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Kirsty Nicole Bocado
The University of Vermont

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Get in the Cypher and in the Groove, A Call to Action, What's the Move, APIDA for Black Power, Community Organizing, The Future is Ours

Kirsty Nicole Bocado

Through activism, community organizing, and investigation, I learn the Philippines' true hystory, disrupting anti-Blackness brought into the country from colonization and researching Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) and Black unity. In college, I was in a freestyle street dancing crew and while immersed in Hip-Hop culture, I taught the elements of Hip-Hop, honoring OGs and pioneers and raising awareness about cultural appropriation. Hip-Hop culture is Black culture and roots of many cultures are from Black people. In high school, I was a musician of four instruments, playing and practicing Jazz music in Jazz band. The Jazz genre and many genres of music are from Black people. In community organizing, I collaborate with Black activists for various causes. In this article, I present the hystory of Hip-Hop, Jazz, and movements; introduce leaders and organizations in activism and community organizing; share collaborations with Black activists and friends in Hip-Hop, Jazz, activism, and community organizing; and urge the APIDA community to support the Black community.

Content warning: police brutality, racism, sexism, and violence

Keywords: activism, anti-Blackness, anti-racism, Black Lives Matter, breaking, community, Critical Race Theory, culture, dance, Jazz, Hip-Hop, prejudice, movement, music, organizing, racial justice, social justice

The Black community faced anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism throughout hystory and to this day. Our duty is to empower Black people through self-reflection and tangible action. In this article, I analyze anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism in communities, including within ourselves. I name how I became active for and with the Black community through Hip-Hop, Jazz, activism, and community organizing. Through these dynamics, readers can learn to approach anti-racism

Kirsty Nicole's [they/she] life activities (playing piano, violin, trombone, and guitar, freestyle street dancing, rock climbing, running, and playing tennis) inform their research interests on accessibility, (dis)ability, education, involvement, and marginalized identities. Through activism and community organizing, they study student leadership, systems, collective people power, and the (r)evolution of the masses.

work and dismantling efforts. While elaborating on cultures and movements led by Black leaders, I center Black knowledge and wisdom.

I use Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Hip-Hop as theoretical frameworks to elaborate. Main tenets of CRT address intersectional oppression and everyday experiences of Black people. Elements of Hip-Hop passed down through OGs (old school Hip-Hop heads) and pioneers serve as vignettes for community and movement building. While overlying the core frameworks of CRT and Hip-Hop, I uplift Black narratives and voices.

Race is deeply embedded in cultural, political, and social structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Patton et al., 2007). CRT is firmly planted in anti-racism. Tenants include: Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) can commonly experience racism; differential racialization with other identities contribute to diverse perspectives; authentic storytelling through counterstories is important; and there must be critiques of liberalism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016; Patton et al., 2007). CRT deconstructs perspectives rooted in Whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). CRT relates to abolition and liberatory movements when used in academic inquiry of racial justice.

Hip-Hop is also used in academic inquiry of racial justice (Akorn, 2009; Miller et al., 2014; Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Elements of Hip-Hop include breaking, deejaying, graffiti, and rapping (Akorn, 2009; Miller et al., 2014; Morgan & Bennett, 2011; Silver, 1983). Hip-Hop began in the 1970s South Bronx when DJ (Disc Jockey) Kool Herc extended instrumental sections of his mix (later known as the breaks and associated with footwork and toprock) for listeners dancing at the local block party (Boyer & Graham, 2016; Burns, 2017; Silver, 1983). MCs (Master of Ceremonies), such as Coke La Rock, hyped up the crowd by rapping into the microphone and from this blend of African and Puerto Rican sounds, Hip-Hop was born (Burns, 2017; Silver, 1983). The origin of Hip-Hop cannot be simplified to “looping the breaks of songs.” Although associated with party music, it expanded to cultural activities, education, and social activism to inner-city people (Söderman & Sernhede, 2016). Working-class Black and Brown people from New York City (NYC) got involved with art, dance, music, and poetry in creativity and expression (Aprahamian, 2019). OGs and pioneers became known as bboys, bgirls, breakers, DJs, graffiti artists, MCs, and rappers. With creativity and expression, Black people fought for the freedom struggle and self-determination, forming the Hip-Hop movement (Akorn, 2009). Hip-Hop deepens this interpretation of the freedom struggle and self-determination in “Black cultural and political practices and values” (Morgan & Bennett, 2011, p. 179). Akorn (2009) says that Hip-Hop pedagogy as a liberatory practice is rooted in a long history “for oppressed communities around the world” (p.53). “Responsibility is shared in the liberatory project of education” (Stovall, 2019, p. 83). Therefore, we must have education

and be involved in movements towards liberation.

Author's Positionality: Communities, Identities, and APIDA for Black Power

My identities influence my examination of the history of Black and Filipin@ unity. I identify as APIDA, Filipin@ and Hispanic. Filipin@ students sometimes do not identify with the APIDA label and instead identify as exclusively Filipin@ or with other people of color (POC) (Chan, 2017; Nadal, 2004). Although Filipin@ individuals are considered POC, POC are not immune to perpetuating anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism. Non-Black POC still exist in systems, hold privileges and live different experiences than Black people. I navigate the following concepts through a different racial and ethnic lens: African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), anti-Blackness, co-opting, cultural appropriation and dismissing as well as affinity, resilience, togetherness, and unity. I navigate these concepts centering knowledge and wisdom and uplifting Black narratives and voices.

How do I discuss APIDA and Black power with complexities of our identities and the different oppression APIDA and Black people face? I acknowledge the levels and types of oppression these groups separately face and reveal the history of our mass work, strengths and triumphs together. APIDA and Black relations are layered culturally, personally, and systemically due to anti-Blackness intertwined with solidarity in the APIDA community. By facing anti-Blackness in the APIDA community, APIDA people commit to anti-racism and social justice work that strengthens APIDA and Black solidarity.

According to Chan (2017), some APIDA students express ambivalence or apathy toward protests compared to APIDA students actively engaged in anti-racism and social justice work with Black people and other POC. APIDA people must be aware of indifference which stems from the racial hierarchy between marginalized identities. The model minority myth is harmful because it “is a deliberate construction designed to maintain the oppression of Black and other communities of color” (Chan, 2017, p. 12). The model minority myth upholds White supremacy which further pits APIDA people against Black people. Confronting production and reproduction of White supremacy is a tenant of CRT.

The Black Panther Party was a Black power political organization that confronted production and reproduction of White supremacy. There are Black Panthers alive and in prison due to government repression. They provided Black people with basic necessities and introduced political education in legal rights, negotiation, and safety. Their methods inspired community organizing contingents to require political education and recruit in neighborhoods for projects and tasks. The Black Panther Party's frameworks and political ideologies guide me as a community

organizer and activist in Anakbayan NJ.

Anakbayan NJ is a “comprehensive national democratic mass organization of students and youth in the Philippines and [US]” (Bocado, 2020, p. 88). Their political education combats capitalism, feudalism, imperialism, and liberalism. Their theoretical framework is grounded in Leninism, Maoism, and Marxism. Although focused on the Philippines, they arouse, mobilize, and organize in the US, most often in the Black Lives Matter movement. They align their praxis to help Black people in the fight for liberation from colonization and isms.

Amidst colonization and isms in the Philippines, anti-Blackness has shifted towards an existence of Black and Filipin@ unity. The Philippines have Indigenous peoples, known as the Aeta, with African roots. There was severe discrimination because of colorism and colonialism’s enforced standards of beauty and wealth (David, 2016). Black Americans, known as the Buffalo soldiers, aided Filipin@ soldiers in the Philippine-American War (Roy, 2020). Black soldiers sympathized with Filipin@ citizens in their war for independence and sovereignty (David, 2016; Roy, 2020). During the war, Buffalo Soldiers became “disillusioned with US occupation of the Philippines, especially after hearing the use of the n-word by the White soldiers in referring to the Filipin@[@]s” (Roy, 2020, para. 9). Black activists made victories in the Civil Rights movement, such as the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, allowing Filipin@ and other APIDA people to migrate to the US (Roy, 2020). However, APIDA people cannot expect a liberatory relationship with Black people to be transactional. APIDA people must fight for and with Black people into the future, not simply based on the past. As Filipin@ people strengthen their commitment and dedication to Black people, the APIDA community as a whole must deepen their solidarity with the Black community.

Solidarity between the APIDA and Black community exists through Hip-Hop. The West coast Hip-Hop emergence had mostly Filipin@ DJs, breakers, and dancers and eventually expanded to other APIDA identities (McTaggart & O’Brien, 2017). According to McTaggart and O’Brien’s (2017) research, many Asian Americans reject racist, traditional US community and family expectations of them, finding Hip-Hop a “preferred alternative” where they can “more authentically be true to themselves” (p. 635). Filipin@ higher education practitioners use Hip-Hop pedagogy in affinity spaces, classrooms, and identity development work because they feel it true to their interests as DJs, breakers and dancers (Zamora, 2016). Filipin@ higher education practitioners connect Hip-Hop to social movements to challenge systems of oppression and power that plague the communities that built and maintained Hip-Hop (Zamora, 2016). Readers can challenge systems of oppression and power in places they were born and raised.

Anti-Blackness and Blissful Ignorance Become Unlearning and Relearning

I was born in Harlem and raised fifteen minutes away in a New Jersey (NJ) neighborhood. Although my education progressed in NJ, my parents commuted for work and I played in the NYC streets. My neighborhood attracted generations of BIPOC from Harlem, the Bronx, Washington Heights, and broadly NYC. Its demographics consisted of first-generation, low-income, and immigrant identities from places like Algeria, Barbados, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Haiti, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad and Tobago. During my travels to “rich, White” towns for Jazz band, marching band, spring track, tennis, and winter track, residents and students called my neighborhood “ghetto” and “poor.” Although they considered it “really diverse” or “too diverse,” “diverse” has complicated connotations and I do not consider it as “diverse” as perceived. Despite my neighborhood hosting a prominent, visible presence of Black, Latin@, and APIDA people, the numbers are not large and anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism exists everywhere.

In Harlem, the Bronx, Washington Heights, broadly NYC, and my neighborhood, AAVE and n-word use is wide-spread (Jones & Hall, 2019; Rickford, 2016). AAVE is common in areas like Harlem (Jones & Hall, 2019; Rickford, 2016). Most NYC and NJ slang has roots from AAVE. Ten to twelve years ago, there were no curiosities or questions of my neighborhood’s language and vocabulary. Apparently, due to being “really diverse” with Black, Latin@, and APIDA people, “Everyone talked like this” and “No one was offended” and “This was how to address our friends.” There is evidence of neighborhood effects on speech and AAVE use (Rickford et al., 2015). My neighborhood was familiar with AAVE and the n-word in school and on streets so Black and non-Black people used AAVE and the n-word as an honorific: a signifying term of camaraderie and respect (Jones & Hall 2019; Rahman, 2011; Sonja, 2015). It was not until years later, in college or personal investigation, that they learned about AAVE and how non-Black POC should not be saying the n-word. They began the difficult but necessary process of catching themselves, no matter how automatic and ingrained their speech was because language and vocabulary had to change. Many were unaware due to innocence (or blissful ignorance) that there was anti-Blackness in our “really diverse” Black, Latin@, APIDA neighborhood. Speech patterns are shaped “not only by one’s family, but also by one’s broader regional and social environment” (Rickford et al., 2015, p. 11, 817). There was blissful ignorance in speaking the way others spoke and learning particular speech in our environments.

All of us have to check ourselves and hold ourselves accountable, such as by addressing language and vocabulary. I take accountability for anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism by addressing my language and vocabulary which is part of unlearning and relearning. APIDA people are non-Black POC familiar with AAVE and the

n-word. How APIDA people listen and talk and what they knew earlier in their lives no longer excuses what is known now, especially with research and resources. To share transparently, for years I was not checked by my Black relatives, best and closest Black friends, or strangers in my neighborhood, Harlem, the Bronx, Washington Heights, and broadly NYC. Slang I knew as a child (“brick, deadass, wylin’,” for example) was not challenged yet I unlearn and relearn through literature and reflection. It is not the responsibility of Black relatives, best and closest Black friends, or strangers to educate me. It is my responsibility to educate myself. Although they never named concerns or grievances with me in the past, I name for myself what is not acceptable in the present.

In the present, it is typical to hear non-Black POC who identify as APIDA and Latin@ in Harlem, the Bronx, Washington Heights, and broadly NYC, use AAVE and the n-word with Black people. Non-Black POC must evaluate what they hear from school and the streets, even when they do not receive backlash from surrounding Black people. I have been adamant about calling in and calling out non-Black POC in these areas. To understand the complexities and origins of AAVE is to understand Black culture and Black people. Part of unlearning anti-Blackness is relearning that even blissful ignorance causes harm instead of understanding.

Active Engagement, Critical Action, and Direct Intention

It was essential to frame anti-Blackness within ourselves to show how active engagement leads to anti-racism work. Non-Black POC may think they have proximity to Blackness but they are not immune from perpetuating anti-Blackness. Non-Black POC must take conscious action to be anti-racist and non-racist, especially after being unconsciously conditioned by contexts and environments. Non-Black POC must lean into discomfort to become better at the work that is done and the work that will occur.

Anti-Blackness is imparted to every one of us and sometimes learned unintentionally. My “really diverse” neighborhood, for example, excused learned jokes and stereotypes. Be aware of intention and potential impact. Intention does not equal or justify impact. By being honest about past instances of impact, people show humility and vulnerability to change. People rarely take time to actively, critically, and directly think about anti-Blackness in neighborhoods and how to dismantle it in their own lives. Engagement, action, and intention move towards dismantling anti-Black ways of doing and knowing.

My commitment to dismantling is informed by my racial and ethnic lens, honesty about anti-Blackness and blissful ignorance, journey of unlearning and relearning, active engagement, critical action, and direct intention. I hope this transparent positionality narrative compels readers to challenge anti-Blackness, prejudice, and

racism within their selves, lives, and neighborhoods. Through experiences in Jazz band and a freestyle street dancing crew, I further challenged anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism and committed to anti-racism work and racial and social justice.

Get in the Cypher and in the Groove: Music and Dance are Black Culture

Jazz Musician in Jazz Band

Although I am a classically trained pianist, violinist, and self-taught guitarist, I was trained in Jazz on piano and trombone, learning how the Jazz genre and many genres of music are from Black people. Black musicians were leading innovators, offering creativity and talent and the development of Jazz as a tradition in the 20th century (Tucker & Jackson, 2001). Legendary Jazz musicians and notable songs include Charles Mingus (“Moanin”), Herbie Hancock (“Chameleon” and “Rockit”) and Miles Davis (“All Blues” and “So What”). These songs are classics passed down by legends who engaged in story-telling and counter storytelling through music in addition to nontraditional elements.

In Jazz music, there are elements that break away from traditional measures like breaks, improvisation, riffing, and solos and these elements relate to CRT and Hip-Hop. Story-telling and counter storytelling through nontraditional methods are important in CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Being attuned to beats and rhythms are also important in Hip-Hop. Black artists established foundational elements in New Orleans, “before the music had a name, or when it was still referred to as ragtime or ‘ratty’ music” (Tucker & Jackson, 2001, para. 7). Musicians continued to interpret a varied repertoire of dance music (polkas, two-steps, waltzes), marches, traditional hymns and spirituals (Tucker & Jackson, 2001). Jazz is the composite of “African-descended musical forms transmuted through the experiences and musical practices of Black people” (Stovall, 2019, p.77).

Jazz went through the passage of the Jazz Preservation Act (JPA) in 1987 which defined it as a Black American art form (Farley, 2011). According to Farley (2011), aspects are “the Blues aesthetic, which inevitably expresses racist oppression in America, and the democratic ethic, wherein each musician’s individual expression equally contributes to the whole” (p.113). The Jazz band, for example, is “a model of democracy arbitrated solely upon musical values and talent” (Farley, 2011, p. 126). Rather than denying racial discrimination in Jazz, the band externalizes it within its aesthetics (Farley, 2011). Jazz band was where I began tangible anti-racism work.

Freestyle Street Dancer in Hip-Hop

Another place I continued tangible anti-racism work was in a freestyle street dancing

crew in college. This dance crew informed my development as an APIDA, Filipin@, Hispanic person in the Hip-Hop community. It was humbling being welcomed in the dance and Hip-Hop scenes while aware of its roots. Hip-Hop culture is Black culture and roots of many cultures are from Black people. Legendary old school Hip-Hop heads include Coke La Rock, DJ Kool Herc, DJ Grandmaster Flash, and those in the Rock Steady crew and Universal Zulu nation (Arahamian, 2019; Miller et al., 2014; Morgan & Bennett, 2011).

In CRT, Whiteness looks at property that can be used (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Patton et al, 2007; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Consumers extract Black culture and do not cite it because they do not care about revering Black people. According to Boyer and Graham (2016), Hip-Hop has dominated society through fashion, media and politics yet “stripped of its history and significance in Black communities as an art of protest” (Schaefer, 2019, para. 4). Disregarding its true roots is cultural appropriation and there is no excuse to prolong it with knowledge and wisdom readily available. Issues with my dance crew and other dance crews are rampant cultural appropriation and lack of action and support for Black people. I repeatedly voiced concerns that our dancers did not participate in Black events, fundraisers, demonstrations, die-ins, or protests I always invited them to. For example, one African dancer with internalized hatred towards Black people in the US and an obsession with KPop and Korean culture, prioritized APIDA events. She, two Asian American dancers, and a White dancer often teamed up to accept performances at APIDA events while declining performances at Black events. One of these Asian American dancers became president of the dance crew in 2018 and her passiveness to covert and overt racism weakened the relationship I established between the dance crew and our college’s cultural center. I repeatedly voiced concerns that our dancers claimed to represent Hip-Hop but did not accurately represent Hip-Hop. For example, they loved KPop but ignored how KPop appropriates Hip-Hop and Black culture.

While appropriating Hip-Hop and Black culture, some all-stylers, breakers, bboys, bgirls, and freestylers enjoyed identifying as “Hip-Hop” dancers in a “Hip-hop” dance crew. Two Asian American bboys and an Asian American bgirl often teamed up to complain when their music was not played on the speakers, particularly during Afrobeats, Dancehall, and music by Black artists was playing. They enthusiastically participated in breaking but could not answer questions I asked such as “What are you doing for Black people? Why are you silent on Black issues?” One cannot “be about these forms that come from the African diaspora and the trauma of slavery and not participate in the fight for equality” (Schaefer, 2019, para. 19). All throughout the years in my dance crew, I persistently brought up anti-Blackness, cultural appropriation, prejudice, privilege, and racism.

Despite attacks from my dance crew while fighting for Black people, I kept calling

out anti-Blackness, cultural appropriation, prejudice, privilege, and racism. I refused their disrespect and irresponsibility in the Hip-Hop community and Black culture. All-stylers, breakers, bboys, bgirls, and freestylers must own up to responsibility and endure accountability conversations. Black activists and friends reassured me that my passion was justified and that it was right for me to be unapologetic. As Black activists and friends reassured me, I collaborated with them to lead calls to action in NJ and NYC.

A Call to Action: Activism with Black Activists for Various Causes

In collaboration with Black activists, I led calls to action for and with marginalized communities and movements: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA Recipients), Native Americans, Palestine, and the #MeToo movement. CRT research has expanded to acknowledge dynamics of colonialism, immigration, and sovereignty (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Hip-Hop pedagogy is used for socio-political analysis of marginalized communities (Akorn 2009). Marginalized communities have sustained movements in colonialism, immigration, and sovereignty, notably during the Trump administration, where there was also awareness of issues of sexual misconduct.

Black people face issues of sexual misconduct: abuse, assault, harassment, and violence. In my college, White professors/directors of a “public center for dialogue and diplomacy” did not protect students and did not respond adequately or at all to sexual misconduct. There was gross negligence because they excused perpetrators while highlighting blame on survivors. No matter how “severe” or “tangible” a form of sexual misconduct is, there should be zero tolerance. Excusing sexual abuse, assault, harassment, and violence further contributes to rape culture. Rape culture claims that survivors want clout from false reporting while punishing them with victim blaming. It seems just a small amount of false accusations invalidates the large amount speaking their truth.

Someone who speaks their truth is Tarana Burke, a Black woman and the founder of the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement was not founded by a tweet from Alyssa Milano in 2013. Burke coined the term #MeToo in 2006, long before celebrities wore black. Black women persevere to make moves in the #MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter movement for marginalized groups. CRT expands beyond an individualistic focus because “it is respectful of the sociopolitical realities of marginalized groups and does not reinforce the power structures in society” (Patton et al, 2007, p. 48). Burke encourages people to not reinforce the power structures of patriarchy and misogyny, which are intertwined with capitalism, racism and sexism (Bailey & Trudy, 2018).

What's the Move: The Black Lives Matter Movement

Black Lives Matter is More Than a Movement

In CRT, capitalism, racism, and sexism are “neither random nor recent in their onset” (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 3). According to McCoy and Rodricks (2015), racist incidents do not manifest “solely at an individual level” (p. 3). Police brutality and campus racism are symptomatic of a society rooted in racist ideologies and White supremacy. By studying CRT, readers can disrupt oppressive systems and structural racial inequality. The Black Lives Matter movement is an ongoing disruption of oppression and inequality.

Black Lives Matter is more than a movement, more than an organization, more than politics. Activists and community organizers do racial and social justice because Black. Lives. Matter. Everyone holds privileges and it is our duty to use privileges to turn past instances of anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism into healing and liability. Color-blindness and being neutral will not end anything. Racism is endemic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Higher education practitioners, for example, actively and passively center White supremacy in their field. Higher education practitioners should utilize Black feminist thought as guidance to rebuild the field.

Black feminist thought has guided movements. Black, queer, and transgender women have been the forefront of liberation movements, like the three Black women who created the Black Lives Matter movement: Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi (TED, 2016). They established a feminist, queer framework that “grasped the importance of intersectionality” (Smith, 2020, para. 22). Cullors, Garza, and Tometi did not expect organizing to become a full-time job because instead, it is their life’s work (TED, 2016). Garza said “When Black people are free, everyone is free” (TED, 2016, 3:25). They persist like Sybrina Fulton, who ran for positions in office, and Marcia Chatelain, who created the #Ferguson syllabus. Black, queer, and transgender women rarely get the credit and praise they deserve. Bailey and Trudy (2018) describe misogynoir, the racist misogyny that Black women experience. Black, queer, and transgender women get dismissed even after the trauma they endure. Activists must do better at centering their knowledge and wisdom and uplifting their narratives and voices.

In 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement for the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Iyanna Dior, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Breonna Taylor. There are countless named and unnamed Black people that were victims of hate crimes and police brutality. Hip-Hop pedagogy can raise awareness about hate crimes and police brutality, in addition to issues such as incarceration and poverty (Akom, 2009; Miller & Bennett, 2011).

Militarized policing is part of these oppressive systems of incarceration and poverty. In CRT, there is a need to address systemic racism in every context (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

Activists for Black Lives Matter in Penn State, NYC, and NJ

Hip-Hop has transcended to address systemic racism in every context because it is a force; it is an identity; it is a voice (Miller et al., 2014). Hip-Hop is a “community of people seeking justice and higher learning; it is an environment for those seeking spiritual solace and cathartic release; it is performance art” (Miller et al., 2014, p. 1). Hip-Hop creates individuals that challenge discrimination and oppression while validating the experiences of marginalized BIPOC who unite with each other.

I united with other BIPOC at demonstrations and die-ins at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) around 2013/2014. Demonstrations and die-ins consisted of marching through campus and laying on ground inside or outside buildings. I went to so many that I cannot remember locations, but I remember feelings of anger and sadness. I name the cultural center I was heavily involved with, the events I attended and performed at, the initiatives I advocated for, and the organizations I integrated with at Penn State because there must be recognition of Black activists, leaders, students, and youths. If you are ever at Penn State, give these centers, events, initiatives, and organizations energy, labor, money, and time. To review this comprehensive list, please refer to Appendix A after References.

Since graduating Penn State, much of my work in the past decade has occurred in NYC and NJ with local Black Lives Matter contingents. I name groups and information because there must be recognition of Black activists, leaders, students, and youths. If you are ever in NYC or NJ, give these contingents energy, labor, money, and time. To review this comprehensive list, please refer to Appendix B (following Appendix A) after References.

What To Do: Community Organizing

I provide recommendations related to community organizing based on a review of culture, history, and movements. Hip-Hop pedagogy focuses on political and social issues in the US, particularly race. Hip-Hop also focuses on community organizing in addition to civil rights, justice, and politics (Burns, 2017; Söderman & Sernhede, 2016). These recommendations in civil rights, justice, and politics for political and social issues should be interpreted as urgent tasks that readers must do for Black people.

According to Yosso (2005), community organizers that challenge political and social issues most likely recognize the tenets of CRT as part of the work.

Community organizers should be grounded in educational and political praxis. Leftists and liberals might have no praxis or one that relies solely on voting and compromising with politicians. Sometimes, the praxis is nothing beyond saying “Go vote!” every four years. It is vital to go beyond just voting every four years and citizens should have political education and training. In CRT, there is critique of liberalism which perpetuates color-blindness and neutrality of the law. Rather than relying on liberalism, one must gather power from the people that comes from community organizing in neighborhoods, which is what the Black Panther Party did and what Anakbayan NJ does. As a member of Anakbayan NJ, I know voting is still relying on an inherently racist electoral system that enables fascism. Simply voting is not the only method to make radical change. It is absurd to push voting because many will, of course, yet voting is not accessible for everyone. The push for voting should not dismiss civil doings that forced changes in history time and time again: community organizing, direct action, and mass movements such as protests and riots (Olla, 2020). One day of organizing in a neighborhood and materially serving the people will do more than a lifetime of voting. People should be open to the “hidden role of social movements in achieving change in this country” (Hunter, 2020, para. 4).

Big victories throughout history have come from civil disobedience and resistance from the hidden role of social movements. Examples include progress in the abolition of slavery and winning child labor laws due to direct action (Hunter, 2020). There are misconceptions that some moments, like Rosa Parks refusing to move, spontaneously sparked the Civil Rights movement. Actually, such moments take a lot of planning (Hunter, 2020). CRT is grounded in the Civil Rights movement and highlights empowerment, liberation, and social justice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Community organizing carries the Civil Rights movement through collectives, delegation, and tasks. For me, community organizing entails: two to three hour meetings with minutes, phone calls with follow up, outreach across different platforms, relationship building with centers, halls, and schools, and much more. Although I go to numerous demonstrations, die-ins, marches, protests, and rallies, they are only a small aspect of organizing. A most vivid memory was staying outside a NYC precinct when our comrades were arrested for civil disobedience. Other activists and I sourced food, legal counsel, and moral support from the crowd as we waited for their release. In Hip-Hop pedagogy, there is emphasis on spreading knowledge and resources. In CRT, there is emphasis on spreading cultural wealth through lived experiences (Yosso, 2005). Knowledge, resources, and cultural wealth influences motivation and support among the people.

“Motivation and support from the people” sounds vague but basically means gathering a mass movement of people. Examples of mass movements are the protests in NYC, Seattle, and cities for Black people that were killed in 2020. Even during COVID-19, people knew how to organize efficiently and safely. As someone who

organized in numerous demonstrations, die-ins, marches, protests, and rallies since 2013/2014, I am aware of safety and security. Yet during COVID-19, we adapted new, precautionary measures: masks at all times, free gloves and hand sanitizers, and snacks and water packages. We encouraged those with immunocompromised systems or symptoms to stay home and participate in other forms. Readers should figure out best ways to show up as activists, because there are accessible ways.

During 2020 protests, we showed up with accessible community care and mutual aid. What we manifested during the protests is what communities could look like without police. It is evident we know how to protect each other: providing mental health and physical health resources, housing, food, and money. Checking on each other and trying to protect each other contributes to safe communities. Rather than relying on police, we relied on each other, which made us cognizant of residents having fair access to education, healthcare, and jobs. Hip-Hop pedagogy emphasizes cooperation, local capacity building and empowering people to increase control of their lives (Akom, 2009). The Minneapolis Uprisings were an example of power of the people against a militarized police state. Bus drivers refused to drive people to jail which was civil disobedience. The Seattle Capitol Hill Free Zone was an example of rebuilding community on the people's terms without police.

It is impossible to denounce the killings of Black people and also praise communities with police. I previously mentioned problematic behaviors of some dancers in my dance crew. One Asian dancer that served as president of the dance crew from 2012-2013 and now works as a coach and speaker, posted about “good cops holding the weight of bad cops.” Respectability politics is dangerous, especially considering one's platform and profession. When holding an APIDA identity, respectability politics for the police perpetuates anti-Blackness in the APIDA community. There is no such thing as good cops in a system corrupt in the first place. In 2020, there was a trend of “copaganda” where police took advantage of photos by kneeling “in solidarity” yet arresting and brutalizing people. The system has to be abolished. According to Bailey and Trudy (2018), “our world needs to be recalibrated and rebooted such that people, particularly those multiply marginalized, are valued” (p. 5). Marginalized people should be valued which is exemplified in community organizing contingents.

Activists can persuade people interested in radical change to join community organizing contingents. Inviting instead of dismissing those who express curiosity ensures sustained movements. People who were not in any community organizing contingents jumped into protests and riots. Instead of noticing these participants just once, we can reach out so they have consistent engagement in the Black Lives Matter movement. We cannot be condescending as community organizers and activists (Olla, 2020). Others may express interest in activism but still have misguided ideals (such as a praxis relying solely on voting), so it is best to introduce

them to political education and training. Outside of community organizing and activism, people cannot be judgmental of how to engage in the Black Lives Matter movement. It is gaslighting to condemn protests and riots. It is harmful to dictate how to express grief and trauma. Every type of mobilization is valid. It is not right to tell the oppressed how to respond to oppression.

Closing: The Future is Ours

Everyone must respond to the oppression of Black people for an equitable, fair, and just future. Cultures and movements are directly Black people's labor and literal blood, sweat, and tears after years and years of exploitation. Take responsibility for past instances of harm and impact in relation to anti-Blackness, prejudice, and racism, even if done unknowingly or unintentionally. Admit privileges. Be advocates. Get in the cypher and in the groove. It is natural to make connections in dance, music, activism, and community organizing. However, it is a duty to go beyond. A call to action. Fight for Black people's liberation and rights.

APIDA folks: continue fighting for Black people's liberation and rights. Combat complicity in anti-Blackness. All folks: get rid of performative allyship. Buy Black business, call legislation, donate funds, share information and do more in Black issues. What's the move? In NYC or NJ? APIDA for Black power. Will you keep doing the work even when the news is not focused on protests and riots? Community organizing. Will you be more than radical and revolutionary? The future is ours. Celebrate Black cultures, honor Black history, maintain Black movements, protect Black people, love Black lives. Black Lives Matter.

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Appendix A

- Ashe Awards
- Paul Robeson Cultural Center (PRCC)
- Penn State African Students Association
- Penn State Black Student Union
- Penn State Blueprint
- Penn State Multicultural Resource Center
- Penn State National Society of Black Engineers
- Penn State Words
- POC Pep Rally
- PRCC Social Justice Retreat
- The STOOP
- Touch of Africa

Appendix B

- Black and Brown Coalition NJ
- Black Diaspora Club
- Black Freedom Society
- Black Lives Matter of Greater NY
- Black Lives Matter NJ
- Black Lives Matter Newark
- Black Lives Matter Paterson
- Solidarity Jersey City