant field of thought, policy and practice, a community specific approach to youth work emerged within the US prison system. The Green Haven Think Tank offered a *community specific approach* for combating criminal and social justice for youth impacted by violence. The Green Haven Think Tank’s analyses of *Crime Generative Factors* and *The Direct Relationship* (1979) rejected punishment or pathology as the most legitimate and/or proactive strategy for

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developing urban youth (DeGruy, 2017). They employed “*resurrection*” strategies grounded in Afro-centric and Latino/a-centric perspectives (Rivera, 1995).

During the 1970s, within the walls of New York State Correctional Facilities, while serving long prison terms (i.e., 10-25 years to Life), living within harsh prison conditions, The Green Haven Think tank organized to develop urban youth in praxis of hope. The *Liberations Study Groups* and *Resurrection Study Groups* (Burton, 2016) were developmental courses, developed and lead by people serving time in New York State prison. The *Study Groups* were design to build urban youth’s potential youth’s Warrior Spirits. Warrior Spirit describes a slice of revolutionary consciousnesses or a “*new consciousness*” (Burton, 2016). A main objective of the *Liberation* and *Resurrection Study Groups* was to develop a “*new consciousness*” in urban youth. Eddie Ellis, a community organizer of the Green Haven Think Tank and Black Panther Party, in a 2013 interview, discussed the significant of a “*new consciousness*”:

*What was significant and unique about the BPP (Black Panther Party) and other revolutionary groups during the period was that it ushered in a new consciousness that was brought into the black community. It was not an assimilationist or integrationist consciousness, but a rather a consciousness of self-determination, self-reliance, independence. This new consciousness brought a new kind of energy to the black community which ultimately led to a massive uprising of people all over this country (p. 4)*

A “*new consciousness*” signifies a shift towards a community specific approach needed to address urban youth development. Similarly, women in Bedford Hill Correctional facility created processes of healing circles to share personal stories of hurting people and being hurt by people/systems (Watts, 2006). Their works have manifested into criminal justice, educational, and housing policy change. They have assisted in shifting culture, in terms of view of women/people in prison. These leaders have ushered in a “*new*” cadre of womyn leaders within

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our community that we continue to lean on (National Council, 2020). The Bedford Hill Sisters created space of shared vulnerability rooted in socio-emotional trust.

The Green Haven Think Tank's non-traditional approach and the Bedford Hills Sisters, both bring together local community knowledge (i.e., knowledge of the oppressed) of grassroots scholarship to build critical consciousness as a practice of healing for currently/formerly incarcerated people. I lean on Green Haven Think Tank's "*resurrection*" strategies as a theoretical frame for youth development. Currently/formerly community specific approaches to youth development are taken serious in this dissertation.

**Human Justice.** The Green Haven Think Tank's community specific approach lives on, with many people, communities, and institutions. One iteration is with the Center for NuLeadership On Urban Solutions (CNUS), notion of *Human Justice*. Human Justice informs all CNUS' policy initiatives, research, community organizing, trainings and programmatic efforts. CNUS is an established tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization developed and run by formerly incarcerated community organizers. CNUS is based in Brooklyn, NY, and is nationally respected as a community based public policy, Human Justice Think Tank, advocacy and research training center. CNUS has developed a Human Justice approach to community and policy related training. CNUS is committed to shifting the paradigm for safety, accountability and justice to one from criminal justice to Human Justice (CNUS, 2012).

Eddie Ellis, one of the co-founders of CNUS shared a history of organizing with the Green Haven think Tank in the 1970s, and 1980s. Eddie was born in Harlem in 1941. In 1966, Eddie help found the first Harlem Chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP). In 1969, during the rise of Black revolutionary consciousness, Eddie was wrongfully (as he maintained until he

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transitioned) arrested like so many other community organizers. (Burton, 2016) Eddie was release from prison in the 1990s and contributed to some of the most ground breaking thinking and efforts within the criminal punishment abolition history. In 2014, Eddie transitioned from us.

*“How do we organize the heart?”* –Chino Hardin

Chino’s question gets at the most basic aspect of Human Justice. Beyond research and organizing efforts that target social policies and ideology, Human Justice is a praxis for developing new ways to be and engage as humans and/or spirit. Human Justice is a mechanism to “re-humanize” individuals and communities traumatized by the criminal punishment system. Human Justice integrates youth development across multiple intersections- particularly with a focus on “community”, “system” and “individuals”. These intersections are focus of analysis in this study.

Human Justice understands human/youth development to function within culture (i.e., communal space), and a nexus of relationships, and community engagements. It understands that individuals are influenced by community, and communities are influenced by systems/institution/empire, and systems/institution/empire are led by individuals. This frame accounts for the ways human development is molded in the interplay of community, system and individual culture/history. The resurrection study groups, Black studies programs, and Bedford Hills Sisters’ “What I want my words to do circles” (all took place in New York State Prison) teachings have journeyed to shape the development of many community-based organizations, collectives, and institutions. Including, How Our Lives Link Altogether! (H.O.L.L.A!) - the grassroots organization understudy. Human Justice is a praxis of intersectionality -across ancestors, generations, genders, sexuality, geographic localities, and movement approaches to

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sustain legacy, as well individual and collective healing. This dissertation's empirical study is situated within this long grassroots history of community specific approaches to urban youth development.

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### Research Site: How Our Lives Link Altogether! (H.O. L.L.A!)



This dissertation research took place in a community organization with real (“lived”) relationships to The Green Haven Think Tank and Bedford Hills Sisters. H.O.L.L.A! is a manifestation of radical hope from within the bar wiring fencing of Green Haven Correctional Facility and the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. H.O.L.L.A!’s healing-centered youth organizing curriculum is an example of personal, interpersonal, sociopolitical, spiritual and institutional epistemology integrated into the development of a grassroots community-based organization. H.O.L.L.A! is an established tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Brooklyn, New York. H.O.L.L.A! has been incubated at the Center for NuLeadership for the last 5 years. H.O.L.L.A!’s youth organizing training incorporates a blend of grassroots specific approaches coupled with Healing Justice processes of sociopolitical development. We engage in a praxis of *Human and Healing Justice* - blend of Human Justice and Healing Justice. We teach and facilitate political and cultural education, while connecting youth to social services resources (other) to sustain healing. *Human and Healing Justice* is an explicit move to place the radical healing process in a grassroots movement building/sustaining praxis.

Our approach to human and healing-centered youth organizing is rooted in ancestral practice and a vast range of grassroots pedagogical approaches. The intergenerational knowledge of elders is passed down through H.O.L.L.A!’s programmatic teachings, study and creation of

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media. The gamut of creation includes: film/video, person to person interviews with elders, readings from books, chapters, research/scholarship, journals, magazines, unpublished documents/manuscripts, political education and by shadowing leaders in the field as they engage in daily community organizing.

### **H.O.L.L.A!’s Theory of Change**

We have built a political curriculum within a theoretical space to facilitate a process of healing and human development for urban youth. Our theory of change sits within an ecological and intergenerational context of urban poverty, historical trauma and every day struggles of urban youth. We understand violence with root causes of history, structural and interpersonal forces that shape human and community interconnectedness. We place specific attention in creating rituals to facilitate youth, elders and community through a process of sociopolitical development, guided by ancestral wisdom.

Our theory of change aligns with a growing Healing Justice Movement (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015; & Ginwright, 2016). We understand healing as a regenerative process inclusive of the mind, and body, aimed to restore and renew individual and collective emotional and spiritual well-being (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015). Our process equips youth and communities with healing-centered analysis and practices for human development. Through sharing through music, having hard conversation, and engaging artistic expression we build a foundational basis for constructive, healthy and meaningful emotional exchanges (i.e., connection). Our process leads to unpacking of trauma, interpersonal harm, while simultaneously building power to dismantling violence. Our theory of change works to address the subsequent energy of hopelessness urban

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youth encounter. We see grassroot movement building as a platform to heal and build the dreams of urban youth and their communities. See H.O.L.L.A!’s Healing Modalities in Appendix A.



### Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks

#### Theoretical Braiding of Hope (Healing Justice) and Spirit (Sociopolitical Development)



H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C), community leaders and youth pose for a picture in the middle of the Center for NuLeadership office during H.O.L.L.A!’s 2019 Album Photo Shoot Party. May, 2019. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective Praxis.

#### Introduction: The “*Magic Sauce*”

Facilitating the development of *spirit* and *hope* is an emotional process. To sustain urban youth experiences of healing and sociopolitical development is a spiritual process. It is about journeying. It is about flowing like a river. Knowing how to travel with, hold space for, and facilitate a range of emotions, as they emerge. I pull from Healing Justice (Ginwright, 2016) and Sociopolitical Development (Watts et al. 1999) theoretical significance to frame my research activities. The major concern of this dissertation is the radical healing process for urban youth in H.O.L.L.A!’s training. I theorize *spirit*, and *hope* to be a “*magic sauce*” needed for exploring healing-centered youth development within an explicit context of grassroots movement building.

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Healing from violence produced by the criminal punishment system require a community approach – aimed at healing youth and developing their capacities to dismantle the structures causing violence in the first place.

### **Sociopolitical Development: Theoretical Framework**

Sociopolitical Development (SPD) was first outlined as a five stages process of development—beginning with the Acritical status, in which a person is “*oblivious to social inequality or views it as a reflection of the inferiority of the oppressed,*” (Watts, et al. 1999, p. 262), followed by the Adaptive stage, Pre-critical and Critical stages in which CC emerges; and finally toward the Liberation stage, in which an individual is both critically conscious and has a desire to “eliminate oppression... becom[ing] an agent in the transformation of his or her environment” (Sánchez, et al. 2015). After additional examination of SPD, the field learned more about the developmental process. Later studies suggested alternative processes of SPD development. Processes that did not follow the 5-stage model so neatly (Sánchez, et al. 2015) and other who discussed a “lived context” SPD process (Guishard, 2009).

The strengthening of urban youth’s collective critical consciousness, and identity development are healing strategies for dismantling everyday logics of “common sense” (Martín-Baró, Aron, & Corne, 1994) or what bell hooks calls, “an interlocking systems of lies.” Indeed, the elements of critical consciousness are important factors considering SPD as a useful frame of reference to study human and healing-centered youth organizing. In addition, a focus on spirituality (As stated earlier) is just as important to a roust sociopolitical development theoretical framing. In this study, I engage sociopolitical development as a theoretical guide to research youth’s experience(s), reflection and embodiment with *spirit* and *hope*.

**(Re)inserting Spirituality Back into Sociopolitical Development**

In *My Soul is a Witness: Affirming Pedagogies of the Spirit*, Dillard and colleagues (2001) open up a pedagogical paradigm of spirituality. Teaching connection to spirit is a political practice. Pedagogy on spiritual development is an important process for relationship building and engaging in rituals (Somé, 1999 & Somé, 2000). Pedagogy of the spirit is a process of connecting to the invisible, an intentional praxis to locate oneself, in order to truly/honestly see others. Spiritual grounding is beneficial for urban youth development (Somé, 1999; & Somé, 2000). (Re)inserting spirituality within SPD framework, asserts that youth development is related to ancestral knowledge (Somé, 1999; & Somé, 2000). Studying spirit as a compass for relating to relatives from indigenous/grassroot standpoints that are essential for undergoing a process of social psychological healing (hook, 1993). (Re)focusing on spirituality within SPD theoretical framework explicitly details a developmental process that centers internal healing (Sánchez, et al 2015). This dissertation studied the possibilities of healing – to travel as spirit (i.e., energy).

**(Re)inserting Socio-Emotional Healing back in Sociopolitical Development**

I slant me analysis to study socio-emotional knowledge and analysis within SPD framework. I assert that youth development is facilitated by emotional undertones. Considering all the ways vulnerability, fear and courage shape youth's ability to think and act critically is a focus of this dissertation's inquiry. Refocusing attention on socio-emotional knowledge and analysis within SPD framework explicitly details a developmental process that centers the study of internal healing (Aho (2014). The above analysis of SPD theoretical framework summarizes important components I see essential in this dissertation analysis and investigation.

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In the second half of this chapter, I describe Healing Justice theoretical relevancy to my dissertation.

### Healing Justice: Theoretical Framework

Over the last 20-30 years, Healing Justice has been practiced and articulated by many: [Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective](#), [CURYJ](#), [Fathers and Families of San Joaquin](#), [Autumn Brown](#), [Southerners On New Ground \(SONG\)](#), [Flourish Agenda](#), [Cara Page](#), [Family Matter Network](#), [Breathe: Circles for My Sistas](#), [RJOY](#), [Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective](#), [Nexus Community](#), [Christina “V” Villarreal](#), [Richael Faithful](#), [Dr. Shakti Butler -World Trust](#), [American Friends Service Committee](#), [The People’s Movement Center](#), [Dr. Joi Lewis](#), [Tanuja Jagernauth](#), [H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective](#) and many others around the nation/world.

Healing Justice aims to restore, build/sustain the hope within youth impacted by violence. The framework encompasses three core strategies for development: the radical healing process, wellness development, and collective hope building. All three strategies require a “*a practical task*” of social action (Ginwright, 2016; Ortega-Williams, 2017). In the sections below, I provide analysis of the inter-working concepts of Healing Justice: *radical healing*, *well-being* and *collective hope*. I describe their importance to this dissertation theoretical inquiry.

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### Radical Healing as a Spiritual Process

Radical Healing is a new iteration to a community specific approach (i.e., African Dagara Tradition and *Green Haven’s Resurrection Study Groups*) to address violence and healing. The process offers youth a platform to participate in personal transformation connected to social justice. Radical Healing builds on the theoretical critique that challenges patriarchy, white

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supremacy and homophobia woven into the fabric of western epistemology and foundation of youth development (Hills-Collins, 2000). Building on the theoretical works of feminists of color and indigenous systems of knowing, radical healing describes “*healing*” as a political journey (Anzaldúa, 2002; Crenshaw 1989; 1991; Collins 2000; Dance, 2002; Hooks 1981; Somé, 1999; Somé, 2000; Stevens, 2002; Ward, 1996; 2000).

In 2010, Ginwright introduced radical healing as response to violence faced by urban youth. A framework to develop youth’s spiritual-hope for a better tomorrow can exist, despite their current realities. And youth, themselves, are active creators in the betterment of that new tomorrow. Radical healing points to the process of *building hope..., and a vision to create justice in the midst of ongoing violence/oppression*” (Ginwright, 2010 p.85). p.85). Ginwright (2010), articulated a radical healing process designed to bring love, hope, and meaning into the lives of youth struggling through a matrix of violence.

Radical healing builds on Janelle Dance’s (2002) theorizing of “humane investment”, where black communities invest deeply inward in caring relationships amongst themselves. Dance’s notion of “human investment” is theoretically situated in the context of urban education. This contextualizes the complexity within teacher-student (Black) relationships, and highlights the intentions needed within individuals (teachers and students) to cultivate a community of investment. Radical healing conveys that a message that “*trauma [violence] harms individuals and communities.*” Therefore, a process is required to restore youth and community to a state of well-being. A key to sustaining well-being is interpersonal healing (Somé, 1999). This understanding of human investment is centered in this dissertation theoretical framework of radical healing. To study the “*in between*” of relational healing. H.O.L.L.A!’s youth organizing training is conceptualized as a radical healing process (i.e., spiritual process) filled with many

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learnings, and re-learnings. In this context, healing from violence is a political act of building hope (hooks, 1993).

### Collective Hope to Building Grassroot Movements

*“Why do you think or feel separate and alone when all things grow towards unity? Each life is as a drop of water in an ocean, a drop which can unite or remain separate from its ocean, but it is ever water and so part of the whole” –White Eagle –*

Previous theoretical and ethnographic scholarship has captured the processes of radical healing (Ginwright, 2010). Still in all, there is more room to look closely into the radical healing process for youth of color connected to a grassroots-based community organization, operating from community specific approach. Particularly in regards to cultivating hope to build/sustain grassroots movement. Cultivating hope, and the capacity to dream has always been at the heart of every social movement (Kelley, 2002). Grassroot movement building in itself is a spiritual process. In *Freedom Dreams* (Kelley, 2002), Robin Kelley share lessons about Black-led social movements that offered up grassroot knowledge from past. Kelley, reminds readers, that people “*experience movement(s).*” Freedom is an “*experience,*” “*a practical task*”, something to live out. Freedom, is understood in the “*how*” Black led movements’ live, die and courageously dream, as they journey.

In *Hope and Healing in Urban Education: How Urban Activist and Teachers Are Reclaiming Matters of the Heart* (2016), Ginwright suggests that collective hope is a social praxis for healing. In theorizing hope for urban youth, Ginwright considers hope as, “*a social phenomenon that should be studied through institutions, communities, networks and social settings.*” Ginwright expresses a notion of collective hope (p.22, 2016), and collective hope as a social praxis (p.25, 2016). This dissertation builds on this foundation of hope as collective-social (i.e., community) praxis. In framing hope as a collective social praxis, I theorize hope as a

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community specific approach to cultivate “spirit” for building/sustaining grassroots movement. I study hope as a theoretical lens to better understand the collective possibilities of urban youth (Ginwright, 2016). I employ hope as a theoretical guide, to consider the collective experiences, realities, and possibilities for healing multiple individual, across a range of identities, generations and intersections simultaneously. I study the possibilities of bringing together nine (n=9) urban youth who shared similar realities, and who dare to dream together (i.e., think tank), and turn those dreams into building/sustaining a grassroots movement.

### **Braiding Praxis-Based Knots Between Hope (Healing Justice) and Spirituality (SPD)**

I engage the concept intersectionality as a method, praxis and analysis to braid theoretical knots between hope (Healing Justice) and spirit (Sociopolitical Development) to conceptualize the radical healing process under study. I place emphasis on ritual experiences based in vulnerability, political education and deep self/collective reflection to enhance “new ways” of listening, relating, and journeying with self/other. The Green Haven Think Tanks and Bedford Hill Sisters’ framework of youth/community development (i.e., Human and Healing Justice) grounds this dissertation theorizing of *hope* and *spirit*. This dissertation leans on assumptions that urban youth have a political right to build movements towards collective a “we” as a form of healing. In this context, the pedagogy of *hope* and *spirit* is placed within a journey (and/or process) towards reconciliation from historical, structural and interpersonal violence. A journey of transforming the ways urban youth *dream* while simultaneously reimagining the structures which sustain the harm.

This dissertation inherits ethics, epistemology and wisdom from elders, and ancestors who intimately experienced violence, and have chosen to journey towards healing, In the African

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tradition of call and response, this study is a response to the echo of “*freedom dreams*.” (Kelley, 2002) The collective desires for healing exhibited by our elders/ancestors (i.e., past research/praxis (Rivera, 1995). This dissertation theorizes *hope* and *spirit* to mediate or “*fuel*” interconnectedness bonding (or not bonding) in grassroot movements; how youth development is facilitated by experiences of leading movements. This dissertation organizes a theoretical shift by explicitly studying the sociopolitical development within the context of human and healing-centered youth organizing.

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## Chapter 4

### Methodology and Epistemology



H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C), H.O.L.L.A! co-founders, community and youth pose for a picture with their legacy mural in the background at the Center for NuLeadership office after a long day of prepping for their album release party. Ethnographic Documentation by H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Praxis.

#### **Introduction: Epistemological Soundtrack: Liberation Psychology**

Liberation Psychology is my epistemological soundtrack. This frame grounds this dissertation methodological scholarship and ethics. Rooted in Liberation Theology (Gutierrez, 1973), Liberation Psychology is an explicit strategy to reshape psychological tools, and the uses of such tools in psychology. Liberation Psychology recognizes that violence lives within the power structure of empirical scholarship, and within the field of psychology. Liberation Psychology is political project: an empirical stance and community praxis to address structural privilege built into academic assumption of knowledge production (Stoudt, 2009 & Lewin, 1946)

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that plays out in objectivity, that challenges the academic history; positivist thoughts, and neutral stances within research (Sandwick, et al. 2018). Liberation psychology reframes who has the right to research (Appadurai, 2006). Liberation psychology is a process and praxis to dismantle the “*collective lie*” and to produce a more grassroots or community specific truth. Liberation psychology works to uncover and re-center local knowledge from the margins (hooks, 2000), as well as problematize, and ask questions to unanswered questions, and ask questions of multiplicity, that are connected to our surviving and healing, that produce new/different knowledge(s), and ways of being (Guishard, 2009).

Martín-Baró, a social psychologist by training expressed a need for the psychology to shift from what he called a “*Lack of an Adequate Epistemology*” and move toward an explicit practice of organizing, as knowledge production. Martín-Baró asserts five (5) assumptions that prevent the liberation of psychology:

*1) Positivism - scientific conceptions which hold that knowledge should be limited to positive facts, to events, and to their empirically verifiable relations; 2) “Individualism – proposes the individual as an entity with its own meaning as the final subject; 3) “Hedonism – the pursuit of pleasure with psychology scholarship as if that explain it all; 4) “Homeostatic vision – leads psychologists/psychology to distrust everything that is changing and disequilibrium, to think badly about all that represent rupture, conflict, and crisis: and 5) “Ahistorical – is perhaps the most serious assumption, scientism leads us to consider human nature as universal, and to believe, therefore, that there are no fundamental difference between say, a student at MIT, and a Nicaraguan campesino, between John Smith from Peoria, Illinois and Leonor Gonzales from Cuisnahuat, El Salvador.*

Martín-Baró, when establishing Liberation Psychology in the early 1980s shared this political analysis and epistemological wisdom with other Latin American psychologists:

*We want psychology to make a significant contribution to the history of our peoples—if, as psychologist, we wish to contribute to the social development of the countries of Latin America—we have to redesign our theoretical and practical tools, but redesign them from the standpoint of the lives of our own people: from their suffering, their aspirations, and their struggles” (Martín-Baró, & Martín-Baró, 1994, p.25)*

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Martín-Baró believed liberation psychology had to be built from the “bottom up.” From the assumptions of the people most impacted by the research design, social injustice and violence. Social science or psychology role is to be used as a tool to liberate the people.

*“we must affirm that any effort at developing a psychology that will contribute to the liberation of our people has to mean the creation of a liberation psychology; but to create a liberation psychology is not simply a theoretical task; first and fundamentally it is a practical task” (p. 25, 1994)*

Liberation psychology is my epistemology soundtrack, from this place, I ask the question: who knowledge of healing and justice have been undervalued? I ask myself, “*with whom, for whom, with what, and for is one working for* (Sánchez, 2013, unpublished works)? Said differently, I come into this research with questions such as: *research for what?* (Stoudt, & Torre, 2014). and *what role (if any) research has in bringing our collective dreams of liberation* (Tuck, 2009)?

### **Liberation Psychology: A Political Project to Liberate Psychology/The Psychologist**

Empirical investigation is not a neutral value-based enterprise (Zinn, 1997). Academic scholarship, from its inception has been constructed as a political project (Smith, 1999). As a concept, academic scholarship –theory development and methodological foundation stand on a violent history of settler colonialism (Smith, 1999). Much of the academic canon’s critical theory (Fine et al, 2001), feminist scholarship-praxis (Hill-Collins, 2000), indigenous worldviews (Smith, 1999, and community action-orientated research (Payne, 2013; Payne & Brown, 2016) are the academy’s (i.e., mostly led by scholars/researchers from marginalized communities who gained access into the academy) attempts to heal such violence.

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Liberation Psychology provides a roadmap for social scientists to flow in research-based praxis to liberate psychology. Liberatory epistemology is an empirical process which works to re-claim (liberate), and facilitate a psychology that responds to the “*urgent needs of the oppressed*” (Montero, 2007), or in this case, urban youth. I stand on Liberation Psychology as a political platform to re-organizing youth development around (Montero, 2007). Maritza Montero a Venezuelan social-political psychologist and student of Liberation Psychology, places emphasis on the required “*action*” of psychologists to liberate psychology. Montero said:

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*“The psychology of liberation is not just a discourse of words, but a discourse of actions carried out with the people. Liberation is not given, but constructed by those needing it and those impelling and facilitating it.”*

Montero’s analysis describes liberation scholarship as a politics in which the researcher is personally seeking their own liberation (or in this case healing and justice) with a “*chosen family*” (Montero, 2007). In this dissertation, I take on take on this task.

### **Epistemological Conclusion: How I Come to Liberation Psychology**

In 2012, I was three years removed from serving an eight-year prison sentence in New York State Department of Corrections. I’ve recently graduated from LaGuardia Community College, CUNY Deaf Studies Liberal Arts Associates of Arts program. Following, I received a scholarship to attend New York University Applied Psychology program. During my junior year (NYU first year of attendance), mid-way through my first semester, one day, in my research methods course, a class debate broke out, students debated back and forth on quantitative and qualitative methods. During the debate my professor interjected to tell a story about a relationship he shared with a close friend; a scholar who teaches him (a quantitative-based

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researcher) the importance of documenting the qualitative journey of people/communities as a process in applied research.

After class, I conduct an online search of the scholar mentioned in class earlier by my professor. Her name was Michelle Fine. She was/is distinguished professor at the Graduate Center, CUNY with extensive knowledge in participatory scholarship from years of engagement and theorizing of community-based research praxis. I contacted her via email. I stated who I was, how I came in contact with her work, why I wanted to connect with her, and asked, if it was possible to meet in person. She quickly responded, and agreed to meet. We met in a matter of weeks. We met in her office at the Graduate Center, CUNY. During our first meeting, I shared my personal story of incarceration, current scholarship and future aspirations. Our meeting lasted all of 20 minutes. The meeting ended with me receiving an invitation to a gathering at John Jay College, CUNY a few days later. The John Jay meeting was being organized to develop a research agenda for a community driven research project about the “gifts” formerly incarcerated students carry with them into college/university (Halkovic, et al 2013). The gathering included local community organization leaders, formerly incarcerated people, academics/scholars who study prison issues and human concerns, college students, school administrators, researchers and policy developers. I was able to attend the gathering. As the participatory research evolved, I became one of the lead co-researchers. A year later, I joined the Critical Social/Personality Psychology (CSP) doctoral program where Michelle Fine teaches and co-founded the Public Science Project.

## **Method Section**

### **Critical Ethnography**

Ethnography is the explorative, descriptive and analytical study of culture/tradition (Thomas, 1983). In addition, critical ethnography, grapples with power dynamics within and beyond the research. Ethnography with a critical slant approach research to build consciousness for social change (Thomas, 1983). I practice critical ethnography in this study of healing justice as a praxis. Critical ethnography is employed in this study as a grassroots dive into H.O.L.L.A!'s youth's perspective of violence. As a critical ethnographer, I accept my social position, relation to participants, and the power I hold within the research. I co-facilitate and work with all youth-organizers/participants-as-equals. Knowing and acknowledging my position as having implicit bias, we use the tenets of critical communication, and trust building to create opportunities to level power dynamics. I engage critical ethnography as a methodology to explore emancipatory possibilities, and the potential of building grassroots knowledge for healing. Critical ethnography was central to my exploration of grassroots rituals that facilitate healing for urban youth. As a critical ethnographer, I privilege the literature of grassroots culture, and in particular, urban youth. I situated this study as a praxis to reframe the tenants of healing from a community specific approach.

Personal and collective experience(s) serve me within this dissertation. To value urban youth truths worth analyzing is where the practice of Black feminist theory, Indigenous principles of healing and local community knowledge – from our blocks, mothers, cultures are centered as bearers of wisdom. Much wisdom was collected and absorbed from spending over 2,500 hours with youth. I've facilitated sessions, attended - political education sessions, internal

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healing circles, concerts, performances, panels, and keynotes with youth. I have engaged in personal conversations, created, collected, and analyzed youth voice artifacts. I have organized in the street/communities, shared my home, and cultural holidays with participants. I have shared lunch on NYC housing park, as well as ridden long hours on buses to Healing Justice Movement actions. We have driven in tightly packed cars/vans across the country to conferences. We have journeyed.

I have organized and co-facilitated Healing Justice Movement workshops/circles with participants all throughout New York City, and across the nation. I've experienced participants express their humanity in many different settings, and under many different emotion states. In meetings, rallies, at home with family, local community parties with peers, conference with other youth organizers, panels with other scholars/experts, workshops, Healing Justice circles, and one on one. These experiences offer me macro and micro insights of participants individual transformation, community healing praxis, and healing-centered organizing process.

### **Participatory Action Research**

Dr. Michelle Fine, Dr. Brett Stoudt, and many of the Public Science Project researchers often talk about PAR projects as “babies” or projects that derive from a PAR project. (Michelle Fine, Critical Participatory Action Research Institute, 2014). PAR “babies” as a concept is a critical reminder that knowledge, and/or histories, and/or relationships are always wrapped in dialogue with each other. The participatory research, I co-conducted in this dissertation stands on Dubois’ ethnographic praxis and community assessment process to gather data that could speak to the “*collective lie*” of violence (Du Bois, & Eaton, 1899). The participatory research praxis I engaged is in conversation with political stances of empirical processes to engage local

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community in research with various levels of participations Freire, (1970), Fals-Borda (1959) Martin Baro (1990) Lykes, (1997) Payne, 2013, and Stoudt, et al. 2014.

The dissertation is baby of many learnings, conversations, experiences from PAR conferences, Critical Participatory Action Research Institutes, and empirical projects. I lean on my personal knowledge and scholarly experience(s) with co-leading *The Gifts They Bring* (Halkovic, et al. 2013), and *The Morris Justice Project* (2015). This research is accountable to the teachings from testimonies; empirical writing; and relationships produced by *Changing Minds* (Fine, et al. 2001). This research pulls on the lessons from *The People Report* (2013) that insist scholars create research platforms for street-identified people to practice their rights to research and be recognized for their humanity. More specifically, this participatory action research is lineage of the Green Haven Think Tank. This research builds on *Community Specific Approach* (which we now call *Human and Healing Justice*) uttered by formerly incarcerated scholars. This research is led by people responding to the deep impacts of the criminal punishment system, as people who experienced incarceration first hand. Our experience of imprisonment, beyond physical incarceration, is set as an epistemology center to engage possibilities, community organizing, and relational healing. It is from these epistemological boundaries, and historical realities that “we” sketched collect commitments for our participatory research: *(a) generative community/grassroots knowledge through relationships building and personal sharing of vulnerable stories; (b) develop specific knowledge for community healing through political education, and skill sharing; (c) generate local knowledge that can fuel local community organizing and large social change; and (d) engage in a process of self-reflection, self-transformation and personal development.*



## **Participants**

All youth participants (n =9) in this dissertation live(d) in low income communities. All participants experience(s) similar marginalization due to historical, structural, interpersonal violence. Youth and young adults were between the ages of 18-27 years old. The average age 21.5 years old. 88% (n=8) self-identified racial as Black; 44% (n=4) mixed ethnically and 11% (n=1) as white. 77% (n=7) as male and 22% (n=2) womyn. 88% (n=8) sexuality as identified as straight (n=8); 11% (n=1) as LGBTQ. 88% (n=8) resided in Brooklyn, 11% (n=1) in Bronx. 66% (n=6) were directly impacted by the criminal justice punishment system. 44% (n=4) practiced community organizing prior to joining H.O.L.L.A!. 75% of those who engage in community organizing did so within the context of street organizations often labeled Gangs and “*super predators*.” Each young person was compensated a total of \$325 for participation in dissertation activities. All nine participants were recruited through How Our Lives Link Altogether! (H.O.L.L.A!) 18-month Human and Healing-Centered Youth Organizing Training. Every participant in program enrolled in the study.

**18 Month Training.** Participants engagement of human and healing centered youth organizing manifested in two (2) trainings: *The Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training* and *The Youth Organizing Collective Training*. **The Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training**, is a 6-month, stipend-based, relationship-building, political education, resource-connecting and community organizing training. *The Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training* creates a space for youth participants to do much needed internal work on themselves while building important relational ties to each other. Participants shared how the NTRLT experience was a space “*to get to know everybody*” and for us to share “*a lot of disagreements*,

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debates, and arguments” and “a huge space for a lot of us to build.” Below is **table/chart 2** a demographic breakdown of participants in the Nat Turner Training.

	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Neighborhood	Prior Experience with Community Organizing: Y/N	Justice/ System Impacted	Gender	Sexuality
Participant 1	Black	27	Brooklyn	Yes (some with street affiliations)	Yes	Male	Straight
Participant 2	Black and Honduran	25	Bronx	Yes (some with street affiliations)	Yes	Male	Straight
Participant 3	Black	18	Brooklyn	Yes (some with another youth group, focused on gender justice)	Yes	Female	Straight
Participant 4	Dominican and Haitian	19	Brooklyn	No	No*	Female	LGBTQ
Participant 5	Black and Honduran	22	Brooklyn	Yes (some with street affiliations)	Yes	Male	Straight
Participant 6	Black, Belizean and Honduras	23	Brooklyn	No	No*	Male	Straight
Participant 7	Black	18	Brooklyn	No	No*	Male	Straight
Participant 8	Black	18	Brooklyn	No	No*	Male	Straight
Participant 9	White and Polish	24	Brooklyn	No	Yes	Male	Straight
<p>* All participants with no direct criminal justice contact (i.e., RAP Sheet/record/conviction) was still raised in one of the seven (7) communities that was identified by the Green Haven Think Tanks "Seven Neighborhood Study" as low-income urban communities of color that are attacked and made vulnerable by the criminal punishment system/the prison industrial complex.</p>							

After NTRLT, participants were asked to reflect on how they seen each other grow. One cisgender young man said, “I’m able to talk about gender related issues instead of keeping quiet or a blind eye”. A cisgender sister said, “we learned to trust people”, another youth said, “I grew to love people in the group.” Others talked about collective leadership: “part of good leadership is knowing how to follow and learn.” When asked, what challenges were experienced in the NTRLT, participants said:

“trusting others”, “being tired from a long day of work”, “dealing with others in the collective leadership process”, “inconsistency in peers showing up”, “being held accountable”, “learning from the binder”, “we needed more of co-founders of H.O.L.L.A! present with us.”

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Youth expressed a notion of healing that came from relationship building amongst themselves: *“being more intentional to community”*; *“people overcoming their fears against others on their own, and wanting to work with others in the group naturally.”* The experience allowed youth a space to build *“new human muscle, muscles necessary to listen more to each other, internal and external understanding of the pain...”* Participants expressed how their experience(s) in NTRLT was healing.

**Youth Organizing Collective Training (YOC)** is a stipend based 12-month fieldwork-based community organizing, relationship building and political education training with a focus on personal transformation. A few sessions into the Youth Organizing Collective Training, Y.O.C decided to go deeper within our own healing praxis. There was much back and forth discussion about gender, and ways to deepen the analysis and experience of gender, within the leadership, transformation and healing process. One early debate covered, *why girls/womyn wear tight clothes, the influences behind it* and loud back and forth... After enough negotiation, the group felt the space could benefit from more cis sisters to balance out gender dynamics.

Two sisters (one Black and one South Asian) were added to the collective at this point. Both the sisters were structurally more connected to social, economic and political resources than the youth in the program. Because of their status, the two sisters did not receive participants' stipends from the program. These two sisters were not randomly selected. They both had prior relationships to the participants and H.O.L.L.A!. In addition, one of them and I shared the same Ph.D. program. She was also previously hired by H.O.L.L.A! to lead critical ethnographic observations. I do not use any data from person. But it should be noted, this person's analysis was critical to the development, experience, and praxis of H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice

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Movement. Rachna (the South Asian sister) was a friend from undergraduate school. In addition, she maintained interpersonal relationships with youth in the program. Rachna had been attending, volunteering, and participating in the program since *Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training*. In my analyses, I use data from Rachna although she was not present during the first 6 month and other data points across the dissertation

At the end of NTRLT one high-school aged youth participant expressed, that he “*would not be able to keep their job (at Burger King), go to college and organize with Y.O.C.*” Tylik told the group he could not continue with the process (joining the Youth Organizing Collective). He mentioned, Y.O.C could call him when there were events or to keep an eye open for other ways, he could continue to support the work. He really wanted to organize with the rest of his peers, but just could not find the time due to family responsibilities. He had to step back. In my analyses, I did not analyze any data from Tylik. Y.O.C had a total of nine (n=9) participants. Below is **table/chart 3** with the demographic breakdown of the participants enrolled in the Youth Organizing Collective Training.

**Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) Training Demographic Chart**

	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Borough/Zipcode	Prior Experience with Community Organizing: Y/N	Justice/ System Impacted	Gender	Sexuality
Participant 1	Black	27	Brooklyn / ZC	Yes (some with street affiliations)	Yes	Male	Straight
Participant 2	Black and Honduran	25	Bronx /ZC	Yes (some with street affiliations)	Yes	Male	Straight
Participant 3	Black	18	Brooklyn /ZC	Yes (some with another youth group, focused on gender justice)	Yes	Female	Straight
Participant 4	Dominican and Haitian	19	Brooklyn /ZC	No	No*	Female	LGBTQ
Participant 5	Black and Honduran	22	Brooklyn /ZC	Yes (some with street affiliations)	Yes	Male	Straight
Participant 6	Black, Belizean and Honduras	23	Brooklyn /ZC	No	No*	Male	Straight
Participant 7	Black	18	Brooklyn /ZC	No	No*	Male	Straight
Participant 8	Black	25	St. Louis, Harlem /ZC	Yes	No***	Female	Straight
Participant 9	South Asian, Indian	23	New Jersey, Brooklyn /ZC	Yes	No**	Female	Straight
Participant 10	White and Polish	24	Brooklyn /ZC	No	Yes	Male	Straight

\* All participants without direct criminal justice contact (i.e., RAP Sheet/record/conviction) were still raised in one of the seven (7) neighborhoods identified by the Green Haven Think Tanks “Seven Neighborhood Study” as low-income urban communities of color that are attacked and made vulnerable by the criminal punishment system/the prison industrial complex.

\*\* These participants joined the research activities in month seven (7) of the eighteen (18) months long process.

\*\*\* Data from this participant is omitted at the participant’s request.

At the conclusion of Y.O.C, I asked participants, how they saw each other grow as leaders. One queer youth said, “*we were able to change habits*”. One participant said, “*we started trusting in Y.O.C more*”, another youth said, “*we learned compassionate listening.*” Participants articulated a sense of journeying; that individuals within the group developed over time. Y.O.C became “*better organizers*”, and started “*learning from the healing circles.*” When asked to express what challenges were experienced in Y.O.C, participants said, “*communicating effectively thru arguments with each other*”, and “*adding new member mid-way thru the 18-month process*”. Participants spoke of “*learning how to sacrifice*” and “*all the arguments.*” Another challenge participant shared was the constant negotiation of “*personal issues outside of the group affecting collective group potential.*”

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Participants were asked to answer: in what ways have you experienced or seen healing in Y.O.C.? They reflected on healing cultivated from overcoming the tension or conflict within the group dynamics. Y.O.C said, “*Over-coming situation within the healing circle.*” We learned it is “*ok to cry as a man*”, and “*how to be vulnerable with others*”. They mentioned, “*how to apologize and make amends.*” Many of the participants expressed ownership of themselves: “*we learned about ourselves.*” Other said, “*we led more healing circles with community.*” Participants’ described healing as “*creating a family of healing.*” Others in Y.O.C articulated healing that comes from “*building the Healing Justice Movement from just nothing but chart paper.*”

### **Dissertation Instruments and Analysis**

I employ multi-methods in this dissertation, involving *critical ethnography, youth voice artifacts, mapping, participatory action research*. I pull from data gathered from youth voice artifacts, identify map, and participatory processes to understand a community specific approach to build/sustain urban youth healing within a context of grassroots movement building.

### **Mapping/Youth Voice Artifacts and Analysis**

Pulling on my multiple experiences within PAR projects (Halkovic et al., 2013; & Stoudt et al., 2016) and the works of (H.O.L.L.A!, 2018), I asked participants to produced numerous picture drawings, raps, poetry, and writings to describe their experiences of healing and justice. Over the course of the research I’ve collected and analyzed participants' creative and expressive artifacts. The Mapping/Youth Voice Artifacts came in many forms, and in different moments - engaging different sociopolitical topics and processes of youth’s development– all Mapping/Youth Voice Artifacts were crafted around participants’ experiences, struggles,

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relationships, engagements and aspirations, in regards to healing from violence. The Mapping/Youth Voice Artifacts captures the social psychosocial details within participants' journey to heal. Engaging critical ethnography, I analyze across youth political education sessions, chart papers notes, identity mapping, and drawings of healing intertwined with movement building.

### **Individual Interviews**

I focus my analysis on two individual interviews with participants. The interviews both took place in the final 12 months of the process/during the Youth Organizing Collective Training. One interview was conducted at month fourteen (14) and the second at the conclusion of the training (month 18<sup>th</sup>). Both interviews assessed participants' social psychosocial experiences and analysis of leading and developing H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice Movement.

### **Healing Justice Movement Documentary Interviews**

The bulk of interview data being analyzed derived from *Healing Justice Movement Documentary Individual Interviews*. I study nine (N=9) individual video interviews. Each of the participants were interviewed by the film director/editor for the Healing Justice Movement documentary at month 14 of the 18-month training program. The individual interviews lasted between from 30-220 minutes. The interviews captured Y.O.C's notions of healing and justice as a praxis. The individual interviews were conducted at one of Y.O.C's apartments or in a quiet room in H.O.L.L.A!'s office.

Before the interview, the film director (Falon Jones) spent 3 weeks following Y.O.C around to learn about our Healing Justice Movement. After a few weeks of relationship building,

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Y.O.C, the film editor/director, and myself designed the video interview protocol that we would use for the documentary video interview. The documentary features Y.O.C. It uplifts our analysis, organizing and personal journeys towards healing from violence. A video trailer of the documentary can be [access here](#) (H.O.L.L.A!, 2019). The full-length of H.O.L.L.A!'s healing Justice Movement documentary "We Came to Heal" was released Feb, 2020 (personal communication, 2020). These interviews capture participants' in their most explicit frame of articulating Human and Healing Justice analysis. Each participant was given space to share their analyses of their praxis to build a movement for healing. And, how they lived and shared healing with others they cared about in their communities. Next, I describe the data analysis strategy I applied to analyzing video interviews.

**Grounded Theory Approach.** I supplement grounded theory analysis with data generated while immersed in critical ethnographic observations –field-notes, youth voice artifacts (i.e., Y.O.C Logo), and participant observations. I choose not to impose the academic literature's notion of healing, instead, I privilege the theory, lived experiences, and reflective lens of the youth within the study.

Research methods training was an iterative process over 18 months. We trained each other/youth in critical ethnographic strategies including observation, field note-taking, data analysis and data transcribing. Participants were trained in qualitative methods -interview transcription and thematic analysis. Over the course of this dissertation process and youth organizing training, I trained and trained participants in research methods. We reviewed academic literature to further contextualize our data analysis and process. We discussed the importance of capturing our individual and collective experiences of organizing as method to



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document grassroots knowledge. There were add on conversations, reflections and research methods training for youth participates during months five-twelve when we collectively designed the Healing Justice Movement Youth Community Assessment Survey and Healing Justice Movement Circle Evaluation. In addition, we paid an outside research consultant to help transcribe and serve as another layer of feedback. Together, as a team, we transcribed all 9 (nine) interview. I then analyzed the data using a constructivist grounded theory approach as outlined by Charmaz, (2011).

Before transcribing the video interviews, I watched and listened to each video interview 5-7 times. I took notes as I reviewed videos. This begin my process of developing themes. After a certain point, I began to know the narratives of each participant. Almost word for word. This was my first step in exploratory data analysis (or initial coding). After confirming these interviews' theoretical premise (narratives strictly about healing and organizing) were empirically aligned with my dissertation analytical aims, I moved further in my analysis.

**Memos: *In Vivo*, Initial, Focused and Axial Codes.** From the very first video interview, I began drafting memos as a way to group participants' narratives and experience into ideas or concepts (i.e., healing). This was an on-going process until the dissertation concluded (and even after). Through this process, I identified many initial in vivo codes. As the process moved along, I compared memos developed from different video interviews against each other to see if memos were consistent. Through comparison and refinement, I synthesized the initial codes into focused codes. Once examined, sorted, synthesized, and organized, the large number of focused codes were organized into axial codes (See **table/chart 4**). I shared my invivo, initial, focused and

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axial codes with Y.O.C (and H.O.L.L.A! staff) at every level of my analysis for their feedback, clarity, and approval. This was also an on-going process.

### Final Youth Interviews (month 18<sup>th</sup>)

The final individual interview was administered during the 18th month of the training. The interview was called, *Reflections on Your Journey* (Appendix A). I conducted final interviews to learn how spirit and hope grows as praxis, emotions/feelings and pedagogy for healing and organizing. The interview captured data across three learning-based platforms: *The Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training*, *The Youth Organizing Collective Training* and *H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice Movement*. The interview asked questions that included:

- 
1. *How was your experience with this space that you co-created?*
  2. *What challenges were present in the space?*
  3. *How did you grow as a leader?*
  4. *Did you experience healing? If so, how?*
  5. *What do "relationships" mean to you?*
  6. *How do you define spirit and hope within [your program]?*

Participants were asked to reflect on the above questions across all the three learning platforms. The individual interview purpose was to capture individual level data/wisdom of each participant's entire experience in H.O.L.L.A!'s' Human and Healing-Centered Process. The interview focused on youth expressions of personal development within a context of interpersonal relationships needed to sustain grassroots movement. The interviews lasted between 45-190 minutes. I pull from seven (N=7) youth interviews. Two of the youth's audio recordings were not usable. The interviews were recorded through a voice recorder. All voice recording used for data analysis were later transcribed for analyses. Y.O.C collectively decided that a group of four -five organizers/participant would transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews were

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transcribed, Y.O.C collectively reviewed the transcribed transcriptions to make sure they were accurate with audio recording. Once the accuracy was confirmed, Y.O.C studied the transcription for further organizing and earning.

**Thematic Analysis.** Five participants (Y.O.C organizers) agreed to transcribe the final interviews. At their conclusion, I doubled check transcription against voice recording to confirm accuracy. I listen to get each participant between five and seven times. They were all accurate. I continued my analysis.

I pulled thematic knowledge from SPD and Healing Justice literatures as a guide for coding across the interviews. In addition, my analyses of participants' expression uplifted thematic analysis of spirit and hope specific to this study. After I reviewed participants' interviews, I developed codes for thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). I completed the entire process of coding themes three times. Each time, slight changes occurred to tighten themes (i.e., *A Collective "we" and Collective Hope*). There was high agreement between each iteration of coding across participants' interviews. Honoring our movement praxis, I double, triple and quadruple check the themes developed in my analysis against our grassroot movement work (i.e., videos, youth voice artifacts, PAR praxis, and scholarly literature) to check if the codes I developed were consistent with how spirit and hope was discussed in our community organizing. My thematic analysis process was iterative, informative and theoretical. During the coding process, at each iteration, I shared themes with participants for feedback and suggestions. Participants provided no feedback. They affirmed but did not ask for anything to be changed. They felt the themes reflected to "*enough degree*" their individuals and collective expressions of hope and spirit.

### Participatory Scholarship to Build Grassroots Movement

Lewin (1946), an elder of the PAR tradition discussed workshop-research as a methodological process of intentionally linking action, research and training together as a method to build knowledge (i.e., skills, community and healthy relationships (Lewin, 1946). Our research agenda was built as a consciousness development and resource gathering process, to further equip urban youth with skills and “*know how*” for survival and healing (see, e.g., Hoare, Levy, & Robinson, 1993, for a discussion of PAR within native communities (Lykes, 1997). Our methodological praxis overlapped within our praxis of *Healing Justice Movement Circle Process* (discussed below) which included, poetry/rap (artistic expression), vulnerably sharing and storytelling, knowledge sharing and theater of the oppressed activities to invite participants and co-researchers to find their purpose/liberation and connections to each other (Lykes, 1997; Tuck, 2009 & Zeller-Berkman, 2007). Identifying particular intersections of violence and healing as undertheorized/unacknowledged was an important project of intersectionality within this study. Our Healing Circle Process was a methodology to collect youth’s reflections, and opened up space for knowledge that is relevant for multiple intersections of our community (Stoudt & Torre, 2014). We engaged in a praxis of bringing many intersections of urban youth identity, histories, experiences, and communities together to generate grassroot knowledge to sustain individual healing and movement building.

Before the research, my co-researchers and I gathered. We circled. We cried. We fought. We tried to love. We put up our defenses. We loved. We became family. We co-created space to learn from each other. We laughed, argued and created many moments that made it possible to co-create a shared set of commitments we desired to sustain our relationships and methodology.

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Working within a liberatory framework, we felt it was important to commit to a practice of relationship building as part of the research process. During this dissertation, I employed a methodological strategy to capture, journey with, and to be accountable to Y.O.C's lived experience(s) (Payne, 2013).

My intention with engaging PAR was to blend methods with action and healing (Tuck, 2009; Monique, 2009 Ayala, 2009; Boudin, 1993 & Payne, 2013; Payne & Bryant, 2018). We engaged in a shared process of research that involved individual and collective reflections with other youth in New York City (NYC) about their experiences of surviving through violence (Lykes, 1997). We organized around PAR to assist in our facilitation of exploring "*who we are*" and "*who we are to each other.*" We wanted to engage the complexities of silencing, voice (Lykes, 1997), and journeying with urban youth.

**Grassroots Youth Praxis.** The praxis of urban youth is rarely seriously engaged, and/or included in citywide development of policy, law, and institutional development. The Youth Organizing Collective's movement-based research was/is committed to remedying this problem. Y.O.C knew the truth of urban youth **must** be included in any community and societal developments. With this in mind, without state/system support, Y.O.C created vulnerable spaces for themselves, and other youth to heal and learn how to heal with one another. Y.O.C conceptualized research to be the fuel to bridge organizing that move forward healing within individuals and between individuals. We committed to a process of creating opportunities for youth to heal as they facilitate grassroot movement building.

**PAR's Timeline and Development:** H.O.L.L.A!'s radical healing process began in April of 2016. Three (3) months into the 18-month training, Y.O.C participated in a 3- Day Youth-

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Activist Participatory Action Research training hosted by H.O.L.L.A! (CITE (See Appendix B). During the training, Y.O.C received training from Dr. Monique Guishard on participatory ethics. Dr. Yasser Payne trained on the history of Street PAR and PAR orientation. Community Connection for Youth CCFY), a Bronx Youth space working to reform the juvenile justice system shared research on youth led-PAR focusing on the juvenile justice system. The Public Science Project research assistant Allison Cabana trained on organizing PAR as a national tool to uplift LGBTQ issues of injustice. In addition, The Public Science Project research assistant Prakriti Hassan and Dr. Brett Stoudt shared research of a The Morris Justice Project based in the South Bronx that studies and organizes against stop and frisk practices with local community members of the south Bronx.

Group activities, food and cultural artifacts were shared. Music and personal stories weaved throughout the 3-day training. The final day of training ended in a PAR jeopardy game. Participants were divided up into jeopardy style teams. The purpose was to review, and engage in further dialogue about the topics covered in the training. The topics covered include: *(a) Intro to H.O.L.L.A! /Legacy; (b) Why Conduct Research? Research for What; (c) Youth Activists' Commitments; (d) Street PAR; (e) Ethics and PAR; (f) History of PAR; (g) Youth-led and Action; (h) PAR as a National Praxis; (i) Closing Ceremony; and (k) Party/Open Mic.*

A month after the Participatory Action Research Youth-Activist PAR training, Y.O.C co-developed their fight the power film series (See Appendix C). This film series was developed to further inform our movement-based research praxis. We opened this series up to the general public, we wanted to learn with community. The series featured *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution, ¡PALANTE, SIEMPRE PALANTE!: The Young Lords, The Last Graduation:*

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*The Rise and Fall of College Programs in Prison, and The Streets of Harlem: How Black Men in the Streets Adapt to Structural Violence.* In total, 40 local community members attended across the series.

As NTRLT came to an end, we developed more of our research agenda. In political education sessions, we unpacked our practice of healing and justice. We developed healing circle curriculum, ethics of research, and strategies for outreach. We argued and agreed on the terms of survey and evaluation construction/development. We sent out survey drafts to local community organizers, university students, PAR scholars and elders for feedback.

After 13 months of training; skilling up; strategy building; healing up (good enough); building ‘deep enough’ relationships with each other; and a close enough collective analysis. We were ready to learn from and share our lessons with other urban youth. The 13<sup>th</sup> month of the 18<sup>th</sup> month process, we launched our Healing Justice Movement as well as our movement research-based praxis to the public. We created a participatory project as a praxis to engage urban youth in a process of healing interpersonal relationships. From the lessons and analysis, we accumulated to that point, we launched a *four-phase movement-based research process* to organize and amplify youth desires to heal from historical, structural and interpersonal violence. They included: 1) *Healing Justice Movement Circles Process*; 2) *The Healing Justice Movement Youth/Community Health Assessment*; 3) *The Healing Justice Movement Circle Evaluation*; 4) *Community Healing Forums to Report-Back to Community*.

**Healing Justice Movement Circle Process.** Direct influences on our Healing Justice Movement Circle Process included wisdom we received from trainings held for us by experts within our community/the field. We received trainings from Earth Seed, Kay Pranis, RJOY,

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Piper Anderson and Dr. Shawn Ginwright. These works sit at the foundation of Y.O.C's intentions to develop a radical healing process for the community (i.e., urban youth) in NYC.

We've developed our healing circle praxis to organize urban youth in vulnerable storytelling, artistic expression, cultural ceremony, and so that relationship building can take root. The Healing Justice Movement Circle Process incorporates Hip-Hop, media, activities, interactive one-on-one and group dialogue into a healing circle process to discuss violence, the power of youth organizing. We offered three varieties of Healing Justice Movement Circles Process to engage with youth in NYC. They were: 60, 120, and 180-minute curriculums.

We conducted over 70 Healing Justice Movement Circles Processes with urban youth. Healing Circles were held across New York City Metropolitan Area and beyond. Some of the circles include: *Sadie Nash*, *Far Rockaway Task Force*, *The Allied Media Conference*, *Free Minds*, *Free People*, *Neon Arts Arches Program in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant*, *Rikers Island* and *Columbia Beyond the Bars Conference*.

In the Healing Circle Process, we administered our *Healing Justice Youth Assessment Surveys* and *Healing Justice Circle Evaluations*. The *Healing Justice Movement Youth Community Assessment/Survey* was shared with participants before the Healing Justice Circle started. The *Healing Justice Movement Circle Evaluation* was given after the closing ceremony (Assata Shakur Chant) of the circle process.

**Healing Justice Youth Community Health Assessment.** The Healing Justice Youth Community Health Assessment was developed by Y.O.C with the advice and feedback from community members and academic experts. After completing the first phase (NRLT) of the radical healing process, Y.O.C begin to examine surveys development within the academic



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literature. We studied the *Morris Justice Project* (2018) *Polling for Justice* (Fox, 2014); *What Your Issue* (Torre et, al 2018), *Community Assessment to study the Philadelphia “Negro Problem”* (Du Bois, 1898) and *The People Report* (Payne, 2013) to better understand survey construction. We began crafting our Healing Justice Movement Youth Community Assessment. Many drafts of the assessment were sent out to local community organizers, university students, PAR scholars and seniors/elders for feedback, revision and to deepen analysis. After many rounds and 10-months of dialogue, engagement on survey questions and factors development we had a survey. The final version of the assessment was nine (9) pages (See Appendix D). Our grassroots youth/community assessment was developed to assess youth of color experiences/expressions of historical, structural, and interpersonal violence. And, youth’s desires to heal. The final version included three sections/factors: 1) *If willing, please share experiences of structural and interpersonal harm*; 2) *If willing, please share desires to heal from structural and interpersonal harm*; and 3) *If willing, please share who you are?*

**Healing Justice Movement Circle Evaluation.** The Healing Justice Circle Evaluation was developed by Y.O.C with the advice and feedback from multiple tiers of community members and elders. The primary emphasis of the evaluation was to center feedback from other urban youth who experienced the Healing Circle Process. We wanted to uplift youth’s assessment of what went well and did not go well during the Circle Process. We also wanted to learn if any healing to place, and if so, in which form. Our community specific evaluation was developed to receive feedback from youth on their experiences within the Healing Circle Process. The final evaluation was one page and asked eight questions (See Appendix E). We collected and analyzed a total of 142 surveys. The first question asked the participants to rank

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their experience in the circle on a scale from one (1)- five (5). One (1) *being poor* and five (5) *being excellent*.

**Community Healing as a site for Grassroots Knowledge Building.** Y.O.C co-created a large community healing forum to bring together the 70 individual healing circles, local community, and general public for relationship building and knowledge sharing. We created many community forums, the three of focus within this dissertation data analysis are the *Let the Talents Heal: Talent Show, H.O.L.L.A! DAY & The Healing Justice Summit*. These three community forums are examples of Y.O.C participatory praxis and data collection processes to learn about healing, through process of living out healing.

*Let The Talents Heal, Talent Show.* In March, 2017, we organized and hosted [Let The](#)



H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C), H.O.L.L.A! co-founders, city-wide community and youth pose for a picture at Mullaly Park Bronx, NY. September, 2018. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective Praxis.

[Talents Heal, Talent Show](#) (See [Appendix F](#)). A city-wide talent shows for urban youth to share their talents as an expression of healing. Let the Talents Heal, Talent Show was the birth place of our Healing Justice Movement and research-praxis. We launched our *Audre Lorde Mural of Community Healing*.

This mural was a space to document community wisdom. Youth and community members were encouraged to contribute to the mural with the famous words of poet Audre Lorde written over

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the top “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare”. The mural invoked prompts such as “What are you healing from?” and “What does healing look like to you?” Responses varied from: “Healing from intimate relationships”; “Stop and Frisk”; “inner doubt” other said “emotional abuse”; “healing is about learning yourself; “rape culture”; “existential crisis” and “Patriarchy.” Attendees of the talent show age range covered between 7-80 years old. About seventy-five (N=75) community members attended the community healing forum.

**H.O.L.L.A! DAY! 2017.** In August 2017, we held our 6<sup>th</sup> annual H.O.L.L. A! Day!, a



H.O.L.L.A!’s youth organizers engaging a community member to share on the Audre Lorde Community Healing Mural at H.O.L.L.A!’s Let the Talents Heal: Talent Show in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. March, 2017. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Praxis

city-wide event held in a Bronx city park, complete with food, face-painting 3 on 3 basketball tournament and other activities (See Appendix G). The day is meant to heal through celebrating our legacy and bring

communities of color together in peace and love. More than 250 people attended and several contributed to the mural of community healing.

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*Healing Justice Summit.* On September 15-16 2017, at Columbia University School of



H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) lead a community discussion on Human and Healing Justice at the first ever Healing Justice Summit. September, 2017. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective Praxis.

Social Work, with The Center for Justice, The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solution, and Flourish Agenda we organized the first-ever 2-Day Healing Justice Summit ([Day 1 full video](#)). The summit included keynote addresses from Dr. Shawn Ginwright, leading national expert on Radical Healing, Healing Justice, African American youth, youth activism, and youth development; and

a Y.O.C organizer. We extended invitations to all those who participated in the 70 healing circles, and partners from the San Francisco Bay Area. Various workshops, breakout sessions, performances and screening took root across the two days. Over 150 community members, academic scholars, youth service providers, and youth organizers attended the 2 days summit (See Appendix H).

**Participatory Data Analysis Process.** We collectively analyzed the Healing Justice Movement youth assessment and circle evaluations. The entire data collection, entry, analysis



H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) in political education session conducting participatory data analysis and coding. November 2017. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

and coding process was iterative, participatory, and long. ([H.O.L.L.A!, 2017](#)).

We began by collectively reading, studying and examining the hard copy assessments and evaluations as a group (Stoudt & Torre, 2014). During the early

readings of participants' assessment and evaluation responses, we used google

form to upload and store participant responses. Next, we created blank table chart on google spreadsheet with each question from the survey/assessment and evaluation. For each question, participants' responses were placed in their own separate line within the spreadsheet. After all individual responses were uploaded within the spreadsheet, we printed out four (4) copies of the entire spreadsheet with data responses. We then split Y.O.C into four groups of two (one group had an extra (3) person). Each group received a copy of all the individual responses to each question on both the assessments and evaluation. Each group reviewed and cut out all individual responses within the data table chart. After cutting all the individual responses out, each group began coding the responses. After each group finished coding, we came together for group

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presentations. Each group presented their codes/theme and individual response under each code/theme to the other three groups. Each group explained the rationale for coding the way they did. Once a group was finished presenting, the other three groups went in circle asking questions, sharing comments, jotting down notes and making connection(s) between their own themes/codes. This process was iterative. Some of the codes that were uplifted were: *Critical consciousness / Emotional knowledge, Critical Feedback, Connection/Community/Collectively, Safe Space/Vulnerability (See Appendix for more details).*

Each group experienced this process for each question on both assessment and evaluation. During group dialogues and group work codes/themes were identified. The group discussions opened up space to understand and analyze themes in regards to individual response(s) as a collective. In some cases, the collective could not agree to place some responses under one theme. In those cases, we all agreed the response represented more than one theme. Critical Consciousness (CC) was coded for many different types of responses. At first, blanketly coded responses as CC. As we coded along, we began to realize that CC had sub codes; In this case, we created a CC emotional code and CC political ideology code. In this case, we place the response under two or three themes. In most cases, we collectively agreed to code under one code. We conducted this entire process for each response under each question twice before we agreed on our final coding (See APPENDICES I & J) (Stoudt & Torre, 2014). After many rounds of dialogue, a collective coding scheme was developed and agreed upon for all assessment and evaluation responses.

**Dissertation Research Procedure**

Early in 2015, our organization organized a staff meeting for us to discuss my dissertation research. I explained the nature of my research purposes and procedures. After a few rounds of questioning and responding, staff and youth all agreed to participate in the research. My relational capital assisted me in sharing a dissertation proposal that was well received. Institutional review board approval was required, and attained, to authorize our data collection procedures involving human subjects before survey administration. Data for this study was collected in service of a community specific approach to youth development. This initiative was designed for urban youth impacted by historical, structural and interpersonal violence. I conducted self-reported surveys. Every youth who participated signed and completed an informed consent.

## Chapter 5: Building a Grassroots Movement of Healing and Justice



Opening Night at the first ever Healing Justice Summit. Youth Performance getting the crowd hype and ready. September, 2017. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective Praxis.

### **Introduction: Epistemological Soundtrack: Liberation Psychology**

*If you ever think about me, and if you think about me niggas. And if you ain't gonna do no revolutionary act, forget about me. I don't want myself on your mind, if you're not going to work for the people. Like we always say, if you're asked to make a commitment at the age of twenty and you say I don't want to make a commitment only because of the simple reason that I'm too young to die, I want to live a little bit longer. What you did is, you're dead already. You have to understand that people have to pay the price for peace. If you dare to struggle, you dare to win. If you dare not struggle then, god damn-it, you don't deserve to win. Let me say peace to you, if you are willing to fight for it. –Fred Hampton–*

The research praxis, I co-led during H.O.L.L.A!'s participatory investigation evolved from the spirit of Liberation Psychology, and a “*commitment to the people*” echoed in the above quote by Fred Hampton. Fred Hampton’s opening quote embodies: a spirit of to “*sustain a collective “we”*”; a spirit of “*movement building*”; a spirit of “*journeying together with chosen family*”; a spirit of co-struggling; a spirit of individual and collective sacrifice; a participatory spirit of co-creating liberation and fighting for freedom in community with community. Later in this same speech, Hampton, asks the audience some spiritual questions, I still honor. Fred’s



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questions speak to the epistemological spirit of Liberation Psychology. They also grounded me as through this dissertation journey. Hampton asked:

*“Why don’t you live for the people? Why don’t struggle for the people? Why don’t you die for the people?”*

These questions were posed within a context of unaddressed spiritual wellness, persistent state violence; on-going interpersonal violence within communities of color impacted by historical violence. His questions surveys individuals’ willingness to engage in a praxis of collective sacrifice, risk, and commitment. I uplifted Hampton’s quote and questions (analysis/spirit) as an epistemological soundtrack to this chapter.

### **Defining PAR**

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a tradition with many different definitions but the general meaning discusses a set of research-based activities carried-out through collaboration between academics and marginalized individuals/communities with various levels of participation and power dynamics (Guishard, 2009). In participatory praxis, non-academic researchers are centered and included in all phases of the research project, including development or the execution of: (1) research questions/hypothesis; (2) theoretical frameworks; (3) methodological designs; (4) data collection and analysis; (5) formal publications; (6) formal presentations; and (7) training in socio-political organizing in response to data outcomes. (Payne, 2013). PAR is situated within a broader historical context of liberatory research practiced in Central and South America, with sprouts in Asia, Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Europe and the United States, (see, e.g., Lykes, 1997; Fals-Borda, 1988; Fals-Borda 1959, & Rahman, 1991; Fine, 2008) that incorporated emancipatory practices within the framework of scholarship (see, e.g., Freire, 1970).

## **Results Section**

Below I share results from my analysis of a H.O.L.L.A!'s participatory project that included a process of community listening, education and knowledge sharing (and receiving) to facilitate healing for the local community. My analysis in this chapter adheres to the ethical commitment to engage the intergenerational and intersectional realities, and complexes of healing from violence for urban youth. Engaging in movement-based research with a focus on healing is more than a data collection and analysis project. The research in itself, is an attempt to start/continue the healing process.

Two interrelated results were uncovered through participatory data analysis and critical ethnographic analysis. The findings highlight the importance of participatory action research: (a) *that centers healing that blurs the lines between method and action – action as a throughway project of the entire PAR process*; (b) *that centers vulnerability as an axis of interpersonal healing/to engage vulnerability as a ritual of storytelling*; and (c) *that owns a responsibility to carry/hold and generate hope/spirit within/across research activities*. I land on two themes that capture the how vulnerability moved through this participatory project. The two findings are: 1) *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing* and 2) *Building Grassroots Movement as Healing*. Findings from this participatory research have the validity to inform future research on community specific approaches to urban youth healing.

### **Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing**

The first result I discuss is *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing*. *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing* has 2 sub-themes. The first is *Vulnerability*

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*Sees Vulnerability*, it captures my analysis of when youth shared emotions with each other it opens up more space for youth to share emotions towards healing. The second sub-theme is *Vulnerability as a Praxis of Truth-Telling for Healing*, this captures my analysis of critical feedback from participants to Y.O.C about our Circle Process.

When cultivating an experience, dynamic or in this case a Healing Justice Movement Circle Process, vulnerability, was uplifted as an axis to practice for relational healing. One participant reflecting on the Circle Process said, “*the students and Y.O.C had the opportunity to try on vulnerability, to explore radical love and healing.*” Vulnerability within this chapter is interpreted as an action-verb, a noun; a political action, a process of self-reflection, the sharing of personal testimonies, and when youth experience healing with each other. Other times, our analysis positions vulnerability as an ingredient that brings together the intersections – of shame, love, guilt, pride, pain, dreams, sharing of stories, not sharing of stories, healing and more.

Across our analysis, we documented youth responses of how the Circle Process allowed room for more “*vulnerability.*” The cultivation of vulnerability facilitated permission for youth to build deeper with themselves and each other. Honoring *Healing Justice* and *Human Justice*-Y.O.C created a Circle Process experience where healing dynamics occurred on at least three levels: internally (within the youth), interpersonally (between youth) and across interpersonal groups (the movement).

### **Vulnerability Sees Vulnerability**

When vulnerability grows and/or is fostered within urban youth interpersonal relationships, the “*how*” in youth’s ability to listen to other’s truth, and to share truth with each

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other changes. It's different. Vulnerability allows relational roots to grow deeper connection towards one another. Vulnerability is important for movement building and personal healing. In one instance, we heard:

*"I think it was dope because we have been with each other all year and Y.O.C somehow still managed to make us learn something about each other."*

Across our movement-based research, we documented testimonies of vulnerability being shared:

*"I enjoyed learning more about my peers and seeing and hearing Y.O.C thoughts."*

*"I'd never been asked these challenging questions before, and that made us think deeply. I also liked being listened to so attentively."*

Vulnerability functioned as a source of familiarity, maybe even "*comfort-ability*" that serves as a buffer of trust for engagement in collective holding, knowing and understanding of each other's truth/wisdom. Creating brave spaces, held by a praxis of vulnerability opens up new (maybe deeper) pathways of knowing: 1) the self, 2) the self to others and 3) the self to world/system.

Vulnerability was communicated as a chance to build and connect: "*allowed me to talk with someone that I never talk with about some deep stuff.*" In other cases:

*"connecting"*

*"I liked how open and inviting everyone was and I feel very comfortable with them. They were willing to listen."*

We also heard:

*"talking to people, their company."*

*"that everybody came together to talk about their personal problems/issues."*

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*“sitting in circles, having smaller group, individual going through many common problems.”*

The Healing Circle Process allowed connections between internal pain/healing and interpersonal pain/healing. The Circle Process allowed youth the space to further this connection. The Circle Process supported youth in expressing and understanding violence, *“the circle better helped me express and understand oppression by hearing other stories and feeling an emotional connection with another person.”*

**Discovering Shared/Mutual Vulnerabilities.** The Healing Circle Process is a ritual that opened space to discover shared vulnerabilities between youth. A space for hearing and digesting stories of violence/healing and a space to stimulate emotional connections between youth. In doing so, the emotional connection, serves as a source of knowledge to better understand (as a feeling) and articulate violence/healing. And to deepen youth’s emotion analysis. The Healing Circle Process served as an invitation to share mutual vulnerabilities: *“because it causes us all to become more vulnerable and made us talk to people we usually don’t.”*

Strategizing about violence and healing is an emotional process. Holding space for other youth’s stories of violence is hard work. Feeling strong enough, or safe enough to share one’s own emotions related to violence is equally hard. Our Circle Process allowed youth the comfort-ability to travel to emotional places they usually do not travel. Vulnerability assisted youth with getting under emotional numbness and/or around internalized violence to create space for newer emotional understandings and realities to emerge. This is where the healing is at. Youth shared many reflections of tapping into emotional knowledge on a personal level as healing:

*“the circle made me express feelings that I have been holding for a long time”*

*“the circle made me feel things I never felt before.”*

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*“the circle made me think and feel more comfortable talking about myself.”*

There were reflections that tap into emotional knowledge on an interpersonal level of healing:

*“the circle made us more vulnerable + open.”*

*“the circle helped people open up, say, and tell things they don’t usually talk about.”*

*“I began to hear what others really feel.”*

One participant said this about our Circle Process, *“the circle is challenging us to be vulnerable, and that is necessary for healing, thank you”*. Vulnerability facilitates the healing process. The mutual sharing of violence and the desire to heal can be an emotionally healing process: *“I like the communication between Rachna, I feel like I really vented to her, and she shared too.”* Across our Circle Process we listened to participants expressed a notion of healing from having their emotions to listen to. In this context, vulnerability allows youth to hold emotional space longer with each other. Another participant reflected on being listened to: *“I’d never been asked these challenging questions before, and they made me think deeply, I also liked being listened to so attentively.”* To hold space for witnessing other people’s pain is a practice of vulnerability. Seeing others’ pain open up possibilities for healing. To be emotionally seen by others, is one of the most important factors for urban youth healing. Story after story, circle after circle we gathered data from youth: *“I like how open and inviting everyone was and I feel very comfortable with them. They were willing to listen.”*

Participants’ expressions, reflections and experiences articulate a process of healing. Particularly, the vulnerable moments when they opened up new, different, unpaved, and/or previously scary processes of self-reflection and communication. One participant said: *“It made me think and discuss things I don’t normally discuss.”* Others discussed how the circle process

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created a space to open up about inner feelings, “*The workshop was very intriguing and it made me express my inner feelings.*” One youth articulated the space Y.O.C co-created allowed them to be them in a safe way, “*the circle gave me the opportunity to speak my feelings and thoughts in a safe space.*” In other cases, youth said, “*the circle really made me reflect. I love the time given to debrief. Being able to reflect and debrief is essential to healing.*”

The Circle Process was a place to “*really think about some questions, and articulate some responses*” or “*to talk about my problems/story out.*” Youth experienced the Circle Process as a place to “*express my feelings more and in a more effective way.*” The organizing and pedagogy of vulnerability allowed space to help youth “*understand how other youth feel oppressed and how we can heal each other. It is important to communicate.*” Across the Circle Process participants communicated a desire to be more vulnerable. To be “*more*” vulnerable with themselves, and with other youth. Participants expressed a need to be in spaces that “*allow*” access to vulnerability. Within our Circle Process, vulnerability was uncovered as an axis driving the healing process. Particularly, in regards to emotional development, multiple understandings of violence/healing and relationship building amongst urban youth.

**Organizing A Space of “Love” to Explore Vulnerability.** Y.O.C intentionality (about our aims, who we are and who the people are sharing space with us) and grounded-ness (your values, skills and morals) as facilitators opened up emotional space inside the Circle Process for healing. Our intentionality, within our own energy, during facilitation was critical within our praxis of circle keeping, conflict de-escalation, community accountability, and cultivating healing (Kay Pranis, et al 2015). Participants who experience our Circle Process, comment on why they rated the Circle Process as they did. Youth shared:

*“The energy of Y.O.C.”*

*“The sincerity and appliance of Y.O.C.”*

*“Y.O.C created a source of community even among a group of strangers.”*

*“I loved the positivity and support.”*

*“Fun”*

*“Y.O.C authenticity allowed for my conversion with my partner(s) to be more authentic and more nuanced.”*

*“Y.O.C you have such a loving and comfortable environment, I feel safe and seen here.”*

*“Good vibes, it got deep, helping.”*

*“This was facilitated wonderfully. I think what you do is extremely important. Keep it up.”*

*“Y.O.C are energetic, funny, and welcoming.”*

*“I loved the passion and enthusiasm of Y.O.C” Thanks You! God Bless!”*

*“The interaction & origination was done very well. I can tell a lot of hard work went into the circle. You seemed very prepare thank you!!*



H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) Healing Justice Movement “Report-Back Album Release Party. July 2019. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!’ Youth Organizing Praxis

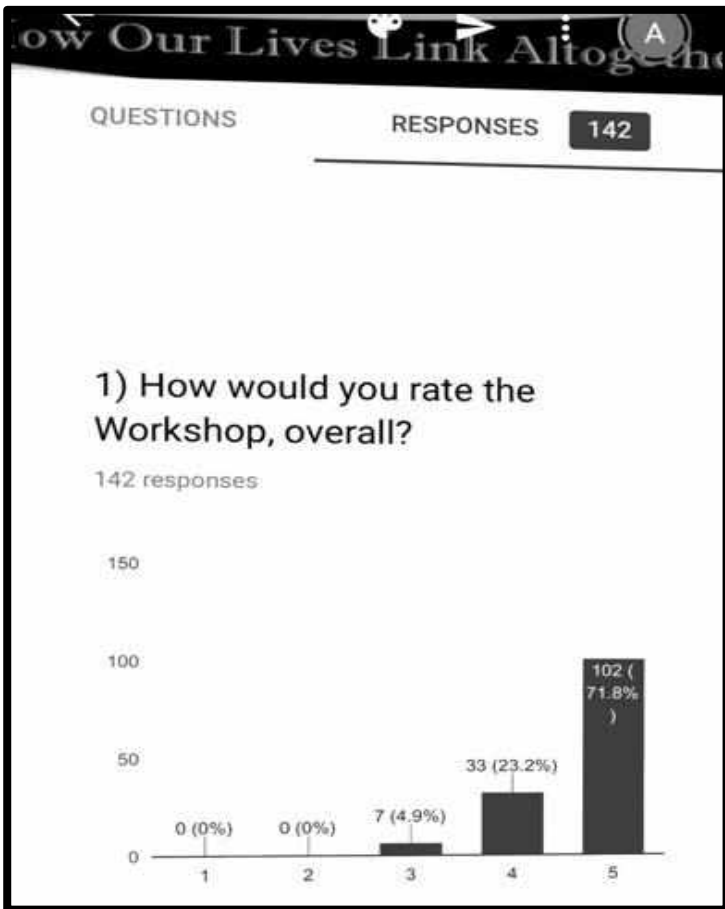


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Others noted that Y.O.C facilitators expressed “*honesty and vulnerability*” that provided a “*group energy and respectful interaction that felt very supported.*” Our collective analysis suggests Y.O.C’s facilitation was energy/realness that created a thread of trust within the Circle Process. Participants told us the space we created was “*welcoming.*” For some “*the circle helped me understand everyone’s perspective and I learned a lot from each other.*”

In many of the participants’ reflections above (and across the data), “*love*” was expressed as an emotional appreciation of the Circle Process we held for the community to heal. The centering of love as a political, pedagogical and existential purpose within the Circle Process (Pour-Khorshid, 2018). Y.O.C co-created space to heal relationships among urban youth. “*Love*” was given to Y.O.C for their preparation, “*You seemed very prepare thank you!*” The participants’ reflection on our preparation underscores the importance of Y.O.C’s need to be grounded and intentional within our own practice of facilitating healing. Our facilitation communicates energy of vulnerability to youth. Youth responding to this energy reflected on their own feelings, “*YOC were very kind and open. Made me feel like the world will change for the better.*” In the Circle Process, we learned on another level, that the facilitation in itself is an important element within the healing process.

## Vulnerability as a Praxis of Truth-Telling for Healing



This table displays participants' results of answering the first question from H.O.L.L.A.'s Healing Justice Movements Evaluation

The first question on the Healing Justice Movement Circle Evaluation asked participants to rank their experience of the Circle Process on a scale from one (1)- five (5) (See appendix and graph below). One (1) being poor, three (3) in the middle, and five (5) being excellent. In total, every participant rated the circle process a three (3) or above (4 or 5). A hundred and two (102) participants rated the circle a five. Thirty –Three (33) rated the circle a four, and seven (7) rated the circle a three. The majority (71%) of youth who experienced Y.O.C Healing Justice Circle Process self-reported the circle experience was excellence or a five.

hooks' theorization of a system of lies, remind readers to consider the importance of speaking truth to power and/or to each other (Aho, 2014). hooks argue that ideologies and systems such as settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy and chattel slavery “{have} always relied upon a structure of deceit to perpetuate degrading... stereotypes” (hooks, 1993 pg. 20), disenfranchisement, surveillance, and exclusion from mainstream resources and political power. Many individuals and communities impacted by this very culture of domination

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internalize the lies and/or adopted lying as a strategy for their own survival. hooks argue further, “today, it is critical to understand that “lies hurt,” and although lying was a useful strategy in the past or gives us an advantage in one area, lies often undo or prohibit the process of healing in other areas.

Truth telling is a vital part of Black people’s resistance, ethnic survival and healing (Ginwright, 2010). How one tells their truth is just as important. Below, I share participants’ expressions and feedback to help strengthen our Healing Justice Movement Circle Process. Although most youth enjoyed the Healing Justice Movement Circle Process, there were critical feedback:

*“I loved the message and purpose of the organization. The circle was good but organizing amongst Y.O.C could be a little better which will improve the circle you do.”*

*“Time management”*

*“Too many questions in the introduction part. Too long. Maybe less questions, more time, more time to think.”*

*“I think starting off with a concise introduction would be helpful.”*

We used participants’ critical feedback to revise our Healing Justice Youth Community Assessment and Circle Process. Suggestions, recommended that: *“maybe make it easier for people with lower literacy”*, to asking additional questions such as *“Who do you feel most supported by”*, *“if youth could heal the community, if so, how will you do it?”* and to *“self-reflect on the experience of taking the assessment, what we gained from it.”* We received advice on how to make some assessment questions more relatable (clearer): *“the prompt has to be clearer about how often you see the struggle because I didn’t understand.”*

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As Ward (2000) argues, critical consciousness and community specific strategies for healing in Black communities are shared in moments of intimacy. Somé (2000) argues, “*outside of ritual, nothing can truly be intimate.*” Within the Circle Processes, we experienced many intimate moments, during those times we learned about developing a “*consent culture, especially since a lot of folks need healing from sexual violence*”, and we heard youth feedback on how to make the Circle Process safer/braver:

*“Sharing with my partner. Not enough time of building relationships before sharing.”*

*“I think just letting people feel like they will benefit from all the aspects, but are welcome to opt out can help people feel more empowered to speak.”*

*“I think more outlets for abstaining from points of the circle process because of lack of feeling safe.”*

We received important lessons in regards to practicing healing from interpersonal violence with each other. Youth (in our circle process) wanted us/Y.O.C to “*show more examples of healing justice* and to “*discuss different ways to heal.*” Participants in our Circle Process desired, “*switching listening partners to talk to more people.*” Participants in the circles requested that we bring the Circle Process to other locations/youth of color, “*can you have this circle in schools with students.*” There were loud cries from youth to “*Talk little more about what’s going on in the hood*”, with “*women/children, Younger minds, LGBTQ ideas, concepts and oppression.*”

Other participants felt our Circle Process did not teach them much. Participants in some circles expressed: “*We did not talk about trauma and oppression too much learning wise but we discussed It*”, “*I don’t it really learn much did but that’s just because I have a lot of experience already.*” Others echoed the words, “*I never had trauma or oppression.*” A selected few participants: “*thought it was good information; next time I would just add some statistics on*

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*issues discussed*” and “*we did not really cover anything other than our opinions over a few topics.*”

Some participants suggested we further “*define Healing Justice,*” *explain what happens when Blacks rally against whites*” and share “*resources that a person can use, in case they may need further assistance.*” Others wanted to let us know: “*people were not trying to speak*”, “*it was hot in the room*”, “*next time bring some coffee next time.*” Thank you all. We have internalized this critical feedback. We honor you sharing your truth with us. This feedback has/will enhance our ability to better organize and heal in the future.

Critical feedback came from places. In the few opportunities, we conducted Circle Processes in spaces like Princeton University, Columbia University, New York University and other non-grassroots locales, we heard more feedback. Youth of color and white youth share that our Circle Process should not be “*directed towards an extremely privileged group like this, this may be a challenge.*” We heard stories again about our Circle Process organization, “*If we had more time, we could hit each subject a bit,*” and “*The long intros but I love everyone and want to hear more.*” Some participants felt it was important to share (their own) accountability in why their Circle Process was not as good as it could have been, “*probably we were late, so we missed a lot*”, and we also captured expressions such as, “*just wished we had more time, our fault tho.*”

Our Circle Processes lasted 60, 120, 180 minutes and some went on well past 3 hours. There was never enough time for healing, youth across the circle process desired “*more time*” to heal with each other. Participants demanded that Y.O.C “*Give a longer time to answer the questions in pairs.*” In general, many of the participants reflections were coded as critical

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feedback were participants' desires to spend more time in the healing process with Y.O.C *"The lack of time, yall were cool."*, *"there was not enough time."*

Participants' truth-telling included gratitude. They affirmed the healing space and facilitation co-lead by Y.O.C: *"once again it was lit! I'm chill out now. Lol but I love how yall came and left your roots, and helping the community"*, and *"I would def like to learn more about CSI and applying it on both a community, personal and individual level. This is amazing."* Participants expressed a connection to Y.O.C that they wanted to explore further. They stated *"I wanted to hear your personal stories of oppression and healing and how you overcome."* Some asked us to *"provide links to [our} website and other resources."* They wanted to learn more about our *"mission"* for us to further *"Explain what H.O.L.L.A!/Legacy is."* In general, we received a strong sense from the data and our experiences that participants *"wished there was more things for discussion from the facilitators."* Participants expressed a sense of being inspired, engaged, and awakened by the Circle Process. Participants enjoyed the relationship cultivation experience. We heard; participants say *"Tell us more about how we can support your cause."*

Sharing and receiving critical feedback with the people/community you struggle with is a vulnerable exchange. An exchange to enhance relational transformation and healing. One of the central findings of the Circle Process analysis, is that vulnerability allows space to share truth with youth of color impacted by historical, structural and interpersonal violence. Vulnerability in itself was a sacred place of meeting (Somé, 2000). Similar to Farima Pour-Khorshid's notion of *"Cultivating a Sacred Space for Collective Healing and "Soul Care"* (2018), Y.O.C co-create a Circle Process where the *reciprocity of vulnerability* aided collective healing for urban youth.



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organizations and sites; the other sites, we knew of their works/mission/relationship but not them personally. We contacted each through a three-step approach: 1) email, 2) phone call, and 3) visit.

In the end, we successfully contacted over 60 organizations throughout the five boroughs, consequently leading over 70 healing circles (some organization experienced 2-4 circles with us) from December 2016 to June 2019, servicing a wide range of organizations and institutions, including Riker's Island, community-based organizations, social service agencies, and schools (school-day and afterschool programs). We co-lead and co-taught youth and service providers, including schools of social workers and Department of Education staff who work with young people in correctional facilities and detention centers. We began providing technical assistance for the Dept. of Health, Columbia School of Social Workers, Echoing Green, and John Jay College. As we began implementing our Circle Process across the city, word spread and service providers began reaching out to us. Requests came from inside and outside NYC. We led workshops in Princeton, NJ, Detroit, and Baltimore. We engaged in a ritual of spreading the word of *Human Justice* and *Healing Justice* – facilitating our legacy/praxis, and creating energy (spirit) to build a movement.

In addition, to the individual circles to build relationships, we organized a wide range of city-wide events/activities as rituals meant to bring intergenerational communities of color together for collective healing. Below, I focus my analysis on our 2017 Healing Justice Summit (a major action, we used to bring all 70 sites and the general public together). I use this community healing forum to offer a critical ethnographic analysis of Y.O.C's grassroots praxis to build/sustain a movement for healing and justice.



**The 2017 Healing Justice Summit**

The two day Healing Justice Summit 2017, brought together over 150 youth, organizers, community leaders, community based organizations, scholars, policy makers, artists, activists, advocates, parents, community residents, poor individuals, and women of color, trans-folks, formerly incarcerated people, elderly people, people using drugs and low income communities of color together to discuss *Building a Healing Justice Movement*. People travel from Oakland, New York City, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Chicago. They came from airports, planes delays, housing projects, living room couches, and gentrified communities to share approaches, frameworks, and current threads in regards to cultural healing. The summit extended invitations to all those who participated in our 70 or so city-wide healing circles (i.e., Circle Process). The Summit included various training/workshops, healing circles, keynote speeches, breakout sessions, music performances and a film screening.

The Summit' aim(s) was to connect and build relationships across issues lines, state borders, and political campaigns with grassroots leaders and organizations practicing healing-centered organizing. We co-created this platform with four questions in mind: (1) *What are healing-centered approaches to youth development and community development and how are they practiced in different contexts under different circumstances?* (2) *What are the implications for growing a national network of youth, practitioners, community leaders, organizers, scholars and educators using healing justice strategies in youth and community development?* (3) *What are inspirational examples of grassroots/cultural leadership, youth organizing and intergenerational community building that can inspire hope, collective resistance, action and peace nation-wide?* (4) *What is a Healing Justice Movement? Who is a Healing Justice*

## **Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building**

*Movement accountable too? What is new or different about the Healing Justice Movement from other movements?*

### **Building Grassroots Movement as Healing**

*We are Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C.), the movement arm of H.O.L.L.A.! (How Our Lives Link Altogether). We are reaching out to all grassroots/youth organizing groups to build relationships, share our practices, stories and experiences, and engage deeply in conversations and healing justice circles led by our healing justice youth organizers. -Y.O.C email correspondent to 80 youth organizing sites within New York City-*

The final result of this chapter, I titled, *Building a Grassroots Movement as Healing*. I provide mini-ethnographic description of an intergenerational youth organizing process committed to share, add on, create, and dream a movement of Healing and Justice. I narrow my analyses on Y.O.C's Healing Justice Movement Summit (2017) that was co-organized by H.O.L.L.A!, the Center for Justice at Columbia University, CNUS, and Flourish Agenda. The Summit represents an example of Y.O.C's systematic efforts to make healing a normal practice(s) in local communities across the states. Three sub-themes emerged from my analysis of Building a Healing Justice Movement. They are: 1) *The Legacy: Acknowledging our Elders/Ancestors and Youth*; 2) *Grassroots Wisdom(s) for Survival and Healing*; and 3) *Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement*.

### **The Legacy: Acknowledging Our Elder/Ancestors and Youth**

The first ever Healing Justice Summit started off with energy. Y.O.C organizers Sosa runs on stage, in front of a packed room of people screaming, "Yo, Yo, Yo, Yo, we are here." Dressed in a red durag, black jeans and red and black Healing Justice Movement Summit tee shirt, Sosa continued, "This is the very first ever Healing Justice Movement youth summit. Say it

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*loud with me, Youth Summit. 1, 2, 3, Youth Summit!”* Sosa, led us as the summit welcomer.

Sosa’s role was to bring spirit into the summit’s atmosphere. After 2-3 minutes of hyping up the crowd, and screaming at the top of his lungs, “*Are you Ready? Are you Ready?*” The crowd was WOKE. Sosa then introduced our elders Cheryl Wilkins and Kathy Boudin. Both Cheryl and Kathy are formerly incarcerated womyn who lead programming and organizing at the Center for Justice at Columbia University. Both these elders have long histories with prison organizing while serving time at Bedford Hills Correctional facility.

Kathy and Cheryl walk up to the stage with big smiles. Kathy, grabbed the mic with her bright red and black Healing Justice Movement Summit tee shirt and said:

*I don’t know if I can keep up the energy (talking about what Sosa started - the crowd laughs). But I just want to say, this is like a dream come true that Y.O.C is here at Columbia University, the Center for Justice. I have to tell you, when Cheryl and I came here (to the Center for Justice at Columbia) nine (9) years ago, we said we can make this space a place that is not isolated from community. Where the university has no relationship to the rest of the world. But Y.O.C you are here, you are bringing in the world. You are bringing in the next generation. I mean, I’m a little older than you but you are keeping me down, you keep me young, and you are going to make a change in the world. I don’t know how else to say more. I can bless you, but that is not really my thing. I just want to say welcome and we love you.*

Building a movement requires a connection to the past, and in many instances, permission from the elders to lead. From the very beginning of the Healing Justice Movement Summit, Y.O.C created an atmosphere that honored the legacy – the intergenerational connection of struggle and resistance. Kathy’s opening remarks is one of the many manners intergenerational healing was cultivated, uplifted and shared across the Healing Justice Movement, and within the community, and program understudy. After Kathy’s opening remarks, she passed the mic to her partner Cheryl Wilkins. With a big smile, Cheryl grabbed the mic. Her

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reads pulled back in designed ponytail. Wearing a black dress shirt, tucked neatly in her tan khakis. Cheryl shared more about our legacy:

*I just want to add, this would never had happened (them at Columbia University) if there was not a NuLeadership at Medgar Evers College, CUNY (the crowd erupts, saying teach, teach). We look at their model, and how they included community with academia and what that combination can do for criminal justice reform. So we have to acknowledge our boy Eddie Ellis. Our mentor, our friend, our brother (the crowd erupts again, saying yea!). And his beautiful daughter is right here, Shout outs to Greer. So yea, you are welcomed here, because we were welcome in his space. And this is how we have to do this here in the movement. We all have to work together, and we are not going to fight each other for anything. We can't let anything turn us against one another. With that said, Let's Kick it Off!!*

Kathy standing next to Cheryl with her arms folded, smiling ear to ear, watched her close friend electrify the crowd. Cheryl shared a story about movement history. Her comments provided instructions to the next generation. She then passed the mic to Dr. Divine Pryor, the co-founder of NuLeadership. Cheryl and Kathy walk off the stage. Dr. Pryor opened with:

*I'm humbled to be here, Y.O.C is a manifestation of what was once an idea. Back in the early 90s. When Eddie Ellis and I first started organizing. And we thought of the day, when we will not only influence a movement of people across the United States of America at that time was known as ex-convicts and ex-offenders. And decided to take control of our own destiny, and created our own narrative. And first ask that we do not be called those degrading and derogatory terms (the crowd, starts clapping, saying right). And then we demanded it! For those of you who recall those times, we were so aggressive when we first came out that people stopped inviting us to their panels. So we started walking around without own name tags and plaques, and we will come to the conference and just invite ourselves. I'm telling you this because I want you to understand the seeding of the movement. It was very tender times, very challenging and difficult. People did not want this population (people impacted by histories of incarceration) in population. They did not want us here. There was a stigma that was attached to people who had did time in prison. We were pushed out, locked out, shut out and never allowed to come back in. So we are Not Here cause people invited us In! Or opened the door! Or welcomed us with open arms! We are here because we Kicked down the door in (he performs a kick on stage – and the crowd erupts) and demanded that we have the present, we we are!*

Dr. Pryor, continues with:

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*“I just wanted to open with that. I also want to say that we have always had an intergenerational model. From NuLeadership inception, that was Eddie’s concept. Not only create, nurture and develop leadership, but prepare the next generation to take the lead.”*

Dr. Pryor, also shares powerful stories about grassroots movement history. Oral history is critical for sustaining and building grassroots movements that are intergenerational. Dr. Pryor ended his remarks and passed the mic to Butta Lab, Craig, Arcoks and myself. We are additional threads of the legacy. Arcoks, Butta Lab and I (and Gina) served as the facilitators and curriculum developers for the radical healing process. We shared additional wisdom about our journey of meeting in prison, the work we did to heal with each other, and how we started building the curriculum for the radical healing process while incarcerated.

## Grassroots Wisdom(s)/Rituals for Survival and Healing

We called up circle keepers to wrap up the first night (the kick off night). Facilitators, grassroots organizers, youth and community members to the stage who were leading skill shares, healing circles, and cultural trainings on day two of the summit. I was the host. I called each healer to center stage. I asked them to bless us, to share who they were, and to express to the crowd, the context in which they are living in and doing their work in. I asked them to let us know what *Healing and Justice* means in their works. We heard from many. Community United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ) from Oakland were first to speak. Indigo (a youth organizer/leader at the time), Jose and George all spoke. CURYJ mission is to **unlock the leadership of young people to dream beyond bars**. They look to young people for leadership in transforming our community by investing in youth’s healing, activism, and aspirations. Indigo shared:

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*So I represent CURYJ, Community United for Restorative Youth Justice. Somebody says it takes courage (the crowd says courage!). It takes courage to go outside yourself and heal with your community.... Tomorrow we are doing a working called La Cultura Cura--Culture Cures. This skill share will identify and demonstrate the different ways that Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ) implements cultural and artistic healing practices to engage, develop and sustain young leaders. So hit us up we incorporated a lot of indigenous practices, a lot of healing practices in our work culture.*

Next up was UPM from Oakland. Urban Peace Movement (UPM), they build youth leadership to transform culture and social conditions that lead to community violence & mass incarceration. UPM's model of "Healing-Centered Youth Organizing" supports young people to feel self-confident & hopeful while empowering them to work for healing, social justice, and a brighter future for all. Nicole and Kamima both spoke. Nicole offered insights of their work:

*I'm honored to be here. I'm Nicole and from Urban Peace Movement. I'm Representing Oakland as well. I'm a fourth generation Oakland resident actually. And as folks know Oakland has a long tradition of Activism. And we feel really proud to be in that legacy but we also got a lot to learn as well. NYC is a really big culture and we feel so blessed to be here. We talked to Cory on the phone but never met him in person. So nice to see you in person, Cory. But we just feel excited to be here and share what we do in Oakland. We will be sharing a workshop tomorrow called Heal the Healers. This skill share will explore the need for healing spaces for activists, community organizers, outreach workers, and folks who hold up young people from our neighborhoods. The work we do demands so much of our time and heart and sometimes we forget to take care of ourselves. Join us to have a conversation about why it is important that we make time to heal ourselves and heal the healers.*

Nicole was followed by Sammy Nuenz of Fathers and Families of San Joaquin (FFSJ) of Stockton, California. In the Central Valley of California, FFSF mission is to promote the cultural, spiritual, economic and social renewal of the most vulnerable families in Stockton and the greater San Joaquin Valley. Sammy opened with:

*My name is Sammy Nuez, I came by way of Stockton, California. It is good to be with all you relatives her today. You know when you family, everything changes. Right? (the crowd, respond). I'm here with Father and Families of San joaquin – because first they came for our fathers, then they came for our mothers, and now they are coming for our babies. So we are heal,*

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*deal and get it real! Im formerly incarcerated like many of my comrades. I'm really feeling the energy and vibe up in the air, and tomorrow we gonna try to keep that energy. Just want to give a shout out to Cory. Big up homie, yall got family in California. Not just in the Bay area but in Central Valley as well. H.O.L.L.A!.*

Bianca, DeVante and Community Connection for Youth (CCFY) went next. CCFY's mission to empower grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations to develop effective community driven alternatives to incarceration for youth. They did a little monologue/role play of their skill share before DeVante shared this with us all:

*"All that to say, we gonna be doing some stuff, and really unpacking some stories of violence that happen to us in our lives, in our cities, in our homes. And I hope that you guys would fuck with it (crowd responses, most def!)."*

Ashley Ellis from B.R.E.A.T.H which stands for Balanced, Restored, Empowered, Affirmed Transformed and Healed: Circles for my Sisters. Founded in Bronx, New York, B.R.E.A.T.H. mission is to create space for sisters to heal and breathe. Ashley shared her work:

*My name is Ashley Ellis. I created a space called B.R.E.A.T.H.E to Balanced, Restored, Empowered, Affirmed Transformed and Healed... Circle for my sister. B.R.E.A.T.H was created out of a space when I was working for an organization to work with women in the commercial sexually exploited space. And they did not have space for them. And to be honest there is not space for any of my sister, especial girls in the juvenile system. And so, I was like I need space for my sister to breathe. We need to heal too and we need space to heal with one another with interference or anything else. B.R.E.A.T.H.E was created four year ago, and we are still here, we still running... But tomorrow, it won't be a presentation. We are not here to present anything, but if you are here for healing justice. We came here to heal. So we gonna create space for our sisters to heal. So all our girls, woman, sister of color. You got a niece, a cousin or a friend- bring them. And if they need that we will create a space for them. For us, by us. This is not a show! This is real! This is a time to uplift and reclaim sisters that we have lost to the justice system, to violence or being lost by ourselves and we showing up today to be found." So just show up tomorrow for more of an experience, than a presentation.*

The last person to speak the first night of the Summit was Ebony (a youth) from Artistic Noise. We had recently completed Healing Circle with Artistic Noise. During that process we

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shared the news about the Healing Justice Summit. Artistic Noise is located in Harlem New York. The program brings the freedom and power of artistic practice to young people who are incarcerated, on probation, or otherwise involved in the criminal punishment system. As Ebony start to share, Ashley is there to hugs and supports her from her nervousness:

*I'm kind of nervous. I'm really never, ever nervous. My heart is jumping out of my chest right now (as she looks at Ashley. The crowd clapped her on). But... My name is Ebony. I'm the youth representative from Artistic Noise. I made this project that I will do for you guys tomorrow. It is called Redesign Yourself. You guys are going to have the opportunity to see how people and society views you but also to show them who you are. How you would want the world to view you (the crowd scream yes and claps). Tomorrow, I promise I won't be nervous, cause I'm doing art.*

Healers from various contexts shared knowledge on the ways culture can be healing, the need for healing for the healers, the importance of self-identity, the reclaiming indigenous roots and a spirit to heal with us, and for us. Machlie and Phil co-hosted the Summit, they came back on to the stage to offer one last round of applause to all the community healers. The night concluded with Machlie and Phil calling Y.O.C organizer Miasia to the center stage to lead our closing ceremony ritual. Miasia, closed the first night off leading us all in the Assata Shakur Chant. In front of the entire room, Miasia, asked everyone to stand up, and hold hands with some next to you. When everyone was settled, Miasia, gave more instruction:

*“you all holding hands (the crowd replies, yes), ok. I want you to repeat after me. Three times. Each time, we will get louder. Ready? Ok. It is our duty to fight for our freedom, it is our to win, we must love and protect each other, we have nothing to lose but our chains!”*

The first night ended with more instructions for everyone to bring more energy back the following day for healing and recovery. (i.e., day two).



## **Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement**

*Today, tonight and tomorrow, I hope that it is something that you get here from the ideas that we share. I want to thank Cory for this vision and really all of H.O.L.L.A! for this vision to bring people together. I think this is the first Healing Justice Summit/Conference but it is definitely not the last. Because this Movement is going to spread around the country, and we are going to have a profound impact seeking joy and justice. (Shawn Ginwright, personal communication, Keynote speech at Healing Justice Summit 2017)*

Hope and spirit were shared across the Healing Justice Summit two days. In moments, spirit was packaged within youth and community performances, in other circumstances, energy generated from listening to each other's analysis, by asking the right/hard question, and through ritual/ceremony. I kicked off the opening night performance, with my poem titled *Healing Justice is Our Strategy* from our recently released Healing Justice Movement Album, titled *The Report-Back*. This was a moment of eliciting spirit. The poem opens with:

*I came to heal, what you came to do? I came to build what you came to do? But if I got to kill just to make it thru, I'm making sure I make it you. But I said we (pointing to Y.O.C) came to heal, what yall came to do, we came to feel, what yall came to do? We came to heal, what yall came to do? But if we got to kill, just to make it thru, we're gonna make sure we make it you. But I said we all (pointing to everyone in the crowd) heal, what they (pointing to the door) came to do? We all came to feel, what they came to do? We came to build, what they came to do? But if we all got to kill just to make it thru, what gonna make sure we make it to you.*

I close with:

*"Healing Justice is Our Strategy. Responding to historical tragedy. But now we are all in the building, they are gonna be made at we. H.O.L.L.A!"*

The co-host (Mach and Phil) danced and re-enacted performances all night. It was a sight to watch/witness. They sing with, and to us. They brought structure to the day's agenda flow. They made us laugh. They made us stand and sit. They introduced keynote speakers, artists and made us feel welcomed. They held us accountable, making sure we showed respect and show love to all the performers, speakers and organizers of the summit.

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In day two, we open with a 30 min collective presentation on Human Justice and Healing Justice in front of the morning audience. We shared *The Legacy*; our human and healing-centered youth organizing curriculum process; our experiences in the radical healing process to that point; we outlined the Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training, The Youth Organizing Collective Training and our Healing Justice Movement praxis. After 30 minutes we opened up for questions, comments, and breathe-outs. One attendee, from Philly reflected:

*Greetings everyone, my name is Sheena, and I'm here from Philly. I was inspired to come to this conference because there are definitely some models in Philly that look very similar to the work of NuLeadership and Y.O.C in particular but I want to make that more prominent. And I can, I can really just feel, the transformation that is present in a lot of you young folks. The way that you are embodying, this sense of working on internal transformation and healing. I can just feel that spirit, so props to you all!*

This attendee traveled over 3 hours to the summit. They wanted to part take and “*feel the transformation of Y.O.C.*” This person ended their statement saying, “*I can just feel that spirit, so props to you all!*” This person’s reflection describes how our praxis invoked spirit for movement building, program replication, and expanded grassroots knowledge of community organizing. After 40 minutes of back and forth questions and responses, the floor fell to silence. We asked if there were any more breathe-outs or any last spirits in the room that want to get something out before we went to break? One attendee, Ashely, who self-reported being from Chicago. Ashely, also was one of the healers co leading a healing circle for sisters at the summit. She breathe-out with this spirit:

*I just want to say, that H.O.L.L.A! is doing that damn work! (the audience clap together). I do want to commend you all, and lift you all up. Yall are soo dope! When I say you all are doing the work from the inside out, I mean when I hear that question, It is an embodied experienced. So what you know, is what you lived... and how people experienced you. The healing work that you all are doing makes me so excited.... And to see this healing work is taking off across the city, and in Non-traditional ways, that brothers who look like the men I grew up with are talking about healing. This is big, because this was not even part of the language when I*

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*was coming up. So I'm just inspired! Yall are doing that damn work, and I don't care with nobody say. And yall make it look good, yall make it feel good. And just encountering yall is a healing experience. So I just wanted to lift that up. Ashay....*

Reflections like the ones above give a small picture into the hope and spirit cultivated at the Healing Justice Summit. As Somé (2000) says, *“the community is a grounding place where people come and share their gifts and receive from others.”* The Healing Justice Movement Summit (2017) created a space *“in which we could call in spirit to come and be the driver, the overseers of our activities.”* The Healing Justice Summit gathered folks to think, strategize and more importantly, to feel, what it means to build/sustain a movement for healing and justice. Those two day, we did not win a campaign or change any policy, but created/sustained a spirit needed to continue the work of healing ourselves/others.

### **Conclusion: Movement Building is a Process of Healing**

At the closure of the radical healing process Y.O.C were asked: in what ways have you experienced or seen healing in the Healing Justice Movement. Y.O.C were very proud in articulating one thread of standing on legacy; *“holding down our legacy and moving it forward”* and *“being patient thru the process.”* Y.O.C spoke of a healing that brought hope to entire communities of people; *“when we give community back our movement reports, conduct healing circles and lead the Healing Justice Summit.”* Y.O.C expressed the healing that comes from *“hearing other people stories.”* Y.O.C understood healing transpired when *“they were able to point out what was hurting them in the first place.”*

In addition to the question above, I also ask Y.O.C to reflect on their experience with creating a movement. Y.O.C narrative an analysis that suggests that building a grassroots

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movement is *“a lot of time and energy.”* Y.O.C’s Healing Justice Movement started from nothing but our beliefs in our elders/ancestor’s practices. When asked to further reflect on this point, I heard, *“we realize how important the movement is for community and us.”* Building a Healing Justice Movement, for many participants was a platform to *“learn about the history of ancestors and prior movements.”* Traveling within NYC and across many state lines co-leading healing circles was echoed by participants as a meaningful experience, *“co-leading workshops with many groups in different states.”* The process of building a grassroots movement assisted Y.O.C to feel more accountable to each other. This analysis was articulated as a collective process of awakening: *“we were holding each other accountable more”*, there was a *“sense of hope, and support amongst us.”*

## Chapter 6:

### Healing as the Preferential Option Y.O.C



H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice Movement Logo/Painting. January, 2018. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene

#### **Introduction: Whose Picture of the World Matters?**

The image above is a painting of our Healing Justice Movement logo. Y.O.C co-created this painting with Isaac Scott, a formerly incarcerated community activist who create and share arts media for social dialogue and change. The painting was finalized in November, 2017. Our logo was theorized and worked on over a 9 (nine) months process. The painting is conceptualized to be a symbolic representation of our Healing Justice Movement. Isaac and Y.O.C collectively owned the painting, since Isaac did this entire line of work without no financial compensation. We agreed upon shared terms (Appendix K). A few months after the agreement, Isaac, decided it was best for Y.O.C to have full possession of the painting to further organize within the movement. At that time, Isaac gifted Y.O.C the logo/painting. We created the image to represented the human and healing-centered organizing we were creating, leading,

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and experiencing (e.g., living). The logo/painting is our epistemological foundation of healing and justice that derived from their ancestors, community, and daily praxis as organizers. The painting demonstrates how Y.O.C sees healing functioning through a grassroots and indigenous world-view.

Below, I present findings from a cross-case analysis of urban youth experiences of healing and justice. I share grounded theory analysis of participants' expressions, dreams, and struggles (i.e., praxis understanding of healing) to build a grassroots movement. I examined Y.O.C's articulations and engagements "*to be well*" through a Liberation Psychological epistemological framework. I grounded my analysis in the preferential option of Y.O.C (youth understudy) to develop a complex rhythm of the many vibrations of teachings embedded in youth's experiences with healing. The results in this chapter reflect the accounts of multiple standpoints of youth involved in self and community healing (Rivera, 1995 & Torre, 2009).

### **Grounded Theory Chart: Y.O.C's Praxis of Healing**

My analysis landed on three central themes that emerged from nine (N=9) video interviews, field-notes, youth voice artifacts (i.e., Y.O.C Logo and Healing Justice Movement Video), and participant observations. **Table/Chart 4** represents my analysis of themes that highlight how Y.O.C '*lived*' an experience of healing and justice as praxis that consists of: 1) *Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing*; 2) *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing*; and 3) *Journeying - Relationship Building and Relationship Transformation*.

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<b>Axial Codes</b>	<b>Focus Codes</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>
<b>Grassroot Wisdom for Survival &amp; Healing</b>	Wisdom from reflection/lived experience of structural & interpersonal violence	<i>“systems of oppression is all around us --- home, school, healthcare &amp; everywhere. It is important to know that”</i>
	Wisdom from grassroots knowledge/political education	<i>“learning about intersectionality”</i>
	Wisdom from spirit/energy & standing on legacy	<i>“sharing a legacy forward that was shared with you”</i>
<b>Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing</b>	Learning the Power of Your Vulnerability	<i>“spending time in rawness and feeling longer”</i>
	Speaking Your Truth and Holding Space for Others’ Truth	<i>“embracing those oppressions forces oppressing you”</i>
<b>Journeying: Intentional Relationship Building/Transformation</b>	Can’t Heal Alone	<i>“Like every time that you open up and share a story, every time that you build with someone, every time that we connect with the community, it leads to someone gettin’ justice”</i>
	Building and Shifting Relationship with Community	<i>“It’s tied to healing with personal family”</i>
	Healing is a process that is different for every person	<i>“healing is an ongoing process of relationship building and shifting”</i>

**Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing**

Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing, is one of three themes on healing and justice as a praxis that emerged from the video interviews (at Month 14<sup>th</sup> of the process), painting, and field-notes analyzed from critical ethnographic field-observation. Grassroots Wisdom (i.e. Rituals) for Survival and Healing have three subthemes: 1) *Wisdom (Healing that*

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*comes )from Reflections/Lived Experience of Historical, Structural and Interpersonal Violence;*

*2) Wisdom(Healing that comes) from Grassroots Knowledge/Political Education; 3) The*

*Legacy: Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Ancestors and Spirit* that describes how Y.O.C

associated healing and justice with receiving education from alternative sources of wisdom, other than the mainstream structures (often harming them).

In Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing, participants described (in their own way) how experiencing, study, organizing and/or teachings from their own culture, H.O.L.L.A!’s training, and ancestral heritage was critical for healing through daily struggles with violence. Y.O.C narrated a museum (stories after stories) of experiences about coming engaged/in-contact with information, rituals, relationships, reflections, knowledge (within and outside of H.O.L.L.A!’s trainings) that assisted them with healing from violence facilitated by historical, structural and interpersonal dynamics.

### **Healing/Wisdom from Reflecting on ‘Lived’ Experience(s) of Violence**

*“They don’t understand the shit that we have already been through. We went from slavery, to being some-what free, now its modern-day slavery” – Machlie*

From whose perspective is a serious historical and epistemological question. When Y.O.C was asked: what are you healing from? Y.O.C collectively responded; we are healing from the experiences of:

*being forgotten”, “all kinds of pain” “society tell us false message”, “not a good childhood”, “all kinds of trauma”, “all kinds of oppression”, “white people and europeans colonizing the world”, “I used to think I was too dark, hairy and negative”, “feeling pressure to show up like other females in the work that do certain things to get power”, “the way the country (United States of America) was founded”, “ashamed because my dad was in prison” “from the scars”, “the system”, “lack of hope.*

My grounded theory analysis of the Y.O.C’s experiences demonstrates an awareness of violence as a historical experience (seeing themselves as their elders and ancestors); a familiar



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understanding of pain; as fuel for organizing (i.e., relationship building and relationship shifting), and as political right to center healing in their everyday walk ([H.O.L.L.A!, 2018](#)).

Rakim, a 27-year-old Black cisgender male from Brooklyn, New York who identifies as a formerly incarcerated father, and youth/street organizer. In his interview, Rakim narrated an experience of family separation facilitated by the political force(s) of the foster care system and the crack epidemic. Responding to the question: what are you healing from? Rakim said:

*“We never really had a chance. Doesn’t matter who our president or who is our government (is)? Who our mayor was, who sat on the city council? We ain’t really had a chance. You know what I’m saying so it was just like. We went from slavery to a crack epidemic to being prisoners, and what’s next?”*

Rakim ends this quote with a rhetorical question; “*what’s next?*” Rakim’s analysis, names violence as a historical pattern of incarceration, and governmental strategies aimed to weaken his (i.e., The Black community impacted by the criminal punishment system) community (i.e., crack epidemic). In the quote above, Rakim asks a deeply reflective question; “*what’s next?*” Rakim’s question suggests the historical pattern he named around governmental violence, is still moving, changing, renaming itself, to continue its pattern of hurt against him and his community. Rakim’s comments mirror the analysis shared by Ava DuVernay, in the Netflix documentary, titled 13<sup>th</sup>. Slavery i.e., (the criminal punishment system) as a historical and constant force that re-shapes and revamps itself to continue causing havoc.

Sosa a 24-year-old Afro-Caribbean cis male youth organizer, who identified as an undocumented uncle of Belize and Honduras roots. Sosa moved to Texas from Belize when he was 13 years old. He later moved to Brooklyn (East New York) when he was 17 years old, and currently lives in Queens, New York. Responding to the very same question: what are you healing from? Sosa said:

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*The very system is killing us.... Killing me emotionally, Killing me spiritually. Killing us in ways society does not understand.... The government use you (society) in ways, for the fact that the government don't give a fuck about Black and Brown people...especially when your age is between 12-25 years old... all they think about is ruining our lives, ruining our legacy, and any thought of happiness that we may have thought you could have achieved.*

Sosa builds on Rakim's analysis above. Sosa speaks about youth's the need of healing from governmental inflicted violence. Sosa's analysis sheds light on the systematic apparatus he feels is working to kill him and his people. His analysis uplifts the way his and others' pain is often unacknowledged by the larger society, which in itself is another form of harm/hurt (Braveheart, 1995). Sosa describes the ways the government steals "*happiness*" from the people.

Phil, a 25-year-old cis white male who identified as formerly incarcerated (served time in NYS juvenile and adult criminal punishment system) is a youth organizer of Polish heritage from Brooklyn, New York. Phil responded to the same question: what are you healing from? "*The system makes you want to believe that you need the system to survive.*"

On one hand, Phil's reflections offer insights into how the system manipulates youth to believe the state violence they are experiencing in their daily lives is justified. On another note, Phil's analysis reveals the struggles youth experience when so much of their "*freedom dreams*" live in the hands of a system of lies (hooks, 1993). Phil is articulating a type of harm that can be multiple: internal (psychologically, emotionally, spiritually) or external –impact civic life, relationship building with others, and access to resources/self-determination).

Across the interviews, Y.O.C, continued to narrate a description of healing and justice that was vibrant, alive, contextualized by history. Stories that represented their daily experiences. In the quote below, Victor a 25-year old cis male of Indigenous and Honduras roots, who identified as a former street organizer and formerly incarcerated youth from Bronx, New York. He responded to the question, what is he healing from? In mid-conversation, Victor articulates an

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analysis of government enforced violence that targeted Black freedom movement's spiritual vibes, internal relationships, and credibility. Victor analysis articulates a set of ideas that communicate a need to heal from how state violence has long impacted Black community's grassroots movement building process:

*Knowing the history of like gangs, you know because you know they called the black panthers a gang. The CIA um came into our communities and created this division amongst us. But, the same thing happened in the Black Panther Party, you know there was a lot of people doing great things and the same thing happened in The Nation of Islam. Anytime there were black movements that were trying to bring about change, civil rights whatever you want to call them, um there was always like infiltration from the government, you know trying to disrupt and dismantle that. And it's the same thing with the gangs. When you create this, this distrust amongst the people, people lose sight of what the goal is. And throughout time people lost sight of the goal, people seen people um distrust, people seen um their own brothers their own sisters giving them up you know to the system.*

Victor's analysis break downs the ways governmental forces use their power to define and re-name grassroots movements. Victor's analysis analyzes how the government creates distrust between intimate relationships among grassroots community members within movements. Victor continues:

*“And throughout time people lost sight of the goal, people seen people um distrust, people seen um their own brothers their own sisters giving them up you know to the system.”*

Victor's analysis connects to what Phil shared earlier. Victor is expressing how youth and their communities are experiencing such a violence that makes youth feel like they can't trust themselves and/or their community. So, by default, youth/community rely on the system for solutions. Later, in the same interview, Victor, describes how healing from violence produced by the educational and economic system in children and parents' interpersonal healing.

*Our parents are putting so much trust in our education system. Our parents don't have the time to educate us, they are so busy chasing money, you know um and so this is like the cycle of living in a capitalist society.... Our parents could do more.... They (our parents) don't tell us the information of our histories, so we grow up a certain way and basis. They don't tell us (stories of immigration and survival) cause, they don't think it is that important, they are trying to protect us.*

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Victor's quote lifts up the ways structural forces, particularly, the educational system, creates relational dynamics between children and parents. Victor points to how capitalism map onto poor parents. Creating the conditions where parents are "so busy chasing money" that quality time with children is limited (its altered). Lastly, Victor analysis points to hurt youth and communities experience when their cultural history is denied. Or said differently, the violence youth experience when their *legacy* is not share as a generational praxis for survival and healing. Victor analysis points to a notion of violence that is produced when parents over rely on the institutional structures to develop youth/their children.

Throughout the interviews, Y.O.C expressed countless accounts of what they were healing from. Rachna was 23-year old middle class (*the only middle-class youth in the study*), cis female, who identified as a Brown sister, and youth organizer from New Jersey. Rachna is of Indian heritage, and lived in Brooklyn, New York. She expressed an articulation of structural and interpersonal violence, arched by a history of white supremacy - colonial forces that caused harm in her family relationships and self-identity.

*I grew up in like a rich white neighborhood, my high-school was like very wealthy, private, prep school, um, with like a lot of like Jewish students, and there was like a few people of color. That was not the majority at all. And even in that – like I consider myself a person of color, I'm Asian, but I'm not black, and I'm not like Spanish, I'm not Latino, um, so but – there was still like, all the brown – people of color, like brown and black folks, it was a small amount. So, even when you divide that there's so much, there's a very little of each of us there. So um, I feel like in high school I went through this process of seeing that I was different. I really like knew that I was different, and I was just trying to forget that I was different. I didn't wanna be different. I wanted to be – look different physically, I wanted to be lighter skinned, because that is like, you know, the people around me who were the most popular, who were the most privileged, they were lighter skinned, and in my home, because of all of like, my country was colonized, you know? So, um, that like – that whole notion of like the lighter skinned the better, is also um, in India and it's in my home too.*

Rachna's analysis provides a narrative on how youth of color's cultural identities are complicated when immersed in white and wealthy educational institutions. These spaces produce

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feelings of “*different*” or otherness(ing). Moments later in the same interview, when asked what was meant by humanizing someone, Rachna said:

*“I guess, let me give a quick example, like when I have trauma that comes out. I deeply have mistrust, in gendered ways. Like, the men in my life have really like... this is how I used to view it – the men in my life have really let me down and really hurt me, deeply”*

Later on, she adds on:

*“We have not spent enough time in these raw spaces that are uncomfortable. Like, when you feel uncomfortable, ask yourself, why?”*

Rachna articulates mistrust as a form of violence associated with her gendered relationships; particularly, the men in her life. Rachna, breathes-out on the reality, that there is just not enough space in her intimate relationships to create space to be uncomfortable to unpack each other’s journey/stories of pain, and inflicting pain. Raw and uncomfortable spaces suggest environments where there is enough trust to be vulnerable, to be “*Raw*,” to be in the process of healing. Rachna’s analysis suggests that youth do not have the intimate relational space or “*how*” to unpack raw gender dynamics that are hard but needed to unpack for healing.

Alex is a 23-year-old cis male of Brooklyn, Mississippian, Black and Honduras roots. Raised by strong Black womyn, Alex identifies as a formerly incarcerated street organizer from Brooklyn, New York. Alex’s analysis to the very same question, connects to an analysis shared by Sosa earlier. In regards to unacknowledged pain youth/community experience. Alex commented to, what you are healing from:

*from pain, from scars, from being left alone, from moments of being disown, abandoned, forgotten, physical hurt, from not being understood, or not being heard, from people not hearing your cries, from people taking advantage of me, from being closed in – away from people... all the stuff that cause one to break down inside.”*

Alex narrates a theoretical reality, a scholarly truth, that sits quietly on the other side(s) of historical trauma; the continuous ignoring, and disregarding of pain by those both close and

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far. Alex is speaking of an emotional wound that may not be visible on the outside, but is composed of all “*the stuff that cause one to break down inside.*” Brave Heart, (1995) theorized this violence as *Unresolved Grief*. Y.O.C practice the importance of having knowledge of structural impacts on wellness as a starting point for developing Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing. The second point uplifted in Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing was the healing generated from intentional grassroots study and political education.

### **Healing/Wisdom from Lived Experience(s) of Political Education**

*“And I also want them (other youth of color) to be aware of the system that we live in, because, honestly, for me, I was not fully aware of the systems, and a lot of systematic oppression until I started working at Girls in Gender Equity and hanging around H.O.L.L.A!” – Miasia*

Reflecting on their own personal journeys - prior to joining the radical healing process, and more specifically, since joining the human and healing-centered training - Y.O.C felt responsible to share their wisdom (new/uncovered learnings) with other youth like them (all across New York City 5 boroughs and around the nation) as tools for organizing (i.e., surviving). Y.O.C created a 2-minute trailer video that would start this process. After launching their first ever, “Let the Talents Heal, Talent Show”, in March, 2017 in Brooklyn, New York, Y.O.C continued to organize. Y.O.C built relationships with many, relationship after relationship. One relationship was with a film director and film editor. The film director and Y.O.C agreed. (See Appendix L). on terms for video recording and documenting Y.O.C’s analysis, organizing, and personal experiences with building their Healing Justice Movement. The film director agreed to support this work for no financial payment. Faolan Jones rather engages for his own personal journeying, transformation and relationship building with Y.O.C. This became the Healing Justice Movement documentary is titled “We Came to Heal” (Appendix M). The film director served as the interviewer for the video interviews. He asked Y.O.C the same set of questions:

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*Who are you? Where are you from? What are you healing from? And what is Healing and Justice?* When the film director asked, Miasia and Alex (in separate interviews), what is healing?

They both opened with:

*At first, I wouldn't take healing seriously. And when I first got here (H.O.L.L.A!'s radical healing process) I was just like, I felt I healed enough and that there was nothing in my life that needed healing. I did not feel like there was any trauma that was bugging or bothering me...to the point that I need to be like, healed from. but now, after many deep conversations and routines (or rituals) I realize, I do have a lot of trauma. –Miasia.*

*Before I met them (H.O.L.L.A!) I was struggling, I was on probation (for 7 years, just got off 2 week ago before this interview), before that I was in foster homes, my mother was on drugs, so it was very very hard for us... I could not see the next day; I could not see the future.... And having another family (H.O.L.L.A!'s legacy) to help guide my dreams and my spirit, I needed that..... I didn't even know about healing, or that healing was a thing. I thought it was something that you had to physically felt. I did not even think Indigenous practice was gonna bring me that (healing), these things are real. –Alex.*

Alex and Miasia, expressed complicated stories of not knowing how to heal (before joining H.O.L.L.A!'s space and 18-month training/process), intertwined with stories of community specific approach that sustained them as they engage in their own work of locating how to heal– as a practice of keeping their “*dreams*” alive. Many urban young people surviving in the face of daily struggle don't have the resources or what Alex called a “*guide*” – a space/organization/people who see him as human; and share ancestral wisdom and practices with them to assist him with solving his own and others problems. Many formerly (and currently) incarcerated, undocumented, and LGBTQ identified youth share Alex's sentiments, when he said, I “*needed that.*” Referring to the “*guide*” he has and continue to receive from the H.O.L.L.A!'s human and healing-centered youth organizing training/program. The experience of being seen and heard, when you are often ignored or “*forgotten*” is healing.

Miasia is an 18-year-old cis female from Brooklyn NY, who identified as regular girl from Brooklyn, a sister, child of a formerly incarcerated parent and youth organizer who shares

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wisdom from her lived expertise. Miasia's quote uplifts the importance of political education and rituals to assisted her with better understanding her own trauma. Miasia said, "*But now, after deep conversation and routines, I realize, I do have a lot of trauma.*" In a human and healing-centered youth organizing training/process with a grassroots history like H.O.L.L.A!, the assumption or epistemology, built into these processes, curriculum and organizing design, believes that political education is critical for cultivating individual transformation and development during a long-term process of healing or what we call "*da cooker.*" ([H.O.L.L.A!, 2020](#))

*"Music is Healing. We learned this knowledge from studying the Negro Spirituals in our political education sessions"* -Machlie

Political education in this context, refers to Human Justice and Healing Justice based teachings (i.e., pedagogy) that incorporated personal experiences and culture as pedagogy to assist youth in learning about themselves, and their connection to the world outside of themselves. The personal is political. Many of the testimonies expressed by Y.O.C about their own journey of healing from violence connects to one of the societal systems or institutions, socio-political history, culture, immigration, laws and/or generational poverty (being poor for centuries) and each other. Below, Victor shares a story about healing when he (re)connected to ancestral/cultural wisdom (i.e., also seen as spiritual) while in prison:

*When I went to prison, the first thing that I did was learn about myself. The first thing I did was learn about who my people were, cause I'm Garifuna and Garifuna is like an Indigenous group - a mixture of like West African, Arawak and natives from the south of America.... they were mixed because of like traveling, like slavery and just learning about them always revolting in the Caribbean islands and then them being exiled to like the coast of Central America.*

Victor later expressed a transformational experience he encountered through his study of political education with H.O.L.L.A!:



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*When I came home (from serving a 7-year prison sentence) and I met Cory and I did political education with H.O.L.L.A!. That really opened my mind to all the intersectionalities. I started to understand how gender and how sexuality and how race and how language and how religion and all these different things plays a different role to your identity and plays a different role in how you're going to be oppressed in this society*

Victor's ah-ha moments, describes the importance of political education for teaching and/or connecting youth's humanity. Victor reflections describes the ways youth can heal through ancestors' stories/legacy ([H.O.L.L.A!, 2018](#)). Youth engage ancestors' stories/legacy as strategies for learning who we/they are, who we/they were, and who we/they can be. Political Education allowed a space for youth to process ideas in a nontraditional manner in service of knowledge building for community healing. Political Education teaches the community we are all inter-connected through structures of privilege and oppression. Victor's quote suggests a need for political education curriculum that include all our community, *"really opened my mind up to all the intersectionalities."*

I use Victor's analysis to narrate a story of healing and justice that is in sync with learning who he is –as historical experience – this involves uncovering important teachings about his indigenous roots, his ancestor's resistance to historical violence and the intersectional relationship between identity and violence. I share Victor's analysis as an expression to articulate that healing comes from educating one-self about their own cultural identity over time (in and out of prison). The study/engagement of political education is extremely valuable practice of ritual for re-humanizing individuals and communities who are (have been) suffering from individual and collective violence. Political education is one mechanism that affords youth a framework for coming together, and dreaming to reflect on and name the ways violence has limited their healing/human growth.

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*“I have to rebel against them (systems of oppression) ... “Why sit here and take this, like, when I know I deserve better?” I felt like if every kid was aware of systematic oppression, I feel like no one would be able to stop us.” -Miasia.*

Miasia’s quote demonstrates the power of political education to assist youth in understanding systematic and historical violence. Intentional engagement with political education provides youth with a framework to ask questions such as *“Why sit here and take this, when I know I deserve better?”* Miasia’s quote is an example of emotional wisdom/dreaming/theorizing that is possible through an intentional study of systematic violence as a historical project. *“I felt like if every kid was aware of systematic oppression, I feel like no one would be able to stop us.”* In the above quote, Miasia’s analysis names the importance of political education a part of the healing process to assist with developing analysis that can facilitate action towards dismantling systems of violence. Practicing political education to build grassroots knowledge is a sacred place where healing was located, and found. The final sub-theme of Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing, is the wisdom from spirit/energy or ancestors.

### **The Legacy: Wisdom from lived of Experience(s) of Spirit**

*“When we went on that retreat (youth organizing relationship building and healing justice movement evaluation retreat). When we went to the Poconos, I don’t know what that trip did for me, but it – I think it did something’ for all of us. We had no Wi-Fi, so we had no choice but to communicate with one another. Yeah, I think that was like, spiritually like, that was a time where I was just like, “Alright...”*



H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) pose for a picture after their Kwanzaa Celebration. December 2017. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

Across the study, Y.O.C, discussed and organized around the importance of personal transformation in the context of movement building. Personal development in this context included a spiritual vibe. Alex says healing is energy: *“Healing can be physical or invisible, but I think it always energy.”* My analysis uplifts a collective story of learning about and/or reflecting on, and/or sharing and/or developing spirit and/or hope as a tool to open up relational pathways needed for healing.

In an earlier quote, Alex said: *“having another family (H.O.L.L.A!) to help guide my dreams and my spirit, I needed that.”* Alex’s expression, alludes to a deep acknowledgement of being seen when you have historically been written off as *“invisible”*. When one’s pain is repeatedly ignored, one’s hope to be seen disappears. Alex’s analysis suggests his inner driver (Somé, 2000), his *“spirit”* (hope in a better tomorrow) was struggling with seeing a different reality for him and his people. Alex appreciated the space H.O.L.L.A!, provided for his *“spirit to*

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*be guided.*” The phrase that follows, “*I needed that*” uplifts the potential emotional and spiritual consequences of not having someone that believes in you or to guide your spirit. To believe you have someone or space that sees hope/humanity in you, and where you come from is critical for fighting against hopelessness, or what Sosa named as the phenomena of “*hurt people hurting people*”. Building hope, sustaining hope and connecting to hope is articulated as a necessary practice of Healing Justice. I delve further in this analysis in chapter 7 when I discussed the result “*The Hope “we” Pull on to Circle-Back on Relationships.*”

Y.O.C situated their understanding of Human Justice and Healing Justice within the lives of those most ignored by historical, structural, and interpersonal violence. Healing is communicated as a spiritual journey towards hope. Associated with pathways taken by elders, ancestors (i.e., people they know in person and in spirit) community leaders, and selves to move away from hopelessness. When asked, why is he involved in the Healing Justice Movement, Victor commented:

*When people see people in the community doing things for the community, when people see maybe a dude that’s in a gang helping an old lady with her groceries, you know people get a sign of hope. Because it’s like this negative image that keeps getting portrayed and when they actually see some people doing something or they see people could come together have a barbeque, um we had a barbeque um last year H.O.L.L.A! day um and we fed like the whole park and you know um some of us didn’t even eat, but it was cool, we had like a basketball tournament, we fed um, we fed like the kids in the park. And you it’s like damn, a lot of us was locked up, a lot of us was incarcerated, a lot of us was like this stigma that society says about us and then it’s like we are doing like good things, but this stuff is not going to be documented, this stuff is not going to be put on the news, this stuff is not going to be portrayed. And I think like that is like hope, people are doing things, people are getting together, um people are getting bringing their resources and they’re like doing things for people they don’t even know. Some people see it like this is hope, like this is brothers coming home their like feeding people, their like looking out for people, they’re creating smiles, we had like finger paint, water paint you know we were doing a lot of things that day in the park. Seeing the transformation in people that um you knew they once were in a different stage in their lives and doing different things.*

Y.O.C described a clear understanding of the internal energy needed to generate and facilitate healing not only for themselves, but for their community as well.

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*“I don’t want to let my ancestors down. Like, I’m makin’ sure I’m given them – like, I given back a legacy as well. I think the end goal of my journey is to pass the legacy... Just pass that legacy on” – Alex*

Y.O.C articulated building a grassroots movement as a cultural practice (Brave-Heart, 1995 & Aho, 2014), wisdom passed down through generational knowledge (Rivera, 1995).

Y.O.C expressed the importance of sharing lessons and rituals as a practice of handing down legacy;

*One, I think what I do is, though it’s a choice, I think it is also, it is su’in ? that has been like written, already written. Like su’un that has been engrained, and somethin’ that has been given to me. Somethin’ that has been passed down as a legacy, somethin’ that’s just like, somethin’ that’s worth more than me. It’s very hard, if you’re not real with it. You know? It’s everybody on the block. It’s everybody who been in prison. It’s everybody who’s bein’ deported right now. It’s everybody who’s just dyin’ all over the world, you know, who’s just starvin’, so many things, the earth herself that is dyin’. I think um, what I do, is somethin’ that like I never thought in the world when I was younger that I could be doin’, you know?... Didn’t know what was goin’ happen after twenty-one or eighteen. Su’in calls out to me, this calls out to me, and this called out to me and grabbed me and like, it helped me and saved me.*

Alex described connecting to a spirit within him that was passed down through “*the legacy.*” An energy of hope that was ingrained in him. A spirit that is for “*everybody on the block.*” The experience of connecting to the spirit or “*the legacy*” is what Alex believed “*saved him.*” Alex’s analysis suggests connecting to such a source of hope can facilitate healing and justice for urban youth. Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing was the first thematic category that emerged for Y.O.C’s lived experience of healing as a movement praxis. The second thematic category developed in this chapter is *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing.*

### **Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing**

*“All that vulnerability that they (H.O.L.L.A!) throw me in, and I help them (other youth) cope with that. Cuz people help me cope with my vulnerability” – Rakim.*

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I present on the term Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing, which is the second of three themes that emerged from my analysis. Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing, has 2 (two) subthemes: 1) *Learning the Power of Your Vulnerability* and 2) *Speaking Your Truth and Holding Others' Truth*. The first sub-theme presented under the term Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Relational Healing describes relational connections (i.e., knowledge) that were open up when participants leaned into their own and others' vulnerability.

### Learning the Power of Your Own Vulnerability

*"Being vulnerable is how you work yourself up for self-transformation."*-Sosa.

When the video film director, asked: how do you live out and practice healing and justice, Y.O.C responded with:

*"we fight", "we cry", "we yell", "we listen to music", "jogging", "smoking weed", "I read books", "I do poetry", "I'm an artist", "having sex", "working out", "being vulnerable", "meditating and praying", "being Muslim."*

Y.O.C communicated an analysis of building a grassroots movement that suggests the first part of healing is trusting yourself enough to "opening up" to express the emotions of your pain. In his interview, Victor commented on a source of healing that came from reflecting and crying:

*"I feel like I was in prison for 7 years so I did a lot of healing. I feel like I did a lot of, I went back so many times (reflecting), I cried, I did different you know so, I was really trying to be different."*

In her interview, Rachna commented on the importance of crying, as healing:

*Healing is crying; I think that I cry a lot. In an act of resistance, when people try to make me feel bad, or ashamed or embarrassed for crying, I just want to give a big middle finger to that, because crying is our body, it our body, it's our bodies strength. It is not a weakness. And we fall victim to these little mentalities that cause us to cause so much harm to each other. So I cry and try to create spaces where it is ok to do that (cry).*

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Rachna alludes to cultural and political forces which make it hard to be vulnerable (i.e., cry) in her lived experiences. She describes the importance of resisting forces that try to define her expression (and other youth expression) of crying, as something “*weak*.”

On the other hand, in his interview, Alex reflected on how music helped him better understand and unpack his vulnerabilities (feelings):

*My mom playin' mad Mary J. Blige in the house, mad Al Green. I think everything that music has given to me helped me understand myself better. Understand my feelins'. Understand how to let go of pain, but also, how to like, cry sometimes. Word, I always used to love to dance when I was younger. So I think that was also an amazin' thing. And I like um, I like martial arts. I think that's also a form of art, in a way of energy, or like, just like, you bein' grounded with the earth and bein' grounded with yourself.*

Alex's analysis suggests healing is connected to understanding yourself on a deeper level, and music can facilitate a process of understanding your emotions better. Y.O.C, in general, communicated healing as an emotion process, and experience(s) of vulnerability lived-out through mental, spiritual, physical and artistic expressions. Embracing one's vulnerability was a source of healing. In his interview Rakim express his own journey with *embracing gendered-based* vulnerability:

*“when I first came around, I could not embrace gender but since being around H.O.L.L.A! and NuLeadership I have embraced this and see them... this speaks a big role and helps me understand all barriers and concepts different from when I first came around.”*

Rakim touched on his personal struggles with not being able to “*embrace gender*” before he was engaged with NuLeadership and H.O.L.L.A!'s 18-month human and healing –centered youth organizing training. Rakim speaks of gender, but in this context, gender also means sexuality. He said since joining H.O.L.L.A! “*I have embraced this (gender) and see them (trans people)*.” The them, in “*see them*” is speaking of people who identify as transsexual. Rakim's quote demonstrates the role political education can have on youth healing in regards to gender

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related issues. To assist expanding youth's understanding of community with different experience(s) from their own.

Rakim's analysis cracks open struggles many cis males (but all humans suffer from) encounter. The inability to be able to "*embrace gender.*" Which would help them connect to the their own and others gendered-based vulnerabilities. Rakim and participants experienced a process that assisted them in building new/different human muscle needed to relate better to themselves and others.

Y.O.C associated healing with a praxis of being in a "*bag*" that allows space to reflect, engage with, express, and sit in/with a full range of feelings that stem from experiencing, witnessing, and inflicting violence on self and others. Said differently, what are the lessons learned of "*leaning into the tension and contradictions?*" Participants all described (in their own way) how being vulnerable, and/or opening up space for their people to be vulnerable was a necessary praxis for surviving and healing through daily struggles with violence. Rakim reflected on the first time Y.O.C met each other:

*when we first met each other, it's gonna be like any other time you meet someone, like I don't know this motherfuka. But after building, and interacting.... being in close spaces. We went on a **camping trip**; it brings us together. With H.O.L.L.A! and NuLeadership we **built that trust and that bond**, here is not a job for us, this is a family **building, building more relationships, embracing things we usually don't, embracing vulnerability.***

Y.O.C's narration of vulnerability registered a particular analysis, a recognition and acknowledgement that being vulnerable for urban youth is an extreme risk. Particularly, when youth are historically vulnerable to violence. Y.O.C articulated vulnerability as a chose, as an action(s) or a praxis. The youth in this study expressed a lived reality of vulnerability as an emotional space, where both violence and wisdom/lessons are present. Vulnerability was



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expressed as a process of trusting yourself (your ability to transform/journeying) and trusting others (the belief that others have the ability to transform as they journey with you/others).

Y.O.C movement of healing and justice offers the field of youth development insights of the emotional importance of identity development for urban youth surviving through daily attacks of violence. *Who are you*, is an important historical, socio-political and ontological question? *Who are you*, is a forever moving question? This is a question Y.O.C engaged throughout the radical healing process. During interviews, Y.O.C was asked, *who are you?* In response, Y.O.C shouted-out political statements after political statement:

*“I’m formerly incarcerated”, “I’m from Brooklyn”, “I’m queer”, I’m someone who was incarcerated as a juvenile”, I’m white- from a Polish background” “I’m whatever I chose to be for the day”, “I’m just a regular girl from Brooklyn”, “I committed harm”, “I’m from Mississippi”, “I’m a gang member”, “my father was incarcerated and I use to be ashamed”, “I’m undocumented”, “I (cis gender male) was raised by women”, “I’m Indigenous”, “I get triggered”, “I’m young”, “I’m Muslim”, “I’m from Honduras”, “I’m Afro-Caribbean”, “I’m new to organizing”, I’m a Healing Justice youth organizer”, “I’m my ancestors” “We are the movement arm of H.O.L.L.A!”, “we are parents”, “I’m a descendants of slaves”, “I’m a children of a drug users”, “Black”, “I’m a survivor”, “I’m not a criminal”, I can take responsibility, “I’m South-Asian”, “we are individuals and communities that ultimately seeks to increase healing and justice.”*

When asked directly; who are you? Sosa dropped this wisdom:

*“the who are you question, to me, it means to know yourself on a deeper level than what society sees you as, and to remove stigma away from that you that the government places on youth.”*

Finding one’s own inner courage, trust, and know “how” to see oneself (yet alone others) as human and/or as powerful, in a world that has “othered”/dehumanized one’s existence is an emotional process of identity recovery (healing). In the quote above, Sosa’s analysis suggests that learning who you are on a “*deeper level*” - your own histories, contradictions, dreams and vibrations as a political, cultural and social expression is critical for healing youth’s emotions related to identity development.

## Speaking Your Truth/Holding Space for Others' Truth

*“Then bein’ at school I felt I could be honest, like that was my truth. My truth was that my dad was incarcerated. My truth is that my dad, because of bein’ incarcerated, made me who I am”- Miasia.*

Responding to the questions; who are you? And what are you healing from? Phil commented:

*I feel like me being white, me you know uhm of european descent. I feel like for me to uhm not only look deep into myself but to also uncover the uh blindness and the deafening of others people of my community you know who are Caucasian, white, European descent. Whatever you know because those are the people that either causing the harm in these communities or just not aware of the harm that's going on in these communities and are not supporting any change. So I feel like uhm me as being white and growing up as someone who grew up in these communities (of color with other youth of color) it's important for me to know you uncover the mask, uncover the truths and to help spread it you know amongst everyone and you know maybe I can relate to others better and maybe I can help people understand from my point of view what I went through.*

In a space where youth of color are constantly uplifting their Blackness and Indigenous identities as well as critiquing (i.e., questioning) white supremacy as the only white youth organizer in the entire organization, Phil was regularly reminded of his connection to whiteness.

*“So, I feel like uhm me as being white and growing up as someone who grew up in these communities (of color with other youth of color) it's important for me to you know uncover the mask, uncover the truths.”*

Phil’s analysis begins with a historical truth; Phil owning his identity/whiteness or “*european descent.*” Secondly, Phil expresses an experiential truth of growing up in urban communities of color surviving through violence. Together these realities and experiences formulate a compass for Phil to follow in regards to healing with himself, as well with the relationship between his racial identity and geographic neighborhood experiences (i.e., relation). For Phil, healing in this regard, includes a praxis of connecting and teaching people from his white-community the truth about urban youth’s histories, experiences and realities.

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Phil articulated a type of community-led process discussed in detail within Green Haven Think Tank Non-Traditional Approach to Social and Criminal Justice. The Green Haven Think Tank called what Phil described above as “*Empowerment Theory*”, referring to the responsibilities of the person(s) in prison to heal themselves by engaging in personal study about the ways their communities are impacted by violence as a foundation for personal transformation needed to engage in healing with their *own* larger community (Green Haven Think Tank, 1979/Rivera, 1995).

Vulnerability was facilitated as an intentional process of co-creating spiritual and emotional trust which allowed rawness into the relational space of knowing as youth journeyed. The experiences from the Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training coupled with The Youth Organizing Collective Training created a space for youth in the study to learn from their own internal struggles with each other about the importance of speaking their truth to power and/or to the people they are in relationship with. Y.O.C learned the “*how*” of “*Keeping It Real*,” or speaking their truth (discussed further in chapter 8). They learn the importance of developing new human muscle(s) needed to hold space for their family and communities’ truth (that may or may not affirm their own truth) ...

Holding space for others was communicated by Rakim earlier quote and analysis “*embracing things we usually don’t, embracing vulnerability.*” Rakim analysis signifies emotional knowledge learned through a process, and from a lived experience with others he had to hold space for, and vice versa. Vulnerability in this regard engages a practice with consistent struggles. With many waves of turbulence, and on-going conflicts. Moments filled with internal and interpersonal doubt, fear, and courageous emotional reflections. Over the 18-month relationship building and relationship transformation process, Y.O.C experience many conflicts

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with each other. Fights. Disagreements. People not talking to each other or gossiping about each other, to name a few instances. Earlier in the radical healing process, Y.O.C discussed and developed an agreement/culture to assist them/us with being able to circle-back on conflict with those they are intentionally in relationships with or those they chose to struggle with.

In this regard, over time, through rituals, conflict becomes an opportunity to reflect on individual and collective processes of learning, journeying, and understanding. As a ritual process Y.O.C engaged arguments, disagreement and tension as a platform for wisdom. As a collective experience to reflect on... in many of the internal healing circles, youth in Y.O.C opened up and shared with each other their grievances, disappointments and hopes for others to grow/transform. Over many experiences and internal healing circles, this community agreement became a reality that many (all at different moments) in Y.O.C respected (to their individual capacity), cared for and worked to uplift. The notion of “*Circle-Back*” became a culture Y.O.C desired to live in and create with others. The praxis of “*circling-back*” was extremely important for Y.O.C, because many of them/us were/are often pushed-out and/or ignored in general. “*Circling-Back*” (more in chapter 7) was one of the many ways Y.O.C practiced holding space for each other.

Y.O.C song “[Share Your Story](#)” off their Healing Justice Movement Album titled the “Report-Back” is an analytical example of creating internal and communal space to “*speak their truth and hold space for organizers/family’s truth.*” Alex elaborates further on the importance of sharing and hearing truth in the healing process for communities fighting against violence.

*I think healing is truth though. It’s truth... Truth ... it could be good or bad. You know? But I think it’s (truth) always healing to at-least get that (truth) because, you normally don’t get that (truth). And you don’t get that (truth), you stay trapped within lies. To know the truth of how this world works, to know the truth of how history is laid out, how my people is looked at, how we live, to know the truth of how women are being treated, how all women be treated, to know the truth of how like distant I am from most of my heritage and most of my community. And the*

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*truth of just not knowing. If you'll be able to like know all of it, ever. Word man, I think um, there's a lot of truth, to still like – that I'm still tryin' to learn, you know? I think there's good truth to to know that um, the work that I've been doing is real. I think that that's amazing to know because, it's caring about humanity, and it's caring about people.*

Alex acknowledged, “*Truth ... it could be good or bad*” either way, it is still medicine (I.e., healing) to heal and organizing the people’s hearts to dismantle systems of lies (hooks, 1993). Alex analysis suggests that healing happens when individuals and communities impacted by violence co-created their own communal space to bear witness to the truth of each other; the world, interpersonal gender-based violence; and community beef. Healing and justice happened when we are ready to engage (have the capacity and “how”) and witness the journeys of our own and others’ vulnerabilities.

**Empathy/Humanizing People/Stuff who Harm You/You Harm.** *“Knowing I sometimes make mistakes, and I can forgive myself for it.”-Sosa.*

One of the major lessons, and hard to swallow teachings of Human Justice and Healing Justice that propelled personal healing was the power to forgive (or be in a process to forgive) those who have hurt you the most. For Y.O.C, to forgive meant:

*“letting go”, “holding one accountable”, “empathizing/a process of working hard to understand the journey of the very one being forgiven”*

What’s the “*othered*” journey to this moment of violence? How have the “*othered*” been harmed? What is the relationship between how the “*othered*” was harmed, and harmed the “*othered*” is (re)producing (if any)? How does this relationship inform practices and strategies for healing and accountability for all involved? How do you determine who is all involved? And where does all of this start? And ends? During his interview Alex explained the necessity to humanizing people who have harmed him most, for his own healing:

*“You know, you could do all these other pieces within’ healin’ and if you, if you, and if you just like, not lettin’ go, then you might not ever heal. And I don’t think lettin’ go is not... I don’t think lettin’ go is not holdin’ people accountable for things that happened in the past or*

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*things that happen now. I think lettin' go is for you not to absorb that energy that has created that, so you don't become them, like that. So you don't replicate that um, those same processes and those same like, ideas and feelins'.*"

Alex describes the practice of “letting go” as a wellness strategy used to protect one from absorbing negative energy that was generated to harm spirit/humanity in the first place. Alex’s analysis of “letting go” is theoretically connected to Victor’s analysis of “forgiving.” They both center the internal (spiritual) work required to reach an emotional place where “letting go” or “forgiving” is even possible. This point describes the struggle within a praxis of living out vulnerability. When asked about healing, Victor told a story about forgiving his father without even speaking to his father. Victor expresses how forgiving his father helped him release a much-needed emotional load.

*“I forgave my father for not being there I did a lot of things that were healing to me and like the biggest thing was like forgiving my father. Like I didn't have to tell him that, but I think just telling myself that I forgave him for not being there removed a lot of like trauma/hurt from me and I just it was just like that was like a big load that I was carrying.”*

When asked, what are you healing from? Rachna, shared a story about how she was not able to move passed (let go- get over) her ex-partner, and the harm he/they committed against each other, until she was able to develop “new human muscles” to recognize her ex’s humanity: the ways he’d been harmed; and truth of his fuller story. The quote below describes a praxis rooted in a radical empathy - to humanizing the people you experienced violence by and with. Rachna commented on her journey of healing from gender-based violence.

*Um, there was no honesty. Everything was like, supposed to be a certain way and then everyone ends up lying. And I felt healed only after I stopped criminalizing my partner. Understanding that yes, hands were put on one another. Um, words – his hands his hands may be put on me, things I was doing was impact – this is all happening. And criminalizing, and acting like this person only has one human to him, really didn't help me heal, it didn't help my cause, it didn't help me relive the experiences that I felt and help me like, get really mad thinking about like, “Oh, how could he do this, how could he do that?” It didn't help me self-reflect. It didn't help me grow, it didn't help me see the truth, it did not help me let him go. This is why I stayed. I'm like, “I'm with this monster,” but then, he was – I still loved him. There was still a*

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*human there. And so when finally, I acknowledged that truth, was when I could let him go for some reason.*

Rachna's analysis articulated a process of journeying with relationships through good or bad. Which is describes a commitment to hold space for justice and healing, even when holding space is painful. Vulnerability is often a painful process with sweet rewards. Rachna analysis uplifts the important but hard (and sometimes complicated) work of self-reflection that can lead to self-transformation for individuals who experience interpersonal violence. Rachna, Alex and Victor's analysis points to the depth of the emotional work needed engaged in holding space for others existence/truths.

*“Letting-go”* is not a static experience. This experience itself is filled with many dynamics, reflections, moments and interactions. At times ... *“letting-go”* feels impossible, unacceptable, or to forgive is just too hard at the moment (with your capacity) .... *“Letting go”* in emotionally difficult moments is hard. And in many instances across the radical healing process, Y.O.C (all of us) did not have the capacity or will to offer up vulnerability – to humanizing or empathizing with relationship(s) that produced violence in their humanity. *“Letting-go”* suggests a deep internal process of healing or working through past interpersonal emotions with self and others grounded in action(s).

Y.O.C analysis of a building a grassroot movement is born from a standpoint of complex experience(s) of daily encounters of harm produced by systems, inequalities, people, ideology and white supremacy. And reproduced in their interpersonal relationships with each other. Y.O.C lives were situated within a reality of ongoing hurt, for them, sometimes, the best way to heal and protect themselves was by embracing the forces hurting them. Rakim comments on how he stays spiritually well in a world where people are getting “fucked up”:

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*you think about it like how the fuck I'm a heal from this, so when mass incarceration , oppression, racism, like unequal rights , we have feminism all these different variables, like you have to embrace all of it cause if you don't shyt gonna, you gonna fucking be mad at the world. You gonna be like the current president, smiling but he mad at the whole fucking world. Whatever he went through so I mean those take you back to your healing because you gotta be willing to embrace them. Like you get teased everywhere. Where the bully, even the bully is bullying because he got bullied, you know what I'm saying. So, it's like that shyt affects you. You now so you gotta find some type of uhuh system to grab and heal from. Cuz if you don't shyt is really gonna fuck you up. It's gonna fuck you up bad too.*

Y.O.C shares a notion of forgiveness, letting go, and/or moving on, that is depended on being connected to a “how” and/or a “system to grab and heal from.” Alex’s analysis in the earlier quote further unpacks a notion of “*accountability as two folded*”:

*“I don't think lettin' go is not holdin' people accountable for things that happened in the past or things that happen now. I think lettin' go is for you not to absorb that energy that has created that, so you don't become them, like that. So, you don't replicate that um, those same processes and those same like, ideas and feelings.”*

Empathizing with other humanities who've harmed you is one example of *two-folded accountability or collective healing*. Rakim’s analysis of, “*So it's like that shyt affects you. You now so you gotta find some type of uhuh system to grab and heal from*” is critical for mapping out the working relationship between humanizing others and healing. Rakim’s analysis suggest healing is generated from seeking emotional insights about the harm other(s) have experienced that have perpetuated harm onto one’s own humanity. Rakim analysis of “*Cuz if you don't shyt is really gonna fuck you up. It's gonna fuck you up bad too*” suggest spiritual, and psychological hurt can be enormous for those who do not seek emotional insights about the violence other(s) have experienced that perpetuated harm onto own their/our humanity.

In this section, the Youth Organizing Collective shared Human Justice and Healing Justice strategies that incorporates vulnerability as tool for intentionally connecting to the emotional journeys of hurt, learning and expressing oneself, humanizing people, and “*letting go*.” This result peeked into the journeys of those who are hurting, and those who heal through



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learning about the hurt of others as a continuum of knowledge production. As Phil mentioned, healing is understood as a journey: “*Healing is knowing that you are going to fall along the journey towards healing.*” In the next, and final section, I describe Y.O.C’s personal, communal and movement benefits of building relationships as intentional process of journeying to transform with each other.

### **Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation**

*“I think healing is a lifetime battle” – Phil.*

During my organizing with Y.O.C, I witnessed, documented, and experienced the many ways youth learnt about themselves on a “*deeper level.*” I experience participants find the courage to share their own stories; first, to their own spirits; secondly, to their peers in Y.O.C; third, to their local community/their home and finally, with others from very different life circumstance and upbringings (i.e., a typical student from Columbia University or New York University (NYU) or people of color who did not grow up “hood”). In speaking their truth, whether with people from their lived experience(s) or those with very different life realities, I have witnessed Y.O.C challenge people’s assumptions of what it is to be “*human*” and what it means and takes to be “*more human*” or to gain new “*human muscle.*”

Speaking one’s truth as an intentional praxis of relationship building and relationship transformation was uplifted over and over by Y.O.C throughout their Healing Justice Movement organizing. Y.O.C referred to this process as spiritual, where the spirits of organizers are activity and intentionally working to connect with the spirits of their communities/society. Connecting to spirit, the invisible world, and other youth’s spirit is a vulnerable process. An intentional process of building the courage and/or removing the fear to let down internal walls/barriers of “protection” (from the visible world) that usually block spirit (our full humanity).

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My analysis of Y.O.C's relationship building and transformation process suggest that healing and justice happens/transpires when youth of color and their communities are engaged in journeys with each other about the ways violence steals well-being. Y.O.C articulates a spiritual connection and understanding of vulnerability that comes with the tension, a tension that is always with our humanity, that pushes our humanity forward, that questions our humanity, that makes us ask more questions about ourselves, each other, and the world(s) (visible and invisible). Y.O.C's journeying towards relationship building/transformation took root within this context.

The theme, Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation, is the last of three themes on Healing Justice that emerged. Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation has three (3) sub-themes: 1) *Healing Can't Be Done Alone*; 2) *Building and Shifting Relationship with Community*; and 3) *Healing is Different for Each Youth* that describes how Y.O.C associated healing with creating intentional space for relationship building and relationship transformation with themselves, their personal family, movement, and the larger society. Participants all described (in their own way) how the process, and the journey from pain, differed, from youth experiences. These results describe youth' individual commitment to struggling with others as necessary means towards healing. Below, I provided analysis of Y.O.C's praxis of healing as journey (with yourself and others) that can't be done alone.

### **Healing Can't Be Done Alone**

*"Old school Black love.... or what Indigenous people would call organizing around the feminine"- Cory*



H.O.L.L.A!'s Ritual Program to Launch the 18-month Radical Healing Process. March 20. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!.

Y.O.C met for the very first during H.O.L.L.A! ritual programs (March 2016). One of the key terms that night was “*Ubuntu*.” The ability to see yourself (i.e., spiritual and material) within the other spirits/energy/selves was articulated as analysis for healing. Human Justice and Healing Justice requires collective healing. Similarly, Human Justice and Healing Justice suggest healing happens at multiple intersections simultaneously and integratively: ***individual transformation***, ***community organizing*** and ***system dismantling***. In alignment, Transformative Organizing (Mann, 2010) adheres as the individual heals, the local community and larger society heals as well. The youth in this study communicated healing as a lived process that required building new relationships with themselves and others. They’ve lived out an experience of mending current relationships; and they lived with a clarity around the understanding that their own personal healing could not be done alone, but in fact, at times their healing depended on interpersonal bonds.

In the quote below, Victor describes how his connection to Islam allows him to connect more with the “*spirit*” behind what people in “*his*” world are communicating:

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*But, not just get by, I also felt like I was restoring myself I felt like, like as I became Muslim, as I started to learn a lot of different things, I learned how to like read Arabic, um I was doing like a lot of self-reflecting. And I was saying even when I used to listen to music it was like different, like it was just like music that I would just bump my head to I started to listen to the words and I started to like really like grasp the message. I feel like artist are also giving a message that we can't grasp and I feel like converting to Islam kind of like opened up my third eye to like really grasp the message and the words that people are saying.*

When asked, what is the Healing Justice Movement? Miasia describes healing that can't be done alone:

*Like every time that you open up and share a story, every time that you build with someone, every time that we connect with the community, it leads to someone gettin' justice. So, I feel like its "healin' justice" because the first part of it is you have to clearly heal. Like you have to open up. You have to be willin' to take that step. And then the second part is justice because, whether it's justice for you or it's justice for someone that you know, or someone completely different, we're still helpin' in some way, to bring justice to these – like, our community and to people that we care about, and givin' back.*

Miasia describes the ways relationship building built on vulnerability or filled with “opening up” provide opportunities for collective healing that can “bring justice to these – like, our community and to people that we care about.” Miasia’s quotes uplifts an intersectional truth, that our individual healing is connected to each other. Healing or not healing to some degree is located in individual choices to “open up” or to “hold back.” Victor responds to the same question: what is the Healing Justice Movement?

*Well part of the vision is giving the like youth like the tools that they need to like survive in a society that is trying to like exterminate them. Showing them their leadership roles, how do we show them that you are a leader and like society is like trying to suppress your leadership. Our mission is just like to try like and show the world or our communities or different people that we come in contact with, that there is so much more there. That there is so much more wisdom and so much more happening in these communities with these youth, they're not just angry and violent and like don't want to be educated and like all these you know yeah they're rebelling but they're rebelling for a reason. You know um and the society doesn't try to understand why these kids are rebelling, you know and we just try to like embrace that and like we know why you rebelling. Um but, we try to like curb how they should go about rebelling not control but, we understand and we explain to them like we was rebelling too, we also need you to rebel with us, like you know your voice matters to us, you know we fighting for the same thing. And we just trying to give you the tools and how you can use that same energy that you use in the streets you*

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*know on a different platform and sometimes not even on a different platform but just the tools and get the information and take it back to the streets, you know so um that we can heal and we can prepare to fight.*

Victor shares a narrative about healing and justice that transpires when relationship building is built on a movement praxis of sharing “*a legacy*” of surviving through violence(s)/harm. Victor uplifts a notion of journeying that dismantles that lies non-traditional leadership do not support their communities. Victor analysis of healing as a collective process, describes a process of knowing each other to “*prepare to fight*”, that involves sharing “tools”, “*the same energy*” and a “*platform.*”

Both Miasia and Victor quotes echo vibrations of “*Warrior Spirit*” teachings. A praxis of relationship building, and getting to know each other, built on the foundation of fight and “*rebellious*” for sustaining liberation. “*Warrior Spirit*” described by Green Haven’s organizer Hassan, encompasses an energy, moral compass, and politic of fight, and organizing that propels experience(s) of collective healing from violence. Within and across interviews, Y.O.C expressed fight, and a need to shift relationships in their everyday experiences for survival and healing.

### **Relationship Building and Relationship Transformations**

On a rainy Friday evening of March, 31 2017 inside of Mount Pisgah Baptist Church located on 212 Tompkins avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn, over 75 people showed up to celebrate the talents being shared by youth of color (within the New York City area) at *The Let the Talents Heal: Talent show*. The theme represented the power of “youth using their talents to heal themselves and their community.” Youth shared a variety of performances: Dances, R&B, Raps, and Art with the larger community. There were over 12 youth performances; and a team of youth and elder served as judges to evaluate each performance. Youth won prizes: trips to

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recording studio, season passes to Six Flags Great Adventure and H.O.L.L.A! swag. The event's second aim was to celebrate and recognize the leadership of femme/womyn supporting the personal development of Y.O.C (as an individual and as a collective). Y.O.C created a space to publicly appreciate the femme/womyn at H.O.L.L.A!. We honored a selected few sisters with legacy awards. Y.O.C engaged in ceremonial practice of acknowledgement, as a practice to resist un-acknowledgement (Brave-Hart, 1995).

Y.O.C Healing Justice Movement underscored a commitment to self-preservation in the face of daily threats of violence. *"Let the Talents Heal"*, was Y.O.C first ever public launching/announcing of their Healing Justice Movement. From the very beginning of the movement, Y.O.C co-created a space to integrate the political need to heal in community (with others). Using artistic expression as a tool and conduit, Y.O.C created the Audre Lorde Community Healing Mural titled:

*"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence – it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare" What are you healing? What does healing look like to you?*



This image is a representation of H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice Movement. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective Praxis.

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Church members, youth from the local Bedford-Stuyvesant community, friends and family of Y.O.C, organizers within the NYC social justice scene and grassroots community-based organizations filled the church building. Attendees aged ranged from 7 years to 80 years old. Most attendees were youth. Music was blasting with Hip-Hop; Rap; R&B; and Caribbean Music as people filled into the church. Attendees were ushered inside by Y.O.C. Attendees were asked to sign-in, and complete Y.O.C self-developed *Healing Justice Movement Youth-Community Assessment*. Afterwards, attendees were escorted to the *Audre Lorde Community Healing Mural* to share their personal reflections and see other reflections.

In the context of healing as self-preservation or as the need to survive, when asked what are you healing from? Community members at the talent show responded with:

*“PATARICHY”, “from the hurt and pain”, “being alone”, “EMOTIONAL ABUSE”, “being alone”, “from intimate relationships”, “Reading”, “Stop and Frisk”, “inner doubt that has been cultivated by whiteness, racism and sexism”, “RAPE Culture” “An existential crisis, an identity crisis”*

Y.O.C use of mural as ritual (i.e., as healing) where the analysis and experiences represented in the quotes above (and mural) could inform a communal healing process - a communal understanding of the needs for survival/healing. *The Audre Lorde Community Healing Mural* became a platform or point of collectively outlining the need within community to heal. Despite the relational shifts (i.e., with people, systems and community) that were outlined, in the context of self-preservation, the second part of the *Audre Lorde Community Healing Mural* asked, what does healing look like for you? Community members responded with:

*“You Are Perfect, Just as You Are”, “To Love and Respect”, “Play for the whole day”, “Drinking tea”, “being yourself”, “Spending time with my amazing friends”, “Believe in yourself good things will happen”, “Live Life”, “You are perfect”, “Eradicate anything that prevents you from it.”*

## **Journeying is Different for Every Youth**

In a world in which we live, humanity and spirit are often separated from general understanding. In this study, healing and justice was articulated, lived, and practiced and experienced as an evolutionary process. A walk (i.e., crawl) towards recovery from the separation; from the pain, from the violence. Healing and justice were constructed as many moments of transformation that happen over time. “*Not in one day/ or in a retreat.*” Through journeying: day in and day out.” From NTRLT to Y.O.C to the Healing Justice Movement, and to our personal lives. Y.O.C described a healing in which “*you can’t put time on healing.*” Youth in this study engaged in a practice of consciousness rising as a journey. Human Justice and Healing Justice were communicated as a process that allows youth to study their own experience(s) and interpersonal relationship dynamics simultaneously as an approach for consciousness rising. In this regard, critical consciousness is a process that allows the emotional courage for interconnecting with others (similar and different). Y.O.C understood critical consciousness as spiritual wisdom youth receive along the journey:

*“Consciousness seeking is something that feels like a must for all of us, as a practice of healing, like actually seeking understanding/consciousness as a compass to understand your responsibility to yourself and those interconnected to your spirit.”*

Having an understanding that everyone has their own healing process was an overwhelmed analysis communicated. Acknowledging the different realities as truth. Speaking your truth while holding space for others’ truth allows space for intersectionality or struggle or tension or balance or room for the mess to grow. And space for many individuals’ journeys of healing from similar and different paths of violence to intersect. Y.O.C communicated a thick analysis and reality of Human Justice and Healing Justice that was



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*“different for everyone”; can’t put time on it /healing; “for every being to figure out”; “people heal in different ways”; “everyone has their own way of defining healing justice.”*

Y.O.C expressed an emotional understanding of healing as different for different types of hurt/pain, and different for every human. When asked, what you are healing from, Victor commented:

*“To me healing is like, I understand we have different types of traumas and I think healing, I heal differently when different things happen.”*

Miasia, explain healing was different for each youth organizer in Y.O.C:

*We fight. We cry. We yell. Um, we listen to music, we talk. Um, there’s a lot of different things that goes on here, like, it’s different for each one of us. So, conversation might be healin’ to me, but it might not have been healin’ to someone else. Listenin’ to music could have been healin’ for them. So it’s different things and each one of us take away from the healing’ circles and the things that we do here, differently.*

When asked, what are you healing from? Phil commented with:

*I don't think you could just heal overnight or in a week or a month, you know i'm sure for other people everybody case is different but I feel in my case its a lifetime battle where you know your constantly trying to overcome you know the flashbacks or the memories or the times you've lost because of certain events so for me healing is like you know knowing for the rest of my life the only way to heal is to continue being a part of this work....*

Phil connected healing to a journey. A process of overcoming old memories of life event that created lost and the need to heal from events/lost. Phil articulates healing as a “*lifetime battle*” towards healing from specific life events and experiences. During our human and healing centered youth organizing process, we discovered healing as a form of wisdom that comes from journeying with each other through our lived experience(s) and reflection(s) of those lived experience(s) of violence.

**Conclusion: The Relational Process of Healing from Violence as a Praxis**

Lastly, the theme, Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation, captures the personal and collective journeying of transformation. In this section, I shared learnt lessons from Y.O.C's lived organizing experiences and reflections about the relational process of healing from violence as a praxis. Y.O.C describes a process of healing that uplifts the collective, but also left space for specific journeys of each person. My analysis reflects that Y.O.C practice of building a grassroots movement on healing and justice could not be done alone but needed partnership from community and ancestors. My analysis of Y.O.C praxis connects healing with the visible and invisible worlds/communities (Somé, 2000 & Somé, 1999). My analysis uplifts healing youth experienced from reflecting with other youth who share similar experiences violence, and dreams for transformation. My analysis suggests Grassroots Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing is essential to urban youth development, and the process of movement building. Grassroot Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing describes the energetic force of teaching and love that exist between youth and elders/ancestors.

## Chapter 7: Intergenerational Passing (Teaching) of Hope and Spirituality



Cory Green and Larry White of The Green Haven Think Tank pose for a picture after a talk about the seven-neighborhood study and non-traditional approach to development. October, 2018. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene

### Introduction: Braiding Hope and Spirit

In this chapter, I share thematic analysis of Y.O.C's praxis of hope and spirit to build/sustain grassroot movement. Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroot Movement has three sub themes: 1) Spirituality for Grounded-Ness, Protection and Direction; 2) A Collective "we"; and 3) Warrior Spirit that describe how Y.O.C associated connecting to energy that assisted them (and others) in sustaining themselves in the movement building process.

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### Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement

Thematic analysis of the final individual interviews (end of radical healing process) uncovered the theme Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement. The analytical

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theme Hope and Spirit to Sustain/Build Grassroots Movement has two subthemes. The first subtheme is *Spirituality for Grounded-ness, Direction and Protection*. This describes how Y.O.C expressed, and reflected on their live experiences of feeling spirit guiding, directing, and protecting them in relationship building across the movement building process. The second subtheme is *A Collective “we.”* This describes the emotional, physical and spiritual experience(s) (and reflections) of Y.O.C to ground their own energies to be able to connect to other humanities they journey with. Chapter’s 5 *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing* dived into this analysis as well.

### **Spirituality for Grounded-ness, Direction and Protection**

The first aspect of Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movements is Spirituality for Grounded-ness, Direction and Protection. This sub theme describes the experience of Y.O.C to engage/use energy as a spiritual guide for direction, analysis and protection as they build relationships within movement building process. Across Y.O.C’s interviews, there was a general feeling:

*“sage and like, all that stuff that you like, introduced me (Cory) to like, it helped me spiritually. Because, before sage, I used to like, really just... I used to feel that energy around me. And like, I mean, even now I still feel that energy around me. But like, I feel more grounded.”*

Youth knowing themselves, abilities and limitation within relationships building and relational transformation is knowledge needed to figure out the “*how*” to coexist in journeying. Y.O.C believed spirit to be a guide, analysis and protector of their process of relationship growing within movement building:

*Um, so I think that’s why it’s dope: How Our Lives Link Altogether! because there’s spirit always in there too. When you think about it. But yeah so... um... I think like growing’ up I wasn’t very intentional of like what was going’ on in my body. Or like, obviously I couldn’t see because I was always given’ the wrong stuff. Um, so, yeah! Like, now when I’m, when I think about spirit, like, I felt. I feel like, I feel like my body... is, is... one, um, I feel like, my spirit is more in control. You know, I feel like my spirit is more in control of my actions, my*

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*understanding', my like patience, um... I feel like, yeah, like, and because of that, I could be more careful with myself. And I could like **protect myself better.***

Spirit as analysis for protection and direction represented a sense of:

*“Peace and quietness....”, “Time to really think and reflect”, a sense of “doin’ a lot of like, soul-searchin’ within yourself at times.”*

Connecting to spirit as analysis for protection was discussed as:

*“It is like energy... it tells you who is around you and if they are not right...”, “I am listening to people’s spirit not their words...”*

In other examples, spirit articulated a guide to engage healing despite fear. In other breathe-outs and experiences, spirit, described a practice of courage practiced in Y.O.C’s ability to engage tension, and to bring intentional energy into relational dynamics. Spirit as an analysis for protection and direction describes an intention to be more human:

*You know, like... so, um... and yeah, it talks – it, it, it means I’m bein’ more intentional. It means I’m bein’ more intentional, how I talk to my women, how I treat my women, how I treat my young people, how I treat myself, um, it means like, I gotta be more um... more of a human bein’ then I haven’t been able to be. And I think like, Spirit gives you that talent. Ya understand? And I think that’s the grounded part. When people are not thinkin’ about it, you feelin’ me?*

The above analyses of Spirit as Grounded-ness, Direction and Protection provide insights into elements of spiritual development to assist youth in listening to their own humanity (i.e., searching their own soul) for connection to self that allows them to know how best to listen and connect to other “*people’s spirit and not their words.*” Spirit development was described by Y.O.C as a journey:

*“Um, so yeah, like, I think like Spirit... protects me. It makes me feel like, yeah like, I can control my journey. You feel me? Like, even though there’s messed up shit around me, there’s evils around me, there’s like, people who really wants to hurt me, and like, create things to hurt people that I care about... Spirit lets me know that like, it’s gonna guide me, and it gives me strength.”*

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As a guide, spirit provides “*strength.*” Within and across Y.O.C reflections of building a grassroots movement, I heard/witness correlations between youth being grounded in spirit which allows them to access energetic pathways for building hope along their journey. Spirit was described as *magic source* needed for journeying towards *A Collective “we”*.

### A Collective “we”

The second analytical theme of Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movements is *A Collective “we”*, which uplifts Y.O.C’s reflections and analysis of hope as energy to sustain H.O.L.L.A!’s Healing Justice Movement. This describes how Y.O.C reflected on their collective experiences of believing in each other (building hope around them), and their legacy. Grounded with spirit allow Y.O.C organizers to:

*maneuver around It (spirit or energy), I could... I feel it! And like, I know I could distance myself from bad energies, and before I felt like, real like, confused. Like, “Ok that... I know this is negative energy, I know this is bad, but like, what the hell I’m supposed to do?” Like, “What options is there?” Now, I feel more grounded in myself spiritually, mentally and stuff like that. Because like, I’m more in touch with myself. Like, I understand myself a little bit more.*

Being personally grounded in spirit, is part of a larger process to connect collectively with the spirit of others. Spiritual depth allows for youth to “*understand myself/themselves a little bit more*” which is necessary for knowing how (assessing the best way you can connect to others) to connect or gain access to other spirits and/or for deciding if it is even worth connection to other spirits. Y.O.C learned that sacrifice is a part of the building/sustaining a grassroots movement, and it is not always an easy praxis to engage:

*“A movement itself is hard – like, because that means... like that is su’in... that is like... that’s su’in that’s comin’ through – like we talk about legacies, and then we talkin’ about, we talkin’ about sacrifice, we’re talkin’ about... um... we talkin’ about like, like, bodies. Real people. Ya understand? So um...”*

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To be spiritually tapped into yourself is to be tapped into others' feelings and experiences. Connecting to spirit is a collective process. Ancestors are always present but other spirits as well. Y.O.C expressed a need to ground themselves in the movement building process. This self-grounding is believed to be connected to developing A Collective "we." Across Y.O.C interviews – I heard:

*"Right. Spiritually, like, you know, um... comin' with an energy of... of "How can I grow more as a collective?" Or "How can I show up more as a collective?"*

Personal grounded-ness is necessary for connecting to other's spirit within the movement building processes. In this case, spirit assisted youth with the self-grounding - knowing and understanding their individual purpose within A Collective "we." Y.O.C began to;

*realized, one of the most important things that I never really thought much about was... is, it is really important to ground yourself as an individual. And... to ground yourself as an individual and make sure that... to be like, secure with yourself, and able to like, hold it down on your own, when other people ain't around. I think it was always like, to me it was always like, "Oh, we're a group, so we're goin' hold down as a group.*

*"Being human" or connected to spirit within a grassroots movement building process "creates energy, creates dialogue (with yourself), and creates relationships" where youth can share vulnerable moments with each other because spirit has provided space for them to connect or access each other. Spirit was as A Collective "we", create the conditions to provide youth with a, "chance to like, be able to be vulnerable. say somethin' that um, that probably has been, you know, um, harming' them, traumatizin' them, or somethin' that they just needed to get out, that could probably help someone else."*

The Healing Justice Movement Circle Process (discussed in chapter 5) was a place where individuals spiritual grounding made it possible for collective grounded-ness to evolved:

*I feel like individual spirit definitely... it um, is definitely, you know like, just what I was talkin' about leadership, but there it's like, it's Spirit that like... creates energy, so we could*

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*create dialogue, or create relationships. Um, or create like, a healin' justice, a healin' justice experience. So, like, even in Healing Justice Movement Circle Process, I would know that like, you know like, Spirit has given somebody the moment and a chance to like, be able to be vulnerable. Say somethin' that um, that probably has been, you know, um, harmin' them, traumatizin' them, or somethin' that they just needed to get out that could probably help someone else. And I think, when we are able to just like, be open up with other humans, and like listen to that, um, we're connected to all spirits. You feel me? That's how spirits are connected. And, I seen that in many Healing Justice Movement Circle Processes, of like, um, people just holdin' space for like silence. Or like, people um... you know, even in our like, our um, "who are you", and people just one-on-one, your just like absorbin', um, a lot of this person's spirit. You feel me? And that person has never probably like, had the time to like, either like, explain this stuff to themselves. And I think that's like, so, so like, um... yeah like, you can't explain when Spirit is gonna happen for you. You feel me? You can't explain when like, somebody says somethin', and it lands on you so real that like, you shiver.*

As Somé, (2000) confessed, when in ritual or the healing process, spirit has the permission to drive and lead the relationship and experience. In these moments, *"you can't explain when spirit is gonna happen for you. You feel me?"* There are instances of emotional vulnerability and spontaneously that are often unexplainable. This is one of many examples of the benefits of connecting to other humanities in the process of healing and movement building.

*"We did a lot of stuff and like, even though we might have not seen the benefits of it, like I still feel like you know, like, it's comin' to us. Like, everything that happens, like you don't always have to see it, but just know like it happened for a reason, and, most shit we didn't have control over, but like, I was still like, "Yo, we got this."*





H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C) pose for a picture after their Healing Justice Circle Process at Allied Media Conference 2017. June 2017. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A.!

Towards the end of NTRLT we began developing the early foundation of H.O.L.L.A.'s Healing Justice Movement. It started from chart paper. At first, things felt so *“far-fetched.”* When we started the radical healing process (now), four years back, many of us were never engaged deeply in any organized grassroots movements. When asked to reflect back, Y.O.C offered:

*And then lookin' back, you know, all these months later, to like, “Wow, we did it. Like, we did all that. We actually came up with a blank piece of paper, notes, to... [Cory chuckles] you know, doin' all these healing circles and buildin' this movement, to...” you know, um... I remember we said “Oh, you know, we goin' try to get in contact with this community organization, try to do this many healing circless” and, it seemed like certain things were just so like... I don't want to say “far-fetched” but like, but it wasn't as realistic as – you know you be feelin' like “Yo, that's a lot of work we gotta do. That's a lotta people we gotta meet. That's a lotta conversations we gotta have.” But then after you do all that, you're like “Well, that wasn't that bad! [Cory chuckles] That wasn't that bad!” And, to me it's like, you know, I hear some people say “Oh, I'm at work,” or “I'm at my job” and this and that. To me, it's not really “work,” you know, because it's somethin' that you wanna do! It's su'in that you... you gotta have.*

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Y.O.C described hope and spirit as energy or “*somethin’ that you wanna do*” or to grow and sustain movement building. In other instances, Y.O.C expressed how their hope increased as they gave back to the movement: “*Pullin’ off the Healing Justice Movement first ever Summit. That, that gave me a lot of hope.*”

Phil analysis above gets at the healing youth experience when they are affirmed by the larger community. In the long quote below, Phil, uses a matchbox metaphor to describe how Y.O.C Healing Justice Movement is/was hope for many Y.O.C came in contact with:

*I think the goal – I think the best metaphor would be like, it’s like a matchbook. And the goal of... the goal is, to have the whole matchbook lit. Because you want to go, you know, a full fire. So each time, I feel like it’s another match bein’ lit. You know, each healing circle, each event, each time somebody says “Yo, good lookin’,” that’s another match bein’ lit. You know? And I think as you go deeper down a process, and you get close to that full matchbook bein’ lit, you get so much more energy and purpose. You find more purpose in what you’re doin’. You find more ways to like, to make it happen, when you think you couldn’t make it happen.*

Phil’s describes a process in which each healing circle (we did over 70) Y.O.C co-led serves to lights one match in the matchbox, until the entire matchbox is lit. Hope is a collective practice to generate energy (lighting matches) that can inspire yourself and others (more matches to light). A praxis to “*go deeper down a process*”, and to receive “*more energy and purpose*” to light, and sustain/build movement building.

Hope was described as a code word for feeling seen, for seeing others, and/or feeling connections: *when you notice... the collective hope is when you notice, how all our hopes are being, are being, um, affirmed.* Hope was expressed as feelings of gratitude and an emotional connection to co-exist with others you shared community with:

*You understand? Um... I definitely feel like, yeah, I’m grateful for like, everyone in Y.O.C., bein’ able to experience that. Ya understand? Because that’s somethin’ that tell you there’s hope. That’s like a real essence of hope. When you just like goin’ to fuckin’ D.C., Baltimore, Detroit, Chicago, don’t matter where you go, it’s just like, when you go to these places and you buildin’ with people, who’s like... “We gotchu.” Ya understand? “We share*

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*witchu. We sleepin' here witchu." [he laughs] Like, "Whatever's yours is mines, whatever mines is yours." Like, and it's like, everything – and while we know that these fuckin' systems is tryin' to hurt us and kill us. Ya understand? We's always – like, we still sayin' like, Yo, like, "Nah, brother. Chill." We still sayin' like, "We just need to like - we here for each other. This is how we goin' do it." Yeah man, um.*

Hope as a praxis to build/sustain energy for movement building was associated with the second theme, *A Collective "we"*. Y.O.C practiced hope as an organizing strategy to build/sustain grassroot movement building. However, community organizing can only go as deep as the individuals, their analyses, interpersonal dynamics, and the spirit within movement. Hope within Y.O.C analysis and praxis represented an explicit move from the individual to the collective. I heard over and over that:

*"Hope as an individual is hard to make it real.... Needs to be collective." Y.O.C experienced: "Hope is in the collective - like when Cory and the co-founders started H.O.L.L.A!"*

Over the course of organizing the Healing Justice Movement, Y.O.C engaged in collective hope for healing. Y.O.C as a collective in regards to cultivating and understanding hope:

*"Like hope is differently cause like for me I interpret hope differently now than I was before for me hope now means I can't heal by myself I gotta heal with the community."*

Hope as A Collective "we" is a praxis dedicated to creating vulnerable moments,

*When you can realize like Yo, people could be, um, one with another, um, after like, after sharin' somethin' so deep. Or after like, arguin'. Or just um... did not even knowin' each other. So, um... and then I think also in the movement, you know like, we met so many other like, young people, who was goin' through mad stuff. And, like to see that like, we were able to like, so like, just as leadership is a collective, hope is a collective thing. You feel me? You know, that shit like, you know, it's a um, it's definitely like, within all of us. And givin' and takin', it's like, it just moves like the wind. So um, you know just meetin' all these young people, who like just been through so much um, been through so much just like us, and like, um... and I think through those moments of people like us just bein' vulnerable, us holdin' space, or like, the holdin' space, um, us learnin' from them. I think like, in all the moments, we realized hope because we never had that before.*

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Y.O.C reflections and analysis on hope suggest that it is an energy to sustain as an organizing praxis and connection aimed at sharing vulnerability with other youth, they *“did not even know”* who was *“goin’ through mad stuff”*. Connecting to culture, community and other youth humanity in a spiritual manner was considered hopeful:

*“We were around so many, like, so much blackness and like, so many places you could call your home now, like that hope is much more- wider and much more, like, its much more- deeper and steep.”*

Hope as A Collective *“we”* expresses a deep belief in the collective:

*“we”*: *Like I had hope and I had faith in us and like everything that we were doin’ like, even the stuff that we were doin’ that wasn’t right! Like, I had... I had that faith like, “Yo, this is goin’ work itself out. Everything’s goin’ fall into place the way that it’s supposed to fall into place,” because, like we... did a lot of stuff.”*

Creating collective hope allows space for youth to *circle-backing* to interpersonal relationships in moment of disagreement, tension and conflict.

**The Hope *“we”* Pull on to Circle-Back on Interpersonal Healing.** Within the subtheme hope as A Collective *“we,”* interpersonal relationships were uplifted as a place to practice hope: *“Hope that the relationship you had with someone can transform into something better/healthier.”* Hope as a praxis of circling-back on interpersonal healing was discussed as a process that took time to develop. Many of Y.O.C shared:

*I had no hope because, I was just like, “We ain’t got no structure, we mad crazy, all of us is opinionated, like, all of us is goin’ through shit,” like, so I’m just like, like “How the fuck are we gonna accomplish [Cory laughs] anything if every time we turn around we havin’ a fight, somethins’ happenin’ here, somebody’s not here, this is goin’ on,” it’s like, I had no hope! But then after bein’ here and bein’ involved like, and fully like, bein’ in the process, I got hope.*

In moments youth doubt themselves and their community. This is a result from internalized trauma, relational dynamics, individual’s action(s), and lack of grassroots rituals.

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The quote above expresses the importance of doing hope or being in the process of moving from a place of hopelessness to hopeful in regards to healing interpersonal relationships.

In the example below, hope was expressed as deep knowing on a “*spiritual level*” (internal/emotional level). Miasia said:

*“After every fight, that gave me a lot of hope, cause like I said, I said to myself, “I’m not comin’ back here! [She laughs] This is it! Don’t contact me, don’t call me, like, this is it.” And like, like you said, on the spiritual level like, I... I knew what it was, like I knew that I had love and care for everybody in here but like, I couldn’t bring myself to say it.”*

Miaisa, articulates a notion of hope or healing that comes after *every fight* or a moment of need. Another thread of collective hope uplifted was the social emotional understanding of ourselves and hurt people that often bring out youth’s worst selves:

*“go into other bags.... yeah, like I could easily be like “fuck you,” or I could easily be like “fuck outta here, never come back,” or easily, you know, just like, not want to build....”*

Hope described energy needed to sustain interpersonal wellness when youth feel like giving up on relational dynamics. Energy needed to care for people (and yourself) even one feels a person is not caring for you/themselves/collective... Caring for people through their “*fuck you*” can bring hope to youth’s relationship. This was captured when Alex, shared:

*I think um... you know, there’s like moments, of like, of... people goin’ into other bags that they – of themselves. And... I think yesterday, like, you know... I think I told you how like, um... I talked about it as like, um... when you fight that norm, like there’s a normal going like, yeah, like I could easily be like “fuck you,” or I could easily be like “fuck outta here, never come back,” or easily, you know, just like, not want to build. Or like, you know, cause... that’s easy as a human to like, not operate carin’ for others, you know? And, I think for all of us, you know, hope is really present. It was like, hope is like... hope was a lot present when like, when we’re faced with those decisions or faced with those bags, and like, tellin’ ourselves to like, that it’s not like, worth what this is. And it’s not worth like, hurtin’ yourself as well.*

One element of cultivating A Collective “we” is having the bandwidth to circle-back on interpersonal harm as a praxis of healing. Y.O.C praxis and reflections within this study, offer up

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many experiences with engaging interpersonal hope: Y.O.C reflects on the process of circling back:

*“Circle back when there is tension is hope because it gives the other person that you are willing to have a better understanding with them about the things you were in conflict about and it's a whole learning process for them/us all... It gives the person hope that things can be worked thru.”*

Below, Miasia, reflects on how hope played a serious role in her own ability to mend interpersonal harm with another Y.O.C organizer:

*I still had hope like, “Alright, we goin’ fix it eventually.” Like, the situation with me and Rachna like that, that gave me hope. Because, for me, like, my past, I always result to like, just straight up fightin’. Like, it’s... “We don’t need to talk, I either wanna fight you, or you wanna stay clear out my path!” So, like, for like – also, Rachna situation also gave me hope because, at first I was sayin’ like, the situation involving me, I wasn’t bothered by what she said but then like, after I sat down and I really reflected on it like.... Yeah! Like, for me to be able to now say, “Alright, it hurt me.” And like, still be able to like, build with her and like to have a conversation and everything like that gave me hope.*

Miasia’s quote describes the emotional energy she had to carried and needed to sustain across time and relationships. When she says, *“I still had hope, like, alright, we goin fix it eventually.”* Miasia’s quote shed light on the role of reflection and self-ground-ness to tap into possibilities of hope (new ways of being and new realities) that are different from the past or the norm. Y.O.C teaches us that trusting each other is needed to: *“gain the essence of collective hope.”* Y.O.C lived out a type of:

*collective hope, when you notice –And all our hopes are seen as links to each other. Whether it’s like, Yo, like, whether it’s, um... one person who had knowledge of how to, how to get to school, and then the other person had knowledge on how to walk home from school. Ya understand? Like, we are all – like, thinkin’ about pedagogy – we are all, like, learning simultaneously, givin’ knowledge to each other, which is going to build our hope.*

My analysis of Y.O.C’s organizing suggest that hope and spirit are passed on from generation to generation, movement to movement, human to human, and organizer to organizer.

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Through an intentional praxis of connecting to others' dreams, hurts, courage, emotional vulnerabilities and humanities. It is energy(ies) that bind spirit(s) within movement building.

### **Warrior Spirit**

*The primary goal of a Non-Traditional Approach, from an Afro-Latino perspective...says we must instill in our youth not just skills, trade or education, but also we must instill in the prisoner (the youth) the responsibility to go back into the African and Latino community, upon their release with in mind and {in} heart, to combat socio-economic condition (crime generate factors) that contributed to their imprisonment in the first place, Rivera, 1995.*

The spirit and hope within this dissertation have ancestral roots in the daily survival and healing of the Green Haven Think Tank as well as other community people in prison (and before prison) who refused to allow their humanity to be targeted by dehumanization. The Green Haven Think Tank dreamed from behind bars of *hope and healing* for youth and their larger community. They wanted to offer tools needed to address specific social/communal problems, and seek to empower youth with the “*how*” or “*the muscles*” to cope with both worlds -- the general society; and his/her/their community. The Green Haven Think description of *hope and healing* starts with “*truth-telling*” and provides a community specific account (from Afro and Indigenous Perspectives), on how we got to this point in time (of needing hope and healing).” This message was recently shared by Hassan (One of Green Haven Think Tank Organizers) to an audience of community members, academics, policy makers and students at Columbia’s School of Social Work Beyond the Bars Conference.

### **Elders’ Tales of Warrior Spirit**

Hassan a formerly incarcerated elder and Green Haven Think Tank organizer participated in many of the developments of the Think Tank youth (human) development processes. The *Resurrection Study Group*, *Black Studies Groups* and *Liberation Program* were constructed for

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deep processing around identity development, analyses of violence, community organizing and personal healing/transformation.

In a recent panel discussion at the 8th Annual Beyond the Bars Conference at Columbia University titled “*Closing Jails and Prisons*” Hassan performed a presentation with peers who led and co-founded The Green Haven Think Tank. Hassan reflected on the ideological frame and pedagogical praxis he led as an incarcerated instructor of incarcerated youth. He outlined the ways crime generative factors (i.e., structural violence) steals, alters, traumatizes and weakens youth of color and their communities’ connections to *Warrior Spirit*. *Warrior Spirit* explains growing a free spirit, regardless of the material consequences. A spiritual place of freedom that cannot be measured by campaign policy wins, base building signatures – it is measured by the energy that travels across generations, and movements to provide courage, directions and strength to grow a *Healed Black future* (Ortega-Williams, 2017).

Hassan, performed monologue was an artistic expression of at his teaching practices to engage incarcerated youth in a pedagogy of *Warrior Spirit*:

*These men (a long lists of ancestors from the black freedom tradition) were extraordinary. And you need to know exactly what that means, the simple truth is extraordinary people do extra extraordinary things. You are extraordinary. And you need to understand, that you also to degree or a lesson degree have been seduced, and so cleverly misdirected that you accept antisocial behaviors as a normal way of life. And only your extraordinary will to define and defend your presence in the world can save you in this society... **My hope** is that you would raise up and master the extraordinary talents you already present and merge them with intellectual and physical courage needed to be leaders in the model world. Then you will have grasped the **warrior spirit**.*

Developing the *Warrior Spirit* is one of the critical learnings of the dissertation. The teaching of the *Warrior Spirit* is a dream of our elders. “*My hope is that you would raise up and master the extraordinary talents you already present and merge them with intellectual and*



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*physical courage needed to be leaders in the model world.*” Y.O.C’s elders dreamed that we would be leaders who would be able to move away from violence/hopelessness (i.e., trauma(s)) to find our potential, wisdom and courage to heal ourselves and community. Hassan reminds urban youth that their ancestors’ and elders’ hopes live within them.

When cultivating youth development in the context of movement building, the engagement of spirit and hope becomes central for personal and collective development and sustainability. A pedagogy of spirit and hope is intentional about the process to develop grounded-ness, emotional knowledge and intuitive analysis, which are important internal ingredients (emotional grounded-ness in life threatening situations, courage and healed fears) that facilitate outward agency. Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and many Black, Indigenous and Grassroots ancestors have paid, and therefore, taught us the “*cost of freedom*” and the rewards that come from following your *Warrior Spirit* to be free/fully human.

### Youth’s Tales of Warrior Spirit

Y.O.C shared plenty of stories and reflections on healing that comes from engaging with their own (i.e., our) *Warrior Spirit*. Answering the question, what is the Healing Justice Movement? In his interview, Victor, reflects on ancestral and spiritual knowledge to tell a story about the cost of freedom, and the shifts within our spirits needed to survive/heal/be free:

*When people left the underground railroad and they just like left from the south or wherever they went and they didn’t know where they were going that was the sacrifice, they had to make to be free. So I think a lot of us are not **ready to make the sacrifice**, like some of us that are conscious and know, we know what we have to do to **be like totally free**. But, some of us we just have too many responsibilities, **freedom costs so much**. And oftentimes you know **our ancestors their freedom cost them their death**, but they felt like **death was freedom too**. I think it is possible, I think it’s all about, I think like **I’m Muslim and in Islam they teach us not to like hold on to this life, not to get caught up with the luxuries** because all it is a distraction and the Koran speaks about that life is just temporary, this life is just temporary because your soul lives on.*

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Victor's quote describes an element of *Warrior Spirit* that engages sacrifice. To sacrifice oneself (i.e., employment, education, wealth, life) for the collective "we" is a praxis of healing.

Reflecting on his way of life, Victor discusses a notion of questioning yourself.

*And we the Koran always emphasize that the goal is not to stay on the earth, because you're not going to live a thousand years, you're not going to live here forever. And it's but, it's to contemplate what's going to happen to your soul once you leave this vessel you know and a lot of people don't live that way, a lot of people don't live contemplating like what's going to happen after this. Because they're saying I'm here.*

To question one's own role (spirit) as a search for "freedom dreams" is a practice of *Warrior Spirit*. Another thread within *Warrior Spirit* is wisdom embedded in youth's analysis of "the cost of freedom" or "consequence of freedom." This is captured in the below quote:

***I think Harriet Tubman said this and she spoke about like whether you know whether they got away or got captured and they killed them they still would be free. So they were saying either way they was gon be free, you know um whether they got away or whether they got murdered trying to get away they would have been free from slavery. Some people and that's why they say the people who don't have anything to lose are the people who are most feared because it's like you like your visions are very different, when you understand that I have the freedom to do this. Yeah there's consequences, but knowing the consequences and like still being free cause part of being free is that you going to pay for consequences. And I think like the consequences or the imposed penalties are there kinds like to curb you from being free.***

In Victor's analysis of Harriet Tubman and Underground Railroad, he breakdown that freedom comes with spiritual rewards, but also material hardship. Victor believed youth internalized fear from material consequences that serve as a spiritual block to one's *Warrior Spirit* and true desire to free. I use victor's quotes to narrated an interconnected account of what Hassan (of The Green Haven Think Tank) called the *Warrior Spirit*. The *Warrior Spirit*, in this case represents an intentional shift from solely living a life worried about material consequences of dehumanization towards creatively living a lifestyle built from/on the possibilities of

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healing/liberation/survival. Victor, reminds readers that freedom must be “*experienced*” in the invisible world of spirit, ancestors, and dreaming/futures.

My analysis of Victor’s quote positions the concept “*cost of freedom*” within a spiritual understanding of ancestors and religion epistemology. Victor’s analysis sketches a historical account of the aftermaths of chattel slavery, to describe freedom is a choice to struggle. And a process to “*figure out*.” He reflects on Harriet Tubman and the underground railroad to explain a notion of freedom built on having nothing to lose, but only liberation to gain. My analysis of this Victor’s quote reveals a notion of healing or freedom that appears when individuals and communities sacrifice their material world luxuries. These analyses articulate a notion of healing that requires sacrifice - the potential loss of one’s political, financial, spiritual, relational and psychological life and/or “rights.” My analyses of “*cost of freedom*” details an engagement with *Warrior Spirit* (a process of freedom) that puts youth in direct opposition of energy that is intentionally working to dehumanize, imprisoned, and kill them. A type of healing that is not concerned with the material consequences (you may pay) but is committed to seeking spiritual freedom.

### **Conclusion: Spiritual Possibilities of Collective Hope**

Spirit is another name for intuitive knowledge or wisdom that comes from youth’s insides... Tapping into spirit was expressed as knowing yourself on another level. A deeper knowing of oneself is required for knowing one’s full possibilities to journey with others in movement building. This deeper knowing derives from elders, ancestors, culture and ourselves. Spirit in this chapter explains one’s emotional capacity to struggle or not struggle with other relationships. Spirit was closely connected to the desire to be free and a *Warrior Spirit*. The *Warrior Spirit* described an internal place that brings together the insights from reflecting on

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“*freedom dreams*” and *consequences of freedom*.” Having the knowledge and know “*how*” to tap into spirit grounding, allowed Y.O.C to connect to their own/others’ senses of hope. Spiritual grounding was key for opening up possibilities for building collective hope.

Hope described energy (spirit) for seeing possibilities to personal growth and build grassroot movements. Hope described an energy that assisted youth in navigating the complexity and tension of their own human toxicity. Hope and spirit within this chapter describes an inter-generational and intersectional sharing (passing) of sustained energy across generation and relationships.

## Chapter 8: Grassroots Community Specific Rituals



H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C), organizational elders, personal family and community of youth in morning circle during H.O.L.L.A!'s 4-day spiritual healing camping trip. May, 2017. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

### **Introduction: Non-Traditional Approach to Healing Youth**

*Men Enter prisons and spend years there, yet root cause of their behavior is never confronted because neither the state or the local administration offers any programs or even a visible theory, which deals with our specific problem. As a results we had to design, develop and implement programs, classes, from our Afrocentric, Non Traditional Approach, which we believe begin to address, values and behaviors and many of the attitudes that lead to internal oppression and our hesitant/fear of our own capacity to heal and be in a healing process... We are not only seeking to turn around our lives, but in the process, we seek to become role models for youth. While this vision is expansive, those of us who been imprisoned for many long years realize that is our only hope to salvage our youth and it is our last chance, (Rivera, 1995)*

The pedagogy of relationship cultivation is a journey (Dillard, et al 2001 & Somé, 2000).

This process is particularly emotional when cultivating relationships with those you love and those who have hurt you the most. The emotional journey towards healing, understanding or receiving accountability and/or clarity, often requires energy beyond individual's human capacity. It means holding mad space. Negotiating personal and social life, and family with individuals impacted by violence is bumping to say the least. It is like a river with many different currents of trauma, swimming in similar and different emotion paths towards and from each

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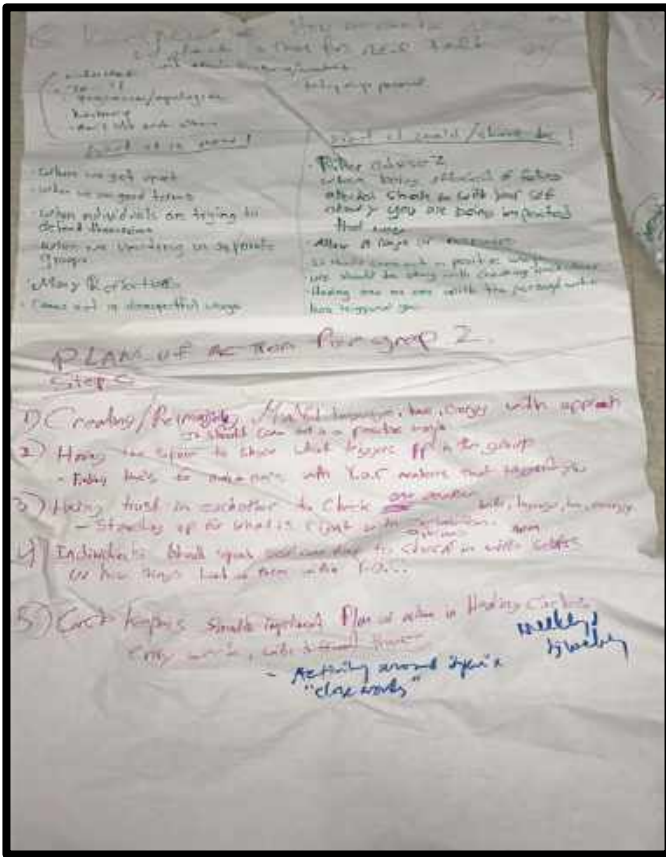
other. To understand each other's experience(s) of violence requires intention, mistakes, patience and practice. It requires journeying. Since ancient times, to sustain journeying, elders/ancestors have practiced rituals to cultivate energy, strength, and remembrance.

### **Community Specific Rituals for Interpersonal Healing**

In this chapter, I will share my analysis on H.O.L.L.A!' community specific rituals. I sketch two (2) mini ethnographic images from my analysis of programmatic notes, activities and rituals aimed to heal Y.O.C at the interpersonal level. The first image captures Y.O.C's ritual of *Keeping it Real* with each other and the second process captures Y.O.C's *Commitments Letter* ritual.

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“Keeping It Real” with “Chosen Family”



"Every time we experience harm, healing is right around the corner." (Ginwright personal communication, Speech at Healing Justice Summit 2017).

“Keeping It Real” with “Chosen Family” is a ritual for interpersonal healing between people willing to struggle with each other. This ritual asks youth to share and receive feedback from youth they are accountable to. This ritual creates spaces for youth involved in interpersonal relationships to consider what truths are needed, and what is the best way to share those truths with each other to create a sense of safety.

There were many moments across H.O.L.L.A!’s human and healing centered youth organizing process when “Keeping It Real” was extremely hard to do, hear, or facilitate, but the experiences were still productive for the collective process of trust and knowledge building.

Trust within interpersonal relationships grew over many shared moments, and experiences. Within the first few weeks of the 12-month training there was a fight in the conference room. Following the fight, we had a circle at the local church. There were moments when we told each other “suck my dick”. There were big fights, little fights, and arguments before *Free Minds Free People* panel in Baltimore. There was the healing circle we

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had in Baltimore's Hyatt Hotel lobby. I was accused of favoritism. Other senior leadership was consistently late. Y.O.C stole from each other, or accused each other of stealing. We had many internal healing circles to follow up on these experiences. To speak and listen about the importance of being brave enough to trust each other, and to keep each other safe. We raised our voices to each other. We walked out and/or away on each other. We distanced ourselves. Most of the time we came back, but sometimes we did/do not. We debated the systems of oppression, and argued about gender and sexuality or what is grassroots. We challenged each other, and in doing so, we also hurt each other. After numerous moments of disagreement with each other, or emotionally triggering one another, we finally struggled to a place where we wanted to "*Keep It Real*" with each other. The multiple experiences, and emotional tensions emerged a ritual to facilitate "*Keeping it Real*" with each other to heal interpersonal relationships.

"*Keeping It Real*" conveys a process and engagement with someone(s) you care about, who you feel could benefit from truth-telling. Truth telling is complex, truth-telling was a main cause of harm in our dynamics. From these experiences, Y.O.C understood it was not just about speaking our truths, but "*how we told our truths mattered in the process of interpersonal relationship cultivation and healing.*" "*Keeping It Real*" was developed as a ritual to share critical feedback for healing social emotional processes with "*chosen family*". The ritual aimed to shift relationship dynamics, release emotional burden, and open up space to dream different relational (and personal) possibilities.

Y.O.C devoted intentional time to develop a ritual from their personal experiences. Three full, six-hour days were dedicated to political education, healing circles, interactive dialogues,



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and personal sharing with (senior leadership) guiding from one activity to another. This curriculum process was to better understand and practice “*Keeping It Real*” with each other.

In “*Keeping It Real*”, Y.O.C defines Realness

as Wellness:

*Being truthful about your feelings and emotions towards the situation (what’s said) or group. Be mindful of language, tone and energy, with a good approach. Think about what are your goals with starting this conversation/process. Give constructive criticism in a healthy way. What’s best for that person/situation. Know what trigger people in the space. Share your truth in a way that doesn't trigger with each other. Receive feedback. Take time to understand and accept your issues within yourself, and be able to speak about it within the group. Appreciate other people realness. Stand up for what you think is right with explanation by using experiences, stories, etc. Know what you need. Sacrificing with Love.*

“*Keeping It Real*” was a ritual that space for Y.O.C to share emotions and feelings towards a situation with someone. While being mindful of what might trigger the person(s). Y.O.C’s focus on the “*how*” within sharing truth is an important finding. It is also a practice of vulnerability. In Y.O.C’s analysis of “*Keeping It Real*”, the person “*Keeping It Real*” has to be willing enough to receive feedback, listen to their own inner-self (i.e., spirit) and be able to speak (authentic energy) that out loud to the group. “*Keeping It Real*” also meant seeing and honoring other youth’s realness.

*“Take time to understand and accept your issues within yourself, and be able to speak about it within the group. Appreciate another person’s realness”*

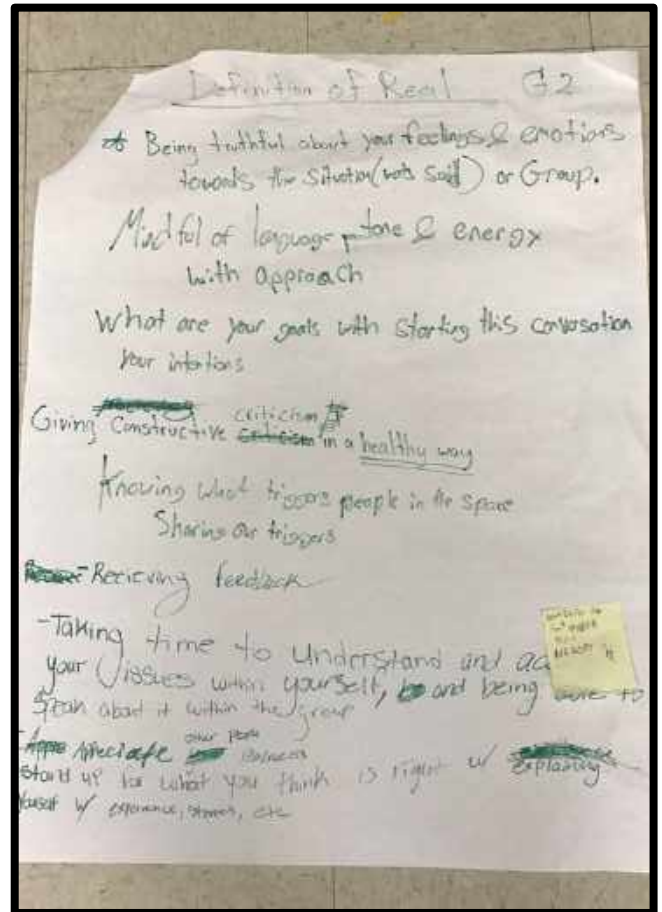


Chart-paper notes from political education session focused on “*Keeping it Real*” with each other. August, 2017. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

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As I mentioned above “*Keeping It Real*” is an extremely emotional practice. It’s spiritual process. To ground each other for an experience of sharing and receiving truths is a praxis of healing. Y.O.C developed a set of themes and related activities to cultivate individual and collective “*Realness*.” Y.O.C asked each other what are the things we need to be our realest or most truthful with each other. *Realness* was described as:

*“understanding each other's histories / context”, “learn to forgiveness/apologies”, “trusting the process”, “learn not to harbor emotions”, “try not to take it personal, how hurt people, hurt you”, “having one on ones with individuals/people who triggered you, allowing space for many responses, being ok with checking each other, it should come out in a good way.”*

“*Keeping It Real*” explained how Y.O.C reimaged their “*how*” - language, tone, and energy within their’ bodies and approach when sharing and/or receiving truth. “*Keeping It Real*” asks one to seriously check in with themselves. Deep emotional and spiritual healing is a journey of reliving through pains, and learning about the pains of others. It is a process of reframing those learnings/narratives of pain, to analysis of critique, energy for healing, and to grow stories of survival.

“*Keeping It Real*” allowed Y.O.C to intentionally resist harboring negative emotions towards each other. It also created a space for Y.O.C to practice the work of releasing emotional tension in relational dynamics. “*Keeping It Real*” requires collective (all involved) human-capacity to build a spiritual process that is worth youth’s time to travel through. “*Keeping It Real*” requires constant engagement, intentions and reoccurrence. The critical aim of “*Keeping It Real*” is to practice transformation at the relational level. “*Keeping It Real*” articulated a process to build trust and vulnerability with each other through collectively sharing and receiving each other’s personal belief about safety. This ritual provided a “*Think Tank*” to generative collective

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agreement for generating responsibilities and expectations all could uphold throughout the duration of their journeys together.

### The Legacy: Who “we” are Accountable To

*“It is our duty to fight for freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.” Assata Shakur-*

Grassroot Community Specific Rituals are a commitment to make *Assata Shakur’s intersectional movement strategy a reality*. Assata’s analysis of sacrificing the self in favor of the collective is an epistemological foundation H.O.L.L.A!’s human and healing centered youth developmental process. Youth development within this context focuses on deepening youth’s commitment (i.e., spirit alignment) to each other (figuring-out the “how”). Their ability to thrive together, and have the capacity to struggling for/with each other. The community specific youth development approach evokes a transformational process of spiritual resistance, collective hope building, and healing from violent structures (and its production of interpersonal harm) as a practice for sustainability (i.e., self-determination).

One ritual practice Y.O.C engaged as a collective was the writing, sharing back, reflecting, and responding to each other’s “*Commitments Letters*.” Over the course of radical healing process there were two (2) “*Commitment Letters*” rituals. The first letter was written at the end of the first phase of the process (month 7). The second letter was written at the end of the entire radical healing process.

The “*Commitment Letter*” purpose is to create a space in which each person in Y.O.C including facilitators (senior leadership) could express their commitments for personal growth, and relationship building with each other to build/sustain *the legacy*. The ritual included a sharing and affirming circle as a way to process each person’s reflections and “*Commitments*.” In

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the circle process Y.O.C were able to ask each other clarifying questions. The “*Commitment Letter*” circle process was a space for each Y.O.C member to receive clarity and understanding from each person about their expression(s), and respond to each Y.O.C organizer’s commitments. Each organizer in Y.O.C was given a few weeks to complete each letter before we sat in the circle part of the ritual to share/hear feedback.

The first “*Commitment Letter*”, asked Y.O.C to:

***“Tell us through their own words. With your voice, tell us: But PLEASE be as CREATIVE as you need and feel to be: What do you hope to get out of YOC personally and collectively?? What are you willing to risk in this work? What is your role to our collective good, even if that means you do not get personal satisfaction in a given moment and time (I.e., we chose not to roll with your idea)? What question(s) do you have for H.O.L.L.A? Or YOC? or any of us (individual) working together to heal and build our people, blocks and community? Why do you do this work?”***

The second “*Commitment Letter*”, asked Y.O.C to:

***“Tell us through their own words. With your voice, tell us: But PLEASE be as CREATIVE as you need to be. After going thru this 18—month process: What hopes/dreams/worries/tensions do you carry along with you going forward in terms of the relationships that were opened up with yourselves and each other, and for the relationships you/we developed in the Healing Justice Movement. What hopes/dreams do you have for your own transformation and your other Healing Justice organizers? What hopes/dreams do you have for us and our communities to see each other as full humans?”***

Below, I analyze across both “*Commitment Letters*” rituals, and individual responses to articulate back a collective expression of Y.O.C’s commitment, hope, and sacrifice to sustain interpersonal relationships as they build grassroots movements.

### Dear Y.O.C and The Legacy:

We do this work because ***“I want to better the black community by any means.”*** *I Do this work for my people behind bars that they could just get a chance to die at home.”* *“I do this work because it’s in my blood to do so. I come from a similar background as a lot of these youths I work with. I understand their pressures. I been through them time after time. I understand the false sense of love they get from people who genuinely don’t understand what is real love.”* ***“To show the young kids how to organize.”*** *“To make the community better.”* *“I do this work to make sure that my brother and sister grow up better than I did.”* *“My reasons for being passionate about this movement and living this work are that after growing up in neighborhoods*

*where youth of color were my brothers and sisters, being incarcerated as a youth for years and then as an adult only to see the numerous holes in our in-justice system, and realizing my lack of guidance growing up and that feeling of having no one to turn to. There is work that needs to be done. Who will wake up every morning with a stronger commitment to fighting battles in a war which has overcome their lifestyle? I will.*” *“There is no right or wrong answer to why we do this work. **For me It’s my life I honestly don’t know where my journey would have been if I never walked through 510 gates avenue 1<sup>st</sup> floor, and that is one of my greatest fears waking up and not having all of you in my life and this space being gone.**”*

Our role to the collective is *“just to be optimistic to whatever we are taking in and not steer away from the stated objective.”* *“To do whatever I gotta to do to get our message across.”* *“To kept my personal commitments to myself.”* *“For us all to show with our best selves, every day because we are looking and leaning on each other for affirmation to ensure what we are doing is in alignment with our collective vision.”* ***“I want to become stronger, so I can bring that love outward into all my relationships in a consistent and meaningful way.”*** *“I’m about collective good, so my role is to be a leader and a follower.”* *“be supportive, help give my expertise in certain areas and to learn more.”* ***“My duties are to support our movement beyond and above my capacities, and to provide a diverse perspective to the battle we are fighting.”*** *“I hope to grow closer with all of Y.O.C.”* *“I’m committed to keeping my space open and safe.”* ***“My role is to continue working to learn, organize and heal with my community.”***

What hopes you have for us in Y.O.C? *“To get a better understanding of what we building.”* *“To become more independent.”* ***“Hopefully some type of relief and not cooperating organizing replica model.”*** *“I hope we learn the importance of teamwork and the process of building with each other, and what intentions its take to handle and sustain relationships long term.”* *“Personally, I would love to get out of it, better relationships with Y.O.C and the people we will meet in the future.”* *“Y.O.C brings me an amazing opportunity being a white male, to engage the topic of white supremacy, and reach out to the parts of that community that have acted as deafness is a norm when it comes to critical matters dealing with racism and oppression to Black communities.”* *“I personal hope to gain more knowledge about the area where I grew up and H.O.L.L.A! is located at. This is the place I call home.”* ***“I want to build more relationships with Y.O.C and the people around me.”***

For our relationships and the legacy, we stand on, we are willing to risk, *“a lot in order to change.”* *“My mind.”* *“my blood, sweat, tears and time.”* ***“I’m willing to risk personal finances earnings.”*** ***“I’m willing to risk my love, time, energy, passion over personal feeling but I’m not willing to risk my foundation that allows me to take care of my needs and sustainability.”*** *“The risk may be a thought of endless possibilities which may play against me, but when the scale of balance weighs the endless ways which a difference can be made and change can be conquered, the risk is no more a factor but only a barrier to break down.”* ***“I would risk my life for H.O.L.L.A!/Y.O.C cause without it there is no hope there is no meaning I know it sounds crazy but anyone who calls that space home would know its potential its future for person who walks in, and I’m committed to keep my space open and safe.”*** *“I’m willing to risk letting down all my walls, barriers, and defenses to allow you all into every part of my humanity and life.”*

As we transition from this place in history (2017-present)– the completion of the radical healing process, and launch of H.O.L.L.A!’s Healing Justice Movement - we wanted to share our

dreams and hopes for our own personal transformation, relational dynamics, and our collective journeys towards Human Justice and Healing Justice. Their collective commitments read:

***my hopes would be that we all continue to be a family with one another, because we started something that many would have quit.*** “I hope we can see each other as full humans.” “I would love to see us (Y.O.C) lead the next Nat Turner and Y.O.C.” “I worry that without structure in place so of us may lose the fire/spirit and urgency to keep fighting.” “I hope that I learn more.” ***I hope that the relationships that this Healing Justice Movement has been fueled by, will last forever.*** “It also has to be about us transforming ourselves being better humans and spirits.” “I hope that we continue doing this work because out the whole process we inspired so many people.” ***I will give a %100 of my spirit to the care and wisdom sharing with young people.*** “I hope to love my sisters better, so that they can love me better.” “I hope that we continue to build with each other, it has only been 18-months, I feel like there is more room and more love.” “H.O.L.L.A! is a dream, and we hope to keep dreaming.” ***I hope that the stuff we share with each other, and the moments of vulnerability are honored.*** “The dreams I have is to launch Raising Brooklyn.” “I hope that nontraditional youth development and grassroots organizing be shared more with our youth.” “I worry about some of us who have distance and what would be needed for the circle-back.” “I do hope that all relationships created over the 18-month last forever.” “But one thing I worry about is losing these relationships.” “I hope we all learned a powerful lesson about dreaming and hoping together.” ***I hope to continue my own healing process, because you can’t heal others without healing yourself.***

### **Conclusion: Building a Legacy is a Journey**

*“I feel like Nat Turner really... started something’ for like each one of us. Like, it opened up our eyes to a little bit more, I – even in Nat Turner was meant to be, like a whole like, political process and learning’, I think we learned more from ourselves and like, the conversations that we had, more so than the work that you were tryin’ to get us to do.”-Miasia-*

The two (2) rituals presented in this chapter, “*Keeping it Real*” and “*The Commitment Letters*,” on the one hand serves as a tool to assist participants in processing complex feelings and emotions. On the other hand, these rituals are engagement strategies for relationship transformation. They create a space where youth can practice sharing/receiving vulnerable stories with each other. In the above quote, Miasia (Y.O.C, youth organizer), speaks to how she believed the most beneficial “*learning, came from the “political process”*” of vulnerable conversations. Rituals to heal interpersonal relations require individuals to “*Keep It Real*” about their feelings/emotions with themselves, as well as those they journey with. “*Keeping It Real*”

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gets at spirit knowledge. “*Keeping it Real*” get to a spiritual practice – a journey (where one is certain that the process may or may not work for them) that opens up shared vulnerability needed for truth-telling in youth’s interpersonal relationship. The “*Commitment Letters*” ritual – described a process that engaged Y.O.C’s individual commitments of personal and collective transformation over time. These community specific rituals reveal the ways urban youth seek and receive wellness. Community specific rituals open up healing and development as a socio-political property of youth development. The results in this chapter provide knowledge about the radical healing process of developing personal and collective commitments for urban youth engaging grassroot rituals to build/sustain *legacy*.

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Implications

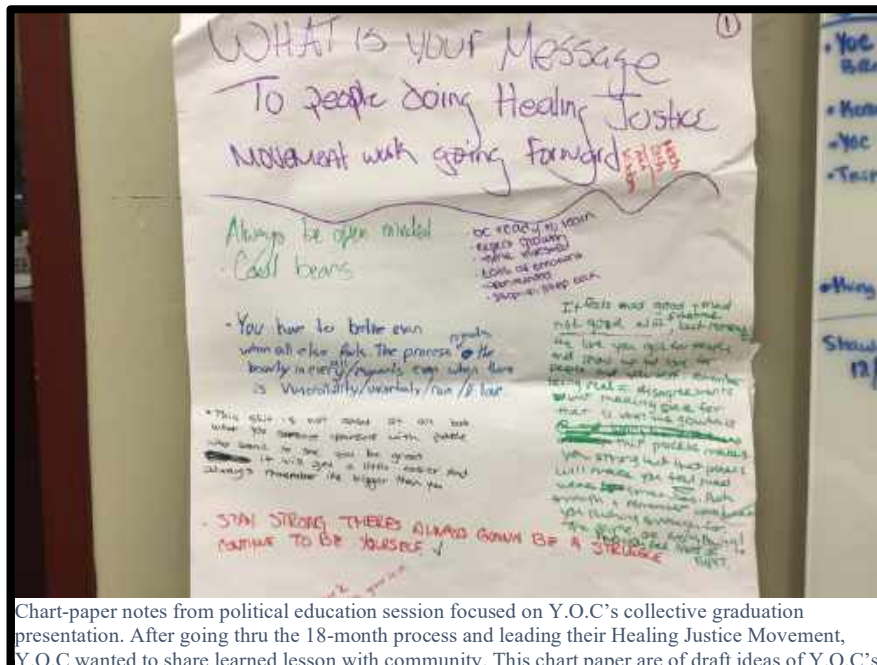


Chart-paper notes from political education session focused on Y.O.C.'s collective graduation presentation. After going thru the 18-month process and leading their Healing Justice Movement, Y.O.C wanted to share learned lesson with community. This chart paper are of draft ideas of Y.O.C's message to people doing Healing Justice. December, 2018. Ethnographic documentation by Cory Greene.

### Introduction: Take Aways and Reflections

There are many stories within this dissertation worth uplifting (the cognitive, the emotional, the interpersonal, and “external actions” of elements SPD across/within the radical healing process) however the most salient story is the learnings about feelings along the personal and collective journey - what are they? how did they get like they are? which feelings are best to lead with in particular moments? Emotions that facilitate and support (or don't support) youth's intellectual growth, external socio-political actions, and radical healing process to build/sustain community – (i.e., movement building). This chapter delves within the socio-emotional realities of youth development at the intersection of grassroots movement building. More specifically, this chapter outline learnings from an intersectional praxis of youth development. Below, I provide a roadmap of the chapter's structure.



### **Roadmap**

This chapter discusses the implication of the dissertation's results. I restate the rationale, the importance, and need for this dissertation. To follow, I present an overview of my key findings. Then, I explore to what extent my study answered the central research questions of this dissertation. Followed by my analysis on how the dissertation's findings contribute to the larger literature used to frame the study. Next, I discuss my dissertation's contribution to reframing youth development, and the possibilities of developing a movement-based research praxis. I conclude with a review of the dissertation's strengths, limitations and future implications.

### **Review of Study Rationale**

There was an empirical need to learn more about spiritual and emotional healing at the intersection of SPD and healing-centered youth organizing. Very limited empirical research to this point had examined grassroots community processes of building hope for urban youth. The rationale for my dissertation research was to deepen learning on the interconnectedness between movement building, spirituality, and healing for urban youth impacted by violence. There were gaps in the literature about the development of interpersonal relations in SPD over time, with the same youth/participants/people. There was a need for further research to better understand culturally relevant healing rituals employed to develop spirit, hope and vulnerability. This dissertation was an effort to advance the field of youth development by uncovering and uplifting grassroots (i.e., non-traditional) community specific approaches, (her)histories, experiences and praxis that informs youth development, interpersonal transformation and grassroots movement building. Lastly, my study is in accordance with a liberation scholarship. To use social psychological research as a tool for understanding the inner-workings of grassroots rituals

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steeped in movement history aimed to guide the journeys of youth navigating personal and collective notions of Healing Justice.

### **Overview of Key Findings**

The methodological praxis of this dissertation project was politically and theoretically situated to study learnings at the intersections of multiple urban youth experiences, generational knowledge, and community specific approaches to healing. A through-line finding of this dissertation project is the elicited methodological and praxis-based framing of intersectionality within youth development and healing-centered organizing. In addition, there were six key findings representing the big picture takeaways of human and healing centered youth organizing to build/sustain grassroots movement: 1) Wisdom from Ancestors and Elders to sustain youth development and healing; 2) Journeying – youth and their community learning they have the ability to heal each other and with each other; 3) Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing are important for healing youth in the process of building/sustaining movements (i.e., community and society development); 4) The Art of Cultivating Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing; 5) Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement as energy needed to sustain healing, organizing, and interpersonal relationships along the journey (i.e., grassroots movement building and radical healing process); and 6) Building Grassroot Movement in itself was a source of personal and communal healing that spans across generations, identities, social context as well as the visible and invisible worlds. **Table/Chart 5** below tells the story of six big takeaways from this dissertation research.

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		DISSERTATION FINDINGS				
Chapters			Four Takeaways			
	Wisdom from Ancestor and Elder	Journeying – Learning you can Heal	Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing	The Art of Cultivating Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing	Hope and Spirit to Build Grassroots Movements	Grassroots Movement Building as Healing
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Acknowledging our Elders/Ancestors and Youth</i></li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vulnerability Sees Vulnerability**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Grassroots Wisdom(s) for Survival and Healing**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vulnerability Sees Vulnerability*</i></li> <li>• <i>Vulnerability as a Praxis of Truth Telling</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Acknowledging our Elders/Ancestors and Youth</i></li> <li>• <i>Grassroots Wisdom(s) for Survival and Healing**</i></li> <li>• <i>Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement**</i></li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Ancestors and Spirit**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Grassroots Knowledge/Political Education**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Reflections/Lived Experience of Historical, Structural and Interpersonal Violence</i></li> <li>• <i>Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Grassroots Knowledge/Political Education**</i></li> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Ancestors and Spirit**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning the Power of Your Vulnerability</i></li> <li>• <i>Speaking Your Truth and Holding Others' Truth.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Ancestors and Spirit**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation</i></li> <li>• <i>Healing Can't Be Done Alone</i></li> <li>• <i>Building and Shifting Relationship with Community</i></li> <li>• <i>Healing is Different for Each Youth</i></li> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Wisdom (Healing that comes) from Ancestors and Spirit**</i></li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Warrior Spirit**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Spirituality for Groundedness, Direction and Protection**</i></li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Spirituality for Groundedness, Direction and Protection**.</i></li> <li>• <i>A Collective "we"</i></li> <li>• <i>Warrior Spirit**</i></li> </ul>	

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<p><b>Chapter 8</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Who “we” are Accountability Too**</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Keeping it Real” with “Chosen Family” **</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Keeping it Real” with “Chosen Family” **</i></li> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Who “we” are Accountability Too**</i></li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Legacy: Who “we” are Accountability Too**</i></li> </ul>
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\*\* The result is represented in more than one of the six takeaways within chapter’s findings.

**Wisdom from Ancestors and Elders**

Wisdom from ancestors and elders is an important finding within this dissertation project. Y.O.C’s youth development was cultivated in an explicit context of community specific knowledge lead by elders and ancestors who experienced imprisonment and violence. Y.O.C pulled on curriculum, lessons, relationships and a process of journeying with their elders and ancestors for their own development. Lessons from the *Warrior Spirit* and the teaching of Warrior Spirit as Hassan promoted is critical for human and healing-centered youth development praxis. Ancestral knowledge assisted Y.O.C in their own process of building a Healing Justice Movement. Youth development nested on a “*Legacy*” is rooted in culture, (her)history and ancestors. Ancestors as a foundation of teaching and practice is important for healing urban youth. Framing youth development within an intersecting framing of generational knowledge is an important lesson this dissertation project offers the field.

**Journeying – Learning you can Heal**

Journeying - learning you can heal is a central aspect for all humanity, and spiritual entities. The young, old, oppressed, privileged, gendered and those who fall elsewhere, all have their own journeys to heal from. We also have a responsibility to learn how our journeys of healing relates to others we journey, and other spirits in general. Learning how to heal captures the intersectional wisdom of healing, how healing is different for each youth. Learning who you

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are, is a forever moving question. Learning how to heal is connected to who one is, and who one is relates to how one is situated (her)historically, structurally and interpersonally. Learning who you are (at different moments across one's life) informs one's journey and process of healing.

Across the study's analysis and my experience(s) I've heard youth after youth express/live out not knowing how to heal or be vulnerable before they experienced processes captured within this dissertation. Learning how to heal themselves along with other youth was critical for Y.O.C. Learning how to heal opened space for Y.O.C's spirit(s) to be drivers of building grassroots movement. When youth learn how to heal they were able to see other youth they often did not see before. They were also able to embrace realities about other youth's humanity (and themselves) that were invisible or hard to embrace prior. Learning how to heal allowed youth to keep it real with each other, to stand on a legacy, to cry, to fight, to smile more, and to share personal stories they never uttered before.... All these moments, experiences and reflections signified to Y.O.C (and youth throughout the study) they were healing and/or could heal and/or could heal with others they journey with. The feeling that one can heal, particularly, for urban youth hurt by violence is one of the most important findings of this dissertation praxis.

### **Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing**

Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing within a radical healing process of grassroots movement building uncovered critical processes for individual (i.e., youth) growth and capacity development needed to lead and engage healing. Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing were infused in all H.O.L.L.A!'s engagements (i.e., organizational design, program curriculums and leadership structure). Across the study participants experience individual and collective moments of growth, and transformation directly related to Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing.

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Sustaining well-being is critical in the radical healing process (Ginwright, 2016). Knowing the difference between healing and well-being is key. In addition, to knowing the difference, having Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing to engage both healing and well-being are necessary. Considering the youth/youth program understudy, Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing strengthened individual and collective spiritual and personal identity development. This was considered healing or a source of energy/knowledge needed for journeying. I will expound upon this later in the chapter.

### **The Art of Cultivating Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing**

In regards to this study, knowledge creating, organizing and relational praxis was embodied through the art of vulnerability. Vulnerability was experienced as an intentional journey into the emotions. A journey into all the feelings for personal learning (i.e., transformation) and connecting to others. In some context, vulnerability was seen as a coat that label youth/community as victim, weak, something to attack. Other slices of vulnerability allowed one to connect to themselves more, to be with themselves differently. In other variations, vulnerability was expressed as a praxis, as a way of being, that allows others to engage in being vulnerable or being more themselves. As a movement building praxis aimed at sustaining relationships, vulnerability was experienced as teachings, a knowledge system, and a way to create dreams, a move away from fear(s), and a space to build beyond present realities/capacities.

### **Hope and Spirit to Sustain/Build Grassroot Movement**

Hope and Spirit was experienced as one concept with *2-sides* or said differently, a coin with two different sides (hope and spirit). Both hope and spirit were experienced as a source of energy (i.e., healing and development) that came from ancestors, elders, and culture. Both spirit

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and hope were experienced as a process of teaching with self and others. Y.O.C experienced personal moments of growing their own hope in relationship to collective moments of bringing hope to other youth/community. Both hope and spirit were experienced as energy to bring others deeper into relationship, and to sustain those already in the movement. Spirit was experienced as intuition; as an ontological understanding of interconnected-ness to the invisible worlds. Spirit was experienced in this study as an emotional guide and analysis to protect youth in their own process of journeying.

### **Building Grassroot Movement as Healing**

The journey of building grassroots movement pushed youth beyond their own perceived capacities to be human. Building a Grassroot Movement assisted Y.O.,C in growing, healing. Building a movement required youth to transform their relationships with one another, towards one of wellness and possibilities. The process asked youth to struggle with who they were, at many different moments of their development. Building a grassroots movement asked youth, who they were accountability to, and ready to organize with? It also asked Y.O.C, who they want become? Further, the process asked Y.O.C, what are they willing to sacrifice or not sacrifice to grow and transform with each other? These questions, allowed space for vulnerability to settle, spirit to arise, and different ways to answer and respond to the world. Building a Grassroot Movement as Healing opened up layer opportunities for Y.O.C to learn the importance of *Grassroot Wisdom (Rituals) for Survival and Healing, Standing on Legacy*, and how *Hope* and *Spirit* serve as energy to sustain the process. Building a Grassroot Movement as Healing asserted that healing was associated with committing to a process bigger than one self.

### Summary

In this section I reviewed four key findings about community specific approach to human and healing centered youth organizing to build/sustain grassroots movement. The findings of Grassroots Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing; The Art of Cultivating Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing; Hope and Spirit and Hope to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement and Building Grassroots Movement as Healing, are evident. They fill important gaps within the literature by expanding ideas related to the future of youth programming and community specific approaches, which will be explored further below (in the implications section). In the next section, I provide a more expanded review of the central research questions.

### Exploration of Central Research Questions and Finding

This dissertation inquiry examined the sociopolitical processes of urban youth impacted by violence engaged in Human Justice and Healing Justice. I focus on youth connected to H.O.L.L.A! –a grassroots-based community organization led by formerly incarcerated organizers/leaders connected to over 60 years of movement building experiences/her(his)tory. This study was guided by the following research questions: 1) *what is the ethnographic story of developing a youth led Human to Healing Justice Movement focused inwardly on healing from structural, institutional, spiritual, interpersonal violence? and What is the ethnographic story of social change (i.e., healing and justice)?* (2) *What are the lessons from experiencing, engaging and reflecting on community specific rituals? and How do community specific rituals contribute to the psychological, spiritual, and emotional development of urban youth?* (3) *What are the possibilities of braiding together the tenets of hope and spirit in community specific approaches to healing-centered youth organizing?*



*What is the ethnographic story of developing a youth led Human to Healing Justice*

*Movement focused inwardly on healing from structural, institutional, spiritual, interpersonal violence? and (b) What is the ethnographic story of social change (i.e., healing and justice)?*

The first question I proposed for this study was what are the particular engagements, moments, reflections and analysis of healing and justice that are discussed and uplifted within the process of building a grassroots movement? Many of the findings across the entire dissertation answers this big question. Particularly, the findings described in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Below I focus attention on five findings from my dissertation to answer this first question.

The five findings are: 1) *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing*, 2) *Building a Grassroot Movement as Healing*; 3) *Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation*; 4) *Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroot Movement*; and 5) *Grassroot/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing*

### **Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing**

The first finding that stands out in regards to the engagements, moments, reflections and analysis of healing and justice in movement building was Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing. In this finding, Y.O.C shared healing strategies that incorporate vulnerability as a tool for intentionally connecting to the emotional journeys of hurt. Expressing themselves, humanizing people, and letting go of emotions are needed for personal and collective growth. Vulnerability was expressed as a process of trusting oneself, and you organize with abilities to transform as you all journey. This was an unanticipated finding. Y.O.C lived, engaged and reflected on vulnerability as an axis into the relational healing process. Vulnerability within this study was interpreted as an action-verb, a noun, political action, a process of self-reflection, the sharing of personal testimonies, and experiences of youth healing together. My analysis positions

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vulnerability as an ingredient that brings together emotional intersections – the shame, love, guilt, pride, pain dreams, sharing of stories, not sharing of stories, healing and more. Vulnerable here describes how youth in the study associated healing with creating intentional space to share/receive personal stories needed to transform relationships with themselves, their personal family, the movement, and society.

### **Building a Grassroots Movement as Healing**

The second finding, I will present in regards to the engagements, moments, reflections and analysis of healing and justice in movement building was Building a Grassroots Movement as Healing. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was employed as a movement praxis and method to collect data (surveys, art murals, and evaluations), and engage youth in healing circles. The Healing Circle Process was designed to organize youth/community locally into H.O.L.L.A!’s Healing Justice Movement. Building a Grassroot Movement, asked researchers/scholars to think, strategize and more importantly, to feel, what it means to live a “lifestyle” of healing and justice for the most marginalized youth. Building a Grassroot Movement allowed many opportunities for Y.O.C, to engage other youth and community in the process of healing. Movement building in itself was expressed as factors that contributed to Y.O.C’s personal and collective healing.

### **Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation**

I present, Journeying: Relationship Building/Transformation, as my third answer to the first question. This finding has a sub-theme which imparts learnings of *Healing is Different for Every Youth*. Y.O.C grew to learn, what one organizer needed for healing may not be the same as another organizer needed for healing. Through their journeys with each other, Y.O.C were able to better understand the differences between their individual healing needs. And how those

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individual healing needs related to A Collective “we.” During H.O.L.L.A!’s radical healing process I’ve learned that healing works on personal and interpersonal axis, as a constant back and forth. You are never just doing one or the other. Lacking in one area will impact the other area. Y.O.C expressed much about their own personal growth. In some cases, self-healing was a focus. But never did self-healing stand in as a replacement for collective healing with family, organizers, and local community. Self-healing was in service of collective healing and vice versa. Y.O.C engaged in an intentional praxis of 2-way healing- one focus on their own personal development coupled with a second focus on interpersonal transformation. In the context of historical trauma and on-going state assaults, I learned youth “*Can’t Heal Alone.*” Intentional healing and relationship transformation are developments that happen in community, and with community as an intentional process. As a Journey.

### **Spirit as Analysis for Protection and Direction**

In grassroots movement building, the development of spirit to ground Y.O.C while they led community organizing activities was necessary. Spirit reckons with the lessons from ancestors of the know “*how*” to heal along the journey. The spirit to “*keep going anyway.*” At times during the movement building process, Y.O.C needed to pull on energy from sources that were invisible. The *7 Neighborhood Study*, *Changing Minds*, and *The Gifts they Bring* are all examples of sources and directions that comes from the elders, leaders and ancestors. Y.O.C embraced these lessons. They embodied and lived in the “*spirits*” of these truths within the context of grassroot movement building. Embodying spirit, allowed Y.O.C to tapped into internal wisdom needed to guide and/or protect them in relational dynamics. In many youths’ experiences, interpersonal relations are softly planted. Not grounded in struggle, honesty, and vulnerability. This leaves space for spiritual dilemma. Questions of *how do I show up? And,*

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*which version of me comes first or last or not at all?* In this study, Spirit articulated the knowledge from within each youth that spoke to them, ask them to be more accountable, to show up better, and guided them in the journey.

### **Grassroot/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing**

The final finding, I will present on question one was Grassroot/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing. This major finding describes the importance of grassroots/community specific rituals to aid in the healing of urban youth at multiple levels, and across multiple intersections. Communal rituals support the emotional, and spiritual development at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. See the chapter 6 for further discussion and analysis.

***What are the lessons from experiencing, engaging and reflecting on community specific rituals? and How do community specific rituals contribute o the psychological, spiritual, and emotional development of urban youth?***

The second central question that I focused on inquiry on was finding out what role, if any, did grassroots/community specific rituals played in facilitating healing, organizing, and youth development. Several findings answer this question from across the radical healing process. I pull from the following findings to answer this question: 1) *The 18-month Human and Healing-Centered Youth Organizing Process*; 2) *Healing Justice Movement Circle Process*; and 3) *Community Healing Forums as a site for Grassroots Knowledge Building*; 4) *Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing*.

### **The 18-Month Youth Organizing Process**

The first finding I highlight to answer the second question is H.O.L.L.A!'s 18-month radical healing process. Of the many lessons pulled from 60 years of grassroots prison

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organizing, curriculum and program development, H.O.L.L.A! leans on ancestral knowledge to cultivate spirituality, and social political analysis within urban youth. The radical healing process developed by H.O.L.L.A! facilitated interpersonal healing and individual development amongst the participants. The process was intentionally designed to place individual healing in a context of community healing. Participants experienced healing in both phases of the radical healing process. The process was important for their individual and collective growth. H.O.L.L.A!'s radical healing process was the platform for Y.O.C to launch a praxis their Healing Justice Movement - healing at multiple levels, and across multiple intersections. **(SEE APPENDIX A)**

### **Healing Justice Movement Circle Process**

The second finding uplifted to answer the second question is H.O.L.L.A!'s Circle Process. H.O.L.L.A!'s Circle Process was a ritual at the community level, that engaged multiple tiers of community in the process of healing. The Circle Process allowed Y.O.C to engage in personal healing connected to relationship building with many groups of youth. This communal process was beneficial for Y.O.C, and the youth they engaged. Y.O.C and youth were able to be vulnerable, and create vulnerable spaces to see each other differently. They create a space to affirm each other's existence. Vulnerability was a major theme of the Circle Process. Vulnerability with the Circle Process allowed youth an opportunity to share their truth with each other. This furthered individual and collective healing. After facilitating a handful of Healing Circle Processes, Y.O.C began to receive a range requests from youth and community to lead additional Healing Circles. The request also asked Y.O.C to share their Healing Circle teachings, and ways they this group and Y.O.C could continue the process of healing together. The Circle process provided healing to Y.O.C and so many more.

**Community Healing Forum as a Site of Grassroots Knowledge**

The third finding presented here responding to the second question is H.O.L.L.A!’s Community Healing Forums. In addition, to the Circle Process, Y.O.C organized large community healing rituals to build grassroots knowledge. Community that include – young, old, queer, and formerly incarcerated. Wives, children, close friends and stakeholders attend. Those serious about healing and others who are only there to learn the language. These communal ceremonies intentionally welcomed ancestors and elders. Healing within communal forums transpired through oral histories, and the experience(s) of survival that is expressed from *Standing on Legacy*. In these communal forums, communities (many individuals at the same time) are asked to share their gifts of *grassroots wisdom(s) for survival and healing*. Gifts that provide *hope* and *spirit* to sustain “us” in the process of healing and building.

**Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing**

My fourth and final response to this question lies in the finding Grassroots/Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing. Grassroots/Community specific approaches contribute to youth and community wisdom for survival and healing. Grassroots Wisdom for Survival and Healing describes how youth in the study associated healing with gaining wisdom from community specific sources. Community specific, in this sense means from their own personal and collective lives. This finding aligns with Healing Justice literature (Ginwright, 2016), which will be discussed later in the chapter. Creating rituals to honor the stories, culture and gifts that come from hurt people was a place of healing. Across radical healing processes H.O.L.L.A!’s rituals for survival and healing were in conversation with each other as an intention process to sustain and awaken spirit. Y.O.C praxis of rituals had a healing impacted on more than just themselves. They were able to touch urban youth, families and local community members across

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the process. Y.O.C's praxis situated community specific rituals for survival and healing to function at the individual, interpersonal, and communal levels. These findings align with the literature (Chavez-Diaz, & Lee 2015; Campos, 2015; Ginwright, 2016); Some, 1999 & Some, 2000).

***The Hope “we” Pull on to Circle-Back on Healing.*** Many indigenous healers believe the medicine (healing) is in our wounds (pain) (Aristizábal, 2018). Gifts for survival and healing live within marginalized people's experiences/community. Community organizers, elders, and youth all possess lived experiences that need to be shared (and respected) to assist “us” in navigating our journeys. Hope as a praxis of circling-back took time to develop. Y.O.C's spoke of the importance of having the internal strength and know “how” to come back to hard conversation with others youth to create hope. And new ways to relate to each other. Circling back describes a praxis and learning process for all involved. The one who circle-back, and the one who is circled-backed on... Y.O.C articulate the ways hope gave them opportunities “to fix” their interpersonal relationships. This particular dimension of finding hope was an unanticipated finding.

Y.O.C's community specific rituals “*Keeping it Real*” was generative for the participants of the organization (become part of the curriculum going forward). This ritual creates spaces for individuals involved in interpersonal relationships to consider what truths are needed, and the best ways to share those truths. This ritual gets at how do you tell someone you care about something hard, but important for healing. These findings highlight the ways community specific rituals develop and heal youth and community. These findings align with the literature (Chavez-Diaz, & Lee 2015; Campos, 2015; Ginwright, 2016); Some, 1999 & Some, 2000).

*What are the possibilities of braiding together the tenets of hope and spirit in community specific approaches to healing-centered youth organizing?*

Many thematic findings emerged from this study that speaks to the final research question – what are the possibilities of braiding together tenets of hope and spirit in human and healing-centered youth organizing? *Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movements* is the findings that I think most clearly speaks to braiding hope and spirit at the intersection of personal healing and collective transformation. There are five (5) key findings that answer this question. They are: 1) Spirituality for Grounded-ness Protection and Directions; 2) A Collective “we”; 3) The “Commitment Letter” Ritual; 4) Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movement; and 5) Warrior Spirit.

### **Spirituality for Grounded-ness, Direction and Protection**

The first finding that articulates my study’s contribution to braiding hope and spirit is *Spirituality for Grounded-ness Protection and Directions*. Using knowledge of their own emotional energy to guide them in connecting with others’ spirits. Y.O.C was able to engage their intuition(s) as a guide for protection in their relationship building/transformation process. Spirit is understudy. In SPD and other frames, spirit is connected to religion (which is true). Spirituality for Grounded-ness Protection and Directions is slightly different here. This finding on spirit articulates the learnings from emotional analyses that support visions and strategies for personal and collective journeying. The finding of Spirituality for Grounded-ness Protection and Directions is an emotional feature of sociopolitical development and the radical healing process. More to come on this in the literature contribution sections. This was an unanticipated finding. Spirituality for Grounded-ness Protection and Directions relates to another dimension of spirit that was central to the survival and healing of youth and community.



### **A Collective “we”**

The second finding that articulates my study’s contribution to braiding hope and spirit is grounded in an energy to grow A Collective “we.” This finding was salient across research praxis (i.e., activities). In many moments across the radical healing process Y.O.C engaged and reflected on personal and communal doubts or hopelessness experience. Many in Y.O.C described the spirits they needed to grow to continue healing along their journey. This particular dimension of spirit is informative and unanticipated. Learning how to ground one’s own emotional charge/energy (i.e., spirit) provided Y.O.C needed spiritual grounding and space to process. This emotional praxis (i.e., with personal and others) open up possibilities to build/sustain connection with others they organize with. A Collective “we” focuses on interpersonal relationships as a place to practice hope building/sustaining. A Collective “we” described Y.O.C explicit move from the individual to collectives dreaming/struggling. This finding aligns with previous literature on collective hope (Freire, 1992 & Ginwright, 2016).

Y.O.C believe in each other; and as a daily process of working hard to believe in each other. And, working even harder to believe more in each other. Y.O.C A Collective “we” is energy that assists youth personally in building/sustaining grassroots movement. This finding helps bridge connections between hope, spirit and community organizing. These concepts seem related but not often in conversation with each other in the literature concerning youth development. A Collective “we” meant Y.O.C and their community used their collective energy to sustain each other.

### **The “*Commitment Letter*” Ritual**

The third finding that articulates my study’s contribution to braiding hope and spirit is the learning embedded in H.O.L.L.A!’s “*Commitment Letter*” ritual. This ritual creates intentional

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pedagogical space that allows each youth to search within themselves and between each other for their commitments (i.e., spirit) to journey with each other. This ritual, asks youth to ask themselves, who are they, in the context of their legacy? What more can they give to heal, transform, and sacrifice for something bigger than themselves. And how do they hold, negotiate, and journey with the commitments other youth they agree and disagree with. This ritual opens a door for individual commitments to fuel collective commitments. This finding on grassroots community specific rituals for survival and healing asked Y.O.C organizers what they are willing and/or not willing to risk for each other's healing. This finding of youth/community development centers an interpersonal bond building process aligned with a culturally specific tradition of healing (hooks, 1993; Lawson Te Aho, 2014). And provide practical evidence to the theoretical claims of engaging vulnerability to come closer to others (Fine, Greene, & Sánchez, 2016).

### **Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Movement**

Hope and Spirit as a transformative energy needed in times of struggle, to continue the work of healing/journeying was an important finding. Y.O.C articulates a notion of spirit or hope that was invisible. They communicated hope and spirit as energy, intuitive analysis, emotions, feelings, and vibes. When journeying from histories of pain... with others who carry pain, Y.O.C pulled an energy from ancestors and community. A community who received them back. Affirming youth's healing was energy needed to create more healing. During the journey, transformative energy could arise from a practice of sage lighting and smudging, drumming, or from an Open Mic event. Or a healing circle. Other times transformative energy is felt after long builds with elders or witnessing a co-organizer transform in an area of development. *The Healing Justice Summit, Let the Talent Heal: Talent Show* and *H.O.L.L.A! Day* are examples of grassroots community rituals aimed to generate a transformative energy. These rituals' purpose

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is to cultivate spiritual energy that can sustain individuals and collectives as they move forward in the journey. In this context of urban youth development, and persistent suffering – the process of developing hope and spirit is critical for healing interpersonal bonds necessary to build grassroots movement.

### **Warrior Spirit**

The last finding, I bring into picture that is key to how I braid hope and spirit derives from my analysis of *Warrior Spirit*. As Y.O.C engaged in personal development alongside movement building, at some point they began to realize that their ancestors and elders/parents' hopes (dreams) live within their actions/manifestations. That they could “*channeling liberation*” from elder and ancestors' visions (Ortega-Williams 2017). *Warrior Spirit* describes a sense grounded-ness, emotional knowledge and intuitive analysis, which are critical and important internal ingredients (emotional grounded-ness in life threatening situations) that facilitate outward leadership. *Warrior Spirit* describes insights about the “*cost of freedom*.” The shifts and sacrifices individuals and collective spirits need in order to be “*free*.” This finding was not expected, and seems to suggest that spirit is a praxis that pulls on past knowledge for working thru fear. Fear limits one ability to healing, or being freed. *Warrior Spirit* is a spiritual shift from solely living a life centered on oppression, worries, and/or death, towards creatively living a lifestyle built from dreaming/freedom. Central to personal transformation and movement building processes is the engagement of *Warrior Spirit* or an intentional engagement with the emotions of fear and courage in the context of freedom and healing.

### **Summary**

Overall, it appeared that H.O.L.L.A!'s radical healing and the sociopolitical processes to engaging youth/community impacted by violence in the areas of cognitive learning and

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emotional development was a source of healing needed for personal development, movement and building. In the next section, I review key findings their contribute to the literature that framed this dissertation. In particular, sociopolitical development theory, the Healing Justice Framework, The Legacy as Grassroots Epistemology and The Epistemology of Liberation Psychology Epistemology.

### **Contribution to Literature**

I referred primarily to four frameworks to inform this study. Two of which are theoretical: *Sociopolitical Development and Healing Justice*. Two of which are epistemological: *The Legacy and Liberation Psychology*. I incorporated Sociopolitical Development Theory and Healing Justice framework to offer insights into the elements of youth development, radical healing process and movement building (i.e., community organizer) for urban youth fighting against violence. I included *The Legacy and Liberation Psychology* as epistemological foundations with deep literature of life experiences concerned with freedom fighting. Imposing these frameworks on my study produced several key findings that are applicable to social psychological knowledge (social science in general), and the field of youth development (in New York City and beyond). Below, I review the areas of overlap between my study's findings and gaps in the field to consider how my study contributes to the existing literature. Bringing together SPD and human and healing-centered youth organizing allowed me to explore a new understanding of the intersection of hope and spirit in youth development.

### **Sociopolitical Development Theory**

#### **Critical Consciousness**

Sociopolitical Development Theory has particular relevance for this study as it describes the psychological, spiritual and political agential process of development for youth navigating

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current systems of violence (Watts, et al 1999). Sociopolitical Development Theory sets the tone – that the personal is political, that youth development sits within a historical context of many political moves and state apparatuses. The cognitive/intellectual element SPD is to develop the critical consciousness of youth impacted by violence (i.e., internal racism, sexism). This notion of SPD was consistent in my study. Alternative knowledge and education are critical for psychological development (Sánchez, et al 2015). Y.O.C expressed boldly that political education and rituals based in community specific approaches assisted them in developing wisdom - at the intellectual, spiritual and emotional levels.

*“but now, after deep conversation and routines, I realize, I do have a lot of trauma.”*

At different times, across the research praxis, participants spoke clearly about how they developed critical consciousness and understanding from reflecting on their own personal lives, and from listening to other youth’s personal reflections (Chapter 7 and Chapter 8).

### **Political Efficacy**

Sociopolitical Development Theory is concerned with political efficacy (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Most scholarly enterprises situate political efficacy as a theoretical measure not grounded in practice (i.e., actually community organizing) but as “perceived ability to effect social change” (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). In this study, political efficacy was measured both as a cognitive process (i.e., the things youth say or note about their political capabilities/agency) and as a practice of organizing. Individual and collective; focusing on past and future. This study was consistent with SPD literature on political efficacy, in the sense that Y.O.C engaged organizing as a practice across the radical healing process in many individual and collective moments. This includes, shifting individual behaviors, from coming late to coming on time, not doing community-work to doing all the community work, from not feeling

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capable or comfortable to facilitate internal educational sessions to feeling good and excited to lead internal sessions, from not ready to lead panel discussions or keynote speeches to taking the lead on all organizational keynote speech and panel discussion offers.

The belief to heal is essential to healing. In the context of healing-centered youth organizing, political efficacy was embodied a collective notion. Moving from never organizing before or only organizing a few years to leading the development of political strategy to launch their own version of Healing Justice. Political efficacy was demonstrated in hope needed to circle-back on hard dynamics within important relationships. Political efficacy, in this study, represented a belief (for all involved) that interpersonal relationships could be different or transformed. This study teaches us about the emotional characteristics of political efficacy. Gaining the courage and or abilities to engage political efficacy at the individual and/or collective level is not only a cognitive process, but also an emotional and spiritual process.

When political efficacy is examined within a “lived critical consciousness” context, the attention to emotional pedagogy, socio-emotional regulation and feeling debriefing is recognized. In this context of CC and SPD political efficacy is understanding a version of hope, spirit or energy within individuals and communities that needs to heal when healing is not in sight. *Grassroots Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing* and *Building a Grassroot Movement as Healing* captured reflections, processes and experiences that suggest youth’s political efficacy can be healed, developed and shared as a collective process. In this study, political efficacy was produced by evoking ancestors, elders, and going through a process to learn how to listen more carefully to one’s own inner emotions.

**Vulnerability the Emotional Effect of SPD**

Vulnerability as a way into the emotions was lived, reflected on and engaged across the radical healing process. Emotional development within SPD literature of late is receiving more attention (Godfrey, et al. 2019 & Watts, Kirshner, Govan & Fernandez, 2018). However, much more focus, analysis, understanding and frames of knowing is needed to further think through the emotional aspect, affective elements, and feeling development within SPD. Within this study, in many acts of being/organizing Y.O.C needed to pull on emotional energy/currency to facilitate intentional processes of co-creating emotional trust with themselves and other youth. The ability to pull on this emotional energy or the inability to pull on this emotional energy has implication on youth/community's political efficacy and praxis (among the least).

This study uncovers findings that remind the field of the fullness evolved in seeing/understanding, let alone developing humanity. And particularly, urban youth impacted by violence seeking healing through building community, and “*embracing vulnerability.*” The teaches within the finding, *Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing*, demonstrate vulnerability to be an important component within the sociopolitical development process. Critical Consciousness is a concept with more than just an intellectual property. This study sheds light on CC emotional components. My finding of *Spirit as Analysis for Protection and Direction* describes an emotional dimension of CC needed to understand and deconstruct violence. *Spirit as Analysis for Protection and Direction* also aided youth with relational navigation in community organizing. Emotional analysis (i.e., regulation) assisted the intellectual processes and understandings. Knowing how to get one's freedom or living out one's freedom or understanding what freedom feels like, are similar but different aspects of knowing freedom. This study uplifted emotional aspects of developing consciousness for urban youth engaged in

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building grassroots movements. Participating in movement building process was seen as a space to develop critical awareness, emotional “how”, and hope sustain the process.

### **Spirituality in SPD**

Sociopolitical Development Theory pays particular attention to the spiritual development of youth/community impacted by structural and interpersonal violence (Watts, et al 1999). Less attention is given to the discussion of measurement or ways to capture spirit or spirituality within the SPD literature. Furthermore, SPD literature describes spirituality as inspiration, strategy, and courage to build and sustain movement, this study was consistent with this understanding (Watts, et al 1999) Y.O.C spoke of spirit in many tongues and actions. Participants shared about the Warrior Spirit, as a particular shift within spirit to search for freedom (to be yourself) despite its consequences. Spirit as energy, and learning one’s energetic flow for personal grounding. Spirit as analysis for protection and direction in movement building, and spirit as energy to grow a collective “we.” Y.O.C experienced spirituality within a “*lived critical consciousness*” context of development as a process over time or said differently, as a radical healing process of spirit teaching. This study sheds light on possibilities to develop spirituality amongst urban youth engaged in human and healing-centered youth organizing. This study shares valuable insights into community specific approaches to capture, teach and measure the process of spiritual healing that is generative to many fields of study/practice.

Spirituality in this study articulated a deep commitment to beliefs, way of life, or something bigger than the person, and/or present moment. Within the SPD literature, to conceptual liberation on a spiritual level, arises a deeper personal commitment to sacrifice for a larger goal of freedom (Watts, et al 1999). This particular analysis within SPD’s spirituality dimension was salient in this study. The commitment to struggle with each other was displayed



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time, and time again across the radical healing process. There was a real emotional commitment to show up for each other, despite youth's own personal feelings. The commitment to grow individually in the areas named by the group and oneself. Y.O.C's commitment letter rituals were examples of spirituality practiced in a ritual to heal/develop youth's commitments to each other. As a process of learning and "*embracing vulnerability*." In the context of "*lived critical consciousness*" having direct relationships and contact with culture, elders, and ancestors provided youth with an experience (type of knowledge/relationship) that helps heal the developmental gaps and pathways to spiritual connections. In this study, spirit lived within the pockets of our relationships and inner-connectedness with elders and ancestors.

SPD describes spirituality as energy to sustain commitment and engagements over time despite realities. In the literature, spirituality is not articulated as a praxis or an intentional engagement within the process of sociopolitical development. In this study, spirituality was intentionally enacted as a praxis. There is much to learn from a pedagogy of healing spirituality in youth development as a grassroots practice. More so, when spirituality is engaged as a praxis or within a context of "*lived critical consciousness*," the lines between spirituality as a concept and hope as a concept become blurry. In many moments across the radical healing process, when engaging spiritual journeying, it felt like *hope* was present or close by. Participants spoke of spirit and hope interchangeable at times when describing energy. Spirit and hope are both internal sources of energy that engages wisdom from the invisible world (Freire, 1992). This study uplifts the connection between the two related but not intentional connected concepts (spirituality and hope) in youth development. Below, I elaborate further on hope in relation to the Healing Justice framework.

## **Healing Justice**

### **Radical Healing**

Healing Justice Framework expands the understanding of youth development as a sociopolitical process that centered healing, hope building and sustained well-being (Ginwright, 2010). Radical Healing is one of the central elements of Healing Justice. Radical Healing has spiritual foundations (Somé, 1999), pulling from afro-indigenous rituals. Radical healing as a spiritual process was salient and consistent with the findings from this study. A critical dimension of the radical healing process is the investment in caring relationships (Dance, 2002). Pulling on Janelle Dance's (2002) framework of "humane investment", the radical healing process is only as strong or good as the people involved in holding each other. Y.O.C experience(s) was consistent with this element of radical healing. The Healing Justice Movement Circle Process was an example where Y.O.C created Healing Circles after Healing Circles to invest in themselves and other youth. The Healing Justice Movement was built on the principle of human investment. This study's finding on "*Keeping it Real*" with "*Chosen Family*" articulates the intentional need to maintain relational connection when investing in other spirits. This dissertation opens up insights into *Grassroot Community Specific Rituals for Survival and Healing* that are needed to sustain and maintain human investment.

### **Hope**

As I mentioned above, Radical healing describes a spiritual process to engage youth in building hope, optimism, and a vision to create justice in the midst of ongoing violence. In the Healing Justice framework radical healing is regarded, more specifically, as a process in which to build and develop hope, amongst the hopeless or youth struggling to practice hope. Throughout the study Y.O.C and the youth/community they engaged spoke on and reflected on

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their developmental journey with hope, their abilities to dream bigger... This was reflected in chapter 5 findings on *Building Grassroots Movement as Healing* and in many other findings across the dissertation such as the “*Commitment Letter*”; *The Hope “we” Pull on to Circle-Back on Interpersonal Healing* to name a few.

Healing Justice conceptualizes building hope as a collective engagement (Freire, 1992 & Ginwright, 2016). This study explicitly located radical healing within a grassroots movement building process. Or said differently, within a context of grassroots community organizing. Situating radical healing explicitly within a human and healing-centered organizing process allows room (not just Y.O.C) for youth and community to enter into the process. Into an intentional pedagogical process of community healing and hope building. In this study Y.O.C to lived out a hope (i.e., healing justice organizing) as a process of healing.

Hope was a portal (we/spirits can enter), that youth can create for each other. The way youth stand, show up, live, and more, all have the ability to serve as a portal to another youth’s spiritual core. Collective hope building as a praxis was a finding within this study that is consistent with the literature. However, the level and depth of hope that was built across Y.O.C’s Healing Justice Movement – all the circles, events, panels, keynotes, personal meetings, and performances were not anticipated, and can’t really be measured (i.e., academically at least).

### **Healing –Centered Youth Organizing (Well-Being)**

Healing–centered youth organizing has risen to the surface as a pedagogical frame for youth development to build/sustain hope. In Healing-centered youth organizing praxis the cultivation of hope is one of the most important factors to facilitate individual, community and societal healing. In this study, my findings were consistent with healing-centered youth organizing dual strategies of youth development. (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015 & Compos, 2015).

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Y.O.C's Healing Justice Movement was built from the reality of healing-centered youth organizing's dual strategy.

This research and praxis have further taught me that political work itself is a form of healing. Youth (and humanity) find their dignity, voice and power---personally and thru the affirmation and camaraderie of being in/building movement. However, questions around which strategy comes “*first*” or “*second*” in the dual process and/or the move between strategies (“*first*” and “*second*” or “*second*” and “*first*”) is still not all the way clear. In some (many) moments, it is the collective that facilitates a process youth to receive emotional healing, and in other times, being alone creates internal healing needed to fuel community organizing with others. There is no prescriptive strategy for moving between the “*first*” and “*second*” strategies within the dual process of healing. How do one get the wisdom that lets them know they have healed enough to do community organizing with others? How do one know when their spirit is healed or ready enough? Is that for the individuals to do all on their own or in relationships with others? Is this different for every youth? When does the “*first*” strategy stop and/or the “*second*” strategy start? And are the “*first*” and “*second*” strategy a real or false binary? These are questions I leave with... not sure I have complete answers to any of them. However, I do believe the two strategies are important and us finding the individual and collective balance is important for collective healing.

This dissertation explicitly examines urban youth's well-being within the context of grassroots movement building. There was much value in situating healing-centered youth organizing within an explicit context of grassroots movement building. *Building Grassroot Movement as Healing* is filled with many learnings. The Movement, in itself, is sort of like a teacher. The experience, political education sessions, actions.... reflections with elders, and local

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community.... All in different ways open up pathways to healing. This process provided youth with new found energy needed to continue their journeys. Placing healing-centered youth organizing in an explicit frame of community organizing – youth’s personal journey of healing is in conversation with community’s (personal family, past movements and ancestors) journeys of healing.

Lastly, within a grassroots movement context, a focus on interpersonal healing was central. Youth being able to share needed truth with each other is critical along the journey. *Grassroot Community Specific Rituals (Wisdoms)* allowed youth to “Circle-Back”, “Keep It Real” and Share their “Commitments” with each other, in their best way possible. Journeying with the same individuals over time, comes many moments and learning. We all have many selves. Knowing how to share our multiple-selves with each other is a journey, but it is also a choice. *Grassroot Community Specific Rituals (Wisdoms)* support this process. Rituals assisted Y.O.C in their engagement of healing-centered organizing and interpersonal healing. Y.O.C experiences with *Grassroot Community Specific Rituals (Wisdoms)* were consistent with the literature. In addition, this study introduces specific levels at which ritual work to transform: individual, community, and society. This study introduced a focus on rituals within a context of grassroots movement building that produced healing for youth, youth’s interpersonal relationships, and youth’s larger communities simultaneously.

### **Discussion**

In this section I discuss the implications of my dissertation’s findings at three intersecting levels; 1) youth development through the lens of vulnerability; 2) centering hope and spirit within human and healing-centered youth organizing; and 3) research as movement building, and movement building as research.

**Youth Development through an Intersectional lens of Vulnerability**

Centering intersectionality as a methodological praxis opened up lessons on the many layers within urban youth's expressions and experiences of vulnerability. In fact, vulnerability intersected at four related experiences and practices: 1) *vulnerability as hurt: the experience and/or understanding of one's (or community) precarity to historical, structural and interpersonal violence.* 2) *vulnerability as feelings: the multiped-layered and intersecting experience(s) and wisdom(s) of living in and thru emotional situation(s)/moment(s) of precarity.* 3) *vulnerability as practice/action/behavior: the experience(s)e of sharing emotions, and facilitating precarity to simulate development and healing for self and others.* 4) *vulnerability as standpoint (analysis/epistemology): wisdom from youth's experiences of precarity that assist them in forming strategies and understandings of the benefits of curating emotional connections and wellness with themselves and others as praxis of movement building.*

Vulnerability impacts the ways emotions move between youth's interpersonal relationships with co-organizers (i.e., adults and relationships in general). Questions such as: how do we make vulnerability powerful (Fine, Greene, & Sánchez, 2016)? How do we build a pedagogy of vulnerability? How do we develop a practice of youth development and healing that creates spaces to understand emotional analysis and consciousness derived from vulnerability? How do we learn from urban youth who experience(d) vulnerability? These are some questions people engaging youth work, critical studies and public policy development are grappling with or need to start (continue to) processing. Another question I ask is what do the field know about the intersection of vulnerability and youth development?

Vulnerability is a big contribution to SPD and Healing Justice theoretical frameworks. Vulnerability opens up the emotions, hearts, and relationships. Vulnerability underscores

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embodied knowledge and possibilities. In the literature, vulnerability is discussed as truth, experiences and reality that all humans have access to (Fineman 2008). In fact, vulnerability binds our humanity interconnected-ness (Fineman 2013). In other sections of the literature, vulnerability describes the ways power ingrained within societal structural and interpersonal relationships create different levels of unstableness. Based on the youth's social location (Butler, 2006, 2009, 2015). We are all vulnerable bodies, living out vulnerability in whatever context we are navigating. In *Neoliberal Blues and Prec(ar)ious Knowledge* (2016), we discuss an analysis (epistemology) that comes from one's interpretation of their own vulnerability (or precarity) (Fine, Greene, & Sánchez, 2016). This dissertation brings me back full circle on vulnerability as a source of healing.

Considering Sociopolitical Development Theory and Healing Justice, knowledge on the pedagogical process of vulnerability is useful. Vulnerability is spiritual process and tool for shifting in "*how*" we facilitate, teach, learn and approach youth development. Cultivating vulnerability as an intentional sociopolitical process creates space to dive into youth's emotions. To engage emotional knowledge where spirit and hope to meet up. A pedagogy of vulnerability is centered on intuition. A praxis of consistently reconnecting to the intuition despite material world realities. Vulnerability is a "*how*" that helps one moves between and around the emotional fear, shame, guilt to still be human/present. Vulnerability asserts that emotions are centered in youth development, particularly youth development in context of grassroot movements. Vulnerability is a developmental foundation that asserts spirit and hope are included in the process of urban youth development. A pedagogy of vulnerability pulls on ancestral knowledge.

**Y.O.C: Personal/Collective Journeying with Hope and Spirit**

The concepts of hope and spirit are stand-out findings from this dissertation study. Together, they speak to elements of youth/human development that have been under study (Ginwright, 2016 & Watts et al 1999). Hope was embodied in every aspect of this dissertation creation. Even in my early stages of building the dissertation's protocol was a journey... it was a process... None of the framings, questions, and analysis I shared above were clear or articulated neatly (as there are to this point). Still in all, I asked my advisors to journey with me with the hope we would make through this dissertation journey. If anyone would of asked me or any one of my advisors, what do you think assisted us in getting through hard conversations (because we had some hard conversations) and struggles of producing a dissertation? You may hear a few different answers, however, regardless of the answers, under the words, I would say it was an energetic force that kept us journeying together.

When we (Y.O.C) decided to take this journey some 4 years back, we did not know what we would learn from each other (and the world), what we would mean to each other, yet alone, what we would create for others... When hurt people decide to be with each other, we should expect hurt to show up at some point, and in some cases often. In H.O.L.L.A!, it was no different. Personal and collective journeying is an art. It is hard work. Every individual in their own way is experiencing the weight of historical, structural and interpersonal violence as they engage movement building. Some days are harder than others, some moments are hard than others. While this dissertation is filled with findings demonstrating healing as a praxis, that is not without moments of not healing. That is part of what makes healing a journey. Despite many instances of not healing, one of the main findings is that when youth and community put their



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hearts, minds, and bodies together to dream, there is no telling what can be created, made, sustain/built and passed on to the next generation. This dissertation is a story about hope and spirit. In moments, there are collective waves and currents of hope building driven by spiritual processes, portals to the ancestors... and there are moments of individual stories of hope and spirit driving.

When considering personal development and collective transformation in the context of grassroots movement building or journeying, findings from this study suggest a deep pedagogical investment in the development of spirit and hope for urban youth. Spirit and hope development provide youth with the bandwidth to circle-back on interpersonal relationships for healing. Spirit and hope development allow youth/community to grow A Collective “we” needed to sustain hard relational moments, and carry relational moments to the “*finish line*.” The possibilities of youth to build/sustain relationships long-term is at the heart grassroots movement building. To build movement is much greater when the internal spirit and compass of youth are strengthened. When their spiritual knowledge is able to guide and protect youth along their journeys.

In closing, we learned that each of our hopes are bonded up within each other’s hope. As we witnessed each of us grow in individual areas of transformation, others gained hope for their own capacity to transform/grow. Similarly, when we did not see or feel others transform in individual areas of transformation, other embodied a sense of hopelessness. We learned that we are “*portals of hope*” for each other. We realized, the more spiritual grounding, the more likely we can create ongoing relationships and “*portals of hope*” for our collective journey(s).

**Research as Movement Building, and Movement Building as Research**

Explicit Movement Building Frameworks help ground the researcher spirit throughout the research process. Movement Building Frameworks assist the researcher with remembering their responsibilities and commitments. They help situated the researcher for the journey. This dissertation serves as an extension of incarceration scholarship, and the empirical scholarship of the Think Tank (Rivera, 1995). I grounded this dissertation in an epistemology of movement building. I particularly leaned on Liberation Psychology and *The Legacy* (Green Haven Think Tank/Bedford Hills Sisters' Grassroots Knowledge) as my epistemological frameworks. This dissertation ontological foundation is steeped in grassroots movement building. Not as research to support movement building, but the research in itself is a fire-starter for grassroots movement building. All research decisions, was engaged as a movement building activity, and not only as a dissertation protocol. The dissertation's design, research praxis, and protocol, pull from previous grassroots frameworks, literatures, and findings. In particular, the grassroots wisdom of incarcerated individuals and communities is centered; and their (our) community literatures, program designs, organizing framework are front loaded in the creation of this research possibilities (i.e., design and activities). Secondly, Liberation Psychology is centered in this dissertation. Liberation Psychology focuses on standpoint, local knowledge, and the creation of knowledge through organizing is another movement building pillar. Liberation Psychology as a movement building framework explicitly works to interrupt historical, structural and interpersonal violence as an ongoing praxis.

### The Researchers is an Organizer

To be honest, in many ways, many of the dissertation's procedures, activities, and power dynamics with the process replicate the violence I examined within this study. How do you heal, go forward, and negotiate violence within the academic structure as a research and organizer? As a researcher engaged in movement-based research, we must ask ourselves, is the research "we" are leading liberating to "ourselves?" And, is the process of research within the academy liberating or harmful?

Martin-Baro (1994) teaches that the role of psychologists is to liberate psychology. Researchers involved in movement-based research are organizers, following Martin-Baro instructions. Martin-Baro suggests that we (psychologists) should be organizing to break free from our own psychological violence and psychology departments. In liberation psychological frames, the researcher(s) and research itself is seeking to answer and address this question/reality. Researchers engaged in movement building should ask themselves, 'what am I willing or not willing to risk in order to liberate psychology? This is a question that should be incorporated into an iterated process across the research movement process. Furthermore, researchers leading movement-based research are seeking their own liberation. As they journey in the research movement process, each moment, every research activity, should be an opportunity to heal/liberate themselves. In movement-based research, a researcher is actively participating in the research enterprise. They are committed to working for their own liberation in partnership with others working for their liberation. The aim of freeing oneself in a liberation psychological praxis on some levels are more central than the research itself. This is an empirical and experiential "truth" I've learned through the journey.

**Movement Based Research is a Spiritual Practice**

Engaging research as movement building is an emotional process. Outside of any of my dissertation training/schooling, I needed to pull on internal knowledge in moments of vulnerability. There were times which required spirit to drive. There will be moments when one's emotions are saying one thing and my theoretical framing is saying another... There will be moments of exhaustion from organizing to liberate psychology or from engaging the research activities or from personal relationships or from a combination of them all, that will require spiritual grounding. Movement based research is a practice of hope, having the courage to engage in non-mainstream approaches despite the consequences. Having a Warrior Spirit is important while practicing movement-based research. A spiritual commitment to continue pushing the boundaries of social psychological practice and scholarship. More often, grassroots movement-based frameworks lay on the margins of academic literature. Bringing grassroots frames into an explicit empirical view allows more possibilities for engaging research as movement building and movement building as research. Liberation Psychology taught us this. Liberation Psychology has ties to historical roots that run back to indigenous communities struggling against historical, structural, and interpersonal violence. Honoring old, indigenous, and grassroots community specific methodologies and epistemologies of movement building in itself a spiritual practice. It is also healing that the academy needs.

**Strengths and Limitations**

In this dissertation, I engaged in a multi-method critical ethnographic study that followed H.O.L.L.A!'s program activities and participants as they engaged in a radical healing process of human and healing-centered youth organizing. One benefit of the study was the community

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specific design – which allowed me to follow the same nine (9) youth over time, and across the movement building process. Another strength of the research is the researcher’s positionality or my personal relationship to the program understudy and Y.O.C. This allowed me to move in between research, friend, organizer, and program facilitator all in one motion within the research activities. The dissertation epistemological foundations are another strength of the study. The sample or Y.O.C was represented by youth from urban communities impacted by violence. Ecological validity was another strength of the study (Fine, 2006). The study’s blended method-action approach was another positive.

The study is filled with limitations. I played researcher, organizer and writer of this dissertation. Wearing these many hats within the research has some negative impact (and a lot of good to it) on research activities. The sample and research site were selected and agreed upon based on my personal relationships. My sample did not include any youth who identified as gender non-conforming or trans-gender or incarcerated. The study’s sample did not have any youth who identified as differently able. This dissertation’s sample size was another limitation. Methodological limitation point to the limited quantitative data collected across the research design. The methodological limitations limited certain analytical claims and analysis. I wish there was more room to analyze and center intersectionality as an analysis and methodology within this project. To my thoughts and not as a connector to the ideas this dissertation circles around. design a research-based praxis.

### **Implications for Future Research**

My dissertation’s findings make room for inquiry about future research regarding themes that emerged. In this section, I will share ideas that could further build upon the knowledge

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generated in this study. First, I believe looking more closely at vulnerability within the radical healing and sociopolitical developmental process for urban youth can generate new learnings, practices and teaching of youth development.

Second, there is much knowledge to build on from my study on grassroots measures for spirit/hope development. *Warrior Spirit* was one example of learning uplifted in the context of emotional development, related to the spirit cultivation. In the future, I would like to see further research, practice and policy engage the spiritual aspect of youth development. To study hope as social praxis within movement building for urban youth. In addition, I would like to see more empirical studies honor grassroots community specific approaches to developing spirit and hope.

Third, I believe SPD Theory and Healing Justice Framework has more to learn from each other. Particularly, at the intersection of their separate but related theorization of hope and spirit. I would like to see future research, praxis and policy development on youth development to engage both these concepts within an explicit context of grassroots movement building.

Fourth, there is enough credible data that rituals, cultural practices and healing modalities bring and sustain healing and wellness for individuals and communities. More research is needed to study the depth of impact for each ritual, to better understand what are the rituals individual impact on wellness and healing. More research is needed to study the practice of ritual with youth and community across different intersections, over time to learn of its impacts.

In addition, Y.O.C created more than 4 grassroots community specific rituals or ceremonies within their radical healing process. Many of Y.O.C rituals targeted interpersonal transformation. In the Healing Justice framework, borrowing from Transformative Organizing (Social Justice Leadership, 2010), there is an assumption that healing interpersonal relationships is in relationship to healing the larger society. Further research is needed to study movements,

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communities, and programs who engage rituals at the interpersonal level for more understanding of the impacts. Further research is needed to track individuals who engage in interpersonal level rituals to see the impacts of such rituals on their own relationships in general – outside the ritual experiences, and over time.

Further, research is needed on participatory action research designs that explicitly blend methods with action. Further study of participatory projects steep in Liberation Psychology with a commitment to building grassroots movement is needed. Particularly, PAR processes involving youth of color seeking access to health, wellness, and healing resources and reparations. Moreover, a project featuring differently abled youth of color and youth impacted by homelessness can teach the field further about the healing needs of urban youth organizing against historical, structural and interpersonal violence. There is room to further study on Healing Justice/Radical Healing processes with urban youth/community who seek to build grassroots movement with focus on accessing “Black Land” (Penniman, 2018). There is a need for future study on Radical Healing/Healing Justice models led by Black/Indigenous womyn, working with youth from urban communities impacted by the criminal punishment system (and other systems of violence) within in an explicit movement building context. This dissertation project uplifted more questions about methodological design and praxis that moves into the details of intersectionality. There is room for future research to explicitly center intersectionality as a critical praxis within youth development and healing-centered youth organizing. Lastly, this study raised questions about the procedural process of completing a dissertation rooted grassroots politics. When considering research as movement building, and movement building as research, further research is needed to study the intimate relationship between student(s) and

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advisor(s) along the dissertation journey. This relationship is critical in the research movement building process, because it has the potential to aid and/or prevent liberation processes.

### **Conclusion: What do “we” Want Our Words (stories/truths) to do?**

My dissertation sought to explore a community specific approach of radical healing to develop urban youth’s abilities to engage spirit and collective hope for grassroots movement building. I focused my inquiry upon three questions: 1) *what is the ethnographic story of developing a youth led Human to Healing Justice Movement focused inwardly on healing from structural, institutional, spiritual, interpersonal violence? and What is the ethnographic story of social change (i.e., healing and justice)?* (2) *What are the lessons from experiencing, engaging and reflecting on community specific rituals? and How do community specific rituals contribute to the psychological, spiritual, and emotional development of urban youth?* (3) *What are the possibilities of braiding together the tenets of hope and spirit in community specific approaches to healing-centered youth organizing?*

Four key interrelated findings represent this dissertation’s takeaway story: 1) *Grassroots Community Rituals for Survival and Healing*; 2) *The Art of Cultivating Vulnerability as Emotional Knowledge for Healing*; 3) *Hope and Spirit to Build/Sustain Grassroots Movements*; and 4) *Building Grassroots Movement as Healing*.

Y.O.C deserves a lot of credit for the completion of this dissertation. Thank you, again Y.O.C. My *hope/spirit* is that this dissertation serves as a reminder to the journey we took together; to the many emotional moments we shared with each other; and to our dreams....

Y.O.C dreamed that one day, “we” would submit this dissertation for publication. We are here! We now wait! We wait for what is to come next...



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But if you (the academy/readers) ask us, what do “we” (Y.O.C and our legacy) want our words (data and stories) to do, our answer is, to start and/or continue you on your own/collective healing journey. This dissertation is an invitation for us all to live (the researcher and researched) differently, to live more in relationship to each other, and each other’s spirits, to be human in different ways, and to ask questions, to further intersectional healing; such as, what’s next for human and societal transformation? What else do “we” need to learn? Where else is does “our” healing required? Where must “we” continue to struggle for freedom? As well as, who are you? Who are you not ready to become? What does healing mean to you? How does your fear of vulnerability negate your own healing? How do you become vulnerable with yourself, while leaning into other people’s shame for collective healing? Who does not deserve your healing? How are you healing, while others are hurting? Who do you owe some healing too? Where do you still need to grow for others to heal?



H.O.L.L.A!’s Youth Organizing Collective during the closing of the Let the Talents Heal: Talent Show. March 2017. Ethnographic documentation by H.O.L.L.A!

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## Appendix A

Level of Healing (CS)	Rituals/Activity/Practice	Ritual Description and Key Activities	Ritual's Purpose Towards Healing
Community	<b>Human and Healing Justice Community Contemplative Practices</b>	A practice at the beginning and/or end of each community gathering. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>mind, body, emotion and spirit activity, meditation using political and ancestral/cultural symbols and artifacts.</i>	help participants transition into/out of a space of body, mind, emotion and spirit learning and development as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Check in/Breathe out</b>	A practice that is usually placed at the start of a community process, before the formal "teaching and learning" begins or at the end of the community process, after the "teaching and learning." <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Debrief circle process, debrief action and external engagement, personal check in about life circumstances.</i>	allows each youth, and their community a space to be seen and heard. These release emotional build up and open up space to process emotions collectively as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Interpersonal Relationship Cultivation</b>	A set of activities and engagements across the programmatic time-line. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>partnered assignments focus on self-discovery, collective experience, learning and travel, healing circles, spiritual camping trip, keep it real sessions, check/debrief.</i>	processes intentionally designed to mend harm, bring closer, and sustain dreaming within relationships over the process as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Healing Circle</b>	A space that incorporates hip hop, media, activities, culture, indigenous herbs-medicine, interactive one on one and group dialogue into a circle process. to discuss daily struggles, historical trauma, the power of youth organizing and relationship building as a praxis of healing. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>affirmation circle, healing from harm circle, relationship building circle, community integration circle.</i>	space for individual and collective discussion about daily struggles, historical trauma, the power of youth organizing and relationship building as a praxis of healing. This support emotion connections/interpersonal dynamics/builds emotional/spiritual trust as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Human and Healing Justice Political Education</b>	A set of Human and Healing Justice based activities that incorporated personal experiences and culture as pedagogy. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>History of H.O.L.L.A!'s, PAR training, Campaign Development, "how" in Facilitation.</i>	assist youth in learning about themselves/culture, local community, and their connection to the world outside of themselves as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Spiritual and Wellness</b>	A set of trainings, activities and engagements. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Radical Healing, Four Direction Circle Process Training, Empathic Facilitator Training.</i>	cultivate knowledge of, and participation with cultural and ancestral practices of wellness, resistance and community as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Dream Building</b>	A practice with the program facilitator and peer - youth organizers as an accountability process to co-plan and dream of developmental steps needed to accomplish; professional, personal, spiritual and collective goals. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>circle space to hold and share dreams, interpersonal space to hold and share dreams</i>	space to reflect personal and collective developments, across the 18month process. Space to be held and to hold emotions and hopes as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Human and Healing-Centered Community Organizing</b>	A commitment to engage a set of activities such as issue meetings, leadership development trainings, base building, public education, accountability and direct-action campaigns that centered healing ourselves and each other. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Healing Justice Movement, Bed-Study local community gathering, Formerly Incarcerated and Currently Family and People's Movement.</i>	space, praxis, emotional confidence, intention and "how" to transform or to apply leadership with self, community and society as a praxis of healing at the community level.
	<b>Art-Based/Artistic Expression</b>	Is a creative engagement with music, spoken word, vibration, and oral expression as pedagogy and therapy that brings awareness, energy, and uplift shared connections between youth and their community. Art as an open acceptance of vulnerability to transform culture. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>music education on negro spirituals, studio recording session, cultural affirmation celebration (Kwanzaa)</i>	Conjuring vulnerability and transformational relationship building to dismantle structural violence presence in our personal and collectively energies, connections to ancestors, play/have fun and share knowledge/culture as a praxis of healing at the community level.
System	<b>Healing Circle</b>	A space that incorporates hip hop, media, activities, culture, indigenous herbs-medicine, interactive one on one and group dialogue into a circle process. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>affirmation circle, healing from harm circle, relationship building circle, community integration circle</i>	Space for individual and collective discussion about daily struggles, historical trauma, the power of youth organizing and relationship building as a praxis of healing. This support emotion connections/interpersonal dynamics/builds emotional/spiritual trust as a praxis of healing at the system level.
	<b>Human and Healing-Centered Community Organizing</b>	A commitment to engage a set of activities such as issue meetings, leadership development trainings, base building, public education, accountability and direct-action campaigns. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Healing Justice Movement, Bed-Study local community gathering, Formerly Incarcerated and Currently Family and People's Movement.</i>	space, praxis, emotional confidence, intention and "how" to transform or to apply leadership with self, community and society as a praxis of healing at the system level.
	<b>City-Wide Healing Praxis</b>	A practice to engage and co-facilitate youth and other community in collective healing with each other at the same time. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>H.O.L.L.A! Day, Healing Justice Summit, Let's the Talent Heal Talent Show.</i>	space to collective healing with each other at the same time as a praxis of healing at the system level.
	<b>Art-Based/Artistic Expression</b>	Is a creative engagement with music, spoken word, vibration, and oral expression as pedagogy and therapy that brings awareness, energy, and uplift shared connections between youth and their	Conjuring vulnerability and transformational relationship building to dismantle structural violence presence in our personal and collectively energies, connections to ancestors, play/have fun and share

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		community. Art as an open acceptance of vulnerability to transform culture.  <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>music education on negro spirituals, studio recording session, cultural affirmation celebration (Kwanzaa)</i>	knowledge/culture as a praxis of healing at the community level.
<i>Individual</i>	<b>Human and Healing Justice Community Contemplative Practices</b>	A practice at the beginning and/or end of each community gathering. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>mind, body, emotion and spirit activity, mediation using political and ancestral/cultural symbols and artifacts.</i>	help participants transition into/out of a space of body, mind, emotion and spirit learning and development as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Check in/Breathe out</b>	A practice that is usually placed at the start of a community process, before the formal “teaching and learning” begins or at the end of the community process, after the “teaching and learning.” <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Debrief circle process, debrief action and external engagement, personal check in about life circumstances.</i>	allows each youth, and their community a space to be seen and heard. These release emotional build up and open up space to process emotions collectively as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Interpersonal Relationship Cultivation</b>	A set of activities and engagements across the programmatic time-line. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>partnered assignments focus on self-discovery, collective experience, learning and travel, healing circles, spiritual camping trip, keep it real sessions, check/debrief.</i>	processes intentionally designed to mend harm, bring closer, and sustain dreaming within relationships over the process as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Healing Circle</b>	A space that incorporates hip hop, media, activities, culture, indigenous herbs-medicine, interactive one on one and group dialogue into a circle process. to discuss daily struggles, historical trauma, the power of youth organizing and relationship building as a praxis of healing. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>affirmation circle, healing from harm circle, relationship building circle, community integration circle.</i>	space for individual and collective discussion about daily struggles, historical trauma, the power of youth organizing and relationship building as a praxis of healing. This support emotion connections/interpersonal dynamics/builds emotional/spiritual trust as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Political Education</b>	A set of Human Justice based activities that incorporated personal experiences and culture as pedagogy. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>History of NuLeadership, PAR training, Campaign Development, “how” in Facilitation.</i>	assist youth in learning about themselves/culture, local community, and their connection to the world outside of themselves as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Spiritual and Wellness</b>	A set of trainings, activities and engagements. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Radical Healing, Four Direction Circle Process Training, Empathic Facilitator Training.</i>	cultivate knowledge of, and participation with cultural and ancestral practices of wellness, resistance and community as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Dream Building</b>	A practice with the program facilitator and peer - youth organizers as an accountability process to co-plan and dream of developmental steps needed to accomplish; professional, personal, spiritual and collective goals. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>circle space to hold and share dreams, interpersonal space to hold and share dreams</i>	space to reflect personal and collective developments, across the 18month process. Space to be held and to hold emotions and hopes as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Human and Healing-Centered Community Organizing</b>	A commitment to engage a set of activities such as issue meetings, leadership development trainings, base building, public education, accountability and direct-action campaigns that centered healing ourselves and each other. <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>Healing Justice Movement, Bed-Study local community gathering, Formerly Incarcerated and Currently Family and People’s Movement.</i>	space, praxis, emotional confidence, intention and “how” to transform or to apply leadership with self, community and society as a praxis of healing at the individual level.
	<b>Art-Based/Artistic Expression</b>	Is a creative engagement with music, spoken word, vibration, and oral expression as pedagogy and therapy that brings awareness, energy, and uplift shared connections between youth and their community. Art as an open acceptance of vulnerability to transform culture.  <b>Key Activities:</b> <i>music education on negro spirituals, studio recording session, cultural affirmation celebration (Kwanzaa)</i>	Conjuring vulnerability and transformational relationship building to dismantle structural violence presence in our personal and collectively energies, connections to ancestors, play/have fun and share knowledge/culture as a praxis of healing at the community level.

## Appendix B



### Y.O.C Youth Organizers reflections after completing the 18- month process

#### The Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training Experiences/Reflections

1. *What was your experience was like in Nat Turner??  
if you want to add to that, what was good? What was not so good? What was missing? What was not enough?*
2. *What relationships with the folks in Nat turner, the center, or the people we met just by being Nat turner you develop if any? What did these relationships mean to you? What did you learn about relationships?*
3. *How did you grow as a leader?*
4. *What challenges you had in Nat turner?*
5. *What ways you think you experienced healing or seen other people experienced healing or you played a part in other peoples like in people healing like just what ways you seen healing happening in Nat Turner?*
6. *What was good what was not good what was missing what could've been more of?*

#### The Youth Organizing Collective Training Experiences/Reflections

7. *What was your experience was like in Nat Turner??  
if you want to add to that, what was good? What was not so good? What was missing? What was not enough?*
8. *What did Y.O.C as a mean to you?*

9. *What relationships with the folks in Y.O.C, or the people you met just by being Y.O.C? What did these relationships mean to you? What did you learn about relationships?*
10. *Y.O.C was there any challenges for you in Y.O.C?*
11. *How did you grow? Can you share examples of you as a leader in Y.O.C.*
12. *What healing did you experience in Y.O.C?*

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**The Healing Justice Movement Experiences/Reflections**

13. *What was that experience in creating and leading Healing Justice Movement?*
14. *What was good? What was not so good? What was missing? What was not enough in the healing justice movement if anything I'm just giving you more space?*
15. *What was that space... what did that space mean to you and make you feel like the healing justice movement space?*
16. *Thinking about the relationships that the movement opened up for you like what was those relationships and what do they mean for you? What did you learn about relationships?*
17. *What ways did you experience healing in the movement?*

**Use Healing Justice to Navigate the World**

18. *You think seeing those things and living through those things here like help you navigate shit in your own life outside?*

**What is Spirit?**

19. *For Y.O.C and yourself, what do you think we meant about spirit? Can share examples and stories from across Nat, Turner, Y.O.C and Healing Justice Movement to help me understand your meaning?*

**What is Hope?**

20. *For Y.O.C and yourself, what do you think we meant about hope? Can share examples and stories from across Nat, Turner, Y.O.C and Healing Justice Movement to help me understand your meaning?*

Appendix C

# Participatory Action Research Training



Using research critically to move community organizing forward!

Join H.O.L.L.A.'s Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Program for our Participatory Action Research (PAR) Training

## Register Facilitated By:

<http://goo.gl/forms/CLHgNL1XikO7sZ9Y2>

510 Gates Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11216

July 23rd-25th

11am-5pm

Contact:  
coryholla@gmail.com

- Dr. Yasser Payne, Associate Professor of Black American Studies University of Delaware
- Dr. Monique Guishard, Bronx Community College, City University of New York
- Community Connections for Youth (CCFY)
- Prakriti Hassan and Allison Cabana
- How Our Lives Link Altogether! (H.O.L.L.A.) Organizers
- What's Your Issue?
- Dr. Brett Stoudt, Public Science Project, City University of New York

Appendix D

# FIGHT THE POWER!

FILM SERIES—  
FREE AND FOR  
THE PEOPLE!



**MONDAY** THE BLACK PANTHERS:  
VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION



**TUESDAY** ¡PA'LANTE, SIEMPRE PA'LANTE!:  
THE YOUNG LORDS



**WEDNESDAY** THE LAST  
GRADUATION: THE RISE AND FALL OF  
COLLEGE PROGRAMS IN PRISON

**THURSDAY** THE STREETS OF HARLEM:  
HOW BLACK MEN IN THE STREETS ADAPT  
TO STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE



FIRST WEEK OF AUGUST. EVERY NIGHT AT 5pm-830pm PM.  
CENTER FOR NuLEADERSHIP ON URBAN SOLUTIONS.  
1st floor: 510 Gates Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11216.  
FREE. EVERYONE WELCOME.





Appendix E

H.O.L.L.A! Youth Organizing Collective—Healing Justice Movement Community Health Assessment

Page 1

# HEALING JUSTICE MOVEMENT NYC’s YOUTH HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Healing Justice Movement, a project of  
The Youth Organizing Collective of How Our Lives Link Altogether, H.O.L.L.A!



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## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS IN THIS ASSESSMENT?

We believe community conflict, community division and disenfranchisement are maintained by systems we live under—called systems of oppression. This community health assessment will ask you questions about institutions that support systems of oppression like **white supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, ableism and capitalism.**

Specifically, this community health assessment will ask you about:

- **Education**
- **Healthcare**
- **Community Violence**
- **Criminal Justice or Punishment**
- **Intimate Partner or Domestic Violence**
- **Shelters, Housing, and Property Ownership**
- **Employment and Income**
- **Foster Care and Child Welfare**
- **Legal System**
- **Transportation and Mobility**
- **Immigration and Migration**

### WHO WE ARE: LET US BE VULNERABLE WITH YOU

**H.O.L.L.A!’s Healing Justice Movement** is a project of the Youth Organizing Collective (YOC), the movement arm of H.O.L.L.A! (How Our Lives Link Altogether!). The goal of the project is to develop youth-led community healing strategy to bring youth of color and our communities together and heal from trauma.

Healing Justice is about our right

to emotional growth and internal healing. We refuse to remain traumatized and isolated: we choose instead to heal by building community through grassroots and intergenerational strategies. We are working to (1) internally heal from wounds inflicted by interlocking systems of oppression (i.e., internalized, interpersonal, institutional and ideological oppression), and (2) dismantle institutions, laws, policies, practices and ideas that maintain and perpetuate harm and violence in our everyday experiences by transforming ourselves and each other. We believe healing transpires when our communities are deeply engaged in dialogue about cultural history and how power functions in our community. Healing happens when our communities are committed to building trust, and when individual and community accountability is predicated on protecting the people and the future of our existence.

## Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building

This youth assessment is an engagement tool for sharing knowledge and was created by youth, young adults and adult leaders from structural disinvested urban communities in New York City who are fighting against the systems of oppression.

We created this assessment because

- the grassroots leadership of youth of color from poor and working class urban communities are rarely seriously engaged or included in city-wide developments of policy, law and institutions that have serious consequences for our lives and communities;
- to better understand how these laws, policies, and institutions cause harm in our lives;
- to identify the healing needs, practices and desires of youth of color;
- to better understand what we need to build in order to best provide healing resources for our community.

We promise that everything you share in the survey will be confidential. We promise that everything you tell us will be honored and treated with respect, love and care. We will share back everything we learn/gathered from this survey and our experiences on our organizational website, through city-wide events and written reports.

We would like you to be a part of building this with us. If you want to be more involved with the Healing Justice Movement, please reach out at [coach.holla@gmail.com](mailto:coach.holla@gmail.com), and visit our website at [holla-inc.com](http://holla-inc.com).

Updates and media related to the Healing Justice Movement can be found here: <https://healingjusticemovement.wordpress.com>

The online version of the this assessment can be found here:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScq\\_eJQae\\_-QKEIA2bVkiqsOhfBMtwvKeK8MQ3K7uCS0IXmYg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScq_eJQae_-QKEIA2bVkiqsOhfBMtwvKeK8MQ3K7uCS0IXmYg/viewform)

# THE ASSESSMENT, PART 1

## INSTITUTIONS & HARM

Please reflect on the impact of the institutions listed below, and check response that apply to you. Please feel free to add clarifying notes in the lines below.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
<b>Education:</b> police at school, metal detectors, standardized testing, lack of mental health providers in schools, lack of academic counseling in schools, no special education that address different learning needs, suspensions and expulsions, no ethnic studies or other culturally relevant curriculum (for example, European-centric focus on classes)					
<b>Healthcare:</b> NY benefit card, no/ little health care, no medicaid, lack of decent food, no access to doctor, no interest in doctor, reproductive health (access to safer sex education, support with parenting and pregnancy, access to abortions, etc.), access to dental health, access to eye health, no access to non-Western styles of healing, no access to mental health services					
<b>Community Violence:</b> lack of culture/ history hope internalize colonize , materialistic ,sexism robberies selling drugs ,gun on guns fight knife on knife fight tyb, street organization not building deep relationship , separated disagreement					
<b>Gendered or Gender-motivated Violence:</b> transphobia, policing of gender presentation, gender-motivated sexual assault and harassment, sexual harassment in the workplace, devaluing of your gender, discrimination, street-harassment and catcalling or other forms of interpersonal harm					
<b>Accessibility:</b> lack of accessible facilities, increased costs to meet accessibility needs, no common understanding of accessibility needs, differently abled and/or disabled, no address of mental and developmental health needs or emotional and mental health needs					
<b>Criminal Justice or Punishment:</b> school to prison pipeline, division of families, stopping and frisking, policing, fear of police, lack of alternative resources for safety, wrongful convictions and charges, surveillance (scanners, metal detectors, forced disclosure of information), police brutality, incarceration, continued punishment post-incarceration					

# Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building

<p><b>Intimate Partner or Domestic Violence:</b> verbal and emotional abuse, financial control and manipulation, physical abuse, someone using children or loved ones to control you, lack of accountability for harm caused, generally unhealthy relationships, lasting impact and trauma from abuse or neglect</p>					
<p><b>Shelters, Housing, and Property Ownership:</b> run down housing conditions, poor landlord support, homelessness, abuse from shelter staff, rental increase, no access to government support for housing, policing of access to housing and use of housing, gentrification, eviction, housing discrimination</p>					
<p><b>Employment, Labor and Income:</b> lack of income (no or little money), wage theft, tip theft, minimum wage, poverty, lack of access to jobs and skills training, other worker rights violations (such as no paid sick leave, no overtime pay), lack of access to worker organizations and unions, subsistence level jobs, no protection in the workplace including domestic workers</p>					
<p><b>Foster Care and Child Welfare:</b> Separation of family, access to support and benefits for family, access to programs for youth and other resources for children, foster care system, lack of access to adoption system, transnational adoption, policing of parenting</p>					
<p><b>Legal System:</b> no access to legal services to address other issues (such as workplace discrimination, gender transition, evictions, etc.), forced use of legal name and gender, inaccurate categories on the census, taxes,</p>					
<p><b>Transportation and Mobility:</b> increased transportation costs, inability to access air travel, no access to car, lack of safe transportation</p>					
<p><b>Immigration and Migration:</b> naturalization process, refugee status, 1.5 to Third Generation status, member of the diaspora, undocumented, divided families, inability to access other services and institutions because of status, fear of immigration system on behalf of self or loved ones</p>					

**Notes:**

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# THE ASSESSMENT, PART 2

## HEALING NEEDS

### 1. RANKING

If you had to rank these systems, in order from one to seven, which one do you want to heal from the most or most immediately? (**1 being most important** for you to heal from and **7 being least important** for you to heal from). In the “Comments” column on the right, please feel free to vent any feelings you would like to share about these systems.

Systems	Rank	Comments
Education		
Healthcare		
Community Violence		
Gendered or Gender-motivated Violence		
Accessibility		
Criminal Justice or Punishment		
Intimate Partner or Domestic Violence		
Shelters, Housing, and Property Ownership		
Employment, Labor and Income		
Foster Care and Child Welfare		
Legal System		
Transportation and Mobility		
Immigration and Migration		

**2. SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

**How do you experience, embody and/or define harm?**

**What question or comment would you ask institutions, policies, laws, stakeholders, ideas people and or practices that cause harm and violence to you, your family and/or community?**

**How do you experience, embody and/or define healing?**

**Despite the violence and the harm you have survived, what inspires you and motivates you to heal and fight back?**

Other Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

THE ASSESSMENT, PART 3
WHO ARE YOU?

- 1. What is the culture/hood/block you represent \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which best describe(s) your gender? (circle ALL that apply)
a. Male i. Masc
b. Female j. Femme
c. Woman k. Two-Spirit
d. Man l. Gender Non-Conforming
e. Transgender m. Genderqueer
f. Cisgender n. Questioning
g. Trans-man o. Intersex
h. Trans-woman p. Something we missed: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your sexual orientation? (check ALL that apply)
a. Queer g. Pansexual
b. Questioning h. Polysexual
c. Intersex i. Asexual
d. Gay j. Polyamorous
e. Lesbian k. Heterosexual or Straight
f. Bisexual l. Something we missed: \_\_\_\_\_

If your gender or sexual orientation does not fit into these categories, please let us know why:

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

- 5. What is your race, ethnicity, or national origin? (check ALL that apply)
a. Mixed Race c. African
b. Black d. African American



**Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building**

- e. Afro-Caribbean
- f. White
- g. Western European
- h. Eastern European
- i. Latinx
- j. Caribbean
- k. Latin American
- l. Middle Eastern
- m. Mediterranean
- n. Asian
- o. South Asian
- p. East Asian
- q. Southeast Asian
- r. Pacific Islander
- s. Indigenous
- t. Native American
- u. Something we missed: \_\_\_\_\_

*If your race/ethnicity/national origin does not fit into these categories, please let us know why:*

Appendix F

H.O.L.L.A! HEALING JUSTICE MOVEMENT EVALUATION

1) How would you rate the Workshop, overall?

<i>Poor</i>		<i>In the Middle</i>		<i>Excellent</i>
1	2	3	4	5
<p><b>Comments:</b></p>				

2) How did this workshop help you better express and understand trauma and oppression? effective for you in expressing or understanding trauma/oppression?

3) What did you enjoy the most about the workshop?

4)What did you enjoy least about the workshop?

5) Are there any points we missed, or did mentioned enough, which you feel are critical to the subject matter of Healing Justice?

## Grassroots Tales: Journeys of Inward Healing and Outward Movement Building

6) Please list any ideas you think can make the workshop more helpful to other members who will participate in future classes.

7) Please list any ideas you have for HOLLA's Healing Justice survey? This survey will be used as a educational tool to formulate different way the community can practice resisting oppression and healing together, but most of all this survey was created by the communities youth of color who believe that healing needs to happen.(example: question)

8) Who is down to support this movement? If so, below please share your contact information and how you are willing to support the development of this Healing Justice Movement. Thanks!

Appendix G




 HOSTED BY the  
 YOUTH ORGANIZING  
 COLLECTIVE

**1st, 2nd, & 3rd PRIZES!**

FREE FOOD  
 RAFFLE PRIZES  
 & FUN!

# LET THE TALENTS HEAL

WOMEN'S EQUALITY,  
 BLACK POWER, AND LOVE.

**FRIDAY  
 MARCH 31, 2017  
 6PM-9PM**

Mt. Pisgah Church  
 212 Tompkins Ave.  
 Brooklyn, NY




Appendix H

# H.O.L.L.A DAY

**HOW OUR  
LIVES  
LINK  
ALTOGETHER!**

**FOR MORE INFO/  
TO DONATE:  
coach.holla@gmail.com  
347-575-6900**

**FUNDRAISER  
FOR YOUTH  
OF COLOR  
ORGANIZERS**

**FOOD,  
MERCH,  
GAMES,  
PRIZES**

**@ MULLALY PARK, BRONX  
SATURDAY AUGUST  
12th / 12PM-7PM**

**4 / B / D TRAINS → 161 St. -  
Yankee Stadium**

## **3 ON 3 BALL TOURNAMENT**

**contact us to play by august 5th  
3 players/team, 1 sub optional  
1 loss elimination  
games to 11 pts, no 2 pt baskets  
\$5-15 sliding scale/per player  
\$150 - 200 prize for winners**



*H.O.L.L.A! is a community organization committed to youth of color engaging critically in the use and misuse of power and privilege thru youth community organizing. Come support us at our 3rd annual H.O.L.L.A! Day! We are raising money to fund youth organizers to work with us!*



Appendix I

**SAVE THE DATE**

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**HEALING JUSTICE SUMMIT**

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**SEPT 15TH & 16TH, 2017**  
**COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Organized by the Youth Organizing Collective at  
 How Our Lives Link Altogether (H.O.L.L.A.)**

**in collaboration with the Center for Nuleadership on Urban Solutions,  
 the Flourish Agenda and the Center for Justice at Columbia University**



**FOR MORE INFO VISIT [HOLLA-INC.COM](http://HOLLA-INC.COM)**

## Appendix J

1



### Healing Justice Movement Evaluation Coding Book

#### 1) How would you rate the worship overall?

- a. Uplift/Praise/Affirming - Giving thanks for sharing our healing justice ideology , for creating opportunities for people to explore vulnerability.
- b. Rank & explain - People who have given a rank from 1-5 and explain why they were given that rank.
- c. Idc, idfwu, idfwu - Participants who didn't understand the workshop.
- d. Workshop/Healing Justice Process - Participants talk about how the curriculum was dope.
- e. N/A, idk - Participant didn't have anything to say about the workshop
- f. Safe space/ Vulnerability -The workshop has created a comfortable environment where people can open up and feel protected
- g. Youth leadership - Participant explain how the yoc organizers facilitated and perform leadership and treat people and each other
- h. Critical consciousness / Emotional knowledge - The healing justice workshop helped guide participants to have a clearer understanding of their feelings , thoughts and experience
- i. Critical feedback- People giving us ideas on how we can make the workshop better

#### 2) How did this workshop help you better understand trauma & oppression?

- a. Uplifting & affirming the space-Participant affirming Y.O.C organizers & the space Y.O.C created.
- b. Self reflect- Personal testimonies from participants about how the workshop landed on them in a deep way.
- c. Critical consciousness / AHA/ system political ideology- A reflection of a moment that stands out because it teaches them.
- d. Practices - listening, speaking truth / trust opening up- Healing as a practice that involves listening, speaking truths, and opening up.
- e. Oppression/Trauma /Need to heal from- The need for spaces to heal cuz oppression is real.
- f. Feelings/Emotional knowledge- Having a clear understanding of your feelings in the process while learning from it.

- g. Connection/Community/Collectively- A space to be in community and relationship with others to feel connected.
- h. Deep compassionate listening - Being able to be seen and heard / plus share & hear others.
- i. Blackness - Connecting with other black people.
- j. Healing - Through understanding trauma experience ppl learned what they needed to heal from.
- k. Intergenerational - Shared how trauma is passed down through generations.
- l. N/A/Other - Define itself.
- m. Idk/Not sure- Self explanatory.
- n. I didn't learn anything new - The workshop did not offer any new knowledge.
- o. Never had trauma- Never had trauma or oppression.

### 3) What you enjoy about the most about the workshop

- a. Opening up - Participants enjoyed sharing/being heard while listening to others which made them feel good about letting things out.
- b. Practices and Pedagogy - Sharing and learning different techniques from our experiences.
- c. Emotional knowledge - Participants reflected on how the healing justice process created vulnerability to help learn about who they are in connection to healing.
- d. Facilitation - The method/skills/tools in which the Y.O.C use to build relationships and guide a community space.
- e. Deep compassionate listening- A space where everyone is heard and seen. A space where people want to listen to others.
- f. Youth leadership - Participants uplifted how young organizers were real and powerful.
- g. Affirming the space /Y.O.C- Uplifting how the the space/workshop Y.O.C created was inspirational.
- h. Workshop activities - Uplifting the activities within the healing justice process curriculum.
- i. Oppression and Trauma /Address issues - Being able to talk about internal and external wounds.
- j. Aha / communities connection / relationship building - Participants reflected how they enjoyed building relationships with others and got closer in the process.
- k. Aha/self - The healing justice process created a space for dialogue between one's self and their thoughts.
- l. Idk/N/A /other- Participants didn't have anything to say about the workshop/people didn't understand the workshop.

### 4) What did you enjoy least about the workshop?



- a. Facilitation- Didn't agree with how the organizers led the workshop.
- b. Curriculum development- Dislike the healing justice workshop.
- c. Nothing was wrong/affirming Y.O.C- Participants felt like there was nothing wrong with the workshop.
- d. Time /Relationships- The lack of time to build relationships.
- e. Name of activities- Disliked activities within the healing justice process.
- f. I want more knowledge- Participants felt that the workshop and the facilitators didn't give enough.
- g. Space/comfortability/Food/Community- People didn't feel connected or comfortable enough to build.
- h. I wasn't ready for that/vulnerability/self reflect- People weren't ready for how much the healing justice process could be mentally physically and spiritually.
- i. Not sure/idk- Participants didn't have anything to say about the workshop.

**5) Are there any points we missed,or did not mention enough,which you feel are critical to the subject matter of healing justice?**

- a. Community agreements/more safety- Participants' responses framed around how important and delicate our experiences are and want the space to be more intentional to everyone's experiences.
- b. Questions to answer- Giving questions that were not mentioned and after dialogue.
- c. More statistics/facts- Some people rather have facts and statistics.
- d. Our stories/H.O.L.L.A/ Y.O.C- "learning about our work" the legacy,wanting to hear about our wounds,trauma and triumphs.
- e. Share our truth/stories of healing and understanding trauma- Share more stories/techniques of healing trauma in oppression.
- f. Outlet for resources- Practices in any resources that can help others.
- g. Nothing/Not sure/Good/Affirmation- The healing justice workshop was a great experience and wasn't missing anything.
- h. Hood/Culture/Community- Talk more about the experiences and dynamics of different cultures and histories.
- i. More time- Need more time for the healing justice experience.
- j. Definition/Define more- Give a clear description of healing justice that can relate to other communities.

**6) Please list any ideas you think can make the workshop more helpful to other members who will participate in future classes.**

- a. Facilitation/curriculum/workshop development/critical feedback/healing justice process- Giving us ideas/tools for the curriculum to help others get more from the healing justice experience/process.

- b. Answered already- Gave and answer already in another section of the evaluation.
- c. Pedagogy- Learning more of your legacy ideology and experiences.
- d. Time/more time/I need time- The healing justice workshop needs to be longer so everyone can enjoy the process.
- e. Space to be heard/opinions/Express yourself- Having more of an open space for people to talk and express their opinions.
- f. Y.O.C stories/experiences- Sharing personal stories.
- g. Real life situations/issues- Talks about different situations that people are going through.
- h. Affirmations /Not sure/You did great- Uplifting healing justice workshop and didn't have any ideas to input.
- i. Supporting Y.O.C - Talk about what resources does Y.O.C need and how to support those needs.

**7) Please list any ideas you have for the H.O.L.L.A healing justice survey.**

- a. Format/Contex- Helpful tips on how to change the structure of the survey.
- b. Questions for survey/Categories for survey- Different categories in questions so people are able to speak their truth.
- c. Helpful suggestions for creating surveys- Helpful ideas and what should the survey stand on,giving information and inspiration.
- d. Things to work on- Correcting/changing survey so people can better understand.
- e. Things that went well- Uplifting survey.
- f. Survey audience- Having our survey reach different cultures, communities and places.
- g. Affirmation/na it's good- People affirm survey and had no other ideas to input.

**8) Who is down to support this movement**

- a. Individual skill- People listed their gifts and how they can help.
- b. Affirming/Not sure/N/A- Self explanatory.
- c. Volunteering- People who wanna support but didn't give specific skills that they have.
- d. Contact info/Email/Numbers/Names- Self explanatory
- e. Spaces that need the healing justice movement- Places we should bring the healing justice movement to.
- f. Organizations/communities/people/families down to help- Organizations,communities,people,families that are willing to help.
- g. Wish I could- I wish to help and is there a way.
- h. Donate time and money- Donate through time,money,energy,ability and word of mouth.

## Appendix K

1



### Healing Justice Movement Youth Assessment Coding Book

- 1) Comments: Please feel free to vent any feelings you would like to share about these systems.
  - a. Did not understand- The ranking of systems was too confusing to understand.
  - b. N/A- Self explanatory
  - c. Identifying systems of oppression- Understanding how these institutions oppress different people.
  - d. Necessities of living and a need to heal from these systems- These systems have become an important need for living, and yet we need to heal from them.
  - e. We need system change- Organizing to make the system work for everyone.
  - f. Speak your pain/Truth about the system- Speak your truths about how these systems have oppressed you and your people/families.
  
- 2) **How do you experience, embody and/or define harm?**
  - a. What does harm look like- Describing the visual aspect of harm.
  - b. Define harm- defining the meaning of harm in your own words.
  - c. Experiences of harm/the truth- Individuals express how they experienced harm and still experience harm.
  - d. The effects of harm/How it harms- The internal and external long term effects of harm.
  - e. Causing harm to others and one's self- Describing how harm can be brought on to others and also someone can bring harm onto themselves.
  - f. Communities in harm- How harms are brought onto communities
  - g. No/N/A- Self explanatory.
  
- 3) **What question or comment would you ask institutions, policies, laws, stakeholders, ideas people and or practices that cause harm and violence to you, your family and/or community?**
  - a. General Questions to the world and people- Questions that all communities can answer.
  - b. N/A- Self explanatory.
  - c. Questions to the system about harming youth- Questions towards the harm being done to youth.
  - d. Questions toward individuals apart from systems- Asking questions towards the humanity of individuals who are a part of systems and institutions or privileged off systems and institutions.

- e. Questions toward Institutions,policies & structure of oppression- Questions addressing policies and systems of oppression.
- f. Reform.Fix.Make it better- Create change for communities and people affected by institution,policies and practices.
- g. Statements,Thoughts,Ideas about people practices- Statements about people and practices.
- h. Stop!- Asking institutions,policies and people to stop.
- i. Why?- People just asking why.

**4) How do you experience, embody and/or define healing?**

- a. N/A- I don't have an answer
- b. Self care-Taking care of self need externally and internally.
- c. Liberation-Healing is freedom in every way
- d. Ingredients for healing- Different activities that can involve a healing process
- e. Healing with community/families and friends- Healing with communities and families are important to restoring one's self and collective hope.
- f. Reflection process,healing to become a better person- Healing through self transformation by reflecting on one's trauma and experiences to restore one's self.
- g. Safe space/Vulnerability- Healing is a place where you're able to be vulnerable and be safe.
- h. Hard to understand when healing occurs- Healing is a process of up and down and in and out and it is difficult to understand when healing is taking place.
- i. Wounds that haven't been healed- Wounds that are still in the healing process.
- j. Define healing- defining healing through your own lense.

**5) Other Comments**

- a. N/A- Self explanatory.
- b. Speak up- Talking about how you feel towards any issue.
- c. Affirmation /Uplift/Y.O.C/H.O.L.L.A/Blackness/Life/Yourself/Showing love- Represent/Uplift Y.O.C/H.O.L.L.A/yourself or anything.
- d. Asking for support- Asking others to support your work.

**6) What skills/gifts/ resources can you offer the healing justice movement?**

- a. Ethical wisdom and support- Can support through deep compassionate listening,understanding,taking action,being heard,through motivation,positivity and care.
- b. Artistic expression,resources and wisdom- The skills and resources that people want to offer are surrounding artistic expression etc.
- c. Educational support and wisdom- Educational resources and support such as tutoring,computer skills,english,spanish and writing.
- d. Community and connections- Willing to support the movement though connections with people,communities,institutions and money.

- e. N/A- Self explanatory.

**7) Despite the violence and the harm you have survived, what inspires you and motivates you to heal and fight back?**

- a. Mothers- Mothers give us the love and energy to fight and heal.
- b. Family- Family is a direct link to our histories, wisdoms and supports.
- c. Sports help me heal- Sports help me to heal.
- d. IDK- I don't know what inspires me to fight back.
- e. Nothing- I don't have anything that motivates me to heal.
- f. Others that may carry the same pain/Struggle- Fighting for others that have also experienced my struggles.
- g. Connectivity, collectivity, myself and community- The connection between different communities, cultures, people, and myself.
- h. Have not had violence or harm done to me- Hadn't had violence or harm done to them.
- i. The struggle I bear and pain I see- The pain in my experiences help me fight back.
- j. My will is strong- The strength within my will motivates me to fight back.
- k. What the future holds/Dreams and aspirations- The dreams and aspirations of what the future can be like.

Appendix L



**COMMISSION AGREEMENT**

This agreement is made as of this date, December 18, 2017, between:

How Our Lives Link Altogether  
(H.O.L.L.A.)  
510 Gates Ave,  
Brooklyn, NY 11216  
Contact: Cory Greene  
(E) coryholla@gmail.com  
(N) (347) 575-6900  
www.holla-inc.com

-and-

Isaac's Quarterly (IQ)  
3170 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Contact: Isaac Scott, Founder &  
CEO, Isaac's Quarterly  
(E) issacscott@isaacsquarterly.com  
(N) (347) 622-9949  
www.isaacsquarterly.com

**Regarding project:**

Youth Organizing Collective (Y.O.C.) logo image (see figure 1)

Figure 1



**IQ Project Description**

In 2017 Isaac's Quarterly was commissioned by H.O.L.L.A. to create/design a logo image for H.O.L.L.A.'s Youth Organizing Collective. The IQ artist selected to complete this commission project was Isaac Scott. Instructions/details for the aesthetic layout, figure representations and word content for this project were provided by the organizers

of H.O.L.L.A., and materialized through the creative consultation and capacity of artist Isaac Scott. Project started July 2017. Project finished: November 2017.

**Details of Pro Bono Agreement**

Isaac's Quarterly has agreed to complete the Y.O.C. logo image as a pro bono project. The details of the pro bono status of this project are as follows:

1. H.O.L.L.A. owns all copyrights to the final image of the Y.O.C. logo image. This includes the aesthetic layout, figure representations and word content therein (see figure 1). Copyright instructions are not included as copyrights are the sole responsibility of the client.
2. The original artwork will remain in the custody of IQ to be exhibited. Exhibition details are as follows:
  - a. Artwork will not be for sale. In the event that a potential buyer makes a monetary offer:
    - i. HOLLA will be notified immediately of all such prospects;
    - ii. No deals shall be made without the full knowledge and consent of H.O.L.L.A. At which time IQ and HOLLA will agree on a final sale price and all subsequent details (e.g. how to split the profits of the sale)
  - b. Y.O.C. Logo description will be displayed with artwork at all times.
    - i. Description shall be provided by H.O.L.L.A.
3. At any time HOLLA can void this agreement by purchasing the original artwork from IQ.
  - i. This price remains negotiable between H.O.L.L.A and IQ
4. Agreed upon language for citing this work by other and the general public. Citation should read: "H.O.L.L.A.'s Youth Organizing Collective(YOC), 2017. "Our Artistic Expression of a Youth-Led Grassroots Movement for Intergenerational-Intersectional Healing and Justice." Instructions/details for the aesthetic layout, figure representations and word content for this project were provided by the organizers of H.O.L.L.A! and materialized through the creative consultation and capacity of artist Isaac Scott. The Project started July 2017. Project finished: November 2017."

H.O.L.L.A. Representative

IQ Representative

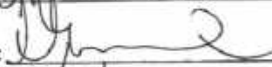
Print

CORY GREENE (HOLLA!)

Print

Isaac Scott

Signature:



Signature:



Date:

12/19/17

Date:

12/18/17

## Appendix M

H.O.L.L.A.!

### Memorandum of Understanding

Between

How Our Lives Link Altogether!'s -- Youth Organizing Collective

and

Liberate-Ed -- Faolan Jones

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets the terms and understanding between the How Our Lives Link Altogether! and Liberate-Ed for producing several multimedia projects surrounding and leading to a full length Healing Justice documentary.

#### Background

This partnership is important because it is documenting the processes involved with launching and sustaining the Youth Organizing Collective's Healing Justice Movement. The film will be important for reflection, outreach and marketing.

#### Purpose

This MOU will ensure that H.O.L.L.A.! owns any and all multimedia content generated during this documentary film compilation. H.O.L.L.A.! also reserves the right to review, veto, edit and amend any multimedia content recorded. At the culmination of recording, all copyrights of footage will be transferred and remain in H.O.L.L.A.!'s possession for circulation.

The above goals will be accomplished by undertaking the following activities:

- One on One Interviews of every member of the Youth Organizing Collective
- Recordings of YOC Sessions
- Recordings of Healing Justice Workshops, Conferences, Outreach Events



**Reporting**

There will be periodic monthly check-ins to evaluate effectiveness and adherence to the agreement and when evaluation of the full project will happen.

**Funding**

This MOU is not a commitment of funds. H.O.L.L.A.! is not obligated to fund this film project.

**Duration**

This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from H.O.L.L.A.! and Liberate-Ed. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from the H.O.L.L.A.! and Liberate-Ed and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the partners by mutual consent. In the absence of mutual agreement by the authorized officials from H.O.L.L.A.! and Liberate-Ed this MOU shall end on January 30th, 2018. At the end of the project ALL raw and remaining footage, media, photos and other content will be handed over to H.O.L.L.A.!

**Contact Information**

Partner name: How Our Lives Link Altogether! (H.O.L.L.A.!)  
Partner representative: Cory Greene  
Position: Co-Founder & Healing Justice Organizer  
E-mail: [coach.holla@gmail.com](mailto:coach.holla@gmail.com)

Partner name: Liberate-Ed  
Partner representative: Faolan Jones  
Position: Filmmaker  
E-mail: [junglewirefilm@gmail.com](mailto:junglewirefilm@gmail.com)

Date: 05/15/20



(Partner signature)  
(Cory Greene, H.O.L.L.A.!, Co-Founder & Healing Justice Organizer)

Date: 11/05/2020



(Partner signature)  
(Faolan Jones, Liberate-Ed, Filmmaker)

Appendix N



# We Came To heal

THE DOCUMENTARY  
COMING TO YOUTUBE JUNE  
28TH AT H.O.L.L.A!TV

Link to H.O.L.L.A!TV  
[Thttps://cutt.ly/pyTj7pZ](https://cutt.ly/pyTj7pZ)

PRODUCED BY



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