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Forsaken Study: Youth Organizing, Development and Sustaining Abolitionist Visions in Late Liberal San Francisco

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Education

by

Miguel N. Abad

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Gilberto Conchas, Chair
Professor Rossella Santagata
Associate Professor Damien Sojoyner
Associate Professor K. Wayne Yang
Assistant Professor Constance Iloh

2020

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DEDICATION

To

the youth organizers and educators in San Francisco who continue study, struggle and refuse to submit

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VITA

Miguel N. Abad

2006 A.A., City College of San Francisco

2008 B.A. in Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles

2018 M.A. in Education, University of California, Irvine

2020 Ph.D. in Education University of California, Irvine

FIELD OF STUDY

Youth Studies, Out of School Education, Youth Organizing

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Forsaken Study: Youth Organizing, Development and Sustaining Abolitionist Visions in Late Liberal San Francisco

by

Miguel N. Abad

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Irvine, 2020

Professor Gilberto Conchas, Chair

Within education and youth studies, the concept of "positive youth development" has been taken up by researchers and practitioners usually as a framework for structuring learning settings and pedagogy to optimize educational achievement. At the same time, such frameworks stop short of the questions of "to what end" or "for what purpose"? As such, this text questions the assumptions and limitations of positive youth development frameworks, especially as their efficacy is increasingly reduced to its correlation with measures of academic achievement. Based upon two and a half years of ethnographic field work with Latinx and Asian American youth organizers in San Francisco, this text focuses how social movements served as contexts for youth development. Youth organizers developed skills and built community through agitation, refusal and resistance rather than through conventional notions of individualism, professionalism and compliance associated with schooling. Through their active participation and investments in movement campaigns for housing justice, educational inequality, environmental justice and workers' rights, youth organizers in San Francisco illustrated how movement work can foster alternative visions of youth development and career readiness that are intertwined with social justice.

Introduction: Free Our City, Free Our Stories

Fig. 0.1. Panel from the "Mental Health Is Real" zine from the "Free Our Cities, Free Our Stories" art action. Courtesy of Solidarity in Action.

"In our actions and in our protests, how are we bringing our cultures and ourselves into it? It's not just politics, politics, politics. That doesn't give us life. What really gives us life is really being able to express where we come from and what we need."

Clara, the twenty-seven-year-old Chicana organizer with MISSION UNITED and Solidarity in Action, addressed the Latinx and Asian American youth organizers in the room as they installed their projects for the upcoming art action titled "Free Our Cities, Free Our Stories". It was the summer of 2019 and Solidarity in Action had recently achieved a major youth-led campaign victory within the San Francisco Unified School District. The "Our Healing in Our Hands" campaign demanded increased mental health resources within SFUSD high schools as well as established more space for youth decision-making power in schools. After over two years of grassroots organizing, the school board unanimously passed a resolution to enshrine the campaign's demands.

"Free our Cities, Free Our Stories" was the culmination of the campaign's success, as well as a collective response to the decades long restructuring of San Francisco's political economy, geographies, and its surviving communities. San Francisco's status as the most expensive and unequal city in the nation (Sharkey et al. 2020), and the global epicenter of the tech boom have come at the cost of enduring crises along every axis of domination that can be theorized. Clara's statement invited us to understand how the work of organizing in the wake of these disabling conditions requires not only study and struggle, but also creativity, collective and personal expressions, and imagination. Aimé Césaire (1982) observed that "Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge" (17), which is necessary for moving beyond the world at is it is and towards what it still might become. Clara, like Césaire, underlined how our movements and our humanity are left impoverished without a commitment to poetic and artistic knowledge.

The show was held at one of the quintessential movement landmarks in the city: the I-Hotel. Over a generation ago, the I-Hotel housed poor and elderly Filipino and Chinese

immigrant workers, as well as a several local Asian American leftist organizations. During the late 1970s, it would be one of the flashpoints of grassroots, multiracial resistance to redevelopment schemes and land speculation in San Francisco. Today, the space continues to stand as a reminder (or a relic) of a tradition of movements and solidarity in The City. As the doors to the show opened on that late July afternoon, guests and visitors began streaming in. The internal temperature of the gallery space spiked and I found myself patting my forehead dry every five minutes with my sleeve.

"Can we get everyone's attention please?" Raul's voice boomed over the gallery's PA system.

Microphones in hand, Raul a 17-year-old Chicano youth organizer and Carol a 16-year-old Chinese youth organizer stood in front of an intergenerational crowd that included youth, movement elders, educators, activists, organizers and friends and family from around San Francisco. Hanging on the wall behind Raul and Carol were banners of their respective organizations MISSION UNITED and Chinatown Local, which together comprised Solidarity in Action.

Carol welcomed the crowd to the event and lifted up of the collective effort on a recent campaign victory.

> This is a community celebration for our mental health campaign. This campaign began in 2017 after our youth members told us they were struggling with their mental health. We got our communities together and went to the school board. And after over two years of organizing we won and secured funding for support more staff and student voice in decision-making and also provide resources to have peer counseling.

Raul followed up Carol by connecting mental health to the decades-long housing crisis in San Francisco.

> Ranging from photography to screen printing to spray paint for the past six weeks, MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL youth have been collaborating on pieces that you see around the room. Pieces which tie to mental health, its severity, yet

> lack of acknowledgement. I would also like to acknowledge the space we are in and its history. The I Hotel was and is a site of loss and victory to the community here known as Manilatown. This was home to hundreds if not thousands of Filipinx laborers before the eviction brought about by corporate developers. In response, housing activists, students and community members and tenants united to protest and resist eviction, which sparked a nationwide solidarity movement. However, corporate developers evicted them in 1977 and demolished their homes in 1981. It's important to remember this history as we go up against gentrification today. While the I-Hotel was rebuilt in 2005 to house low income seniors, we remember the struggle and resilience of those who fought against the displacement of our community.

At that moment, I recognized the fundamental contradiction of this gathering. Most, if not all of the artwork on display in the gallery expressed states of alienation, as well as a profound sadness for those who have been pushed out, displaced, left unhoused and rendered unworthy of living within what is left of San Francisco. Moreover, they underlined the cross-cutting dimensions of precarity and immiseration that have shaped the experiences of working-class Black, Latinx and Asian American youth around the city and the entire Bay Area. At the same time, the event was far from somber, despondent or resigned. Rather, I observed how the space was animated by diverse modes of study and pedagogy. In his manifesto for political artists, Emory Douglas (2011)—the former Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party—observed that "art is a powerful tool, a language that can be used to enlighten, inform, a guide to action." I watched on as these youth organizers engaged in improvised study and political education with guests both young and elderly through their art. These demonstrations were an example of how community, mutual aid and alternative visions of society still endured even within the aftermath of San Francisco's centuries-long process of settlement, its position as a vanguard for racial capitalism, and its ongoing agendas of organized abandonment.

The show was multimedia and included ten collaborative art projects focused on the intersections of mental health, displacement, dispossession and environmental justice. Penelope and Geneva lead a screen-printing station using the image of a lotus to signify resilience. The

lotus flower often emerges from the mud and other seemingly inhospitable ecologies. Alitzel, Anna, Nancy and Carol produced a group painting of four distinct yet interconnected panels. Each panel captured distinct emotions and mental states, while collectively they illustrated how interiority and mental health are inextricable from land, power, and politics. I worked closely with Marcia, Elijah and Francisco on a nine-panel zine. One particular panel from the zine caught my eye, which was a digital collage that the three of them created together (see fig.0.1). The profundity of the collage emanated from its simplistic elegance. We are presented with a map of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. Looking closer, we can see monarch butterflies placed seemingly random locations without any obvious logic or pattern. A closer look reveals that that the butterflies have been relegated to the far corners of the BART system away from San Francisco. Perhaps they speak to the realities of those who have been displaced, dispossessed and priced out the city—especially Black communities—in the past three decades. For activists and organizers within contemporary immigrant justice movements, the monarch is not a generic signifier, but a symbol for migration, and a refusal of what San Francisco poet Wendy Trevino (2018) has called the "cruel fiction" of borders. While displaced from the city, these monarchs might still conceivably fly above the municipal boundaries, bodies of water, hills and tech offices on their journeys back home to SF.

Forsaken Study is a story of imaginative youth organizers and their adult allies who continue to study and struggle within the remains of a city where the radicals have lost, and the neoliberal consensus has left its mark on every corner of its topography. I situate my critique upon the animating logics of character and youth development that permeate our state sanctioned and extra-legal educational contexts. Contemporary models of schooling too often are organized around promises of social mobility (for some) in exchange for dull study and impoverished

political imaginations. If notions of development and character are only legible in so far as they can signify and facilitate academic achievement—or other bourgeois modes of meritocracy—what kinds of interventions are necessary to rupture this conceptual dead end? This question is crucial for us educators or scholars who recognize the social investments in conflating education with schooling. This chauvinistic posture establishes reductive ideas of what counts as education and who are considered educators in our society (Baldridge 2020). Non-white educators are much more likely to be youth workers in comparison to the classroom teaching force, which has been mostly comprised of white women (Flores 2011; Fusco 2012). Simply put, the impulse to ignore or overlook non-schooling forms of education is a reflection of how racism continues to animate education as an academic discipline.

As such, this project uncenters state-sponsored institutions called schools and focuses on community-based youth organizing. Throughout the history of the United States, youth organizing has been an indispensable pedagogical method within the educational programs established by BIPOC[1] and white leftists (Boggs 1998, Davis 2013; Glen 1996; Ransby 2003). The setting for this ethnographic text is not limited to a self-contained school campus or organizational headquarters, but the neighborhoods, sidewalks, buses and buildings where young people study, learn and struggle in contemporary San Francisco. I aimed to distance myself from the concerns of dominant educational discourses such as contemporary achievement narratives. The theoretical core of this text attempts to unpack the question: How might youth organizing promote modes of development that transcend individualistic achievement imperatives and enable abolitionist political visions? Still, dominant achievement discourses emerged frequently within my fieldwork and my interactions with my youth interlocutors, which speaks to their resonance and ubiquity within the lives of young people within our late liberal society.

Arrested Development and the Bio-Economic Subject

This text traces how notions of youth and character development prevalent within schools and out of school educational spaces have been invested in what Sylvia Wynter (2003) has called the "bio-economic subject." Post-Enlightenment humanism located rationality and the figure of "the human" within the geographic bounds of Western Europe (Da Silva 2007). The human was defined by his interiority as well as his ability to affect the world and the course of history. The "Age of Discovery" enshrined the irrationality of Black and indigenous peoples through cartographies of exploration and conquest, which defined them as subjects waiting to be acted upon by nature and the rational human (McKittrick 2006). Conquest, settlement and the development of capitalism became avenues for the exportation of racialist Western European ontologies of difference (Robinson 2000/1983). The ensuring global spread of secularism, reason and capitalism since the 18th century introduced a liberal humanism paradigm, which Wynter (2003) described as "Man 2": the jobholding, wage-earning breadwinner.

When optimized, this exceptional version of the human would resemble a master of accumulation: a capitalist. This figure of the "bio-economic subject" is also defined in contrast to those subjects who are unable or unwilling to fulfill the expectations of the state—especially those racial subjects who are relegated to states of unfreedom or subjected to genocide (King 2019). This dichotomy becomes enshrined through race as the white breadwinners are made legible in relation to the criminalized, jobless and surplus populations of racially othered peoples. Within our neoliberal racial regimes, a politics of recognition extends the promises of the myths of social mobility and meritocracy to incorporate racially othered peoples (Robinson 2007). At

the same time, such a claim requires faith and investment in the legitimacy of the same political formations and institutions that continue to reproduce unfreedom, settlement, economic deprivation and other forms of domination (Coulthard 2014).

Mainstream educational paradigms—in which youth and character development are located—are defined as successful (or failures) in relation to their ability to enable the reproduction of the "bio-economic subject", disciplined labor, and surplus populations. For the past three decades many Black, Indigenous and other education scholars of color have attempted to move the field beyond deficit-centered scholarship by centering the assets and forms of knowledge found within marginalized communities (Ladson-Billings 1995; Moll et al. 1992; Paris 2012; Yosso 2005). Moreover, the rise of "positive youth development" frameworks have attempted to identify generalizable mechanisms of promoting initiative, motivation and academic success among young people (Durlak et al. 2007; Eccles and Gootman 2002; Larson 2000; Lerner et al. 2005). At the same time, the psychological indicators associated "positive youth development", as it has existed for over three decades, have been entangled within hegemonic ideas of success, productivity, citizenship and worthiness. Said differently, development is rendered positive only in so far as it enables academic success in school and the eventual reproduction of laborers. Within this research paradigm, the question of "development" in education too often takes on teleological dimensions in the form of naturalized developmental stages, rather than a dialectical relationship between biology and social relations (Lee 2010). As such, my critique of how we come to talk, write and educate young people around the grammar of development must address the question, "For what aims, and purposes does development serve?".

I situate this question within what revolutionary Guyanese historian Walter Rodney described as *underdevelopment.* Rodney's (1982/1972) most well-known text *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* offers a systematic deconstruction of the idea of development within the world capitalist system during the mid 20th century. As a Pan Africanist and a Marxist—although not dogmatically so—Rodney recognized how the grammar of development propagated by Western European politicians and neoclassical economists, functioned to naturalize the relative deprivation of former colonial territories on the African continent. In other words, Rodney problematized the dehistoricized and decontextualized label of underdevelopment, which obscured the entrenched legacies of Western imperialism and what Saidiya Hartman (2008) has described as the "afterlives of slavery".

Rodney's theoretical intervention rearticulated the notion of "development" not as objective, universalizable phases and linear processes, but like capitalism, a description of historically contingent social relations (Campbell 1980).

> In some quarters, it has often been thought wise to substitute the term "developing" for "underdeveloped." One of the reasons for so doing is to avoid any unpleasantness which may be attached to the second term, which might be interpreted as meaning underdeveloped mentally, physically, morally, or in any other respect. Actually, if "underdevelopment" were related to anything other than comparing economies, then the most under developed country in the world would be the U.S.A., which practices external oppression on a massive scale, while internally there is a blend of exploitation, brutality, and psychiatric disorder. However, on the economic level, it is best to remain with the word "underdeveloped" rather than "developing," because the latter creates the impression that all the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America are escaping from a state of economic backwardness relative to the industrial nations of the world, and that they are emancipating themselves from the relationship of exploitation. That is certainly not true, and many underdeveloped countries in Africa and elsewhere are becoming more underdeveloped in comparison with the world's great powers, because their exploitation by the metropoles is being intensified in new ways. (14)

Extreme levels of relative deprivation between the metropoles in the Europe and the liberated countries on the African continent and across the global south were functions of empire,

settlement and ongoing economic strangulation. In addition to political economy, Rodney highlighted how the social and cultural configurations of undeveloped nations were intertwined with the reproduction of local and global capitalist systems through what Louis Althusser (2014) called ideological state apparatuses: the church, schools and the universities. These institutions produced modes of the bio-economic subject in the form of politicians, technocrats and other leaders who participated in the retrenchment of dependence on Western capitalist nations. England, Belgium, France and Portugal established colonial school systems "to train Africans to help the man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans. In effect […] selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole" (Rodney 1982/1972; 240). It must be stated the power and influence of ideological state apparatuses are never total, and in some instances can become covertly commandeered as sites of resilience and resistance (Moten and Harney 2004; La Paperson 2017). At the same time, schools within these colonial contexts were structured to primarily serve the ends of the metropole by ensuring the underdevelopment of the colony.

As a pedagogical expression, underdevelopment underlines the social, political and economic dimensions of educational programs that reproduce the conditions for domination. Although Rodney's formulation of underdevelopment was created to describe the historically constructed deprivation on the African continent, underdevelopment can be stretched to provide us a way to understand the entanglement between youth and character development, and the imperative to reproduce the bio-economic subject within American education. Rodney's theoretical intervention reminds us that even biological and scientific definitions of human development are always already situated within historically contingent social relations.

The first organizing theme of this text takes up how resistance in education—including "critical" formulations—are imbricated with what I describe as *achievement contingencies.* Said differently, I grapple with the ways in which resistance frameworks in education tend to hold on to investments in the bio-economic promises of academic achievement even as the fictions of social mobility continue to lose their luster (Chetty et al. 2014). I see this tendency as fundamentally reformist and unequipped to meet the transformational needs of young people and young adults who are most vulnerable within the status quo.

The question of resistance within education has often been guided by conversations about what resistance can do, what forms it can take, and its material and psychological consequences on the lives of young people who partake in it (Fine 1991; Foley 1990; Fordham 1996; McLeod 1987; Tuck and Yang, 2014; Willis 1977). For example, in *Learning to Labor* (1977), Paul Willis zeroed in on how working-class young men in England participated in oppositional school cultures, which consequently locked them into cycles of "self-damnation" and into working-class trajectories. The respective works of Michelle Fine's (1991) and Signithia Fordham (1996) illustrate the paradox where academic success instantiates a "cost" for some students of color, while those who make the choice to opt out of school generate a form of empowerment. Prudence Carter (2005) and Gilberto Conchas (2006) respectively transposed cultural straddling and social scaffolding frameworks onto achievement and assimilation discourses in order to complexify the reductive arguments about educational achievement, assimilation and what Ogbu and Fordham (1986) described as "acting white".

My exercise here is not to relitigate the literature on the sociological relationship between culture, educational achievement, but rather to pose questions about the premises of these long-standing contestations. Common within much of this literature is the trope of "self-defeating

behaviors", which usually indexes young peoples' (usually Black, Indigenous and non-white students) choices to underperform, to not perform, or to opt out of schooling entirely. For example, Solórzano and Bernal's (2001) critical race theory model of transformational resistance model describes this as "self-defeating resistance":

> Self-defeating resistance refers to students who may have some critique of their oppressive social conditions but are not motivated by an interest in social justice. These students engage in behavior that is not transformational and in fact helps to re-create the oppressive conditions from which it originated. An example of self-defeating resistance is the high school dropout who may have a compelling critique of the schooling system but then engages in behavior (dropping out of school) that is self-defeating and does not help transform her or his oppressive status […] Although the construct of self-defeating resistance acknowledges human agency, one might argue that it does so in a limited way by only considering a partial understanding of the systems of oppression and demonstrating behaviors that can be destructive to oneself or others. (317)

Solorzao and Bernal (2001) draw from critical race theory and LatCrit theory in education by offering a framework for "transformational resistance" as a means to more precisely delineate forms of resistance based their relationship to critical consciousness and social justice principles. Solorzano and Bernal (2001) argue an incommensurable relationship between transformative change and the act of dropping out of school. This rationale rests upon the assumption that dropping out of school is categorically self-destructive and self-defeating. If we are to assume a rational actor in the vein of neoclassical economics, dropping out of school certainly assumes some negative consequences within the dominant social formations and political economies that organize the United States. This rationale rests upon a utilitarian logic of harm reduction, which seems unwilling to entertain the possibility that schooling, as it exists today, is an integral appendage of larger oppressive systems, which may or may not be truly amenable to reform. At the same time, we are reminded by Damien Sojoyner's (2017) response to the unspoken limitations of similar harm-reduction rationales: "[W]hat damage is done by reinforcing a narrative that Black students should not drop out of school?" (p. 516). In other

words, if youth resistance can only find validation through the "north star" of academic success, is it ever possible to resist the legitimacy of schools or schooling?

A second premise in this argument relates to the legitimacy of education and schooling for preserving American civil society. As Michelle Fine (1991) has argued, public schools are "still the primary public institutions of social democracy" (27). As such, what I find unconvincing in Solorzano and Bernal's (2001) argument—as well as similar arguments among other resistance theorists—is the presumption that "transforming her or his oppressive status" presumes a specific kind of engagement with schooling. This presumption rests upon Horace Mann's (1848) description of education as "the great equalizer of the conditions of men". As a truism, this presumption is dubious, especially when inequality has always already been concomitant to all aspects of schooling within the United States, which sustains social inequalities (Darling-Hammond 2004; Vaught 2009). Obviously, schools serve as a pathway towards social mobility to a small minority of youth across racial groups, yet it has not delivered the promises of social equalization that would warrant a strong relationship to transformational resistance.

Conceptually, this genre of resistance literature in education falls short of confronting the logics that reproduce meritocratic impulses and modes of relative deprivation in part due to the ways education is conflated with state-sponsored schooling in the United States (Stovall 2018). I describe *achievement contingency* as the implied rationality that validates, defines and makes (il)legible forms of resistance in so far as resistance can appeal to or enable "academic success". The legibility of resistance frameworks in education are defined by their relationship to schooling and conventional notions of achievement. More importantly, this configuration leaves undisturbed the state-sanctioned legitimacy of schooling and achievement to drastically shape

young peoples' life trajectories and their ability to live dignified lives. This rationality is faithful to the liberal formulations of work and labor that have been foundational to American society. As auto worker, activist and theorist James Boggs (1963/2011) noted in his text *The American Revolution,* "[T]he right to live has always been so tied up with the necessity to produce that it is hard for the average person to visualize a workless society" (109). As such, the right to live and sell one's labor in the market resembles not emancipation, but coercion. Moreover, notions of work and labor have been (and continue to be) imbricated within how character, race, inequality and unfreedom are constructed (Nopper 2011). Schooling is enveloped within this framework where achievement functions as a stand in for (projected) productivity or aptitude to manage the racial capitalist state. Those many poor, racialized and queered students who do not demonstrate the potential for generating surplus value are justifiably immiserated and incarcerated as surplus populations. As such, understanding education more expansively outside the confines of institutions called schools offers modes of resistance that do not rely upon conventional achievement narratives for validation, but rather put into question their legitimacy and transform them (Cohen 1997; Cox 2015).

When understood in this way, *achievement contingency* structures how education—and the premises of work and labor that it rests upon—represents an articulation or mode of governmentality for regulating life and the distribution of precarity and death (Mbembe 2003). If we accept that schooling is a legitimate and integral part of the state and civil society, then it is difficult to deny that it is also implicated in what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) has described as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (28). It is this conundrum that ensnares and penetrates even radical formulations of resistance in education discourses. I contend that these achievement

contingencies resemble residual traces and investments in notions of character within education. In chapter 2, I further explore how notions of character were foundational to the earliest schools including Black industrial schools and Native American boarding schools. I offer a historiography of how two of its main figureheads, Samuel C. Armstrong and James Henry Pratt, understood character as the connective tissue between race, labor, citizenship and education after Reconstruction.

Youth Organizing, Resistance and Development

In this text, I utilize the definition of organizing forwarded by labor organizer Jane McAlevey (2016). She describes organizing as a practice that aims to a) "transform the power structure to favor constituents and diminish the power of the opposition", b) "prioritize power analysis, involve ordinary people in it and decipher the often hidden relationship between economic, social and political power", and c) "[develop] the skills of key organic leaders who are key influencers of the constituency […] and independent of staff recruit new people never before involved" (McAlevey 2016, 11-12). In other words, organizing is a strategy that encompasses a set of tactics and practices focused upon building power, clarifying the terrain of struggle, and supporting the intertwined development of individuals and the collective growth of social movements. Organizing offers us the settings to better understand the dynamic interplay between education, pedagogy, development, power and politics.

In the past two decades, the genre of youth organizing literature has centered youth resistance and challenged deficit-centered and ethnocentric formulations of "youth development". Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota (2002) have argued for a "social justice youth development" that integrates the cultivation of Freirean critical consciousness and political praxis. At its best, youth organizing can synthesize civic engagement, community development,

and psychological wellness (Kirschner and Ginwright 2012). Soo Ah Kwon's (2013) ethnography with Southeast Asian youth organizers in Oakland spoke to the forms of "affirmative governmentality" that permeated through influence of philanthropic funding agencies on grassroots organizations. As the genre has grown in the past two decades, researchers have begun to seek inclusion within youth development paradigms by highlighting organizing as a developmental context, or the impact of youth organizing on academic achievement (Cammarota 2007; Kirschner and Ginwright 2012; Mediratta et al. 2008). As such, even this insurgent genre of has become invested in the achievement contingencies that animate the political economy of youth development literature. Additionally, youth organizing scholars have tended to emphasize the grammar of "action", which too often subordinates the essential dimensions of study and planning in radical political projects.

One of the transformative aspects of organizing is the ability to engage in quotidian forms study and planning that do not rely upon state validation or the imperatives of schooling and academic achievement (Moten and Harney 2004). For instance, the practice of Black study threatens the legitimacy of state schooling by unsettling its monopoly on "real" learning and education. Moreover, the overemphasis on action may overshadow the every-day theoretical interventions of working-class young people as they not only build critical consciousness, but they also imagine alternative futures. Said differently, this text is not about teasing out the supposed "benefits" of youth organizing for human development. Rather, I was interested in focusing on how engaging in youth organizing might afford young people the opportunities to interrogate normative modes of citizenship and success that cut across school, community and home.

"Abolition is not an absence; it is a presence" (Gilmore 2019). For decades, movement scholars and organizers have advanced the intertwined political and intellectual projects of abolition by foregrounding the carceral state and its manifestations within the United States and all over the world. (Davis 2003; Gilmore 2007; James 2013). At the same time, abolition and carcerality extend well past the discrete institutions known as prisons. Dismantling the carceral state requires not only the abolition of prisons and policing, but also the carceral logics that animate societies and permeate institutions (Ritchie 2012). Within education, abolitionists have articulated the school to prison nexus to describe the intricate systems of surveillance and pedagogy that depress students' radical praxis (Meiners 2007; Stovall 2018). At the same time, abolitionists also ask us to understand the quotidian manifestations of carcerality inside and outside of schools that operate through commonsense notions of safety, innocence, worthiness and exceptionalism within pedagogies and curriculum (Sojoyner 2016). Moreover, these logics inform many of the basic assumptions of schooling and achievement, which enable the surplus-making of populations who cannot (or will not) equip themselves as the state demands. As such, I invoke the necessity of an abolitionist tradition as a means to "*transform* our conceptions of what makes us secure and what makes our lives and communities just" (Meiners 2011 551). Moreover, abolition invites us to imagine societies in which the material needs of everyone are met, specifically those communities that continue to be most harmed by poverty, policing and racialized violence. Abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba notes, "There are some communities already living that today […] We should not act as though it's some sort of fairy tale or some sort of impossibility. It is actually not impossible (Kaba and Duda 2017, 18)." In other words, abolition is both an analytic framework and a political vision of society that is not only about the

abolition of buildings called prisons but the conditions under which carcerality—in all its manifestations—has become the solution (Gilmore 2020).

An abolitionist resistance in education is not animated by technocratic approaches to improving schools or preserving a harmonious relationship between youth rebellion and academic achievement. Rather, the project is focused upon simultaneously undoing what exists—including our attachment to achievement and success—and creating new educational projects based upon justice-centered priorities. Instead of grappling with stale questions such as "How do we close achievement gaps?" or "How do we make schools more equitable?" we ought to be asking "What if schooling as it exists today, cannot be reformed?", "What should a humanizing education look like?" and "What institutional configurations—that may or may not resemble schools—could make this happen?". In other words, an abolitionist resistance takes up refusal as praxis for breaking through liberal reformism in order to reimagine what society ought to look like, and engage in the necessary forms of organizing to enact those transformations (Davis 2003).

In order to break through the hegemonic logic of reform and incorporation, Kahnawà:ke Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2014) has described in elegant detail modes of *refusal,* which are responses to the assumed goodness of the multicultural politics and reformist politics of settler states. For the unfamiliar analyst, the idea of refusal may summon associations with irrational, solipsistic impulses. As a contrast, Simpson articulates refusal as an ethical stance "that stands in stark contrast to the desire to have one's distinctiveness as a culture, as a people, recognized [and] comes with the requirement of having one's *political* sovereignty acknowledged and upheld and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in a position of recognizing […]" (11). Refusal as a political and ethical stance, puzzles Western

liberal modes of social contracts due to the insolence within questions such as "What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so?" (11). To pose such questions unsettles what Fred Moten (Harney and Moten 2013) has described as the *call to order* by refusing the legitimacy of settler governmentality as well as Western liberal promises of recognition, multiculturalism and inclusion. Understood in this way, *refusal* holds a similar productive capacity to what Anna Tsing (2005) has described as "friction"—the creative forces that emerge out of unstable, unequal, uneasy, awkward interconnections across difference. In other words, *refusal* is not singularly concerned with the individualized practice and ethic of "opting out". In the case of some Mohawk peoples, Simpson notes, "asserting *actual* histories and thus legislating interpretive possibilities in contestation—interpretations of treaty, possibilities of movement, electoral practices—not only in individual selves" (22).

The practice of refusal extends beyond the disciplinary boundaries of Indigenous studies, and also finds consonance with theorists in Black studies through the invocations of *fugitivity.* Tina Campt (2017) articulates *fugitivity* as "the range of creative responses black communities have marshaled in the face of racialized dispossession," and when situated in conversation with refusal congeals into "practices honed in response to sustained, everyday encounters with exigency and duress that rupture a predictable trajectory of flight" (10). Because of the everyday and routinized history of racialized dispossession of Black communities in the United States (Hartman 1997), a significant degree of Black resistance has also taken on quotidian modes of articulation (Kelley 1995). Campt's (2017) understanding of fugitivity is multidimensional and accounts for the related, but distinct impulses and practices of "flight and escape, and the creative *practices of refusal*—nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant" (32). Damien Sojoyner (2017) transposes fugitivity onto the realm of education by

repurposing the practice of school disengagement; this effort reveals "the façade of state power and the liberal frameworks that buttress encloses places" (517). Said differently, fugitivity indexes a constellation of practices pioneered within the Black radical tradition as a means to not only escape from captivity, but also unsettle its constitutative elements As such, the practice of fugitivity establishes that the possibility of living truly "free" lives for Black people—and everyone else—requires confronting the (il)legitimacy of structures, institutions and ideas that sustain domination (Kelley 2002). Even more, fugitivity contains what Saidiya Hartman (2019) has described as a *wayward* quality, or "an ongoing exploration of *what might be;* it is an improvisation with the terms of social existence, when the terms have already been dictated, when there is little room to breathe […]" (228). In other words, fugitivity and refusal represent profoundly creative methodologies that depart from compromised resistance frameworks—that have become too entangled within a politics of recognition—by having the impertinence to put into question the legitimacy of ruling classes, institutions and the state, and by demanding and asserting radical alternatives to liberal modes of change.

One might ask how refusal or fugitivity differ from what some social scientists have described as *oppositional consciousness* (Mansbridge 2001; Morris 2001). It cannot be denied that there exists visible parallels and resonances between these tendencies. At the same time, as a mental state, "oppositional consciousness" is more occupied by issues of cognition and motivation as a means to scientifically derive generalizable principles for how individuals become politicized and are moved to act (Mansbridge 2001). Moreover, this perspective also presupposes that an "oppositional consciousness" requires particular conditions such as access to political education and access to mobilizing institutions. As such, this concept becomes less relevant outside of contexts that less resemble the high-profile mobilizations and social

movements. As such, "oppositional consciousness" is reliant upon a form of "eventfulness" where movements and mobilizations are rendered (il)legible depending upon their (un)spectacular qualities (Povinelli 2011). In other words, "oppositional consciousness", as theorized by political scientists and sociologists, has more difficulty in attending to the quotidian, unorganized, and inchoate refusals and resistances of individuals who are not proper "activists" or that do not necessarily have membership within organizations, institutions and movements (Sandoval 1991).

Inspired by refusal and fugitivity, this text aims to offer alternative accounts of youth praxis and resistance that are not necessarily animated by desires for recognition or achievement. As Edward Said (1983) has noted, theory travels across difference and "the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity" (226). At the same time, I recognize the care and sincerity required to responsibly engage with Black and Indigenous theories of justice and freedom. I aim to preserve the fidelity of these distinct traditions as I trace the resonances of solidarity that can be of use for non-Black and non-Indigenous people struggling for liberatory futures. In other words, to "stretch" theory in this way enables questions to reach further than their immediate origins without ignoring the specificities and traditions that birthed them (Gilmore 2005). I engage in this delicate maneuver by centering what Lisa Lowe (2015) has described as the "intimacies of four continents"—the entangled global and historical processes across the four continents including settler conquest, African enslavement and indentured labor—that were necessary for the formation of Western liberalism.

> [Intimacy] involves considering scenes of close connection in relation to a global geography that one more often conceives in terms of vast spatial distances. It means drawing into relation with one another the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean and the development of colonial modes of biopolitical violence in Asia that sought to replace

> African enslaved labor with Chinese "free" labor there and elsewhere; it means revealing the proximity of the geographically, and conceptually, distant sites of the Caribbean and China, and appreciating together settler practices with the racialized laboring figures of the slave and the "coolie." (16)

Intimacy does not aim to flatten the specificities of the historical trajectories of race, but rather attends to "the implied but less visible forms of alliance, affinity, and society among variously colonized peoples beyond the metropolitan national center" (19). Said differently, intimacies points to the potentialities of alliance and solidarity that are obscured and made illegible by the colonial archives. In this way, I attend to fugitivity and refusal as forms of developmental praxis that are always already imbricated with the traditions and tendencies of abolition and decolonization, and that can be taken up by non-Black and non-Native people who struggle in in thick solidarity—or whose maneuvers share resonances—with these justice projects.

Movement Vulnerability

The second overarching theme that I offer in this text is *movement vulnerability*, which gives meaning to the modes of personal development that occurred within the contexts of youth organizing in San Francisco. In education, the notion of development takes on individualistic and linear trajectories often focused on biological processes and the optimization of academic achievement. I step away from this dominant model and instead highlight how minoritized young people demonstrate growth through their participation in the demanding work of study, struggle and collective action. As such, *movement vulnerability* answers the question of "Development towards what end?" not by lifting up the fully formed capitalist individual—what Sylvia Wynter (2003) has described as the "bio-economic subject"—but an alternative trajectory of personal growth articulated through collective struggle. In common parlance, vulnerability indexes a susceptibility or openness to harm. And as such, vulnerability is historically produced and conferred structurally onto distinct populations. These structural vulnerabilities are

interconnected—and as Black feminist theorists have reminded us—comprise matrices of domination (Collins 2019; Combahee River Collective 1970). At the same time, vulnerability also signifies an openness to new possibilities and futures, which are necessary for enabling and engaging in justice projects.

Movement vulnerability attends to the creative and self-making processes of engaging in the often-uncomfortable work of activism and community organizing. Much of this work is uncomfortable, unspectacular and often offers no material returns for those who engage in it, yet it is through that discomfort and the commitment to justice that personal development is enshrined. For example, for my non-Black interlocutors cultivating "thick solidarities" required engaging in the uncomfortable work of moving beyond simplistic concepts such as "people of color" and understanding the specificity of anti-Black racism (Liu and Shange 2018). As such, *movement vulnerability* necessitates forms of fugitive planning and Black study, which are not dependent on state recognition or animated by promises of academic success (Harney and Motel 2013). Rather, they challenge the legitimacy of state-sanctioned monopolies of what we conceive of education as a process and a social relation (Kelley 2018).

The commitment to both study and struggle should not be reduced to a simplistic classroom-street dichotomy. Rather, studying the roots of domination and unfreedom enables struggle on the streets, just as struggle on the streets enable more expansive theory. *Movement vulnerability* is manifested through quotidian moments such as knocking on doors, engaging in a political education workshop, or sitting through the procedural dullness of a city government meeting. As I will demonstrate in the chapters to come, *movement vulnerability* enabled the necessary forms of personal and collective dexterity required to confront and respond to the state. For my youth interlocutors and their adult allies, engaging in forms of organizing and

refusal in relation to the state required an understanding of what Raymond Williams (1978) described as the *structures of feeling*: "We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationship: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought" (132). In other words, engaging in forms of refusal meant also engaging within affective economies (Ahmed 2004). Politics and organizing, as my interlocutors became aware, are not simply about positing rational-empirical argument, but also activating emotional and affective resources (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015).

Lastly, I must note that this theoretical formulation is not meant to romanticize activism, organizing or social movements. As Joy James (2013) has noted, "not all activism provides an alternative. Some of it re-inscribes the competition, opportunism, disciplinary mechanisms, and demands for institutional loyalty that characterize the marketplace. Activism or activists, like academia and academics, have their own forms of commerce" (210). Rather, I offer *movement vulnerability* as an alternative means to articulate forms of youth development that are more distant to the imperatives of academic achievement and the demands of market.

Generative Conflicts

The final theme of this text is *generative conflicts*, which I use to highlight how some of my youth interlocutors disrupted the flow of movement spaces by highlighting their contradictions or bringing to attention to oppressive climates. Anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2005) has described friction as "the awkward, unequal unstable and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (4). Injecting conflict into movement spaces in this sense is a sort of friction that is productive. At the same time, creative processes produce consequences that are often unpredictable. While frictions can generate new avenues for analysis and praxis, they can also produce unforeseen forms of harm and damage. In what follows, I introduce *generative*

conflicts to underline how my interlocutors engaged in forms of inconveniencing or performed the role of a "killjoy" (Ahmed 2017). Moreover, this technique stretches progressive and accepted social justice discourses to their breaking points by pointing to the limits of political reform. Moreover, this concept also evokes what Chippewa theorist Gerald Vizenor (2009) has described as an "aesthetics of survivance". For Native peoples, Vizenor (2009) describes survivance as "an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent" (85). In this sense, *survivance* is not so much an ideology, but a practice through which renunciations of domination emerge. Within this story, *generative conflicts* enabled my interlocutors to lift up the presence of domination existing that exist within so-called progressive and left movements as well as its romanticized stories.

Generative conflicts were part of political education at Solidarity in Action, which unsettled hagiographic accounts of movement figures. My interlocutors dissolved romanticized notions of organizing and movement work by unsettling hagiographic accounts of movement figures. Lastly, I lift up the experiences of former CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers who highlight how the adult-led sphere of organizing in San Francisco can reproduce many of the same forms of harm that movement work ostensibly aims to eradicate from society. As a framework, *generative conflicts*, speaks to how my interlocutors unfurled the contradictory layers that comprise San Francisco progressivism at this current conjecture.

Methodological Sketches

This methodological sketch is intended to provide a bird's eye view of how this project came to be. I have left the finer grain details with the manuscript's appendix section.

San Francisco is where I came of age developmentally, politically and professionally as a young adult and an educator. As a former community college student at the City College of San Francisco, I had my first gig tutoring fellow students who were part of the school's Educational Opportunity Program Services. I returned to San Francisco after completing my undergraduate degree at UCLA and soon began teaching US Government at a local high school, which I worked at for two academic years. I left the classroom realizing over time that I was likely doing more harm than good for the students who I was charged with teaching and caring for. After leaving, I began working at an education non-profit organization that served high school aged youth from San Francisco's District 10 neighborhoods. While the organization's mission was college access, I had the role of designing the organization's youth development programming. This role afforded me a level of freedom and creativity in my work with young people that I could not achieve as a classroom teacher. In my six years there, I was able to bring in local teaching artists to offer youth programs in visual arts, muralists, to musicians and poets. Moreover, I began my involvement in modest forms of community organizing and activism with my youth interlocutors in the form of quasi participatory action projects which involved research, outreach, mobilization and planning large youth-led summits focused on structural inequalities affecting working-class Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander young people in the district.

My exit from the non-profit industrial complex coincided with the most recent transformations of San Francisco and the influx of tech dominated capital. The organization quickly grew due to an influx in funding from corporate and finance-backed philanthropic foundations. In a few short years, the logics of neoliberal education reforms that the Bush and Obama administrations introduced into public schools began to permeate of our youth

development programs. I found myself spending more and more time working to justify how art and civic engagement were valuable solely in their potential to boost students' GPAs, college acceptance chances and workforce readiness. As I left San Francisco for graduate school, the parting was more bitter than sweet, yet I still held out optimism for the city's future. While a graduate student at UC Irvine, I was able to work closely with youth organizers in Orange County's burgeoning social movement organizations. Due to my experience as a youth worker, I could supplement grassroots organizers' work by putting my college access expertise to use. These youth organizing spaces presented me an entirely different frame for thinking through youth development, not determined by school or achievement, but a collective purpose and struggle.

As a graduate student looking to find organizations to work with, I knew I wanted to return to San Francisco to understand how young people continue to struggle together within the wake of organized abandonment. I was able to cultivate relationships with staff at CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED though my relationships with young people who had also participated in their respective youth organizing programs. As neighborhood, place-based organizations, CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED offered a glimpse into the localized character of organizing that has been emblematic of San Francisco movement history for decades (Beitel 2013). Additionally, I was drawn to the multi-racial dynamics of Solidarity in Action as a collaborative project between CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED. While I sense that my experience working with similar populations of youth facilitated my entry into both organizations, what was more significant was the political affinities that I shared. I sense that I was able to build relationships and rapport with both organizations due to my socialist and anti-racist political commitments and my connection to the city. I began

working with CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED during April 2018 and concluded my field work over two years later on May 2020.

While this manuscript is not about me, I am undeniably present in each ethnographic fragment and theoretical claim. After all, these chapters are based upon my regular encounters with youth organizers and adult movement workers. I cultivated a variety of relationships with my interlocutors at CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED. Some have become close mentoring relationships and friendships, while others never progressed beyond warm familiarity. These relationships were shaped over two years of daily interaction in person, over text messages and over social media. I have witnessed shy 14 and 15-year-old youth develop into legitimate organizers and activists. Moreover, I have also seen early 20s adult staff members evolve into more seasoned youth workers and educators.

My decision to commit as a regular volunteer served three purposes. First, I could not ethnically justify being involved with either organization unless I was actively contributing to their work. Secondly, being a high engagement volunteer was necessary for me to build meaningful relationships and participate in the myriad of organizing activities around San Francisco. Thirdly, both CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED are organizations who have been deeply involved in contemporary Bay Area social movements for decades. As such, they have regularly been subject to attacks by right wing and white supremacist agitators. Committing to a role as a high-level volunteer was a way to ensure that I was in solidarity with their work rather than a threat. I find it doubtful that I would have been allowed to occupy the role of a detached ethnographer and be in good relations with the youth organizers and the adult staff members.

During that period, I worked with the adult staff at both organizations to determine the forms of support I could offer. Together we decided I would take on building a college access service for youth in both organizations as well as a young men's political affinity group to explore issues of gender, masculinity and patriarchy with cis men members. I began working MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL in the Summer of 2018 as they collaborated on the planning an action to protest the development of luxury condominiums in the city's Excelsior district. I also became involved in working with youth organizers and adult youth workers in developing political education curriculum and research, which allowed me to leverage my access to the intellectual resources of the University of California in service of several campaigns. During the Winter of 2019, I filled in as a chaperone with CHINATOWN LOCAL during its Southern California trip, which was filled with visits with youth organizers in Los Angeles and Orange County. By the summer of 2019, I had conducted 46 semi-structured youth interviews and 11 semi-structured interviews with adults, as well as over a year of informal interview data within my field notes. Over time, I also began to attend unrelated organizational events, volunteer for the organizations' electoral organizing work, as well as mutual aid efforts during the 2020 COVID-19 crisis. My fieldwork and level of involvement with both organizations continued steadily and without interruption through the Summer of 2020.

I shared a colleague-like rapport with adult staff. I followed their lead and offered my professional expertise as a youth worker and academic as requested. I collaborated with adult staff by helping to craft and facilitate aspects of their political education workshops. Moreover, I was often asked to fill in as a trusted adult chaperone or support staff during demonstrations, rallies and high stakes meetings with politicians and other state representatives. My youth interlocutors seemed to perceive me in a myriad of ways. In some instances, I was likely seen as

an authority figure by the fact that I was often the single cis male adult in the room. I navigated this dynamic by following the lead of the women, queer and non-binary educators who worked for CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED. The opportunity to participate with CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED and collaborate with their youth workers allowed me to evolve as an educator and work through the patriarchal and authoritarian tendencies within my pedagogical repertoires. Following the lead of my adult colleagues, I intentionally practiced cultivating non-coercive and non-judgmental relationships with youth organizers.

As a fellow traveler, I accompanied my youth interlocutors on bus rides, running errands, wilderness retreats, in political education workshops, strategizing sessions, meetings with local politicians and school administrators, and other quotidian moments where we just hung out. My positioning as a Filipinx cis male afforded me a sense of solidarity with CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED. I share a similar commitment with CHINATOWN LOCAL to a building a radical Asian American political coalition that advocates for justice for working-class Asian Americans (Espiritu 1993) and supports Black and Indigenous liberation struggles across the globe. The centuries of colonization and the resultant Hispanicization of the Philippines by Spain facilitated my integration into the organization through a mutual affinity with the members of MISSION UNITED, most of whom traced their family's migration pathways from Latin America and its many detribalized indigenous communities. Ultimately this project has come to resemble a critical ethnography, which is exemplified by my commitments to "other possibilities, that will challenge institutions, regimes of knowledge, and social practices that limit choices, constrain meaning, denigrate identities and communities" (Madison 2011, 6).

Chapter Roadmap

Chapter 1, “All that Glitters” maps out a historiography of San Francisco, which attends to its settler colonial origins, its location as a staging point of global American imperialism and its contemporary formation as the quasi gilded age, techno-capital of the globe. Within the city, I also provide an overview of CHINATOWN LOCAL, MISSION UNITED and their joint youth organizing project Solidarity in Action. Chapter 2 offers an excavation of the educational concepts known as character education and character development. By engaging with the works and lives of Samuel C. Armstrong and Richard Henry Pratt—two of the leading intellectual minds in the late 19th century behind the rise of Black industrial education and Native American boarding schools—I trace how pedagogies of character were integral to the projects of educating and integrating Black and Native youth into the post-Reconstruction racial order.

Chapter 3 and chapter 4 present empirical case studies of CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED youth as they make demands on the state through two separate political campaigns. engaging in political campaigns and making demands on the state through organizing and utilizing available affective resources. In chapter 3, I offer a portrait of MISSION UNITED youth as they participate in a San Francisco Planning Commission meeting and how they participate in a collective refusal of a market-rate housing development through the utilization of affective resources. Chapter 4 follows Chinatown Local’s year-long campaign to expand mental health services in San Francisco public high schools. I offer snapshots of CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers as they engage in advocacy efforts with district administrators around expanding mental health services in San Francisco public high schools. I underline how they maneuver around the politics of evidence set by the district through the work of mobilizing allies and building coalitions.

Chapter 3 and chapter 4 are also offer examples of my youth interlocutors working to "study up" by engaging with representatives of San Francisco's city government (Nader 1972). Chapter 5 explores how Chinatown Local youth organizers and adult allies grappled with the model minority myth and its relationship to anti-Blackness. Through the recent controversial case of the *Life of Washington* mural, I highlight how youth organizers and adult allies at CHINATOWN LOCAL engaged in the uncomfortable work of articulating the realities of anti-Black racism in Asian American communities, as well as the (im)possibilities of building thick solidarities for Black liberation. Chapter 6 chapter focuses on the issue of *generative conflict* as youth organizers from CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED disrupted comfortable and romanticized narratives around organizing and activism by brining to light forms of erasure in actions as well as forms of abuse within movement work.

Chapter 1: All That Glitters

As you drive up the oft-congested US Highway 101 North toward the downtown San Francisco skyline, one cannot help but fix your eyes on the 325-meter-high phallic structure that punctures the perpetual marine layer hovering above the city. Erected between 2013 through 2018, the shimmering chromatic façade of the Salesforce Tower refracts not only sunlight, but also the story of the city's political economy during the past decade: the congealing of the state, global finance, speculation, luxury real estate development and the rapacious tech economy. This reconfiguration has been intertwined with the intense velocities of gentrification, and the decades-long displacement of poor and working-class Black and Latinx families in neighborhoods such as Bayview/Hunters Point and the Mission. Concurrently, this period has also brought victories for racial liberalism and the politics of recognition (Fraser 2000) as the city elected its first Asian American mayor Ed Lee in 2011. After his unexpected passing in 2017, the city welcomed the appointment (and the eventual election) of its current and first Black woman mayor London Breed in 2018. This current iteration of San Francisco—located on unceded Muwekma Ohlone land—is defined through the heightening contradictions between the city's imagined "progressive" bonafides and the unyielding burdens foisted upon poor and working-class Black, Indigenous and other people of color. These contemporary rearrangements of San Francisco's political geography are not anomalous, but are situated within the longue durée of placemaking, dispossession, capital accumulation—all enshrined through race—within in the region.

From the Gold Rush to Silicon Modernity

After the end of the Mexican American war and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the United States' settler colony now stretched from coast to coast. Although

there was no more physical "frontier" to discover or conquer on the North American land mass, the United States' possession of California ensured that its imperial ambitions could now be projected and exported upon the Pacific, Oceania and Asia (Horne 2007). San Francisco emerged as the west coast nexus for these imperial desires. As a port city, San Francisco became a major hub for commerce by linking trade and the flow of capital between the Pacific and the West. Concurrently, the area became a magnet for white settlers looking to make good on the federal government's Homestead Act. While the stars and stripes now flew over the region, the United States was not the first colonial regime to violently assert its claim to the San Francisco territory.

In the mid 18th century, Spain established its colonial government in the region, which would engulf the thousands of people that made up the various Ohlone tribal groups (Leventhal et al. 1994). The imposition of the colonial *mission* system would facilitate the simultaneous dispossession of ancestral Ohlone lands and the immiseration of Ohlone tribes in the region under the Spanish crown (Field 1999). In contrast to Spain's former *encomienda* system, the mission system was premised upon assimilation into the Hispanic world (Sandos 2004). Ohlone and other tribal groups in the region engaged in countless examples of resistance against mission life by fleeing, establishing outlaw villages and engaging in raids and armed struggle against local missions (Milliken 1995). In 1821, the Spanish colonies of the southwest—including California—would go on to gain independence under the Mexican flag. After Mexican Californians dismantled the Franciscan missions during the 1830s, some in the Mexican government supported making Ohlone and other Native tribal groups into Mexicans by granting them plots of former mission lands. These plans never materialized as mestizo and non-Native patrons of the Mexican government monopolized the available lands while Native peoples were relegated to laborers on their estates (Booker 2013; Weber 1994)

The discrete shifts of ruling nation states in the region—Spain, Mexico and the United States—collectively signified the continuity of ongoing dispossession and settlement that transcended regimes and flags (Booker 2013; Sánchez and Pita 2014). In his book *Imperial San Francisco,* geographer Gary Brechin (2006) describes San Francisco as a nexus of three major industries during the mid to late 19th century, which included mining, newspapers and shipping. As such, San Francisco's development during this conjuncture underlines the crucial role the city occupied in facilitating capitalist accumulation, enshrining white supremacy, maintaining settler colonial social relations, and expanding American imperialism across the Pacific (Almaguer 2008). The quartz, silver and gold mine boon in the region drew a combination of land speculators, financiers and white settlers who flooded California during the 1849 "Gold Rush" (Brechin 2006). Between 1856 to 1873, state sanctioned dispossession, displacement and racial violence enacted upon California's Native peoples caused their population to plummet 80% from 150,000 to 30,000 (Madley 2016). Mining and agricultural oligarchs had an immense appetite for workers, which could not be fulfilled by the available white settler population. During this labor crisis, the California state government imposed compulsory labor laws upon Native populations through the 1850 *Act for the Government and Protection of Indians.* Additionally, the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad compounded the enormous demand for labor that was rapidly approaching on the horizon.

This demand for labor positioned San Francisco as a point of entry for workers across the Pacific and Asia, especially from China. Historian Manu Karuka (2019) describes the role of Chinese laborers not as subjects of colonialism in California, but as instruments of colonial-capitalist accumulation:

> To be a Chinese worker on the Central Pacific was definitively not to be a slave, the property of another. It was, however, a reduction to the status of a tool for grading earth

> and drilling a mountain. It was to be expendable, interchangeable, replaceable. Chinese workers were instruments of labor, constant capital for the Central Pacific Railroad Company. (85)

In partnership with the Central Pacific Railroad, the Chinese merchant capitalists facilitated the importation of Chinese laborers into San Francisco. Access to these relatively cheaper laborers ensured that railroad oligarchs could maximize profits while also affording Chinese labor contractors the opportunities to solidify their control over local Chinatowns (Karuka 2019). Chinese laborers were subject to regular instances of racial violence from white laborers, which forced Chinese workers to relegate themselves within the confines of Chinatowns. While racism facilitated the solidification of ethnic unity and cohesion within Chinatown, these communities were also organized around hierarchical class divisions where Chinese merchant elites functioned as de facto rulers (Lee 2001). These class frictions became apparent when Chinese railroad workers instigated a strike in 1867. Chinese merchant elites reacted by backing the Central Pacific Railroad management and refusing to supply food to strikers, which proved crucial to breaking the strike. Anti-Chinese sentiment accelerated in the 1870s as local discriminatory ordinances were passed to curtail Chinese competition in the labor market (McClain 1994). Soon after, white colonialist visions of California and the threat of Chinese labor would culminate in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Existing historiography of San Francisco suggests that Central Pacific Railroad preferred white and Chinese laborers and typically only considered Black workers as a means to discipline labor through racial divisions (Daniels 1991; Karuka 2019). While the Black population in San Francisco almost tripled from 1850 to 1860, their systematic exclusion from most major labor sectors stagnated their growth through the end of the 19th century especially when compared to the social and economic gains made by some Black communities in the Midwest and East Coast

(Broussard 1993). Black workers in San Francisco during that historical moment, most were transportation workers on ships and later on trains on the Central Pacific Railroad, while others found opportunities in local entertainment industries or other non-unionized jobs, which shut out Black workers until the mid 20th century (Broussard 1993; Daniels 1991).

20th Century Pluralistic Liberalism

The combination of union exclusion of Black workers and the Chinese Exclusion Act assured that San Francisco would be a predominantly white city through the mid 20th century. At the same time, the mostly white labor unions comprised of Irish, Italian and German immigrants in San Francisco and the Bay Area would go on to exert significant power as the city witnessed the multiple manufacturing and industry boons that emerged after the Civil War as well as the two following world wars (Walker 2001). For example, in 1934 San Francisco dockworker unions joined workers across the Pacific Northwest in what they called the "Big Strike". By refusing to handle cargo, they brought much commerce and manufacturing in San Francisco to a halt. After two months of striking and violent clashes with police, the San Francisco general strike of 1934 led to the creation of Local 10: International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which would go on to become the Bay Area's first major integrated union and later to and have Black leadership. More importantly, the ILWU is one example of San Francisco as a site of movements and radical organizing that emerged within the deeply racist and exploitative socio-political-economic contexts of early 20th century San Francisco (Cole 2018).

After the 1906 earthquake, San Francisco began its second period of major development, as it was rebuilt as a modern urban cosmopolitan city with high rise buildings that rivaled any other west coast settlement. The discriminatory administration of New Deal housing programs, redlining, as well as local racist housing covenants produced heavily segregated neighborhoods

in the city. Starting in 1942, Japanese Americans who had been occupying the Western Addition were displaced into internment camps during World War II. The bustling war economy coincided with the first wave of the Great Migration as Black laborers arrived in San Francisco and developed communities in several neighborhoods such as Bayview/Hunters Point, as well as the recently vacated Western Addition (Broussard 1993). Black populations rose all around the Bay Area including Oakland, which would be referred to the "Detroit of the West" due to the burgeoning automobile and shipping industries (Self 2005).

As immigration and refugee laws began to change in the 1950s—and especially with the 1965 Immigration Act—the increasing numbers of immigrants gradually shifted San Francisco from a virtually all white city into a city defined by a segregated racial pluralism (Sanchez 1999). Chinese, Filipino and Vietnamese immigrants began to move into San Francisco neighborhoods such as the Tenderloin, SOMA and Downtown, while migrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Peru were attracted to the Mission district due to the low rents and its reputation as a Latino community (Contreras 2019; Sandoval 2013). At the same time, Chinese and other Asian immigrants in Chinatown found themselves mostly confined to the overcrowded housing and increasingly slum-like conditions due to state abandonment (Wu 2014).

Urban Renewal and Community Organizing

After World War II, urban renewal spread across the country and inaugurated the third major development cycle in San Francisco. Land speculation, whose presence was marginal in San Francisco in the early 20th century, began to more forcefully exert its influence on the city's political economy. Starting in the 1960s, deindustrialization began to take hold of San Francisco, which led to the loss of manufacturing industries. This signaled the city's political economic shift away from industry and towards an era shaped by global financialization: finance, banking,

tourism, trans-Pacific commerce and real estate (Godfrey 1997; Harvey 2007). As such, urban renewal first set its sights on downtown, which would be converted into a haven for the growing presence of financial industries and firms. Downtown redevelopment depended upon the displacement of mostly immigrant and non-white residents, especially Filipino immigrants living in the Manilatown neighborhood. The demolition of Manilatown was punctuated by the drawn-out evictions of Filipino seniors at the International Hotel. The land was purchased by Chinese and Thai international investors who planned to transform the plot into a parking garage to serve local high-rise developments as part of the city's "slum clearance" agenda (Habal 2007). By the 1970s, downtown's transformation positioned San Francisco as the "Wall Street of the West" second only to New York City as a banking and finance hub (Cohen 1981; Godfrey 1997).

In the late 1940s, the city government and developers zeroed in on the Western Addition as a prime target for redevelopment citing health, safety and economic stagnation as imperatives to justify razing the neighborhood (Baranski 2019). A San Francisco Planning Commission report in 1947 described the redevelopment proposal for the Western Addition as an effort to reclaim the city from blight and moral decay: "Gone are the disreputable joints. The so-called smoke shops, the "hotels," and poolhall hangouts known to the police. Gone, too, are the alleys in which juvenile gangs plotted mischief that sometimes ended in murder." Although those affected by urban renewal in the Western Addition would be mostly Black, the planning commission report projected images of two poor white children and a white man as the primary victims of the blight in the district. While the fierce opposition to redevelopment by local activists did not stop it, this organized effort signaled the emergence of neighborhood and community-based activist organizations, which would go on to shape San Francisco city politics into the 21st century (Beitel 2013).

Urban renewal battles over the Western Addition would serve as an example for activists in Chinatown and the Mission to engage in resistance against the looming shadow of redevelopment soon to be cast upon these neighborhoods (Contreras 2019; Hartman 2002). Due to its close proximity to the downtown redevelopment zones, Chinatown should have been a logical choice for urban renewal, but the prevailing land use patterns—such as high land values due to large amounts of mixed-use buildings—in the district saved off urban renewal efforts (Li 2018). Still, it was Chinatown business elites who mostly benefitted from the existing status quo while the majority of residents endured the ongoing housing crisis in the neighborhood. Most Chinatown residents continued to experience high levels of unemployment and were forced to live in single room occupancy buildings and other overcrowded and decrepit housing developments (Li 2018).

Emerging from the material conditions of the time, the Red Guard emerged in Chinatown during the 1960s. Inspired by the Black Panther Party in Oakland—who some Red Guard members credited with introducing Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book* to Chinatown—young Chinese Americans embraced a revolutionary political program and adopted their own "ten point plan" rooted in anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism (Hing 2001; Maeda 2005). The Red Guard was primarily led by young people who organized local food programs, political education and also played roles in local struggles such as the I-Hotel. Traditional Chinatown leaders opposed the Red Guards and other youth organizations of the era. While these youth organizations generally held leftist political commitments, Chinatown business elites were staunchly anti-communist and saw radical youth organizations as a threat to the community's social order (Habal 2007). San Francisco historian Estella Habal (2007) notes, "The young activists exposed the deplorable and cramped housing conditions, delinquency, unemployment, and, especially,

police harassment in the area" (53). Said differently, these young Chinatown radicals threatened the model minority image that Chinatown elites had cultivated after World War II and the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949 (Wu 2014).

In 1966, the city's redevelopment agency set its sights on brining urban renewal to the Mission District by building BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) stations and commercial properties to the area. Having witnessed the consequences of urban renewal on Black residents in the Western Addition, a coalition of Latinx and Native American grassroots organizations successfully led the resistance. The city's redevelopment agency argued that urban renewal would spur economic growth for existing residents. Local Mission housing activists Mission Council on Redevelopment (MCOR) "inverted the logic of urban renewal: the initiative would not assist Missionites in confronting the economic transformations generated by BART. Instead, redevelopment would propel and escalate BART-related changes" (Contreras 2019, 140). MCOR and development opponents eventually held off the city's redevelopment agency for a time after the Board of Supervisors voted to suspend the proposed plan.

In the 1970s, liberal Mission activists of the from the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO) partnered with the city government in enrolling San Francisco into the federal Model Cities Program, which was grew out of the Johnson administration's "War on Poverty". MCO members believed this compromise would allow them to steer the direction of (re)development towards community control (Contreras 2019). Funding from this program kickstarted an entire generation of non-profit organizations in the community—many of whom exist today (Castells 1983). At the same time, the Model Cities Program would also facilitate the eventual construction of BART stations, market rate housing and redevelopment into the community (Cordova 2017). Concurrently, radical and populist Mission organizations emerged as

ideological contrasts to the MCO's liberal program. Youth activists in groups such as LDSC and LaREAL emerged out of Third World liberation struggles on San Francisco State University and City College of San Francisco demanding ethnic studies courses and Latino educators (Contreras 2019). The group was at the forefront of grassroots efforts supporting "Los Siete": seven young Central American men accused of the murder of a white SFPD officer. Like the Black Panther Party and the Red Guard, they blended grassroots activism, mutual aid neighborhood programs and anti-imperialist politics. These ideological and generational contrasts within neighborhoods underlined the important roles that activist-oriented community organizations would take up as they continued to shape radical movements and local politics across San Francisco (Beitel 2013).

Manhattanization of San Francisco

From the late 1960s through the 1970s, communalism experiments among counter cultural communities in San Francisco and around the Bay Area reached a peak. Commoning and communes pointed to the possibility of recovering a shared sense of *the commons*. As an exercise in liberation, the rise of communalism in the region pointed to a possible off ramp from the constraints of American liberalism and capitalist realism (Boal 2012; Fisher 2009). Still, this vision of freedom was never stable–-and like San Francisco itself—was always fraught and contested. On one hand, communalism offered an inchoate radical vision of social relations beyond of the confines of American capitalism. On the other hand, freedom also signified a libertarian vision: "A desire to "control one's own life" contained a radical individualism susceptible, when circumstances changes, to a neoconservative subversion by the likes of Mrs. Thatcher or Mr. Reagan" (Watts 2012, 238-239). As such, San Francisco since the 1970s might be understood through the dialectical relationship between these dueling modes of social relations and visions of progress.

The rise of Silicon Valley during this period underlines the legacies of libertarian thought that continued to circulate in San Francisco and the Bay Area as a whole. Mythical narratives of Silicon Valley often draw upon fables that foreground the industriousness, grit and entrepreneurship of a handful of scientific geniuses who built the tech empires of today (Gobble 2018). For proponents of the political economic role of the tech sector, the region is empirical proof of the "inherent innovation" that libertarian social relations can produce (Castells 1996). In actuality, the architecture of Silicon Valley was laid down long before the conventional historiographic accounts from the 1970s and 1980s (Lowen 1997; Williamson 2017). The creation of Silicon Valley involved a collection of variables, actors and complex historical contingencies. During the height of the Cold War in 1952, the University of California established Lawrence Livermore laboratory just south of Berkeley, which was dedicated to weapons research. Many of the pioneering Silicon Valley firms could directly trace their lineage back to the lab and the state sponsored defense industry (Brechin 2006). As another node for the state, science and war, Stanford University would also play a crucial role in establishing the dominant role of technology industries in the South Bay. As mentioned earlier, oligarchs and elites have always occupied a central role in the development of the city and the region. From the Hearst's to the De Youngs, the intertwining of the state and capital have dictated the shifting forms of political economy for over a century.

Information society theorist Manuel Castells (2011) has compared the rise of Silicon Valley to the mid 19th century Industrial Revolution in England. The growth of high tech in the Bay Area did not only mean advancements in computer hardware, but also a monumental shift in the area's political economy around the growth of information technology. Alistair Duff (2015) has described this particular synthesis of profit and efficiency seeking, data commercialization,

and post-ideology liberal idealism as "information capitalism". This Silicon Valley style augmentation offered capitalism with a human face (Žižek 2009). This softer alternative contrasted itself with the vulgar screeds of neoliberal politicians such as Margaret Thatcher by offering a vision of capitalism where anti-establishment sentiments could find a home and firms such as Google could proudly adopt mottos such as "Don't be evil".

This massive shift in regional political economy in the late 20th century reverberated all over the region, and especially in San Francisco's housing market. The influx of high-tech workers and venture capital inundated the region sending property values through the roof. At the same time, local municipalities—especially those around Silicon Valley—resisted efforts to build more housing in order to protect their own property values by enforcing local density ordinances (Shaw 2018). Meanwhile, land speculation in San Francisco hit overdrive as developers anticipated the enormous profits that could be made from Silicon Valley transplants. As such, newly purchased properties would often lead to astronomical rent hikes and the evictions of existing working-class tenants. The 1990s witnessed the first large tech-fueled gentrification wave as startups began to move their operations into the city and San Francisco began to challenge New York City as the most expensive housing market in the nation (Bay Area Economic Forum 1999). Rebecca Solnit and Susan Schwatzenberg (2000) have described this transformation as "a New Urbanism in which cities function like suburbs" (29). The transformation of the city into a bedroom community for laborers of the rapacious tech economy depended upon the accelerated displacement of Black and other working-class residents of color.

The city witnessed brief reprieves in tech-fueled development in the aftermath of the 2001 Dot Com downturn as well as the 2008 recession. Companies such as Twitter, Google, Facebook, Salesforce and AirBnB would set up locations in the city during the 2010s cementing

San Francisco as the big city tech capital of the world. All the while, affordability and housing crises continued to fester all around the city. Although Mission activists had a long history of fighting displacement, 2011 brought a new wave of gentrification into the district which catapulted the community onto the national stage as one of the battlegrounds (Shaw 2018). Black homeowners in San Francisco were especially impacted by the 2008 recession through foreclosures (Center for Responsible Lending 2010), which contributed to the city's decades-long shrinking Black population.

In total, the first two decades of the 21st century have culminated in staggering socio-economic inequality, instability and precarity. Among major cities, San Francisco holds the sixth highest level of income inequality with white residents' median income being 69% higher than non-white residents (Berube 2018). As the center of the nation's app-based gig economy, the industry's success has depended upon the increasing vulnerability of its precariat workforce (Benner et al. 2020). Today, San Francisco boasts the country's most expensive housing market. Wages for working class educators, care workers and community workers in the city have lagged far behind the increases in housing costs (Shaw 2018). Increasingly, even some well compensated tech workers and other high paid professionals have been confronted with the realities of the city's unaffordability. In turn, the city's homeless rate has steadily increased in the past decade with San Francisco coming only behind Washington D.C. and Boston (Turner 2017). Moreover, while only making up 6% of the city's population, Black people comprise over 37% of unhoused persons in the city, which underlines the racialized modes of San Francisco's intersecting crises (Applied Survey Research 2019). Like many other cities, San Francisco continues to struggle with educational inequalities. Although the city hosts one of the most diverse districts, racial segregation continues to separate students by race (Goldstein 2019), while

the city also has higher percentages of children attending private school relative to other large cities including New York (Lapkoff and Gobalet Demographic Research 2018). The polarization of race and class in San Francisco offers a glimpse of the aftermath of racial capitalism in the silicon era.

Chinatown Local and Organizing Asian American Youth in San Francisco

In 1972, leftist Chinese youth organizers in Chinatown established the Chinatown Local (CL). Originally, the organization focused on promoting normalized relations between China and the United States. Additionally, CL members were active in housing justice campaigns on behalf of Filipino seniors who were threatened with eviction from their homes at the International Hotel. By 1976, the organization had become a tax-exempt nonprofit. By the end of the decade, CL bean to work on unionizing efforts by low wage restaurant workers in the city. During the 1980s, CL shifted its work towards voter engagement and political education campaigns. Moreover, the organization was involved in a coalition with other California immigrant organizations to increase bilingual education. By the 1990s, CL began a tenant organizing arm, which focused on enforcing housing code violations in Chinatown single room occupancy (SRO) dwellings. The organization also founded its youth programming, which at the time focused on anti-tobacco campaigns. In 1998 CL along with MISSION UNITED launched "Solidarity in Action", which brought youth organizers from each organization to work on campaigns related to environmental justice. At the turn of the 21st century, CL continued its worker advocacy program by collaborating with local restaurant and garment workers on wage theft cases. CL also joined a larger coalition of community organizations which helped to pass minimum wage and paid sick leave ordinances. In 2009, CL transformed its youth program into Youth Movement of

Justice and Organizing (CHINATOWN LOCAL), which greatly expanded the scope of issues that youth organizers would organize around.

By the time I had joined the Chinatown Local program as a volunteer in 2016, the group held 23 active youth members and two adult staff members. Between five to seven youth members comprised the CHINATOWN LOCAL core leadership. These members were usually nominated by core members from the year prior usually based upon engagement and initiative. While adult staff conducted recruitment drives at SFUSD high schools, the program relied heavily upon the recruitment done by youth members. Core members typically demonstrated the highest levels of engagement in the program as they were tasked with co-facilitating political education workshops, leading political campaigns and mobilizing other youth members for actions. While youth members lived all around San Francisco, the program continues to be housed at the CL headquarters in Chinatown since its inception in 1998.

MISSION UNITED and Solidarity in Action

Mission United is a Mission-based community organization that emerged out of San Francisco's environmental justice movements of the early 1990s. Since the organization's inception, housing has been a major focus of their efforts, which has included anti-eviction and affordable housing campaigns. MISSION UNITED members typically serve immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Moreover, MISSION UNITED's membership includes a sizeable number of Indigenous migrants from Ecuador, Peru and Guatemala. As such, MISSION UNITED's past campaigns have also revolved around reclaiming land for community use such as green spaces and below market rate housing. MISSION UNITED is not a 501(c)(3), but operates underneath the fiscal sponsor Tides, which is a public charity which distributes donations from private donors to its organizational network. MISSION UNITED launched its

youth program in the late 1990s and since then has partnered with Chinatown Local on the Solidarity in Action collaboration for over two decades.

MISSION UNITED's youth organizing structure included one adult staff member and between 10-15 youth participants. Compared to Chinatown Local, MISSION UNITED's program structure was more fluid without a defined hierarchy between members. Moreover, MISSION UNITED's political education work highlighted culture and art as sites of organizing. Clara, the 27-year-old youth coordinator of MISSION UNITED articulated an expansive definition of organizing:

> I come at this work as an educator first rather than typical organizer. I vocalize it often because doing youth organizing includes a lot of stuff like doing the service provision. It's all those things together. Like, did you eat? Sometimes that's my biggest role. Have you eaten? Have you drank water? That's my organizing. It's doing leadership development. It's doing social emotional learning. It's doing the exploring political identity. It's not awakening. Often our youth come in with a sense of politicized identity. It's the inspiration that our movements need. To look at the future and create.

Clara describes the limital space where youth organizing is situated between the realms of care work and political education, where the borders between these genres are often opaque and sometimes indistinguishable. Moreover, this description brings to mind how youth organizing can serve as a venue for what Sylvia Wynter (2003) has described as "self-inscription". While organizing indexes a constellation of tactics and strategies for building collective power, Clara asks us to also attend to its creative dimensions that connect disparate mediums from street protests to community murals. Said differently, the organizing frameworks within MISSION UNITED attempt to inflect a sense of wonder and enchantment into political organizing, or as Adrienne Maree Brown (2019) has described, a "politics of feeling good".

Organizing across Difference: The Origins of Solidarity in Action

In 1998, MISSION UNITED and CL launched Solidarity in Action a joint youth organizing project between the two organizations with the explicit focus on collaborating on environmental justice campaigns and fostering spaces for cultivating cultural heterogeneity (Iloh 2018). Rather than the Mission or Chinatown, Solidarity in Action has been typically been located in San Francisco's Southeast neighborhoods such as the Excelsior, Bayview Hunters Point, and Visitation Valley. In addition to having some of the highest concentrations of poverty, San Francisco's Southeast communities also are home to large percentages of immigrants from Latin America, China and Southeast Asia. In recent years, Solidarity in Action has engaged in several projects and campaigns including a tour of toxic sites, outreach campaigns for single payer health care propositions in California and campaigns for affordable housing development on underutilized city-owned land. During the first year I joined Solidarity in Action as a volunteer, the group had been planning a street action to protest displacement of working-class people of color in the Excelsior and a proposed luxury housing development in the neighborhood. Through the work of organizing campaigns, youth participants engaged in workshops focused on political education, cross-cultural community building and organizing tactics. Funding for the program came from the respective organizations as well as grants from the city's Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Resistance and Endurance

In spite of the monumental political forces and crises that have ensnared the city in the past two decades CL and MISSION UNITED have been part of a still existing presence of social movements in San Francisco. The 2000s also brought a resurgence in local organizing efforts and movement victories in the city. In 2002, the city adopted inclusionary housing ordinances requiring developers to allocate 15-20 percent of new housing units for below market rate for

low income tenants. The work of organizers helped to push through a $15.00 minimum wage, which was fully instituted in 2018. Through the work of local immigrant justice activists, the city strengthened its existing sanctuary city statues in 2013. In 2014, youth organizers from a coalition of grassroots organizations led a successful campaign to eliminate willful defiance discipline policies at all SFUSD schools. Grassroots organizers lead a successful campaign in 2019 with Measure C to raise taxes on large corporations and fund affordable housing and homeless services. More recently, local prison abolitionist activists and organizers have led successful campaigns to close down the city's juvenile hall in 2021, the closure of another city-run jail, and the removal of police officers from public school campuses. Today, the story of San Francisco offers us a way to envision how people respond and live within the seams of racial capitalism in this modern silicon form. As such, this text is a story about what happens after we lose, and yet strangely enough, the clock continues to tick, and we wake up to live another day.

Chapter 2: Pedagogies of Character: Race, Labor and Citizenship in Black Industrial Education and Native American Boarding Schools after Reconstruction

Frances Benjamin Johnston's 1899 photograph (Fig. 2.1) depicts the quotidian racial encounters between Black students, Native students and their white teachers in a Hampton Institute classroom. In 1877—nine years after its opening as a Black industrial school—Hampton began to admit Native students into its population. The composition of Johnston's photograph nudges the viewer to focus on the figure of Louis Firetail a Sioux, Crow Creek student who had been at Hampton for over two years. The aperture setting from Johnston's camera subtly positions Louis Firetail in the foreground as his figure and features stand out more sharply than the relatively blurred faces of the Black students and the white teacher. Louis is standing on a raised wood platform slightly leaning against the table behind him, which holds a taxidermized bald eagle. Most of the Black students and their white teacher are huddled shoulder to shoulder near the wall to the left of Louis, except for three Black girls who are seated in their desks. Male presenting students are dressed in buttoned-up military style coats, while female presenting students are dressed in blouses and full-length skirts. While all of their gazes are directed at Louis, he does not seem to meet their glances. Rather, his body is positioned slightly askew from the students. Presumably, he might be staring at the opposite corner of the room.

The facial expressions of several Black students hint at a sense of ambivalence or perhaps skepticism of the lesson being delivered. That hesitancy is at least partly justified. While Louis Firetail's costume is generally appropriate for his tribal affiliation, the fine details of the garments underlined the lack of care for its specificities. As historian Sarah Anne Carter (2018) notes:

> The shirt is belted, which is not typical, and may even be worn backward, as the fringe is not falling properly. Neither his shirt nor his leggings fit correctly. His bonnet is made of eagle feathers, but not the typical wing feathers one would expect. His pipe looks as

> though it could be Lakota, his necklace or breastplate appears to be Blackfoot Crow, and the designs on his pipe bag are likely eastern woodlands. His teacher who leads the class with a rattle in her hand, holds the item upside down. Firetail probably knew these things as he posed for the camera. (113-114)

This moment demonstrated how the state's pedagogical project relied upon controlling images of Black and Native people. As a technology for state craft, these contradictory projections revolved around Black and Native relative proximity to "humanity" and potential for self-uplift. One of the stories in this photo point to the state mediated racial politics at play at Hampton. To the state, the Native savage signified the ambassador for a primitive yet noble civilization, which positioned him as racially superior to the recently emancipated Black population. At the same time, Black students were positioned as models for the new Native students who were thought to be not as amenable to assimilation into the Western labor ethic as Black students (Cooper 2011).

The educational program at Hampton and other schools of the era were animated in relation to notions of "character", which came to index the potential for labor and relative proximity to humanity. Much of this pedagogical work relied upon "how to interpret bodies and labor as well as material and visual culture, both inside and outside the classroom" (Cooper 2011, 115). In what follows, I offer a historiographic survey of Native American Boarding Schools and Black Industrial schools through the work and thought of two of its main architects Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Henry James Pratt. In reviewing their respective visions of post-reconstruction Black and Native education, the notion of character emerges as an integral to the development of the pedagogical programs at Hampton Institute and Carlisle Indian Industrial School. More broadly, notions of character were also imbricated within their competing visions of racial order and hierarchies. This chapter aims to provide an alternative presentation of character by exploring its relationship to race within the history of American education. Within

the technocratic field of contemporary character education, its association with academic achievement obscures its historically constructed normative dimensions.

Fig. 2.1. Frances Benjamin Johnston. *Louis Firetail (Sioux, Crow Creek), wearing tribal clothing, in American history class, Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia*. [1899]. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Online Catalog. https://www.loc.gov/item/98502982/.

Laying the Terrain: Black Industrial Education During Reconstruction

The postbellum era of the late 19th century in the United States has been a topic of interest for historians and scholars for setting the stage for the contemporary American racial state. The conclusion of the Civil War in 1965 nominally marked the end of the institution of chattel slavery for millions for formerly enslaved Black people. The North's victory was hardly a

storybook benevolent crusade for racial justice fueled by the tradition of the Enlightenment or a Hegelian "spirit". In fact, as W.E.B. Du Bois (1935) noted, many white northerners "oppose[d] slavery not so much from moral as from the economic fear of being reduced by competition to the level of slaves. They wanted a chance to become capitalists; and they found that chance threatened by the competition of a working class whose status at the bottom of the economic structure seemed permanent and inescapable" (18). In other words, the victories borne of the Civil War must be understood within the context of over three hundred years of resistance, refusals and uprisings against imperialism by Indigenous and enslaved Black populations across the Caribbean and the Americas (James,1989).

In *Black Reconstruction,* Du Bois famously recounted the central role carried out enslaved Black people in bringing about the Confederacy's defeat. Through a general strike, they severely diminished the Confederacy's ability to sustain its capacity to continue to wage war. Du Bois points to the general strike as one example of the centuries long movement to destroy the plantation economy and establish what he described as an *abolition democracy*. This vision was focused on fundamentally transforming the lives of the Black proletariat and poor and working-class whites against white capital. Ultimately, this dream never came to be as the Black codes, convict leasing and racial terror came to regulate Black life within the regions of the former Confederacy (Haley 2016). At the same time, the brief period of "radical Reconstruction" saw some progress through the ratification of the 14th and 15th amendments (birthright citizenship and Black male suffrage, respectively), the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau, Black representation in public offices, and inchoate examples of a multi-racial democracy (Foner 2014).

Established through an 1865 bill, the Freedmen's Bureau was tasked with providing and distributing food, shelter, clothing and land in the South to formerly enslaved individuals. Within its purview of the Freedman's Bureau was also tasked with the establishment of state sanctioned schools and educational services While Black educational institutions existed before the antebellum period, the educational initiatives of the Freedmen's Bureau signified the state's interest in further disciplining the movement and lives of freed Black peoples into the shifting labor regimes (Anderson 1988; Span 2009; Webber 1978; Watkins 2001; Williams 2005). More broadly, the Bureau was one of the first major forerunners to the idea of a welfare state in the history of the country (Morris 1991; Foner 2014). Yet, from its inception, the act only authorized the Bureau with operating for only 1 year after the end of the Civil War.

After President Lincoln's assassination, President Andrew Johnson would take control of the office and oppose subsequent attempts by Congress to extend and expand the original act. His resistance to the Bureau and its supporters defined Johnson's standing as a shrewd political operator who played an integral role in preserving white supremacy and anti-Black politics through appeals to capitalist notions of self-uplift, fairness, "freedom" (Trefousse 1975). Such narratives tied the Freedmen's Bureau with enabling laziness and vagrancy in the freepersons, which ostensibly handicapped hard-working white laborers (Foner 2014). These attitudes were not limited to white southerners and President Johnson. For many whites in both the South and the North, the Freedman's Bureau activated racist and anti-socialist attitudes (Richardson 2001). While the Freedmen's Bureau was primarily supported by Northern philanthropy, capital, and missionaries, their view of the state was not one of racial egalitarianism, but rather fundamentally driven by a vision of a highly segregated racial state and a White nationalist hierarchy (Frymer, 2017).

For many in the South, the Freedmen's Bureau symbolized Northern tyranny, which provided handouts and giveaways to formerly enslaved Black people. President Andrew Johnson, the most powerful opponent of the Bureau consistently clashed with the Radical Republican congress and vetoed all efforts to establish or expand the Bureau's purview. As Du Bois (1935) observed, Johnson's vision of Reconstruction was fundamentally concerned with preserving the dominant standing the defeated Southern planter class, who vehemently rejected the efforts to provide material benefits to freepersons or restructure the South's power structure. By 1868, the quasi-welfare state role of the Bureau was drastically reconfigured into a fundamentally different institution that was primarily tasked with regulation rather than welfare. Rather, the Bureau was now primarily charged with promoting self-help and self-sufficiency to freepersons through education and schooling (Cimbala 2003; Foner 2014). Ultimately, the weakening and eventual dissolution of the Bureau underlined the many failures of Reconstruction.

Within this historical milieu, the educational prospects of Black people during reconstruction was a struggle over who Black people could and should become within the postbellum United States. Education for the majority of Black people symbolized both emancipation and continued subjugation. The progressive spirit Black education provided a tangible pathway towards independence, empowerment, and some sense of social and economic control (Anderson 1988). At the same time, the influence of the state and capital actively worked to quell more radical visions of freedom (Span, 2009; Watkins 2001). As historian Christopher Span (2009) notes in *From the Cotton Field to the Schoolhouse*, while many white Southerners violently opposed educational access to freepersons, the ostensibly more racially enlightened white northerners scoffed at the transformational vision of a radical Black education

in favor of an education of domestication and subservience. During Reconstruction, specifically within the operations of the Freedmen's Bureau, Black industrial schooling emerged and became one of the dominant state sanctioned avenues for educating Black youth (Watkins 2001). One of its prominent models emerged through the establishment of the Hampton Industrial School in 1868 by former Freedman's Bureau agent, General Henry C. Armstrong. As a proponent of industrial education, Armstrong believed that civilizing and lifting up the savage races required educational institutions rooted in a transcendental and moral vision of labor.

This model would be taken up and reconfigured most famously by Booker T. Washington, a protégé of Armstrong who would go on to establish Tuskegee University in 1881. While Washington's vision of education and uplift—which was heavily influenced through by his time at Hampton—was most visibly amplified, the meaning of uplift was vigorously contested within Black intellectual circles in significant part to its attachments to elite class politics, patriarchal leadership and respectability (Gaines 2012; Greenidge 2019). Tuskegee came to represent one form of racial uplift where industrial work became means for newly emancipated peoples to generate the economic power needed for self-uplift and create a Black middle class (Washington, 1901). Unlike Armstrong, Washington's vision did not necessarily relegate Black people to a perpetual second-class status. Rather, Washington saw industrial education as a pathway towards building black economic security and power. At the same time, the dependency of the industrial education system on the whims of philanthropic capital constrained the progressive potential of Washington's vision of industrial education (Watkins 2001). As Du Bois recognized, the co-optation of industrial education would play an important role in preserving racial capitalism and stifling the realization of a true abolition democracy (Anderson 1988).

Native Education and Extinction Narratives

During the 1860s, Native nations such as the Sioux carried out ferocious military campaigns in resistance to the unending streams of American settlers moving into their territories. Even the American federal government and military recognized that the actions of white settlers were the main catalyst sparking wars with Native people across the frontiers of the American empire (Frymer 2017). In 1865, the state initiated its "peace policy" towards Native nations and commissioned a report entitled *Condition of the Indian Tribes.* The report comprised of a collection of accounts of "Indian agents" from the federal government who were tasked with assessing the social, political and economic statuses of tribal nations spanning territories west of the Mississippi from the Midwest, Southwest to the West Coast.

Released in 1867, the report was compiled through ethnographic observations, testimonies and interviews with and by the state's Indian agents. The document offered five conclusions on the state of Native tribes in the territories. Their analysis highlighted the diminishing populations of Native tribes across the continent, which they traced to serval factors including disease, intemperance, and the destruction of traditional hunting grounds and wildlife such as the bison. The report also identified the unending "Indian Wars" as a function of "the aggressions of lawless white men, always to be found upon the frontier, or boundary line between savage and civilized life" (5). Interestingly, the report does not significantly foreground the role of the state in promoting racial violence and dispossession. In fact, the committee noted that the problem was not "so much by the system adopted by the government in dealing with the Indian tribes, as by the abuses of that system. Only three years prior to the creation of *Condition of the Indian Tribes*, President Lincoln signed the 1962 Homestead Act, which incentivized White settlers to move West onto Native territories by offering 160 acres of free land.

Ultimately, this document underlines the antebellum policy orientation of the American government in relation to Native tribes. In the eyes of the state, this historical moment presented Native people an ultimatum which presupposed the inevitability of their annihilation and extinction (Vizenor 2000). “In our Indian system, beyond all doubt, there are evils, growing out of the nature of the case itself, which can never be remodeled until the Indian race is civilized or shall entirely disappear” (p. 8). Patrick Wolfe notes (2016), the disappearance and extinction of Native populations is a fundamental premise of settler colonialism in North America. This elimination process takes several forms including biological dilution and regulation (e.g. blood quantum) and extermination (Simpson 2014; TallBear 2013).

In contrast to the “decaying” and “primitive” Native tribes, the committee contrasted the “Five Civilized Tribes” who were relocated half a century beforehand to “Indian Territory”, in Arkansas and Oklahoma. These tribes included the Cherokee, Chicksaw, Chocktaw, Muscogee Creeks and Seminoles.

> The Indians everywhere, with the exception of tribes within the Indian Territory, are rapidly decreasing in numbers from various causes: By disease, by intemperance; by wars, among themselves and with the whites; by the steady and resistless emigration of white men into the territories of the west, which , confronting the Indians to still narrower limits, destroys that game which, in their normal state, constitutes their principal means of subsistence; and by the irrepressible conflict between a superior and an inferior race when brought in presence of each other. (3)

The report further elaborated further that

> [T]hey were actually advancing in population, education, civilization and agricultural wealth…Their exceptional condition may be attributed to the fact that, from their earliest history these tribes had, to a considerable extent, cultivated the soil and kept herds of cattle and horses; that they were located in a most fertile territory and withdrawn from the neighborhood and influence of white settlements and to the legitimate influence of education and Christianity among them (4).

The elevation of these particular tribal groups implied that the "disappearance" of the "uncivilized tribes" in the West was driven in large part to their inability and resistance to properly adopting Western capitalist notions of labor, ownership and social relations.

The 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie tasked the US government, missionaries and other philanthropists with building and staffing on-reservation schools across the Great Sioux nation. The development of the reservation system was integral to this mission in which schooling would perform one of the primary civilizing roles. As Lower Brule Sioux historian Nick Estes (2019) notes, "With armed struggle mostly abandoned, indigenous resistance changed from military resistance to a strategy of challenging the reservation system by continuing to refuse to sell land or to cooperate with reservation officials" (118). The state supported reservations schools were staffed and run by Christian missionaries whose focus was on religious conversation and pacification of tribal communities (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015). During this era and into the 20th century, state run schools would be a fraught terrain of erasure, resistance as well as struggles of self-determination for Native children and their families (Child 2000; Grande 2014, Vizenor 2008). In late 19th century Native schools were driven by the American army as well as Christian missionaries. As such, these schools were innately braided within the colonial project of land expropriation, elimination of Native people, the erasure of indigeneity and the imposition of a settler ongology (Byrd 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Estes, 2019; Grande 2014).

For liberal White educators of the era, Native American schooling represented a belief in universal human capabilities rooted in the Enlightenment and what historian Jacqueline Fear-Segal has called a "progressive racialization". At the same time, this universalist educational project presupposed that a "[…] construction of American nationality involved the destruction—geographical, legal, political, and cultural—of Indian nationalities (Fear-Segal 2007, xii). Said

differently, this ostensibly egalitarian vision of the education of Native Americans has always already been a realm of pollical struggle between incommensurable agendas and severe asymmetrical power relations. By the early 1870s, the reservation school would start to be overshadowed by the boarding school model popularized by General William Henry Pratt (Adams 1971). Pratt (1964) was a vehement critic of the reservation system and he believed that the system prevented Native tribes from becoming citizens of white civilization. As such, he emphasized the belief that the only effective avenue towards civilizing of Native children could only occur away from the degenerating influences of the reservation—the reservation model (Fear-Segal 2007; Lomawaima 2000). Emerging from a prison camp at Fort Marion in Florida in 1877, Pratt's model began with as an educational experiment on 72 Indigenous warriors.

The passing of the Dawes Act of 1887 would underline the state's intention to dismantle the social, political and economic structures of tribal life by transforming any remaining communal ownership structures on reservations into individualized land allotments (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015). The state's answers to the "Indian question" were wide in scope and entangled notions of racial difference, processes of settler colonialism, questions of epistemology and ontology, as well as capitalism and political economy. It is within this stage of the American settler project that I locate the development of Native American Boarding schools within the ultimatum of "civilization" and "extinction" (Adams 1995). As Sandy Grande (2015) notes, as a parallel to the state's expansion into Black education, this era also marks the beginning of the hegemony of the state within matters of the education of Native peoples.

Within this chapter, I underline the central role of character education within the ideological, pedagogical and curricular frameworks of Samuel C. Armstrong and Richard Henry Pratt, as well as their specific visions for Black industrial education and Native American

education during the late 19th century. I must note that the purpose of this chapter is not to solely credit Armstrong and Pratt as the sole architects of Black and Native education. Black and Native education in North America predates, transcends and has outlived state sanctioned industrial education, and has always already been a site of resistance against domination (Anderson 1988; Davis 2013; Du Bois 1938; Grande 2004; Lomawaima and McCarty, 2006; Span 2009; Williams 2005). Rather, I draw from Armstrong and Pratt's educational, biographical, political and philosophical writings to highlight the role of character education within the state sanctioned schooling models for Black and Native youth. Moreover, their thought offers a window into the interlocking dynamics between character education, racial difference, political economy and citizenship within the wake of Reconstruction.

The Pedagogies of Conquistador Humanism

Within this historiographic effort, my analytical thinking draws from the work of Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) and her theorization of *conquistador humanism*. King's text *The Black Shoals* refracts Black and Native studies through the prism of conquest. While settler colonial studies' conventionally focuses on land, sovereignty and political economy, King asserts the necessity of theorizing Black fungibility and accumulation as well as Native genocide as central to understanding settler states in the global north, and also the human. King's understanding of *conquistador humanism* is tightly braided with Sylvia Wynter's ideas on the *genres of man*.

Wynter describes the progression of Western humanism first through Christianity, which defined man through their relationship to God and the church. From the renaissance through the Enlightenment, epistemic ruptures of science and religion would redefine man by their capacity for reason as well as their relationship to the state; Wynter would dub this paradigm as Man1. It is at this junction where *conquistador humanism* congeals and the representation of Man1

became *overrepresented* as the human itself. This overrepresentation required the symbolic and bodily death of the Native and Black other through the process of conquest. Conquest takes center stage in King's theorization of how to understand the rational paradigm of man that emerged through the Enlightenment. "I name conquest as a lingua franca or shared dialogic space to articulate genocide and slavery as forms of violence that are essential to the emergence of conquistador humanism or what Wynter names 'Man1'" (p. 21). King notes that how, *conquistador humanism*, "though revised, still positions Indigenous and Black people at its bottom rungs" and "requires Black and Indigenous dehumanization (as death bound)" (p. 16). For King, conquest is "a grammar and a frame from which to think makes it possible to register the always already intersectional violence of anti-Blackness, slavery and its afterlife and genocide at the same time" (p. 68). Contemporary revisions of *conquistador humanism* developed concurrently with spread of capitalism across the globe from the 19th century into the present. This paradigm of the human "Man2", would now be defined through their relationship to the market and capital: the penultimate subject of neoclassical economics—homoeconomicus.

What King's theorization of *conquistador humanism* reveals is how the human is always already more than a bio-medical-scientific entity, but also culturally and discursively constructed through historical processes and aftermath of conquest and genocide. Moreover, what also becomes clearer is the "the violent modus operandi of the making of the human…" (p. 69). As such, the project of creating and reconfiguring of Western humanism must be understood in relation to what Fanon described as the *zone of non-being*, which hosted the non-human Black and Native subjects.

In this essay, I attempt to graft schooling—in the forms of Native boarding schools and Black industrial schools of the late 19th century—onto the matrices of *conquistador humanism*.

These institutions were ostensibly organized around bringing Black and Native subjects closer to the realm of the human (Man2). Such pedagogical projects aimed at producing subjects based upon capitalist notions of labor and productivity and Western ways of being, comportment and gender ideology. This project of cultivating humans was animated by moral appeals of charity and philanthropy and the specters of guilt emanating from the prospects of Black and Native extinction. Yet, *conquistador humanism* required and sanctioned extinction, just of a different sort. Tropes of laziness and primitivity associated with Black and Native subjects were threats to the ontological foundations of the American vision of man during the late 19th century. Such tendencies had to be eliminated through the process of bringing Black and Native youth into the realm of homoeconomius.

It is here that I locate schooling as a necessary technology of the racial state in creating Black and Native approximations of the human during and after Reconstruction. As such, this essay will be guided by the following question; how do *conquistador humanism* and racial capitalism inform Armstrong and Pratt's articulations of character within their visions schooling of Black and Native youth through in the late 19th century? These institutions housed two related but distinct programs, which I refer to as the *pedagogies of character*, which served as the sinewy connections between the political economic and ideological models within Native American boarding schools and Black Industrial schools such as Hampton and Carlisle. that focused on manual and industrial labor competencies. Such competencies were intimately aligned with the political economic demands of capital, which conjoined industrial labor competencies alongside the cultivation of good faith buy-in to projects of citizenship, self-making and labor ethic. Through the remainder of this essay, I center the ideological and

pedagogical interventions of Samuel C. Armstrong and Richard Henry Pratt and trace how notions of character occupied the liminal spaces between race, education and capital.

Foundations of The Armstrong Model

Born on the island of Maui, in 1839 Samuel Chapman Armstrong was the son of Christian missionaries operating within the Hawaiian archipelago. During this era, one of Armstrong's biographers notes how White Christian missionaries related to native Hawaiians through a sense of pity; these Natives could be pitied as they possessed souls that were worthy of salvation, but this salvation could only be actualized by overcoming their moral and mental handicaps through a proper Christian education (Talbot 1904). Virtually all of Armstrong's schooling experiences were at Punahou School, which was originally founded to educate the sons of Native chiefs. Over time, the Native population at the school declined due to the fatal influences of colonial occupation and the student body came to be comprised of primarily missionary children (Tomlinson 1917).

From 1860-1862, Armstrong attended Williams College, which coincided with the beginning of the Civil War. At Williams, Armstrong studied philosophy under the school's president Mark Hopkins who was a moral philosopher. Hopkins introduced Armstrong to a conservative metaphysics "including beliefs that philosophical inquiry ultimately confirms old truths, that piety prevails over intellect and scholarship, that education is the only possible social equalizer, and that private property qualified one for spiritual stewardship—a tenet soon to be called the 'gospel of wealth' (Lindsey 1995, 3). Upon graduating, Armstrong enlisted with the Union army by joining a company based out of New York. Armstrong's biographers suggest that his decision to enlist was as much a career conscious decision as it was his dislike for the institution of chattel slavery (Tomlinson 1917). Moreover, harkening back to his missionary

upbringing, Armstrong was primarily driven by the mission of saving souls rather than a disgust of slavery (Fear-Segal 2007; Talbot 1904). In a letter to one of his college friends, Armstrong elaborated on his views of slavery and the war.

> Chum, I am a sort of abolitionist, but I haven't learned to love the Negro. I believe in universal freedom; I believe the whole world cannot buy a single soul. The Almighty has set, or rather limited, the price of one man, and until worlds can be paid for a single Negro I don't believe in selling or buying them. I got in, then, for freeing them more on account of their souls than their bodies, I assure you. (Talbot 1904, 86)

On enlisting with the 125 New York Infantry, Armstrong was awarded the rank of captain despite not having prior military experience. In 1863, Armstrong was promoted to major and was placed in command of the 9th U.S. Colored Infantry and later the 8th U.S. Colored Troops, both of which were comprised of Black soldiers. For many White officers in the Union, commanding Black units meant that they often saw themselves as shepherds, educators and civilizers (Cornish, 1952). Armstrong approached military service as an opportunity for Black soldiers prove and to demonstrate not only the potential for their capacity for self-uplift, but to also demonstrate their humanity to white society.

> The Negro troops have not yet entirely proved themselves good soldiers; but if the Negroes can be made to fight well, then is the question of their freedom settled. I tell you the present is the grandest time the world ever saw. The African race is before the world, unexpectedly to all, and all mankind are looking to see whether the African will show himself equal to the opportunity before him. And what is this opportunity? It is to demonstrate to the world that he is a *man,* that he has the highest elements of manhood, courage, perseverance, and honor; that he is not only worthy of freedom, but about to win it, so he has a chance…They are too noble for slaves, and the nations will despise a country that attempts to enslave men who have saved her own constitution and independence…Their honor and their glory will insure the freedom of their race; their dishonor will result in the disbanding of the troops and in universal contempt for the race. I gladly lend myself to the experiment—to this issue. It will yet be a grand thing to have been identified with this Negro movement. (Talbot 1904, 101).

In this letter to his mother, Armstrong situates the position of the Black soldier at the vanguard of the uplift of the Black race. In other words, Armstrong frames it as an opportunity for Black

soldiers to prove their worth, character and humanity to the state by putting their lives on the line for the Union. While it is true that freedom was not going to be freely given to enslaved peoples, Armstrong's premise is contingent upon Black people needing to prove their humanity echoes what Denise Ferreira Da Silva (2007) has described as the *analytics of raciality*. The terms for who can be considered human is entangled within a construction of race that is always already global and centered around a transcendental, post-Enlightenment European subject.

Reconstruction and Armstrong's Pedagogical Visions

In 1866, shortly after the end of the war, Armstrong joined the Freedmen's Bureau and received a double appointment as an agent as well as the Bureau superintendent of over 10 Virginia counties, which was headquartered at Hampton. The population of free Black people in these districts ballooned to over 7,000 in Hampton alone where they built small, independent towns upon vacated land some of which were formerly plantations. Headquartered at Hampton, VA it became an integral location for the experimental reconstruction plans (Lindsey 1995; Warren 2010). The initial years of Armstrong's appointment did much to sharpen his vision of addressing the "Negro question" and the fate of the freedmen. Armstrong lamented on the condition of Black people within his districts. Edith Armstrong Talbot, Samuel Armstrong's daughter and his biographer quoted his report to the Freedmen's Bureau.

> The restoration of lands and cry out against the injustice of it. They will not as a general rule be permitted to remain, owing largely to their failure to pay rent…Their inability or refusal to pay is due to improvidence, or carelessness, or poverty, or to their not comprehending the fact of restoration. Their minds are in much confusion, and many have been honest in refusing to pay. Many who do not would pay rent if they believed it right to do so. Freedmen as a class are destitute of ambition; their complacency in poverty and filth is a curse; discontent would lead to determined effort and a better life. Many cling to Hampton and stick to Virginia apparently to lay their bones there when they have no more use for them. 'Born and bred here, bound to die here' is often their supremely stupid and pitiable answer when asked to go elsewhere. Honest efforts on their behalf they interpret into designs to reenslave them...These wild notions are the result of ignorance, to which is mainly due the troubles of the race (Talbot 1904, 147).

Armstrong's frustration underlined his general sentiments towards the work of the Bureau and more broadly, reconstruction. He like many whites in the North and the South began to see government sanctioned rations given to Freemen as akin to socialism, which was ostensibly having a demoralizing effect and generating hopelessness within the population (Richardson 2001; Span 2009). He understood the condition of the freepersons as analogous to the Indigenous Hawaiians he grew up around on the Hawaiian Islands, which was a deficiency of character (Beyer 2007). Here, we can begin to focus on how character begins to suture Armstrong's future visions of education. Both pedagogical models were necessary in order to uplift Indigenous "savages" and the formerly enslaved Black population.

> The negro and the Polynesian have many striking similarities. Of both it is true that not mere ignorance, but deficiency of character is the chief difficulty, and that to build up character is the true objective point of education. It is also true that in all men education is conditioned not alone by an enlightened head and a changed heart, but very largely on a routine of industrious habit, which is to character what the foundation is to the pyramid…Granted that character in its highest sense is the objective point, then mission work evidently should be organized with reference to supplying the conditions under which morality and the creation of character are feasible (Armstrong 1884, 213-214).

The road to character and a true Christian life for the millions of freepersons could only be cultivated through labor. Armstrong was quite cognizant that the types of labor he advocated Black people to take up would confer then no real economic power, "but it will pay in a *moral* way; especially with the freedmen. It will make them men and women as nothing else will. It is the only way to make them good Christians" (Armstrong 1893, 6). He would go on to characterize the failure of reconstruction as "bridge of wood over a river of fire", yet he would also note that the decision not to provide reparations as one of its few successes. For Armstrong, it was a blessing in disguise because reparations would have promoted idleness, racial segregation and would have ruined the opportunity for them to become Christians and learn true uplift through labor (Talbot 1904; Watkins 2001). Within Armstrong's pedagogy, capital,

morality, salvation for Black people could only be achieved through labor. As such labor was the pathway to bring them closer towards the realm of the human.

Labor, Character and the Hampton Model

While Armstrong articulated the immorality of slavery, he would nevertheless come to acknowledge its "educative condition" that demonstrated the potential for formerly enslaved Black people to learn (Armstrong 1893). Said differently, slavery contained elements of both a pedagogy of capital and overrepresentation. Warren Henry Pitt, a former classmate and biographer of Armstrong, highlighted Armstrong's belief that the experience of slavery conferred a kind of virtue through labor amongst formerly enslaved Black people (Warren 1913). For Armstrong (1914) the purpose of education was "not only for the sake of self-support and intelligent labor but also for the sake of character" (13). For Amstrong, the ignorance of uncivilized races was not the main problem, but rather "[t]he chief difficulty was […] deficient character […] He is what his past has made him; the true basis of work for him, and all men, is the scientific one—the facts of heredity surrounding: all the facts of the case (Armstrong 1893, 6). In other words, race, character and labor were deeply intertwined within Armstrong's models of education and were the pathways through which formerly enslaved peoples might be moved closer to the ideal of liberal humanism.

The guidepost of character would loom greatly over the initial conceptualization of Hampton as Armstrong believed that it was character, more than ignorance, which was the primary barrier for Black people (Engs 1999). For Armstrong, the logical answer to addressing the idleness of the newly freed Black populations was through education, especially one that was rooted in Christianity and a labor ethos aligned with maintaining the capitalist political economy

and the prevailing racial hierarchies. These experiences parallel many of Armstrong's views on the purpose of Hampton Institute.

> The thing to be done was clear: to train selected Negro youths who should go out and teach and lead their people, first by example, by getting land and homes; to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves; to teach respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands, and to those ends to build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self-support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character (Talbot 1904, 156).

James D. Anderson (1988) notes that Armstrong envisioned Hampton with the explicit purpose of putting its students, who would later become educators, through a rigorous industrial education through which they would embody the "dignity of labor" and preach its gospel to Black people throughout the South. Moreover, these teachers would be prepared to bestow the distinctive values and character that were appropriate for Black laboring classes. At Hampton, producing Black educators was a means spread the messages of self-uplift that were compatible with the prevailing racial capitalist order.

Hampton, in Armstrong's vision, was an avatar of labor as a moral and civilizing force. "Labor next to the grace of God in the heart, is the greatest promoter of morality, the greatest power of civilization" (Armstrong 1893, 19). It is this ethos that undergirded his vision for a pedagogy of overrepresentation. In contrast to a Marxian understanding of labor as a social relation and a mechanism of capitalist exploitation, Armstrong's understood labor as a deeply spiritual concept, which animated the foundation of character, morality and Christianity itself (Talbot 1904). Within a pedagogy of overrepresentation, producing competent laborers was not sufficient because character required that Black students become true believers. In relation to the formerly enslaved, Armstrong believed labor was the only force powerful enough to lift the freepersons up from their condition of destitution and laziness. While Armstrong recognized the work ethic that that Black people were able to cultivate during the three centuries of chattel

slavery, he also saw that work ethic as not fully formed to its true potential due to the lack of enthusiasm for the dignity of labor (Adams 1977). The solution to their social and cultural degeneration could only be ameliorated through the elevation of their character, which could most efficiently be done through an industrial education animated by Armstrong's understanding of labor as a transcendental force.

The Hampton Institute was organized around an academic program, manual labor and strict discipline all of which were oriented towards the project of character building. For Armstrong (1893) "[c]haracter does not develop as rapidly as mind" (29) and he sometimes drew distinctions between schoolwork and work geared towards cultivating character. An industrial education was the most efficient pathway towards developing character.

> The academic program, aside from preparing students to teach grade school and to pass varied state teachers' certification examinations, was planned mainly for the ideological training of potential Hampton missionaries. The manual labor system, organized to shape attitudes and build character through steady, hard labor, was designed to connect the theoretical and practical lessons. (Anderson 1988, 49)

Armstrong's vision of industrial labor contrasted with that of the manual labor movement, which was more common among higher education institutions. Manual labor was typically oriented towards providing wealthy and white students with opportunities for physical education and exercise, which usually took the form of lite and moderate farm work. For Armstrong, typical manual education lacked the explicit focus on building an appreciation for labor and the ideological project of developing character (Engs 1999, 79). In other words, only industrial education could be the vehicle for Armstrongs' vision for a pedagogy of overrepresentation. Industrial education at Hampton was also gendered with girls directed to take on feminized labor such as cooking, sewing while boys were tasked with more physically strenuous work (Hampton Institute 1899).

While he held the belief that the condition of slavery afforded Black people a more advanced work ethic compared to Native Americans, they were still uncivilized because they lacked an enthusiastic appreciation of the dignity of labor (Adams 1977). As such, Armstrong saw his industrial model as superior to the task of cultivating the necessary enthusiasm and ideological conviction among Black workers and moving them towards becoming self-sufficient laborers within the postbellum white civilization (Anderson 1988). Armstrong's formulation for the education of Black students revolved around the pedagogy of overrepresentation—specifically, cultivating good faith buy-in of the racial and economic order.

In relation to the Freedmen and the millions of Black people in the postbellum south, character was inseparable from Armstrong's understanding of Black education. Armstrong understood that this project would not build economic or political power for Black people, nor would it unsettle the prevailing racial hierarchies of the time. While Armstrong had an understanding of the existential danger facing formerly enslaved Black people in the South, his missionary leanings were not primarily concerned with challenging racial capitalism or unsettling the dominant racial formations of the time. Rather, Armstrong saw Hampton as a civilizing project, which offered the only chance of the survival of Black people. In the context of these historical conditions, Armstrong was an avatar for liberal philanthropy, which identified the problems facing Black people as cultural rather than forces such as the racial state. In other words, Armstrong and his contemporaries projected their hopes and visions of the racial, political and economic order onto the concept of character. More importantly, this particular understanding of character came to represent earthly salvation itself.

In 1883, Samuel C. Armstrong published a pamphlet titled *The Indian Question*. The text reflected many of the same conclusions of the 1965 government report *Condition of the Indian Tribes*. Armstrong lamented on the disappearance of many tribes' hunting grounds and traditional methods of subsistence, which in his view placed them at a crossroads. Without state intervention, "they will depend either on public charity or on stealing their food, unless taught to care for themselves" (Armstrong 1883c, 3). For example, Armstrong noted that the destruction of the buffalo herds was in some respects more difficult for Native peoples in comparison of the situation of Black people in the antebellum south. While emancipation "changed the relations rather than the realities of life", Armstrong believed that Natives had to endure an extra barrier in "having to come to terms with the change in realities rather than the relations" (Armstrong 1883c, 5).

In describing the condition of Native tribes, Armstrong explains how the reservation system has instilled deep dependence on the American federal government. For Armstrong, this dependence was fundamentally untenable because a modern civilization could not rely on the government and charity indefinitely for its subsistence. In a report he produced on behalf of the Indian Right's Association in 1883, Armstrong discussed his trips to Native reservations in the Southwest. Similar to the observations he made on Black freepersons during his appointment in the Freedmen's Bureau, Armstrong (1883b) applied a similar logic to the condition of the Kiowas and the Comanche.

> Not only are these tribes fed by the Government, but they will make trouble if we do not feed them…But it is, I believe, quite possible to bring them all to self-support, thus making a vast saving to the Government, which is not giving them as a gratuity about four hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, chiefly in food (Armstrong 1883b, 17).

For Armstrong, this arrangement of dependency upon the federal government was not only untenable and costly, but it violated the maxim of self-support which defined Armstrong's vision of a white Christian civilization, and the fantasy of homoeconomicus.

In this text, Armstrong chastised the congress for acting as an accomplice in abetting the moral degradation of Native people. Politicians, Armstrong argued, were unequipped for the task "to make citizens of the red man" (Armstrong 1883b, 7) because they could not grasp that "The Indian is a child and needs a father", and that "To awake in the bosom of the Indian and to consummate it in Christian character, is the work of individual men, by contact and by personal influence" (Armstrong, 1883b, 8). Said differently, Armstrong believed that only military officers had the necessary personal qualities to be the educators to instill the pedagogies of character upon Native students.

In contrast to the *Condition of the Indian Report*, Armstrong's report did not characterize Native tribes as destined for extinction. Rather, he saw a race of people who were coming to see the light of Western civilization with the aid of paternal guidance from the state and private philanthropy.

> For more than a century Indians rejected our civilization. Their thinking men, (for they are a race of thinkers) forecast the future, and with their children thought the white man's way as their only hope. They do not choose this: they are compelled to it: hundreds, thousands, are waiting and glad to work for an education. They beg for what they once detested, and this feeling is growing (Armstrong 1883c, 21-22).

Armstrong's racial construction of Native people reflected a colonial imaginary of a people filled with potential for rational humanity. As such, they had potential to be amenable to the pedagogy of overrepresentation and its demand for buy-in to the social, political economic imposition of the state. The weakness of this race, Armstrong noted, is "physical, not mental or moral" (Armstrong 1883c, 15) due to their ostensible vulnerability to disease. In contrast to the beast of

burden trope that has been associated with Black people since the early days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Armstrong still believed that Native tribes were capable of reaching a higher level of civilization through the development of character and self-reliance. This is not to say that Armstrong believed that either Natives or Black people would reach the same level of civilization as Whites. Armstrong's articulated his belief in rigid racial types, which was fairly static over his adult life (Fear-Segal 2007).

In bringing in Native students to Hampton, Armstrong wrote with excitement about how its Black students could serve as role models and stewards for Native students in furthering the projects of a pedagogy of labor. After all, in Armstrong's view, the institution of chattel slavery—while morally repulsive—in Armstrong's view conferred a foundation of the dignity of labor within formerly enslaved Black people. A race that has been led is leading another…With perhaps finer mental and moral texture, the red race does not produce half enough to feed itself: the rougher stronger black race, has not thrown a pauper upon the country, and raises raw material for the mills of Christendom" (Armstrong 1883c, 16).

In addition to their racial predisposition to hard labor, Armstrong asserted that centuries of slavery imbued formerly enslaved subjects the necessary discipline that produces valuable laborers and workers (Lindsey 1995; Watkins 2001). Armstrong envisioned Black students as emissaries for the pedagogies of character, and role models for Native students. As a "race of thinkers", Armstrong express his view Native people were predisposed to rationally accepting the premises of a pedagogy of character and the universality of Western civilization (Fear-Segal 1999). What limited Natives' trajectory towards humanity was the lack of competencies associated with a pedagogy of labor. Eliminating their dependence on collectivist and qusai-socialist social structures and their dependency on the state required a pedagogy of labor. While

Black students had developed the habits of work, Armstrong understood that they still required an education to address the lack of enthusiasm for the "dignity of labor" (Talbot 1904).

The Fort Marion Experiment

The experiment of Native students at Hampton can be traced to the arrival of Captain Richard Henry Pratt. A former Union officer during the Civil War, Pratt was promoted to captain of the 10th Cavalry in 1873. The unit was the first cavalry regiment of its time which was primarily comprised of formerly enslaved Black soldiers. From 1873 through 1875, Pratt and his unit engaged in military operations against Native nations within the Great Plains such as the Cheyenne, Cherokee, Kiowa and Arapaho nations. During this time, Pratt and the 10th Cavalry were often tasked with hunting down and arresting Native bands who raided white settlers across this frontier. In 1875, the federal government appointed Captain Pratt to take custody of 72 Native prisoners, who were from an assortment of tribes such as Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho. In his autobiography, Pratt (1964) recounts how that these prisoners could not possibly receive a fair trial due to the intense anti-Native sentiment among White settlers in the Great Plains—especially towards militant Native warriors. As such, the federal government decided to indefinitely exile the Native prisoners to Florida under the custody of Captain Pratt.

In 1875, Pratt and the 72 Native prisoners arrived at Fort Marion, which was a former Spanish outpost in the town of St. Augustine. Soon after arriving, Pratt decided to remove the shackles and implement an educational program. Pratt (1964) emphasized that prisoner-students take up Western dress by training prisoners to property wear and care for their army issued clothing until "there was pride established in the wearing of the army uniform" (Pratt 1964, 119). Additionally, prisoners were taught to speak and write in English until it became the primary mode of communication. Moreover, prisoners were also tasked with creating their own industry

through work primarily by shining seashells from the nearby beaches, which the prison would sell to local merchants and visitors. Pratt required that prisoners participate in military drills, which would become a popular attraction for visitors to Ft. Marion. Moreover, to the chagrin of his White officers, Pratt instituted a system that placed Native prisoners as prison guards (Adams 1995). Pratt's account of Ft. Marion represented an unprecedented "success story" of good faith buy-in and labor competence of Native prisoner-students.

By 1877, the federal government came to the decision to release the prisoners at Fort Marion. Pratt opposed returning the prisoners back to reservations as he saw reservations as a major obstacle to the successful long-term assimilation of Native students into white civilization. After Pratt was unsuccessful in placing the Native students at northern white agricultural schools, he turned to the Hampton Institute and Armstrong. While initially hesitant, Pratt and Armstrong came to an agreement to welcome Pratt and 62 of the Native prisoners. At the time, Pratt, like Armstrong saw the uplift model for Black people as a road map for civilizing Natives. While Pratt detested slavery, he like Armstrong recognized the "positive" externalities of enslavement on a group of people. Native students would need to undergo a similar "assimilation under duress". "I look upon slavery for the Negro as exemplifying a higher quality of Christianity than any scheme that either Church or State has originated and carried out in massing, controlling and supervising Indians. Slavery did not destroy the Negro race but increased it" (Lindsey 1995, 24-25).

While Pratt's initial views of Indian education heavily relied upon his interpretation of the historical circumstances of Black people in North America, he was more ambivalent towards rights and well-being of the formerly enslaved as compared to his enthusiastic advocacy for Native people. Additionally, Pratt articulated a belief that Native tribes were subject to worse

treatment from whites and that Natives were a more noble race that had more to offer to the United States as citizen (Fear-Segal 2007).

After a year, Pratt grew unsatisfied with the educational program for Indians at Hampton. Pratt described a vision of uplift that contrasted with Armstrong, Booker T. Washington and the Hampton model. Pratt saw the Hampton model as being unable to properly civilizing Natives.

> Participation in the best things of our civilization though being environed by them was the essential factor for transforming the Indian…This lesson could never be learned by the Indian our people through the indurated system of segregating and reservating the Indians and denying them chances to see and thus learn to prove their qualities through competition (Pratt 1964, 213-214).

Pratt was deeply skeptical that the Hampton model would properly civilize and save Native people because "it was not the best of help to the Indian to unite the two race problems; that what the Indian needed was to gain ability to held his own, and fellowship with the whites, and not with the negro" (8). In other words, while Hampton offered Native students a necessary labor ethos and Christian education, Pratt saw Hampton model as too isolationist in the sense that it did not adequately afford Native students the chance to immerse themselves within White civilization. Said differently, within Pratt's pedagogies of character, schooling was necessary but insufficient. True uplift, especially in regard to Native youth, had to come through deep and permanent immersion into White civilization. Additionally, Pratt came to see association with Black students as counterproductive for the project of Indian Education due to unyielding anti-Black sentiments (Warren 2010). Moreover, Pratt was much more adamant about the necessity of ending the Native reservation system and eliminating Indigenous cultures and epistemologies (Lomawaima and McCarty 2006; Warren 2010). Doing so was necessary to ensure that Native people would successfully become assimilated into white civilization.

The Carlisle Model and Pratt's Theory of Civilizing

Historian Jacqueline Fear-Segal (1999) has characterized the fundamental ideological divide between Pratt and Armstrong through their contrasting views of racial difference: Pratt as a racial "universalist" and Armstrong as a believer of racial "evolutionism". Armstrong articulated racial difference in much more biologically rigid terms where Black and Native people were biologically less evolved compared to white people. Moreover, he was ambivalent to the idea that they could be civilized to the equal level of Whites. For example, Armstrong (1883b) offered a fond impression of the "Five Civilized Tribes", which "commencing seventy years ago with savages, has in two generations produced as high a stage of Christian civilization as could be expected" (24). At the same time, he also would note "it is far weaker than that of the Anglo-Saxon, which has had a growth of a thousand years" (24). In contrast, Pratt saw Native people (and to a lesser extent Black people) as essentially "the same" in regard to their potential to be eventually transformed into the universal liberal humanist subject (Fear-Segal 1999). As an environmental determinist, Pratt saw racial difference was primarily a function of historical, material, and socio-cultural variables. For Pratt, civilization necessarily required the elimination of Native cultural and social foundations (Trafzer et al. 2006).

Despite the ideological differences between Pratt and Armstrong (which lead to the quick departure of the former from Hampton) both men held compatible understandings of the goal of educating Black and Native students. Both projects presupposed the liberal humanist subject as the universal (Talbot 1904; Engs 1999). In order to arrive at this location, educational programs needed to be focused on producing self-sufficient individuals who could compete in the market just as white men. During the late 19th century, Armstrong perceived that Black students ostensibly were farther along in regard to labor competencies, yet he would often note that they lacked the good faith appreciation of the dignity of labor and the sufficient acceptance of the

social, political and economic order. Black people, who to some degree had ostensibly developed an understanding of hard work and labor through their collective experiences of slavery were to be the models for the uplift of their race, but also the civilizing of Native people. Both Pratt and Armstrong saw Native students as a thoughtful and rational race. As such they could be expected to more easily take up a pedagogy of overrepresentation than Black students. Still Native students lacked the labor competence of not having been enslaved. In both cases, character came to bridge the gaps between the labor, race and citizenship within Armstrong and Pratt's educational visions for Black and Native youth.

Saving the Man

Upon leaving Hampton in 1977, Pratt would go on to develop a different method for character education, which emphasized culture and immersion as the means towards creating self-sufficient and civilized Native laborers. Pratt would successfully make this argument to the federal government, which they hoped would finally address the lingering "Indian problem" (Adams 1995). The Carlisle model must be first and foremost understood in relation to Captain Pratt's ongoing work with the Army and their continuing "pacification" projects on Native populations across the frontier. When Pratt was granted approval to recruit Native students from congress, he was directed by the Secretary of the Interior to recruit Native children from tribes that were openly hostile to the American government. Pratt noted that those particular children "would be hostages for the good behavior of their people, but if I failed there I might bring the party from the Indians I knew" (Armstrong 1964, 220). In this way, the federal government saw the Carlisle project not only as an educational endeavor but also deeply intertwined with military strategy against resistant Native tribes.

It is within this context that historians have commented on Pratt's genuine belief that the Native tribes were on an inevitable path towards extinction, and an education was the only way to ensure their survival. This sentiment characterizes how the state, religious and philanthropic supporters conceptualized the purpose of Indian education, which existed in tandem with the state's colonial ambitions during the late 19th century (Adams 1995). In a letter to Henry L. Dawes, the senator who would go on to pen the 1887 Dawes Act, Pratt notes the boarding school's necessary role in the eradication of Native life and the transformation of Native peoples into American citizens.

> I suppose the end to be gained, however far away it may be, is the complete civilization of the Indian and his absorption into our national life, with all the rights and privileges guaranteed to every other individual, the Indian to lose his identity as such, to give up his tribal relations and to be made to feel that he is an American citizen. If I am correct in this supposition, then the sooner all tribal relations are broken up; the sooner the Indian loses all his Indian ways, even his language, the better it will be for him and for the government and the greater will be the economy to both" (Armstrong 1964, 266).

The boarding school model had a three main purposes: 1) removing Native youth from the corrupting and degenerating influence of Native civilizations on reservations, 2) using Native children as leverage to coerce Tribal nations and 3) actively dismantling Native tribes by depriving them of their youth populations (Adams 1995; Lomawaima, 2000; Trafzer et al. 2006). As such, the philanthropic and civilizing project of Native education was deeply intertwined with the continued expropriation of Indigenous territories.

Similar to Hampton, Pratt envisioned Carlisle to be rooted in an industrial education model. "This is to be an industrial school to teach young Indians how to earn a living among civilized people by practicing mechanical and agricultural pursuits and the usual industries of civilized life" (Armstrong 1964, 235). This model would be situated closely in relation to the 1887 Dawes Act and the state's plans to dismantle Native kinship and collective ownership

systems (Estes 2019). In relation to the "Indian problem" of the late 19th century, Pratt's project for industrial education centered cultural training as both the means to civilize Native children, as well as dismantling reservation life and Native ways of being.

In advocating to congressmen for increased federal funding for Carlisle and Indian education broadly, Pratt consistently emphasized Indian education as the premier solution to the "Indian question". Moreover, Pratt's would emphasize that Native children had the aptitude towards civilization within a generation.

> There is no-doubt but that a well directed effort for the education and training of all Indian youth of suitable age can be made successful and certainly nothing will tend more to save us from a large pauper and vagabond population. I know that Indian children of nomadic parents, properly trained, can be made self-supporting men and women. They can learn to speak the English language, they can take on a fair education, and be trained industrially in civilized pursuits, they can be made self-supporting and industrious, and I think these facts will be apparent to the members of Congress who may come to look at our work here (Pratt 1964, 258).

This statement demonstrates another way that Pratt's philosophy differed from Armstrong. Pratt seemed to support the notion that Natives could be civilized immediately, while Armstrong was much more ambivalent and pessimistic. In this vein, Carlisle played a crucial role in Pratt's attempt to prove that Native children could successfully become assimilated as citizens into white civilization. As such, Carlisle often branded itself through before and after photos that underlined the stark transformation that occurred within the school. Moreover, the campus was also a "living experiment" to showcase the results to policy makers, funders and other curious onlookers. In total, Carlisle projected differing messages internally to its students versus its image within white civil society. Native students were made to believe that they were being trained to take on their place in White society as leaders, while the external message implied that these students would be integrated as subservient individuals who would not unsettle the dominant social and economic arrangements (Fear-Segal 2007). By 1891, the federal

government established compulsory schooling for all Native youth and the Carlisle model became the paradigm for state sanctioned Native schooling.

While the Carlisle model was based upon industrial education, the school continued in the legacy of his first educational project at Ft. Marion. The pedagogy of overrepresentation drove the school's cultural training program. As such, Carlisle resembled a *total institution* that was centered on the separation of Native youth from their communities and immersion into white civilization (Goffman 1961). The school took on a militaristic form, which addressed the concerns of policymakers and funders' who believed in tropes of Native children and cultures as innately wild, undisciplined, disorderly, lazy and socialist (Adams 1995). Native youth were required to have their hair cut to short lengths to eliminate the savagism of long hair. Gender binaries and roles were strictly enforced through gendered regulations on clothing and industrial training (Paxton 2006). Additionally, Carlisle emphasized the inclusion of Native youth into settler temporal frameworks "clock time", which was fundamental to western notions of work and labor, which necessitated the erasure of the disorderly and "unscientific" understandings of time of many Indigenous communities (Fear-Segal 2007; Rifkin 2017). History curriculum was based off of the idea of universal civilized progress from savagism and barbarism towards white civilization. The curriculum was supposed to humiliate students to some degree in order to provide them the hope that they could lift themselves and other Natives into the world of modern civilization.

Many aspects of Carlisle and Pratt's pedagogical practices were not original but emanated from lesser known boarding schools established in the early 19th century such as the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky (Snyder 2017). In many ways, the Carlisle model took those lessons to the extreme by taking cultural and labor training to their logical endpoints (Child

2000; Lomawaima 1994). Industrial training was not simply focused on vocational skills but imbricated within it were a host of values associated of self-reliance, rugged individualism, thrift, perseverance. It is here where the parallels with Armstrong's "dignity of labor" shine through. In order to carry out this educational project, Armstrong's emphasized the need to dissolve cultural and ethnic origins.

> In America all of our many alien white races are merged and origins lost and not one of our ten millions of negroes can tell his tribal origin simply because all these have been forgotten through constant participation in American opportunities…Certain it is we can never make the Indians real, useful American citizens by any systems of education and treatment which enforce tribal cohesion and deny citizenship associations (Pratt 1908, 21).

At Carlisle, class placements were organized with the explicit purpose of separating children of related tribes, which "[…] not only helped in the acquirement of English but broke the tribal and race clannishness, a most important victory in getter the Indian toward real citizenship" (Pratt 1908, 21). For Armstrong, such techniques were necessary in order to stimulate and promote citizenship, which necessarily required dissolving of cultural, ethnic and kinship ties that were not aligned with the social arrangements of white Christian society.

Carlisle's outing program fulfilled a related function by placing Native youth to live with white families for extended periods of time during the summer months and in some instances 1-2 years at a time where students learned to fully integrate into civilization in ways that could not be achieved at the school (Adams 1971). While the outings were meant to immerse Native youth into civilized life, Pratt also believed outings as a means to erase racial prejudices among white families as well as Natives. "No feature of the work is more productive of good results that that of temporary homes for our students in good families. In this way barriers and prejudice between the races are removed and the Indian youth have an opportunity to measure their capabilities with white youth" (Pratt 1908, 19). For Pratt and many of his contemporaries, eliminating racism

and racial prejudice necessarily meant cultural, political and economic assimilation of Native youth; in other words, moving them towards the realm of liberal humanism.

Character, Labor and the Road to Civilization

Armstrong and Pratt's educational philosophies underline the emergence of character education at the intersection of capitalist formations of labor and the state's racial projects during the late 19th century. Within these two models of schooling, character functioned as a vehicle for white civilization by indexing the figurations of a hard-working individuals who are self-sufficient and eschew laziness and vagabondage. While formerly enslaved Black people were seen as being fortunate to have been educated with a work ethic through their historical experience as enslaved laborers. At the same time, the work ethic that was developed through chattel slavery was incomplete. A genuine embrace of the "dignity of labor" required a full-throated enthusiasm. In both models, character was a central feature of completing this educational process for the freepersons.

With Native people, their social arrangements not only violated capitalist ethos of labor, but more importantly they continued to occupy swathes of land that the American state saw as rightfully theirs for the taking. Pratt's solution to the "Indian problem" was cultural and economic transmogrification. While Pratt's was deeply dedicated to civilizing Native youth and demonstrate their fitness to be citizens of the United States, it was always already a means to eliminate Native civilization on and off reservations. It was through the avenues of culture that Pratt would develop the Carlisle model of character education. As two of the most notable education philanthropists of their era, Armstrong and Pratt provide us insight into character education as a notable philanthropic project at the turn of the 20th century. The philanthropist class was guided by the assumptions that Black and Native were subject to a similar ultimatum:

assimilation into self-sufficiency and a different form of subordinate status or extinction. State sanctioned character education emerged within a period where the education of Native and Black youth was understood by educators and philanthropists as an attempt to prevent the extinction of these uncivilized races.

In contrast to Armstrong, Pratt articulated the deficiencies of Native peoples more directly to the difference in culture as well as social, political and economic structure rather than strict racial types. After the turn of the century, Pratt moved away from articulating Black people as models for Native students as he began to point to the assimilation of European immigrants as the logical path for Native people to follow (Adams 1977; Pratt 1964). At the same time, Pratt (1964) offered a theory of change that presupposed that civilizing could only happen through the dismantling of the reservation system and for Native peoples to "adopt all the abundant resources the white man found and had developed within his ancient habitations" (269). The assimilation that Pratt refers to is not merely a facile adoption of white and other Western cultural practices. Rather, Pratt understood the civilizing project as going much deeper. Pratt articulated the importance of an American character which could be achieved regardless of race. Like Armstrong, Pratt saw a civilized character that was animated and cultivated through an ethos of labor. What separated Native and white people, Pratt noted was not a difference in innate intelligence, but rather a civilized and savage character, which was a result of environment and civilizational progress.

This essay does not thoroughly engage in accounts of resistance within Carlisle, Ft. Marion as well as Armstrong. That is not to say, Black and Native students at these schools did not engage in consistent forms of resistance and refusal to the pedagogies of character. Moreover, there are endless accounts of student escapes and subordination (Adams 1995; Trafzer

et al. 2006). Moreover, the mid to late 20th century witnessed founding of freedom and survival schools across North America by Black and Native educators who created schools that were separated from the state (Anderson 1988; Davis 2013; Du Bois 1938; The Damned 1973). Rather, this essay points to how normative constructions of character were always already threatened by the tropes of communalism, socialism, laziness and dependence associated with Black and Native youth. Such qualities were antithetical to the visions of the human and civilization offered by white educator philanthropists of the late 19th century. More importantly, these tropes of non-civilization offered an alternative vision for what social, civic and economic relations could look like outside of the congealing racial capitalist state.

These questions of labor and character within Black industrial schools and Native American Boarding schools in the late 19th century underline a larger relationship between race and capitalism. What this historical overview offers us is a view of how the character education within these respective educational models cannot be fully understood simply in terms of cultural politics. Taking up Western forms of comportment were important aspects of Hampton and Carlisle's educational models, yet this symbolic transformation was not the end in itself. Armstrong and Pratt's philosophies underlie the intertwined racial and economic suppositions within early models of character education. As a racial and economic project character education was an attempt to apply emancipatory discourses of rights and liberty onto freepersons and Native peoples through their transformation into rights bearing individuals. Yet, as Saidiya Hartman (1997) has noted, that for Black people within the United States, this experiment was always already a "double bind" because emancipation came hand in hand with subordination, material deprivation and the imperative to prove their worthiness as self-sufficient, bioeconomic subjects (Wynter 2003). Moreover, producing character was entangled in ideas of work and labor

that were thoroughly entrenched in capitalist ethos as well as the inevitability of settler colonial futurities (Vizenor 2000). As a connective tissue, character enshrined education with notions of labor, citizenship and humanity. The dignity of labor for Armstrong and Pratt was a unique product of the Enlightenment and the Anglo civilization who was its champion. In the case of Black and Native racial subjects, Pratt and Armstrong differed to the extent they believed that either group could become fully civilized and self-sufficient. Regardless, both of their philosophies were deeply rooted in shared the belief that self-uplift and civilizing would come through education; especially an education centered around the cultivation of character and the moral-transcendental force of labor.

Chapter 3: "Stop the Monster, Build the Marvel"

"How are y'all feeling?" Clara asked everyone.

"Hella nervous," Penelope responded. She opened her eyes wide open, and three creases on her forehead gradually appeared. To her left, Juana took an audible deep breath. Her gaze seemed to be fixed to the tops of her well-worn Air Force 1 sneakers.

"We got this! Let's go!" Angel implored.

Clara walked to the middle of the room and asked everyone to circle up. After receiving a nod from Clara, Angel began the closing chant and was quickly joined by everyone else in the circle.

Vamos, vamos, vamos, vamos Adelante

Para que salgamos en la lucha avante

Porque nuestra Patria grita y necesita

De todo el esfuerzo de los Zapatistas

The chant was a stanza from the *Himno Zapatista*: the anthem of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) from the autonomous regions of Chiapas. For MISSION UNITED youth and for many people in Latin America and around the global south, the Zapatistas have become one of the contemporary symbols of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist resistance led by indigenous peoples (Jung 2003; Ramírez 2008). The chant also signaled the beginning of an important political encounter between grassroots community organizations in San Francisco's Mission District, the city government, and one of the Bay Area's powerful real estate corporations.

All of us were wearing t-shirts form the Save 16th Street Coalition—a partnership of San Francisco-based grassroots organizations including MISSION UNITED who had organized come together to oppose a luxury development proposal in the Mission district. Maximus—a

Bay Area real estate developer—had been attempting to push through a market rate housing development at 1979 Mission for over a year. Located at the intersection of 16th St. and Mission St., this location had been treasured by land speculators due to its location at one of the main transit hubs in the district. The Save 16th Street Coalition dubbed the proposed development with the nickname "Monster in the Mission". This label indexed not only the development's lack of affordable units and gentrification, but also local organizers' critiques of Maximus' undemocratic planning process.

On this February afternoon in 2019, the San Francisco Planning Commission was going to decide the fate of Maximus' development proposal. The commission had relocated the meeting from its normal gathering space at City Hall to the Mission High School in order to meet the anticipated larger than normal turnout. As a part of the Save 16th Street Coalition, MISSION UNITED youth organizers had committed to attending and joining other grassroots organizations in collectively refusing the "Monster". At the same, the Coalition's planned to offer a counterproposal for the location and an alternative vision for housing in the district. "Marvel in the Mission"—the alternative proposal—was the result of months of work with local Mission residents and proposed a 100% affordable housing development at the site.

As a group, the twelve of us walked together from Centro Del Pueblo to Mission High School. The six-block walk traversed the most highly gentrified boundaries of the Mission District. From the intersection of Valencia and 18th St. to Dolores St. and 18th street, the path is dotted with bars and restaurants that primarily catered to millennial tech workers and their large disposable incomes. The monotony of this walk was broken up by the vibrant murals on the facade of the Women's Building. The building has roots within an ongoing lineage of radical organizing and movement work in the community. Yet, its presence seems to be increasingly

anachronistic as it slowly becomes enveloped by the blocky and sterile architecture that typifies the aesthetics of contemporary urban housing developments. While land speculation has been prevalent in San Francisco since the mid 20th century, the mass production of market rate housing by the city developers have increasingly turned to the cost-cutting methods of aesthetic uniformity as a means to maximizing surplus value (Fox 2019; Sission 2018).

Upon approaching the intersection Dolores and 18th Street, I spotted local news vans parked along the curb adjacent to Mission High School. At the foot of the Dolores Park tennis courts, Save 16th Street Coaltion supporters gathered behind a U-Haul truck. A red banner was attached to the side of the vehicle with the message "NO MONSTER in the Mission!" printed in white text. Across the street, a smaller contingent of individuals were gathering wearing fluorescent yellow vests, construction worker gear and "Mission For All" shirts. According to Clara, MISSION UNITED's adult youth coordinator, word on the street was that "Mission For All" was an astroturfed group put together by Maximus and local building trade unions who paid local Black and Latinx construction workers show up to the commission meeting to speak in support of the 1979 Mission proposal. The San Francisco Chronicle would later report that Maximus bused in around twenty supporters and offered them $30.00 to testify in support of the 1979 Mission development (Dineen 2019).

Movement Vulnerability and a Praxis of Discomfort

This ethnographic retelling is an introduction to my youth interlocutors' confrontation with the state. I underline how their participation in a collective refusal of real estate developers was the culmination of a longer trajectory of political engagement enabled by *movement vulnerability.* This theoretical intervention centers the generative potential of engaging in collective struggle through the demanding, uncomfortable and uncertain work of organizing. In

theorizing vulnerability, I draw upon the idea of "openness" as a precondition for political engagement, self-making and future building. Vulnerability is a double-edged sword in that it enables an opening for both personal and collective change, yet also invites the possibility of harm and discomfort. As geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) has noted, "Political organizing produces new social relations that can, if reproducible, form the basis for a new social order" (57). Said differently, while the fate of any political project is unpredictable, it is through the dance with vulnerability that organizing can enable personal and collective transformations. It is this sense of possibility and openings that *movement vulnerability* enables us to understand how personal development occurs within, and as part of broader collective struggles. As such, personal development is not necessarily tied to desires for educational achievement, but rather commitments to justice projects and the possibilities of alternative social formations. In this way, *movement vulnerability* unsettles the individualistic assumptions of mainstream youth and character development frameworks, as well as their investments in individualistic impulses of self-uplift and social mobility.

Contemporary development frameworks presuppose a mastery of specific presentations and performances that are necessary to successfully interface with the state and other opportunity structures: an aesthetics of competence associated with the bio-economic subject—the capital accumulator and breadwinner (Wynter 2003). This concept parallels sociological conversations around "cultural capital", yet at the same time Bourdieuian theories have overly fixated on the practices, customs and tastes of stereotypical elites. This cultural capital model did not anticipate the extent to which non-elite and subaltern discourses could be incorporated by the state through appeals to diversity, inclusion and neoliberal multiculturalism (Ferguson 2012; Melamed 2011). Moreover, the mainstreaming of a politics of recognition obscures how self-uplift narratives and

individualism continue to reduce educational equity debates into pathologizing obsessions about achievement gaps and market-oriented appeals for college and career readiness (Abad 2020; Tuck 2009). As Soo Ah Kwon (2013) has noted, many youth centered spaces within the non-profit industrial complex are organized around a model of "affirmative governmentality" where healthy youth development is narrowly defined through the lenses of civility, citizenship and self-uplift. Such paradigms are often animated by familiar theories of development where the scope of social change is premised upon young BIPOC engaging in agreeable and passive forms of political engagement. *Movement vulnerability* speaks to the shifts of "structures of feeling" (Williams 1978) as the commonsense truism "Keep your head down and work hard in school" increasingly becomes an inadequate form of praxis for many working-class racially othered young people living and surviving in contemporary San Francisco.

Movement vulnerability speaks to the long-term self-making and world-making processes that emerge through the unglamorous work of organizing, which are not solely animated by individualistic appeals to myths of meritocracy and social mobility. For many MISSION UNITED youth, engaging in collective struggle and organizing required opening oneself to the quotidian drudgery of sitting through dull city government meetings, forfeiting large parts of their social lives, doing the difficult work of analyzing the political topography of the city, and preparing oneself to step into potentially hostile environments. This collection of moments comprised forms of fugitive planning and study, which threaten and unsettle the legitimacy and authority of state sanctioned education because they are forms of learning and education that the state is unable to grade, evaluate, score or dictate on its own terms (Harney and Moten 2013). As such, *movement vulnerability* underlines the intimate connections between personal evolution and revolutionary change (Boggs 2011). While these forms of personal development are not

inherently antagonistic towards education or academic achievement, they are characterized by an alternative commitment to collective struggle and justice projects. For MISSION UNITED youth activists, standing in collective refusal to real estate developers at this commission meeting was the product longer trajectory of struggle, study and organizing.

Liberal Illegitimacy and the Aftermath of Organized Abandonment

The automatic doors of the train hissed as they parted. Raul and Francisco stepped off the train with their skateboards in hand and hustled up the stairs of the 16th st. BART station. I felt the urge to tell them to slow down, but I sensed my words would not register. They seemed to be caught up in a playful jostling like midfielders chasing a soccer ball down the pitch. As they ascended the narrow staircase, the descending commuters paused seemingly frozen in place. Francisco gracefully weaved around their bodies and carved out a path, which Raul immediately followed. I hustled up the staircase to keep up with them. As I reached the top stair, the two of them were moving towards the station's fare gate. In one smooth motion, Francisco placed his palms on the metal fare gate, lifted his body up and swung his legs forward above the orange barricade as if he was clearing a hurdle during a race. Raul's employed a cruder method by forcing open the orange barricade with his hands. The gate began to beep as he moved his hips through the orange gate pincers.

It was a week before the scheduled confrontation with Maximus at the San Francisco Planning Commission meeting. Clara had asked all of the MISSION UNITED youth to swing by after school so that they could work on writing and practicing the speeches they would be delivering during the public comment portion of the meeting. During the session, I took a seat next to Raul. He was slouching in an office chair with a single ear bud in his right ear.

“I think I have some writers block,” Raul noted, “I have so much I want to say, but I don’t know where to start.”

“Don’t overthink it,” I responded, “What’s on your mind right now?”

“I don’t think there is a utopia, but it seems like San Francisco day by day is growing towards a dystopia where the poor are penalized for being poor and Black, Brown and minorities.”

At seventeen years old, Raul was a high school senior who had a penchant for thrifted clothing, skateboarding and dangly earrings. When I began working with MISSION UNITED, I connected with Raul over our common interest in music. Raul had a taste for similar kinds of alternative and punk music that I had grown up listening to. He would often greet me by offering one of his earbuds so he could share the latest band he had just discovered on Spotify. Raul lived at home in a one-bedroom apartment with his mom, his younger brother, his older sister and her toddler child. His mother was an undocumented laborer who cleaned homes of mostly white young professionals for under the table wages. One of the more outspoken members of MISSION UNITED, Raul usually did not shy away from share his political analysis of the cultural and economic contradictions that drove the city.

> BART getting more and more expensive. Police being on BART to check tickets. You’re gonna give someone a ticket because they didn’t pay, but the reason they didn’t pay is because they can’t afford it so they fucking hopped. So, you’re gonna give them a fucking ticket for being poor and being unable to pay? You’re penalizing them for being poor, which is a prime example of how capitalism hurts poor people. That makes no sense. Giving a ticket to somebody because they can’t afford a ticket. I know people take BART because they have work or school in the city. How do you expect them to juggle...pay for rent, food and education with a job that’s out of the way? And you’re only there because that’s the only one you can find. There’s always things set against poor people. It’s like a never-ending thing. While our government is giving tech corporations everything they want like tax breaks and housing.

At this point, Raul has been involved in youth organizing for almost 4 years with MISSION UNITED. His observation about BART was a recognition of the decades-long process of "organized abandonment" that has defined late liberalism across the United States and the world (Harvey 1989; Povinelli 2011). Within urban metropolises such as San Francisco, the state has facilitated the evaporation of its social welfare functions in favor or individualistic and technocratic modes of public policy. Progressivism as it exists in San Francisco, has not been antagonistic to this process, but has been implicated in enshrining privatization and financialization agendas on the backs of its poorer and darker communities (Shange 2019). Ostensibly public services such as BART have increasingly become unaffordable for poor and working-class youth. Rather than moving to make the system more affordable, the state has responded with carceral measures in the form of citations and securitizing train stations. A decade removed from the murder of Oscar Grant by police officer Johannes Mehserle at the Fruitvale BART station in 2009, the punitive impulses of the system seem to be as palpable as ever. In San Francisco and elsewhere, class and race continue to be intertwined vectors of marginalization. In 2018 and 2019 respectively, Black riders have respectively received 52% and 50% of fare evasion citations (BART 2020). This absurdity has pushed Black and other working-class young people to take part in open forms of refusal by hopping fare gates or jumping inside the rear doors of the bus. By hopping gates, pushing through the side doors or by sneaking closely behind a paying rider, these daily practices refusals have become necessary to surviving within San Francisco and the entire Bay Area for many poor young people.

Penelope overheard our conversation and continued down Mario's line of thinking by explaining the entanglement of tech and repressive state apparatuses.

> Like Amazon and how Amazon supports ICE. I've been learning about how a lot of the tech companies here are working with ICE. I went to a protest last week at Salesforce

> because they have contracts with ICE and they make computer programs that they use at the camps on the border. You know they just built that hella big skyscraper in the middle of San Francisco. San Francisco is made up of a lot of immigrants, while Salesforce is helping to oppress them and put them in cages at the border.

I came to know Penelope after I began doing college access work with several high school seniors at MISSION UNITED. Penelope often experimented with hair dye and her hairdo cycled from green to purple to black over the course of the year. At six years old, she migrated into the United States from Mexico with her mother and younger brother across the border into El Paso. After five years they relocated to San Francisco. By the time she began middle school, her green card had expired, and her immigration status has been in limbo. Moreover, the dates of her residency in the United States had rendered her ineligible for the limited protections offered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Penelope's reflection foregrounds how modern capitalism in San Francisco is driven in large degree by the rise of the tech economy, which has catapulted the state of California into the fifth largest economy in the world by GDP. More importantly, her analysis points to the entanglements of the tech economy with the state's policing of the southern borders. The United States' Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operates much of its cloud services through Amazon's web infrastructure (Hao 2018). In 2018, Salesforce contracted with Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) to provide operating software for the agency (Bergen and Grant 2018). While much has been written and said about the relationship between gentrification and the arrival of tech workers over the last decade, Penelope's analysis also points to how the profit motive of the tech economy is also entangled with the systematic detainment of displaced migrants from Central and South America. This dynamic can be situated in a longer historical trajectory where the entire technology infrastructure of the region traces its origins to the security state (Lowen 1997).

Penelope then began to articulate how divestment manifested itself within her own school. She and several other MISSION UNITED youth attended the Academy of Arts and Sciences, which was organized around a small school model that served around 350 students. She often spoke positively about the racial and ethnic plurality of the school, which served large proportions of Black students and migrant youth from Central and South America. Despite the intimate school model, Penelope pointed to how progressive reforms such as calls for culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies are unequipped to address the seismic consequences of organized abandonment.

"A lot of teachers are gone because of my administration at academy and personal reasons because they can't afford to stay here. I feel like every year academy changes. Last year we lost seven. The year before we lost eight." Chronic teacher and staff turnover have been well-documented issues that exacerbates existing problems within schools that serve large numbers of poor students of color (Simon and Johnson 2015).

"Every year it's new people we don't exactly know", Juana adds, "Even though I make close connections with teachers, I lose that because they leave". Although SFUSD high school teachers earn an average of $69,910, this salary leaves educators as low-income due to the staggering housing market and the extreme affordability crises in San Francisco and the entire Bay Area (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). Within the geographical epicenter of the gig economy, educators increasingly have found their social positions coming to resemble that of other precarious workers such as ride share drivers and other "gig economy" laborers. Meanwhile, the starting salaries for police officers in in the city begin at over $89,000, which resembles that of the salaries of tech workers (SFPD 2020). As an example of organized abandonment, this dichotomy underlines how neoliberalism was not simply about the shrinking

or elimination the welfare state, but rather the violent restructuring of state power through the reallocation of capital and surplus (Camp 2016; Gilmore 2007)

Academy was collocated with Ruth Asawa School of the Arts (SOTA), which had more than twice the number of students. Moreover, SOTA has been one of the most heralded schools in the district due to its prestigious music program. Only until a few years prior, the school essentially functioned as a de facto private school by allowing upper middle-class white students from Marin as well as the Peninsula to enroll. While only 13% of SFUSD students were white, over 39% of SOTA's student population was white (SFUSD 2019). Moreover, the school's parent association that functioned as a fundraising arm for the school.

Juana, a typically shy and quiet member of MISSION UNITED highlighted how this dynamic was manifested on a quotidian basis.

> At SOTA it's mostly white kids and at Academy, it's mostly people of color. There's tension between there. SOTA, a bunch of their parents have a lot of money and put more money into SOTA, so SOTA has more privileges than us even though we share the same campus. We don't even have our own floor. They have two floors. We have to share gyms, even though it's our gym we have to share it with them. For the auditorium that they have control over, we have to accommodate to their dates. It can't work the other way around. If we need a date they already have, they get to take it and we don't. We have to be ok with it. It's kind of annoying because I help with a lot of performances at the auditorium. We had and assembly and we had to change it 3 times because they needed those dates and they didn't know before. I feel like it's not fair. They act like they own the school and they don't take into consideration what Academy needs.

Juana's description of the power imbalance between Academy and SOTA parallels what sociologist R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy (2014) has described as "opportunity hoarding". While Academy serves students with some of the highest needs in the district, a school like SOTA is able to rely upon powerful outside fundraising organs as well as dictate the terms of access of campus resources. Within the aftermath of organized abandonment, market competition for philanthropic support becomes the de facto model of organizing educational institutions. As Eric

Kohl-Arenas (2015) has written, philanthropy dissolves democratic decision-making by equating the interests of society with the particular agendas of foundations and philanthropic capital. Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine how the competition and cut-throat individualism at the institutional level permeates into classrooms, curriculum and pedagogy.

Refusing (Under)Development in San Francisco Schools

At MISSION UNITED, youth organizers interrogated the distinctions between schools, schooling and education. For those who are educators or study education, the reduction of education to schooling is insidious in that it reduces the dynamism and transformative potential of educational programs with the institutions and buildings that we call schools, as well the hierarchical relationships between students and teachers (Stovall 2018). As the adult youth coordinator, Clara worked to foster a political education program where participants taught each other and engage in the analytical work critiquing their educational experiences in relation to systems of oppression.

As the conversation began shifting towards schools, Francisco gingerly raised his hand to speak making a peace sign with his fingers. Francisco was a sophomore at Merced, which was San Francisco's premier college preparatory public high school. Like SOTA, Merced was an exclusive public school that employed selective admission criteria based upon GPA, test scores and extracurricular activities. The school has had a polarizing reputation for being extremely academically demanding and its hyper competitive student culture. Over the years, young people I had worked with have told me stories about the heavy workload that often requires students to pull all-nighters. Francisco had grown up in San Francisco's Bayview district, which is one of the city's historically Black neighborhoods and today holds the highest concentration of young people in the city. In order to get to school, which was on the opposite end of the city, Francisco

often had to wake up at 5:30 in the morning to make it first period on time. “Merced is just a place to get academic success. I mean, that’s fine, but the culture is very…do a lot of homework. Homework could be good, but they give us six, seven classes a day. The least you could get, there’s, most of my classes is thirty or forty kids, which is hella. That doesn’t give the teacher enough time to teach everyone.” Francisco’s use of the pronoun “they” to describe Merced’s culture suggests a sense of distance from the school’s exclusive reputation and its hyper-focus on academic rigor. Although he attended the school for over two years, he described himself as a part, and still apart from Merced’s vision of academic excellence and achievement. Sociologist Prudence Carter (2005) might fit Francisco into her typology of a “non-compliant believer”. At the same time, I argue that Francisco’s critique was less about a need to have his cultural codes acknowledged by the school, and more specifically a refusal of Merced’s hyper-productive impulses, which normalize anti-solidaristic competition, sleep deprivation, and poor mental health for the sake of academic excellence. More importantly, Francisco’s ambivalence seems to imply that academic success, which can be useful, is not in itself necessarily liberatory, joyful, or life affirming.

He characterized Merced’s academic rigor not by the difficulty of ideas and concepts, but by the deluge of homework generated from being required to take six to seven “college prep” classes. Moreover, Francisco highlighted the climate of rugged individualism that aligns with the pedagogical models of large, impersonal classes.

> You’re supposed to be independent. If your teacher’s busy, or they can’t answer, you have to find the answer for yourself. For some people it can be hard because they don’t have the resources, but Merced does a good job of giving out those resources to everyone. But what sucks is Merced is the only school that gives those resources compared to other public schools. I’ll be telling my friend they offer free tutoring, and they’ll be surprised, and I’ll be like y’all don’t have that? Honestly, I thought it was all the same, which sucks because it’s not. So, Merced gives a bunch of resources but we’re also very privileged because they get a lot of funding because they get a lot of kids there.

> The PTSA is very involved because they raise a lot of money. Rich kids go there, and their parents do PTSA so they donate. The privilege they have and all the money they have, it helps the school, but it only helps that school. There is no other school getting that type of help.

The myths of academic rigor that are associated with exclusive institutions such as Merced obscure the amounts of supplemental resources and support that they provide its students. At the same time, Francisco highlights the hierarchies of San Francisco high schools where most of them do not have access to supplementary services such as tutoring or the financial power of parent associations to supplement inadequate district and state funding. For decades, the agenda of neoliberal reforms such as Race to the Top have imposed punitive policies that withhold funding from poor schools and reward schools that are already well resourced (Lipman 2011). As such, Francisco underlines how institutions such as Merced prop up the myths of its academic excellence by obscuring the extreme material inequalities that exists between schools within the forty-nine square mile area of San Francisco.

Francisco's critique of Merced's culture points to the relationship between schooling and capitalism, as well as how hyper-individualism becomes concomitant to the image of successful students and academic excellence.

> I hate it. Everyone is busy trying to do their own thing at Merced. You don't smile at people. You don't say hey to people unless you know them. Everyone's against each other. I think it has a lot to do with capitalism. Capitalism is very, everyone's independent. No one's doing it on purpose, but the school is just built like that. Everyone's accustomed to it. You try to break it, but people will look at you and say, "What are you doing?" Never mind. I was trying to break the standards, but you know, it's ingrained, and they don't even know. I just don't like that. It shows in our society a lot. Capitalism influences us. Like, an example. You shouldn't cheat on tests, but like homework. Let's say I did the homework and you ask me if you could copy it because you didn't do it. Some person at Merced will be like, "No I'm not gonna let you copy this. I worked for this." And I get it, but at the same time, we don't even question why we're against each other. It's just like, you have it right there, you could help them, you won't be in trouble, but they'll be like "No I did this. You have to do it yourself." It's like that over there. It sucks. Only a few people there are chill. They're like "Yeah, I got you. Take a picture." But some people are like, "Yeah, No. I did that. Not you. I deserve a

> good grade because I did it. If you didn't do it, that's on you. If you get a bad grade that's cause you didn't do it." It's just like, so independent and hella against each other.

Francisco's account describes the internal logics of schools as ideological state apparatuses in which s students are interpolated as individuals hyper-focused on productivity and winner-take-all competition (Althusser 2014). For Francisco, the pedagogical climate of Merced offered a specific vision of citizenship based around the achievement and the aspiration towards becoming the idealized capitalist citizen (Wynter 2003). Outside of school sanctioned group assignments, collaboration and mutual aid are rendered illegitimate forms of social relations. In other words, Francisco's provocation is not about democratizing access to dominant forms of cultural capital, but rather he questions the legitimacy of the vision of social relations that Merced represents and reproduces. As such, the logical endpoint for this educational and political project is dominance.

"You should be learning to be giving and help others and not be like only independent", Francisco adds, "Being the best sucks because the best is lonely." At the heart of it, Francisco questions these modes of education and how they are inflected with carceral impulses that atomize, individualize and deputize students into competing with and policing each other. Carceral logics function by atomizing, individualizing and punishing aberrations, or as Paula X. Rojas (2007) notes, how "the cops in our heads and hearts" become naturalized. While they attempt to foreclose alternative visions of education, young people like Francisco are always already radically doing the work of remaking themselves and transforming school spaces even when the threat punishment is dangled over them (Cox 2015).

"You don't get to hate it unless you love it": Fugitive Study and Praxis

In the 2019 film *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*, Jimmy Fails, a young, working-class Black man born and raised in the San Francisco takes up a reclamation project of the only

city he's ever known. Set in the post-gentrification and post-techno dystopian landscape of the present, the film asks the viewer to grapple with what it means to seek belonging from a city that no longer wants you—and perhaps never did. Towards the end of the film's two-hour running time, we see Jimmy sitting on a MUNI bus eavesdropping on two twenty-something white women who are presumably transplants working in tech or just "passing through". Jimmy is sitting within earshot of them and listens to their lamentations on having to seek housing within poor neighborhoods of color and their unfulfilling start-up day jobs. While Jimmy is silent during this exchange, he is hit with the impulse to respond after they declare that "The city is over" and "Fuck this city."

> "You don't get to hate San Francisco," Jimmy interjects.
> One of the women incredulously responds, "Sorry, what?"
> The other woman adds, "Yeah dude, sorry but I'll hate what I want."
> "Do you love it?" Jimmy asks them.
> "Yeah, I'm here," she responds, "But to I have to love it?"
> "You don't get to hate it unless you love it," Jimmy asserts, which elicits a sense of indignance from the two women. (Talbot and Fails 2018)

This scene parallels the contradictory feelings, emotions and relationships MISSION UNITED youth had with San Francisco as they organized in the city. While the political economic dynamics of the city are reflected through the hegemony of finance, technology and land speculation, MISSION UNITED youth also recognized the histories and legacies of social movements that have always been driven by the most marginalized communities in the city. But more so, they sustained a commitment to the possibility of a different city that more closely lives up to its egalitarian and communal signifiers. In this sense, belonging was not a description of a passive experience, but a relationship that was expressed and created through friction and struggle.

A day before the showdown with Maximus Commission I tagged along during an exchange visit to the Filipino Community Center where we did some last-minute mobilizing to get allies to attend the San Francisco Planning Commission meeting. After the presentation, the youth organizers made the decision to go to the milk tea shop before calling it a day. Penelope asked me if I wanted to join them, and I accepted the invitation. The shop was relatively empty with only two other people inside including the two employees. After ordering, we huddled around the seating area next to the shop window overlooking Mission street. Directly outside was a MUNI bus stop where every fifteen minutes, a 14 northbound bus dropped off and picked up passengers. We began talking about the looming meeting and the nerves everyone was feeling about participating in public comment.

"So, how about this. What does SF mean to us? Why are we doing all this?", I asked to Penelope, Juana, Elias and Francisco.

"San Francisco is about…it's diverse. It's got a lot of cultures here. It's got a lot of different groups and ethnicities. LGBTQ and stuff like that," Elias said, "A diverse city. It's a sanctuary city too. There's a lot of different stuff going on. People are political here. Like they stand up for immigrants."

"SF is a weird city, a really cool experiment because they put a bunch of different cultures in this city," Francisco noted, "Even though they kind of segregated them, which was not a good idea, people of color made the best of it and created communities."

I looked towards Juana. As we locked eyes, she took a deep breath.

"Social movements that have happened here. Gentrification is happening and how a lot of low-income people have been working against that.

"Big climate marches and protests that have been happening forever," Penelope added, "We got a lot of activists and organizers here and it's part of the culture to be political."

This exchange points to the contradictions of San Francisco as an "imagined community (Anderson 2006). Although their appreciation of San Francisco did not quite reach the level of nationalism, they articulated an appreciation and a commitment to the cosmopolitan aspirations that characterize the city. In many ways, San Francisco's particular flavor of cosmopolitanism has signified the cutting edge of diversity-centered multiculturalism, which has been wielded scornfully by the right and held up by liberals as a model ameliorating social problems (Melamed 2011). As a "majority minority" city, the major arms of the municipal government—including the Board of Education, the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor's office—are staffed or headed predominantly by non-White people. While my interlocutors were very explicit about the importance of representation and diversity as one of San Francisco's valuable characteristics, Francisco speaks to the city's long-standing history of racial segregation that continues to exist within the city's commitment to racial liberalism (HoSang 2010). While critic of neoliberal multiculturalism often point to the ways representational politics are animated through capitalist logics, my interlocutors spoke to the way's diversity is also connected to a legacy of radical movements and activism in the city led by working poor BIPOC. As such, what Elias, Francisco, Penelope and Juana articulated was not a Pollyannaish relationship with San Francisco style progressivism, but a recognition that preserving what good was left in the city—and shifting the city's current trajectory—required collective action and movements.

"Did y'all hear about Kenny?", Elias said, "He said that his family is gonna move to Pittsburgh cause they're 'bout to get evicted."

"Damn", Penelope responded.

"My cousin and his family. They moved to Antioch, but he's using my grandma's address so he can keep going to Bal," Francisco noted, "It's fucked up. He wakes up at 4:30 just so he's not late."

Francisco reached into the oil-stained white paper pouch on his lap and pulled out a long, spring-like curly fry. He moved the conversation towards the transformative power of gentrification as a force in San Francisco's Mission District.

> Francisco: Gentrification and all that. So many people are moving out. The community is not there anymore. A whole bunch of new people. I don't know how I feel about there, but it sucks because the community is displaced now. Someone you thought you knew down the neighborhood doesn't live there anymore. Friends start moving. It sucks. I feel like it's a loss of community, which I wish I could experience. They have old photos of the Mission on this one Instagram account and you could see the community and it's flourishing. People are on the block every day. Kids are on the block every day. I follow that one Instagram account. I think it's "Old 24 Mission". Ah, it's so beautiful. Like there you get a sense of community because no one wanted to live in the Mission. People made the most of it and made their own culture and it was cool. But right now, growing up, I did a feel a little more community. Growing up during Carnival, I would feel it a lot. As the years go by, I notice a lot of people not coming anymore. You don't see the same faces every day. It's just less and less people, which kind of sucks. I remember when I was a kid, my grandma lives where they pass by around St. Peters. We'd always post up chairs and watch the floats pass by. They were so big and so into it. They'd be giving candy and bracelets. There'd be a swarm of people, not just people standing, but people behind you and in the middle, it was packed. The community was there. Right now, looking at it again, it's not as packed as before. You could tell there's not that many people. You start wondering where did all the people go?
>
> Elias: It's like white people on 24th Street. Before I would not see them there. It's not like they're bad, but you could tell that they're not from here. Their presence is making other people have to leave. Techies. Techies all over the place. The big ass white Google busses. That's gentrification. People with hella money coming into communities. Their presence is also dangerous for people of color because it brings more police into the communities, too. That's causing a big disturbance. Like they're not there to protect us but to make gentrifiers feel like they're safe.
>
> Penelope: A lot of people are being kicked out and pushed to other cities. SF isn't even an option anymore. People that you typically wouldn't see in this neighborhood. They say that it's safer when they move in. When they say safety, they mean there's more police and who do you think they're gonna be arresting? Safer for who? People with money? For people who are rich, safety means getting people off the street. But then people don't have nowhere to go. The reason that they're out there is because market rate

housing keeps going up. They don't have jobs and rent is really expensive. You blame them for being homeless and poor, but in reality, rich people and white people being able to come and move to SF means low income people here gotta leave.

Juana: My cousin and his family. They moved to Antioch, but he's using my grandma's address so he can keep going to Bal. It's fucked up. He wakes up at 4:30 just so he's not late.

More broadly, Juana, Penelope Elias and Francisco articulated how the experience of suffering through gentrification are comprised of unspectacular quasi-events that are rendered illegible like an effect without a cause (Povinelli 2011). Francisco, Juana, Penelope and Elias describe how the political economic consequences of gentrification are metabolized through the every-day and quotidian transformations and non-spectacular forms of suffering. Francisco highlights the gradual and naturalized process of deterritorialization of the Mission from a working-class ethnic common into a white neighborhood (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The accuracy of his historiography takes a backseat to his desire and yearning for a Mission that exists outside of late capitalist atomization and alienation. Elias and Juana pointed to the way safety is weaponized within gentrification projects. Safety is reconfigured in service of capital and the mostly white newcomers who possess large reserves of disposable income from their well-compensated tech labor. Juana speaks to how displacement places added burdens on students and parents in the form of unreasonable commutes and creatively maintaining residency status within the city in order to maintain connections their school communities. The risk is not merely inconvenience and time, but also the dangers of state prosecution if the school district is made aware that they no longer live in San Francisco. These quotidian forms of enduring and suffering underline the punitive and carceral dimensions that enable dispossession.

These localized manifestations of accumulation by dispossession speaks to the way state power renders marginalized populations as surplus that must be jettisoned to enable the ongoing processes of capital accumulation through tech economies and real estate speculation (Harvey

2005). In our globalized economies, gentrification has become "tied to an excess of national and international capital sloshing across the globe and being parked in 'hot' cities like San Francisco" (Cohen and Marti 2009, 225). Moreover, conventional market-driven solutions to making housing more affordable in cities are often fueled by microeconomic principles such as supply and demand, which prescribes that municipalities should eliminate regulations and allow developers to build more housing units regardless of their affordability (Shaw 2018). At the time, these common sense, pro-growth claims have not been verified even by mainstream economists (Anenberg and Kung 2018) Either way, evictions and the violent uprooting of communities are understood as unfortunate, but necessary externalities for reaching market equilibrium. Enacting such an agenda relies upon the repressive power of the security state in enforcing the legalized displacement within poor Black and other marginalized communities in San Francisco and the larger Bay Area (Maharawal 2017). In contemporary metropolitan areas such as San Francisco, gentrification is animated through the partnership between the municipalities and developers. Market logics recode formerly undesirable zones into undervalued and underutilized land requiring a corrective revaluation.

Solidarity in Action' anti-gentrification organizing in San Francisco actively worked to contest dominant, supply-side logics of housing that are often the default position of the city government as well as local real estate developers. Moreover—as Francisco articulates—housing crises in the city are not merely an issue of supply and demand, but larger political economic forces that entangle the state, capital and poor immigrant communities in the city.

> A bunch of tech companies are moving here. To move here, they bring their workers here. They set up a new place. Just like that, they bring everyone in and the workers need a place to live. So, a lot of them live in SF now. They work for a tech company that probably pays them to come with them because they have that money. I don't blame them for everything because I know it's more complicated. Also, the city wants them here because they want that money, so they let tech companies do whatever they want because

> they have all the money. I feel like tech companies, they're somewhat the reason for gentrification. That affects people like us who can't move. If we move, that's a lot of money for regular people, not for techies. Then, developers look at this picture of tech workers moving to SF starting their rich businesses and all they care about is finding out how to make hella money from this situation […] The government has a say, too. They let these developers build. They have a choice to say, actually you need to build affordable housing for people that live here and have been here for generations. No instead, they're like you can make a condo that no one can afford except the people that come to move in, which are the rich people. They know what they're doing, which sucks. The reason we're showing up tomorrow is to make them hear us with people power.

While Francisco's descriptive analysis succinctly lays out the phenomena of land speculation in the city, he also offers a prescriptive intervention. Gentrification and displacement are not natural facts of life but are the function of political decisions made within the chambers of City Hall. In contrast to the individualist training that he, Juana, Elias and Penelope have been subjected to at their respective schools, they have prepared to confront the state by doing the work of building solidarities, mobilizing allies and participating in a collective expression of refusal to developers. These forms of organizing have roots in what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) have described as fugitive planning and Black study. These forms of planning and study are not sanctioned by schools or animated by desires for individualistic recognition and academic achievement. Rather, the practice of Black study, like Blackness, threatens common-sense notions of social mobility as well as the legitimacy of state-sanctioned education. For MISSION UNITED youth, the work of organizing enabled a pathway towards engaging in collective solidarities rooted in housing justice and alternative visions for the city.

Embodying a Politics of Discomfort and Affective Economies

The Mission High School auditorium was filled to the brim with onlookers for the evening's planning commission meeting. The room's vintage aesthetic was punctuated by the heavy patina of the hardwood stage. The rigid and cold steel seats were similar to the bleacher seating you would find at sports stadiums a generation ago. A critical mass of the audience wore

orange, pink, green and teal Save 16th Street coalition shirts. The smaller contingent of audience members wore black sweaters with “Mission for ALL” and fluorescent yellow vests. I rubbed my temples to massage the onset of a migraine headache. As it got closer to the start of the meeting, I could feel a nervous tension permeating the auditorium.

The San Francisco Planning commission members were seated on the main stage behind a long row of tables covered by a teal colored cloth. To their right was a projector screen that seemed much too small for anyone more than five rows back to make sense of. To the left of the stage was a brown banner with the letters “MISSION” aligned vertically in gold text, which were the school colors. On the right side of the stage was a gold banner with the text “2018” aligned vertically. From the middle of the stage to the rear doors of the auditorium, there was an aisle that bisected the floor level seating area into two equally sized spaces. The front of the aisle had a podium and a microphone that faced the stage. Standing to the left side of the stage was a white law enforcement officer wearing a khaki colored button up shirt and a walkie talkie attached to his left shoulder.

There were 11 commissioners on the stage, one Asian man, one Black woman, five white men, and three white women. The 1979 Mission community hearing began as one of the Planning Commission members on stage welcomed the crowd with some brief remarks. He acknowledged the large interest in this hearing, which prompted the commission to move locations from the chambers of city hall to the Mission High School auditorium. He concluded his statement with a disclaimer.

“This meeting will uphold the same rules as every other commission meeting. We ask everyone in attendance to practice civility and refrain from applauding, cheering or booing.”

An Asian man in his 40s or 50s walked up to the podium and introduced himself as an analyst within the city's planning department. He provided a brief description of Maximus' proposed development, which was located at 1979 Mission—the 16th St. BART plaza. He summarized the main features of the development plan, which included the 300 units of proposed housing 1979 Mission would bring. As a closing remark, the analyst noted that approximately 18% of the proposed units would be designated as affordable units, which was equivalent to 45 units in total.

The next speaker was a man named Rogelio who seemed to be in his early or mid-thirties. His black hair was cropped on the top and buzz faded on the sides. The collar of his blue oxford shirt was peeking out beneath his black 3/4" zipped sweater. He introduced himself as well as a project manager with Maximus as he began his pitch for the 1979 Mission development. During his presentation, he alternated his gaze from the stack of papers in front of him on his podium and the commissioners on the stage.

> Over the past six years, we've heard the concerns from the community about displacement and the rising costs of living. While one project alone can't solve the issues facing the Mission today.1979 Mission will be a benefit to the community and to the city. We're here today to ask for the commission and the public's support. Maximus was founded and is based in San Francisco. We have over 5,000 apartment homes exclusively in the Bay Area. We're long term owner-operators with a strong commitment to development projects and the communities that we serve as evident by our good Samaritan leases. Since 2005, at Park Merced we have supported 62 displaced San Francisco families including 31 from the Mission District affected by unforeseen circumstances like fires. These families have been given the opportunity to live in Park Merced for over 2 years paying the same rent in the apartment that they left as low as $485 in one example. We're the only landlord to do so in San Francisco. We also hold 333 section 8 leases. The largest of any landlord in the city and we have nearly 7,000 homes in the development pipeline, including at Park Merced where we'll be providing existing impacted residents with a brand-new replacement apartment at the existing rent-controlled rate. 1979 Mission is located at the famous intersection of 16th and Mission St on one of the region's most important transit hubs serving over 13 million passengers a year. With the growth of Mission Bay, and Chase Arena, this is a front door and gateway to the city. 1979 Mission today is an underused parcel where no rental apartment exists today. The project will be constructed with 100% union labor with opportunities for local

> hires so mission district residents can have a job in the Mission. Over the years we have proposed several, concrete above based code options for inclusionary housing. Our prior option was proposed by the Mayor's office of Housing and Community Development. It provided unprecedented support for people of the Mission who the city doesn't otherwise have resources for, specifically those living in SROs. This proposal would have created 321 apartments where none exist today. 46 would be affordable and move in ready the same day as the rest of the building. Income generated from those 46 units were estimated to be 1.5 million dollars which we would have reinvested into the mission district to provide rent subsidies to stabilize an additional 159 SRO households in perpetuity or life of the project.

Rogelio's rhetorical strategy attempted to position Maximus as responsive to the critiques and demands of community organizers and activists. More to the point, he attempted to bridge the incommensurable chasm between developer and community by activating a shared affinity for the city by emphasizing Maximus' origins as a San Francisco-based firm. Rather than a brash market-based proposal, Rogelio offered a plan that was textured with progressive grammar of public-private partnerships, "common sense" supply-side logics and the progressive appeal of union jobs. For example, his use of the phrase "inclusionary housing" functioned to obscure the political economic contours of the grassroots organizers' demands for "affordable housing." Said differently, these rhetorical techniques functioned to skirt Maximus' structural location as a junior partner in the city's development agenda.

By foregrounding the firm's recent charitable and philanthropic deeds, Rogelio was able to produce an image of a caring developer that participates in a different kind of capitalism—one that is "conscious", "humane" and "compassionate". This passage mirrors what Janet Mawhinney (1998) has described as *moves to innocence* or "strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination" (17). In other words, Rogelio's invocation of a moral economy asserted the premises of reasonableness and reconciliation. Within this calculus, compromise and win-win solutions became the logical conclusion of public policy.

After the end of the Maximus presentation, representatives from the Save 16th Street Coalition approached the podium. Three individuals approached side by side each wearing Save 16th Street Coalition shirts. The three of them represented San Francisco based organizations including HOMEY, Mission Housing and the Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco. Their rebuttal to the Maximus presentation offered a critique of the 1979 Mission development through a systemic analysis of displacement. They wove a narrative that resonated across metropolitan areas across the country: land speculation, waves of new professional managerial class residents, pricing-out of working-class immigrants and the dearth of affordable housing. Still, the centerpiece of the presentation was not simply a retelling of a ubiquitous story of gentrification, but a glimpse into an alternative vision for the 1979 Mission site and the entire community.

> Our commitment to community needs at the 16th St. plaza don't end at defeating the monster. Our long-term commitment is to help bring the deeply needed housing and services to the Plaza and further improve the neighborhood. That is why over a period of 9 months we held community meetings and input sessions to truly get at what frontline communities impacted by gentrification wanted in their neighborhood. It was overwhelmingly clear, they wanted 100% affordable housing with supports services on the ground floor. True to the values espoused by the department and the community alike, we modeled a strong example of how and why a community development developed planning process is both necessary and functional. This truly democratic process on the foundations of grassroots organizing led us to create a marvel in the mission an alternative proposal fully envisioned and designed by the communities most impacted by this crisis. Here you can see the proposal. A 100% affordable housing project that would be local hire and 100% union built as are all affordable housing projects in SF with support services on site. A community centers. An open green space and leading towards Marshall elementary school as opposed to a Monster literally blocking out the sun. This is the housing that can actually be lived in by the workers' who built it. Recently, we began preliminary discussions with an awarded architecture firm that has experience building affordable housing with open green space and experience building on top of a BART station. We are working through amassing study, different unit counts of what a plan built out would cost. As well as a planning for the second phase of our community planning process. Any development of this magnitude will need a funding plan. Often these questions are those of political will, especially in a city as full of wealth as San Francisco. Nonetheless at this point we have several opportunities. There are 300 million in the city's 2020 housing bond. Last week a foundational commitment of 500 million for

> affordable housing in the region was announced. There are 181 million in windfall for SF. And statewide, there are government subsidies and government support we can explore. Additionally, we are in a period marked by a change in public priorities. From austerity to ensuring people have what they need to thrive.

At the end of the statement Save 16th Street Coalition members roared with a wave of applause and cheers. One of the women planning commissioners seated at the center of the table interjected herself in the celebration.

"Folks. You can do the waves." She demonstrated by facing her palms out to the crowd and shaking her wrists, "But no clapping or cheering".

Her demonstration resembled something akin to the jazz hands gesture you might see at a musical theater performer. To my right, Francisco and Elias continued to clap and cheer over the commissioner's request.

Angel had her right arm raised in the air and let out an "Ayyy".

In what follows, I lay out how my youth interlocutors engaged in as a *praxis of discomfort,* which offers a way to describe the techniques of political opposition through a combination of refusals and by posing alternatives. A *generative discomfort* resonates with the work of organizer Adrienne Maree Brown (2017) and her articulation of the necessity of understanding the function of "fractals" within movement work. "When we speak of systemic change, we need to be fractal. Fractals—a way to speak of the patterns we see—more from the micro to macro level" (89). In other words, Brown emphasizes how quotidian practices at the individual and local levels might form the foundation for movements at the larger scales. Brown's idea of fractals owes much to the thought of fellow Detoriter, philosopher and organizer Grace Lee Boggs. Boggs' (1998) dialectical vision of social transformation emphasized the importance of building localized institutions and alternatives to the state.

At the same time, Boggs (2011) also recognized the intertwined relationship between personal evolution and the possibility of social transformation. In other words, an understanding of fractals "doesn't mean to get lost in the self, but rather to see our own lives and work and relationships as a front line, a first place we can practice justice, liberation, and alignment with each other and the planet" (Brown 2017, 53). Moreover, *generative discomfort* attends to the quotidian fears, embarrassments, annoyances, malaises and general unpleasantness that make possible the work of organizing against domination, as well as organizing for positive visions of a different world. Discomfort was a dimension that was integral to confronting the state and building alternative futures: late nights preparing speeches, the tedium of sitting through lengthy government meetings, the fears of being perceived as incompetent by adults, and summoning the courage to be unreasonable and refuse the grammar of "win-win solutions".

Confrontation and Collective Refusal

Learning to confront the state in this case was not glamorous or romantic, but is a collection of moments of self-doubt, struggle, breakthroughs, failures and victories (big and small). Through their testimonials, MISSION UNITED youth organizers participated in the affective economies of gentrification by lifting up the quotidian dimensions of displacement (Ahmed 2004). The commission opened up the floor for public comment. There were two lines representing the supporters and the opponents of 1979 Mission development. One the left side of the aisle was a line for supporters of the development comprised mostly of individuals with pastel colored Save 16th Street Coalition t-shirts. The other side of the aisle—the supporter side—was almost exclusively of people dressed in construction gear or "Mission 4 All" shirts. Clara had mentioned to me on the walk that this was an astroturfed advocacy group organized by

Maximus. Earlier in the week, Maximus had contacted MISSION UNITED members and offered them money to show up to the meeting and to support the development.

Angel, one of the eldest MISSION UNITED youth members, walked up to the podium with an orange Save 16th Street Coalition shirt. Her hair was parted in the middle and tied into a ponytail. Around her neck were two rows of circular turquoise beads. Her oversized gold hoop earrings reminded me of the style of jewelry commonly associated with pop singer Sade. Her eyeliner was a bright turquoise and it matched the shade of the stones on her necklace. She held a folded piece of paper in front of her filled with scribbles and highlighter marks. As she read off her speech, she utilized a system of phonetic inflections reminiscent to a slam poet. She modulated the speed and volume of her voice and by emphasizing the concluding syllables of each sentence. At the same time, she alternated her gaze back and forth from her paper script to the commission members.

> I am here because the Mission is my home. A home that is danger of being overtaken by corporate greed of companies like Maxiumus. They take advantage of their economic power to exploit and make profit off land that does not belong to them and off people who have broken their backs for generations to make the Mission what it is today. In my experience my parents used to own a local artisanal business down on 18th street. We were just one of the many beautiful businesses that contribute to the Mission and its beautiful cultural diversity. The kind of cultural diversity that makes people want to live here, and yet no one cared when we no longer could afford rent. I saw that we were being robbed of the right to exist in a place that would be nothing without us. I'm a strong believer in the fact that our very existence is resistance, but I am even a stronger believer that we deserve even so much more than simply existing. We deserve to thrive.

As the longest tenured youth organizer with Solidarity in Action, Angel was also the eldest of child of three. Angel traced her family lineage to several generations of street vendors in Ecuador. "I'm an indigenous girl from Inca and Zapotec tribes", she once told me during an informal interview, "I have never been able to identify myself with a tribe because my history because of colonizers. It's been lost because of the colonizers". Angel spent most weekends with

her family on the road. As artisan vendors, these trips were dedicated to traveling between festivals and fairs from the Central Valley to Eureka to sell their family's wares, which included traditional Ecuadorian clothing, bags and accessories.

I offer this portrait of Angel's experiences not as some romanization of "resilience" and "bootstrapping", but to underline in how she and other youth organizers worked to make legible the non-events of life under racial capitalism in San Francisco. As anthropologist Diane Povinelli (2011) has articulated, "If events are things that we can say happened such that they have a certain objective being, then quasi-events never quite achieve the status of having occurred or taken place. They neither happen nor not happen." (13). While catastrophes and some crises register as spectacular events and demand recognition and a response from the state and civil society, quasi-events are "widespread (quasi-events occur across every actual and conceivable organization of social life); they confound response (their slightness often occurs below the level of accountability); and they resist cause-effect characterization (it's hard to say when they occurred let alone what caused them)" (Povinelli 2011, 145). At the same time, Povinelli notes that these general features obscure the fact that quasi-events occur within an always already socially differentiated world. In other words, quotidian forms of structural vulnerabilities do not register as legible to the state, and therefore do not elicit a response. Through these expressions, MISSION UNITED youth organizers worked to elevate the legibility of displacement in San Francisco and refuse the "humane" form of organized abandonment represented by Maximus and the 1979 Mission development.

After Angel's comment, she turned around let out a grin. There was a loud wave of applause and cheers, but it quickly diminished as one of the planning commission members pleaded with the crowd.

"No applause please! It'll just take away speaking time from other speakers." Penelope approached the podium wearing a teal Save 16th Street Coalition shirt. She pulled out her phone from her back pocket and began to recite her speech from her iPhone. She maintained a consistent cadence and tempo throughout her allotted minute. As she read her statement, I noticed the fingers on her left-hand pattering on the podium.

"My name is M-M-Penelope," she stuttered.

> I am here today fighting for future generations and for my people. I was born and raised in the Mission and being a Mission native, I've seen a lot of gentrification, racism as a result of a capitalist society. Drastic changes have been made in my community. Somehow always leaving the voices and opinions of the people out. I hope this time I have a voice that is heard. There should be 100% affordable housing and it is possible. No Monster in the Mission and build the marvel. My family and I have had to move four times because of rent increases and not affordable housing. Although I live in the Excelsior now, I have seen both neighborhoods be affected by eviction and gentrification. Walking in the Mission I see a neighborhood losing a culture and new developments being built that aren't supporting the community. The Marvel is a part of the solution that will keep families and communities rooted.

While, Penelope's public comment began with a broad structural critique of capitalism and political economy, the heart of her monologue attempted to make legible two distinct prongs. First, she lifted up the quasi-events of gentrification—the stories of uprooted families—that are disappeared through the language of statistics. By articulating the political dimensions of displacement, Penelope lifted up the visceral manifestations of housing insecurity. Secondly, Penelope demonstrated the audacity to offer an alternative vision for housing justice through the symbol of the Marvel and the uncompromising demand for 100% affordable housing. Penelope's call for 100% affordable housing stood in refusal to the limited political imaginations of city policy makers and technocrats. While such a statement may not intelligible within the paradigm of capitalist housing markets, she compelled the commission to bear witness to the failure of the market to provide for the needs of poor Black, Brown and immigrant communities in San

Francisco. Penelope's support of the Marvel also reflected an abolitionist impulse. The call to decommodify housing is part of an alternative vision of social life and politics based upon human needs rather than the state's language of economic efficiency, markets and carcerality.

On the bus ride back from the hearing, Penelope shared some thoughts about the experience and the forms of discomfort and vulnerability that it required for her to confront the state on this stage:

> They got people of color. People in unions. they paid people in unions to go talk to the committee. When we first walked in, we walked in on different sides of Mission from Dolores Park. We met in the entrance and looked at each other and wait, why are we on different sides? It took us a weird way. Wow, they're really trying to put people of color against each other. When people went up and talked, I was so nervous. Oh my god, what am I gonna say. Am I gonna freak out? You're so nervous because these people have so much power. I choked during it saying my name. But when I said it, it felt good. But I laughed it off later. At first, I was like I messed up. I can't go on. I have to say it right. But later on, you realize that you're a only little piece of what everyone is saying. And I did it my way and even with the mistakes they had to listen to me even if it was just 1 minute of me talking.

Penelope spoke to the confusion and tensions that this hearing had brought to the forefront as working-class BIPOC on both sides seemed to be pitted against one another over the fate of a market-rate housing development. While grassroots opposition was fighting to keep out another gentrifying project, the construction workers' livelihoods were also reliant on the ability of real estate developers like Maximus to build. This tension was transposed onto Penelope's tics as she stuttered her name and as she tapped her fingers on the podium. Reflecting upon her performance at the meeting, she pointed to the aura of state power and the ways in which one is expected to demonstrate competence. The pressure to perform competently bred a sense of neuroticism that threatened to stultify Penelope's expressions of refusal and her attempt to offer an alternative social arrangement. Did Penelope articulate herself in a fashion that would have earned her top marks in a speech and debate course? Perhaps not. Yet, Penelope ultimately

refused the individualizing and atomizing gaze of the state. She released the second-guessing and uncertainty, which gave way to a sense of equanimity as she situated herself as a voice within the chorus of a collective struggle.

Francisco walked up to the podium with the same strut that he would often perform after hopping off his skateboard. Unlike the rest of us, Francisco was wearing a black t-shirt and necklace made of small amber stones. Francisco's jet-black hair was parted in the middle and voluminous. On approaching the podium, he wiped off the beads of sweat on his forehead. He closed his eyes and inhaled deeply through his nose and let out a silent exhale through his mouth that was slightly amplified by the microphone. Francisco was holding his script—a wrinkled 8" x 11.5" piece of paper—but instead of reading off of it, he crammed it into his front pocket.

> My name is Julián and I'm a youth organizer with MISSION UNITED. My dad lives in the Mission. He has to live in a hotel room that's smaller than a bathroom. He has to pay $1,500 for literally one room. He doesn't have a kitchen. Basic things a human need to thrive. He doesn't have any free space. He doesn't have a garden. He doesn't have a living room. He shares bathrooms. He's sharing a bathroom with like 20 people living there. Only one of them has a shower. He's sharing a bathroom with 20 people with one shower and 2 toilets. I've been there. It's very grimy. The building owners and landlords don't take care of it at all. San Francisco is obligated to take care of its people. This is like the richest city. One of the richest cities Seeing that its people are forced to live in these circumstances. If he could he would live in a better place, but he has no other choices.

I caught up with Francisco the next day at Cafecito, a no-frills coffee shop around the corner from the MISSION UNITED offices. As he sipped from the bottle of his tamarind flavored Jarritos, he processed on his testimony to the planning commission. "It was hard putting my business out there, you know, but they needed to hear my dad's story. People like him have no choice. Once you're there, you're stuck there. Who wants that? No one deserves to live like that." Francisco underlined the uneasiness of revealing his intimate connection to the suffering produced by the city's market-oriented housing agenda. Still, he emphasized the necessity of

making legible the precarity of unhoused and under-housed people in San Francisco—many of whom are compelled by the market to reside in the deplorable conditions of single room occupancy (SROs) buildings. These depraved housing configurations are the materialized contradictions of San Francisco's tech-fueled model of racial capitalism and the ways in which the concentration of immense wealth has become concomitant to the immiseration of poor and working-class Black, Indigenous and immigrant populations in San Francisco. Moreover, Francisco unsettled the assumptions of freedom and prosperity associated with the city, which in actuality compel too many migrant laborers to find shelter in modern tenements. As such, he refused the individualistic conception of personal responsibility by placing the responsibility of his father and others' impoverishment on the city's political priorities.

After over three hours of public comment, the commission closed off the queue and opened up time for individual commissioner comments. Each of the six sitting commissioners offered 2-3-minute-long remarks about the hearing and they collectively decided that in its current state, Maximus needed to revise the 1979 Mission development plan with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development. Starting from the right side of the table each commissioner acknowledged the discord and dissatisfaction of grassroots community members in the crowd. Via consensus, the commission recognized the crisis of affordable housing, and one commissioner went so as far to note that "the market along cannot solve the issue." Yet, half of the commissioners vocalized the need for compromise, and to "think creatively" towards a "win-win solution" that would benefit both Maximus and the community. As representatives of the state, the commissioners' rhetoric demonstrated the material and imaginative constraints of market based economism. This call for compromise suggests that this impasse can be bridged without fundamentally unsettling the deeper foundations of housing inequality.

Solidarity in Action youth organizers and the other opposing voices of the Save 16th Street Coalition crafted their messages around both a rhetoric of critique and an alternative vision of housing with the "Marvel in the Mission". Yet, all but one of the commissioners made no reference to the counter proposal for a 100% affordable housing development. The one commissioner who did refer to it contrasted the Marvel and the Monster based on their differing courtyard designs but did not reference the substantive differences of the counter proposal. This maneuver points to the ways progressive-technocratic paradigms elide the contrasting visions of the future offered by policy prescriptions. A 100% affordable housing development forwards a specific political project that interrupts the commonsense assumptions of (racial) capitalist realism. Such a proposal is not legible within a framework of "win-win" solutions and "public-private partnerships" where deep antagonisms can be transcended through deal making and compromise. In other words, the only viable type of reform within the existing paradigm is one where nothing fundamentally changes.

Although the outcome of the hearing was a prima facie victory for the Save 16th Street coalition and MISSION UNITED youth organizers, it was unclear the extent to which the demands for housing justice and decommodified housing were legible to the commission. Still, the spectacle of the meeting afforded my youth interlocutors the opportunity to embody *movement vulnerability* by confronting the state and refusing the commonsense views of housing and civil requests for compromise. Rather, they joined the rest of the coalition in articulating a collective refusal by demanding justice and nothing less than one hundred percent affordable housing. Moreover, this confrontation with the state was illustrative of how vulnerability and discomfort were the connective tissue between my interlocutors' self-making process and their organizing practice. The quotidian and unpleasant dimensions of organizing work—the drudgery

of lengthy hearings, confronting an antagonistic opposition and long nights of study and planning—enabled the maneuvers and techniques necessary for them to confront the state and capital. By engaging in the affective economies through storytelling, my interlocutors confronted their fears and self-doubts. While the commission may not have understood the demand for a one hundred percent affordable housing development, MISSION UNITED youth and their allies laid bare the real issue for all to see: the state's impoverished political imagination.

Chapter 4: Our Healing in Our Hands

It was around 3:45 PM, as I stepped onto the escalator connecting the underground Civic Center BART station to the street level and the United Nations plaza. It was a Wednesday, which meant that the plaza hosted a small weekly market of produce vendors and merchants who sold sunglasses, knitted caps and other accessories. Civic Center is the main artery of state power in San Francisco. City hall is situated directly in the middle of the area, while it is flanked along McAllister St. near the district courthouse and the California Supreme Court. I maneuvered my way through the bustling market crowd and walked towards the San Francisco Public Library entrance in order to meet up with CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers and their adult allies Cindy and Sarah. Today was an important moment for the CHINATOWN LOCAL mental health campaign "Our Healing in Our Hands". We were about to have our first meeting with officials from the San Francisco Unified School District—specifically with the assistant superintendent.

A year prior, CHINATOWN LOCAL organizers had designed and carried out a participatory action research project focused on mental health resources at San Francisco public high schools. The idea for the campaign emerged from youth members' experiences with mental health issues as a function of the pressures of academic achievement within their schools. Mia, a Filipinx former youth organizer with CHINATOWN LOCAL described the context out of which the campaign emerged.

> It was during my sophomore year. In my trigonometry class. I didn't know her because I was just learning my own things. A few days later a letter went out about this girl. One of my friends said, "Oh a girl did a suicide". I think there was another suicide the year before that. I just know during that time there was so much suicide at Merced and in other high schools. It kept popping up in my social media. When I found out about that girl, she was in my geometry class. I didn't know her at all, but my friends told me that girl who did suicide was in our geometry class. I didn't even know that. When I found out it was her, my friend was like "She sat a few tables away. Yeah, look there's the empty chair." I'm like god, a person in our class is gone and the teacher carried on with her class. It just felt so weird that no one really talks about it. It just felt so wrong that no one really talks

> about it. It was just mentioned in the school letter. The only time anyone talked about it was basically gossip. I felt like that was so weird. I felt like we should have a conversation about it. Even though it's a geometry class, one of your students died. Killed herself. And the teacher didn't say anything.

Mia was a former high school student at Merced, which has been known for its reputation as the district's most academically rigorous high school. In my former years as a youth worker, I could recall accounts from young people needing to stay up until 2:00 AM or 3:00 AM due to the volume of assigned homework. Some CHINATOWN LOCAL organizers would derisively refer to the school as a "model minority factory" due to its large percentage of Asian American students and the school's reputation of producing hyper academically focused, apolitical students. Mia's recollection underlines how "achievement at all costs" rationale that animates notions of schooling and contemporary education reform in the United States (Dixon-Roman 2017). Even more, what Mia describes is how mental health is something obscured or forgotten within the imperative of "academic rigor" that even a suicide is rendered quotidian and unremarkable.

Starting in 2018, CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers carried out a PAR project to assess the mental health needs of SFUSD high school students. During the data collection phase of the project, youth organizers conducted over 1,000 surveys with SFUSD high school students to gauge the mental health needs of high school students of color and their experiences with their schools' wellness centers. Additionally, they conducted focus groups and interviews with staff members at each high school wellness center in San Francisco. Moreover, CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers also interviewed youth organizers from other allied grassroots organizations in San Francisco with a focus on Black students, Latinx students as well as students who had incarcerated parents.

The project culminated in a political campaign around a set of demands on the school district that included specific reforms such as the implementation of peer wellness coaches at high schools. More broadly, the campaign was focused on advocating for two specific values. The first goal was to transform mental health from an individualized issue of crisis management, to a collective vision of wellness embedded in everyday practices of school. Secondly, the campaign aimed to demand the inclusion of youth decision-making and governance on matters of mental health. "Our Healing in Our Hands" has been part of a decade long movement of youth activism in San Francisco that has brought racial and social justice demands onto the school district. In 2014, CHINATOWN LOCAL joined other grassroots organizations such as Coleman Advocates in successfully advocating for the elimination of willful defiance policies in the district, which local organizers and educations had linked to the districts' astronomical rates of suspensions of Black students. More recently, groups had also started to begin campaigns to move police officers off of school campuses.

Having concluded the participatory action research portion of the campaign, CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers and adult allies were in the process of building a coalition around the campaign by securing endorsements from local grassroots organizations, student groups, school administrators and politicians. On the other end, CHINATOWN LOCAL organizers also began their efforts to engage with the SFUSD bureaucracy with the goal of passing a resolution with the school board.

As I approached the entrance of the San Francisco main public library, I spotted the two adult organizers Cindy and Sarah chatting with each other. Behind them were Harmony, Tracy, Kyle, Kelly and Diane who were eating sandwiches while pointing and laughing at one another. Everyone was wearing crimson shirt with a white "solidarity fist" screen printed on the front.

I waived to everyone and asked them, “How are y’all feeling? Are you ready?”

“I’m hella nervous” Kelly responded.

“I think I’m kinda underdressed,” Harmony added. Harmony wore a teal flannel shirt, faded grey jeans and a pair of worn out Converse sneakers.

Cindy interjected and attempted to assuage Harmony’s anxiety.

“Nah, you’re good. What’s more important is what we say at the meeting and how we stay true to our goals and our values.”

We crossed Larkin St. onto Civic Center Plaza and walked west toward the front façade of city hall. During the walk, Tracy and I chatted about the rally we both attended a few days prior in front of city hall. A coalition of grassroots organizations had been mobilizing to pressure the Board of Supervisors to shut down the Hall of Justice located at 850 Bryant, which housed the oldest county jail in the city. During the rally, Tracy helped to hold up a large red banner that had “NO NEW JAILS invest in <u>COMMUNITY</u> not cages”. As we walked side by side, I asked them about their thoughts on the rally and the campaign.

> You know, it was really cool. I’ve been thinking about how to connect the topic of closing jails with what we’re trying to do with the mental health campaign. Like, our campaign is just a small piece of what other grassroots folks in the city are doing. It’s about changing how things are done and how the city shouldn’t be investing jails and prisons but really in people. I think our campaign is also challenging the notion that police and punishing people in schools are good answers for the mental health needs of young people.

Tracy’s comments struck me due to their effort to situate CHINATOWN LOCAL’s campaign within the context of broader contemporary grassroots movements throughout the city that represent local forms of abolitionist movements. On the surface, a mental health campaign focused on San Francisco public high schools may not have much in common with abolition, yet what Tracy offered was a set of *inflections* that pointed to the intimacies and interconnections

between the mission to close the jail at 850 Bryant and the campaign to confront the school district's approach to mental health and wellness. That is not to say the parallels are always cogently articulated. Nevertheless, Tracy's reflection underlined a vision of the campaign that offered an inchoate linkage to movements, solidarity and abolition.

We walked westbound four blocks along McAllister St. past the northern wing of city hall. The route to 555 Franklin St and the SFUSD administration offices took us from Civic Center to the eastern fringes of the Western Addition. One of the two historically Black neighborhoods in the city, the Western Addition included the Fillmore District, which had been known as the "Harlem of the West" due to its role in hosting the thriving Black cultural and music scene during the mid-twentieth century (Pepin 2005). In the past decade, real estate developers had begun to call the neighborhood "NoPa" as tech workers and other high-income residents began to drive demand in the rental housing markets.

We entered the automatic sliding doors of the administration offices and we walked into a dim conference room. The wood conference table extended the length of the room and there were six adults seated at the far end in a U-shaped pattern. This meeting was scheduled with the associate superintendent and other administrators who were involved in multiple aspects of health and wellness within the school district. CHINATOWN LOCAL youth members all took seats side to side across the long side of the table, while I took a seat next to Cindy and Sarah who situated themselves at the opposite corner of the table.

Throughout this chapter, I offer a portrait of CHINATOWN LOCAL's organizing work specifically in relation to an appendage of the state—the San Francisco Unified School District. During these encounters with the state, youth organizers engaged in a war of position through a range of maneuvers. They refused to frame the mental health campaign in relation to appeals to

academics and achievement. Rather, they attempted to forward an alternative narrative that centered mental health services as an inherent necessity for student wellness. This chapter is also about the political hurdles CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers had to navigate as they made demands on the state, especially around the politics of evidence. While CHINATOWN LOCAL organizers lost the "scientific" battle to the state, they refused the finality of scientific authority and won the policy struggle through movement building, and solidarity, by tapping into affective economies around the issue.

Through seventeen formal meetings and presentations with district officials and representatives over the course of six months, CHINATOWN LOCAL youth carried out the work of making the argument for a vision of a collective wellness within SFUSD high schools, as well as increased opportunities for youth to participate in making governance decisions in relation to issues of wellness. As such, youth organizers and adult allies in the campaign positioned the specific demands of the mental health campaign as a vehicle for these broader transformative principles. These encounters cut to the heart of the frictions between state technocracy and movement organizing. In the process of this work, CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers engaged in the messy struggles of unpacking how the implicit rationality of achievement shaped ideas of wellness in the district, but also conventional aspirations of social mobility and "success".

Refusing the Implicit Rationality

Cindy turned her head towards Diane and gave her a subtle nod to kick off the meeting.

*"*My name's Diane. I'm a senior at George Washington High School and I go by she/her pronouns and I'm a youth organizer with CHINATOWN LOCAL, which stands for Movement of Justice and Organizing."

“Great. We’re all excited for your presentation” the assistant superintendent replied as his gaze was slightly focused on the smart phone in his palm.

Two SFUSD administrators had notepads at the ready, while the three others rifled through the campaign booklet that Cindy had handed out when we first entered the room.

“At school I’ve been taught that productivity and results measure my value and my worth.” Diane pushed up her burgundy eyeglass frames up the bridge of her nose.

“I’ve been told that my challenges are my own challenges and that I’ll have to deal with myself. But at school no one ever talks to us about how that affects mental health and wellness.”

Through her opening remarks, Diane brought to the forefront the entanglements of hyper-individualism and capitalism within dominant modes of schooling in the United States. This messages echoes through the works of Marxist and anarchist education philosophers from Paolo Freire (1970/2018) to Henry Giroux (1983), to Ivan Illich (1971). As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2004) have observed, conventional educational arrangements produce relations where “students will be able to see themselves properly as obstacles to society [...] having diagnosed themselves as the problem” (29). More to the point, Diane’s introduction spoke to the cumulative and quotidian harm of that is reproduced every day through these educational arrangements and are metabolized within the lives of students.

Kelly followed up, “We’ve collected 1000 surveys through school and street outreach. We’ve also done focus groups with 30 students. We also spoke with staff, admins and community organizations including Coleman Advocates, VYDC, T4SJ, AROC, MISSION UNITED and Causa Justa. Over the summer we held endorsement meetings with organizations and received endorsements from Coleman Advocates, API council, Board of Education

commissioners Mark Sanchez, Stevon Cook, Matt Haney and Shamann Walton and Board of supervisor Sandy Lee Fewer."

"Over 91% of the students we talked to haven't gone to the wellness center and they said they wouldn't go even if they need help." Diane interjected, "So even if those services are there, they're not reaching students**."**

"Another thing that we want to point out is that Black and Brown students have told us that even though willful defiance rules were supposed to stop, they're still being punished and criminalized and suspended," Tracy added.

The assistant superintendent's phone began to vibrate on the table. While nodding his head, he began to swipe and press on the screen perhaps attending to a text message or an email.

Tracy turned his head to the left towards Kelly and nodded at them.

"We want to offer some recommendations that we hope will change how the SFUSD thinks about wellness," Kelly says as she bounced her gaze towards each individual administrator, "Wellness and mental health need to be collective issues."

Diane picked it up from Kelly's pause.

"We also think youth should be part of making decisions about wellness centers and mental health at our high schools because we're already the first ones who hear from our friends and peers when they're going through a crisis."

"We want to implement a peer counseling program at our high schools. Berkeley High and El Cerrito in the East Bay have these programs and they've been successful." Harmony added, "It's about transforming schools so that wellness is part of the entire school and not just about when students are having a crisis."

The assistant superintendent slouched back in his chair and let out a subtle but audible sigh and folded his hands across his stomach.

Tracy, Kelly, Harmony, Kyle and Diane's tone during the presentation was not particularly remarkable. One might have described their tone as polite, respectable, nonconfrontational and professional outside of some nervous energy and an excess of filler words. Still, the content of their argument put into question the harmful assumptions and consequences of contemporary schooling. Their presentation excluded appeals to the implicit rationality of academic achievement, which has animated the dominant framing of most strains of neoliberal education reform discourses. Their refusal to appeal to academic achievement as a justification for reform resonates with Gloria Ladson-Billings' (2006) discussion of the deficit-laden language of the "racial achievement gap" and how it facilitates the forgetting of the historical educational debt that is owed to poor and working class students of color. As Ezekiel J. Dixon-Roman (2017) has noted, contemporary hyper-quantified achievement paradigms, like educational injustices, have been inherited through their related historical and social trajectories. In other words, achievement paradigms are concomitant to the reproduction of differential racialized outcomes produced by schooling institutions.

By offering an alternative vision of wellness at SFUSD high schools, they highlighted how harm is produced at the register of the quotidian. For example, scholars who have theorized the relationship between carcerality and schools in the United States have pointed to the mundane and everyday practices, pedagogies and structures (Meiners 2007; Shange 2019; Sojoyner 2016). Said different, the extreme levels of punishment and suspension of Black and other non-white students in SFUSD high schools must be understood not just as a product of extreme discipline policies or prison pipeline metaphors, but *also* of conventional pedagogies

and curriculum. Similarly, excluding the language of "achievement" from the presentation offered an alternative terrain where the premises of schooling might be questioned and challenged. For example, Diane rearticulated the rationale of "achievement" to underline its perniciousness where it can function as a proxy for individualistic self-worth. Moreover, the implicit rationality of achievement reduces educational policy into scavenger hunts for closing the "achievement gap", which leave the quotidian, dehumanizing aspects of schooling undisturbed.

Kelly was a Chinese American high school senior who only had become involved with CHINATOWN LOCAL for six months. She had been grappling with the implications of dominant achievement paradigms during her twelve years of school, and especially participating in rituals revolving around grades.

> I had a lot of classmates who were always comparing grades. "What you get on this test?" Oh my god, I have a B in this class. For me, I even got to the point where I didn't want to be around people who didn't work as hard as I did. Because I felt like it was holding me back. I think that was me being in the environment that I was in. Ever since middle school, I chose classes that would put me into a higher placement. And help me be around people that are as hardworking as I am. Going into Washington [during] freshman year, we didn't have honors or AP classes. When I was in general classes, I hated it because I didn't feel challenged or anything. I always felt like people were holding me back because they learned at a slower pace than I was. It would have been a great chance for me to build with other students in my school, especially because our AP and honors classes are so racially segregated. Knowing that, I was very narrow minded in how I was thinking about education. That's what you learn what being a good student looks like and not I'm trying to unlearn that stuff.

Kelly pointed to the alienating function of grading that undergirded her schooling experiences, especially how competition depressed opportunities for building solidarities across race. Within a capitalist educational system, engaging in solidarity with fellow students implied a delay of her own individual progress. In other words, collaboration became entangled with the impulse of feeling "held back" from her own potential achievement and status at school. As Kelly describes

conventional scripts of individualism within schooling incentivize competition and even resentment. Pedagogies of social mobility invite development paradigms that come to resemble the anti-social and anti-solidaristic dimensions of market relations.

Stigma and the Racial Politics of Mental Health

"We have a few guiding questions about any feedback that you may have. Feel free to ask clarifying questions."

Tracy concluded the presentation by passing the floor to the assistant superintendent and the other SFUSD administrators.

The assistant superintendent asked his colleagues, "Does anyone have any questions?"

A white woman, who introduced herself as a district wellness administrator jumped in. "I want to get your thoughts about stigma. We try to visit classrooms and wellness centers to reduce stigma for students to visit the wellness center. It seems like that isn't enough to encourage students to increase the comfort."

"One of the reasons it doesn't get said is because of stigma," Says an Asian woman who works at a school wellness center, "At Merced, a lot of my job has been to integrate the wellness center into the Merced community. For a long time, it was a place student would avoid because of stigma."

The assistant superintendent followed up by offering an anecdote about his view of the racial politics of mental health in San Francisco.

> We had a very powerful conversation in Sunnydale where Reverend Brown has asked us to talk about significant mental health needs in the Black community. DPH set aside some funding specifically, for African American mental health. We're meeting about what does this mean. Do we hire more therapists? Oh, you're Black, so you should get a therapist. So Black students are not achieving at a high rate. There's more community violence. There's a lot of statistics showing that the Black community needs support. We go to Sunnydale with Hope SF and the community is outraged and the families are outraged. "Stop branding our students! Stop telling them that they have mental health

> problems! You know who the problem is? You're the problem because you're telling them that they have mental health issues." So, oh my god, we can't win or lose here. Different cultures who see mental health and define mental health and respond to mental health issues differently and are facing very different circumstances. What we can do is to make sure all students and families have access to services at their schools, but mental health is not one thing, but many things to many different people.

The evocation of stigma and mental health by these administrators seemed to frame the skepticism and resistance from Black communities as *the* primary barrier to addressing mental health needs in the school district. While the stigma associated with mental health is well-documented, it is not a phenomenon that is particular to Black communities (Corrigan et al. 2012). By foregrounding stigma as the main explanatory variable driving low engagement rates at wellness centers, the administrators begin to flirt with the tropes of Black communities as ignorant or harboring anti-scientific tendencies. Moreover, this assertion also occludes the horrific histories of racial violence by American biomedical institutions and practitioners. This history has included examples such as the forced sterilization of Black women and unethical medical experimentation on Black men and prisoners (Blue 2009; Davis 1981; Reverby 2009; Washington 2006).

More to the point, the pivot to stigma as an explanatory variable reinscribes the dilemma of mental health and wellness in schools as a question of "access". What the assistant superintendent seemed to express a sense of resignation that access to services was the extent to which mental health and wellness could be engaged by the district. Access signals a technocratic rationale and approach to policy making that functions to render social problems as discrete issues of miscalibration (Kiely 2017). Michelle Murphy (2017) has described how this rationale and style of governance reflects an "economization of life", where issues of "access" are legible as policy issues in because they are knowable and amenable to measurement and calculation. What is occluded are the premises that undergird the logic of access: specifically, how issues of

pedagogy, curriculum and instruction are compartmentalized and divided from issues of wellness and mental health. Said differently, because most public high schools in San Francisco technically already have wellness centers, mental unwellness is rendered the responsibility of individual students.

As the meeting concluded, the assistant superintendent thanked the CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers and noted, “We’ll bring your feedback to district’s attention.”

He bounced up from his chair and walked over and stood by the conference room door.

“Thank you for coming,” he said as he shook each person’s hand as we existed the conference room.

We walked out of the district office and headed to the nearby Peet’s coffee shop on South Van Ness avenue. We commandeered two small tables and huddled around them for a group meeting debrief. After a few seconds of silence, Diane broke the ice.

“I felt like he had a better conversation with his phone than us.”

“His body language was so bad.” Kyle added, “He was resting his head on his head. He was just really and looked inattentive.”

Kelly expressed her frustrations.

“I don’t understand why he didn’t put his phone on silent. If this was another meeting would he have done the same thing?”

Diane, Kyle and Kelly’s observations underlined how the assistant superintendent’s demeanor was a violation of the unspoken rules of professionalism that ostensibly regulate state institutions such as school districts. Despite a skillful display of the techniques of respectability, there was a shared sense of dissatisfaction. Their skillful display of professionalism did not seem to elicit reciprocation from the assistant superintendent as he spent stretches of the meeting

occupied on his smart phone or making gesticulations that struck me as expressions of impatience and exasperation. In this moment, Elizbeth, Kyle and Kelly seemed to come to the realization that respectability and professionalism offered no guarantees as they engaged with the assistant superintendent or other agents of the state.

"Still, in a way this was a victory," Sarah added, "It looks like we have a lukewarm commitment for a meeting with the superintendent."

After a round of smiles and high fives, Diane pushed the focus back to the meeting.

"At one point, it was kind of like he was talking about mental health as an individual issue. It feels like he's on a different page than us."

"I agree," Tracy added, "Stigma is a vague word in order to shield themselves from accountability. His interpretation was off. It's not that people in Sunnydale don't care about mental health, but the community was tired of being pathologized."

Diane and Tracy pointed to how evoking stigma functions as an evasion by the state, which transposes responsibility upon families and youth, especially those from marginalized communities in San Francisco. As Saidiya Hartman (1997) has noted, Blackness has been defined through fungibility, which the state has harnessed through the construction of tropes. As such, stigma stands in as a sociological rationale to construct communities as ignorant or openly hostile to the realities of mental health. Ironically, as Tracy pointed out, the assistant superintendent did not seem to grasp the substance and subtext in the responses from Sunnydale residents. Said differently, Sunnydale community members' responses could have been a refusal to be pathologized and a critique of state violence, rather than the assistant superintendent's parsimonious diagnosis of stigma within the community.

Waging the Science Battle and the Politics of Evidence

Following the initial meeting with the assistant superintendent, CHINATOWN LOCAL organizers were able to secure a meeting the superintendent of the school district. This specific encounter, which contrasted with their first meeting, revealed a new terrain of contestation around data and the politics of evidence. The PAR project that kickstarted the campaign generated a mix of quantitative and qualitative data around the mental health needs of students at SFUSD high schools. CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers trained their peers to collect close to 1,000 survey responses from San Francisco public high school students. The project also consisted of focus groups and interviews with youth members of allied grassroots organizations as well as staff members at wellness centers. CHINATOWN LOCAL organizers utilized the collected data to produce a media booklet for the purposes of making policy arguments with the school district. Through this encounter with the state, evidence and data emerged as a central site of contestation between CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers and district representatives.

I had not been planning to attend the meeting with the superintendent, but on that morning, Cindy had texted me and asked me to come and fill in for her as an adult ally in the room. She had to be in Oakland for the afternoon to fill in at a San Francisco Rising coalition meeting, which was a convening of grassroots organizations from across San Francisco, Oakland and other parts of the Bay Area. I arrived at the SFUSD district administration office a quarter past four in the afternoon. Upon entering, I spotted Sarah at the lobby seating area along with Tracy and Diane. In her mid 30s, Sarah was a Chinese American adult organizer with CHINATOWN LOCAL. She oversaw the organization's youth services programs and she had also been the primary adult advisor for the youth organizers during the campaign. Born in Kansas, Sarah had been directing the youth organizing program for over three years by the time I had joined them. Formerly a PhD student in the Asian American studies program at UCLA, she

shared with me how she found academia constraining and how it prevented her from spending the necessary time to engage in meaningful organizing work in the community. After leaving UCLA with a master's degree, she relocated to the Bay Area and began working with CHINATOWN LOCAL. Like several other staff members at CHINATOWN LOCAL, Sarah identified as queer. Gender was often foregrounded at CHINATOWN LOCAL's political education program as much as discussions around racism and capitalism. Youth organizers were exposed to queer politics ranging from feminism, social constructions of gender, as well as the political implications of cis-heteronormativity.

As I approached their audible range, I heard Sarah tell Tracy and Diane, "Y'all have done the hard work of gaining the endorsements from of grassroots organizations."

"What should we do about data?" Tracy asked?

During the meeting with the assistant superintendent, one specific administrator posed a set of questions about the methodology of the PAR survey, specifically regarding sampling and the extent to which it was representative of all SFUSD high schools.

"It's ok to accept that there are limitations to our data and the study," Sarah responded, "but also the findings do tell us something about the students you did talk to."

At around 4:25 P.M. the four of us stood up and took the elevator to the third floor for the meeting. As the elevator doors opened, a receptionist greeted us. Seconds later, the assistant superintendent greeted us and walked us towards a conference room directly across the from the elevator. While we walked into the conference room, the superintendent stood by the doorway and shook each of our hands. He wore a set of thick rectangular black framed eyeglasses. As we each walked inside, he offered each of us a warm smile. The superintendent was a Black man who was born and raised in San Francisco. Prior, he had been the superintendent at San José

Unified School District located at the southern edge of the Bay Area. During his five years in San José, he had been credited with "raising academic achievement, narrowing the achievement gap between White and Latino students, and passing landmark agreements with San José's teacher's union."

The conference room was rectangular shaped and similar to the room from the prior meetings. Instead of a drywall, the adjoining wall was made of all glass. While the glass wall had vertical blinds for privacy purposes, they were set sideways, which allowed the conference room to remain transparent to onlookers After the handshakes and greetings, the superintendent and the assistant superintendent sat along the short side of the rectangular table, while we sat across from them on the long side. Upon everyone getting seated Diane and Tracy began to facilitate the meeting.

"My name is Diane and I'm a senior at George Washington High School. I go by she/her pronouns".

"And my name is Tracy. I go by they/them pronouns. We're representatives from CHINATOWN LOCAL an organization that primarily serves working class Chinese and Asian American communities in SF. We organize around issues affecting working class communities such as education, health justice and workers' rights."

Next, Diane described the methodology of the PAR project and key campaign endorsements.

"We conducted 971 peer-to-peer surveys, over 30 students through focus groups and 30 wellness staff. We also have received over 15 endorsements from grassroots organizations and several school board members."

The superintendent interjected and posed some questions to the group.

"You said you surveyed over 900 students?"

"971 students," Diane confirmed."

"And then, how were those students selected?" the superintendent asked a follow up question, "How did you get the students you surveyed?"

"First it was street outreach with high schoolers and in classrooms […] With our allied organizations we did focus groups with students in the southeast." Tracy replied, "But the research does tend to skew towards Washington, Lincoln and Galileo."

"When you say street outreach, what do you mean?" the superintendent asked.

Tracy responded, "We talked to high schoolers near their high school and around the main streets like on Mission St. and Geneva".

"And then on the focus groups, how were the students selected on the focus groups?"

"That was through youth programs. That was specifically the Vietnamese Youth Development Center, the Filipino Community Center, Arab Resource and Organizing Center, Coleman Advocated, MISSION UNITED." Diane chimed in.

"So, you went to those centers and formed focus groups?"

"Yeah" Diane responded.

The superintendent leaned forward with his elbows on the table and his hands clasped together.

"So, we do a climate survey with all of our schools. One of the first things we want to do is…make sure the data that you have reflects what we have." The superintendent stated, "We feel the way in which we go about gathering that data is as scientific and as accurate as possible."

Tracy responded to the superintendent's point about the PAR data.

"Also, another thing is that I feel like one of the strengths of our campaign is that youth collected all the data with other youth. We felt that environment facilitated honest feedback."

"Being data driven is important to us. But in order to be scientific, we need to make sure the data is representative of the district population. If the data isn't collected scientifically, then the data won't be strong. Without strong data, we can't change policies."

This exchange underlined how CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers were confronted with the politics of evidence. During this particular encounter with the state, the superintendent imposed the governing logic associated with experimentalism. Within education and other realms of public policy, randomized control trials and quasi-experimental methodologies have been considered the "gold standard" for determining the validity of evidence (Shadish, Campbell & Cook 2001). From the perspective of an experimentalist or an econometrician, CHINATOWN LOCAL's PAR project was rife with issues of internal and external validity—especially due to selection bias.

With that said, what was at stake in this exchange was not only a debate about statistical bias, but how the state draws upon a politics of evidence and its scientific authority in managing external critiques and demands for change. The superintendent, who held an EdD., seemed to be drawing from his social science training as his line of questioning poked at the layers of invalidity. Said differently, the superintendent's methodological interrogation seemed to be a polite way to cast doubt on the validity and unrepresentative quality of the PAR data. Because the state ostensibly abides by rigorous scientific standards in regard to policy making, it has the authority to determine what constitutes valid evidence (Latour 1987). The superintendent's trajectory of skepticism implicated the PAR study as unscientific, which should render their critiques and claims on the state illegitimate and unfounded.

CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers came to realize that within this arena, scientific validity was not a terrain on which this campaign would be successful. After the conclusion of the meeting, the four of us exited the building and sat on the short flight of stairs that connect the front doors to the sidewalk. It was in the midst of rush hour and Franklin street was functionally a parking lot as cars inched northbound through stop and go traffic. Tracy expressed skepticism about their data as the primary the primary organizing tool for the campaign.

"A common thing I'm seeing across the meetings so far is about data. SFUSD clearly has a specific set process of doing data collection. They're definitely hesitant about our data set. Maybe our survey itself isn't where he's finding the most compelling evidence. I think by focusing on the focus group piece and also talking about how we as youth doing survey collection and outreach provide a different lens is something we should emphasize because that thread has power and credibility and even covers up some of the weaknesses they see in our data because they [focus groups] included a lot of Black and Latinx students."

"I agree," Diane responded, "The survey isn't the only thing. They focused so much on "How many people did we survey?", "What are the schools?" At the same time, I want them to realize we have other aspects and not just the survey that make this campaign.

"Also knowing that the survey methodology is more sanitized in SFUSD and coming from a much more impersonal and professional," Tracy added.

Sarah chimed in.

"What you said earlier was a great point we should keep making in future discussions around how the survey was created by youth and how that creates a more intimate data."

"Our focus groups are a testament to our advocacy for youth resources. And that we can provide valuable information that the district can't," Tracy noted.

"That would be the credibility part. If they are skeptical of our statistics, we can bring up the fact that our survey is designed by youth for the youth. It's not made by authority that wants to dig our information from the students. It was a way for us to figure out what's going on with our friends at school," Diane added.

"At a certain point, it's going to be ok to realize our data is different," Sarah pointed out, "The point of sharing our data isn't to see that our data correlates with theirs. Sitting with the fact that there are gonna be contradictions and what is important is how the data can be useful for the campaign. Let's also remember that the data is important but not the most important thing. It's really about how it can help us get to our goal and bring about change."

As an intellectual and political endeavor PAR methodologies have their roots in anti-colonial struggles in Latin America and the African continent as indigenous communities and scholars have challenged the political economy of knowledge production and the ideological presumptions of neutrality associated with the social sciences (Zavala 2013). More to the point, researchers, organizers and activists have utilized PAR to unsettle the hierarchical relations between the university and local communities, rupture the hegemony of colonial Western thought, and partner with local communities to transform existing material conditions (Fals-Borda and Mora-Osejo 2003). As a matter of axiology, issues of methods—rather than being the central concern of PAR projects—are intended to be accountable to broader liberatory struggles and social movements. In other words, methods within PAR cannot be the endpoint of justice projects; Or as Frantz Fanon (1952) observed, "there is a point at which methods devour themselves" (7).

It is within this frame that CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers confronted the epistemological antagonisms within the arena of technocratic state policy making. The PAR

project was an expression and exhibition of youth led knowledge production, activism and organizing. At the same time, these meetings highlighted the real limits of organizing primarily on empirical or scientific grounds. While the state wielded scientific authority, it was not the end of the story. During the meeting debrief they responded to this impasse not by resigning themselves to defeat but by shifting their focus onto the power of narratives. In her description of "affective economies" Sarah Ahmed (2004) describes how feeling and emotions do not reside within subjects or objects, but function as an "effect of the circulation between objects and signs" (45). Said differently, the upcoming school board meeting could be an opportunity for CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers to mobilize allies and generate formidable narratives that could not be silence or discounted by experimentalist notions of validity. Diane reflected on the change of tactics that were required at that moment.

> During the superintendent meeting there was a lot of talk about statistics and we tried so hard to remind them what our statistics serve and what is the important reasoning of our campaign. It's not the statistics. The statistics just show an overall kind of summary. It just shows big picture. But the smaller picture is what's more important, like more of the narratives and what's really happening in students' lives. It's clear that people power was the answer. They might have the stats, but we have the numbers and the pressure. Having that coalition of young people telling them what they needed was more powerful in that moment than some stats on a piece of paper.

Leading up to the school board meeting, CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers had mobilized a coalition of supporters through over a dozen endorsements from allied grassroots organizations who represented communities across the southeast sector of San Francisco from the Mission, to the Excelsior and Bayview Hunters Point including MISSION UNITED, Coleman Advocates, and the United Educators of San Francisco the official union of SFUSD educators. As Diane recognized, mobilization and organizing produced sufficient political pressure which could not be ignored by the state despite its scientific authority. Moreover, the campaign secured an agreement with two sitting school board members who agreed to sponsor

and propose a resolution to the larger legislative body. The resolution, co-written by CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers and the two commissioners, introduced a framework that explicitly called for increased funding for wellness services, increased student voice within school decision making, and collectivizing wellness and healing. On the final school board meeting on June 28th, 2019 the San Francisco Board of Education was set to vote on the fate of the "Our Healing in Our Hands" resolution.

Solidarity Is Not a Market Exchange

On the afternoon of the school board meeting, I saw a mass of people on the staircase leading up to the school district building. I walked towards the crowd at the base of the staircase and joined the CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers as they looked on for the rally. There were groups of people wearing black t shirts with the messages "Not over my dead body" as well as "Paint it Down". One sign on a magenta poster board particularly caught my eye, which said, "Decolonize Our Walls". On the steps of the building, members of CL, Coleman Advocates, Democratic Socialists of America and the Paint it Down collective gathered for a prayer circle. Leslie, a local Indigenous organizer opened the circle with a chant. As they repeated the phrase of the chant, they beat a small hand drum with a stick to a 4/4-time signature. The smell of burning sage wafted in the air as Mari invited speakers from different organizations to make short comments in support of taking down the *Life of Washington* mural from the walls of George Washington high school. Mari concluded the community circle by inviting attendees to participate in a group chant.

"I want to do a little chant just really quick. I understand it's a long prayer for some people, but just remember, your ancestors at this moment and everything that they did for you to be here at this moment. All this time what they had to go through. We're gonna chant "Paint it

Down!" for a while, then we're gonna do "No cover ups!". We wanna make sure the people in the back can hear because we've been listening to them."

On the other side of the staircase was another contingent of people holding up handmade signs with the phrases "Art is not a crime" and "Preserve history". I found the dichotomy of racial difference between the groups striking. Most of the participants of the prayer circle seemed to be BIPOC, while the sign holders were white. While this school board meeting was the moment of truth for CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers, it also converged with the vote on the *Life of Washington Mural* at George Washington High School. Local Native community members, students and educators had been organizing for months to cover up the mural at the school due to its depictions of dead Native people as well as enslaved Black people. Several Native and Black students at the school had testified at a prior school board meeting on the harm they felt from seeing the mural every day. Sarah had mentioned that the Paint it Down coalition had come to CL and CHINATOWN LOCAL for an endorsement for the campaign.

> The Paint it Down coalition came to us a couple days before the board of ed meeting to ask for our endorsement. And I know with our youth team, but mostly the conversations I had with Pam and the organizers at Paint It Down, it was very clear to me at the moment the intersections of our work and what they were also trying to do. Questions of the value of lifting up the students' well-being over pedagogy, or the supposed intellectual or educational value of the mural. Even after the vote people were not all on the same page, but after the day, the vote, people voted on the values that represent our base. And represented the values of our organization, one of which is solidarity with Indigenous and Black folks. At the end of the day, they felt empowered and really blessed to show up for each other when the moment arose.

Robin DG Kelley (2019) has commented on the distinctions between empathy and solidarity as forms of political praxis. A politics of empathy requires identifying with others and seeing oneself in them. Kelley notes how the attempt to "put yourself in others' shoes" is limited and in many instances simply not possible. In contrast, a praxis of solidarity is centered on "the people you *don't* recognize. The people you *don't* see yourself in", and the effort to "step outside

myself" (Kelley, Amariglio and Wilson 2018, 582). Moreover, Kelly (2019) emphasized solidarity not as a transactional market exchange but, a shared commitment to struggle against domination. The convergence of the campaigns exemplified the messiness and difficulty of solidarity and the effort required to step outside of oneself.

Despite the clear intersections of the campaigns, Sarah spoke to the internal debates and the messiness that came with cultivating solidarity with the Paint it Down Campaign, and the discord that lingered among some youth organizers. Kelly attended George Washington High school and expressed some hesitation to supporting the resolution to cover up the mural.

> Towards the end of the school year, we started to get announcements that the media was gonna be here about the mural to talk to students. There was definitely a lot of controversy around it. I don't know what side I'm on. I feel like both sides have good points. I wouldn't have minded either option. To keep it up, one of my teachers posted on Facebook a paragraph of why they should keep it up because you need to educate people on what happened. At the same time, maybe it was or wasn't taught. I just don't remember it being taught to me. I think it's very crucial, if it's being taught to teach all the imperfections about the mural. The headdress of the Indigenous person is wrong because it's from different tribes and how the mural is glorifying colonization. I think those should be brought up, but not a lot of teachers would do that necessarily. Like in none of my years did we have a discussion about the mural. Because it's not being taught that way, or students are only being taught one kind of history in classes, then it needs to come down. It's not doing the students any good. And it's super outdated. And might as well take it down and paint over it. And paint the real history.

Kelly seemed to be drawn to the intellectual debate around the mural and its educational value. Indeed, the mural garnered much attention around the country as academics such as Adolph Reed Jr. and Roxanne Dunbar Ortíz penned opinion pieces on the controversial topic. Kelly's decision to support the Paint it Down campaign seemed to be mostly focused on the historiography of the mural.

Other CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers such as Diane more strongly recognized the convergence between the mural and Black and Indigenous students' mental health. Moreover, she spoke to the need of CHINATOWN LOCAL as Asian American youth to step

outside themselves and to demonstrate a solidarity based addressing harm and lifting up students' well-being.

> Our campaign was really connected with theirs. But it was more than that, too. For me, it was pretty clear that we needed to support Paint it Down because they're fighting for the well-being of Black and Native students. That's the most important reason we needed to show our solidarity for them. At the end of the night, I was so appreciative of how many people that showed up for the mural ended up supporting us because mental health is something that affects all students, but especially Native and Black students, who are being harmed by the mural. Our resolution didn't come up to vote until at the end of the meeting and still the folks from Paint it Down and other orgs stayed there the whole time to support us too. I just loved how there was a strong sense of people power and solidarity in that meeting.

Like Kelly, Diane also was a senior at George Washington High School, and she was engrossed in the same milieu around the mural. Although solidarity is not a market exchange, Diane emphasized the reciprocity they received from Paint it Down and other allied organizations that endorsed both campaigns. During the meeting, it would have been difficult for the school board members to overlook the collective mobilization of youth, families and grassroots organizations around the mural and the mental health campaign. The mobilization resulted in a long mutli-racial procession of speakers who advocated passionately for both campaigns.

During the three hour long public comment section, Sarah addressed the school board and spoke on behalf of CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers in support of painting down the mural.

> I am here today to implore to just listen. I know you've heard of so many different sides. I'm a Chinese American who is a settler on this land. I know that when people talk about the right to create, where was the right to create? Where was the right for the Indigenous folks, the Black folks to decide for themselves how they wanted their history and their humanity to have been depicted? This is the smallest thing you can offer to a community who needs it so much. For some people this is about censorship, but really this is about reparations, so implore you to listen to your heart. Paint it down.
> After Sarah's evocation of "paint it down", the crowd repeated the phrase in unison, which amplified the collective sentiment against the mural.

As one of the final speakers Mari walked up to the podium with their child in their arms. Upon opening their mouth, Mari's voice began to crack as they pleaded with the school board members.

> I beg of you, please paint down those murals. You all have ancestors who fought and survived so you could be in position today. You have the most powerful position. Please let it be unanimous. I know all of you want to paint it down. Go into that heart space that your ancestors fought so you could be there. Please don't let one more student say, "Meet me by the dead Indian". I don't know what a future SFUSD child to hear that if they ever choose to go to GWHS. Please help it stop. Paint it down.

This transcript cannot properly convey the emotional resonance of Mari's comments. Mari spoke directly to several school board members who were of color including one Samoan man, a Black woman, a Black man, an Asian American woman, a Mexican woman and a Mexican man. I felt myself tearing up as Mari tearfully summoned generations of struggle and placed it at the feet of these school board members.

After over thirty minutes of deliberation around costs, feasibility, and educational value, the Board of Education voted in favor of the resolution to Paint Down the Mural. As soon as the decision was reached, cheers and applause erupted from the crowd as well as tearful embraces among Paint it Down supporters. Opponents of the Paint it Down campaign filed out of the room, some of whom let out their frustrations vocally.

"What a disgrace!"

"This is censorship! What country is this?"

While the chamber became noticeably less congested, members of Paint it Down and other allied organizations returned to their seats after their celebrations to stay for the vote on the mental health resolution. During the ensuing public comment section for the mental health campaign resolution, several members of the Paint it Down campaign spoke in support including Mari. They walked back to the podium still wearing the black "Paint it Down" shirt, but this time

I noticed that they were also wearing buttons that CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers had created with the "Our Healing in Our Hands" logo.

"[There's a] connection between mental health and what we see on our walls and our textbooks. […] I love the quote, "Our Healing in Our Hands". In our hands." Mari relayed to the school board members, "We know that we are the answers that we've been waiting for. These youth are the answers that we've been waiting for [.]"

"They have the stats, we have the voices"

In an hour of public comment for the mental health resolution, a stream of over thirty youth, parents and members of allied grassroots community organizations spoke to the school board in support of the mental health resolution. For several CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers, this public comment section was the culmination of over two years of collective struggle. As such, they made their case to the state—this time not by centering statistics and scientific rhetoric, but by foregrounding the human dimensions of unwellness produced within SFUSD high schools. Diane walked up to the podium wearing a red CHINATOWN LOCAL windbreaker.

> Expanding youth-led mental health resources in schools is not only about addressing stigma around mental health but working with our peers to dismantle individualistic success that our society and school systems uplift. I grew up struggling a lot with mental health. As academics got more challenging and intensive, I was caught up in a toxic cycle of striving for perfection and maintaining that perfection and valuing academics more than my mental and physical health. As an Asian student, I'm supposed to believe this normal and good and if not you're worthless. My friends who are Black and Brown often don't get the resources they need when they're going through stuff and get punished instead of being supported. We don't need any more of that. What we need is to promote wellness over punishment and unhealthy individualistic success.

Diane's testimony refused the primacy of conventional logics of educational success. She invited the school board to question the extent to which student wellness was an achievable goal within a school system that is animated by the bottom line of academic achievement. Diane's intervention

pointed to inchoate abolitionist visions where wellness and healing are concomitant to education. Said differently Diane argued for student wellness and mental health services on their own terms, rather than in their ability to enhance academic success or enable the reproduction of proper bio-economic subjects. Moreover, this moment was an opportunity for her to engage in what Vijay Prashad (2000) called "model minority suicide" by refusing the commonsense notions of success and achievement that function to reproduce racially differentiated outcomes. While peer-lead coaching, even in the most ideal scenario, would not undo the underlying logics of these schools, they may produce more openings towards undermining commonsense rationales around achievement and success.

Harmony glided up towards the podium wearing an oversized, beige military camo jacket. They took a deep breath and bent the gooseneck microphone closer to their mouth. Behind Harmony, several CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers held up signs "Youth know what youth need!" Harmony wore a pair of oversized earrings, which were the same ones worn by actress Tessa Thompson and her character "Detroit" in the 2018 film *Sorry to Bother You.* On Harmony's left earlobe was a wood carving of the words "MURDER, MURDER, MURDER" stacked vertically. Similarly situated on their left ear were the words "KILL, KILL, KILL". Similar to the character Detroit, Harmony's artistic voice and political instincts were one in the same, which they articulated through an uncompromising and inscrutable construction of style.

As a CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizer and a high school sophomore, Harmony identified as non-binary and had a penchant for experimenting with masculine and feminine coded outfits and hair styles. One of the more outspoken youth organizers, Harmony expressed more antipathy towards school than most others in the group. In my judgement, it was not for lack of intellectual curiosity or work ethic, but their frustration with the constraining structures of

their school. Harmony was a gifted artist and I would often see them before meetings on the floor working on a new sketch or paining a new piece. Harmony often spoke about their struggles with mental health and their dissatisfaction with how their schools failed to adequately meet the mental health needs of other students, especially queer students. Facing the seven school board members, Harmony made their case for the campaign and the mental health resolution.

> I personally have been personally been struggling with depression for many, many years of my life. And for a long time, I was too uncomfortable to speak out and get help because people would think of me differently. One time I was sobbing at school and my friend physically dragged me to the wellness center and I can't overstate how important that was to start me on the journey of healing and talking to my family and getting a therapist. It was really helpful, but the truth is most students who go through that don't have that experience. Although I really appreciate our wellness centers, our schools aren't doing all that they can to help students. For queer students who are being bullied every day. Students of color and uncommitted students are more likely to have more stress and you combine that with the fact that most therapy is prohibitively expensive like everything else in San Francisco. Everyone should have the right to care not just the people with money.

In the past decade conversations on trauma, adverse childhood experiences toxic stress has become more legible as researchers, educators and health care workers have brought to popular attention the effects of poverty and racism on the development of young people (Duncan-Andrade 2009; Harris 2018). For example, in education circles, building "trauma informed schools" has been absorbed into broader education reform discourses (Chafoleas et al. 2015; Walkley and Cox 2013). Departing from this body of literature, Harmony's argument was centered on issues of justice as a rationale for change rather than a conventional appeal to educational achievement. In other words, Harmony expressed how the campaign was not simply about addressing "achievement gaps". In a small way, the resolution and the campaign were about enacting some semblance of justice within a city rife with economic and racial violence.

At the end of an hour of public comment, the resolution was now up for a vote. The two years of collecting data, organizing, building coalitions and maneuvering against the state's

scientific authority came down to these six elected school board members. It was nearing 9:00 PM and I could feel a migraine headache slowly creep into my temples. In anticipation of the vote, I noticed Harmony, Tracy, Diane and Kelly linked together with their hands and arms. Paint It Down coalition members stood up from their seats in anticipation of the decision.

"On 195-14A as amended."
"Yes."
"Yes."
"Yes."
"Yes."
"Yes."
"Yes."
"Six ayes."
"Congratulations."

Bittersweet Endings

The room erupted into a chorus of cheers, hugs and bittersweet tears. In the midst of an embrace, I could see Diane sobbing onto Sarah's shoulder.

"Please move your celebration to the lobby, so that we can proceed with the rest of our agenda" the board president requested from us.

As we all spilled out to the lobby, Sarah asked all CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers, "Paint it Down coalition members and other allied organizations to circle up. The circle was enormous and spanned the length of the lobby, which garnered curious glances from people passing through the room. The circle was intergenerational and included organizers who had been active in San Francisco social movements since the 1960s. Pam, one of the community elders and founders of CHINATOWN LOCAL had been a well-known organizer in the Bay Area for over four decades for her work in Chinatown. In August 1977, Pam and other organizers created a human barricade around the historical I-Hotel, to prevent the eviction of Filipino seniors who were being displaced by the city and real estate developers. The stand-off

between over 3,000 protestors and 400 San Francisco police officers was violent and led to the beatings and arrests of dozens of activists. Although all 197 of the I-Hotel's senior residents were evicted, organizers and movement scholars point to the I-Hotel action as one of the major antecedents of contemporary housing justice movements across the United States (Habal 2007; Yamashita 2010).

> I can't say how proud I am to be part of this intergenerational space with you. You've inspired me. They say the youth is our future. And you've taken it and you run with it. Last night we had a lot of discussion about what are we gonna do. And you proved something that is very very right. It's from the ground up. It's from the day to day experiences and you took it from those little blocks we called Chinatown. You uplifted the whole city. You should be proud of yourselves. The love each of you have put into this work, you inspire me and make me so proud. I'm older than a lot of you people. When I was your age, I thought about how CL would be 40 years from now. I think my dream came true. You wonder what happens. These are moments that give me hope. After Pam, Mia shared a few words in the circle. She was one of the former

CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers who had begun the campaign two years prior.

"I'm having the memories of being in that shithole called Merced."

"Abolish Merced! Fuck Merced!" Harmony added.

Mia gathered her breath and wiped the tears from her cheeks with the sleeve of her hoodie.

> I remember my experiences and my geometry class and the student who killed herself. No one addressed it. No one did anything […] I remember just seeing that desk empty reminded me of my own experiences being diagnosed with mental illness but not having the services in school and thinking about how if you have these services today, back then I feel like without that support I could have died. Imagine all the help other people could have gotten. The girl in my classroom could have gotten. I may not have known her, but maybe if I did, I could have. When we started the campaign, we knew that we had to force them to do something, because they weren't gonna do shit. After today, they can't ignore us anymore.

Chapter 5: "I'm picking a side" Thick Solidarity, Antiblackness and the Grammar of the Model Minority

"Hello board of education members. My name is Aurora and I'm a recent graduate of the San Francisco Unified School District". Speaking into the gooseneck microphone on the podium, Aurora's voice rang through the PA system slightly distorted, but still audible to the attendees of the San Francisco Board of Education meeting. An hour earlier, I had been tasked with the role of reserving seats for youth organizers in attendance. As soon as the security guard unlocked the room, all of the chairs and aisle spaces had been claimed within 30 seconds by a tornado of jackets, bags, notebooks, and bodies. The audience section was packed as onlookers claimed every square food of unoccupied space, including the aisles.

Aurora's shoulder-length black hair was parted in the middle of her scalp just slightly off-center. She fixed her sharp gaze at the seven school board commissioners through her black-rimmed eyeglasses. I could not overlook Aurora's burgundy t-shirt, which had a raised white fist screen-printed on the front – a familiar signifier of solidarity within radical movement spaces. Aurora, a youth organizer with CHINATOWN LOCAL offered her public comment in support of the "Take It Down" campaign: a collective of Black and Indigenous youth, educators and parents who demanded that the district paint over the mural located on the walls of a San Francisco high school.

> A lot of folks who have been arguing that we need to keep the Washington mural up have been talking about the mural having historic value and that I need to be educated about the history…When I reflect on my education, I didn't need a mural to know that genocide happened to the Indigenous people of this land or slavery…Where was the right for the Indigenous folks, the Black folks to decide for themselves how they wanted their history and their humanity to be depicted? Coming from a family of Chinese immigrants, I will never know the kind of impact that Black and Indigenous folks are feeling from this mural, but I understand when my community tells me they need me the most I must listen. Today you are the ones with power to decide the outcome of this resolution. Please listen to the Black and Indigenous students who need you most. Please paint it down!

The Life of Washington, painted by Victor Arnautoff, is a fresco mural that was created as part of President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration program. The mural depicts George Washington's life as a military figure, a plantation and slave owner, and an ambassador of settler colonialism. On one panel, Washington points his left arm in the direction of a group of White settlers armed with muskets and pickaxes marching on Native territory and past an Indigenous body lying face down on the grass. Members of the campaign noted how this panel became a common meeting place associated with the phrase "meet me under the dead Indian". Another panel depicts Washington at Mt. Vernon overlooking the enslaved Black people of whose lives and labor he was the sole proprietor. The opposition, comprised of a mix of predominantly White, middle-aged, self-identified liberals, argued that this effort symbolized "censorship" and "political correctness". The *Life of Washington* mural does present a critical illustration of the foundations of racial capitalism in the United States: expropriation of Indigenous land and Black enslavement (Cherny 2017). At the same time, Black and Indigenous students, parents and educators at the school testified to the daily quotidian suffering of being required to view these depictions of dead Natives and enslaved Black people.

This ethnographic vignette stems from a San Francisco Unified School District Board of Education meeting on an afternoon in June 2019. As This meeting was also the culmination of three years of organizing work led by CHINATOWN LOCAL youth to demand that the board pass a resolution to support improving mental health resources and incorporating youth voice within public high schools. For the Asian American youth organizers of CHINATOWN LOCAL, the hearing also became a moment to demonstrate solidarity with the demands of their Black and Indigenous peers.

In this chapter I explore the (im)possibilities of building cross-racial coalitions within the "progressive dystopia" of San Francisco (Shange 2019). Specifically, I underline my interlocutors' efforts to carry out the unsettling study of interrogating the relationship between the model minority myth and antiblackness as part of the process of developing inchoate cross racial solidarities. Given the racial context of San Francisco—as a predominantly White and Asian American city—I explore how CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers worked to cultivate what Roseann Liu and Savannah Shange (2018) have theorized as "thick solidarity". This concept eschews the "false equivalence between experiences of racialized violence" in favor of a solidarity that "mobilizes empathy in ways that do not gloss over difference, but rather pushes into the specificity, irreducibility and incommensurability of racialized experiences" (190). For Liu and Shange (2018), *thick solidarity* "layers interpersonal empathy with historical analysis, political acumen and a willingness to be led by those most directly impacted" and can "withstand the tension of critique, the pulling back and forth between that which we owe and that which we share" (196). A praxis of thick solidarity necessitates forms of study that intentionally attends to differences in experiences and structural vulnerabilities between racialized communities in the United States. As such, this chapter attempts to jettison liberal critiques of the model minority myth that are centered around "bamboo ceilings" and representational politics. This chapter is partially informed by the works of theorists located within critical Black studies, including the contemporary intellectual movement known as afropessimism. Although I do not subscribe to some of the political conclusions made by some afropessimist theorists, I do find some of their interventions provocative and generative for thinking through the discourses around the model minority myth, political education and the (im)possibilities of coalitions.

Contemporary interventions in the study of antiblackness (Dumas & Ross 2016; Sexton 2010a; Wilderson 2010), settler colonialism (Byrd 2011; Simpson 2014) and racial capitalism (Robinson 2000; Walcott & Abdillahi 2019) offer education researchers a way to contextualize the durability of the model minority myth by centering the phenomena of racial antagonisms. In partnership with my interlocutors, I interrogate the model minority myth in relation to what Frank Wilderson (2010) has described as the *structural antagonisms* within the United States where racial frictions are animated through the paradigm of anti-blackness and manifestations of anti-Black racism. Moreover, I underline how the figure of Asian Americans have been enveloped within multiculturalist projects, which obscure indigenous sovereignty claims (Byrd 2011). Said differently, Asian American youth organizers in CHINATOWN LOCAL, reaching towards a *thick solidarity* required interrogating the model minority myth in relation to the complex interplay of antiblackness, settler colonialism and racial capitalism (Coulthard 2014; Robinson 2000).

Confronting Antagonisms

Contemporary historiography around the phenomenon of the model minority myth often begins in 1966 with William Petersen's *New York Times Magazine* article "Success Story, Japanese-American Style". Similar to other liberal sociologists of his era, Petersen was interested in decoding the cultural factors that might explain (un)successful assimilation and acculturation of immigrants and minority groups into the American social fabric. Petersen (1966) coined the phrase "model minority" to describe the movement of Japanese Americans into middle-classness during the 20th century. Japanese Americans contrasted with the "problem minorities" who comprised the American underclass: "Like the Negroes, the Japanese have been the object of color prejudice. Like the Jews, they have been feared and hated as hyperefficient competitors.

And more than any other group they have been seen as agents of an overseas enemy". Ultimately, Petersen pointed to cultural, religious and nationalist pride as the determining factors that enabled Japanese Americans to "climb over the highest barriers our racists were able to fashion in part because of their meaningful links with an alien culture. Pride in their heritage and shame for any reduction in its only partly legendary glory—these were sufficient to carry the group through its travail." Petersen's article flattened and generalized the relative structural locations of non-white racial groups during that era, as well as ignored the historical, structural and material specificities of anti-Black racism. Moreover, these cultural explanations of success became entangled with its converse—the darkened "culture of poverty" tropes (Nopper 2014).

While much of the model minority discourse since the 1960s has been manufactured by liberal academics as well as right wing political actors, there is also a lesser acknowledged trajectory of Asian Americans contributing (consciously or unwittingly) to and investing in the symbolic constructions of exceptionalism. In 1927, decades before the *Brown* decision and the myth's dawn, a Chinese merchant in Rosedale, Mississippi Gong Lum sued the state to get his daughters re-enrolled into the White school after they had been labeled as "colored"; the crux of *Lum v. Rice* hinged upon his argument that the daughters were not Black and therefore not "colored" (Berard 2016). Cases like *Lum v. Rice*, Chinese Americans' efforts to resist the state's racial classification also reinforced the segregation of Black students in schools (Kim 2018, 15). In other words, Asian American exceptionalism is often made legible in relation to the negative anti-Black tropes of failure, cultural pathology and laziness.

In *The Color of Success* (2014), historian Ellen D. Wu traces the longue durée of the model minority myth's construction as a result of a multitude of actors and forces: Japanese and Chinese Americans maneuvering to secure rights from the state, the efforts of liberal social

scientists and philanthropists sympathetic to their predicament, and media apparatuses and politicians who hoped to salvage the promises of American capitalism. Spanning from the late 19th century through the eras of Asiatic exclusion, the Cold War, and Black uprisings across the US, Wu (2014) describes the model minority status as "for the most part an *unintended* consequence that sprung from many concurrent imperatives in American life" (256). During the era of the Cold War, conservative business elites within Chinatowns openly maneuvered to cultivate images of respectability and industriousness among Chinese American immigrants as part of an anti-communist political project. Wu's historiography illustrates how variations of the model minority discourse—despite its unintended foundations—was fundamentally defined as "not-Blackness".

The Racial Solution

Those who are positioned and racialized as model minorities—or as Mari Matsuda (1996) once described the "racial bourgeoisie"—are inheritors of a racial-economic process where Asianness today is defined systemically as "other", as labor, and increasingly through signifiers of middle-classness (Cheng 2013; Da Silva 2007). The model minority myth occupies one side of a Janus-faced coin with the other being its converse—the darkened culture of poverty. Inverting Du Bois' (1996/1920) central question from *The Souls of Black Folk*, Vijay Prashad (2000) notes that the model minority myth asks Asian Americans "How does it feel to be the solution?" (6). For decades, this myth has fueled the scholarly agendas of sociologists and education researchers who have tried to "figure out" the paradox of Asian American academic success and Black failure. Said differently, the discourses of model minorities have consistently been constructed within education research relative to discourses of antiblackness (Poon et al. 2016).

Jodi Byrd (2011) articulates the how the figure of Asians, which is trapped in a "third space" between immigrant threat/model minority, produces "…distortive parallactic effects that have been used to disrupt and deny indigenous sovereignty" (189). Specifically, she lifts up how scientific colonial narratives such as "the Bearing Strait Theory" deterritorialize indigenous claims to land by suggesting "…that not only were "Indians" not indigenous to the Americas, but that they were ultimately the first wave of a "yellow peril" invasion that infested the lands already (or destines to be) inhabited by Europeans" (201). Whether as a settler or an arrivant, the figure of the Asian laborer/worker has occupied a mercurial position within the settler project: constructed as docile workers, a threat to working-class interests, or valorized as an embodiment of the meritocratic promises of settler state (Karuka 2019; Lowe 1996).

Claire Jean Kim's (1999) seminal essay on *racial triangulation* broaches the uncomfortable processes of racialization in the United States where the perverse valorization of model minorities is entangled with anti-Black racism. Model minorities, due to their ostensibly superior cultures, are valorized for successfully complying with the terms of racial capitalism such as assimilation and non-reliance on the welfare state (Yu 2002). These logics have a legacy of being weaponized by the state to construct discourses of Black criminality and matriarchal pathology and justify state neglect and violence (Muhammad 2010; Spillers 1987). Within Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2007) oft-quoted definition of racism as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (28), we might begin to understand the model minority myth as a structural feature of schooling. As an *enclosed place,* the school as a state institution functions to contain and suppress Black life (Sojoyner 2017). As a "site of black suffering" (Dumas 2014), it is of no surprise that the construction of the model minority is concomitant to this project.

Social scientists have formulated expansive frameworks in order to unravel the education "achievement paradox" associated with Asian Americans through the discourses of "success frames", "selective immigration" and "co-ethnic institutions" (Lee & Zhou 2014). While such sociological work provides useful empirical knowledge of this phenomenon, the terms of social and cultural capital too often presumes a "goodness" of "Asian culture", which animates immigrant exceptionalism narratives, while obscuring the dynamics of racial positioning (Kim 2018; Nopper 2014). Additionally, this lens can conceal the violent arrangements of racial capitalism and settler colonialism through the sociological grammar of assimilation and integration processes. Similarly, efforts to "debunk" the model minority myth often reflect an aversion to confronting the ways that some Asian Americans are positioned "not only as victims of organized, state-sanctioned violence, but also as agents, or at the very least as accomplices" (Sexton 2010b, 94).

Contemporary confrontations between Asianess (Cheng 2013) and antiblackness converge at a moment where the Asian American political project seems increasingly unable to contain the multitude of material, social and class factures among its body politic, especially as economic inequality within Asian America now eclipses that of any other racial group (Lowe 1996; Pew Research Center 2018; Zhou et al. 2016). Therefore, questions about the political leanings of Asian Americans are increasingly unanswerable without asking "Which ones?". While right wing elements within Asian American communities have latched onto renewed debates around affirmative action at elite universities, progressive and leftist Asian American organizers, activists and scholars continue to lead and agitate for a multitude of justice projects, including dismantling anti-Black racism within Asian American communities (Letters for Black Lives 2016; Kim 2018; Liu 2018; Poon 2019). For example, Chi Nguyen and Rand Quinn (2018)

discuss how Vietnamese youth organizers worked to build better analyses of Vietnamese and Black interracial tensions in Philadelphia. This chapter attempts to take this inquiry a step further by attending to the unsettling structural antagonisms that link the model minority myth to antiblackness and racial capitalism within education discourses (Poon et al., 2016)

Centering antiblackness within education asks us to jettison mistaken impulses to "go beyond the Black-white binary" and instead grapple with what Christina Sharpe (2016) has described as "the weather". "[The] weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is antiblack" (104). As such, this requires an understanding of the specificities of anti-Black political projects and how those projects inform how race is understood in the United States (Yancey 2003). Philosopher Lewis Gordon (1997) summarized the American racial paradigm as "(1) be white, but above all, (2) don't be black" (63). This premise underscores what Jared Sexton (2010a) has described as "people-of-color-blindness", which is characterized by the flattening of racial oppressions positions and the concomitant obscuring of antiblackness. Blackness has been defined historically in the United States through fungibility and accumulation—as labor *and* property (Hartman 1997), as well as disruption and resistance (Moten 2003). While labor exploitation is essential to the functioning of capitalism, the state of captivity experienced by Black people haunts universalist narratives of liberation through class struggle (Wilderson 2003). This fungibility marks the Black subject in ways that cannot be conflated to the structural positions of those racialized as "Asian American", "Latinx", or otherwise not Black. Centering anti-Blackness unsettles facile theorizations of solidarity and foregrounds the ways the state can deploy technologies—such as the model minority discourse—as part of an anti-Black and settler colonial project.

The Political Economies of Exceptionalism

Model minority discourse is entangled within broader racial discourses of who and what counts as "the human". As such, centering the work of Jamaican social theorist Sylvia Wynter offers a way to understand the imbrications of anti-Blackness and racial capitalism within what she describes as the "genres of the human." Wynter's thought underlines a conceptual framework for understanding how legible forms of humanity have always been defined in relation to the "space of Otherness" (Blackness) as well as conquest (King 2019). For those subjects structurally positioned as model minorities, a Wynterian methodology offers a way of undoing myths, and building a praxis for *thick solidarity* (McKittrick 2015). In this section, I provide an overview of the thrust of Wynter's theoretical project and how it can reconfigure our understanding of the model minority myth.

The model minority myth resonates within Wynter's theorization of the "bio-economic subject", as the "jobholding Breadwinner and even more optimally, a successful "masterer of Natural Scarcity" (Investor, or capital accumulator)" (Wynter 2003, 321). The figure of the model minority is made real by its ability to reify the rationality of racial capitalism and the settler state in large degree through a calculus of antiblackness. Moreover, it is in relation to Blackness that the model minority is rendered legible to the state. Within contemporary education discourses, the model minority functions as a variation of the "bioeconomic subject", which is constructed through the interplay of racial ideology and neoliberal social structures (Chen & Buell 2017).

In what she describes as the "wages of non-Blackness", Tamara K. Nopper (2011) notes how discourses that valorize immigrants for their work ethic, character, productivity and cultures draws from a moral economy steeped in capitalist perspectives of labor and anti-Black rhetoric. Nopper reminds us that uplifting representations of non-Black minority groups do not operate in

silos or vacuums but are often wielded for the advancement anti-Black political discourses and projects. At the same time, these projects are readily transposed by the state, as needed, onto non-Black subjects including more vulnerable members of the Asian American body politic (Buenavista 2018; La Paperson 2017). Moreover, these discourses also remind us of the adaptive potential for the model minority status to signify and incorporate a widening range of racial subjects.

Drawing from Wynter's theorizations, I offer an analysis of the model minority myth in relation to what Wynter has articulated as *ontological sovereignty* (Scott 2000). *Ontological sovereignty* describes a praxis "to move completely outside our present conception of what it is to be human, and therefore outside the ground of the orthodox body of knowledge which institutes and reproduces such a conception (Wynter, in Scott, 2000, 136). In a conversation with geographer Katherine McKittrick, Wynter (2015) describes this process as a means "to uncover, to reveal, here is that which lies behind the ostensible truths of our everyday reality, but which we normally cannot see. It is that of the dynamic of what I now call the *autopoiesis of being hybridly human*" (27). As such, autopoiesis, "is a creative process whereby humans have been able to question binary and oppositional epistemic codifications of sameness and difference to signify, semiolinguistically, the possibility and/or conditions for freedom" (Alagraa 2018, 167). *Ontological sovereignty* sets the stage for resistance or refusals targeted at the dominant genre of the human as well as moving forward towards the not-yet conceived possibilities of being human. For Asian American youth organizers at CHINATOWN LOCAL, reaching towards thick solidarity was intertwined with their own struggles for *ontological sovereignty.* Developing an analysis of the model minority myth in relation to antiblackness and racial capitalism was not only an intellectual exercise, but these analyses also deeply informed their organizing efforts.

Foregrounding Antiblackness and Embodying Solidarity

Jessica, the adult youth coordinator for CHINATOWN LOCAL stood in front of the room and introduced the topic of the afternoon's organizing workshop. It was a Friday afternoon in late March, and I could sense that many youth members were burned out—myself included—from the long week and were looking forward to commencing their spring break. It was also "bring a friend day", where youth organizers were encouraged to practice an essential organizing strategy—peer recruitment. As such, the meeting room was more crowded than usual from the new faces in attendance. Jessica was flanked by Jonathan and Alexandria, who were two youth organizing leaders and high school seniors. They had helped lead that year's organizing efforts for CHINATOWN LOCAL's mental health campaign within the San Francisco Unified School District. The topic of that afternoon's workshop was centered on antiblackness. The youth organizers and Jessica had decided earlier in the week to move up the antiblackness workshop in order to address racial tensions of that moment. Earlier that week, elderly Chinese residents in San Francisco had been reporting physically violent robberies and almost all of the survivors had alleged that the assailants were Black. Jessica had informed me that CHINATOWN LOCAL had to respond by shifting the gears of its political education program.

> As an Asian American movement organization, we've got to be assertive and counter the anti-Black rhetoric that is being put out by conservative and right wing Asian American groups in San Francisco. We decided to engage our youth members in order to counter some of the messages they're probably hearing from friends and maybe even family members.

Jonathan and Alexandria introduced the first activity of the day, which was focused on how young people come to learn about racism in our society. They directed the 16 youth members to organize into groups of four. Alexandria announced that she and Jonathan would be providing a series of discussion prompts for the group conversations. The first prompt from Alexandria was

"After we're born, we start learning stuff about race and racism. What are the first messages you remember receiving and learning about when it came to Black people?" At first, nary a whisper could be heard, but within a few minutes, the room was transformed by the cacophonous tones of group discussions. About 10 minutes later, Alexandria yelled "shower clap!" to the room in order to call the groups to attention. In a relatively coordinated manner, everyone clapped and made the "shhh" sound in unison. After, Alexandria asked for volunteers to share out. Katherine, a high school junior was the first to share.

> I don't really know. I do remember though...I remember when we came over from Vietnam, we came over here. I guess this might have been the first thing for them, but I remember there's this word in Vietnamese that I always thought meant "homeless people" because me and my mom would be walking in the street and then she would say, "oh don't be like them", or like "they're gonna catch you". I just always thought she meant homeless people, and then when my cousins came over, they were being stubborn. And they were like "oh, those people are going to catch you." My mom asked me "Do you know what that means?" And I said, "homeless people", and she said "no, Black people". I guess that might be the earliest I can remember.

Next, Charlie a Filipinx young man and a sophomore chimed in,

> The first word that comes to mind with media or what our families think is "assumption". What media depicts African Americans as a lot of the times is dangerous, they commit crimes, they're drug addicted, they do bad things. Another thing about assumptions, and me personally, I tell my parents about recent news or events that happen in our neighborhood. If I tell them anything negative like a robbery, or a shooting, the first thing they ask is "What color is the person? Was he Black? Was he Latino?". They automatically assume that it's a Black person, and sometimes a Latino.

What this exercise illustrates is the power of what Frank Wilderson and Jared Sexton have described as the *libidinal economy*. They describe it as "the economy, or distribution and arrangement, of desire and identification…the whole structure of psychic and emotional life" (Sexton, cited in Wilderson 2010, 7). Wilderson (2010) also notes, "It is linked not only to forms of attraction, affection and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction, and the violence of lethal consumption" (7). These group discussions brought to the forefront the personal experiences of

youth members and the prevalence of antiblackness within their own communities. The resonance of this theme across members underlines how Blackness is easily and semantically linked with negative tropes that are (un)knowingly held within non-Black, racially marginalized communities. Most importantly, these discussions generated an unsettling consciousness among youth members by emphasizing how negative affective associations of Blackness operate all around us like the weather (Sharpe 2016).

The workshop concluded with a final activity that centered on the Letters for Black Lives Project (2016). Begun in 2016, the effort is a crowdsourced project created to facilitate conversations with families and friends about anti-Black racism. To date, the letter has been translated in dozens of languages including—but not limited to—Vietnamese, Cantonese, Korean, Japanese Mandarin, Tagalog, Thai, Khmer, Hindi and Urdu. Jessica informed the group that they would be reenacting an action from 2016, which was organized by former CHINATOWN LOCAL youth members. "In 2016 CHINATOWN LOCAL youth members went to Portsmouth Square and read The Letter for Black Lives in Cantonese and English to everyone at the square. We're gonna wrap up our workshop today by reenacting the action and reading this letter together." Alexandria asked everyone to organize into a large circle while Jonathan passed around handouts to everyone in the room.

Each double-sided handout had a copy of the letter in English and on the reverse side. were drawings by a Bay Area artist Oree Originol. The drawings were portraits of people murdered by police officers in the Bay Area and across the country in the past decade. As everyone gathered in a circle and held up their handouts, I could see black and white portraits of Philando Castille, Akai Gurley, Ayana Jones, Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and Sandra Bland. There were also portraits of local victims of police violence including Oscar Grant, Mario

Woods, Alex Nieto and Amilcar Perez Lopez. Each person in the circle recited several lines from the letter before passing it on to the person on their left. Alexandria began the with the first few paragraphs of the letter, which outline the disproportionate level of police violence levied on Black people in the United States and the deaths of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. Next, Jennifer, a Chinese high school senior read the next paragraph.

> Even as we hear about the dangers Black Americans face, our instinct is sometimes to point at all the ways we are different from them. To shield ourselves from their reality instead of empathizing. When a policeman shoots a Black person, you might think it's the victim's fault because you see so many images of them in the media as thugs and criminals. After all, you might say, we managed to come to America with nothing and build good lives for ourselves despite discrimination, so why can't they?

Charlie followed her up by reading the proceeding section.

> It's true that we face discrimination for being Asian in this country. Sometimes people are rude to us about our accents or withhold promotions because they don't think of us as "leadership material." Some of us are told we're terrorists. But for the most part, nobody thinks "dangerous criminal" when we are walking down the street. The police do not gun down our children and parents for simply existing. This is not the case for our Black friends. Many Black people were brought to America as slaves against their will. For centuries, their communities, families, and bodies were ripped apart for profit. Even after slavery, they had to build back their lives by themselves, with no institutional support — not allowed to vote or own homes, and constantly under threat of violence that continues to this day.

The reenactment of the past action afforded CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers to embody solidarity in action. The specific passages read by Jennifer and Charlie demonstrate an ethos in line with Liu and Shange's (2018) notion of *thick solidarity.* The letter makes explicit how racial oppression across racialized groups cannot be conflated. Jennifer's passage illustrates how criminality operates within our libidinal economies always already in tandem with Blackness. Conversely, the passage underlines how seldom criminality is applied to Asian Americans today. Charlie's reading contextualizes the racial oppression faced by Black people in the United State by historicizing anti-Black racism. It debunks the false equivalencies and the

facile arguments offered by the model minority myth, which often eschews the particularities of chattel slavery and Jim Crow that have an unquantifiable influence upon history of Black people in North America. Building *thick solidarities* takes much more time and commitment than can be contained in a two-hour workshop. At the same time, these vignettes underscore the power of youth organizing as a generative context for carrying out the unsettling, but necessary work of constructing the necessary analyses for theorizing *thick solidarity.*

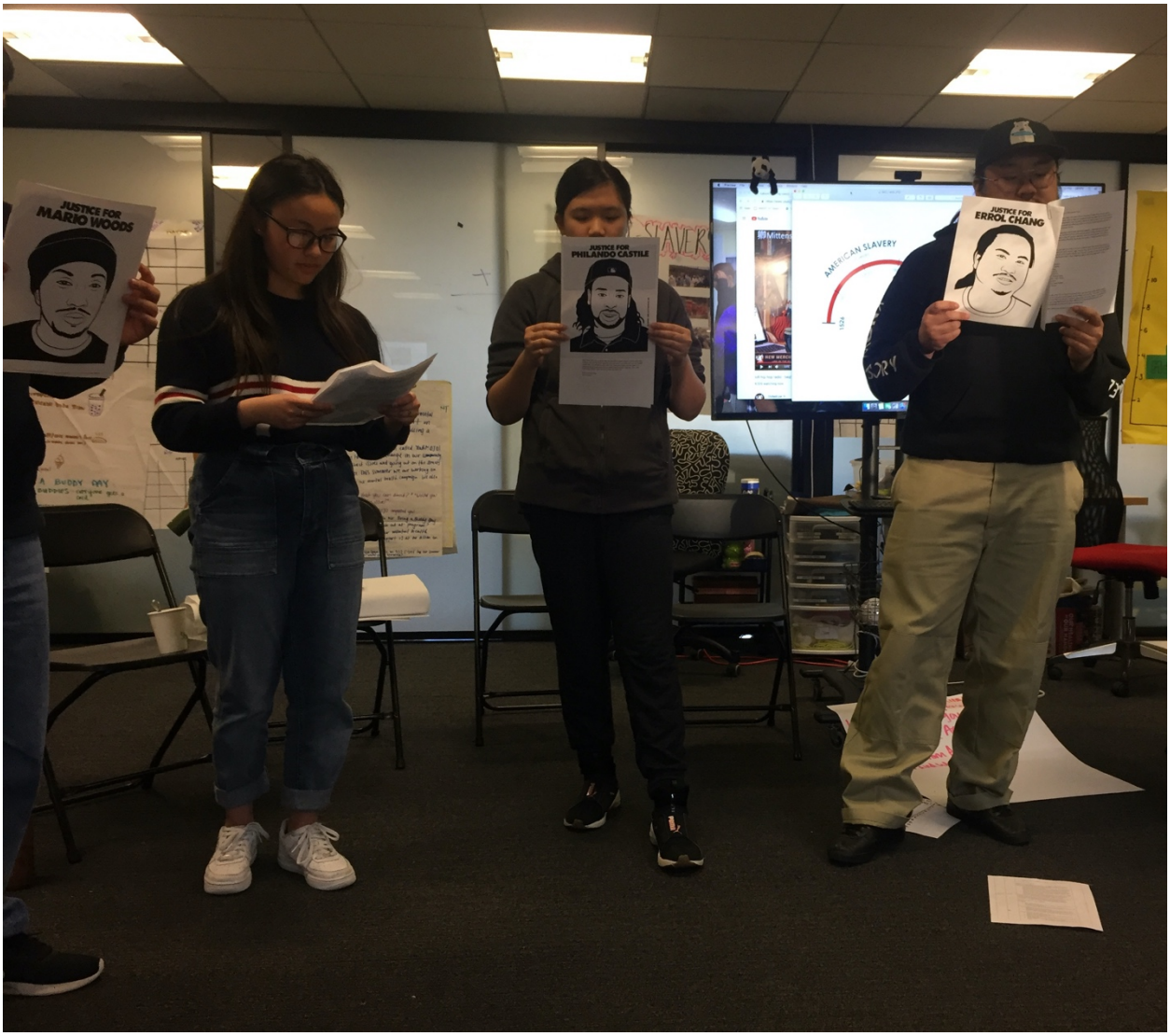

Fig. 5.1 “Letters for Black Lives” reading at a CHINATOWN LOCAL political education workshop. Courtesy of Chinatown Local.

Divesting in the Bio-economic Subject

Ricky and I sat on the floor with our backs to the wall of the CHINATOWN LOCAL office. Stuck to the wall above us were large easel pads from past political education workshops. Each pad held definitions for concepts such as “cisheteropatriarchy”, “white supremacy” and “capitalism”. At that point it was June 2019, we had known each other for about a year. Tracy and I often spoke about the most recent spats on Twitter among social justice figures on the platform. A 2nd generation Chinese non-binary person, Tracy had just completed their junior year of high school. A self-described politics nerd, Tracy was also heavily involved in a wide range of movement work and anti-capitalist, anti-racist and queer spaces around the Bay Area. I often wondered and admired how Tracy managed such an immense slate of commitments at their age. During CHINATOWN LOCAL organizing meetings, Tracy often vocally urged their peers to foreground their positionality as Asian Americans and the intricate racial politics that the model minority myth confers onto Asian Americans who are engaged in movement work. During this moment, we spoke at length about the racial politics and dynamics at play in envisioning the possibilities of cross-racial solidarities among Asian Americans in relation to Black movements.

> I think that Asian Americans need to be politicized to a degree that I think…even the need is even greater than other communities. Upward mobility is a powerful thing that so many of us believe even if we don’t say it. It gives you the privilege of not being politicized. Upward mobility requires investment in capitalism and investment in the state. The fundamental rule of capitalism, that you can’t profit without the fundamental exploitation of other people […] going off that you can’t move upward socioeconomically without perpetuating a system that historically oppresses working people, people of color. And you also can’t do that without exploiting those who aren’t allowed to be part of the state, like a lot of Black folks, queer folks, poor folks. Whave to divest from the goal of upward mobility. Upward mobility is always, like relational. Who is allowed to do that? It’s about assimilation. That’s the model minority myth. And also understanding how it’s a divide and conquer strategy […] there’s such a careful balance between “We’re being used” and “We’re using what we’re given” because Asian Americans both have a degree of agency over participating in the system, as well as knowing there’s forces that incentivize participation in racist systems like schools that uphold antiblackness. As part of our campaign, we’ve had to step outside of ourselves to

> start to understand how we're not really in danger to particular things in our society the same way Black and Native folks are. Policing is one example that we all know about, but there's a bunch of other things because of the history of this country.

In this passage, Tracy performs the necessary but unsettling analytical work of untangling the ideological program of the myth vis a vis racial capitalism and antiblackness. They articulated the importance of recognizing the intertwined, yet disparate historical trajectories that produce the specific structural vulnerabilities that target specific racialized peoples. In the process, they sketched out the necessary elements for building thick solidarities by grappling with the specific state sanctioned vulnerabilities that are distributed unequally between racial communities. For example, Tracy articulates how, upward mobility—one of the essential folk tales of racial capitalism—operates as an impediment towards the politicization of some Asian American people. Moreover, they note how antiblackness is entangled within historical narratives of social mobility in the United States, and how constructions of the upwardly mobile immigrants are fundamentally wrapped up in discourses of non-Blackness (Nopper 2011). Ultimately, Tracy points to the need to exercise some form of refusal of meritocracy, social mobility and the racist assumptions that animate those narratives.

This immanent critique echoes Sylvia Wynter's notions of the genres of the human and the overrepresentation of the *bioeconomic* subject: the breadwinning, productive capitalist. The model minority myth interfaces very well within this framework. The thrust of Ricky's argument stems upon his own interrogation of the model minority myth and the dialectic of complicity versus structural forces. Moreover, he questions "moves to innocence" (Tuck &Yang 2012) where investments in the settler state's promises of social mobility are rationalized—by Asian Americans, as well as other racially minoritized people—through the discourses of survival.

Ricky refuses the framing of a liberal politics of recognition, and instead hints at an inchoate figuration that resembles an abolitionist politics (Coulthard 2014; Moten & Harney 2004).

Picking Sides and the Labors of Solidarity

A week after the school board meeting, I the rode the bus with Aurora down Mission street towards the subway station. It was late in the afternoon and we had just wrapped up the programming day for "Solidarity in Action", a summer program that brought together CHINATOWN LOCAL youth with Latinx and Indigenous youth organizers in San Francisco. Aurora and I sat side by side towards the back of the bus as we whisked through San Francisco's Excelsior neighborhood. As Aurora scrolled through the Instagram feed on her phone, she described her experience speaking in support of the Black and Indigenous students who were demanding that the school board take down the *Life of Washington* mural.

> I didn't know what I was going to say until the day of. But I knew that our mental health campaign and their campaign were connected. I wanted to be very clear that I'm not going to say what my experience is with the mural, because it's not about my experience with the mural. I can see how this mural is affecting the Black and Indigenous students who have been speaking up about it and how much it's hurting them. So, my speech was about getting the school board to paint it down. I was nervous, but I was also focused because I kind of saw everything that was happening in the room. Like the hearing started off with the people who wanted to keep the mural up. All the White people on the other side didn't really care about listening and hearing what Black and Indigenous students had to say. They were saying a lot of harmful stuff to the Indigenous community and when I heard the Indigenous and Black students speak up, it was 100% clear to me that "Yeah, this is definitely what we need to be supporting". I could feel it. I'm picking a side. Our values…our campaigns shared those values. Both the campaigns were about love. Love for each other and love for yourself and love for the youth…I'll always remember that even after the board voted on the mural, the "Paint It Down" folks stayed until like after 9:00 PM to speak up and support our campaign, too. Solidarity is kind of a hard concept to understand or talk about, but that night I think was the first time I could *feel* what solidarity could look like. Like nothing else other than winning doesn't matter at that moment.

Concomitant to Aurora's effort to embody a thick solidarity was a form of self-making in the spirit of Wynter's notion of *autopoesis* (Wynter & McKittrick 2015). Aurora's reflection

illustrates how a politics of solidarity requires both decentering oneself and amplifying the concerns of those who have been directly harmed. As Aurora notes, that moment was not about her, or "disproving" model minority tropes, but for standing up for the dignity of her Black and Indigenous peers. While "picking a side" rested upon Aurora's understanding of the structural arrangements that reproduce Black and Indigenous suffering in schools, she also identifies an affective quality to solidarity—clarity and love. Love itself is unable to fulfill the work of thick solidarity, yet it does highlight the affective qualities that are concomitant to projects of resistance, self-making, decolonization and abolition (King 2019). For Aurora, this feeling may have only lasted a few minutes/hours/days, but at least for that moment, her words echoed the convergence of justice projects in opposition to settler colonialism, antiblackness and racial capitalism. Aurora's feeling of justice transcended rational political analysis and moved into the registers of sincerity (Jackson 2010) where solidarity is not a market exchange, but the desire to fight for people struggling for dignity and liberation (Kelley Amariglio & Wilson 2018).

Through my encounters with Asian American youth organizers such as Aurora, Ricky and Marjorie, I have come to realize how liberal versions of the model minority discourse are often rendered facile because they eschew the difficult and unsettling work of addressing questions of antiblackness and the ongoing crises of racial capitalism. Researchers who are invested in Asian American education and the model minority discourse would do well to look to the justice projects emerging from the corners of Black and Indigenous studies and the scholars who remind us that the model minority myth is always already entangled within questions of liberal humanism and settler ontologies (Byrd 2011). As such, theorists such as Wendy Cheng (2013) have advocated the use of "strategic orientalism" as a means to leverage privileges accorded to Asian Americans for the advancement of social movements.

As Roseann Liu and Savannah Shange (2018) remind us, *thick solidarities* do not "gloss over differences, but rather pushes into the specificity, irreducibility, and the incommensurability of racialized experience (190). For these youth organizers, homing in on specificities required developing political analyses that extended beyond generalized discourses about white supremacy and a deeper understanding of the enduring legacies of racial capitalism and conquistador humanism (King 2019). For my interlocutors, grappling with the structural, interpersonal, libidinal and economic functions of the myth necessitated a political analysis that could reckon with the realities of antiblackness in San Francisco and the United States. Solidarities are defined through differences of identity, structural location, and privilege. Thick solidarities call for us to maneuver and find solace in a vision of coalitions—and movements—not only through the aspirational discourses of certainty and permanence, but also as provisional, and always already in motion on trajectories not always of our choosing.

Contemporary justice projects led by young Black, Asian American or other non-Black people represent a multitude of tendencies whose visions of liberation are often divergent. Paradoxically, discord, difference and friction may offer generative pathways towards cultivating thick solidarities. The work of recovering what Lisa Lowe (2015) has described as the "intimacies" among formerly enslaved, as well as formerly and currently colonized people necessitates forms of study that do not flatten but clarify the specificities of social locations and political commitments through which coalitions might still arise.

Chapter 6: Romantic Façades: Movement Work and Generative Conflict

Within this concluding chapter, I highlight moments of rupture where my interlocutors peel back the idealism and romanticism sometimes ascribed to movement work. I describe these examples as moments as *generative conflict*. This formulation draws from draws from Sarah Ahmed's (2017) idea of the *killjoy* and how "[w]e become a problem when we describe a problem" (39). Among justice projects, the role of the "killjoy" has stood in for the unresolved contradictions within movements. Yet, those who lift up and bring attention to the contradictions have too often been positioned as "the problem". One might look at the complicated, historical relationship between Marxist-inspired movements in the West and the Black radical tradition where the question of race too often would be rendered ancillary or divisive in cultivating class struggle (Hall 1996; Kelley 1997; Robinson 1983/2000; Singh 2016). This is not to reduce Marxism to a "white ideology", which is historically inaccurate given the essential contributions of non-white organizers, scholars and revolutionaries in leading leftist and anti-colonial movements around the globe in the 20th century (Combahee River Collective ; Davies 2008; Fanon 1961; James 1938; Zedong 1964). At the same time, I lift up this dynamic to illustrate the necessary role of *generative conflicts* in highlighting the weaknesses and limitations of our movements and theories of liberation. In this way, *generative* conflict evokes an "aesthetics of survivance": practices that produce resistance to domination within settings and contexts that are ostensibly part of "the movement". Moreover, *generative conflict* is useful for underlining the generative and creative friction that is produced in the process of engaging the contradictions of movement work (Tsing 2005). While, generative conflict offers us the opportunity to engage contradictions and lift up new pathways for collective struggle, it still offers no guarantees of success or liberation.

The first ethnographic fragment in this chapter is taken from a youth-led climate march in San Francisco I attended with MISSION UNITED youth organizers. I highlight how their participation inserted a problematic within the demands and goals of the march. Their examples of *generative conflict* underlined a deeper critique of conventional environmental justice slogans, as well as the trendiness of climate activism among young people. Their participation lifted up the contradictions of contemporary climate justice movements in relation the demands of decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty. The second half of the chapter offers ethnographic fragments that unsettle romanticized perceptions of movements organizing and struggles of social justice. I draw upon MISSION UNITED's political education program. Rather than hagiographies, MISSION UNITED's political education program attended and grappled with the problematic and reactionary elements that existed within 20th century social movements and revolutions. I also describe the sobering transitions of several youth organizers as they began to become active within adult-centered activist and organizing contexts in the Bay Area. These experiences presented interpersonal, philosophical and moral dilemmas, which underlined how forms of domination and harm exist within movement work.

"The only environmental justice is indigenous land repatriation"

On September 20th, 2019 over 40,000 people participated in the Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice march in San Francisco. Organized primarily by an Oakland-based, youth climate justice organization known as Youth vs. Apocalypse, the march brought young people from all around the Bay Area to walk through the corridors of downtown San Francisco. The march's route included several stops including the offices of House Representative Nancy Pelosi and Senator Dianne Feinstein, Bank of America, Amazon, PG&E, ICE, BlackRock. As such the

march route articulated the interconnections between the state, capital and environmental catastrophe.

I joined march around 11:00 AM, which was just in time for the second march stop. It was just outside of Dianne Feinstein's office on the intersection of Market street and Post street in the financial district. I made my way around waves of marchers, many of whom seemed to be middle and elementary school aged. As I reached the front of the march, there were six or seven yellow rectangular banners attached to 10-foot-long poles. These signs reminded me of the types of banners that were prevalent in movie and television representations of medieval Europe, which would often display a coat of arms. Each yellow banner had demands written in red paint: "We Demand Equal Rights for all", "We Demand Justice and Asylum for people displaced by climate change", "We demand a just transition", and "We demand policy based on science". Outside her office, a marcher with a white "Youth vs. Apocalypse" shirt begin chant in their megaphone directed at the California senator, "Dianne Feinstein listen to us/We are the people/You work for us". The vibration of the drumbeat followed a 4/4-time signature and the voices slowly converged into a unified chant.

As I followed crowd north on Market St. and I felt a hand on my right shoulder, and heard a voice call out "Miguel". I turned around and see Raul smiling as well as Angel, Penelope, Francisco and Juana. One by one, I exchanged hugs with each of them. One block down, the front cluster of marchers stopped outside of a storefront of an Amazon Go convenience market. I began to hear a new chant gradually spread through the crowd: "Amazon/Do your share/You need to treat your workers fair". The chant quickly spread through the crowd guided by the steady thumping of drums. I bent over into Francisco's ear and I asked him what he thought about the march. "I didn't expect to see so many white people here, and not

that many PoC so far." As he spoke, a large contingent of white youth walked past us. They wore identical sweaters with the image of an eagle and the name of a middle school located in the Peninsula.

The march continued and took a right turn onto 1st Street. This block had become the nexus for finance-capital and the technology sector in San Francisco during the past two decades. Upon turning onto the street, the shimmering, chromatic 325-meter phallic skyscraper demanded recognition. The tower was the headquarters of Salesforce—one of the largest tech corporations in the country with a net worth of over $55 billion. As we approached the base of the tower, we walked under the overpass of the Salesforce Transit Center, which was an avatar of the city's penchant for public-private partnerships. I noticed that there was no prepared chant by the march leaders as we passed the Salesforce tower, which I found puzzling despite the pro-immigrant messaging of the march. As Penelope had noted, Salesforce held active government contracts that had been tied to state agencies such as the Customs and Border Patrol.

As we walked through the underpass, I trailed the MISSION UNITED youth as they were flanked by a group of white youth and their chaperones. As the sound of drums and disparate chants reverberated in the shadows of the overpass, Raul held up a brown 2' x 4' cardboard sign with two hands above his head. In red paint, the sign said, "The only environmental justice is indigenous land repatriation". Raul held up the sign for most of the march, and the it would often be juxtaposed next to other marchers' handmade signs with the messages "#climatewoke", "Green New Deal", "Protect Our Future", "Respect Our Planet", "Keep it in the Ground", "Greta Thunberg is My Hero" among other slogans decrying the coming threat of global warming. This is not to say there were no other radical pieces of iconography to be found at the march. On the

contrary; there was a noticeable presence of signs at the march that alluded to anti-captalist politics and intersectional analyses.

At the same time, Mario's sign injected an alternative narrative for interpreting climate justice. "The only environmental justice is indigenous land repatriation" alluded to the inconvenient but still existing questions of indigenous liberation, and how climate justice cannot be separated from the historical and ongoing legacies of colonialism (The Red Nation 2019). Within the context of the march, the sign also evoked an "aesthetics of survivance" (Vizenor 2009) by pointing to the presence of Indigenous peoples and the inadequacy of climate justice narratives that exclude their claims to ancestral territories. Throughout the march, most participants did not visibly react to Mario's sign. I saw one white adult look at Raul's sign for a few seconds and squint as if they were trying to make sense of the statement. As we emerged from the shadow of the underpass, two white girls glanced at the sign and whispered in each other's ears. One of them pointed at the sign and audibly asked the other, "What does repatriation mean?". The other girl responded with a shrug.

At the end of the block we reached the corner of 1st street and Howard street, which was the San Francisco headquarters of BlackRock. As one of the worlds' largest investment capital firms, BlackRock manages over $7 trillion in assets, much of which has been tied up in fossil fuels. The building's glass façade reminded me of a cutaway dollhouse where each floor is visible from the outside. A silver BLACKROCK sign was attached above the glass face of the building and I could see people in business casual attire leer down from inside the building onto the crowd. As we turned onto Howard street in front of the building, a new chant began to speak through the crowd: "BlackRock Blackrock/How much do you earn?/For murdering our children/As the Amazon Burns". I turned to Angel and I heard her attempt the chant. After she

missed the second and third stanza, she yelped, “The chants are too complicated. Barely anyone knows what to say.” I made a similar observation as most of the chanting occurred during the first stanzas, while the voices dissipated in each succeeding line. Raul handed off his sign to Penelope and she silently held it up just above her head as she faced the glass façade of the building.

A few days after the march, I took out Mario for lunch for his birthday at a diner near his family’s home. Raul had just started his first semester at college at San Francisco State University. I ordered a small stack of pancakes while Raul ordered an omelet filled with tomatoes and spinach. As he dabbed some hot sauce from the small La Victoria bottle, he shared with me his excitement for his introductory sociology course and the discussions about race he was having with his classmates. I asked Raul to speak about his reflections on the climate march and especially the sign he made. We mutually followed each other on Instagram, and after the march I noticed that he publicly shared a photo of himself from the march holding up the sign in the crowd.

> It was empowering in the sense of seeing the turnout. But one thing I kept feeling was what happened to all the Brown people. Everywhere I looked around it was just White people. It’s not like a “oh, fuck White people” thing, “They started all this to being with”, which is a valid thought. These movements have always been Black and Brown and all of them have been Indigenous people’s as well. Indigenous peoples literally practiced it and were the first ones to be vocal about it. Why is it now White teenagers in high school going “yeah, I’m woke.” I’m saying it really generally, but it shows how for a lot of people it’s kind of trendy to be “woke” today. A lot of, the climate change and climate chaos movements and EJ movements have become a lot more white. That’s why I made that sign at the climate march to begin with. Indigenous land repatriation. Because like, Indigenous peoples have been practicing climate justice before colonization. Now it’s become mainstream. What is that? It’s more white. At the same time, if you’re down then you’re down. But why all of a sudden, you didn’t give a fuck before because it didn’t impact you? You know? Some people loved it and a lot of people looked at it, like, kind of confused and kind of scornfully. […] It’s like, in a way, it’s whitewashing a movement. Not considering a lot of history. I tweeted once about Greta [Thunberg]. I said I appreciate what she’s doing with her platform but making her the face of the movement just because she’s a youth and white isn’t correct because there’s a lot of

> history with this movement. There was a lot of backlash to my tweet, like in my mentions saying, who cares? As long as they're in the movement. But no, in that same way, you're ignoring and not giving a fuck of the origins is suppressing, not only struggles that POC go through, but movements that they create. That's why I made that sign. My friend told me about it. He was like I can't make it but make a sign for me along these lines. Some people are like, when they think of colonialism, they see it as a personal attack. And the fact that they see it as a personal attack kind of proves your point as well. Of course, you did not fucking do it. But you get attacked when you bring that up and it makes White people especially uncomfortable.

Mario's critique underscored the struggles within movements—specifically in regard to contemporary forms of environmental justice. Raul's dissatisfaction with the march and the movement more broadly underscores the duality of mass movements. On one hand, there exists a generative potential in mobilizing thousands of people in the streets as an expression of a common cause. On the other hand, the popularization and growth of environmental justice into mainstream consciousness also introduces uncomfortable externalities. For instance, in a society where everything is subject to commodification, social justice concepts are not immune from being reduced to impotent and purely symbolic social trends, or from being appropriated by political enemies (Táíwò 2020). Raul lifted up the whitening of environmental justice movements through the example of Swedish youth climate activist Greta Thunberg who has gained global celebrity status as the face of contemporary climate justice. As Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) has noted, the enduring legacies of settler colonialism are not only the theft of land and settlement, but an ongoing process of conquest. As such, the centering of white faces in the climate crisis—and the concomitant elision of Black, Indigenous and other people of color—conceals which communities and are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and who is becomes positioned as the rightful stewards of climate justice movements. This dynamic points to a paradox where climate justice is refracted in popular discourse as a "white" or "white-led"

movement, while climate catastrophe always already imperils the livelihoods of poor non-white people in the global south.

Geographer Laura Pulido (2015) has written about the ways whiteness and white supremacy are often overlooked and discounted within discourses on environmental justice. As such, the development of "critical environmental justice" scholarship has emerged to situate race at the forefront (Pellow 2016). Still, as Raul's sign posits, even critical engagements with environmental justice often fail to situate their frameworks in relation to (de)colonization and imperialism (Dhillon 2018; La Paperson 2014; Tuck, McKenzie and McCoy 2014). Moreover, Raul's critique hinted at a deeper understanding of the calamity of climate change on Indigenous populations in the global south who have been forced into lives of climate refugees. While anthropogenic climate change spares no victims, it is not suburban white children in the United States or youth in Western Europe who are the most structurally vulnerable. In other words, Mario's sign and his critique transcended representational politics and aimed at the premises of conventional and comfortable notions of climate justice and "social justice".

Through the discourse of Indigenous sovereignty, Raul's sign injected an uncomfortable conversation of historical accountability. Moreover, his gesture put into question which justice projects are rendered (il)legible within the amalgamated discourses that constitute Western liberal visions of environmental justice. While justice projects can exist in collaboration for brief or long periods of time, their relationships to one another defined by their eventual points of departure (Tuck and Yang 2018). The statement "The only environmental justice is Indigenous land repatriation" in the context of the march reframed environmental justice from an expression of general concern about anthropogenic climate change into a confrontation with the enduring structures of settler colonialism. While contemporary calls for a "Green New Deal" may offer a

comforting unification of struggles to save the planet, Raul's sign reminds us that Indigenous liberation is a necessary element in any and all calls for climate justice.

Fig. 6.1 Raul holding a sign during San Francisco climate justice march. Courtesy of MISSION UNITED.

Against Hagiography: Seeking Complexity through Political Education

"Why do we think she lives in Cuba?" Clara asked.

Solidarity in Action members sat in a semi-circle on the floor around Clara. She was facilitating a quasi-Socratic discussion about Assata Shakur's life and her feeling to Cuba after escaping from an New Jersey prison in 1979.

"Because she's still wanted", Penelope chimed in.

Clara rephrased the question, "But why did she choose Cuba?"

Hesitantly, Jessica noted "Because the United States can't go to Cuba because…".

As Jessica's voice tailed off into silence, Penelope picked up the conversation thread.

"She was basically saying like cause even though she's wanted in the US, they can't go into Cuba to try to arrest her because it's against laws.

Clara posed a follow up question, "What happened in Cuba that it was illegal to go there, and it provided asylum for a revolutionary to go there like Assata Shakur? What happened in Cuba that there were so many tensions between the US and Cuba."

"Something with the military?", Penelope answered.

"Missile Crisis. There was Russians involved. What was happening inside Cuba?", Clara asked, "Starts with an r."

"Revolution!", Penelope, Jessica and Elijah blurted out in unison.

Clara redirected the group towards a discussion on the Cuban revolution.

"Cuba's revolution happened in 1959. It wasn't a one-year process. It happened over a number of years. Revolution means a lot of different things. And revolution looks really different in different places. There a lot of critique about post-revolution Cuba. How things are not perfect. Like there was still issues with racism and sexism. People don't have maybe everything that they need, but the government has invested so deeply into education, into medicine, into art. Why do you think the best music comes from Cuba? Cuba has sent doctors in solidarity with a lot of poor countries. Post-revolution Cuba is a lot to talk about. Cuba's revolution was very anti-capitalistic, while the US…"

Clara paused for a moment, and Penelope completed the sentence, "Is on top of that".

"Exactly."

In speaking of Cuba, Clara guided everyone through the contradictions of revolutions and movements. For Clara, the Cuban revolution was one story of "What happens after we win?" and the struggles after *the* struggle. In other words, Clara offered an unromanticized and sober accounting of revolution. As such, to examine movements in this matter means to that lay bare the accomplishments hand in hand with the failures that might dull the sheen of a historical victory.

"Che Guevara, Castro and a lot of other people…were they perfect people?", Clara asked.

"Nope", Geneva replied.

"They weren't. Cuba still had some repression of folks after the revolution."

Clara closed out the discussion by unsettling the simplistic, harmonious narratives about revolutionary groups and the communities that they emerged from.

> So, while we celebrate movements like the Black Panthers, the Chicano Movement, the Red Guard, Yellow Peril, AIM, what's hard to tackle is the machismo in these movements. The patriarchy in the movements. And even how at the time, not all Black People were Black Panthers. A lot of Black people might say, "I would never associate myself with them. I'm never gonna be like them." With some Chicanos. "We just want to be White. We just want to be assimilated. Similar with Chinese folks in Chinatown with the Red Guard.

The act of lifting the veil through political education at MISSION UNITED attempted to reckon with the deep contradictions that exist within all movements, especially iconic activist groups of the mid twentieth century. Clara, MISSION UNITED's youth coordinator, traced her origin story in movement spaces to her high school years in 2008 where she got involved in the burgeoning undocumented student movements of the era and organized school walkouts with her friend. After graduating from San Francisco State University with a degree sociology and ethnic studies, she began working as an afterschool educator in the Mission. For the past three years,

Clara has been heading MISSION UNITED's youth organizing program. She held an expansive view of political education that was not limited to historical lessons, but she also emphasized the importance of offering young people the space to think through their relationships to the land by holding meetings at local community gardens, and making connections between racial justice, environmental justice, extraction and capitalism.

> The political education is less so about history but more so about the critical thinking. Often what's hard about political education, the presenter or facilitator brings in their political view where they idealize our moments and leave out important details. It's easier to do that than bring in a critical analysis of an event in history or an ongoing event by trying to not actively glorify or challenge some of the narratives, even if the narratives are radical and left. By challenging that, I think I internally, ok cool there's still a lot of people who are left out from the story. Constantly being grounded in that is my hope that youth carry that with them when they're doing that work in school or organizing in college. It's the critical thinking lens moreso than like this is political education and this is how I experience this, and this is how I want you to know about it. It's both.

What epitomized Clara's approach to political education program was her intentional efforts to avoid hagiographies of movements and historical figures. Clara traced her own disappointments with Barack Obama's presidency and electoral politics. "I'm just really jaded in a way. [laughter] I'm was just really let down. But that also reminds me how all these political figures whether they're politicians or movement folks […] how we need to be real about their drawbacks." In other words, stories of resistance and victory also needed to center the uncomfortable truths of their imperfections and contradictions. Clara's discussion around the Cuban revolution asked youth organizers to ponder upon the ways systems of oppression manifest themselves even as comrades struggle together towards liberation. More importantly, these discourses muck up simplistic hagiographies that too often offer incomplete histories of justice movements. In this way, Clara points to a form of political education that is less about emphasizing memorization of historical events like in a history class, but an orientation or an analytical framework for interpreting the world. In other words, ensuring that no one gets left

behind requires a sober understanding of the contradictions that animate movements and organizing, and drawing the necessary lessons from them.

Clara's philosophical position on political education echoes the legacy of Black feminism and other feminists of color. In her preface to the first edition of the seminal volume of writings by radical women of color, *This Bridge Called My Back*, Toni Cade Bambara (1984) wrote:

> This Bridge documents particular rites of passage. Coming of age and coming to terms with community - race, group, class, gender, self - its expectations, supports, and lessons. And coming to grips with its perversions - racism, prejudice, elitism, misogyny, homophobia, and murder. And coming to terms with the incorporation of disease, struggling to overthrow the internal colonial/pro-racist loyalties - color/ hue/hair caste within the household, power perversities engaged in under the guise of "personal relationships/' accommodation to and collaboration with self-ambush and amnesia and murder. And coming to grips with those false awakenings too that give use ease as we substitute a militant mouth for a radical politic, delaying our true coming of age as committed, competent, principled combatants. (vii)

Bambara's preface does the pedagogical work of lifting the veils of romantacization and idealism, which when undisturbed masks the forms of domination that linger within marginalized communities as they themselves engage in justice projects. As such Bambara emphasizes how domination is reproduced when some oppressions are positioned as ancillary or not central to an emancipatory politics. Similarly, Clara's approach to political education also resembled a rite of passage. Said differently, the community of practice at MISSION UNITED lifted up the achievements and feats of heroism of movement figures and groups, while also exposing and grappling with the reactionary tendencies that have stunted the "true coming of age". More broadly, Clara's techniques resonated with the spirit of the *Combahee River Collective Statement* (1974), by situating critique towards advancing the promise of a truly emancipatory politics that could push beyond the limits of "siloed" conceptions of liberation where too many are still left behind.

San Francisco's city agencies confer the designation "transitional aged youth" onto individuals who fall between the ages of 16-24. This range reflects a liminal period of life and human development where individuals are not children, but also not fully integrated into adulthood. Furthermore, the term implies that young people within this age bracket hold particular needs as they as they develop from children into consumers, workers, or in the words of neoclassical economists, "rational actors". In the section that follows, I introduce two former CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers as they reflected on their respective experiences transitioning from youth organizing into adult-centered movement spaces. In one aspect, their transitions were characterized by the contradictions they encountered with regards to political ideology. Moreover, they also grappled with the confusing dynamics of working and interpersonal relationships, which sometimes veered into the experiences of being on the receiving end of toxic and oppressive behaviors. In other words, the transition from the educational settings of youth organizing into electoral campaigns and revolutionary organizations revealed how forms of domination are present within movement work.

These interviews illustrate question the legitimacy of unspectacular forms of gendered harm that are often presented as "part of the work." This is not to say movement spaces are all toxic or that they are especially more prone to producing harmful environments than other kinds of contexts. Rather, the following interviews illustrates how the imperfections of movement work are reveled to young activists as they transition from the youth organizing to adult centered movement contexts.

> I felt like there was an implied thing that because I was Mexican and because MISSION UNITED is a Latinx organizing group, I should be with them instead." In between a bite of their chocolate donut, Evelyn elaborated on their experience of being a Mexican member of a predominantly Asian American organization. I've been wanting to get more involved with Latinx orgs, but I feel like […] I am helping them. I'm doing movement work. It doesn't matter the org I'm involved in. Our issues still cross paths.

Evelyn explained how being a youth organizer in CHINATOWN LOCAL gave them the opportunity to learn about issues that affect Asian American communities such as the model minority myth, wage theft as well as mental health issues in San Francisco high schools. Evelyn credited CHINATOWN LOCAL for providing them the opportunity to organize in San Francisco and jumpstarting their commitment to movement work. "There's rarely one issue that doesn't affect multiple communities…Like capitalism and racism. It may impact us differently depending on our race and how rich or poor we are […] so many of the issues intersect and connect."

Evelyn grew up in Bayview Hunter's Point, which was the same neighborhood I had previously lived and worked in as a youth worker. Evelyn was also good friends with young person I had used to closely work with in the community. Identifying as a non-binary person, Evelyn also highlighted how CHINATOWN LOCAL's emphasis on gender and sexuality afforded them a reliable space to explore ideas of queerness and fluidity as well as process their own relationship to gender. Throughout their time in high school, Evelyn experienced several mental health crises, which often led them to miss large chunks of school. During their junior and senior years, Evelyn had been a very active youth organizer within CHINATOWN LOCAL and played a central role in birthing the mental health campaign. After graduating from high school, Evelyn had attended UC Merced for a year but left due to the impact of the school's hyper-competitive atmosphere on their mental health. At the end of the year, they transferred to Mills College in Oakland and they declared as a psychology and ethnic studies major. Whenever I ran into Evelyn at an event or an action, they would often excitedly talk to me about theorists they were reading about in their classes such as bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa.

Evelyn began to work within the arena of electoral politics by joining the campaign of a local progressive district attorney candidate. “I was reading an article about him online that he wanted to implement restorative justice instead of prosecuting nonviolent crimes and decarceration.” Evelyn committed to the campaign after seeing Angela Davis’ endorsement. “That helped me be sure that he was legit.” As a field canvasser, Evelyn balanced their school commitments alongside the campaign field work and their part time job as a barista at Peet’s coffee. Evelyn worked with the campaign for over three months where they carried out dozens of field work shifts and canvassed hundreds of doors around San Francisco. They were eventually hired by the campaign as the field work coordinator and took charge of managing campaign volunteers. Weeks before the election, Evelyn made the decision to vacate their position on the campaign. I sat down with Evelyn for donuts a few days after their decision to catch up and talk about the issues they were dealing with.

> I feel like youth organizing...you don’t see a lot of the negative stuff because mostly you’re just starting out and the adults are able to protect you from a lot of it. For me, I feel like when I got into the adult world of community organizing, you see some of the ugliness up close. You’re either being yelled at. They’re either calling you stupid, which I’ve been called several times. It’s like, when I first heard one of the consultants say during a phone call, because he was really mad because the volunteer coordinator didn’t work with someone from a specific org. He was like, to all the staff “I hope you all don’t fuck this up”. But the way he said it was more of like he was cursing. I could tell over the phone his face was getting red. That’s why I left the campaign. I wasn’t even the only one who left. The communications manager quit as well. When the consultant yelled at her, she was going through trauma from previous years, and it just brought up a lot of thoughts and stuff like that. The consultant never apologized to her or even me, so it’s like even though the consultant is known in multiple campaigns and like has won many campaigns, is he just treating people like this in every campaign he works on? Is this how every campaign is gonna be like? Like, am I being gaslighted right now? I feel like this treatment is abusive, but am I just going crazy?

Evelyn’s story conjures up the deep contradictions that can emerge within movement work and organizing. The candidate’s decarceration rhetoric and his restorative policy proposals resonated with Evelyn and drew her into the campaign. As Evelyn noted, local electoral

campaigns in the Bay Area are often driven in large part by influential, white male political consultants and strategists. Moreover, professional norms are often organized around the compartmentalization of interpersonal dynamics and the task at hand (Friedson 2001). As sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) has described, workers in professional settings are expected to individually manage their emotional lives and reactions. Said differently, professionals come to be defined by their ability to endure as they are subjected to hostility, toxicity and harm in the workplace. By questioning this rationality, Evelyn performs the role of a *killjoy* by questioning the quotidian quality of abuse (Ahmed 2017). Yet as a consequence, Evelyn was made to feel like they were the problem rather than the behavior of the campaign consultant. Although movement and organizing contexts are heterogenous, professionalism is concomitant to the electoral realm. Being professional, as Evelyn describes, implies a submission to a professional setting where hierarchies, humiliation and scolding by high powered political actors becomes normalized as "part of the work" of winning elections.

Evelyn's experience is a paradox for the trajectory of the campaign. While the campaign was buoyed by an unapologetic decarceral political program, the harm Evelyn experienced seemed to reflect interpersonal dynamics that more closely mirrored the carceral logics of the state. "I've been trying to figure out what organizing means to me. More experienced organizers told me don't become an organizer until you find out what you love about it. I'm still trying to find that one thing that I love about it." Their decision to walk away from the campaign, especially at the most crucial point of the election cycle, functioned as both a refusal and an affirmation. Evelyn recognized that campaigns could and should be done on much different terms. While they took some time away from organizing and movement work, they did not write it off. Evelyn went on to join another campaign months later of an up and coming local

democratic socialist running for the California state senate. “It’s totally different,” Evelyn says, “It actually reminds me more of youth organizing again, but I’m still not sure if I’ll ever call myself an organizer.”

From Youth Organizing to Revolutionary Politics

During the first CHINATOWN LOCAL meeting I ever attended in the summer of 2017, Cindy asked me to introduce myself to all of the youth organizers. I stood up on front of 20 high school CHINATOWN LOCAL members and ran through my history growing up in Daly City and San Francisco, my professional work as an educator in the Bay Area and my status as a graduate student. It is a narrative that I have delivered hundreds of times as I have built relationships and trust with new groups of young people. At the end of my monologue, Cindy put me on the “hot seat”. This practice was one of the ways adult newcomers were enshrined into the space.

“Ok, y’all. Miguel has agreed to be in the hot seat for 10 minutes”, Cindy notified the group, “You can ask him questions so that you can get to know him better. Try to ask him the types of good questions that can help you do that.”.

For the first 10 seconds I looked out at the group and saw mostly blank stares as well as two youth members scrolling on their phones.

I saw one hand quickly shoot up from a young woman, “Hi, are you Filipino?”

At the time, Mia was a high school senior and had been part of CHINATOWN LOCAL for over two years. She had a long history of involvement in political education spaces that began when she was a child. As a student in the Pilipino Educational Partnerships (PEP) program based out of San Francisco State University, she learned about this history of pre-colonial Philippines, issues of indigeneity in the Philippines as well as Western imperialism in Southeast

Asia. Like Evelyn, Mia had played a crucial role in starting CHINATOWN LOCAL's mental health campaign, especially in organizing a summertime action outside the SFUSD district offices. After graduating from high school, Mia went on attend City College of San Francisco. As an alumna of CCSF, I helped Mia matriculate into the school by helping her think through how to pick her courses as well as the possibility of transferring to a four-year college in the future.

During her first year of college Mia helped to establish the San Francisco chapter of Anakbayan—a youth-led organization dedicated to anti-imperial and anti-capitalist struggle in the Philippines. Mia described her chapter's ideology as revolutionary Marxism and specifically the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) tendency. Building off of the vanguard theories of Vladimir Lenin and the peasant-focused program of Mao Zedong, MLM has been the guiding ideological program for the Communist Party of the Philippines since the Marcos dictatorship of the 1980s through the current Duterte regime. On December 2019, Mia and her colleagues helped to organize a day of action to calling for the ousting of Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte and his regime's drug war and extrajudicial killings. The event drew organizations from all over the Bay Area and over 5,000 people participated in the action outside the Philippine consulate in downtown San Francisco.

Over a bowl of pho, Mia spoke to me about her experiences organizing in the context of Anakbayan SF. "At Anakbayan, there's not a lot of focus on gender", Mia says, "They're more in the idea that our struggles are based on class…[I]t's kinda different than CHINATOWN LOCAL where politics is about intersectionality and stuff like that." As one of the younger members of the chapter, Mia deferred to older members who were well versed in Marxist theoretical literature. She spoke to the frictions that emerged as she began to engage in MLM

thought, which conflicted with the political education that she had been involved in beforehand. Mia pointed to the ideological heterogeneity that exists between organizing contexts. As such, Mia identified gender as a fulcrum point that animated the frictions between the MLM framework of Anakbayan and the loosely intersectional analysis that she had become familiar with as a youth organizer. Mia did not avoid those frictions. Rather, she expressed her interest in engaging with the theoretical tensions between MLM's revolutionary theory of class struggle and intersectional political analyses of interlocking oppressions. At the same time, Mia found herself more in-tuned to the manifestations of domination within the organization, especially in regard to gender and misogynistic behaviors.

Mia highlighted recent encounters with a male ABSF colleague. As she led a political education workshop with other Anakbayan members on the history of the Philippines, Mia described how this person publicly challenged her credibility and knowledge as a facilitator.

> There's one point where I had to facilitate a workshop about Philippine history, and he kept interrupting me. It was just really shameless. At the end of it, he went up to me and said, "I felt the need to interrupt you because I know more than you". That's a really mean thing to say to a person and I felt so disrespected. I got really mad and emotional. That's when the mediator had to really talk to him and that's when the behavior started to stop. I was like, why does it have to take a person breaking down for it to stop and for things to actually change. There's the whole consent thing and the misogyny. It's interconnected.

Mia's tension was illustrative of the frictions that emerged between her passion for the liberation of the Philippines from the US backed Duterte regime with her encounters with vulgar sexism within Anakbayan. Navigating these frictions meant grappling with ideas of accountability and interpersonal relationships within the confines of a revolutionary organization. "Even though folks think they're radical in the organizing work they do it still shows up" Mia says, "It's bad, but there's always room for us to grow from that. I wouldn't want to shun anyone because they fuck up...but I'm not *not* condemning it." She questions the

disconnect in what it means to be a radical organizer, but still engage in or tolerate misogynistic behaviors. Mia articulates a collective vision of accountability that is based upon collective growth and repair rather than an individualized carceral or punitive response to harm (Kaba 2019). More broadly, she reminds us that justice projects—no matter how radical—are not immune, but always already entangled within matrices of domination (Collins 2000). In other words, the collective struggle of opposing US imperialism in the Philippines and building an alternative vision of the world is inseparable from work of struggling against sexism and misogyny among your comrades

During a recent convening of Anakbayan chapters, Mia recounted how a well-known organizer in the community asked her to deliver a speech to the press at the event. Mia expressed a feeling of being coerced to take on this role due to her respect for this organizer and a desire not to let the group down. Mia contrasted this experience with her youth organizing for CHINATOWN LOCAL where she felt more agency in how she wanted to be involved.

> In CHINATOWN LOCAL, you're always taught that you can always say no. I feel like the atmosphere and environment is different. CHINATOWN LOCAL is all about mental health and well-being… So I talked to one of the other ABSF organizers and told them I'm not comfortable speaking. I don't want to do it. I just have a lot of anxiety. I do want to become a better public speaker, but this is too short. Three days to write and deliver a speech at the NDC. I don't want to do that. I thought about not showing up, but I still went. She showed up an hour later and then when she showed up, my name is called to speak. She then said hey Angela can you speak for us? At that point, I can't say no to that because it's two minutes before the mic was getting to me…I felt like I couldn't say no. She just gave me her phone and she pushed the mic towards me. I'm like, what? What am I even saying? No one even briefed me on this. What kind of bullshit is this? I already said no. I have a hard time saying no to things. I'm like a yes person. So, it was a big slap to my face when she forced me to speak. I noticed that in ABSF it's so different. There's this whole thing about…priority of the movement first before yourself, yet...it makes me uncomfortable and I want to address it. I don't know how to address it and I don't want to make it in a way where it's like...I feel like I'm pushing the work back. It's a very capitalist mindset to feel like you're not doing enough when you're actually doing a lot. I feel like I need to produce more. I'm trying to unlearn that, but it's drilled into you for twelve years of school

Mia's recounting points to how coercion becomes justifiable in the name of a larger calling such as "the movement". Within such a calculus, the weight of responsibility is foisted upon a single individual and renders Mia's consent functionally irrelevant. Again, Mia's critique gets to the paradox of how techniques of domination are employed within organizing and struggles for social justice. In processing this experience, Mia attempted to also challenge what types of involvement constitutes organizing. "I don't want to public speak. I think oftentimes when we think about organizing, we think about folks in protests with a megaphone speaking", she notes, "Fuck the system and shit like that. In CHINATOWN LOCAL I did a lot of behind the scenes work. I kind of like that. And making sure all the little things get taken care of. The not sexy stuff, but it gets ignored." Historian Barabra Ransby (2003) has written about the gendered characteristics of the civil rights movements of the mid 20th century where charismatic men were often positioned as messianic leaders, while figures such as Ella Baker fulfilled essential work in the background usually away from lecterns and the media. Mia's reflection underlined a critique of celebrity culture that can emerge within movement work, which elevates hyper visible tasks above the feminized, yet essential background roles. The pressure to be seen as productive illustrates how the coercive pressures that exist in the larger world are often also at play even within revolutionary projects.

Mia and Evelyn's complex and contradictory impulses underlined the litany of tensions that emerged as they transitioned from the comfortable settings of youth organizing to more contentious activist contexts. To what extent do youth organizing projects have a responsibility to prepare young people for the potential perils of engaging in organizing within adult-driven movement spaces? While movement work has the potential to cultivate radical consciousness, grassroots energies and collective power, it is also subject to those same social forces that

produce domination. After the veil of romanticism gives way to the warts and blemishes, what are we left with and how do we respond?

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Much of this ethnographic manuscript was completed in the midst of the dueling crises of 2020: the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Black-led uprisings against state violence. While acute and well-defined, both of these crises are situated within a longer trajectory of organized abandonment, racial capitalism and settler colonial relations within San Francisco, the Bay Area and across the United States. At the same time, crises are moments where history moves, trajectories become skewed and unfathomable pathways may begin to materialize. Stuart Hall (2017) noted how openings for social and political contestations emerged during periods of crisis.

> What defines the 'conjunctural'—the immediate terrains of struggle – is not simply the given economic conditions, but precisely the 'incessant and persistent' efforts, which are being made to defend and conserve the position. If the crisis is deep— 'organic'—these efforts cannot be merely defensive. They will be formative: a new balance of forces, the emergence of new elements, the attempt to put together a new 'historical bloc'; new political configurations and 'philosophies' (175)

One of the motivations of this work has been to assert an abolitionist presence as a critically provocative and generative exercise. Schools and universities across the nation have been rendered paralyzed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which invites us to revisit our shared assumptions around where education happens, what education looks like and what purposes education should serve. Within this conjuncture, millions of people are imagining what a non-carceral society might look like: a society without policing and without prisons. At the same time, abolition is not singularly concerned with prisons and police, but also the presence of life affirming and humanizing institutions. Therefore, what could education look like within these non-carceral futures? And why our imaginations so constrained that we have such difficulty envisioning something different?

This text was animated by two specific motivations. First, I aimed to uncover a way to understand development and growth outside of the confines of individualistic notions of achievement and success. I underlined the ways common sense modes of resistance within education often come up short due to their conflation of education with schooling and their investments in *achievement contingencies.* The paradox is that the utility and legibility of resistance and radical transformation rests upon appeals to conventional notions of achievement and bio-economic models of youth success. While calls for responsive and restorative pedagogies are welcome, what becomes of their transformational potential when they assume many of the same grammatical premises of achievement? This realization lead me to pursue avenues outside of institutions called schools to seek alternative ways young people are demonstrating forms of growth and resistance. I have introduced the concept of *movement vulnerability* to speak to modes of youth development that are not animated by normative understandings of individualized success, but rather forms of collective study, struggle and self-making through organizing. Lastly, I introduced *generative frictions* to lift up the creative tensions of engaging in political antagonisms through movement work

The ethnographic stories in this text invited readers to recognize the quotidian quality of collective study and struggle. Through movement work, several of my interlocutors came to understand the intimate connection between the forms of success valued by their schools and the political and economic systems that reproduce misery and immiseration in San Francisco and across the world. In this way, I came to recognize how inchoate formations of abolitionist thought could emerge from youth-led collective struggles against developers or school district administrators. During these campaigns, my interlocutors articulated a refusal of bio-economic notions of success favored by schools. Is there space within education as a discipline to

recognize these impulses not as self-destructive or deviant behavior but a fundamental critique of education as a racial capitalist project?

With all this said, the question remains: what can and can't organizing offer young people? My experiences with MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers underlined how it can offer visions of social change and power outside of the liberal paradigms of electoralism. It can offer alternative spaces to interrogate dominant notions of social mobility and success that cut across schools, communities and homes. It can offer spaces to collectively imagine, study and act towards a different world. As such, I resist the impulse to translate youth organizing into the grammar of human capital or other neoclassical economics metaphors. There are particular skills that could plausibly be transferrable into completely unrelated contexts. At the same time, what characterized the respective and collective settings of MISSION UNITED, CHINATOWN LOCAL and Solidarity in Action was a collective sense of struggle and liberation rather than individualistic preparation for the market. As such, many education researchers might scoff at the value or utility of youth organizing without demonstrating causal or correlational relationships with academic achievement. This text and the stories contained within it refuse the terms of this argument.

While I have attempted to provide humanizing portraits of my interlocutors at CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED, I also attempted to avoid romanticizing narratives about their organizations or their organizing methods. Localized social movement organizations have played critical functions in building political power for marginalized communities in San Francisco in the face of well-funded opponents and politicians (Beitel 2013). At the same time, grassroots organizations may incorrectly assume the authority to speak on behalf of huge swathes of distinct ethnic and racial communities to advance even conservative

political projects (Reed 2000). Although my field work did not concentrate on the organizational dynamics of CL and MISSION UNITED, both organizations are entangled within regional NGO/non-profit industrial complex of the Bay Area. As Dylan Rodriguez (2007) has noted, these kinds of formations can blur the line between movements and capital, and in some cases, render them non-existent. Moreover, youth workers (organizers or not) are educators who often find themselves constantly navigating the contradictory intersection of their political commitments and the interests of philanthropic funders (Baldridge 2020).

I have given much thought to the political implications of this manuscripts on readers. I am aware that conservative and right-wing activists might infer some sort of common cause in my critiques of state sanctioned schooling. For any scholar, it is not always possible to predict how one's work might be taken up by audiences. For the sake of clarity, I must disclose that my critiques of schooling and *achievement contingencies* are not intended to support anti-teacher union projects or school privatization agendas. Rather I interpret an abolitionist vision of education within the context of a broader society of humanizing institutions where basic needs are guaranteed rather than left to the whims of racist market economies. In this context, I imagine education—in which ever forms it takes in an abolitionist future—not as a reward and punishment system, but an ecumenical process that enables personal growth, cooperation and collective wellness. Ultimately, the stories in this text dare us to imagine forms of education and citizenship and development outside of individualism, social mobility, market forces and whiteness.

Future work would do well to explore the extent to which young people are able to sustain their political energies as young adults in other movement spaces or in higher education. Moreover, scholars in education and youth studies might also explore the formal and informal

pathways that former youth organizers navigate to find sustainable careers in movement work. While STEM career pathways have dominated education discourses in the last decade, movement work, like youth work is often ignored and delegitimized as career fields. Because much youth activism lives in online spaces and platforms, one thread of research might begin to understand its affordances and constraints for youth organizers. While online platforms have been valuable in amplifying movements and providing mass political education, there is also seems to be examples of hollow and performative forms of activism and organizing that have little relationship to movement work being done in communities.

As a backdrop, San Francisco was a contradictory setting for my youth interlocutors. It still held important symbolic value as an imagined multicultural and cosmopolitan city. At the same time, young people in CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED articulated the limits of liberal multiculturalism, and the ways even the most progressive forms of representational politics are hollow for the majority of poor and working class BIPOC in San Francisco. As an educator and scholar with abolitionist commitments, I have witnessed how youth organizers at MISSION UNITED, CL and Solidarity in Action identified the inadequacy of theories of change that start and stop at being a "good student". The work of lifting up BIPOC students doing well in school and defying racialized stereotypes of failure must continue, yet an abolitionist political project demands much more than "closing achievement gaps" or other equity efforts. Abolition demands challenging the terms of achievement and success that have been foundational to how we think about education and schooling. It asks us to acknowledge that everyone deserves to live a dignified life and have their needs met regardless of their performance within educational institutions. Abolition asks us to make space for an imaginative

vision of society outside of the constraints of settler ontologies that defines our social relations through competition, punishment, extraction and violence (TallBear 2019).

Reflecting on my fieldwork and this manuscript, San Francisco in many senses does reflect a "progressive dystopia" and some of the worst aspects of modern formations of racial capitalism (Shange 2019). At the same time, my field work also lifted up the ways that dystopias are powerful but not total or complete. Fugitive study continues even as the odds seem insurmountable and as liberation at this moment only exists within our art or the smallest moments of our lives. In this way, study and movement work evoke a sense of survivance: a sober, yet "active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry" (Vizenor 2009, 88). MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL youth organizers represent a small subset of a rising generation of youth activists across the country who have studied and developed sophisticated understandings of systems of oppression and are leading contemporary waves of multi-racial class struggle. While I do not hold romantic notions about the near future prospects of revolution, this conjuncture asks critical educators and scholars to keep up with the expansive and imaginative visions that are erupting every day amongst young people during protests, actions, strikes, Zoom meetings, text messages and conversations on the street. This project highlighted how some young people are developing inchoate abolitionist impulses and realizations that "this world is not necessary". The imaginative space of abolition invites us to think deeply about how to give shape to the feelings and impulses we hold, and what we imagine as necessary, even if we may not yet have the proper language to articulate those futures.

Appendix

Research Methodology

Methods

Throughout this ethnography, I utilized a multi-scalar approach to gather and analyze data from the field: (a) observant participation within a multitude of sites: Chinatown Local organizational spaces, MISSION UNITED organizational spaces, San Francisco planning commission meetings, political education workshops, Solidarity in Action program spaces, Board of Education meetings, meetings with SFUSD administrators, direct actions and protests around San Francisco; (b) semi-structured interviews with 24 current and former CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED youth participants and 9 current and former adult staff from CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED; (c) content analysis of city and school district policy documents related to housing and mental health services.

Observing Participant

I describe my modes of observing and participating within this project as a form of *observant participation.* I was not interested in engaging with moves to scientific neutrality, which are often associated with "fly on the wall" forms of ethnography and qualitative methodologies (Vargas 2006). Instead, my data collection, data analysis and writing comprised a larger gestalt. Some researchers have described this approach as *portraiture* in that it attempts to offer the essence of my encounters through the inseparable artistic and scientific elements of ethnographic labor (Lightfoot 2005). In this vein, I worked to center forms of ethnographic sincerity by integrating the emotional and affective dimensions of my relationships with my interlocutors—most of whom I now consider comrades (Jackson 2010). But as with any portrait, the stories I present here are imperfect, incomplete and is one of several that could plausibly be told based upon the data on hand.

My observant participation was loosely guided by a critical ethnographic sensitivity that was animated by my leftist political commitments and my desires to confront state power and hegemonic regimes of knowledge (Madison 2011). On one hand, my participation was informed through an analysis

of *critical bifocality* in which I attended to how structural conditions "come to be woven into community and metabolized by individuals" (Weis and Fine 2012, 174). On the other hand, I also attend to how young people react and push back on state power. I created field notes based on jottings during my interaction with MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL as well as audio recordings from meetings and workshops when appropriate and consistent with my IRB protocol and with the consent of my interlocutors

As a practicing youth worker, I am aware of the relational dynamics of out of school time youth programming as well as the deeply personal dimensions between the educators and youth participants at CHINATOWN LOCAL and MISSION UNITED. Therefore, in order to gain meaningful access to their rightfully protective spaces, it was necessary for me to take up active volunteer roles at both organizations. I began my tenure with CHINATOWN LOCAL on April 2018 after meeting with their adult youth workers and reaching an agreement around my participation with the group. Based upon my skillset as a youth worker, we agreed that I would take the role of helping facilitate several new youth programs within the organization. I co-facilitated a weekly young men's group with a former youth participant-turned youth organizer where we focused on Asian American masculinity and gender, which met every other week. Secondly, I also led a weekly college access support program for high school seniors who were interested in seeking higher education. I also supported the adult youth organizers in facilitating political education workshops especially related to white supremacy as well as anti-Blackness in the United States. Moreover, I took on a load of administrative tasks as a means to lighten the load on the full-time adult youth organizers. Additionally, I joined the organizations' "Activist Member Network" through which I volunteered my time in a myriad of organizing and outreach roles for organizational campaigns. In addition to workshops and official program time, I also sat in on organizing meetings including youth participants as they brainstormed and strategized around their mental health campaign with the school district.

With MISSION UNITED, I attended regular program meetings and held facilitation duties as requested by the youth coordinator. I also participated in strategizing sessions and phone calls in preparation of youth members' involvement in San Francisco planning commission meetings. Additionally, I also facilitated a weekly college access program with MISSION UNITED high school seniors to aid with college applications and financial aid. Following the leadership of the adult youth coordinator, I also contributed to the design and facilitation of MISSION UNITED's political education program, which required doing research on the political geography in the Mission District especially in relation to housing disparities. I also accompanied MISSION UNITED youth organizers to bi-monthly field days at the organization's public garden Hummingbird Farms. Additionally, I became regularly involved in MISSION UNITED's mutual aid food bank project, which made regular deliveries to low-income MISSION UNITED members during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

At both organizations my roles shifted depending on the day, the space and the specific program. Some days I participated in political education workshops as if I were a youth participant in collaboration with my youth interlocutors. On others, I co-facilitated them. This position afforded me the opportunity to build the types of multilayered relationships that make youth workers distinct from formal classroom educators (Baldridge 2019). Because youth participation in MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL was voluntary, the disciplinary authority I held over youth participants was present yet minimal compared to an educator in a schooling setting. Moreover, both MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL employed Freire-inspired pedagogical models, which aimed to promote more horizontal relationships between adults and youth in their respective program spaces (Giroux et al. 1988; McLaren 2015). As such program sessions were comprised of small group discussions, multi-modal pedagogies, kinesthetic activities, and very minimal adult-led lectures (Mobley and Fisher 2014; Moreno et al. 2007).

I utilized a constant comparative method in order to inductively guide the trajectory of my data collection (Charmaz 2006). This method requires the researcher to treat data collection and analysis as a dynamic process that occur concurrently and inform one another. Inductive research approaches also

mean that the direction of the project may take on different directions based upon earlier stages of data collection and analysis. I believe that this approach to data analysis is appropriate because the questions and phenomena of interest within field-based projects—and qualitative research broadly—often evolve, shift, and emerge (Cresswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach to analysis has the capacity to adapt to the unpredictable trajectories of ethnographic work.

Based upon my initial findings from my fieldwork—which centered around racial identity, perceptions of schooling, the state and relations to political geography of San Francisco—I selected eleven youth organizers and four adult staff as my primary informants through a purposive sampling technique (Cresswell 2007; Hatch 2002). I spent time with my interlocutors at formal program time as well as informal moments on the bus, walking to subway stations, local snack shops, parties and celebrations. These forms of observant participation were essential to understanding how youth participants and adult staff theorized their relationships to San Francisco and engaged in the praxis of organizing.

Protest, Actions, State Functions

Throughout my field work, I attended protests and actions that either CHINATOWN LOCAL or MISSION UNITED youth participated in either as organizers or attendees, which included a Bay Area Climate March, actions for closing San Francisco's 850 Bryant county jail, May Day actions, and picket lines of striking Marriott hotel workers. I also attended relevant city government meetings including the San Francisco Board of Education as well as the San Francisco Planning Commission. These settings and contexts were essential for youth organizers as they engaged in forms of political expression including protest chants, artwork and making demands on the state through prepared comments. Moreover, these were also opportunities for youth organizers to mobilize their friends and community allies around high stakes confrontations with various organs of city government. As such, these scenes proved to be integral to my analysis for how young people learned to make claims on the state and exercise power through a diversity of tactics while straddling the line of (in)civility.

Interviews

Throughout my fieldwork I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each of my primary youth and adult informants within both MISSION UNITED and CHINATOWN LOCAL. These interviews occurred in a myriad of settings around San Francisco including diners, coffee shops and parks. I recorded these interviews with an audio recorded with the consent of my informants and transcribed them digitally. Additionally, I participated in regular conversations also known as informal interviews, which occurred daily through my field work (Weiss 1995). Informal interviews occurred in the unstructured moments within workshops, casual moments outside of organizational spaces, bus rides to events and walks around the neighborhood. These mobile interviews were useful for enabling the production of both abstract and concrete data (Cele 2006). I made jottings from these forms of informal interviews, which guided the trajectory of my fieldwork as well as the content of the proceeding formal, semi-structured interviews.

Data Analysis

I utilized a constant comparative approach to data collection and analysis, which is often associated with grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). With that said, I must clarify right away that this is not a "grounded theory" project as it was originally articulated by Glaser and Strauss (2017); a grounded theory methodology requires other design elements that this project does not include—most notably refraining from reviewing existing literature. Rather, I utilized a constant comparative method in order to inductively analyze the data. This method requires the researcher to treat data collection and analysis as a dynamic process that occur concurrently and inform one another. This method allowed me to act responsively to the often unpredictable and dynamic nature of my fieldwork. Moreover, the questions and phenomena of interest within field-based projects—and qualitative research broadly—often evolve, shit, and emerge (Cresswell 2017; Hatch 2002; Lincoln & Guba 1985). On a weekly basis, I coded my field note narratives and any available interview transcripts. Based on these codes, I created memos to explore the thoughts, hunches and reflections based on the most recent coding cycle. These cycles of memos

guided the direction of my early fieldwork and the proceeding interviews. Later, I utilized memo writing to produce and refine emergent themes (Miles et al. 2014). I followed this inductive cycle throughout my time as a co-interlocutor in the field.

Trustworthiness, Sustainable Relationships, and Community Accountability

Rather than aiming for validity and reliability usually associated with quantitative methodologies, I focused on what Lincoln and Guba (1986) have described as credibility, dependability, and transferability. Trustworthiness is a concept that depends on the interrelationships between the components of a research design. As such, it is central to judging the accuracy and the credibility of research findings and conclusions (Cresswell & Miller 2000). In regard to credibility, I have attempted to act transparently and elaborate on my own positionality, which includes my personal commitments and political beliefs, as well as my positioning in relation to my co-interlocutors. Additionally, I have worked to triangulate my findings by gathering data from multiple sources in order to construct a richer understanding of the phenomena at hand. I also conducted regular member checks with my co-interlocutors by sharing interview transcripts as well as summaries of my thoughts and conclusions.

Dependability is ultimately concerned with tracking the processes, procedures and techniques that are used to gather, analyze and interpret data (Lincoln & Guba 1986). In order to produce some sense of dependability, I have maintained a system of transparency by preserving an "audit trail" throughout the entirety of this research process (Cresswell & Miller 2000). I have kept meticulous records and documentation of collected data, chronologies and any other materials that are essential for producing findings and conclusions. Said differently, were an external party to "audit" the available documentation, the auditor would be able to evaluate that the findings are grounded in the data and that the inferences made are logical (Schwandt & Halpern 1988).

While the intention of this project is not to generate a generalizable finding, I intend to provide accounts that are "thick" enough that they may carry some form of transferability to other settings that may have similar processes at work (Lincoln & Guba 1985). In order to build a work that has potential for

"transferability", I have worked to provide as much specific detail as possible about the contexts, settings and circumstances that shaped my field work. What is attended to less often by social scientists is how transferability is also intertwined with the medium of ethnographic accounts. Transferability is also a matter of a texts' ability to demonstrate resonance with the experiences and insights of the reader, which are facilitated through the aesthetic elements of writing (Tracy 2010). Transferability is not only a matter of scientific and methodological rigor, but also the ways in which the researcher crafts and writes a story that engages readers' intellects, hearts and spirits.

Lastly, a discussion about trustworthiness must also be linked to a dialogue about accountability ethics, representation, as well as refusal. Findings and conclusions of ethnographic projects are not mere benign, objective facts about the world to be simply reported to a scientific community. Issues of representation are often shaped by hegemonic notions of authenticity; such accounts are often bereft of sincerity, humor, and love that inform ethnographic encounters (Jackson 2010), while accentuating "authentic" accounts of "damaged" communities and peoples (Tuck 2009). Findings and conclusions are always already representations that can have profoundly negative political and material consequences for marginalized and oppressed peoples. Researchers make ethical decisions based upon their personal and political commitments and responsibilities to others. They must also be able to sit and live with themselves and the ways in which they speak of those others. Sometimes, this tension necessitated that I enacted forms of "ethnographic refusal"—a dismissal of the desire to quench the thirsts of a dissertation, the academy, and of scientific inquiry. As Audra Simpson (2007) has poignantly noted, "In listening and shutting off the tape recorder…these refusals speak volumes because they tell us when to stop…Whether or not we wish to share that is a matter of ethnography that can both *refuse* and also take up *refusal* in generative ways (p. 78). While I have worked to abide by the expectations of trustworthiness I have illustrated above, I also admit that there are aspects of my fieldwork (e.g. stories, observations, interactions, and thoughts) that I or my interlocutors have refused to include in this manuscript even if they could have helped to produce more compelling findings or insights to an academic audience.

Interview Scripts

Questions for Youth

1. What has it been like growing up in San Francisco?
2. What is San Francisco about? How would you describe it?
3. How would you describe the challenges facing folks of color in San Francisco?
4. What is organizing? Why is it important?
5. How did you get involved in youth organizing?
6. How would you describe your experiences at school?
7. How would you compare your experiences doing youth organizing with your experiences at school?
8. What do you think being a good student means in our society? How do you feel about that? How does that compare to what you believe?
9. What is it like preparing to speak to adults in power?
10. Do you see yourself continuing to do organizing or movement work in the future? Maybe as a career?
11. What are some of the personal difficulties or barriers that come with doing organizing?

Questions for Adults

1. Can you talk about your path into movement work and organizing?
2. How would you describe being involved in movement work at this point in time in San Francisco and the Bay Area?
3. How would you describe the work of introducing young people to organizing?

4. How do you approach political education within your program? What are the topics, values or ideas that you tend to emphasize and why?
5. How do you think about your own role as an educator outside of a school setting? How do you feel like your work relates youth experiences at schools -- both being critical of the things that go on there, but also maybe in some ways being aligned?
6. What are some of the challenges of being a youth worker and an organizer?
7. How would you describe your pedagogical style? What are the intentions you bring in when you work with young people?
8. What are some of the barriers facing youth and educators who engage in organizing?

Notes

Introduction

1. I use the acronym BIPOC throughout this manuscript as a way to attend to the specificities of distinct racial positions within the settler colonial context of the United States. Moreover, this acronym foregrounds the ways that Black and Indigenous communities are vulnerable to the most intense forms of state sanctioned and extralegal racial violence.

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