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Embodied Study for Collective Liberation: Everyday Performances of Solidarity

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Embodied Study for Collective Liberation: Everyday Performances of Solidarity

By

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies

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The primary purpose of this dissertation is to talk *to* and *with* others like myself with race, class, and/or academic privileges who wish to practice solidarity in the name of collective liberation. I respond to Black feminist thinkers such as Toni Morrison, who called for White people to look at their own complexes in the equation of racism, and Fannie Lou Hamer who proclaimed that "nobody's free until everybody's free" by demonstrating the spiritual harms of racial capitalism to people who materially benefit from it, and what can be done to heal from these harms. Treating the Poverty Scholars of POOR Magazine in East Oakland as primary theorists of solidarity to analyze four spaces of learning—across race and/or class difference, within sameness, and in mixed company—I practice Poverty Scholarship's emphasis to share from self-observation, or "I Journalism," by including stories and observations from people with race, class, and/or academic privilege practicing solidarity. A major contribution of this dissertation is its use of performance theory to address solidarity as an everyday performance that can be practiced and improved, towards our healing and collective liberation. Ultimately this dissertation offers examples of embodied study for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to divest from racial capitalism's extractive and spiritually harmful structures towards evolving and ongoing practices of solidarity, ethical relationality, and collective liberation.

For the Moon Family
and all our relation

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PREFACE: Fannie and Toni Said[1]

I wait at a red light in a wealthy and predominantly White neighborhood in Oakland at the top of a hill (that's one easy indicator of class in the East Bay) when I hear honking. What's going on? I wonder, look around, and find that there is a group of what look like older White people holding up signs for Black Lives Matter (BLM). Another sign says "End systemic racism." There are more across the street, all of them wearing masks because of Covid19. The honking was from passing drivers expressing their agreement with the statement.

I ask myself "should I honk? I *do* agree with them." But I don't. As I pass them, I feel a tinge of guilt (different from the kind of guilt that I have when I don't give money to panhandlers, but more on that later) blended with a genuine curiosity for the efficacy of the sign holding, what the sign-holders think of themselves as they hold up signs, and how they view their own lives in an anti-Black society.

To readers who don't know me, I am a mixed race East Asian and White European female-presenting non-binary person in my 7th year of a PhD program at UC Berkeley. Even though I come from a lower-income mixed immigrant family (my mother is an immigrant, my father was born here), and my low income qualifies me for food stamps, I have culturally, linguistically, and socially assimilated into middle to elite-class norms and communities because of my ten years in higher education. Most people I know from being in the academy either come from families with or currently have a lot of race, class, and/or academic privilege.

In 1993, Toni Morrison said in an interview with Charlie Rose[2] that White people need to look at their own complexes in the equation of racism. She argues that "if you can only be tall because somebody is on their knees, then you have a serious problem. And my feeling is that White people have a very, very serious problem and they should start thinking about what they can do about it. Take me out of it." That "serious problem" of only being able to stand tall because somebody—Black people—are on their knees is one that takes its spiritual toll on us.

True, when former sharecropper turned badass organizer Fannie Lou Hamer said, "nobody's free until everybody's free," she meant that until she and other Black women were free, the rest of us weren't free.[3] But this dissertation is about adding Toni Morrison's

[1] Mia Birdsong, *How We Show Up: Reclaiming Family, Friendship, and Community* (New York: Hachette Go, 2020). Inspired by Mia Birdsong's preface title "Akaya Said" in her powerful treatise.

[2] *Toni Morrison on the Charlie Rose Show*, 1993, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2txzMkT5Pc.

[3] Maegan Parker Brooks and Davis W. Houck, "'Nobody's Free Until Everybody's Free,': Speech Delivered at the Founding of the National Women's Political Caucus, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1971," in *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer* (University Press of Mississippi, 2010), https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781604738223.003.0017.

proposition with Fannie Lou Hamer's—we with race, class, and/or academic privilege may tout certain freedoms within White Supremacist Capitalism, but we are pointedly *not* free, and *not* spiritually well if the only way we have power and privileges is by knowingly or unknowingly participating in systems of violence.

Thus, the primary purpose of this dissertation is to talk *to* and *with* others like myself with race, class, and/or academic privileges, whether it be from birth, socialization, or a combination of both, who act in the name of a better world. Whether you call yourself an activist, organizer, changemaker, volunteer, service worker, or just by your own name, this is for those who see parts of our world that are unjust and fucked up and have spent time trying to help make it better. This is so that we can see that we are not outside of the harms of White Supremacy, Capitalism, Settler Colonialism, Patriarchy, Ableism, Imperialism, etc. This is so that we can start the ongoing process of spiritual healing (which I will address in specific ways), and discuss alternative ways of performing our solidarity across difference, within sameness, and in mixed company—concepts I will define in the Introduction—in service of our collective liberation.

And if you are someone who does not have race, class, and/or academic privilege reading this, my hope is that this archive feels like a welcomed response to Toni Morrison's call to action.

Acknowledgements

"This book does not belong to me alone. It is the culmination of many hours spent talking with comrades, students, colleagues, strangers. It is the outcome of life-transforming dialogues that take place in the context of community-building."[4]
—bell hooks, *Teaching Community,* Page xv

As bell hooks wisely put it, there are so many people, communities, books, objects, and places that supported this winding journey called a dissertation over the past seven years of my time at UC Berkeley, and also beyond! This project also belongs to:

Maru Moon, my almost three-year-old, who made me the most efficient scholar—if it didn't get done while they were taking a nap or at preschool, it didn't get done! Thank you for reminding me of the next seven generations who will be here when I'm no longer here. For bringing my singing, playing, and unconditionally loving sides out me with the fullness of who you are. /// **Tiny Gray-Garcia** at POOR Magazine for being such a compassionate, loving, and brilliant teacher and scholar to me and all of the other mentees. I learn so much from the way you parent Tibu and the other children in your lives, and how you model being a good daughter, descendant, and ancestor! The central frameworks and methodologies of this dissertation would not exist if it weren't for your fierce commitment to bringing the medicine of Poverty Scholarship to people with race, class, and academic privilege. /// As well, all the other "poverty, in/migrante, race, elder, youth, disability, and indigenous skolaz" of POOR Magazine like **Leroy Moore, Aunti Francis, Muteado Silencio** and more who taught me and other Solidarity Family members so much. /// To everyone I interviewed in the Solidarity Family: **Cecilia Lucas, Roan Boucher, Paige Kirstein, Morgan Curtis, Cynthia Beard, Ellery Graves, Toby Kramer, Yael Chanoff, Lex Horan,** and **Jessica Rosenberg.** Whether I talked with you on the phone or in person, everyone was so encouraging about this project, and extremely generous with their time. Whenever I'd lose steam to continue, I would read the transcriptions of our conversations and feel excited again. Thank you for the heart work you all are doing to practice Community Reparations with POOR and beyond. /// All the administrative and managerial staff in TDPS who helped me through hoops and tunnels and hidden trap doors: **Robin Davidson, Sandra Richmond (Our Benevolent Despot ;)), Grace Leach, Myriam Cotton, Jean-Paul Gressieux, Megan Lowe,** and **Michael Mansfield!** You all are the foundation of this department and I really could not have gotten through this without you! /// **My students** over the past five years. I really struggled to find my voice as a teacher in the first couple of years, and I'm so grateful to have continued and to have been consistently met with brilliance and generosity of spirit from you all. /// **Dr. Brandi Catanese**, my chair who kept

[4] bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2003), xv.

me accountable to the field of performance studies and to a certain standard with the dissertation. Thank you for reading my "shitty first drafts" and offering feedback time and again throughout the past three years! It was a day to celebrate when I heard you say I'd "found my lane!" I am humbled by how much you offer the university, your family, and the world and didn't realize how helpful it would be that my chair was also a parent in the academy! /// **Dr. Gail De Kosnik**, my mentor in teaching, cheerleader in the department from day 1 of this PhD journey, and one of my committee members. You taught me what caring for your students looks like in action, and helped me believe in the academy when it was extra hard. /// **Dr. Greig Crysler**—thank you for being the kind of professor that enjoyed talking through new ideas in office hours and for encouraging me to incorporate theory maps into the dissertation. Even though I didn't end up going in that direction, it meant so much that my many facets were welcomed here. /// My life coach **Allison Roeser**, who has been coaching me twice a month for almost four years! Thank you for supporting me through this process especially when I was feeling super whiny and filled with self-doubt! /// My former therapist **Orit Weksler** who early on in our relationship asked me for some performance studies readings so she could better understand my field! For keeping me grounded and connected to the bubbles beyond me and my activist friends. /// My first writing professor, **Dr. Abbe Blum**, whose class "Ways of Seeing and Writing" during my first year of undergraduate way back in 2007 still informs my approach to the life of the mind, and to reading and writing. Thank you for continuing to cheer me on over the past 15 years and to the universe for bringing you to the TDPS department a few years ago! You are an incredible teacher and mentor! /// I am grateful for the inspiration and encouragements from **Trinh T. Minh-ha**, who insisted I claim my zinester, mixed media methodology as a way to make real scholarship, welcomed a short film instead of a final paper at the end of her class back in 2017, and reassured me in countless office hours sessions when I was having imposter syndrome. /// **Tamara Bergman and Michael Schwartz,** my California fairy god parents, and Maru's grandparents for being such enthusiastic, inquisitive, and wise elders in my life! Thank you for spending time with Maru so I could have some solo time to restore myself and continue on this PhD path! Thank you to everyone else in the Schwartz and Bergman families who have welcomed us into the fold with so much generosity and love. /// **Haley Brown**, for all of your loving texts, calls, mail, and visits that buoyed my time in this PhD program. I would not have been able to feel fully myself without our seasonal artist retreats in Santa Cruz and Oakland, songwriting and redwood adventures in Felton and beyond. Thank you SOO much for knowing my love languages and showering me with your magic and love, and for being our idiosyncratic and emotional artist selves. I love you and Junie and your Grandma and fam so so much! /// My dear cousin **Kelly Baker,** who has known me since I was born! What a gift your unconditional love and support has meant to me. I am so grateful for all the phone calls and snail mail we've sent each other to cheer each other on! 2me2 and 2me3 for life! /// **Jamil Moises**, who always championed the spirit of the turtle—something I needed for this

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I belong to those legacies. /// And the orgs, programs, and places like **Hotpot Philly, Eclipse Rising, 続・地球の集まり, Nongwhal, the API Jam, Connect Remember Enact, Mugworts Cabin, Dhamma Dena, EBMC** and **Namu Farms** which have held space for my many questions about belonging, ancestral practices and foodways. /// My neighborhood and neighbors on E29th St. for being so interdependent and generous! Special thanks to **Stacie, Joe, Leila, Chi, Luz, Catriona, Vickie, Molly, Querido, Juan, Julio, Joseph, Meggie,** and **Joann** for all the small and big talk, and for receiving spontaneous visits and requests to be interviewed by me. /// For all who do incredible neighborhood organizing locally, including the late **Gwen Jackson**. /// **Daria Garina** for transcribing hours of interviews! /// **The Dimond Crew—Zoe, Coral, Erika, Gary, AJ, and Savannah—**for being my parent and kid comrades as we live through a pandemic. Thank goodness for our nourishing friendship and for the friendship of our toddlers! /// **Savannah Jane Kilner** for editing and providing feedback on my dissertation when I was too tired of looking at it! Your professional and compassionate eye was essential! /// **Alex Werth** and **Kaily Heitz,** my geography buddies who gave me feedback early on, and whose brilliant research about Oakland encouraged me to keep looking at my work through the lens of the particular physical and emotional geography of my city. /// All of the graduate students in TDPS who gave me advice in the "grounge" and beyond whenever I had impostor syndrome or was lost and overwhelmed—**Takeo Rivera, Christian Nagler, Kim Richards, Natalia Duong, Miyoko Conley, Juan Manuel Aldape, Julia Havard, Lyndsey Ogle, Martha Herrera-Lasso, Gold, Megan Hoetger, Paige Johnson, Sima Belmar**—THANK YOU for all of your generosity and encouragement! /// All the TDPS professors past and present: **Amara Tabor-Smith, Philip Kan Gotanda, SanSan Kwan, Shannon Steen, Joe Goode, Lisa Wymore, Shannon Jackson, Angela Marino,** and **Peter Glazer.** I learned so much from the way each of you moves through the world and our department! /// **Willow Frye** and **River Bourne** for having my back in the beginning of the PhD journey, and for being wildly brilliant and supportive humxns. I hope you're both doing well right now. /// My undergrad alma mater, Swarthmore College and the loving professors I had there—**Abbe Blum, Haili Kong, Shi Laoshi, Jiang Laoshi, Yoshiko Jo, Randy Exon**—who instilled in me a love for deep learning and having fun while you're doing it! And to my buds from college—**Zein Nakhoda, Michael Xu,** and **Mary Jean Chan,** and many more—for staying in connection throughout all these many years since graduating! I learn so much from seeing the different paths we're on, and intersecting from time to time. /// **Daan van Esch** my lifelong Mandarin-learning, Taiwanese food-appreciating, master Christmas card sender buddy! /// The teachers at **Academy for Coaching Excellence—Jeremy Blanchard, Zo Tobi, Maria Nemeth—**and my fellow coaching classmates who held me through my toughest times in grad school! /// My fellow artist scholar parent comrade **Bidisha Banerjee**—thank you for always asking me such pointed questions and for being that parent mentor a couple years ahead of me. What a gift that we can learn from each other in so many arenas. /// My fellow mixed race kid of an immigrant parent and also big sis to me in many ways, **Mwende Hinojosa,** thank you for being such an open and transparent

role model with me. I love that we get to add parenting to the mix now! And **Mateo Hinojosa** for being my first very mature former housemate doing badass work in the world and introduced me to your sweetie! /// **Rana Alshalyan** for taking care of Maru and for being in beloved community and sharing your ancestral foodways, and your beautiful art! /// **Maestra Rosa, Maestra Olga, Maestro Luis, and all the other staff at Escuelita del Bosque** for instilling Maru with a love for the forest while I work! The places that took care of me, including my leaky tiny house, **La Casita**, the first year, then **Casa de Paz**, then the **Genoa Castle**, and now the **Peacock House**. All of these places were in **Oakland**, **Huichin Ohlone Land** and house my favorite healing spots—**The Gardens at Lake Merritt, The Morcom Rose Garden, The East Bay Redwood Regional Parks, Peralta Hacienda, Alameda Beach, the Island, the Tuesday and Saturday and Sunday farmer's markets, Pete's backyard by the creek, Dimond Park,** and many more. I fall in love with you more each day. /// And last but not least, my parents, **Sky and Dan Baker**, who birthed and raised and loved me with your best; my grandparents **Yoshiko and Isamu Kaneko, Ann and Paul Baker,** and all of our ancestors (human, plant, land, and animal), whose resilience, struggles, joy, and wisdom allow us to be here today.

There are many more I could have written here (on top of this 4+ page list!). It's incredible to remember that even the smallest interactions can have the most profound effect on my life. Thank you thank you thank you. I am so humbled by the generosity of all my relations. May you know how you have touched my life and the work I do.

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

"I'm in a cross-class relationship with my girlfriend and we talk about class because we have to . . . it's cool when you can find really physical manifestations of liberation, which feels abstract—like wow, collective liberation means I get to have my amazing girlfriend! I wouldn't get to date this person if not for the fight for this thing. . . or if we didn't come with this [shared] understanding and analysis. The thing that liberates me is her love. . .so acknowledging those moments in the ways that liberation is important for my [own] life is critical."

—Paige K., POOR Magazine Solidarity Family Member

What are the "really physical manifestations of liberation" in your life, like Paige's example of being in a cross-class relationship, that keep you committed to practices of solidarity? In a writing class I once taught, the final essay—inspired by a prompt from one of Alexis Pauline Gumbs' online classes[1]—asked students to respond to the Combahee River Collective Statement's proposal for collective liberation (which I elaborate on in the conclusion) while reflecting on what such a liberation personally feels/looks/ sounds/smells/etc. like for them in their own lives and bodies. This is because while we often hear mention of collective liberation and freedom in speeches, poems, essays, and movement work, we do not take the time to pause and reflect on the specific physical manifestation of liberation in our daily lives and within our bodies. Whether you believe that our collective liberation is in the future or something that we can access here and now, I urge you to reflect on the circumstances—in as much specificity to your life—in which your body, your relationships, the governing structures in your life, your environment, would be free.[2]

This may be the first time readers with race, class, and/or academic privilege are encouraged to reflect on their personal liberation in the context of solidarity practices. You may be surprised, and used to saying the phrase "collective liberation," while subconsciously thinking that you are already free. But that presumes the people you are in solidarity with are the only ones who need to be liberated in order for us to achieve collective liberation. Or maybe you think it would be selfish for you to consider

[1] "Combahee Throughline Immersion Practice," Sangodare & Alexis for Mobile Homecoming Trust, accessed March 7, 2022, https://sangodare.podia.com/combahee-throughline-immersion-practice.

[2] "Black Feminist Breathing Chorus," Sangodare & Alexis for Mobile Homecoming Trust, accessed March 22, 2022, https://sangodare.podia.com/breathingchorus. Thank you to Alexis Pauline Gumbs' Black Feminist Breathing Chorus for this set of frames in our lives and to ask the sensory question of how our liberation is felt in different ways.

your freedom when there are others who appear to be in greater need, and believe you do not need to be a part of the equation. But my dissertation is rooted in the understanding that solidarity work is not only more effective, but literally made possible by realizing how implicated we all are in practicing our collective liberation.

As I will explain further below, this dissertation uses performance theory to address solidarity as an evolving and ongoing practice of ethical relationality and collective liberation, arguing that the Poverty Scholarship of POOR Magazine enables a way for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to practice solidarity in ways that divest from racial capitalism's extractive and spiritually harmful structures. Treating Poverty Scholars as primary theorists of solidarity to analyze four spaces of learning—across race and/or class difference (PeopleSkool: Chapter Two), within sameness (the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family: Chapter Three), and in mixed company (UC Berkeley classrooms and The Church of Black feminist Thought: Chapter Four)—I respond to the call of Poverty Scholars to share from self-observation by including stories and observations from people with race, class, and/or academic privilege practicing solidarity guided by Poverty Scholarship. Ultimately this dissertation provides embodied examples of alternative pedagogies of solidarity, concluding that solidarity is indeed an everyday performance that can be practiced and improved, towards our healing.

The Poverty Scholarship I cite in this dissertation comes from POOR Magazine,[3] a Poor and Indigenous-led nonprofit grassroots arts and media organization in East Oakland founded in 1996, "dedicated to providing revolutionary media access, arts, education, and solutions from youth, adults, and elders in poverty across Pachamama."[4] They explain that scholarship should prioritize the body of knowledge gained through our lived experiences, rather than that which we have academically studied,[5] and so co-founder Tiny Garcia writes that survival "through extreme poverty and crisis, houselessness, migration, racism, disability, incarceration, and/or substance

[3] "About Us | Poor Magazine," December 31, 2021, https://www.poormagazine.org/About%20Us.

[4] Pachamama is a Quechua word that means Earth Mother (Pacha=Earth; Mama=Mother) but is commonly used among Indigenous communities in the Americas to refer to the Earth (much like some people use the name "Mother Earth").

[5] For those of us in the academy, being a scholar of what we study is likely more familiar to us than the model proposed by Tiny. I know I have often applied for "Designated Emphases" or fellowships in the academy that promise expertise in a certain area by the time you have finished its requirements.

use—is what you need to qualify as a poverty scholar."[6] This shift in who is considered scholar is crucial, because in our society, scholars have power to claim what is a valuable body of knowledge.[7]

Why we need to look at this *here* and *now*

> "Let's talk about who we really are in this family support network. Let's not lie and say—oh sorry, I can't help out with your medical bills. I actually can pay your rent. . . That wealth was literally stolen and not that long ago. *It needs to stop being hoarded.*"
>
> -Yael Channoff, POOR Magazine Solidarity Family Member

But where are we now? Two years out from the shooting of George Floyd, a decade from the official launch of Black Lives Matter, and at least in California, a couple years from the first Shelter in Place in March 2020 due to Covid19. That may sound like a list of times and events, rather than our location, but it can be helpful to start constellating our current events, kind of like echolocation—bouncing off of what is happening around us to know where we are, and how we might safely navigate

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[6] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019), 29. The University of Notre Dame and Stanford University have actual degrees in Poverty Studies, but most if not all universities have scholars and classes dedicated to studying poverty around the world studying "the nature, causes, and consequences of poverty." (https://socialconcerns.nd.edu/content/poverty-studies-interdisciplinary-minor) The Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality has 15 research groups that address "some of the important poverty-relevant measurement problems facing the nation." (https://inequality.stanford.edu/research) Even if some academic Poverty Studies programs explicitly name their goal to be "to confront and reduce poverty in local and global communities," Tiny's shift in criteria offers that lived experience lends more authority and a first-hand perspective to the ways poverty works, and thus how it can be reduced or eliminated. Poverty Scholars who have survived through extreme poverty therefore, she posits, are better equipped to be the ones naming their own self-determined solutions for poverty and homelessness.

[7] Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2021). Edgar Villanueva in *Decolonizing Wealth* also discusses something similar when he says that "deep authentic knowledge does not come from reading statistics, reports or articles; it doesn't even come from a site visit to the community or interviewing someone from the affected community. It comes from living inside that community and experiencing that issue for oneself."

forward.[8] As more and more people get fully vaccinated in my city of Oakland, businesses and events that had been at a standstill have been re-opening. It is what author of *The Art of Gathering,* Priya Parker recently called, a time of "re-entry,"[9] as those of us who were not essential workers are going back to in-person gatherings. But we know that people are poorer (financially), many more are unhoused and/or without health insurance because of this pandemic.

And yet with the re-opening and re-entry, there has been non-stop news about property crime rising. I agree with critics who see alarmist and exaggerated news about crime rates as a backlash against the Defunding Police movements. But even if you believe that police can genuinely help property crime, focusing on this debate keeps us from the heart of the matter—*that people are now able to return to buying and hoarding property, which in the U.S. equates to wealth.* That means that people who weren't able to focus on hoarding wealth—because they were in the red, or were focused on just staying physically safe from the virus—are now able to get back to accumulating wealth. Of course, wealth accumulation didn't stop or slow down for everyone as we know that billionaires such as Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, became even richer during the pandemic.

This accumulation of wealth, or hoarding as Yael refers to it above, is racialized—that is, we know from statistics that it is mostly a White majority that has the concentration of financial and property wealth. This uneven concentration of wealth is not a coincidence—the U.S. was built on policies, systems, loopholes, and networks that allow White (though this category has evolved to include and exclude different people over the course of the past two centuries) people to hoard wealth. Thus, we can never divorce the hoarding of wealth from the structure of White Supremacy[10] and Settler Colonialism in our society. That is to say that while the biggest hoarders of wealth are mostly White, we do *not* need to be White in order to hoard

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[8] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (AK Press, 2020), 15, https://www.akpress.org/undrowned.html. I'm inspired here to think about echolocation by Alexis Pauline Gumbs' book *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (2020) in which she ponders how "echolocation, the practice many marine mammals use to navigate the world through bouncing sounds, change our understands of 'vision' and visionary action."

[9] Prentis Hemphill, "Power, Intention, and Gathering with Priya Parker — Finding Our Way Podcast," accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.findingourwaypodcast.com/individual-episodes/s2e9.

[10] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Central Recovery Press, 2017), xvii. Menakem quotes the White scholar Robin DiAngelo when he discusses what White Supremacy is. In her book *What Does It Mean to Be White?* she says that "White supremacy does not refer to individual white people per se and their individual intentions, but to a political-economic social system of domination. This system is based on the historical and current accumulation of structural power that privileges, centralizes, and elevates white people as a group" (xvii).

wealth.[11] We are all socialized into acting out of a scarcity mindset simply by living within the structures of power in the U.S. And as I will elaborate below and in Chapters Two and Three, informed by Poverty Scholarship, hoarding done specifically by people with race, class, and/or academic privilege is set as a standard of success in our society, much to our detriment.

And yet many readers will agree with me that especially now, as we pivot towards coming back together in-person in the face of even greater Climate Chaos, we so urgently need to remember our interconnectedness in our practices of solidarity and stop hoarding now. For hoarding is a large obstacle to embodying our interdependence. It is of course easier said than done. Similarly, it is easier to say that we must "End White silence." Many of us have heard organizers of color encouraging White allies to "talk to (y)our people," whether at the Thanksgiving dinner table, the highly segregated church, or in other entry points that we have access to in order to create transformation. They/we urge White people to stop remaining silent, because we are uniquely positioned to help our family and communities see the harm in their ways. For those of us whose identities are more than just White, the same holds true for our other identities—formally educated, straight, male, connected to people with political or cultural power, etc.—to transform our communities from within, though there are important nuances that I will discuss further in Chapter Four when we are in mixed company. But as I emphasize in Chapter Three, talking to “our people” is urgently needed *in addition to* learning better ways of being with people across difference, and all the settings in between. We know all of this in our heads, but many of us still avoid actually doing it, or continuing to do it—myself included. Many of us have tried and failed, and given up. Some of us have retreated to other spaces where people are very careful of what they say and do in order to avoid our families and communities of origin which we feel are problematic and/or don’t understand us.

So how do we do this work which is so crucial to practicing solidarity that grows with our lives, which aims for our collective liberation? What we need, as I see it, are some navigational scripts to reparate across difference in humble reciprocity; to deepen and transform within sameness (i.e. ourselves and our communities); and to grow from and leverage our similarities and differences in mixed spaces. Whereas Chapters Two and Three focus on some of the alternative linguistic and spatial scripts of solidarity guided by POOR Magazine to be with people across difference and within sameness, Chapter Four focuses on a few scripts I have engaged with in two learning communities that are mixed race and class. But regardless of the context, none of

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[11] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019. Poverty Scholars point out the irony of financially wealthy White people described as “collecting” their properties and not “hoarding,” while Poor, Black, and Brown people are pathologized as “hoarders” for wanting to hold onto their few belongings.

these are static scripts that tell us exactly what to say or do, or where to practice, which is where performance theory makes an important intervention. Indeed, this dissertation is more than a how-to or how-not-to-guide, because while we can learn from each other, we each have a different set of stories, circumstances, and relationships. And so I want the theories and stories I discuss here to support you to find your own nuanced navigational scripts that work for your lives (and the lives of your relations) at this moment in time. As such, the navigational scripts we will use now to practice solidarity will look, sound, feel, etc. different than the ones we will use tomorrow, in a month, in a decade, etc. But my hope is that hearing the stories of others will provide a place to start.

In the following pages of the introduction, I will first define what I mean by solidarity, and then elaborate on some key concepts and theoretical frameworks that support the study of solidarity in this project. Finally, I give an overview of the chapters and my sites of research to follow.

What is Solidarity?

Although practices of solidarity have been in scholar and activist discourses for decades, the Covid global pandemic in tandem with U.S. racial uprisings have resulted in an especially large spike in its discussion and entrance into popular discourse. One issue, however, when words are used often and by many different kinds of people is that they begin to sound hollow, too general, or "slippery," as Black British feminist scholar Lola Olufemi writes of solidarity.[12] So then what do I mean when I use the term solidarity in this project? I agree with Olufemi's take of solidarity at its core as the practice of mutual aid:[13] that is, giving "our platforms, resources, legitimacy, voices, skills to one another to try and defeat oppressive conditions."[14] I appreciate that she also gives a definition of solidarity rooted in feminism as "a strategic coalition of

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[12] Lola Olufemi, *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power* (Pluto Press, 2020)**.** Olufemi also proposes that solidarity can be organized into three dimensions: the symbolic, the practical, and the aesthetic. Symbolic solidarity is represented in the protest image or the song or the poem or the speaker that tries to direct energy and attention away from themselves and onto someone or something else. Practical solidarity is about sharing strategies—seeing how tactics that were successful in one context, might work in another. Aesthetic solidarity is the beauty that arises from instances of solidarity evokes emotive responses that make us feel like it is possible to change the world as we know it.

[13] Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)* (Verso, 2020); Dean Spade, *What Is Mutual Aid? (Classroom Version)*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYPgTZeF5Z0. Obviously there's a long and rich history of mutual aid in this country, and I highly encourage readers interested to learn more to check out Dean Spade's work, as he also provides other resources.

[14] Lola Olufemi, 136.

individuals who are invested in a collective vision for the future."[15] For Olufemi, solidarity has always been at the heart of radical feminist practices because these movements have understood both the "global nature of their demands" and the "interlocking nature of structures of oppression."[16] In the S.F. Bay Area, feminist women/people of color movements in the past fifty years to create a "global sisterhood" or "Third World Liberation Front" to dismantle patriarchy and White Supremacy/Colonialism around the world exemplify the radical intersectional feminist legacy of soldarity practices Olufemi speaks of.

Feminism, she contends, is a political project about what the world *could be*, both at the individual and collective level. You will hear me writing often about the urgency of practicing our collective liberation in this project because practices of liberation for each individual are not separate from practices of liberation for all people and beings. They must happen simultaneously—for instance Olufemi writes that while feminism made space for her to "be wayward, the wrong kind of woman, deviant," it also helped her realize that true liberation meant extending this newfound freedom beyond herself. As she puts it, "just because I felt freer in some respects, did not mean I was free."[17] This is one of the foundations of my understanding of solidarity. And while organizing with others can be unruly, painful, and challenging, a radical feminist approach of solidarity understands that we still must continue to practice solidarity because we are simply too embedded in each other's lives.

Our embeddedness does not mean that we agree with each other or get along, as I show in this dissertation. In fact, it is facing our embeddedness that brings up more pain than we think is good for our wellbeing. And yet, as Olufemi puts so beautifully, "there is no better answer to combat a fractured society obsessed with individualism than a politics that connects the dots."[18] Solidarity work is at its heart about staying connected, both to one's own self and those similar to us, as well as with those who are different from us. And we do this sometimes painful, often messy connection work in order to heal from the harms of participating in racial capitalism.

Racial Capitalism

When I use the term racial capitalism, I am actually referring primarily to the trio of White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, and Capitalism,[19] in addition to the many other structures of oppression and power in the U.S. that are co-constitutive or woven together (i.e. Heteropatriarchy, Xenophobia, Ableism, etc.) from the time of this

[15] Lola Olufemi, 136.
[16] Lola Olufemi, 135.
[17] Lola Olufemi, 2.
[18] Lola Olufemi, 137.
[19] When I refer to any one of them in this chapter, I am implicitly referring to all three and signaling the intersection of the three structures.

country's beginning. By structure, I mean the larger social institutions such as our laws, cultural norms, media, and more which give power to some and not others. Looking at the term "racial capitalism" alone, most of our normative social institutions would *not* link capitalism with race, let alone our country's histories of slavery, genocide, and Settler Colonialism. Capitalism. Similar to money, capitalism is normatively seen as being a neutral structure or tool we developed that does not implicitly have meaning, or bias.

There are many reasons why people view capitalism as separate from race, but one primary and easy to observe reason is that those who profit in capitalism would lose money if the racist and settler colonial foundations and methods of capitalism were exposed. Thus, we see narratives such as the Bootstraps Narrative, which is about how one only needs to work really hard to financially make it in the U.S., regardless of our race (among other identities). The strong emphasis on such narratives cover the more insidious truth that capitalism originated from stealing land, killing indigenous peoples, enslaving people of African descent (among others), and exploiting many others. The Bootstrap Narrative makes it seem as though those who have financial wealth today earned it, when racial (and many other forms of) violence and settler colonial practices are needed in order for capitalism to even function.[20]

Activists and scholars reading this, on the other hand, may already be aware of the term racial capitalism's recent popularity, particularly in the context of Black movements against state violence and mass incarceration, calling for an end to racial capitalism. But in fact racial capitalism was first described in the U.S. context by the Black political scientist scholar Cedric J. Robinson, in his book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* published nearly 40 years ago in 1983.[21] According to Robinson, racial capitalism evolved out of the "tendency of European civilization through capitalism. . .to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones," specifically critiquing Marxism's failure to account for the racial character of capitalism. Some of the more commonly cited results of racial capitalism's "tendency" to racially differentiate for the purposes of profit are slavery, colonialism, genocide, incarceration regimes, migrant exploitation, and contemporary racial warfare. As Critical Ethnic Studies scholar Jodi Melamed argues, "racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires."[22] In making this comment, Melamed is highlighting how capitalism thrives (when the people with the

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[20] For more on the performativity of money, Wall Street, and get-rich schemes/workshops, see Christian Nagler's writings on the topic.

[21] Cedric J. Robinson et al., *Black Marxism, Revised and Updated Third Edition: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Revised and Updated Third edition (The University of North Carolina Press, 2021). He first encountered the phrase racial capitalism in South Africa in describing the development of a political economy in a society built on racial apartheid.

[22] Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 77, https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076.

most power make exponential profits and the people with the least power are exploited and not financially remunerated) when people are treated unequally. And so racism is used as a way to rationalize putting people onto a hierarchical gradient of least to most deserving of structural suffering.[23]

Of course, race is not the *only* way capitalism has differentiated who does or doesn't have human value/who is or who isn't human (in the name of profit) by creating fictions of differing abilities. Sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, and many other -isms contribute to differentiating (and are intersected with race and White Supremacy), but Robinson and Melamed argue that race is the most common and pervasive identity marker used in the U.S. context.[24] So while many contemporary scientists have debunked the blatant racial essentialism of science's past—using the false belief that racial characteristics (such as that some races are more likely to intelligence and leadership while others to laziness, menial labor, crime, etc.) are biological in order to justify White people surveilling, enslaving, killing, converting, and generally dominating others deemed not-White—the social construction of race is a powerful structure that continues to alter all of our everyday physical realities, perceptions, and practices in the world.

While scholars of racial capitalism understand capitalism as inherently racialized, beginning as a racializing project in Europe, we must also look to Native Studies scholars who expose how racial capitalism is gruesomely tied to the stealing and profiting off of stolen indigenous land in the U.S. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue, racial capitalism needs land to continue because land, not money, is actually the basis for U.S. wealth. People who have the most financial wealth in this country are those with property (stolen Indigenous land) that appreciates in value, which they pass down from one generation to the next. Genocide and slavery were/are both enacted in the service of making sure that this wealth would not lose its source.[25] Thus, they poignantly urge us to decolonize beyond just the metaphorical and figurative levels, and instead practice solidarity that actually returns stolen land. And so the conversation of how we relate to and heal our relationships with indigenous land and Indigenous land stewards is crucial to understanding everyday practices of solidarity.

Where these theorizations get interesting for the purposes of this dissertation are around how scholars discuss racial capitalism affecting our social dynamics and

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[23] Some readers may notice the flip I did here of highlighting who is least deserving of respect to who is least deserving of suffering.

[24] It is noteworthy that theories of indigeneity and settler colonialism do not surface as obviously in discussions of racial capitalism. A scholar whose work I address later in this chapter, Tiffany Lethabo King, is one of few scholars currently trying to bridge the discursive and theoretical gap between Black and Indigenous Studies.

[25] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 24, https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630.

interpersonal relationships,[26] because solidarity is at its core, a way of being in relationship with others. Ruth Gilmore insightfully theorizes that racial capitalism has reduced our collective life to relations that support capitalism, and is therefore what she calls a technology of anti-relationality. Her theory is extremely useful in seeing how racial capitalism is a major barrier for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to practice solidarity outside of capitalism's extractive paradigm, whether with people similar or different from them. But what are some tangible examples of how this plays out? Below are a few that help demonstrate what I mean, particularly as we relate to people across race and class difference: 1) Philanthropy; 2) Transplant activism; 3) Neighborhood Allyship; and 4) Academic research:

1. ***Philanthropy:*** Philanthropy operates at many scales. Though at its largest scale, it encompasses an entire sector of organizations and individuals who donate large amounts of money as gifts, grants, fellowships, or scholarships, at the smallest scale philanthropy can include giving pocket change and bills to panhandlers. In order to examine how philanthropy at the largest scale performs solidarity informed by racial capitalism, we must ask how philanthropy can exist in the first place. In other words, how did a small group of individuals amass such a concentration of wealth? Without an exploitative profit-driven economic system that requires (racial) inequality, there could not be such a wide wealth gap. Without the financial security and profit in owning stolen indigenous land, there could not be such a wide wealth gap. So even from its birth, we see philanthropy as the child of racial capitalism.

   When we explore why philanthropists give money, we must not lose sight of the *how* described above. Some may give for the tax shelter, others because they feel guilt, and yet others because they want to make positive change in the world (or a combination of the three). But knowing that the wealth philanthropists are giving is predicated on racial capitalism, we see that philanthropy (at least traditionally) is inseparable from violence. Philanthropy's polished and benevolent veneer is just that—a veneer—to hide its reliance on racial capitalism.[27]

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[26] Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State*, 2011, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394648; Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Race and Globalization," in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, ed. R. J. Johnston, Peter J. Taylor, and Michael Watts, 2nd ed (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2002), 261; Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2011), https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-transit-of-empire.

[27] Recently, Edgar Villanueva and his team at Decolonize Wealth have been making waves in the field of philanthropy to address the ways extractive economies are dependent on the violent enclosure of land, labor, culture, power, wealth and spirit of Black and Indigenous peoples.

2. ***Transplant activism:*** Here I'm specifying that the activism (and thus the individual activist) is geographically transplanted from another city, state, or country. I use "transplant" to mark the way we (people with race, class, and/or academic privilege & the organizations we found) are excited to help people outside of our immediate family/communities after having learned about social justice movements in the media or at school. We may move across the country, live in co-ops, and start/work for non-profit organizations or other activist projects.

   I argue that transplant activism falls under what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the 'anti-relationality' of racial capitalism, because it brings people together across difference when it is profitable or extractive. Like other activities in racial capitalism, social justice activism has been commodified into a profitable aesthetic and industrial culture. People with race, class, and/or academic privilege who are seen (in photos/videos/media) or are known to work in poor and Black/Brown spaces building houses, gardening (teaching permaculture), and/or making food gain cultural and financial capital. Transplant activism gives us cultural capital by helping us gain a reputation for being "woke" or doing the "good work," and gives us financial capital when these experiences go on CVs, which lead to upward mobility.

3. ***Neighborhood Allyship****:* This performance of solidarity happens in neighborhoods and houses where people with race, class, and/or education privilege live (though it can also happen elsewhere). It may include putting signs up in our windows or yards, or starting initiatives, funds, and projects to help [*insert group of people here*]. It is influenced by racial capitalism because the majority of our neighborhoods are a result of/still being constructed by practices which assign people of different races to different spaces. Social geographists and architects[28] have theorized the ways in which such racist practices[29] have intentionally planned for grossly unequal access to education, employment, transportation, and shelter as well as conditions of underinvestment and neglect.

4. ***Academic research:*** This performance of solidarity is where my earlier discussion of what is traditionally counted as scholarship would fit, and is devoted to studying poverty/the poor, or other marginalized peoples. Typically

[28] George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Temple University Press, 2011), https://tupress.temple.edu/book/0701; Craig L. Wilkins, *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Architecture, and Music*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007).
[29] One commonly cited example is redlining, the real estate/legal practice of drawing red lines on maps denoting where Black and Brown people could buy homes and live in which was technically outlawed.

the research has as one of its goals to help the people of the study through the conducting of the research. Academic research is affected by racial capitalism in a couple of ways. First, most research universities in the U.S. were founded on stolen land, and by rich, White men who made their money off of slavery and/or genocide. Secondly, it is very common that the academic who leads the study makes a profitable (or at least stable) career from writing and investigating the lives of their research subjects. In contrast, the research subjects typically do not actually see any consistent material changes in their living conditions. As described in *transplant activism,* here too racial capitalism brings people together across racial/class difference only when it is profitable.

Geographies of Solidarity

A theme you will notice throughout the dissertation is the role that space and geography plays in our practices of solidarity—both how they support and prevent us from practicing solidarity in ways that resists racial capitalism. Scholars in geography and architecture have long established that space is socially produced/constructed.[30] But some in particular—Katherine McKittrick[31] and Craig Wilkins[32] to name a couple—compellingly name the ways in which our cities, buildings, and other built infrastructure have been intentionally designed in service of White Supremacy, Capitalism, and Settler Colonialism. That is, space is constructed by these structures of power, and the resulting spaces enact these structures of power. For example, space that was designed to support White Supremacist idealogy strengthens Whiteness. As Chris Rhomberg explains in *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community* (2004), the historic construction of East Oakland as a racially restrictive "White" suburb spatially constructed Whiteness as a monolithic racial/spatial identity out of a multi-ethnic Euro-descended group of people.[33] In other words, East Oakland wasn't a White space/just for White people, but also Italians, Greeks, Irish, Germans, etc. *became* "White" by moving to this separated space. Some other tools used to construct and affirm Whiteness and White Supremacy that are often cited include redlining, building freeways outside of White and wealthy neighborhoods, and NIMBY (Not in My

[30] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1st edition (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Univ Of Minnesota Press), accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/space-place-and-gender.

[31] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[32] Craig L. Wilkins, *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Architecture, and Music*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007).

[33] Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland*, 0 edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

Backyard) protesting of public/low-income housing in White and wealthy neighborhoods. All of these tools protect the wealth of White and already middle or upper class residents because homes in our society become more valuable when they are in all or predominantly White neighborhoods without freeways and low-income housing.[34]

Chapter Two elaborates on how Poverty Scholars offer some alternative spatial scripts and practices of solidarity that resist racial capitalism, but first, how do spatial practices within racial capitalism get in the way of seeing the violences of this structure? One way is that those who support and labor for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege are spatially invisibilized, whether through separate entrances, closeted cleaning supplies, windowless break rooms, buses, segregated neighborhoods... the list goes on. What is visible is how efficiently everything runs in our world—that when we put an envelope in a mailbox, it gets to our destination in a couple of days; when the trash can gets full, it gets emptied; the classroom floor is always clean, etc.[35] Any visual cues which might invite us to ask *who* is doing the labor that translates into efficiency are spatially (or temporally in the form of night or weekend shifts) segregated.[36]

At the same time, examples such as entertainment, child care, domestic work, sex work, surveillance, etc. demonstrate that racial capitalism also scripts a required or desired, and therefore tightly controlled proximity and intimacy of Black, Brown, indigenous, and poor people to the rich and/or White people. So what we see is actually that racial capitalism's normative spatial scripts/practices are characterized by the way they demand the one way control of both intimacies as well as separations. That means that within normative spatial scripts of racial capitalism, laborers (or

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[34] You may notice that unlike many accounts of racialized spatial accounts, I am highlighting the increase of material benefit for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege as an effort to practice Poverty Scholarship which asks that I speak of my own communities

[35] On a tangential note, when I lived in Japan during middle school, we students had to serve each other the lunch prepared by staff and wash our dishes, as well as clean our classroom, bathrooms, and hallways. It was tedious and annoying at first, as I was unaccustomed to doing this labor at school but it made me realize how valuable this labor was.

[36] Karl Marx and Ernest Mandel, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, Illustrated edition (London ; New York, N.Y: Penguin Classics, 1992); Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, ed. David McLellan, Reissue edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). As my friend from the Geography department, Alex Werth, reminds me, many geographers have traced this kind of analysis to Marx, who, in *Capital*, writes about the factory as the "hidden abode" of labor. In other words, capital builds spaces in order to render the true cost of wealth invisible to the wealthy (although he didn't incorporate race into his analysis). In "Conditions of the Working Class in England," Mark Engels describes how Manchester was designed to segregate and hide the "slums" from the bourgeoisie.

"essential workers" as they have been coded during the Covid19 Pandemic) are refused the self-determination of when, where, and how they want to be intimate or separate.

When we feel entitled to segregate or bring close to study, surveil, and objectify the people who are doing the labor of efficiency for us that we believe we are independently productive and successful, the resulting performances of solidarity are what I listed on pages 14 to 15. The geography of racial capitalism (and the people who materially benefit from it) thus sustains the illusion of independence by being both invisible and hypervisible in the spheres of home, work, and play.

Structural Sameness/Difference &
"People with Race, Class, and/or Academic Privilege"

Racial capitalism's different effects on people and geographies help us understand a key concept I use in this dissertation: structural sameness and difference. That is, racial capitalism[37] structurally constructs specific similarities and differences among people on a spectrum of material and spiritual benefit to material and spiritual harm. Importantly, this does not negate that we all share a common humanity within which we are all unique. I use structural sameness and difference to describe the intended audience I stated in the preface: people with race, class, and/or academic privilege. I use this phrase knowing fully well that it is imperfect. And yet it does speak to the fact that many people with race, class, and/or academic privilege (depending of course on which ones) have access to similar structural, material benefits, or privileges, at the same time as we are similarly harmed spiritually. We have financial and/or social stability and our social structures (politicians, law enforcement, business owners, landlords, AKA anyone in a position of power) work to protect us and our material privileges from those who do not have our structural, material privileges.[38] One example is how White veterans who were given post-war home loans and their descendants are structurally in a vastly more secure financial position than Black veterans who were turned away. But as one of my research participants Jessica Rosenberg explains, she has come "to wrestle with, and acknowledge the way class privilege under White Supremacy destroys our souls in different ways."[39] Another participant Lex Horan put it like this:

> "The world I came up in was really missing a lot of life force and . . .connection, and I felt really isolated and alone . . . POOR Magazine pushed me to face some

[37] Remember that this is me signaling White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, Capitalism, Heteropatriarchy, Ableism, etc.

[38] This is also why colorblind responses to the social constructions of race, class, and other identities—i.e. "I don't see you as Asian, just as a person Miyuki" —can be so hurtful because they deny the structural disparities that we simply must acknowledge exist in our society.

[39] Jessica Rosenberg, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

> of the pain that is in my life and the lives of anybody whose ancestors have been a part of the horrors of wealth accumulation and White Supremacy . . . POOR's teachings [say that] to get to . . . having this kind of privilege, there is something somewhere in that that you need to be accountable to, and also be compassionate and really try to heal."[40]

What Jessica and Lex are speaking to—and which I will be elaborating on in Chapter Two—is how people with race, class, and/or academic privilege are also structurally similar because we are harmed *spiritually* by the systems designed to materially benefit us.[41] Of course I am aware that using the title "people with race, class, and/or academic privilege" may erase the large range of experiences that exists within such broad categories or reinforce the separation of "us" versus "them."

For example, although I have academic privilege as a doctoral student at a prestigious university, there is a big difference in my experience being the child of an Asian immigrant and low-income in my childhood before attending college and graduate school than my White colleagues who grew up with wealth. They were not as impacted (materially and psychologically) by being paid below the poverty line in graduate school for seven+ years as I. Or as a friend who also grew up low-income reminded me, her degree from an elite liberal arts college and the three years of being paid a higher salary materially only helped her to catch up with her debt from before that job. When our families don't have financial wealth, our academic and/or race privileges do not help us as much as those whose families do have financial wealth.

I use "and/or," to signal the variation that exists, and use the phrase "people with race, class, and/or academic privilege" because it is a shortcut to talking about the structural benefits and harms that certain people have in common within racial capitalism. Finally, I use the terms across (structural) difference and within (structural) sameness to refer to how people with race, class, and/or academic privilege engage

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[40] Lex Horan, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

[41] People with race, class, and/or academic privilege tend to be White or assimilated to Whiteness, property-owning, financially wealthy, formally educated, able-bodied, male, cisgender, straight, and those who carry several or all of those identitiesAnd those people are structurally different than those who are more *materially* harmed by these systems (i.e. Black, Brown, Indigenous, women, poor, disabled, queer, transgender, and those who carry several or all of those identities). I want to emphasize that while the language in which I am trying to distinguish these two categories of those who are *materially* versus *spiritually* impacted by systems of oppression may still be imprecise, I am attempting to find a middle path. For often, I find that the polarized debates in our country derive from a disagreement of who is more or less oppressed. For instance, in response to BLM, on the one hand, some people (regardless of their background or identities) believe that we must only prioritize Black people or women's liberation, while on the other hand, some people believe that White people are equally harmed as Black people and thus Black people should not be prioritized. But there is a middle path here.

with people who are structurally different or similar from them whether through race, class, and academic identities, or the material benefits/harms they have experienced as a result of having these identities within racial capitalism. When I use the phrase "in mixed company," I am talking about spaces that are explicitly a mix of both people who share structural/material similarities and differences within racial capitalism.

Two Major Theoretical/Methodological Interventions

In addition to the concepts above, there are two primary theoretical and methodological frameworks that inform the way I am approaching this study of solidarity. Below I give a brief explanation of the two frameworks followed by a more thorough discussion.

1. **Performance Theory // Solidarity as an Everyday Performance**
   We—our bodies, lives, and relationships—are always in flux; studying and centering the body/embodied knowledge is productive; solidarity should be studied in the quotidian and nitty gritty examples from our daily lives

2. **Poverty Scholarship // The Importance of "I" Journalism**
   Listen to people who are most materially impacted/harmed by an issue for solutions; solidarity is strengthened when we speak and act from self-observation

Performance Theory: Solidarity as an Everyday Performance

> "To treat any object, work or product 'as' performance—a painting, a novel, a shoe, or anything at all—means to investigate what the object does, how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings. Performances exist only as actions, interactions and relationships."
>
> *—Richard Schechner, Performance Studies: An Introduction*[42]

Perhaps Schechner's quote begins to answer why I propose studying solidarity as a performance, or what I refer to as an everyday performance so as to distinguish the kind of quotidian and socially affected performances of identity I am talking about, from easily recognizable performances on stage. That is, performance is typically separated in the field of performance studies between that which *is* a performance from that which can be interpreted *as* a performance. For instance, a rendition of the Nutcracker at American Ballet Theater *is* a performance. Street buskers playing "Lean On Me" in front of a subway entrance *is* a performance. These "is" performances can

[42] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (London New York: Routledge, 2013).

be contrasted with the performances of our social identities: race, class, gender, ability, nationality, etc. The ways we have been taught to move, talk, and think *like* a [fill in the blank with social identity/ies i.e. girl, Asian American, man, rich person, academic, thin person, etc.] make up the repertoire of identity *as* performance, and what I think is more useful to name *everyday* performances. But like any dichotomy, performances are not black and white—there are performances that blur the line between these two categories of performance, and these two forms of performance have a lot in common. However, it is useful to name in order to give readers a context for why I am analyzing solidarity as an everyday performance, and the performative nature of solidarity.

Readers who have heard the phrase "performative allyship"[43] may be confused by my use of the term "performative" here in relation to solidarity. In mainstream discourse, "performative" has negative connotations and has come to mean that the thing they are doing is fake, not useful, or harmful. As Holiday Phillips describes it in her Medium article "Performative Allyship Is Deadly (Here's What to Do Instead): Activism can't begin and end with a hashtag," "performative allyship usually involves the "ally" receiving some kind of reward," whereas a "real ally. . .is someone from a non marginalized group who uses their privilege to advocate for a marginalized group."[44] Here, and in many other social justice conversations, performative has been placed in contrast with real, authentic, genuine, and effective solidarity. I agree with her analyses that our hashtags and our rage will not uproot systemic racism, and that a lot of important solidarity work happens in the "simple daily acts that no one will ever see."[45]

And yet I find Phillips' use of the popularized phrase and definition of "performative allyship" to be limiting because it classifies people into a binary as I mentioned earlier of fake, just-for-show allies versus real allies,[46] which does not attend to the ebb and flow of each of our lives and stories. While it is critiquing the unexamined practices of solidarity we do only because we've been told we have to in order to be "woke," accepted, or a "good" White/rich/[fill in the blank with identity] person, it can also breed fear and anxiety of being called out for faking our actions of solidarity, which can lead to disengaging entirely. Instead, performance theory reminds us that an effective solidarity *must* be performative because as Olufemi points out, solidarity is a "doing word."

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[43] Another phrase that people use when talking about performative allyship is "hashtag activism."

[44] Holiday Phillips, "Performative Allyship Is Deadly (And What to Do Instead)," *Forge* (blog), May 9, 2020, https://forge.medium.com/performative-allyship-is-deadly-c900645d9f1f.

[45] Holiday Phillips.

[46] I believe that the identity of "ally" or even "accomplice" is only useful if it supports us to practice solidarity in ongoing relationships with others shoulder to shoulder. This is why I personally like the word solidarity more than ally or accomplice as it names the action, rather than the title of a person who does the action.

Olufemi's observation is reminiscent of the work of J. L. Austin, who in *How To Do Things With Words* (1955), analyzed what he calls "speech acts" (or performative utterances). That is, words, phrases, and sentences in our language that *do* or *perform* rather than simply *describe* the world. Starting with the most obvious example of the marriage vow of "I do," which legally and socially *performs* in its utterance, Austin takes readers on an ever complexifying exploration of how the context, execution, and intention of a speech act is everything. For instance, what if "I do" is pronounced at a child's play? What if the priest asks an incomplete question before the vows are made? What if the bride is only marrying to satisfy her parents and isn't sincere when she says "I do"? etc. Context—that there's an accepted conventional procedure with the right people enacting it, execution—that the procedure is enacted by everyone accurately and completely, and intention—that the participants are sincere in the moment and also actually carry out their sincere actions over time. These are, Austin argues, what make a speech act successful.

Context, execution, and intention are extremely useful when looking at everyday performances of solidarity, as I'll demonstrate throughout the dissertation, but what I find equally compelling about Austin's theorizations is his surrender to and transparent demonstration of the emergent nature of language. What I mean is that in his unruly 12-chapter-book, he tries again and again—and fails again and again—to create rules and categories for the way language performs or doesn't. Towards the end, he admits that he must start again with the understanding that language operates on multiple levels (i.e. "there's a cat on the mat" may seem to only describe something, but at another level, it could be stated with the subtext that the listener removes the cat on the mat), and it is impossible to come up with an immaculate rule that works universally. Or differently put, the only thing that doesn't change is that change happens.[47] In tandem with this finding is his realization that no utterance can be looked at alone as a speech act. Rather, similar to Schechner's point about how performance only exists as actions, interactions and relationships, we must look at the "total speech act." For Austin, that means we need to look at everything beyond a statement including the evolution of the words, what the words are in response to, the subsequent dialogue and actions to the words, and the entire culture around those words etc. in order to fully grasp its nuance and performativity.

Performance theory embraces such gray areas, complexity and contradictions over simple or black and white answers. As a performance studies scholar, the appeal of Austin's work isn't only in the structural groundwork he laid to analyze our language and their performative efficacy, but also in its reminder to both zoom into the details and zoom out for the bigger picture of our speech acts. When we zoom in we hear questions like: *Who is saying the utterance and are they the right person for this procedure? Were they sincere when they said it? Did they follow through?* When we zoom out we hear questions like: *What are the historical uses of these words? When and for*

[47] It is a lot like the Buddhist principle that the only universal law of nature is change.

what purpose were they used? What happens when these words are used with the wrong audience? What makes them the wrong audience? What are the protocols used in case the words are uttered without subsequent action?

We start to see the richness of such lines of inquiry, as their responses are in flux, everchanging, like the culture they (and we) live in. And *this,* this rich complexity of our socio-linguistic procedures, is what I would like readers to carry forward as an important intervention that performance theory makes into discussions of solidarity.

Poverty Scholarship: The Importance of "I" Journalism & Linguistic Domination Skills

Although I will be engaging with Poverty Scholarhip's invaluable theoretical interventions in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three, one of the key paradigmatic shifts undergirding this entire project is Poverty Scholars' invitation to use self-observation or "I" journalism instead of "Other" journalism in our research and writing. Whereas "Other" journalism relies on stories written in the third person, which "remove the writer from any accountability to what they create and how they actually relate to, connect to, or disconnect from the story," "I" journalism is "rooted in our connection to each other and our collective thrival."[48] When we speak from our own reflections and name our positionality, we can share truths and authentic questions about our place in the world, rather than speaking on behalf of others. And when we write in a way that openly discusses our own doubts, conflicts, and personal relationships, we can make visible the webs of interdependence that racial capitalism wants to hide. This simple but profound shift supports us to take accountability for our words and actions. And you might see how this would support us in practicing solidarity differently.

This invitation has been embodied in the way Poverty Scholars related with me during the five years I have known them. I was first compelled to work with and be in solidarity with the POOR Magazine Poverty Scholars in 2017 after reading an article by Tiny, who wrote about decolonizing the mind and then attending a workshop they facilitated called "How to Not Call the KKKops." In the workshop, I was excited to experience Poverty Scholars embodying both theory and practice. Not only were they able to skillfully and compellingly call out the hegemonic powers of racial capitalism and its effects, but they also offered tangible practices and examples of decolonization and community care. In response to my desire to work with them, and possibly write about them, Tiny invited me to slow down and start in a "good way." To that end, she invited me to attend their weekly People's Newsroom and introduce myself to everyone there, bringing whatever news I had to share and encouraged me to attend

[48] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019), 64.

PeopleSkool—a training they offer to people with race, class, and/or academic privilege that I discuss in Chapter Two.

Tiny, POOR Magazine's ambassador for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege, has continued to invite me to be humble as I learn from Poverty Scholars, while also showing up fully through my "I" journalism, paying attention to what I *do* have the lived experience of.[49] Speaking from my own complex positionalities has allowed for more nuance, which resists the binary language that often accompanies harm, reparations, and practices of solidarity. Indeed, as referenced above, the approach and content of this dissertation are part of my humble response and attempt to reciprocate POOR Magazine's invitation to practice "I" journalism. Not only does it contain my self-observation, it also contains the self-observations of other people with race, class, and/or academic privilege. And while I am in conversation with Poverty Scholarship, I have made a strong effort to *not* speak on behalf of the Poverty Scholars. I also describe my experiences in PeopleSkool and the space itself, but from my own positionality and in what Trinh Minh-ha says is "speaking near" them, as if they can hear my writing. Fortunately, POOR Magazine has published a lot of their own writing (online and in print), which I highly encourage readers to engage with through their website: poormagazine.org and press: poorpress.net. To me, the Poverty Scholarship on Community Reparations[50] and solidarity that I introduce here is without a doubt groundbreaking, and I highly encourage readers to read POOR Magazine's book called *Poverty Scholarship* (2019) to read it from the source.

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[49] Tiny's emphasis on lived experience as the source material of scholarship and expertise is similar to and related with conversations around cultural appropriation by White or assimilated people that invite us to reintegrate the indigenous/ethnic cultures we lost in the deliberate social construction of Whiteness in the early 1900s. By acknowledging that the assimilation into Whiteness required the erasure of unique cultures that existed before immigrating can start to explain the desire to appropriate other non-White cultures, aesthetics and practices (i.e. yoga, zen, etc.) as our own. It can invite the process of remembering and reintegrating traditions and practices that our ancestors had, which is often deeply healing work. This is related to the work POOR Magazine has us do, and I will further describe the spiritual aspects of our ancestor work in Chapter Two.

[50] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, "Bank of Community Reparations | Poor Magazine," POOR Magazine, May 16, 2019, https://www.poormagazine.org/node/5870. According to their website, Community Reparations is a concept launched by Lisa tiny Gray-Garcia and is "rooted in the notion of Interdependence. It is meant to be a healing medicine of resistance to the lie of independence and the separation nation, which encourages the violent act of looking away from people who are poor or unhoused. Community Reparations instructs us all to resist capitalism's normalizing of separateness and "success" through land-stealing and wealth-hoarding. Instead, Community Reparations recognizes our shared humanity and instructs those of us who benefit from stolen or hoarded resources to engage in loving, radical redistribution of these resources."

Another Poverty Scholarship theory that informs the methodology of this project is the use of what they call "Linguistic Domination Skills" towards Community Reparations. Linguistic Domination Skills are what they define as "proficiency in the colonizers' tongue [which] affords access, space, resources, and power to a much smaller group of people with race, class, and/or educational privilege. . .[that has aided] the colonization efforts of missionaries, social workers, service providers, academics, and media makers."[51] In other words, it is the ability to use language that is most likely to be heard and respected by people in power within nonprofit, government, and financial worlds that are structured by racial capitalism. While describing these skills in the framework of domination can be off-putting to some readers, it is meant to be a wake up call that these skills can and are routinely used to have power over others. Power over others does not have to be an act of physical violence against someone—it can be as subtle as my opinion being valued over others because I know how to deliver the thought (my gestures) or make it sound more legitimate or important with the "right" use of the colonizer's language. Poverty Scholarship crucially names how Linguistic Domination Skills are structurally afforded "because [my] family provided love and time with [my] homework and skool navigation so [I] could fill out endless applications and jump through akkkademik hoops. [I] could sit relaxedly in classes 'learning,' not worrying about where [my] next meal would come from and if I was going to have a safe home that night."[52]

But we can and should use our linguistic domination skills in ways that do not cause harm, and hopefully even that are beneficial. Poverty Scholars argue that we can, for example, use them in our practices of solidarity and Community Reparations, such as helping apply for funding, writing fundraising letters to our families and friends, and editing publisher proposals for Poverty Scholars. Similar to my decision to use "I" journalism, which I discussed above, this dissertation is my humble attempt to use linguistic domination skills as a practice of Community Reparations and solidarity with the Poverty Scholars. By conversing with the theories and practices of Poverty Scholarship, such as Community Reparations, to readers with race, class, and/or academic privilege using what is considered "legitimate" language, I hope to reach audiences that might not otherwise engage with Poverty Scholarship.

Chapter Breakdown

The three body chapters to follow include the application of the theoretical frameworks and concepts discussed above. Each chapter addresses a different structural context for solidarity:

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[51] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 44.

[52] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, 169.

Chapter	Title	Structural Context
2	"I'm in the Solidarity Family": Poverty Scholarship's Kinship Solidarity How We Practice Community Reparations Across Structural Difference and Heal Ourselves in the Process	**Across Difference**
3	Navigating Ethical Belonging within Structural Sameness While Rooted in Our Relational Geographies	**Within Sameness**
4	Centering and Communing with My/Our Bodies towards an Engaged Pedagogy of Solidarity in Mixed Company	**In Mixed Company**

That is, in the first two body chapters, I look at how people with race, class, and/or academic privilege—specifically in the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family—can practice solidarity across difference with the POOR Magazine Family, then within sameness, and then in the third body chapter, how the students in my university classroom and the community members of the Black feminist study gatherings I co-convene practice solidarity in mixed company. In all of these contexts, my aim is to lift up practices of solidarity that divest from racial capitalism. Within these chapters, you will see that the relationships I am talking about could be distinguished based on four different demographic, geographic, and relational contexts. They are:

1. **The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family (Practicing solidarity across difference with The POOR Magazine Family):** a group of mostly white, trust fund queer organizers ages 20-50; scattered around the US; having monthly check in phone calls or connecting via email, practicing Community Reparations across difference with members of the POOR Magazine Family
2. **Members of the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family (Practicing solidarity within sameness of our families and communities of origin):** Same as above but looking at how we are engaging with our home communities and families.
3. **UC Berkeley classroom students with each other:** group of college students who have temporary/contingent academic privilege and many different race, class backgrounds; college campus and the same Zoom classroom (academic space); practicing solidarity in mixed company with each other
4. **The Church of Black feminist Thought (CoBfT) with each other:** group of community members who are mostly Black women, many queer but not exclusively because we are intentionally open to all people; in the Bay Area coming to the same downtown Oakland queer Black woman-owned art gallery (non-academic space) co-convened by Black and Asian queer folks with

contingent academic privilege; practicing solidarity in mixed company with each other

In Chapter Two, I start with more lessons from Poverty Scholarship taught by Poverty Scholars during PeopleSkool for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege. We are geographically dispersed people with race, class, and/or academic privilege organized in a group called The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family (where we are in many ways within sameness), and practicing what I call kinship solidarity across difference with the Poverty Scholars. I explore the various alternative linguistic and spatial scripts that PeopleSkool and the Poverty Scholars have designed to support us in the Solidarity Family to practice a mutually beneficial and healing form of solidarity. Specifically, I address POOR's invitation for us to practice Community Reparations—the loving, radical redistribution of stolen or hoarded resources—towards their vision of Homefulness (an antidote to homelessness) and our own healing. What I add to the Poverty Scholarship on Community Reparations are the everyday experiences and words shared by people with race, class, and/or academic privilege in the Solidarity Family. While these may seem insignificant to wide-scale, national conversations around reparations, the voices of those who are reparating are seldom explored as we actively participate in relationships of reparations. Not only do our voices encourage more people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to start practicing Community Reparations, but it also means that we can start to take on some of the weight of addressing the violent systems we partake in.

In Chapter Three, I am still looking at the Solidarity Family and lessons from PeopleSkool, but this time I am looking at how members practice solidarity within our own communities and families of origin. I argue that we must practice a solidarity "within sameness" in order to be rooted in what I call our relational geographies and find ethical belonging in where we come from. This chapter reminds us that we are the best candidates to do the transforming work of introducing Poverty Scholarship and other revolutionary frameworks within our communities. It also underscores the importance of actively working to deepen our connections with people from our families and communities of origin, or where we live now, if we want to feel ethical belonging and rooted when we practice solidarity across difference.

Finally in Chapter Four, I look at two sites of learning—one in a traditional university classroom, and the other in community—where we are interacting in solidarity with people both across difference and within sameness. That is to say, we are intentionally and consciously in mixed company. I use these two spaces of education to look at the bigger picture of pedagogies—the teaching practices—of solidarity, and ask what requirements we need in different contexts to teach solidarity both in theoretical and critical understanding as well as in our embodied practices. Given that both Chapters Two and Three are reflecting on the teachings of solidarity in theory and practice by Poverty Scholars, Chapter Four takes a look at what other

scholars have said about the teachability of solidarity, how important it is to teach it, and what its limits are.

Conclusion

It's no surprise to me that we haven't been able to dismantle racial capitalism while practicing solidarity in ways scripted by the celebrated values of racial capitalism itself: independence, competition, scarcity, and the belief that we deserve what we have access to. Values, which harm all of us. Naming that we are all harmed by racial capitalism, albeit very differently, does not negate the fact that we must follow the leadership of those who are structurally and materially most impacted. We must be able to hold both of these truths—1) that we are all harmed by racial capitalism; and 2) that we must follow the leadership of those materially most impacted—as we practice new scripts and navigational skills of solidarity. We need the first part because "we need a vision for healing, co-existence, and beloved community that is *actually* enticing for everybody, not just a few people," as Morgan, one of my interviewees shared.[53] That is, we need people to feel and know that their own liberation is at stake here too. But we also need the second truth to prioritize listening to those most materially impacted, rather than trying to come up with solutions to problems that we haven't experienced.

And while guides on practices of allyship, accompliceship, mutual aid, and solidarity, written by queer, trans, and/or BIPOC (Black, Indigneous and People of Color) have proliferated in the past decade and are extremely helpful in illuminating strategies to support self-determined movements,[54] they are not necessarily meant to hold space for the emotions and winding journeys of the intended audience members—people with race, class, and/or academic privilege. While these guides may

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[53] Morgan Curtis, Solidarity Family member interview, January 2019.

[54] Indigenous Action Media, "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex," *Indigenous Action Media* (blog), May 4, 2014, https://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/ . Indigenous Action points out how ally has become a sought-after identity, "disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support" because "[w]here struggle is commodity, allyship is currency" (1-2). In other words, in a capitalist society, claiming proximity to the struggles of others gives us social capital. They even discuss the ways in which teaching how to be a good ally has become a profitable career. In contrast, claiming proximity to the struggles of our own people—our family or communities of origin—is not glamorous, does not give us social capital, and is not profitable. In addition to allyship's embeddedness within capitalism (hence why they call it the Ally Industrial Complex), their quote reminds us of the importance of *mutual* understandings of support, rather than a one-sided assumption of what would be helpful. Or as they explain, "accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don't just have our backs, they are at our side, or *in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism*" (emphasis mine).

offer long lists of how-to or how-not-to be a better ally, I argue that they still do not provide the material and relational container for transformation. In other words, we can be well-versed in how we ought to behave, but our liberation will not come from following handbooks. We must have intentional practices of listening to ourselves and all our relations in order to have embodied and spiritual rootedness in our practices of solidarity.

Of course, it may sound like I am simply adding yet another line to the list of how-to guides of solidarity. But my hope is that sharing the journeys of people with race, class, and/or academic privilege will offer concrete examples that readers might take clues from. Another desire is that these stories create a realistic reflection of embracing the ebb and flow of our journeys. That is, in sharing these stories, I hope readers can practice divesting from the binary-thinking of perfect versus imperfect solidarity. Not only is "perfect" solidarity impossible to define or achieve, but also we must hold room for the cycles of learning lessons, forgetting, remembering, resting, and all the changes that happen in each of our lives. I want these stories to inspire and ground people to hold our changing abilities with compassion and see these practices as a part of a lifelong path of deepening relationships. These practices are evolving; we are evolving; we are allowed to make mistakes, wake up the next morning and try to do things differently. In other words, I wish for readers to embody the everyday performances of solidarity.

CHAPTER TWO
"I'm in the Solidarity Family": Poverty Scholarship's Kinship Solidarity and *Practicing Community Reparations Across Structural Difference to Heal Ourselves in the Process*

I settle down at my second-floor desk, next to a window that looks out on my street, East 29th. It's a short but vibrant block in Oakland's Fruitvale District —a block where residents organize to fight evictions, and fill the potholes that riddle the worn pavement. I set up shop—audio recording program opened, phone on the desk, a cup of nettle tea on the coaster, and a glass of water next to it. I check the clock—a few more minutes until the promised time—take a deep breath, and look at my interview questions. In a few minutes I'll be on the phone with Roan Boucher[1], who is based out of North Carolina to talk about his experiences practicing reparations and solidarity across differences of race, class, and formal education. This will be the seventh interview for my dissertation, yet I'm still nervous, because apart from our email exchange to schedule the call, this is our first time talking. But I've already looked at Roan's website, so I know that we have a lot in common—being queer, being artists, being activists, being writers, being parents. Above all, we're in the same chosen family—the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family, a group of college educated, class-privileged and mostly White queer activists who have been practicing Community Reparations with POOR Magazine for the past ten years.

In this chapter, I will be looking at this Solidarity Family and the way Poverty Scholars in POOR Magazine have guided us through PeopleSkool to perform what I call kinship solidarity across structural difference with them. The title of this chapter, "I'm in the Solidarity Family" invokes J. L. Austin's theories—see my section on performance theory in the Introduction for a summary—around the power of words to do things. For at its essence, this chapter explores the procedures and efficacy of kinship solidarity. That is, what context, execution, and intention is asked of us in the Solidarity family by the Poverty Scholars of POOR Magazine in order for our solidarity to be

[1] All names in this chapter are real names, used with consent.

successful. I argue that kinship solidarity must follow both linguistic and spatial requirements, or scripts, set out by POOR Magazine in order to be effective. And as I will elaborate, the effectiveness of kinship solidarity is determined by our (the Solidarity Family) ability to practice Community Reparations while unlearning what we've been taught, and deepening our own healing along the way. As a way to explore the linguistic scripts of kinship solidarity, I share some Poverty Scholarship and histories of the Solidarity Family—who is in it, how and why it was created, according to both Poverty Scholars as well as members of the Solidarity Family. I then incorporate autoethnographic reflections on the geography of being in the Solidarity Family, as well as a discussion of the indigenous land we are all on in order to surface the spatial aspects of kinship solidarity with POOR Magazine. Having explored what is needed for effective practices of kinship solidarity, I turn to the practice of Community Reparations—one of the material and practical applications of kinship solidarity. Finally, I close with a discussion on how we heal ourselves in the process of kinship solidarity.

How the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family Began

In 2007, Roan—one of my interviewees and a fellow Solidarity Family member—read Lisa Tiny Gray-Garcia's autobiography, *Criminal of Poverty*,[2] where she talks about growing up homeless, and the process of founding POOR Magazine with her mother. Roan had already been organizing for a couple of years with Resource Generation, or RG.[3] RG is a network of young people eighteen to thirty-five who benefit from wealth and/or class privilege, and who are committed to the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power. Roan tells me that RG gave him the space to think and talk through all of the questions he was having. "What does this mean? I'm in my twenties, I have a trust fund, I have radical politics, I want to figure out how to give away money but nobody will tell me how. I don't know how to do that in a way that isn't fucked up."[4] Roan was eager to redistribute his wealth, but he didn't know how to go about it. But he had read Tiny's book, and he had read *The Revolution Will Not be Funded* (2017),[5] a queer and feminist of color critique of the nonprofit industrial complex. And he was eager to bring the conversation of reparations and redistribution to RG. While RG had already evolved from its founding, when it was called "The Comfort Zone," and was a place for progressive or liberal-leaning rich people to "be

[2] Tiny aka Lisa Gray-Garcia, *Criminal of Poverty: Growing Up Homeless in America* (San Francisco: City Lights Foundation Books, 2006).
[3] "Resource Generation," Resource Generation, accessed March 25, 2022, https://resourcegeneration.org/.
[4] Roan Boucher (founding member, AORTA coop), phone interview by author, 2019.
[5] INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, Reprint edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2017).

like, 'I can't talk about being rich with my lefty friends,'" he knew that its members had more to learn.

After attending a workshop led by Tiny at the 2008 U.S. Social Forum, where Roan says he had an "embodied experience that was [both] spiritual and creative with lots of brain gears turning," he decided that RG needed Poverty Scholarship. He invited POOR to lead a workshop at an annual gathering cosponsored by RG, The Third Wave Foundation, The Tide Foundation, and The Funding Exchange called "Making Money Make Change." It was a huge success because it got a large group of financially rich people to talk explicitly about reparations, to learn the critiques of philanthropy, and start grounding their money work in movements led by poor people. Fast forward to Juneteenth[6] 2009, when Roan and Tiny organized a weekend convening in POOR's Mission office called the "Revolutionary Change Session." In this convening, Tiny led a group of ten people with race, class and/or academic privilege interested in practicing solidarity with poor and indigenous people-led movements in a different way. Instead of the more commonly called for structural or government-led reparations,[7] Tiny offered participants of the Revolutionary Change Session the practice of Community Reparations, an analysis of reparations and resistance to immediately begin working on redistributing individual resources at the interpersonal and community scale. As Tiny put it, they were "exploring, implementing, and practicing truly revolutionary expressions of giving, equity sharing, and change" during that session, which I will elaborate on in the Community Reparations section of this chapter.[8]

Last but not least, this Revolutionary Change Session initially birthed the POOR Magazine Solidarity Board—later renamed the Solidarity Family, a change I want to flag as setting the stage for kinship solidarity.

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[6] Quintard Taylor, "Juneteenth: The Growth of an African American Holiday (1865-)," June 17, 2011, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/juneteenth-birth-african-american-holiday-2/. "June 19th of each year is known as Juneteenth, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day – and is a holiday celebrating the emancipation of enslaved peoples of African descent in the United States."

[7] "OHCHR | Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation," December 30, 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/remedyandreparation.aspx. The United Nations Human Rights Office published "Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation" in 2005 stating that "full and effective" reparations includes: "restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition." This office is speaking to national governments around the world.

[8] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019), 306.

PeopleSkooL for Mentees of Poverty Scholarship

Over the course of the past decade, the "Revolutionary Change Session" evolved into a training now called PeopleSkooL, taught by Poverty Scholars to people with race, class, and/or academic privilege in East Oakland at the POOR Magazine headquarters, Homefulness.[9] I myself attended PeopleSkooL in the summer of 2018, after Tiny told me it was required of anyone who wanted to work closely with POOR Magazine. As a mutually agreed upon relationship between teachers and students of the training, this is where all Solidarity Family members are taught the foundations of Poverty Scholarship and begin the process of practicing kinship solidarity with Poverty Scholars. Thus, it's important to describe PeopleSkool and my experience in the training not only because it was a requirement for us to be in kinship solidarity with the POOR Magazine family, but also hopefully help readers to get a sense for the powerful container of un/learning provided in PeopleSkool (which is being offered virtually and I highly recommend!).

The year I attended, PeopleSkool consisted of several journal writing and sharing exercises; watching Poverty Scholars enact scenes from their lives in what they call "Theater of the Poor"; discussing articles written by Poverty Scholars; as well as doing several homework assignments. But the first thing we were taught was that scholarship comes from that which we have lived through, rather than that which we study. Therefore, our teachers—Aunti Francis, Tiny Gray-Garcia, Leroy Moore, Muteado Silencio, Laure McElroy, Dee Allen—who live(d) through poverty and/or houselessness, were the Poverty Scholars. As people with race, class, and/or academic privilege attending PeopleSkool, we were pointedly *not* Poverty Scholars. Instead, we were mentees of Poverty Scholarship. Shifting who had the expertise and the right to speak about their experiences by naming poor people as scholars, and others as mentees not only subverted assumptions about class in our society, but also challenged me to question how I directed my gaze during the training. That is, by shifting the paradigm of who was expert (them) and who needed instruction (me) on Poverty Scholarship, I could direct my gaze internally at my own social conditioning instead of my habitual externally-directed gaze.

This supported us when we watched Poverty Scholars enacting scenes from their lives in Theater of the Poor, as well as when we were discussing articles written by Poverty Scholars or films that embodied Poverty Scholarship. In addition to this frame shift of who was scholar versus mentee, we were encouraged to look at the pain in our own lives in what they call the "empathy exercise/crisis dialogue." In it, we were each invited to write down one crisis that we currently or previously experienced in our lives. The purpose was to show that everyone has experienced crisis which helps "dismantle the labels put on poverty skolaz" of being clients in special "need of saviors and

[9] "Programs and Seminars/Race, Poverty and Media Justice Institute," accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.racepovertymediajustice.org/programSeminar.html.

sympathy."[10] As the eight of us in attendance went around the table to share our crises, the shift in the energy was palpable. We shared stories of family abuse, alcoholism, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, sexual violence, and more. Although we were allowed to pass our turn if we really needed, Tiny emphasized that the point of this activity was to build empathy with Poverty Scholars who often have to repeatedly relive their crises in public. But as I discussed in the introduction, it served to plant the seeds of consciousness of how racial capitalism was harming us—people with race, class, and/or academic privilege—too.

In one of our homework assignments, we were asked to make a privilege map of our families. In it, we started with who our ancestors were—how did they get here and what was the original exploitation story of the indigenous peoples who were on the land they settled on? How did they benefit from exploitative industries, different forms of race/skin, class, academic, and land privileges? Then we had to ask the same of our parents and ourselves. The stories we brought back clearly revealed the ways all of our families had benefited from the genocide of indigenous peoples, chattel slavery, and other violent histories, and how they informed the way we were able to live our lives today. Rather than letting these stories fester quietly or provoke a response of immobilizing shame, the goal was instead to empower us to confront the truth for what it is and take action.

After attending a couple weekends of PeopleSkool, I was invited into the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family, whose members live across the U.S., communicating with each other and with POOR Magazine primarily over email and/or phone to continue practicing Community Reparations.

Alternative Linguistic and Spatial Scripts of Kinship Solidarity

But what is it about PeopleSkool that sets mentees up for practices of kinship solidarity? In the remaining sections, I demonstrate how PeopleSkool effectively supports people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to enter into ethical everyday practices of kinship solidarity with Poverty Scholars by guiding us through what I'm calling alternative linguistic and spatial scripts of kinship solidarity. Basically, what I mean is that specific framings of our learning with them both in the language of Poverty Scholarship, as well as in the spatial practices at PeopleSkool and beyond, allow or disallow effective practices of kinship solidarity such as Community Reparations.

In talking about scripts, I'm inspired by American Studies scholar Robin Bernstein's essay *Dances with Things* on scriptive things*,* which addresses the many ways our subjecthood, ideology, and actions around race are *scripted* by the way we

[10] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 173.

"dance" with things.[11] In a poignant example, she looks at the way one violently anti-Black children's alphabet book, *A Coon Alphabet,* from 1898 was designed so that unlike most books in which a two page spread would show what happens to characters, readers had to flip to the next page in order to find out which horrible thing would next happen to the Black children. In other words, the act of turning the page was designed to be an act of inflicting harm against the Black children characters. In all of her examples, the things interpellate or hail (in the Althusserian[12] sense) a White and/or heterosexual audience, inviting them to "dance" with the thing to construct race, proposing that "agency, intention, and racial subjectivation co-emerge through everyday physical encounters with the material world" (69). For Bernstein, "scriptive things" are like a play script which structures a performance, yet allows for "live variations" that are not always predictable.

Poverty Scholarship's Alternative Linguistic Scripts for Kinship Solidarity

One of the linguistic scripts I find most compelling to explore—and that is directly related to the concept of kinship solidarity—is the use of the word "family" in the "POOR Magazine Solidarity Family." When I was first welcomed into the Solidarity Family, I was confused because POOR Magazine was applying the term "family" to me in relation to people I'd never met before—other people with race, class, and/or academic privilege who had graduated from PeopleSkool. And yet, kinship solidarity, or practicing community reparations with the POOR Magazine family as "good family members," is a key element of Poverty Scholarship's invitation to be in solidarity with them. Being good family members to the POOR Magazine family means that among other things, our work "no longer perpetrates voyeuristic, fakely objective media or hierarchical institutional service provisions."[13] And so the use of the term "family" (and specifically "good family member" had at least three effects: (1) acting as a linguistic script that hails those of us with race, class, and/or academic privilege who have begun the process of being in relationship with Poverty Scholars as an invitation to continue; (2) bringing graduates of PeopleSkool with race, class, and/or academic privilege together to support each other; and (3) naming our commitment to showing up in a relationship of kin with both the Poverty Scholars and the other members of the Solidarity Family, which is very different than practices of solidarity influenced by racial capitalism.

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[11] Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race," *Social Text* 27 (December 1, 2009), https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2009-055.

[12] Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (Verso Books, 2014).

[13] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019), 176.

In turn, when each of us in the Solidarity Family says, "I'm in the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family," we are conjuring the procedure and criteria articulated by Poverty Scholarship. Rather than a purely descriptive statement—as in, I am in this family called the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family—this statement is performative, a saying that is also a doing. Participating within POOR's community agreements and linguistic script allows me to occupy the subject position from which a series of actions unfold in the world. And yet similar to Austin, we must ask what makes this performative utterance "infelicitous," that is, unsuccessful or ineffective? For example, what happens when it is used to explain to people outside of this solidarity relationship who have not attended PeopleSkool? What happens when these words are used with the "wrong" or unintended audience? What makes them the wrong audience? What are the protocols used in case the statement is said without subsequent action or follow through?

Asking this series of questions further suggests that stating "I'm in the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family" encompasses much more than a seven word descriptive statement. It is clear that it is just one of many scripts and procedures articulated by POOR Magazine on how to be in a relationship of kinship solidarity with them. I'd like to step back then to address the question about audience and grammar.

Throughout *Poverty Scholarship* are many other linguistic scripts than the Solidarity Family which more overtly rename and respell normatively used words. A few examples are renaming capitalism to "Crapitalism," cops to "KKKops," and real estate developers become "Real Esnake Developers." But such strategic and performative renamings are only effective scripts if they are directed at an audience of people with race, class, and/or academic privilege who want to learn about the hegemonic systems of power we are complicit in. Part of the power of these words is in their shock factor, but I argue that they are not effective scripts if an audience's shock leads them to anger, defensiveness, or any other emotions that prevent further action. Indeed, a couple of Solidarity Family members have shared that they must translate and shift Poverty Scholarship's original language to language and wisdom that their families or communities of origin will actually hear. And as I will discuss further in the next chapter on agitating and transforming our own families and communities of origin, it is crucial that the translated messages are delivered in *our* specific bodies and voices, as well as in loving relationship with those people.

Speaking of audiences, I aim to reach readers for whom Poverty Scholarship's renamings feel unnecessarily crass. It is my intention to use language to invite readers who might not be as receptive to the original language of *Poverty Scholarship* to see that exposing what I call grammars of hiding—the language we are used to using that masks the violences of our structures—is liberating. On the topic of exposing the violences of our everyday speech, the Black feminist scholar Tiffany Lethabo King offers that Black vernacular similar to Poverty Scholarship "slows and intervenes" the

violences of our everyday speech.[14] Specifically, she addresses how what she calls the "Black grammar of conquest"—that is, to say "conquest," "genocide," and "murder"[15]—exposes the violence invisible in words like "imperialism" or "colonialism." She brings in indigenous writer Leslie Marmon Silko, who proposes we say "destroyers," "butchers," and "sorcerers'' instead of "settlers," which she argues is not harsh enough to reflect what happened when millions of indigenous peoples were (and still are) killed/cleared by White Europeans.[16] King describes normative grammars of conquest including "settlers," "genocide," "colonization," "settlement," and "slavery" as a "ruse, distraction, euphemism, invisibilization, evasion and disavowal of daily, everyday, quotidian forms of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous violence."[17] I would add that there is a violence in this very linguistic hiding, in these grammars of hiding.

Returning to Poverty Scholarship's linguistic script of the use of the word "family," we see that there is a more subtle reclaiming and reconstituting of the term "family" in the U.S., which is in fact loaded with racial, class, and gender baggage. In order to see the subversive nature of calling us the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family, we must first see how the concept of family has been wielded in our society. For instance, a "respectable" or normative family has for the past century or so been explicitly White, middle to upper class, with a heterosexual man and woman living in a house they own, driving a car or two of their own, raising children they biologically conceived together. Even though homonormative (the equivalent of heteronormative, except with gay people[18]) families and middle-class families of color who follow the rules of racial capitalism have been included in this category in recent years, such

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[14] Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2019).

[15] Her discussion of the performance of linguistics is in conversation with Frank Wilderson's theorization of "Settler/Master/Human's grammatical structure" in *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (2010).

[16] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (Penguin, 2006).

[17] King, *The Black Shoals*, 20.

[18] This can be seen in the way large companies like banks, insurance, etc. have started portraying LGBT couples on their billboards. The general distinction between homonormativity and queerness in the U.S. is often represented in the statement of "Not gay as in happy, but queer as in fuck you," which is a way to continue pushing for radical change. Many radical queers critique the way the marriage equality movement's binary focus on getting same sex marriage or not meant we did not address issues that fall under the category of family making. Issues such as the high rate of violence against trans women of color, family separation among undocumented immigrants, chosen and non-romantic family supporting each other, etc. Pink-washing is another way to describe a place that has become homonormative, which can be seen in cities and neighborhoods that claim to be gay-friendly and have rainbow flags and gay representation everywhere, but only for a certain kind of gay person who follows the rules of racial capitalism. A pinkwashed or homonormative space is often criticized as being extremely anti-black, anti-poor, anti-houseless people, etc.

fights for exceptionalism have only accentuated the existence of a performance of respectability and normalcy when it comes to family in a society structured around racial capitalism.

As kinship scholars[19] have pointed out, the topic of a normative family inevitably intersects with questions of law, which are actually questions about inheritance and how wealth is distributed. And because racial capitalism is built on the need for a selective class of people who profit off of people whose bodies, labor, and land are exploited, killed, and/or stolen, it is completely logical in our society that the legal granting of family status is highly selective. Otherwise, the systems and people who benefit from stolen land, bodies, and labor would crumble.

Not only has the definition of the normative and good family been crucial to maintain these structures of oppression, but there is also a heavy investment in defining families outside of Whiteness as being broken. This is so that even if people have not or cannot achieve the picture-perfect family because of their race or class, they can look to others and think they are at least not those people over there who are really broken. This is how racial capitalism keeps us in a scarcity and competition mindset, and important to the topic of solidarity, how it creates categories of those deserving of help and those who are not. It also sets up a moral power dynamic of those with money as being morally better than those who don't, which is subconsciously or consciously the basis of a lot of charity models.

While there are many studies that initiated and supported this dynamic, the classic 1965 example of White sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* in which he cites the Black matriarchal family as the "heart of the deterioration of the fabric of negro society," demonized an entire population.[20] This report (commissioned by former President Lyndon B. Johnson) then sanctioned a whole slew of dehumanizing policies and public attitudes towards Black people (especially who were receiving government aid).[21] To my surprise, the reprints of the book are being sold today to audiences who still take it literally. In one of the first issues of POOR Magazine on Mothers, Phyllis Bolden, a single Black mother from New

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[19] David M. Schneider, *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*, Second edition (University of Chicago Press, 2014); Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*, Revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Ulrika Dahl, "Not Gay as in Happy, but Queer as in Fuck You: Notes on Love and Failure in Queer(Ing) Kinship," *Lambda Nordica* 3–4 (2014): 143–68.

[20] U. S. Department of Labor and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family - The Case for National Action* (Cosimo Reports, 1965).

[21] Dee Gray, "The Nature of Mama: An Interview with Dr. Wade Nobles," *POOR Magazine: Resisting Poverty through Media, Education, and Art*, 2001 2000, 12. There is a great discussion about what Dr. Nobles calls "transubstantiation," which he defines as "looking at the surface behaviors of a people [to] draw conclusions about the meaning and value of behaviors, but the meaning and the values comes from the deep structure of a people's [own] culture and values." He explains that Moynihan's conclusions about the Black family were wrong because he was interpreting it from his own European culture "deep structure."

York City explains that "government policy depicting the black family as lazy, uneducated, looking for a handout was reinforced by this terrible report."[22]

And yet, as Mia Birdsong names in *How We Show Up* (2020), the "gift of Blackness is an expansive notion of family—family beyond blood and law, 'play cousins,' and 'fictive kin.' It's finding home in multiple houses, defying patriarchy and marriage; it's stay-at-home dads, and coparenting."[23] Birdsong is naming the way Black people have had to operate outside of the normal and good family conventions because convention, as the Moynihan Report exemplifies, rejected them, or because slavery was built on breaking up biological families. And yet the "gift," as she puts it, of Black family-making is seen in the fact that these practices born out of adversity and oppression for hundreds of years are now seen in the mainstream as being not only acceptable, but even desirable. She continues to elaborate that the gifts of Black, poor, queer, and unhoused peoples' practices of family making are the "strongest, most expansive, boundary-bending, inclusive examples of family and community" we have in our society.[24] I appreciate her subsequent declaration that those of us who are not Black, poor, queer, and/or unhoused owe an actual debt (monetary or otherwise) to those who have challenged the norms our culture has defined for us.[25] The explicit naming of these practices as benefitting all of us is an important paradigm shift for those of us who have been fed toxic stories about Black (and other) families. And the further invitation/responsibility we have to express our gratitude through reparations is aligned with the teachings of Poverty Scholarship.

It's important to share then, that more than half of us in the Solidarity Family are queer, trans, and/or non-binary people who have been excluded from our families of origin. Instead, we have a lot of experience making chosen family—that is, family that is beyond our families of origin or blood. In "Not Gay as in Happy, but Queer as in Fuck You," Ulrika Dahl guides readers through the history of queer kinship theory, joining scholars Judith Butler,[26] David Eng,[27] Elizabeth Freeman,[28] Lee Edelman,[29] and

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[22] Joseph Bolden, "The Moynihan Report. . .35 Years Later [A Mother-Son Interview]," *POOR Magazine: Resisting Poverty through Media, Education, and Art*, 2001 2000.

[23] Mia Birdsong, *How We Show Up: Reclaiming Family, Friendship, and Community* (New York: Hachette Go, 2020), 21.

[24] Birdsong, 21.

[25] Birdsong, 22.

[26] Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?," in *Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?* (Duke University Press, 2002), 229–58, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822383871-008.

[27] David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*, Illustrated edition (Durham NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010).

[28] Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Belongings: Kinship Theory and Queer Theory," 2008, 293–314, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470690864.ch15.

[29] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Edition Unstated (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2004).

Juana María Rodríguez,[30] which she articulates as generally wanting to use queer kinship theory to help "rethink gender identity, modes of relationality, intimacy, and what we mean by family and futurity."[31] Dahl also takes us back to a kinship theory classic, *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* (1968) by David Schneider, which challenged the ways Western culture has naturalized sexual reproduction as the origin of kinship showing how kin is not contingent on having "biogenetic relationships."[32] Instead, Dahl explains that for Schneider, intimacy/love, and duration are key to kinship. Schneider's work helped contribute to the theoretical basis of feminist anthropology, gender studies, and lesbian and gay studies and the work of anthropologist Kath Weston, who builds off of Schneider's arguments in her book *Families We Choose* (1991) to show that "love makes a family."[33] This, Dahl points out, was the premise of LGBTQ rights to marriage and family in the late 1980s in the United States. "Grounding kinship in love," Weston argues, "deemphasized distinctions between erotic and non-erotic relations while bringing friends, lovers, and children together under a single concept." In Weston's account, the experience of being exiled from the (presumed) unconditional love of families of origin is a central starting point for "families of choice" who are however also founded on love (if not sex).

When Dahl asks "How do queers make kinship in the space between blood, ink, and love and what makes kinship queer?", she is essentially grappling with the way queers—and as both Birdsong and myself would add: Black, poor, and/or unhoused people—have had to create belonging in the context of a culture which values blood-relation in order to pass on money, property, and inheritance, let alone love, affection, and sex. We also see throughout histories of radical queer and trans resistance movements, collectives, and mutual aid projects[34] that even beyond those who are closest to us, as in our "chosen family," we have made sure that the basic need—housing, food, healthcare—of our "queer fam" are met. Therefore, POOR's linguistic script to name our group the Solidarity *Family*, not only makes sense given the teachings of Poverty Scholarship, but also to many of our queer practices of building and taking care of family beyond blood-relations.

But the Solidarity Family is, I argue, not just encouraging us to take care of chosen family beyond blood-relations. It is in fact more subversive than that because it astutely points out the ways distribution often happens within the confines of one's

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[30] Juana Maria Rodriguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

[31] Dahl, "Not Gay as in Happy, but Queer as in Fuck You: Notes on Love and Failure in Queer(Ing) Kinship," 144.

[32] Schneider, *American Kinship*.

[33] Weston, *Families We Choose*.

[34] Eric Stanley and Nat Smith, eds., *Captive Genders* (AK Press, 2015),; Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)* (Verso, 2020). for a discussion of these movements and projects. One great organization example is the Sylvia Rivera Law Project.

perceived or performed race, class, and/or academic privilege. As Roan explained, his dad would often say that as a wealthy person, people always want to give him free stuff. In other words, it isn't always just inheritances from one biological generation to another that people with race, class, and education privilege have, but also freebies, networks, loopholes, and workarounds that are only passed around among members of the same fraternity, college alumni, race, and class (i.e. "let me call up my old buddy—he'll hook your son up with a job, no problem" or the lessons on stock investments and tax exemptions that start at an early age). The Solidarity Family is thus encouraged to go beyond simply redistributing money from inheritances (I am one of the few members without one) to POOR Magazine, and practicing Community Reparations in ways like calling an uncle who works in the city planning department, or a family friend who has the power to influence local laws.

Unselling a Plot of Land with Community Reparations: Homefulness on Indigenous Land

The subversive cross class and race practices of kinship solidarity I mentioned in the last section happened early in the formation of the Solidarity Family to facilitate the purchase of the land POOR Magazine is on today in East Oakland, called Homefulness, which is the next alternative linguistic script I want to raise up. As Tiny describes it, POOR was evicted from its San Francisco office two years after the Revolutionary Change Session, so with the help of the Solidarity Family they "gathered enough blood-stained AmeriKKKlan Dollaz to facilitate a 'purchase' of stolen land on Turtle Island to begin the healing of Pachamama, . . .our communities, our children and our families, ancestors, and elders through equity redistribution, decolonization, prayer, and ceremony.[35] The alternative linguistic scripts in this case reference both what needs redressing—genocide (blood-stained), Settler Colonialism (stolen land, Turtle Island), capitalism ('purchase'), White Supremacy and slavery (AmeriKKKlan)—as well as the way to healing—gathering, facilitating, redistributing, decolonizing, praying, and doing ceremony. In the very name of Homefulness is also a resistance of the normative spatial script of "homeless(ness)."[36]

While describing the land of Homefulness as being unsold can already help shift the idea that it is normal to buy and sell land if we have the money, the Solidarity Family is often asked to respond to writing prompts from Tiny to really reflect on these

[35] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 306–7.

[36] Gray-Garcia, 385. They choose to use the terms houseless/landless/unhoused to describe simply that they don't have access to a roof "on this stolen indigenous land" and as they describe in "The People's Glossary," the term "homeless" is another way for those in power to "separate" [them] from the tables of decision-making and power," talking about them instead of talking with them.

linguistic scripts. For instance, in one email writing prompt, she asked us to "*Sit with the context of unselling and liberating land as a commodity*[37]*: When and how did you start believing/get the message, even without thinking about it, that mama earth was a commodity to be bought and sold even if land was "owned" by your family since you were born."* Asking us to reflect on the origin of these messages allowed me to see that the people and institutions that taught me about land ownership did so because in our current society, land ownership offers material stability and wealth. At the same time, being given the possibility at least within the linguistic script to "unsell" land, I am reminded of how POOR Magazine described Homefulness' purchase as "working outside/only slightly inside the Settler Colonial lies (laws) of permit gangsterism to the ultimate end of spiritually and legally unSelling/liberating as much of Mama Earth as we could with First Nations prayer, permission, and guidance."[38]

Is it really possible to be "outside/only slightly inside" of the structures of a Racial Capitalism founded on Settler Colonialism? I would argue that while the Community Reparations-facilitated purchase of Homefulness was not outside of capitalism, it did model another way to be with land from within a capitalist system, or in a way that divested from racial capitalism. For example, they bought the land with cash, and without a bank loan so as to not need to go through a bank which would charge interest (and support their industrial complex) and could take the land away if they failed to make a payment. And while they still had to apply to the government for permits to build structures, they also prioritized getting permission from local indigenous peoples. Though they used "blood-stained dollaz," to make the purchase, they did so with the money that was reparated to them. That money was being divested from racial capitalism (which accumulates wealth when it stays within a family or "owning" class) because it was being redistributed across class, across blood-lines, and across race.

When I asked Solidarity Family members to talk about the use of their Community Reparations to purchase the land of Homefulness, I received the following responses:

> "[It's] wrestling chunks of earth away from the current logics of capitalism and colonization." —Jessica Rosenberg[39]
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> "Land reclamation, taking back the land, and the idea of buying land back and not having it hoarded by White people like myself." —Cynthia Beard[40]

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[37] This prompt also makes me wonder if there is a difference between collective ownership (i.e. public parks) and reparated ownership (i.e. unstolen or liberated land)

[38] POOR Magazine Family, *The Homefulness Handbook* (POOR Press, 2021), 44, https://www.poorpress.net/product-page/ebook-the-homefulness-handbook.

[39] Jessica Rosenberg, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

[40] Cynthia Beard, Solidarity Family member interview, March 2019.

But how does POOR negotiate land as reparations as a family who is primarily tied together by having all experienced poverty and/or houselessness, rather than indigeneity? Because there *are* times we (POOR and the Solidarity Family) use the word decolonization alongside the movement of Homefulness and Community Reparations, which can be confusing. While POOR Magazine is indigenous people-led, they are pointedly not a sovereign indigenous nation. So the monetary reparations that facilitated the 'purchase' of the land Homefulness is on must be carefully distinguished from indigenous land rematriation efforts such as the Sogorea Te' Land Trust in the S.F. Bay Area organized by local indigenous leaders and their solidarity communities.[41]

POOR does speak to how the two identities of poor and indigenous have intersected for people around the world, as it says in a poem in their About Us: "*We a poor people led revolution / claiming back our turf / like the Shackdwellers union South Africa / Landless peoples movement in Brazil / Mumia's MOVE africa and / Pam Africa as well / The Zapatistas in Chiapas / The United Houma Nation / Resisting Eradication! We all had our own own land, Our own roof / Til the po'lice/the government gangstaz / Corrupted the truth.*"[42] By associating themselves with the struggles for poor and indigenous peoples to reclaim the land they were displaced from due to racial capitalism and colonization, they show us how central land is to these discussions of reparations by indigenous peoples. "Homefulness" then is not only the name of the plot of land 'purchased' using Solidarity Family members' Community Reparations, but also the name for POOR's self-determined landless people's movement. Still, it is important to distinguish Homefulness' efforts to "unSell/liberate Mama Earth" from Indigenous nations exercising their sovereignty to have stolen land returned.

That said, because the POOR Magazine Family includes both Black and Indigenous peoples, their vision for Community Reparations uniquely disrupts and complicates the silos which typically form around different frameworks and groups of people seeking redress for harm. For instance, Tiny writes that the POOR Magazine Family is made up of "poverty, in/migrante, race, elder, youth, disability, and indigenous skolaz." Of course there are also people at the intersection of two or more of these identities. Still, what ties all these BIPOC as well as White immigrants, elders, youth, disabled, indigenous people in the POOR Magazine Family is that they were/are houseless and landless, and experience(d) poverty. Put differently, while the Community Reparations that made the initial "purchase" of land for Homefulness does redress specific harms done, such as to Black and Indigenous people, it is ultimately under the umbrella of all poor people who don't have the money or connections in this capitalist system to live on land without paying rent or without fear of being evicted and displaced. So while discourses around reparations for chattel slavery and

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[41] "Sogorea Te' Land Trust," *The Sogorea Te Land Trust* (blog), accessed March 29, 2022, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/purpose-and-vision/.

[42] "About Us | Poor Magazine," December 31, 2021, https://www.poormagazine.org/About%20Us.

Indigenous land rematriation[43] are just as much about racial capitalism (because Black bodies were/are commodity whereas disappearing Indigenous bodies was/is necessary for the stealing of their land), Community Reparations' focus on redressing the dehumanizing violences of poverty differently put racial capitalism on center stage. At the same time, it demonstrates how many people with a wide range of identities and experiences are harmed by poverty.

And while the Solidarity Family would in other contexts be said to have "donated," "given," or "volunteered," towards Homefulness, the alternative linguistic script of "Community Reparations" reminds us that the redistribution of money, land, resources, and power by individuals or groups to Poor, Indigenous, and Black people is with the *shared* vision of supporting their self-determined movements. In Poverty Scholarship's own language, "Community Reparations invites those of us who benefit from stolen or hoarded resources to engage in loving, radical redistribution of these resources."[44] Solidarity Family member Cynthia Beard elaborated that "When I give to POOR I don't say, 'I want you to do *this* [with the money].' I *trust* that they know exactly what needs to happen and they don't need me to tell them. The Community Reparations model of giving is not just giving resources, it's giving power to POOR."[45] The trust that Cynthia speaks of, I argue, is developed and strengthened by relationships and scripts of kinship solidarity with POOR.

The range of what Community Reparations can look like is demonstrated in the list compiled in 2011 by some of the original members of the Solidarity Family in their efforts of kinship solidarity with POOR's vision of Homefulness:[46]

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[43] Talk about reparations in the U.S. tends to signal the redressing the physical, mental, and economic harm experienced by Black Americans in transatlantic slavery and its wake (See Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016).) and less of a framework for Indigenous people seeking redress for genocide, stolen land and the wealth accumulated from stolen land, which is usually talked about in the framework of rematriaion of the land. But in response to the work of many BIPOC activists, more people with race, class, and/or academic privilege are beginning to acknowledge how their material wealth comes from genocide and slavery, and are redistributing that wealth to Black and/or Indigenous peoples. Some noteworthy examples include the Black and Red Reparations Fund in Tennessee and the Weavers Fellowship.

[44] Even in this short definition, there are four alternative linguistic scripts "stolen," "hoarded," "loving," and "radical."There are many more in Tiny and POOR Magazine's 2018 book *Poverty Scholarship* (see pages 384-389 for *The People's glossary*). But for the purpose of this chapter, people who "benefit from stolen or hoarded resources" is Poverty Scholarship's way of naming people who benefit from White Supremacy, Capitalism, Settler Colonialism, race, class, and/or education privilege. It is their version of "people with race, class, and/or academic privilege."

[45] Cynthia Beard, Solidarity Family member interview.

[46] The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family, "Towards Homefulness: The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family," *Resource Generation* (blog), December 17, 2011, https://resourcegeneration.org/towards-homefulness-the-poor-magazine-solidarity-family/.

1. We research HUD 203k loans and scan real estate websites.
2. We offer our cars to get POOR's members to and from the new site of the Homefulness Project.
3. We use our *linguistic domination skills* to apply for funding, to write fundraising letters to our families and friends, and to edit publisher proposals.
4. We fundraise from our networks to buy plane tickets to get POOR scholars to the US Social Forum; to cover the daily costs of POOR's revolutionary education, media-making, and art, including the rent on POOR's office space and stipends and food for Poverty Scholars; to respond to Poverty Scholars' emergency needs, such as evictions and medical bills; and to buy land for the Homefulness Project**.**
5. We draw on the connections we have as people with class privilege—our parents, relatives, family friends, college professors—and call them to ask them questions about real estate law, zoning requirements, soil testing, property taxes, and the publishing industry.
6. We use our credit and cosign on loans so that POOR can buy a van.
7. We do data entry and database maintenance.
8. We participate in direct actions and protests that POOR organizes.
9. We tell people about POOR.
10. We do childcare at POOR events.
11. We post links on Facebook to share the art and media created by POOR scholars, spreading POOR's powerful work to reframe the news, issues, and solutions from a perspective rarely seen or heard in other media: the perspective of poor people.

As you can see, the alternative linguistic script of "Community Reparations" invites members of the Solidarity Family to see which skills and resources we have unique access to—whether that means our editing skills or our mother who works in the building permits department. The list also shows our respect for Poverty Scholarship and our desire to share it with people in our networks.

Most importantly for the theme of this chapter, how do these alternative linguistic scripts of Homefulness and unselling land support practices of kinship solidarity by people with race, class, and/or academic privilege? What changes when what might normally be called a donation of money to buy land to "help the homeless," is instead described as people paying Community Reparations to "unsell" land for a community of poor and indigenous landless peoples to collectively steward towards their vision of Homefulness? In the former, the dynamic of solidarity centers the honorable/generous donor and grateful and helpless recipient without a say of how to make home. In the latter, "Homefulness" is the vision of POOR Magazine that they are acting on with money returned from those of us who benefit from stolen and hoarded

land. When we call it "unselling" or "liberating" land with money, skills, and connections from "Community Reparations," these scripts remind us of our goal of divesting from buying, selling, and imprisoning (perhaps there's a better antonym to liberating) land. On closer examination, we also learn that Community Reparations come from Solidarity family members' inherited wealth, which our families amassed because properties or houses on stolen land exponentially increased value because of racial capitalism, or from current work that we have because we have race, class, and/or academic privilege) to buy back the land.

Poverty Scholarship's Alternative Spatial Scripts for Kinship Solidarity

So far in the previous sections, I have discussed at length how Poverty Scholarship linguistic frameworks serve as alternative scripts for us Solidarity Family members with race/class/education privilege to differently practice/enact kinship solidarity across race and class. That is, I addressed how shifting the *words* or *language* we use to describe ourselves and our practices—The POOR Magazine Solidarity "Family," "Poverty Scholars" and "mentees," "Community Reparations" for "Homefulness" to "unsell land"—*does* something (in the Austinian sense of a performative utterance/speech act that I discuss in the Introduction). I have argued that these language substitutions not only challenge hegemonic structures, but also offer a different social dynamic of how to practice solidarity across race and class.

But *where* the Solidarity Family practices our solidarity from, is just as important, according to Poverty Scholarship. And as I argued in my introduction, space is an analytic that offers powerful insights on solidarity as everyday performance. If these linguistic scripts create Austinian speech acts, or words that do and change things, then the spaces from which we practice solidarity are the material containers which enable and disable such acts from being embodied. For example, even if the language flips the role of who is the expert as is the case with a Poverty Scholar and a mentee in the Solidarity Family, if the spatial containers or practices do not mirror this linguistic shift, we may keep acting in ways that perpetuate exploitative dynamics of racial capitalism.

How then are PeopleSkool attendees interpellated by the house/land of Homefulness and other spatial practices or scripts to support kinship solidarity? While there are many examples, I will expand on the following two:

1. PeopleSkool takes place in a house
2. We call in from our personal spaces to Solidarity Family phone meetings

For each of these alternative spatial scripts, I ask: what performances of kinship solidarity across race and class does this alternative spatial script ask of us?

PeopleSkool takes place in a house

> *I arrive on the 57 bus, which runs the length of MacArthur Boulevard, cross the street and walk a block and a half to Homefulness, on my left hand side. The first thing I see is a wide heavy steel black gate that is slightly ajar in front of a rectangular plot of land. On half of the front part of the land is a tall series of buildings that are still under construction, covered in Tyvek waterproofing paper and new windows with stickers still on them. Next to it is a plot of dirt where a few cars are parked. Outside of the gate, I see a public altar installed facing the sidewalk at eye-level accessible to all passersby. There are many printed photos, flowers, and votive candles. Once I walk past the cars, I see a residential house without a sign, so I walk down a narrow wood chip path to the left of it, flanked by two large metal shipping containers. Once through the path, I arrive at a square outdoor patio with a little cottage to the left, a garden area where I see a goat peeking through the fence, and the entrance to another home to my right with a sign to the side of the door that says* ***PNN POOR News Network*** *in bold letters.*
>
> *I go in and find a small living room area with several computers, a couch, and folding chairs. To the right is a kitchen and dining area where a table is lined with big trays of food. On the first day of PeopleSkool, we were invited to bring food as well, and the table gets filled with dishes as other students enter. There's a pile of plates, and Tiny encourages us to eat.*
>
> *To get to the one bathroom in the house, I walk through Tiny and her son's bedroom. The bathroom has a shower and sink that they use daily.*
>
> *—Personal recollection of attending PeopleSkool written in 2018*

The first alternative spatial script of kinship solidarity is that PeopleSkool and much of POOR Magazine's programming (including a homeschool for the children of Poverty Scholars called DeColonize Akademy) happens at Homefulness in East Oakland. POOR Magazine is not just an organization and group of Poverty Scholars mentoring Solidarity Family members—it is a plot of land with residential houses that the scholars call home. PeopleSkool happens in person in the back house, where Tiny and her son live, and that has a powerful spatial impact on the social dynamics of Poverty Scholars and Solidarity Family members. What happens when schools take place in homes instead of institutions or spaces that are designated solely to be schools? How do our bodies interact with the material realities of a residential house?

And the central question: what performances of kinship solidarity across race and class does the house (and having school in a house) script?

Poverty Scholarship argues that the "cult of independence" is most noticeable in the act of leaving home for school. They tie this cultural norm to sever ties with our families as foundational to colonization, White Supremacy, and Capitalism by citing the many overt re-education projects and schools forced onto indigenous, Black, and Brown people around the world by White people[47] where young children were/are separated from their families. Poverty Scholars note that in the U.S. today, these re-education projects come in the form of mainstream schools and colleges. Black and Brown children often have to travel long distances to attend the most prestigious schools where they are surrounded and inoculated with White Supremacist, Capitalist, Settler Colonial education.[48] And while Solidarity Family members are still traveling away from our own homes to attend PeopleSkool, there is a material impact to our being in their home, rather than a traditional academic space.

Let us return to the three spatial layers I highlighted at the beginning of this section: *the public altar, the wide heavy steel black gate, and the POOR Magazine home.* I am calling these spatial aspects "layers," because they are like the layers of an onion, cocooning one another from the outside in.[49] These three spatial levels force me to confront and perform something different and are really important to what I'm arguing about POOR's alternative spatial scripts for kinship solidarity. Their arrangement together constructs the space of Homefulness, and scripts a different way for Solidarity Family members like myself to perform our kinship solidarity across race and class. But before I move into my analysis, I hope readers with race, class, and/or academic privilege will find it useful to read my autoethnographic navigation of the space as a person with race, class, and/or academic privilege. While the sections below do include specific spatial details about Homefulness, it is my body in relation to space that I want readers with race, class, and/or academic privilege to pay attention to.

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[47] Of course, White people aren't the only ones who have forced their languages and cultural norms onto the colonized. Japan is a classic example, although the government of Japan has often very problematically seen itself as the White country of Asia. This has even been adopted by countries such as Brazil, where they specifically invited immigrants from Japan in an effort to "Whiten" the population.

[48] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 152–60. For an in depth discussion of the effects of this kind of education, see pages 152-160 in *Poverty Scholarship.*

[49] The *public altar* is technically the outermost layer, but in my memory, the first layer I noticed was *the wide heavy steel black gate,* because it is so much bigger, and also because it was closer to me as I approached Homefulness from the bus stop.

The public altar:

Benches, Little Free Libraries, friendly signs, and fruit trees intentionally located between a house and the sidewalk, or in front of a house on the sidewalk are all ways that residents invite passersby to linger. In the case of Homefulness, a public altar invites people to not only linger, but also to engage on the level of spirit, given that altars are sacred spaces created for our ancestors. In this particular altar, there are photos of Poverty Scholars or other local Black, Brown, Poor, and Disabled[50] people who have died and/or have been killed.[51] I don't know most of them. While I recognized a couple of them because their deaths became nationally visible, this majority not-knowing made me realize both 1) how I have only experienced a couple of deaths in my life that weren't due to old age; and 2) how I had been sheltered from knowing about the deaths of the people on this altar.

The first realization led me to feel how my race, class, and/or academic privileges combined have allowed me and my communities of origin to largely avoid and ignore structurally-designed death. By structurally-designed death, I mean the kinds of death that I mentioned above that are caused by structural oppression rather than dying of "natural" causes. But the second realization led me to see that my not experiencing structurally-designed death was predicated on violence and structurally-designed death of others. That is to say, within racial capitalism, my well-being was made possible by harming and in the cases of the people on the altar, killing many. In other words, their visibility reminded me of the adverse impact of the systems that materially benefit me, but spiritually harm me.

And here's the key point—that this harm and death was spatially invisibilized, both geographically and also culturally. The news covers mass shootings and robberies but not the day to day deaths of the people on the POOR Magazine public altar, which are rendered natural and/or unavoidable.[52] As a result (and this is part of the design) the dead lose their individuality and become more of an abstraction that

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[50] I am capitalizing these words to denote groups of people who self-identify with and organize around these categories.

[51] Predominantly due to structural oppression, rather than a "natural death" due to being very old. People who died from mental and physical illnesses that were caused by environmental racism, people who were racially profiled and shot by the police, people who were unhoused and didn't have access to healthcare, etc. For the people at POOR Magazine or people in the neighborhood, the photos are of their relatives, friends and community members, if not people with whom they at least share similar experiences of anti-Blackness, ableism, classism, etc.

[52] Richard Zeckhauser, "Racial Profiling," *Wiley* 32, no. 2 (2004): 131–70. As we have seen from many police reports, the use of arms on innocent Black, Brown, Poor, and Disabled people is justified by what is written into their training to shoot if they feel their own lives threatened in the slightest bit.

can be forgotten. In stark contrast, on POOR's public altar, the rich lives and love for these individuals are made visible and inserted into my awareness. These are ancestors whom we are accountable to, and who are not just part of a depressing statistical figure.

As I have discussed earlier, Solidarity Family members are constantly asked to reflect and write about our own direct ancestors, and so for me, the presence of an altar is an invitation to arrive at Homefulness in the company of my ancestors as well. Tiny often talks about how our ancestors wanted all of us to meet in this time and place to do this important reparations work for the healing of all of us. And while having a public altar on the sidewalk primarily serves POOR's neighbors passing by who do not have race, class, and/or academic privilege, it also provides a spatial and spiritual container for this solidarity healing work. Finally, the altar symbolizes a vibrant spiritual life, resisting developer categorizations of "blight", a racially charged descriptor used to signify neighborhoods (including the one Homefulness is in) with conditions of underinvestment and neglect leading to disrepair.

The wide heavy steel black gate:

Barriers used to separate what we normatively think of as "public" and "private" land come in many forms. There's the "White[53] picket fence," brick walls, barbed wire, plants/bushes/hedges, gates, and more. Each barrier has a different physical effect—for example, a picket fence which is made of wood is typically short enough for an adult to look over, covering the lower half, but tall enough to not be able to step over it. Some barbed wire fences are taller than our heads but you can see through the entire height of the fence. As you might guess, these physical differences affect how much exchange there is between the outside(r) and inside(r) or public and private, as well as our emotional responses.

At Homefulness, the public altar is attached to a long black steel fence, which leads to the heavy steel gate that represents the next spatial level. Each time I have arrived, it has been half open to a dirt parking lot of cars, houses wrapped in Tyvek, and a house with the entrance facing the street. The gate is about six feet tall and cannot be easily climbed over. On the fence side, there is a heavy chain and lock that is wrapped around, but isn't currently being used to keep the gate locked. Still, the heavy steel gate and the narrow path to the main building asks me to be sure that this is where I need and want to be. It is the kind of navigation that requires familiarity, or an invitation to become comfortable. Given that there are many people living on this land (which can be noticed by the various units and cars), it asks me to recognize my position as a humble and respectful guest. What does this mean for my performance of cross race and class solidarity? It means that I ask for permission before I enter, or walk with care.

[53] Capitalized to denote the White racial connotations of the American Dream.

The POOR Magazine house:

After walking with care, I arrive at the house, which is at the heart of many of POOR's activities as a media and educational organization, including PeopleSkooL. As I mentioned earlier, these activities happen in the same place as (and sometimes, at the same time as) the domestic activities of Tiny and her son, and their chosen family members. I can recall several bathroom visits during which I had to pass through Tiny and her son's bedroom, where her son was reading or resting on the bed. I remember feeling awkward in the beginning: I didn't know whether to greet him, apologize for the interruption, stay silent, or change it up. I saw that mostly it seemed okay to not say anything and swiftly move through the bedroom. But that awkwardness was a result of the fact that I needed to get to know them first, so that I could learn how to respond to the convergence of learning and domestic/family spaces.

The alternative spatial script here required that I enter their family space on their terms in order to learn, which brings us into a more familial relationship. This is in stark contrast to the normative learning environment schools and other institutions where communal bathrooms, kitchens, eating spaces, and lounges are typically devoid of such intimacy. For example, while we may brush our teeth or wash our lunch dishes in the school sink, we can't/don't leave our sponge or toothpaste, or whatever implement we must use. Such spaces lack the traces of domesticity that are inherently going to exist in a well-used home bathroom.

Of course, we should take into account that Tiny and her son didn't design the house so that visitors would have to go through their bedroom to get to the bathroom. It's just how it was. Still, the effect of having PeopleSkooL take place in their home rather than an institutional or community space is of creating familial intimacy (or the opportunity for familial intimacy). As you might recall, the primary alternative linguistic script I addressed above was to call us the Solidarity *Family.* We see then that in this example, the linguistic and spatial scripts are in alignment.

Calling in from Our Own Homes to Solidarity Family Phone Meetings

The alternative spatial scripts are not limited to the site of Homefulness. They also include how we spatially engage or relate with POOR Magazine when we are not at Homefulness. Whereas other organizations might just hope that their off-site donors will use good sense before visiting, POOR explicitly names the terms of engagement and says outright that a condition of participation/engagement is that they, not us, set the conditions for visiting the space. As donor organizing, wealth redistribution, and fellowships inspired by reparations expand, I want to emphasize that accepting POOR's (or whoever we are in solidarity with) alternative spatial scripts means we can be in a more respectful kind of relationship of solidarity with them.

An "extra credit" assignment for Solidarity Family members and students of PeopleSkool is to return home and "de-gentrify."[54] While certainly not possible for everyone, moving back home where we already have a bedroom, or where our family of origin and community already know and have a place for us, Poverty Scholars argue, is the easiest route to reverse gentrification. It is a "humble move" that counters the belief that "we can go anywhere, do anything, save everything, fix everything, take care of everything, and be a part of everything."[55] Rather than theorizing or creating new solutions to help out those who were displaced due to our arrival (because landlords can ask more from us than their previous tenants, who were evicted or priced out), Poverty Scholars ask us to take responsibility by reversing what we have the power to reverse. Of course, the places we go home to are also on stolen land, but their point is to go to a place where we have a longer history and deeper community.

When I conducted interviews between 2018 and 2019, many members lived outside the San Francisco Bay Area because Poverty Scholarship encourages us to organize from the place where we grew up, or where our families of origin live both so that we can de-gentrify, as well as organize the people who know and trust us.[56] Some members decided to stay in their hometowns even though they wanted to move to the Bay Area, while others moved here for a period of time and were subsequently persuaded to move back to their hometowns. A couple members were already born and raised here, while others like myself, moved here and have decided for the time being that this is where I want to deepen my roots. So while we attended PeopleSkooL in person (before the pandemic) on the land, most of our communication with each other and with POOR Magazine takes place over email and bimonthly conference calls with Tiny.

Therefore, built into the structure of how the Solidarity Family operates is an alternative spatial script that invites us to stay in our own spaces, neighborhoods, and homes. Our dispersal functions as a way to strengthen our interdependence instead of our independence. We stay connected and committed through Solidarity Family phone calls, Google group emails, and Facebook posts. Logistically, these calls are what can be expected of any other conference call in that there's one phone number we all call into, or a Zoom link we click to join. But unlike groups of activists who have

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[54] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019. It is important to point out here that the concept of "home" has often been used in problematic ways in U.S. history and our collective imaginary, as it completely disregards the fact that our homes are on stolen indigenous land. That said, POOR's invitation is for us to return to the place where our ancestors originally stole land (or to stay put where we are if we cannot return for whatever reason) and be in the company of people who love and trust us. "Home" in this case is the place where we have the most history that we can try to address with our presence and organizing.

[55] Gray-Garcia, 335.

[56] Now that all PeopleSkool trainings happen virtually, this wide geographic representation is even more true.

conference calls in order to come together on site, we have been spatially scripted to stay at home and organize the communities that already trust us (whether it's because they personally know us, or because of a more superficial assessment of being of the same race/class/academic background).

Our kinship solidarity with POOR Magazine therefore is encouraged to be primarily performed without our physical presence in East Oakland. Reparating through the Solidarity Family actually emphasizes how we are not entitled to visit the recipients of our reparations. While this doesn't mean that we are never welcome, it does mean that we are accountable to the Poverty Scholars during our visits. Easy access to their space is antithetical to the practice of Community Reparations, because we are not entitled to their space. Instead, our solidarity calls acknowledge the sentiment, "We all have enough, more than enough; this space is yours. We'll continue to help, but *not* so that we can come visit and pat ourselves on the back."

Additionally, this explicit spatial script to tread softly and humbly on Homefulness means we are reminded of how our presence affects the neighborhood, which is primarily Black, Brown, and financially poor. Yael who travels to Homefulness weekly from San Francisco in her car said to me, "I definitely feel like I shouldn't be there when I'm walking around; if someone saw me they'd be like—'gentrifier!' But I'm glad to be there for POOR Magazine."[57]

One result of this physically distant solidarity is that many of us have never met in person. And yet we share free writes on what reparations mean to us, on an ancestor who took part in an exploitative industry, as well as strategize and collect Community Reparation funds for Homefulness, the Poverty Scholars, and their community. This alternative spatial script to stay/go home also disrupts European colonial narratives of the modern colonizer as active, mobile, capable of and entitled to travel quickly.[58] Most will agree that frequent plane and car[59] travel, which has been the accepted norm for White and/or rich people in North America, has been a

[57] Yael Channoff, Solidarity Family member interview, March 2019.

[58] Zygmunt Bauman, "Living in the Era of Liquid Modernity," *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2000): 1–19. Bauman's account is of how speed and lightness are associated with modernity and modern people.

[59] Although, as my academic adviser offered, once plane travel became more available to the masses, poor people and people of color continued to do road trips because they had more time than money to contribute. This was/is especially true in Black communities, with the desire to maintain relations with family in the South while taking advantage of economic opportunities in the north and west.

significant driver of the climate crisis.[60] What does it mean then that this alternative spatial script asks us to accept a kind of self-imposed confinement and limit to travel? Even though neighborhoods where White and/or rich people live are designed to be self-sufficient (i.e. there is no need to travel far for quality food, entertainment, and parks), this script disrupts the Manifest Destiny narrative of Settler Colonialism that is never satisfied with what we already have, even though what we already have is still-occupied Indigenous territory. It challenges the developer and settler mentality of going into currently divested neighborhoods for profit, and asks us to deeply know the histories underfoot in our own neighborhoods, and begin—if we haven't already—the healing process with the Indigenous peoples whose land we are on.

Even though I mostly traveled to POOR via public transportation, this alternative spatial script has helped me resist my social conditioning that thinks I can and am entitled to go anywhere, whenever I want. Whereas before, I constantly yearned to explore different neighborhoods, cities, and countries, this spatial script has urged me to pay attention to the relationships I have with my immediate neighbors,[61] parks, and social institutions. This has resulted in the ability and enjoyment of staying close to home—something that has been very useful during the Covid19 Pandemic.

I also think of this alternative spatial script as being a call to the politicization of our home communities, which I elaborate in the next chapter. But perhaps we invite our family members and neighbors to pay the Shuumi Land Tax[62] which is monetary reparations for Bay Area indigenous peoples that go towards buying land back. Or we might organize a neighborhood action demanding the city to defund the police who are antagonizing the houseless, and racially profiling our neighbors of color. These

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[60] Margaret M Ramírez, "City as Borderland: Gentrification and the Policing of Black and Latinx Geographies in Oakland," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 1 (February 2020): 147–66, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775819843924; Lisa Rayle, "Investigating the Connection Between Transit-Oriented Development and Displacement: Four Hypotheses," *Housing Policy Debate* 25, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 531–48, https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2014.951674; R Cervero and K-L Wu, "Polycentrism, Commuting, and Residential Location in the San Francisco Bay Area," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 29, no. 5 (May 1997): 865–86, https://doi.org/10.1068/a290865. Even though in the SF Bay Area, poor people and people of color have to drive more and farther distances (or take the bus farther) to get to work or play because they/we have been evicted, priced out and pushed out from the city centers (in an ironic twist from the previous White flight where middle class White families moved out to the suburbs to flee what they believed were the "crime-ridden" city centers). The simultaneous increase in bike lanes has caused a racialization of car travel (especially with non-hybrid or electric cars).

[61] In 2020, I interviewed a few families on the block to create a neighborhood zine! This was inspired by POOR's invitation to organize our own communities/homes.

[62] "Shuumi Land Tax," *The Sogorea Te Land Trust* (blog), accessed March 29, 2022, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/shuumi-land-tax/.

actions and more are possible next steps when we are invited to call in to Solidarity Family calls from our own homes.

The Everyday Nature of Kinship Solidarity

For many members of the Solidarity Family, including me, these alternative linguistic and spatial scripts paired with the wide range of possible ways to practice Community Reparations invites us to see more possibilities in what we specifically have to redistribute. As Yael Channoff puts it, POOR Magazine's many examples of how to practice kinship solidarity provides "a very clear structure of how people across class, across different identities and types of marginalization, can work together."[63] This clear structure doesn't mean we now have it all figured out, or that we are now healed. But it does give us some more spaciousness from which to see that there isn't just one right way to be in kinship solidarity. We can practice meeting ourselves exactly where we're at each day.

Yael shared her life and history with the Solidarity Family across from me on her living room couch in Glen Park. I took BART over from the East Bay, and she and her partner, Derek, kindly offered to pick me up at the station. I followed them through their landlord's garage and into their apartment, where their cat observed us from his perch on top of the refrigerator. "I grew up in a really White Jewish community in San Francisco," Yael began. "I've always grown up with a lot of money, and when my grandparents died, we inherited more money. That was also the time that I started to realize, like, gosh, I have a way different life than my friends." Realizing that her family had more money than most, and learning about the world's systems of inequality, led to ongoing conflict with her family. She directed all of her anger at them. "Can't you see that we're living this way at the expense of other people?" she would ask. Her response growing up was to write and report on different issues.

But it wasn't until 2013, when she was working on an article for the *Bay Guardian*, that she interviewed Tiny and was invited to attend PeopleSkooL. And there she learned things she felt she had been missing her whole life. In her own words, "The way [Poverty Scholarship] describe[s] what your role would be and how to bring your whole self to being a part of an organization or movement . . . made me feel like I fit right into what they needed—I really wanted to play that role." And the current role Yael plays is to drive to East Oakland twice a week—once to give rides to the kids for their martial arts class, and once to do admin support. She also donates monthly and in case of emergencies to POOR. Before, she overthought what she should do or not do with her money and time, she explained. Now she has a clear purpose.

I asked Yael whether she was still angry at her family. She said that Poverty Scholarship's emphasis on the importance of respecting and being in good and

[63] Yael Channoff, Solidarity Family member interview.

geographically close relations with her blood family[64] helped her to see that practicing reparations with her resources and privileges was actually a way to honor (and support the healing of) her family and her community. At the same time, staying to do the work of building deeper and more interdependent relationships and community with her family and neighbors was a way to spiritually heal from the violences of the "cult of independence" which I discuss further below.

The everyday practice of Community Reparations in the context of kinship solidarity also supports many of us to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Many of us who have linguistic domination skills know how to use the right phrases to talk about our complicitness in structures of oppression, and the need for a different kind of solidarity. But it can be all too easy to ignore that we haven't actually found or started demonstrating embodied and relational practices of kinship solidarity in our personal lives. As Paige Kerstein put it, "I came to POOR already knowing I had XYZ privileges and with a pretty good analysis [around my identities]."[65] By XYZ privileges, she means her ability to say to me:

> *"I'm a White person, I grew up in a wealthy family, went to private school and private college, I now benefit from both having a family that has wealth that I could access if I need to, personal access to inherited wealth, and having a job that I make a salary that additionally gives me access to wealth beyond what most people will have access to."*

Her analyses have been further deepened by learning Poverty Scholarship at PeopleSkool, but this is only half of the picture. Since attending PeopleSkool in 2018, she has been working very closely in-person with POOR Magazine at their East Oakland site of Homefulness. As she explained, she does "all kinds of stuff," helping with "anything that needs doing to keep things running" which changes week to week. She texts with Tiny throughout the week about these different things. One example is working to get the most recent books written by Poverty Scholars edited, published and publicized. Another is paying for everyone at POOR to go see *Black Panther* in theaters. She also pays monthly Community Reparations as well as any specific needs in the POOR Magazine's extended community such as rent, diapers, legal fees, tickets, etc. Supporting the day to day operations of POOR has in turn supported Paige to have an embodied understanding of Poverty Scholarship, and to activate her analyses about her identities to practice kinship solidarity in the day to day.

It is important to note that we do need both—a good analysis around our identities as well as embodied practices of being in good relationship across

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[64] The importance is our responsibility as people with race, class and education privilege to organize our families to reparate and support them in healing from the spiritual harms of materially benefitting from violent structures of oppression.

[65] Paige Kirstein, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

difference.[66] But as people with race, class, and/or academic privilege, there is a tendency to overvalue the right wording and analysis, so Paige's quote serves as a powerful reminder that such analyses are ineffective if they do not enact any positive change in the way we live day to day with people across difference.

Connecting the Material Benefits and Spiritual Harms of Racial Capitalism towards Our Healing

In the section above, I use Yael's personal narrative to demonstrate how Poverty Scholarship created a clear framework of Community Reparations procedures which invited her to effectively redistribute and reparate what she had access to in her everyday life. But as I argued in the Preface and Introduction, we must have some personal motivation to reparate. Poverty Scholarship provides Solidarity Family members the motivation to reparate by inviting us to reflect on *how in our specific life and in our ancestors' lives* racial capitalism materially benefited us while spiritually hurting us. Some readers may still be skeptical of my argument on the spiritual harms of these systems I raised in this chapter and in the introduction. You may be thinking, "Okay Miyuki, so there are a few wealthy White activists who already wanted to reparate, saying their "souls are destroyed" or that their life "really missed a lot of life force" under racial capitalism. But there's no quantifiable proof that these systems spiritually harm all people with race, class, and/or education privilege. And what does spiritual wellness even mean?"

These are all fair questions to ask. It's true that there are plenty of people with race, class, and/or academic privilege who would argue that they're spiritually unharmed by these systems. Whereas material benefits and harms can be quantified by virtue of being tangible, spiritual benefits and harms enter the affective realm, making it harder to quantify. One of the primary spiritual harms of racial capitalism that Poverty Scholarship names is teaching "the cult of independence," in which the most important goal to accomplish in life is "*our own singular, self-centered happiness or success*."[67] Womanist theologian Katie Cannon discusses that this goal comes from White Protestant values, which have become the normative basis for ethics in our society. "Economic success, self-reliance, frugality and industry," she argues, become synonymous with ethical action.[68] In this value system, we're further taught that we're free and unconstrained, and "ought to experience reality as offering a wide range of choices." This is noticeable in the expectation and attractiveness of leaving home for

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[66] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Duke University Press, 2003), https://www.dukeupress.edu/the-archive-and-the-repertoire. See Taylor's discussion of the importance of having both practice and theory.

[67] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 168.

[68] King, *The Black Shoals*, 26.

our college of choice, where we're encouraged to "find ourselves." Lured by the legitimacy afforded to us by being part of institutions away from the messiness of our own families, we become well-versed in "individualism. . .and self-centered actions'' which Poverty Scholars argue, produces the "perfect capitalist consumer with all the elements of a future gentrifier and Ikea shopper."[69]

If we return to the practices required of PeopleSkool mentees, we also see one possible definition of spiritual well-being. That is, that we are spiritually well when we respect, honor, and take care of our living family, ancestors, and community with humility. Poverty Scholarship names humility as that which "constrains people's actions to move softly on Pachamama, thinking first about others who live in any given place."[70] Humility also results from seeing not only that our lives are made possible by our family and ancestors, but also from realizing that people were and continue to be harmed, forced, or killed so that we can feel successful, or independent. Personally, it was easier to see the violence in my ancestors who stole and settled on indigenous land or took part in genocide and chattel slavery, but it is in fact a function of racial capitalism to hide how most of our current institutions and everyday transactions are also tied to race and class hierarchy and violence.

In Roan's process of learning how these systems materially benefited him, he first reflected on how his father was able to get rich despite having grown up working class, and what his financial success had to do with bigger systems like Patriarchy and White Supremacy. Poverty Scholarship helped him see for the first time all the invisibilized access to resources, opportunities, structures, and systems that our society makes available to wealthy and/or White people to get rich and stay rich. Things like "tax breaks, unions, the GI bill, access to certain neighborhoods, clubs, social networks, and good public education because of property." "And yet," he emphasized, "they say they did it all for themselves" because "we don't want to be dependent on structure[s]." Now he sees that "independence is not a real thing—nobody has that," and Poverty Scholarship exposed the countless violent systems that help us believe we're self-sufficient and independent.

In a 2016 blog article titled "10 Ways White Supremacy Wounds White People: A Tale of Mutuality," White Quaker activist Greg Elliot argues that the privileges Roan named—formal education, access to jobs, money, land, legitimacy, etc.—are only an illusion of comfort traded in exchange for our humanity.[71] As he pointedly lists, White people must "fear, disown, demean, ignore, dehumanize, exoticize, murder, incarcerate, and segregate ourselves from the majority of humanity" in order to gain

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[69] Gray-Garcia, 172.

[70] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, 335.

[71] Greg Elliott, "10 Ways White Supremacy Wounds White People: A Tale of Mutuality," American Friends Service Committee, July 21, 2016, https://www.afsc.org/blogs/acting-in-faith/10-ways-white-supremacy-wounds-white-people-tale-mutuality.

these privileges and benefits of White supremacy. Paige added the privilege (and ability) for White people to hide (their bodies, money, actions, etc). I would also add denial to the list, and emphasize that to a large extent, this ability to ignore, hide, and deny is a class-contingent experience. That is, those with more than enough money to pay for more than their basic needs can more easily use money to ignore, hide, and deny the violences enacted towards the continuation of White Supremacy.

If Poverty Scholarship's definition of spiritual well-being is predicated on acknowledging the violences of our country's founding, the interdependence[72] and abundance of all life, and taking care of our families and communities, then Elliot's essay is a striking archive of what spiritual harm looks and feels like. But what does Elliot mean when he uses the term "spiritual"? According to Elliot, each of us has both a *spiritual* self and a *socialized* self. He explains that the spiritual self is a "deeper self that longs to remember that we are all interconnected" even while the socialized self can continue to "operate" under the lessons of White Supremacy. Although one could argue that our definition of the spiritual is also socialized, I see it as a useful word to signal the affective benefits or harms of how we live that are harder to quantify.

More specifically in his essay, he names that White Supremacy instructs White people to "dissociate from our bodies and revere 'thinking' over feeling, intimacy, or paying attention to the information/wisdom our bodies give to us." He shares how his parents once said to him: "We don't have any friends we can talk to about our feelings" and that their emotional isolation was normal to them. Other practices of White Supremacy Elliot names that spiritually hurt White people include: Learning to admire colonizers and slave-owners; living on land without knowledge of the indigenous peoples it was stolen from; refusing to acknowledge America's "original sin" of racial, chattel slavery and genocide; forcing people of European descent to erase our culture in order to conform to Whiteness; ingraining the values of dominance, greed, and simplistic notions of "winners" and "losers"; and instilling a scarcity mentality.

Elliot's essay does two important things here in relation to the POOR Magazine Solidarity Family, and to readers of this dissertation. First, it contributes to the voices of Solidarity Family members who have race, class, and/or academic privilege talking about how White Supremacy harms us spiritually, or in ways that are often hard to measure. Second, it supports Poverty Scholarship's claim that looking at how these systems harm us helps us practice a kinship solidarity more effectively beyond the benevolent donor and grateful recipients dynamic. The mutual interest of racial and class justice—that the liberation of people with race, class, and education privilege is

[72] Poverty Scholarship defines interdependence as: the intentional connectedness of people, families, and community. Interdependence is the reliance on each other with an open acceptance that, as people, we need each other. It is a rejection of the bootstraps, capitalist ideal of separateness, isolation, and western, Euro-centric ideas of individuation and independence (385).

linked to those without those privileges—is precisely why Poverty Scholars urge Solidarity Family members to organize our own communities and to practice reparations.[73]

We must, as I shared in my preface, answer Toni Morrison's call to White people (and all people who benefit from aspiring/assimilating to Whiteness) who benefit from White Supremacy—or any other system in which a group of people dominates or has more than others—to examine how this structure and our lives are made possible. Once we become aware of the violences we are taking part in or that took place to make our lives possible, we cannot unsee them, and many of us are inspired to share the exposed truths with others like us and organize for change.

So what if we (and hopefully that includes you, the reader) are unable to unsee these violences and are practicing community reparations, but our families and loved ones do not see our actions as contributing to the violence? How do we understand their continued belief in systems we consider to be violent? In the next chapter, I will be exploring how Poverty Scholarship invites us to deepen our relationships with our families and communities of origin, and be in solidarity "within sameness" as opposed to "across difference." Again, while these two categories appear binary, I offer them primarily to complicate the pre-existing understanding of "self"—those who through the structures of society appear to be similar to us—and "the other"—those who through the structures of society appear to be different to us.

Solidarity Family members attest to the immense healing that comes from practicing Community Reparations with POOR Magazine (and beyond) and learning Poverty Scholarship. Poverty Scholars also argue that our own healing can bring about the healing of our ancestors. I made sense of this argument after reflecting on the actions of my ancestors who caused harm and brought me in "contact" with their stories as they related to my life. For example, I saw how the genocide of Wampanoag people and the stealing of their land (in what we now call Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod, and Nantucket) by my European ancestors, the subsequent owning and passing on land, as well as my grandfather's work as a real estate agent (helping other people buy and profit off of stolen Wampanoag land) was inextricably tied to my ability to grow up visiting my father's childhood home which they "owned." Being in "contact" with those ancestors in the context of my life story made me realize that my ancestors are in fact

[73] One thing to note here is that in articles where people are talking about the harms of White Supremacy to people who also materially benefit from White Supremacy, the focus is on White people. In contrast, Poverty Scholarship goes beyond this group of people to include people with race, class, and education privilege. I believe this intersectional approach allows for people like myself who have class and education privilege see how these privileges of White Supremacy also impart spiritual harms.

a part of what I call "me."[74] If they are a part of me, then it naturally follows that my healing would mean their healing as well.

Similarly, for Lex Horan, healing came not just from giving money back to POOR, but from the process itself of connecting with his ancestors. It was when he was able to reckon with *both* the ancestors who relied on violent systems to care for his family, as well as those ancestors who lived *before* the violences of slavery, genocide, and wealth accumulation that brought him healing. This practice reminded him that there's nothing fundamentally or originally wrong about his people, and that "[he], like everybody else, comes from people who *have* been in right relationship with land, each other, and spirit."[75] In other words, if we go back far enough, at one point, our ancestors were in right relationship with land, each other, and spirit. And so we can take the steps today and in our lifetimes to return to that type of peaceful relating.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how Poverty Scholarship's ten-year-long engagement with the Solidarity Family to practice Community Reparations is made effective through POOR's alternative linguistic and spatial scripts of kinship solidarity. During the pandemic, more articles, books, and media have addressed grassroots reparations efforts like the kind POOR Magazine and the Solidarity Family have been practicing. For instance, *Decolonizing Wealth* by Edgar Villanueva, similar to Poverty Scholarship, discusses how we who materially benefit from systems of oppression must recognize how our wealth was/is "made on the backs of Indigenous people, slaves, and low-wage workers of color," and that paying reparations can help us stop/diminish that harm.[76] But what I think is unique about the Solidarity Family's Community Reparations is that it is an explicit practice of kinship relationality with ongoing and evolving scripts, that enlivens reparations beyond being just another box to check off. It urges us to see that kinship solidarity is an everyday practice, and Community Reparations is just as much about our receiving as it is about our giving. When reparations is another box to check off, it becomes less about doing the ongoing and difficult work towards our collective liberation, and more about a technical shift in the vocabulary. In other words, the Community Reparations POOR Magazine Solidarity

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[74] Or as Alexis Pauline Gumbs said in the 2020 *Finding Our Way* podcast interview with Prentis Hemphill that re-membering our ancestors must mean that they were already a part of us, meaning we are never alone.

[75] Lex Horan, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

[76] Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2021); Edgar Villanueva, "How to Decolonize Wealth Through Reparations," *YES! Magazine* (blog), accessed March 30, 2022, https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/a-new-social-justice/2021/11/15/decolonize-philanthropy-reparations.

Family members give are more than just a more politically-correct term for a philanthropic donation. It is an entire relational structure in which we are given the tools to practice dismantling the charity model so deeply enmeshed in us by racial capitalism, and to practice interbeing, what the late Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh uses to describe the fact of our connection to all beings.[77] And just as important is the invitation to heal our ancestral wounds by practicing Community Reparations.

And while local organizations in the S.F. Bay Area such as Repaired Nation and the Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC)[78] focus on building wealth for Black and Indigenous communities through sustainable economy projects, the ongoing kinship and healing work that POOR specifically invites people of race, class, and/or academic privileges to participate in through Community Reparations is distinct. We are indebted to POOR Magazine for creating a framework and specific practices where we, people with race, class, and education privilege can not only *think* about what to do about the problem Toni Morrison named to "only be tall because somebody is on their knees,"[79] but also *act* authentically in everyday practices of kinship solidarity.

[77] Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra* (Parallax Press, 2009), 3. He explains "If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. "Interbeing" is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix "inter-" with the verb "to be," we have a new verb, inter-be. Without a cloud and the sheet of paper inter-are."

[78] "About Us, Repaired Nations," *Repaired Nations* (blog), May 8, 2018, https://repairednations.org/about-us/; "Sustainable Economies Law Center," Sustainable Economies Law Center, accessed March 30, 2022, https://www.theselc.org/mission.

[79] *Toni Morrison on the Charlie Rose Show*, 1993, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2txzMkT5Pc.

CHAPTER 3
Navigating Ethical Belonging within Structural Sameness While Rooted in Our Relational Geographies

> *"I'm grateful that now me and my family have conversations about their parents and grandparents and other generations in a way that we didn't before—it just wasn't a part of the White culture I grew up in, and I've stopped trying to take out my anger on them and tried to actually use it in a way that helps. . .I [didn't used to] talk about activism or volunteering with people in my neighborhood or my family friends so POOR Magazine helped me see my whole self in life in so many ways."*
>
> —Yael Channof, POOR Magazine Solidarity Family member[1]

> *"My dad loves people and tries to take care of them. He does that in a way that is very hard for me, which is very different, and also this is very much influenced [by POOR's teachings], but I see the ways he has tried to care for my family through wealth hoarding and giving money to us. That is him trying to love people."*
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> —Jessica Rosenberg, POOR Magazine Solidarity Family member[2]

During the unlearning that mentees in solidarity with Poverty Scholars go through around our race, class, and/or academic privileges, we can sometimes forget why these violent systems are used in the first place, and to judge or even push away the people in our lives who continue to use them. Or perhaps, some readers have been the ones pushed away by younger family members. But Poverty Scholarship doesn't just offer wisdom about how to be in kinship solidarity with people across race and class differences. In fact, it necessitates that we "care, respect, and love our blood family, extended family, ancestors, and community with humility."[3] As Jessica's quote above about her dad's use of money to express his love, POOR asks us to see that our family's wealth hoarding actions are not only culturally encouraged, but also with the intention of caring for us. Seeing these intentions can help us hold our families with compassion as we show them how hoarding wealth is causing harm to others and themselves. This is an important offering from Poverty Scholarship, as all too often in social justice communities, there can be a pushing away of anyone who is not politically

[1] Yael Channoff, Solidarity Family member interview, March 2019.
[2] Jessica Rosenberg, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.
[3] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019).

correct enough, radical enough, etc. This compassion for our families is also imperative for us to embrace the role that only we can play. That is the role of translator, bridge, and transformer within sameness.

Solidarity within sameness is also crucial because movement spaces are eager to discuss how to be in solidarity "across our difference(s)," but often fail to address how we can be with our families and communities of origin. In fact, when I was conducting interviews and in preliminary drafts of this dissertation, I too was focused on the aspect of solidarity work that is about bridging differences and showing up for people who have structurally been harmed by racial capitalism. But the more I sat with my interviewees' stories, the more I realized that what was so revolutionary about POOR Magazine's model of solidarity was that it gave guidance to people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to deepen our solidarity with the people we come from, or people who may think, talk, look, or move through the world similar to us, whether structurally or culturally.

So while the Chapter Two was about how Poverty Scholarship's alternative linguistic and spatial scripts support Solidarity Family members to navigate Community Reparations *across* race and class difference in relationships of kinship solidarity, this chapter offers people with race, class, and/or academic privilege some navigational skills to practice solidarity within sameness—our own ancestry, families and communities of origin, or the families and communities that think, talk, look, move through the world like us. And as I will expand more below, I argue that these navigational skills are most effective within a context of ethical belonging, rooted in our relational geographies. Furthermore, as the reflections of Solidarity Family members on our journeys and practices of ethical belonging will demonstrate, these skills have the potential to reconnect us with our wholeness. My hope is that you will also get a feeling for the granular, everyday, processual stuff of being in ethical belonging within sameness, not just the theory or analysis of it.

Ethical Belonging within Sameness for Our Collective Liberation

Most people would probably agree that feeling belonging alone does not make way for our collective liberation. We know this when we look at the way hate-based groups recruit people craving physical, emotional, and/or psychological belonging, and ask these members to reproduce violent messages or actions to secure their belonging. What then might be a path to ethical belonging? A kind of liberatory belonging that does not stake claims of ownership. A kind of spacious belonging that exists beyond binaries of them versus us. A kind of humble belonging to the universe (and the universe to us) that upends the taxonomy of the human which in racial capitalism not only places humans above other beings and non-beings, but also some humans—White and/or financially wealthy for example—as human, and others—Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and financially poor—as non-human. A belonging that is

healing and brings out our most authentic gifts. The simple answer to that question would be to follow Alexis Pauline Gumbs' directive that "freedom is not a secret, it's a practice."[4] It is in the daily commitment and the journey, not some far off hidden destination. Indeed, the practice of ethical belonging with all our relations would be a practice of freedom.

And yet I argue that the practices for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege seeking to belong ethically within sameness have not been as explicitly discussed by those same people, and certainly have not been the practices we see or hear about frequently. More often, ethical practices of belonging and bridging have been requested of people with race, class, and/or academic privilege by those impacted the most (recall my discussion of POC organizers asking White organizers to organize at the Thanksgiving table),[5] but the response or reflection remains private or very quiet. So while I would say following Gumbs that ethical belonging is not a secret, and that it is a practice, the fact that each one of us has personal and different ways we might practice ethical belonging, they take on a feeling of secretness or mystery.

There are a few possible reasons for the silence. The first is that people with race, class, and/or academic privilege might be afraid to talk too loudly about their actions for fear of being judged as inauthentic. For example, it is common to see someone who joins causes for their alignment to "radicality" as an aesthetic, kind of like buying a certain brand name of clothes, car, etc.[6] But it could also be strategic. As an old Japanese saying goes, 能ある鷹は爪隠す(*nou-aru-taka-wa-tsume-kakusu*) or the skilled falcon hides its talons, (because it doesn't want its prey to notice what sharp talons it has). And so it may be that those co-conspirators who consistently show up and agitate within their communities are not talking about their methods so as to do their work in a more camouflaged way. Another likely reason is that because the work to agitate our families is tedious and complicated by interpersonal histories and traumas, people may not want to publicize their personal lives.

Fortunately, as I mentioned in the introduction, in just the last couple of years, more people with race, class, and/or academic privilege are speaking out about our

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[4] "Alexis Pauline Gumbs," Alexis Pauline Gumbs, accessed March 30, 2022, https://www.alexispauline.com.

[5] "What To Say To Family Members Who Make Offensive Comments At Thanksgiving, According To Experts," Bustle, accessed March 24, 2022, https://www.bustle.com/p/what-to-say-to-family-members-who-make-offensive-comments-at-thanksgiving-according-to-experts-13145565.

[6] Farida Vis et al., "When Twitter Got #woke: Black Lives Matter, DeRay McKesson, Twitter, and the Appropriation of the Aesthetics of Protest," in *The Aesthetics of Global Protest*, ed. Aidan McGarry et al., Visual Culture and Communication (Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 247–66, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvswx8bm.18; Monica Anderson et al., "Activism in the Social Media Age," July 11, 2018, https://policycommons.net/artifacts/617271/activism-in-the-social-media-age/1598058/.

practices of the practice of solidarity within sameness.[7] This chapter adds to this archive with quotes and anecdotes from interviews I conducted with POOR Magazine Solidarity Family Members, as well as Poverty Scholarship in order to explore specific navigational skills to be in solidarity within sameness, and the experiences of people who have actually used them for over a decade.

Rooted in Our Relational Geographies

In order for our ethical belonging to effectively support solidarity within sameness, I argue that we must be rooted in our relational geographies. That is because to be rooted is to be in relationship, which Morgan—one of my interviewees—believes is "the balm to that social justice 'aaaaah' frozen feeling" when we don't know what to do next and feel stuck.[8] Rootedness is absolutely necessary for us to have when we want to make any change. Paige, who has been working very closely in-person with POOR Magazine for the past four years explained this by saying that "change needs roots—we can only move as fast as the speed of trust[9]—so I find myself now trying to move toward a more rooted approach to change, to create lasting systemic change while also remembering that I can do things on an individual level."[10] When I requested more specifically of Paige to share any advice for how to talk about our solidarity work to people in our own communities and families, she said the most important thing is to be "in deep relationship with people . . .it's not me yelling about what I do. It's about me being in genuine relationships with people and sharing with them about what I'm doing."[11] In other words, we must do the continual work of deepening our roots with our own family and community members as we share with them the fruits of our learning and unlearning. Unless we are in trusting relationships, our words and theories—however powerful—will have no lasting effect on the people we share them with. And unless we are rooted in our relational geographies, we cannot practice ethical belonging.

Then what do I mean by relational geographies? In the last chapter, I brought up how practicing solidarity from our home geographies encourages us to be bridges within our communities. There are also crucial moments when our bodies are called

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[7] "Why Reparations Are About More Than Money," *YES! Magazine* (blog), accessed March 30, 2022, https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2021/07/15/reparations-more-than-money; The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family, "Towards Homefulness: The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family," *Resource Generation* (blog), December 17, 2011, https://resourcegeneration.org/towards-homefulness-the-poor-magazine-solidarity-family/.

[8] Morgan Curtis, Solidarity Family member interview, January 2019.

[9] An idea she explained she learned first in adrienne maree brown's book, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, Reprint edition (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017).

[10] Paige Kirstein, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

[11] Paige Kirstein, 2019.

upon (by those who do not have race, class, and/or academic privilege) to travel some distance away from our home geographies so that we can organize within sameness. Standing Rock[12] and Mauna Kea are well-known examples, but a local example is when POOR Magazine held an action in front of the Oakland City Hall called "Stop Sweeping, Cleaning, Jailing or Stealing from Our Unhoused Neighbors."[13] Poverty Scholars explained that, "[a]s renters and Mama Earth 'owners,' your voices are the ones that are listened to and therefore important to end the dangerous and ongoing war On the Poor . . .led by politricksters and poLice" so that a "critical mass of *housed people* is VERY important to make this have an impact."[14] In other words, there are people, spaces, and instances in which my structural benefits within racial capitalism[15]—my housedness, PhD, attire, and confidence, which permeate my speech patterns, the way I hold eye contact, or move my body—lead to being listened to or being treated with more respect. This strategic use of our respectability could easily be conflated with respectability politics. But Black historian Evelyn Higganbotham discusses in *Righteous Discontent* that "respectability politics" was what Black women in the South strategically used different dress, speech, and gestures to avoid lynchings in their communities.[16] We are actually mobilizing the respectability afforded our bodies in racial capitalism in

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[12] See *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvr695pq for more on solidarity work at Standing Rock.

[13] POOR Magazine organized this rally held on May 24th, 2019, for which they wrote the following invitation:

"As SF, Berkeley and Oakland politricksters continue their Violent hate campaigns and policies toward and against us houseless folks we realized that another frame needs to be launched- instead of us just constantly reacting to their hate and lygislations - *we are asking folks with homes, with resources to gather - in critical mass and clearly claim - No we dont want our houseless neighbors, swept, Banned, arrested and profiled- we dont want their bodies and resources and belongings stolen-and we dont equate "clean streets" with empty of people streets*- anyway, we are hoping that as many housed folks can stand together with us unhoused and formerly unhoused folks and listen to actual solutions we are manifesting and WeSearch we have uncovered and speak your own commitments to enact solutions not more hate. The gaze must be shifted from us the Swept, to the so-called Stake-holders who the poltricksters say they are "sweeping" us for. As renters and Mama Earth "owners" your voices are the ones that are listened to and therefore important to end the dangerous and ongoing war On the Poor that has invaded our communities led by poltricksters and poLice. . . Critical mass of housed people is VERY important to make this have an impact."

[14] Tiny aka Lisa Gray-Garcia, "Presence, Prayer & Procession of the Housed for the Unhoused Stop Sweeping, Cleaning, Jailing or Stealing from Our Unhoused Neighbors," May 5, 2019.

[15] A normative (straight, cis-gender, able-bodied, Christian, American, masculine, etc.) White man would be more respected than me because White Supremacy, Patriarchy, and Capitalism create a social hierarchy in which the normative White man is at the very top of the respectability pyramid.

[16] Evelyn Brooks Higginbothom. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880 - 1920*, 7. print (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

different geographies to help prevent physical and psychological violence against Black, Poor, Indigenous, and other targeted bodies/communities.

Returning then to being rooted in our relational geographies, I argue that context matters. We can be rooted in geography even if we are not in our home communities if we are doing so in a way that is done with consent and in relationship. Relational geographies is also a nod to the theories of social geographer Doreen Massey,[17] whose view that space/geography is relational is representative of what is now the dominant view of space and spatiality within geography and many related disciplines.[18] That is for Massey, geography is made up of relations and as such, is always being 'made, unmade, and remade' by them.[19] From this perspective, we can see that human bodies, objects, and the geographies we live in (physically, figuratively, and in our imaginations) are actively engaged in the practices of relationality—speaking, listening, helping, being with, trusting, etc.—with each other. Understanding that this dynamic making and unmaking is happening from one moment to the next helps us see that geography is anything but a static container for our relationships. And yet this static and bounded container view of geography and the people within them, which can be traced back in literature to John Locke, is still being enacted today. Feminist social geographers of color such as Mishuana Goeman, Katherine McKittrick, and Tiffany Lethabo King[20] critically link the Lockean view of space as simultaneously empty/passive, yet in need of taming[21] with White Supremacist, Settler Colonial, Capitalist projects which require mapping, categorizing, and classifying geography to justify doing the same to the people within them. In fact, in so many

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[17] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Univ Of Minnesota Press), accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/space-place-and-gender.

[18] Jeff Malpas, "Putting Space in Place: Philosophical Topography and Relational Geography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30, no. 2 (April 1, 2012): 228, https://doi.org/10.1068/d20810.

[19] Marcus A. Doel, "Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space by Jonathan Murdoch," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97, no. 4 (2007): 810, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2007.00587.x.

[20] See Mishuana R. Goeman, "Disrupting a Settler-Colonial Grammar of Place: The Visual Memoir of Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, by Audra Simpson, ed. Andrea Smith (Duke University Press, 2014), 235–65, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822376613-010; Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2006); Linda J. Peake and Katherine McKittrick, "What Difference Does Difference Make to Geography?," *Questioning Geography: Fundamental …*, January 1, 2005, 39–54; Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2019).

[21] Barbara Arneil and Professor and Head of the Political Science Department Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Clarendon Press, 1996); B. Arneil, "John Locke, Natural Law and Colonialism," *History of Political Thought* 13, no. 4 (April 1, 1992): 587–603. Such views conflate the people on the land with the "wildness" of the land.

examples, map-making (whether literal or figurative) has led to extractive relationships of other people, other beings and the earth.

Even if we are not literally making a physical map, metaphorically, mapping is carried out by what Nigerian philosopher Bayo Akomolafe calls "White Modernity" and the way it frames place and geography.[22] He asserts that we are currently experiencing the toxicity of being "fully found, fully owned, fully categorized, fully in place" for White modernity frames place by naming it forcefully and by insisting on the agency of the human, the individual.[23] For instance White modernity takes pride in naming 'That neighborhood is zoned for regeneration' or 'This is the most racially diverse city in the country.' But, he argues, there is an irony to this framing, because when you name something so forcefully, things actually slip away—important things like our relationships with each other, with the earth, and a sense of humility. In his own words, "the whiff of an idea that we are entangled with the planet is lost in the city."[24]

And yet, at the same time, he explains that there can be power in going off the normal path to see what has gone unnoticed by the forceful urge to categorize, count, map everything. For example, he recounts how his elders shifted his understanding of power. He had asked them, "If Eshu, Ogun, Ṣàngó, and Yemoja are powerful, then why didn't they do anything to stop the slavers from taking our people and taking them across the Atlantic?" To this, some elders pointed out how in fact Eshu stole into the ships unnoticed by the "modern" slaver. For on the slaver's diary was a list of the names of everyone they had incarcerated—75 bodies from the Bight of Benin. And yet Eshu was there, an invisible guest creating a "space of excess," they said, and that is power. Thus Akomolafe learned to see power:

> "when things spill away from their containers and become something different that we don't know how to name yet. . .that's occultic and diffractive, and yet to come. *That is entangled and embodied,* and is in league with rhizomatic movements and mushrooms and air and climate. That's a deep sense of power that escapes modernity. And I feel if we learn to listen, maybe we might learn to tap into those other spaces of power."[25]

I am excited by his idea of the unnamed and embodied power lurking between, through, and in the midst of normative spatial practices of racial capitalism. And I agree that we must practice listening—to ourselves, to all our relations, and to the pulse of the unknown—if we are to resist power as being able to name and categorize for the purposes of one-sided extraction.

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[22] Bayo Akomolafe, Hope, Questioning, and Getting Lost, interview by Prentis Hemphill, Podcast, May 2021, https://www.findingourwaypodcast.com/individual-episodes/s2e3.
[23] Akomolafe.
[24] Akomolafe.
[25] Akomolafe.

I propose that being rooted in our relational geographies is a way to be entangled, embodied, and present to that which is unmappable. Of course, these ways of being in relationship to geographies have continually been created by Indigenous, Black, POC, and whoever is most impacted, some of which have been generously and consensually shared with allies to help with our navigation. The practices of ethical belonging within sameness while rooted in our relational geographies is, for instance, directly informed by the teachings of POOR Magazine. May they help others with race, class, and/or academic privilege to orient to different north stars than extraction, progress, profit, and productivity.

Among the practices Solidarity Family members learned from POOR to navigate ethical belonging within sameness while rooted in our relational geographies, I observed that they shared the following themes:

1. **Aware of Spatial Context**: means that we know we must shift our approach depending on where we are, who we are with, and what the goals are. This is particularly important as we begin talking about Poverty Scholarship's ideas with people within our families and communities of origin, as the language they use may need to be shifted in order for them to hear us.

2. **Spiritually Healing**: asks us to acknowledge the ways we (and our ancestors) are hurting because we are disconnected from our relations, helps us see how we belong to each other, and reconnects us to our wholeness by inviting us to practice our gifts to fulfill the responsibilities we have based on our positionality.

3. **Loving accountability**: holds the ebb and flow of each of our lives so that we stay connected yet accountable at the capacity we're able to. We are not "bad people"[26] simply for being born into a lineage or structure of perpetrating harm—we are imperfect humans who still have a responsibility to make right what was wronged. Passing this message on to our communities and families is a gift.

4. **Embodied and connected to ongoing practice**: keeps us engaged and committed to feeling the emotions of this work in our bodies. These practices help us to tangibly feel collective liberation in our everyday lives and relationships.

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[26] I recommend the podcast interview with Jacoby Ballard on "The Art of Allyship: Coming Alongside" https://irresistible.org/podcast/24 and the forgiveness practice he offers at https://irresistible.org/podcast/24p April 2018. See all the other practices at: https://irresistible.org/podcast

My aim is to demonstrate these themes in the example and anecdotes that follow, although several or all themes can be present in one example. Because practices are not finished products, and are being made and unmade daily, my descriptions of our experiences ought not to be taken as prescription or the "one right way." So, in the spirit of process and practice, I hope that reading the following explorations of the stickiness between people, the more-than-human, spirits, memories, ideas, and land serves as an invitation to brainstorm with us about being rooted in relational geographies when practicing solidarity within sameness for our collective liberation. I hope that you find inspiration and curiosity to honor your own stories and to practice ethical belonging in your relational geographies.

Aware of Spatial Context

As discussed already, Poverty Scholars encourage us to practice our solidarity rooted in our "home" communities, by which they mean either the land we grew up on and/or where we have a lot of family (of origin or chosen).[27] This is because we can enact greater change in the minds of people from our home communities, who would be more willing to hear Poverty Scholarship from people who look/sound/are like them than from most Poverty Scholars. But I say *most* Poverty Scholars, because in fact, the main bridge between Solidarity Family members and POOR Magazine is Tiny, someone who can pass as White, can activate linguistic domination skills, and is a published author. She is aware of this and uses her appearances and her words strategically for many purposes, including her role as the ambassador of POOR Magazine when working with people with race, class, and academic privilege at PeopleSkool and beyond. So while in her slam bio, she always includes that she is the "melanin-challenged daughter of a Afrikan-Taino mama,"[28] in PeopleSkool, she recounted how when she was younger, she would be the one to apply for housing instead of her mother, because the agents were more likely to trust her light skin and her linguistic domination skills.

So what does it mean that she is the person most people in the Solidarity Family feel the closest to out of anyone in POOR Magazine? Or that she is the most commonly cited member talking about Community Reparations in my dissertation? At PeopleSkool, Community Newsrooms, and other events POOR Magazine puts on, I have seen how she collaborates with and is in deep and respectful familial relationship with the rest of the POOR Magazine family. And while her name and her mother's names are the only singularly named names on the cover of *Poverty Scholarship,* because she was the primary writer of most of the content, she has facilitated the

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[27] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019).
[28] Riccardo Staglianò, *Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Poor Magazine*, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0_N6NCdG9A.

publishing[29] of many essays, chapbooks, books, and videos by other POOR Magazine family members. This leads me to believe that whether named or unnamed, she has been deputized to interface with us (people with race, class, and/or academic privilege) as we go through the process of learning Poverty Scholarship and unlearning what we've been taught by racial capitalism. In other words, her own strategic uses of her Whiteness facilitates the work of transforming Solidarity Family members to incorporate the teachings of Poverty Scholars who do not have the same ability to pass as White. Despite her very different lived experiences from people in the Solidarity Family (because she was unhoused and lived in poverty for much of her life, whereas no one in the Solidarity Family has ever experienced housing insecurity), Tiny is able to leverage her relatability as a White-passing person, and her linguistic domination skills to do the agitating, translating, and transforming work I address in this chapter of solidarity within sameness.

One example of a Solidarity Family member being aware of spatial context to practice solidarity within sameness is when Yael led a segment of the Stolen Land Tour[30] in front of her parents' house in a wealthy part of San Francisco where she grew up in. In her speech, she talked about her life and where her family money comes from. By being a familiar face or at least someone who identified as being from that neighborhood, she changed the dynamic of the tour. While I'm sure some people would have still listened to the tour had it only been presented by the members of POOR Magazine, Yael's body was able to translate Poverty Scholarship within her community so that they were more willing to listen. Yael shared with me that many different people from her neighborhood still talk to her about the tour to this day.

In preparation for the speech, she told me how she discussed what she was going to share with her parents and took feedback. Her mom didn't like how Yael was planning to share so much about how her maternal grandfather had made a lot of money in the 50s as an engineer in early Silicon Valley. Her response was that Yael was "making it sound like [they] didn't do anything" and so she tried to change the outline of her speech, but her mom still really didn't like it.[31] When Tiny spoke to her parents about the tour, she was able to see her childhood home through her mother's eyes. Even though Yael had learned to see her childhood home through the lens of Poverty Scholarship as 'not normal' in that it wasn't normal to have that much excess of wealth, she could feel the response of "I'm just enjoying my life." And while her mom didn't come out for the speech and her dad did, what is worth emphasizing here is that Yael didn't shy away from the messiness of those interactions with her parents. She

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[29] See many of the books at https://www.poorpress.net/?page=2

[30] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, "Houseless, Indigenous, Disabled Youth & Elders 'Tour' Stolen Land, Culture & Ancestors at UC Berkeley | Poor Magazine," *POOR Magazine* (blog), April 27, 2021, https://www.poormagazine.org/node/6130. A series of tours POOR organizes annually to inform people in various neighborhoods that the land they are on was stolen

[31] Yael Channoff, Solidarity Family member interview.

embodied solidarity within sameness by being rooted in her relational geographies—the relationships with her family, family friends, and neighbors, as well as the multilayered histories of the geography and its relationship to her family's wealth.

Of course it's not always possible to go back to the neighborhood we grew up in because we feel unsafe with our families of origin (as is the case for many queer and trans children) or our families have moved many times. There are also many other reasons—economic, social, personal preference—why we may decide to continue to live in a neighborhood where we didn't grow up. And our neighborhoods, whether from childhood or in adulthood, may not be so racially and economically similar, as was the case for Yael. As is the case with a White family in Fruitvale that started Canticle Farm, a spiritually-based activist space, there are some White families who did not leave during White Flight and/or have been in the same neighborhood for several generations as it transitioned from a predominantly middle-class White neighborhood to a predominantly working-class Latinx, but also very mixed race and class neighborhood.

Developing the skill to have awareness of our spatial context is perhaps even more essential for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege if we live in predominantly BIPOC, mixed race and class neighborhoods such as Fruitvale. Morgan, a White youth environmental activist who has been living at Canticle Farm for the past five years and attended PeopleSkool with me, shared:

> "I'm very constantly aware of my newness here and what my presence and my visibility in the streets here means and triggers for people. I see the ways that has had me be less courageous in engaging with East Oakland as a community. . .one of my methods is avoidance, you know, having my hood up, not wearing nice clothes, trying to look inconspicuous, not loudly talking on my phone, just trying not to be a big I own this place sort of presence, more like I'm clear that I'm small. . .it doesn't feel good."[32]

Despite how Morgan feels about the situation, she actually has a strong awareness of spatial context and is acting accordingly. She's aware that if she wears nice clothes, talks loudly on her phone, and makes her White body visible in Fruitvale, she may be yelled at or targeted. And so she is consciously altering her performance to avoid attention. Essentially, the ways she is choosing *not* to act are ways that can be read as entitled, which is how many people with race, class, and/or academic privilege act. And in my understanding of Poverty Scholarship, lowering our entitlement and amplifying our humility are important steps in our practices of solidarity. But as she

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[32] Morgan Curtis, Solidarity Family member interview. Morgan is from the New England area, and similar to me, is descended from the first settlers of Turtle Island and arrived in Oakland in our 20s.

herself put it, “it doesn’t feel good,” and that can be a major obstacle in being rooted in our relational geographies. Yet it would be so normal for those of us with race, class, and/or academic privilege who are used to being heard and seen, to associate the need to diminish ourselves with being a bad thing. I contend that as long as we can align with the speed of trust, we can be aware and rooted in our spatial contexts, whether that be a new neighborhood or the one we grew up in. Of course, there is a crucial difference between acting humble versus self-hate and we must be attentive to signs of the latter.

My point in addressing Morgan’s account is to demonstrate that practicing humility in our everyday performances of race, class, and/or academic backgrounds in response to our spatial context may not always feel good. But when we feel that tension and notice it as a byproduct of our entitlement to the material benefits of racial capitalism, that awareness can free us and help us *be* with the discomfort. We then have the space to see that this humility, though it may produce discomfort in us, is in service of the incremental and nonlinear practices of being rooted in our relational geographies.

Spiritually Healing

Out of all of the four themes I address, spiritually healing seems the most connected to the feeling of rootedness. The metaphor of “feeling rooted” or not appeared frequently in my interviews with Solidarity Family members in relationship to feeling spiritually well. For example, Lex Horan explained that he feels “really rooted where [he] lives and *in lots of different relationships [in Minnesota].*”[33] The first part of Lex’s quote above is typical of how we talk about feeling/being rooted. We are accustomed to seeing the base of a plant—the root—used as a metaphor for when we feel stable, secure, connected, and I would add spiritually healing in a place. But it is the second part of the quote in which he explains feeling rooted in his many different relationships, that gets to the concept of relational geographies. He is naming how when we feel rooted in a place, it is because we feel interconnected with not just the place, but all of the other beings and relationships we have there. Lex already had a lot of family and friends in St. Paul because he was raised there, but it was when he decided to move back as an adult after college in 2013 that he intentionally used those roots to engage in organizing that was spiritually healing and rooted. Feeling rooted and spiritual healing are foundational to the kind of solidarity I urge us to practice within our home communities even if we are new to a place. But how do we arrive there?

Many of us with race, class, and/or academic privilege are severed from the stories and cultures of our ancestors and the land they were indigenous to. This disconnection can make many of us look at the current state of the world and our

[33] Lex Horan, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.

futures and feel despair, depressed, hopeless—certainly not rooted. And as Paige describes, having roots in something, like our ancestors, religious and faith communities, is essential to feeling hope. Hope is critical, she insists, because "we need hope to move forward."[34] When we are connected to the larger arc of history, ancestors, and culture, we can feel rooted in the fact that "now" is just one moment, and that there is a future for us.

Spiritual wellness and healing pointedly do not only happen in religious or faith communities. They can happen in any context of feeling rooted that helps us see the bigger picture, and thus have the strength to keep practicing our solidarity work. Morgan explains how for her, the bigger, deeper whys like why we are here and where we are going are spiritual questions. She adds that "the culture of burnout and disposability and going as hard as you can all the time, mostly alone, is just not gonna get us there. Without asking the big questions that spirituality asks, we keep our activism in the realm of the smaller questions: are we gonna meet this policy goal? Are we gonna elect this person? When you stay in that realm of questions I think the despair and the burn out can come so much faster because so often the answer is no. No, we are not gonna win this campaign, this policy, this election."[35] I also agree with Morgan that one of the common themes of our many crises—violence and extreme misunderstandings between people with differences and man-made "natural" disasters to name just a couple—is spiritual disconnection or our uprootedness from all our relations.

While there may be other reasons why we are severed from all our relations and why many of us believe that we must "go as hard as we can all the time, mostly alone," this project—following Poverty Scholarship—views racial capitalism and the other co-constitutive structures of oppression as the primary reasons. These structures, which are premised on violence, dispossession, extraction, assimilation, isolation, expansion, and accumulation under the guise of the American Dream and Freedom[36] *require* ignoring, forgetting and dissociating. Without numbing ourselves and forgetting our past and future, we would not be able to continue such harmful and unsustainable (for both ourselves and the planet) methods.

Therapist and writer Resmaa Menakem addresses the particular traumas and symptoms that exist in White bodies when he explains that White bodies often lash out instinctively with their bodies at Black people[37] to protect themselves/ourselves because they/we have traumas "embedded in their bodies from White-on-White

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[34] Paige Kirstein, Solidarity Family member interview.
[35] Morgan Curtis, Solidarity Family member interview.
[36] Freedom is capitalized here to distinguish it from liberatory practices of interdependence
[37] His framework is quite Black and White and so I would add that the person does not have to appear Black to be lashed out at.

violence in Europe that has not been digested and healed."[38] Many organizations exist to support the healing of trauma that exists in White bodies while taking accountability when in racially mixed settings, such as through the East Bay Meditation Center.[39]

White Supremacy manifests as an obstacle to spiritual healing when it makes us feel that Whiteness is the standard or goal, and that race is not an important socially-constructed difference in our culture, even though it is a socially reinforced category used to enable some while preventing many others from material stability, safety, and self-determination. For example, Morgan explained to me that she grew up in an all White family that never talked about race. She recalls never consciously mapping racial difference onto her classmates. Recounting a couple of friends in high school and college who were Indian and Black, she says she never had the thought of "what does this mean for her life?" and never asked them about it. Their friendship had existed entirely outside of her seeing racial context to it. In contrast, she *did* map class difference from an early age, because her family had a second home on an economically-depressed island off the south coast of England. At the age of nine, she remembers being confused and feeling it was so unfair that her working class and poor friends on the island lived such different lives than her. She now sees all the ways she perpetrated harm through invisibilizing her friends' racial experiences—"who knows what I was saying or doing?"[40] And yet she also wonders what has been lost now that she is steeped in social justice culture in which race is the very first thing she sees in someone, or the beauty, as she put it, of seeing that something else was possible when she just saw people as individuals not connected to the ideas associated with race.

As someone who claims the identity of Person of Color, Asian, and queer, among other labels and the child of a White and non-White parent, I have had many conversations with my frustrated White parent who wondered why I couldn't just "be Miyuki." I think this is a common response from people who have identities which are portrayed as being the norm—White, male, straight, cis-gendered, etc.—even though, as Audre Lorde puts it, that norm is "mythical" because this collection of identities

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[38] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Central Recovery Press, 2017).

[39] "Resources For White People – East Bay Meditation Center," accessed March 31, 2022, https://eastbaymeditation.org/about/radical-inclusivity/resources-for-white-people/. Not only do they have a list of articles, videos, and simple suggestions, they offer annual and continued classes on Whiteness and White Privilege for those who want to go deeper. The classes are taught by White EBMC members, but the offering of these resources is an invitation from the entire EBMC community extended to White community members to "actively participate in co-creating the most welcoming, inclusive, and socially-aware environment in which to practice meditation and learn from [their] programs and teachers." In other words, the co-creation of a liberatory container/structure for learning is just as important as learning liberatory content.

[40] Morgan Curtis, Solidarity Family member interview.

together is certainly not the most common in our world.[41] While I do see how some practices of labeling myself with an identity can be limiting and restrictive, I want to live in a world in which the material differences that come from looking, sounding, being labeled as different are acknowledged, at the time as our unique gifts for these very differences are celebrated and honored.

Actually, I can empathize with Morgan's nostalgia and my White parent's frustration. I too am frustrated when our lens for seeing people is only through this limited lens which is clouded by stereotypes. But I strongly encourage us to see that we can do better. We can see *both* the person *and* their racial differences without associations constructed by racial capitalism. What do I mean by associations constructed by racial capitalism? For example, we might come to believe that Black people are the most harmed and need to be helped more than anyone else, or that Asians are the least "dangerous" or likely to resist oppression of all People of Color, and thus do not need to be taken seriously. Such associations are toxic and damaging to anyone who holds them. Of course their toxicity is differently embodied depending on whether or not you are physically endangered by the associations. But this project highlights the spiritual toll that holding these associations takes on people who are physically endangering others—those of us with race, class, and/or academic privilege. One dangerous result is that we begin to equate the structural differences between people to the separateness of our liberations. Instead, I argue that we need to be able to acknowledge and interact with each other's differences with a foundational understanding that our lives and our freedom are completely intertwined.

When we can acknowledge structural difference and imbalance while understanding that our freedom is intertwined in each other's, we can more effectively commit to people across difference, and practice ethical belonging, knowing that we will inevitably make mistakes. For example, Lex shared that he feels really rooted where he lives and "in lots of different relationships here" being in the ongoing practice of "just the shit of being in a community . . . [going] through the shit that they are going through."[42] The "shit" is I think all of the messy, rich, sometimes confusing but absolutely necessary work that is often either hard to articulate or goes unnoticed. For example, with Lex, some of his organizing work might be easy to explain—like being on the core leadership group of the local SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice: End White Silence)[43] chapter trying to get White people organized against racism in Minneapolis. Or doing different kinds of support work for some local Black Lives organizing through SURJ and on his own. But he's also "connected with a group of people who own homes or own property trying to figure out how to be leveraging that to support poor people and POC to own more property and stop property ownership, all that shit."

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[41] Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Reprint edition (Berkeley, Calif: Crossing Press, 2007).

[42] Lex Horan, Solidarity Family member interview.

[43] https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org

To take the metaphor of feeling rooted to the next level, the shit that Lex is talking about is a crucial part of adding fertilizer to, and strengthening our roots of spiritual healing. For Lex, organizing in multiple ongoing relationships with community "going through shit" is how he practices ethical belonging and rootedness on this path of spiritual healing. Feeling rooted in these many different relationships is the antidote, he explained, to the years he experienced growing up that "lacked life force." Life force for Lex is about "being connected to each other, the spirit, the land, and where we come from." I imagine life force here as a sticky web of emotions, memories, stories, experiences, and rituals that make up the interstitial, the in between, and all that connects us to all our relations.

Reflection Question: How would you define life force? Have you felt life force? If so, what were you doing? What are the things that support you to feel that life force?

But feeling rooted doesn't only come from our local communities or family. For those of us in the Solidarity Family who are not in the same geographic location, being connected with each other on an ongoing basis looks like continuing to talk with each other over email or phone about:

- what's up with our families?
- how are we going to fundraise our families?
- the shit we were taught in our families
- how can we keep gathering resources for [Homefulness/POOR Magazine] if we've been asking people for a while?
- if there is something that we could be doing differently.

All of these topics, when revisited on an ongoing basis, act as touch points that have helped Lex keep recommitting, feeling rooted, and therefore spiritually healing.

As Jessica Rosenberg reflected, those conversations with other Solidarity Family members are some of the most honest she's able to be about the challenges of wealth redistribution and supporting poor people led and indigenous led decolonization work. And when Tiny is talking about something she doesn't really want to do, she knows she can go to people in the Solidarity Family and not pretend it's all easy because she knows we are committed to being in it for life. She contrasted this with typical organizing spaces which "require you to be 21 to 25, have a very flexible schedule."[44] The Solidarity Family and our relationship with POOR Magazine does not hold that expectation precisely because it acknowledges that the work of spiritual healing and practicing rootedness is lifelong.

[44] Jessica Rosenberg, Solidarity Family member interview.

Loving Accountability

POOR Magazine has been such a refreshing and liberatory space for so many people with race, class, and/or academic privilege because Poverty Scholars not only name, but also compassionately hold space for the trauma and disease that we have from having materially benefitting from these systems of oppression. They offer PeopleSkool at least once a year for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege, and publish articles to expose how "people never seen as suffering from a disease" are in fact in need of an intervention for theirs and everyone's wellness.[45] They believe that Community Reparations and redistribution offer different ways of being with people, and a medicine that can help us all heal from the diseases of scarcity and capitalism. Tiny says, "I do this work and teach this medicine to heal through a new, non-punitive framework towards our collective healing. . .[because] we all suffer from this disease called capitalism. Let's all heal together."[46] Tiny is clear—her task isn't to blame all of us who hoard, for scarcity is the lie we are all taught in a racial capitalist system. Solidarity Family members are thus asked to be accountable *without* the immobilizing duo of blame and shame. And even if it takes "530 years to unlearn," Tiny is committed to sharing this framework of redistribution, Community Reparations, and being in right relationship with each other to show that there *is* another way to be than to keep accumulating.[47]

I am calling Poverty Scholarship's form of accountability without blame "Loving Accountability," inspired by my conversation with Cynthia Beard, a Solidarity Family member, who said of POOR Magazine that even in the times when things are really frustrating or infuriating, she still "feels loved."[48] When I probed what she meant by "feeling loved," she elaborated that to her it felt like dignity, and like the Poverty Scholars at POOR see her as imperfect and human. This is in stark contrast with anti-racist spaces she has been in where there is an expectation that she will either be a savior or a horrible person. She emphasized that that didn't mean there weren't expectations and standards to respect the group space at POOR, but that there is "a certain grace of acknowledging that how we got here is very complicated and it's not necessarily about fault or shaming people."[49] That while there are still times when things need to be called out, there's an underlying recognition that we are all in this together. There is an acceptance that we are imperfect beings.

She elaborated that in the anti-racist 101 work she has participated in, she has felt that they are "instructing White people what to do and what not to do, what to say

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[45] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 334.
[46] Gray-Garcia, 334.
[47] Gray-Garcia, 334.
[48] Cynthia Beard, Solidarity Family member interview, March 2019.
[49] Beard, 2019.

and what not to say. Don't do this, because you're going to piss people off, or you're going to harm someone."[50] I added that in other spaces that are colorblind (the belief or practice that racial difference doesn't exist) people talk a lot about universal love, the beauty of our common humanity and that we have no differences, there is simply no awareness or conversation about racial capitalism and its different impacts on People of Color and White people, let alone any expectation of accountability.

Rather, at POOR, we are held in loving accountability. What is a message delivered to us with loving accountability? In the chapter "Community Reparations and Revolutionary Giving: Moving Away from Philanthro-Pimping and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," Poverty Scholars remind people with race, class, and/or academic privilege who want to reparate that we are not good people because we redistributed wealth created from stolen land, "anymore than a person who steals someone's backpack and then gives it back is a good person. . .It might not have been your original theft, so shame and guilt do not make sense. But humility is most definitely a feeling you should be moving with."[51] The analogy of people giving their stolen wealth back to a person who returns a stolen backpack helps us see why Poverty Scholars emphasize that "all of that money, comfort, resources, connections, both seen and unseen, that [we] have always had unquestionable access to is not now and never has been [ours]. It is not [ours] to keep, to decide on, to cogitate over, to dream about, to worry about, to feel guilty for, or even to give away."[52] Or as an anonymous Solidarity Family member put it in *Poverty Scholarship* in a way that ties back to our wholeness our spiritual well-being*:*

> *"I could consider as "mine" money that streams to me through an accident of birth in the context of White Supremacy, Colonialism, earth exploitation, and capitalism, but only if I shut my heart, spirit, and mind to huge pieces of the story, only if I am willing to not notice impacts, not register the whole. I could consider his money "mine" and use it as such only if I were willing to not be whole, and I am not. . .there is no true wealth or security or fulfillment in "benefitting" from violence and disassociation. I make reparations as part of dreaming for communities, for the earth, for the truth of interconnectedness, in waking life, in action."*[53]

The compassionate space of accountability that POOR creates effectively supports us to see that taking accountability will bring us back to wholeness. While accountability can look many ways, in the case of POOR Magazine, that accountability takes the form of giving Community Reparations, whether with money, land, networks,

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[50] Beard, 2019.
[51] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019), 323.
[52] Gray-Garcia, 323.
[53] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, 319.

time, or other resources. The demands of giving reparations is continual work and will be demanding. As Toby admitted, it is challenging to be asked for money so often and for it to be expected, but that it is a "healthy discomfort because it means we're *in connection with reality*."[54] Yael also spoke about sometimes being overwhelmed by texts asking for money or other help, especially when there's already a lot going on in her personal life. And yet similar to Toby, she commented that the difficulty balances out her whole life because she is usually shielded from everyday racial capitalism based on her identities as a White person with inheritance money. Practically speaking, she says it helps when she sometimes doesn't respond right away or takes a minute to breathe and think about it and focus on the solutions first. When we are in connection with reality as Toby says, or feel more balance in the way everyday capitalism impacts us, as Yael says, we get to feel connected to our healing, and to all our relations.

Another way POOR supports us to take accountability in a loving approach is by asking us to reflect on the emotional impact of acting on the lies we've been taught. In a section called "To People with Race and Class Privilege," they discuss how our lives are "based on so many lies" that can be hard to untangle, and yet we must try.[55] Reflecting on our emotions supports us as we try to untangle these lies during PeopleSkool, Solidarity Family phone calls, and journal responses. These practices are key in our ability to embody ethical belonging on an ongoing basis.

In turn, Solidarity Family members have passed this message of loving accountability onto those in our own communities. For example, Jessica Rosenberg stated that a large reason she went to rabbinical school was because of her POOR Magazine-informed sense of needing to organize her own people. She currently helps develop trainings in Philadelphia to move her Jewish community to act "less out of our sense of fear and isolation, and more in an expansive and holistic, true solidarity kind of way."[56] She believes that humans want to treat each other better than we do, and hopes that people's conception of family and kin can expand so that their sharing resources doesn't feel like a threat. She's grateful that as a rabbi, she gets to share these ideas of loving accountability, and encourage other people to lean into them in everyday life.

Embodied and connected to action/ongoing practices

During PeopleSkool and beyond, Paige shared that Tiny encourages her to practice empathy building by reflecting on the ways she has struggled to help understand in a bodily way (not just theoretical way) what collective liberation is. This

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[54] Toby Kramer, Solidarity Family member interview, February 2019.
[55] Gray-Garcia, Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth*, 2019, 323.
[56] Jessica Rosenberg, Solidarity Family member interview.

centering of *our own* feelings and *our own* experiences of struggle can help us stay committed to practicing ethical solidarity to support the lessening of other people's struggles. But another important way POOR asks us to center our feelings to stay in a practice of relationality is in the form of writing to a reflection question in preparation for Solidarity Family calls that happen once a month. Each month, she provides a new writing prompt that will inform the next call. There have been prompts about what Community Reparations mean to us, or when we first started viewing the Earth as property/something we could own, and how might we reparate our academic privilege. Another example is as follows:

> **Where is mom/other ancestors located in relation to us, spiritually, physically, emotionally, etc.? What's a dream space for you and mom to be, spiritually, physically, emotionally?**
> Are we in stasis with them, in the process of re-thinking the away nation, etc.? Our relationships with the people who birthed us are different, a spiritual/physical/emotional/visceral/ethereal relationship with the people who gave us life. Hold these in an ongoing way as we unthink the separation nation. They are always fluid, never static. *Write at least a paragraph on this please! If you want to get extra poetic, do the same prompt about Mama Earth too.*[57]

There is usually a google doc where we are all invited to share our responses. This allows for us to read each other's thoughts and be inspired to respond with our own thoughts and experiences. Even though I have not been able to attend the calls for the past couple of years since becoming a parent, I will occasionally read the meeting notes and agendas, and in the case of the prompt above, write a response to post to the shared google doc. In the meetings, there is always a time for each person to check in, and then to hear the reparation needs and items that need various types of support from POOR Magazine, as well as to share responses to the writing prompts. I think this is a powerful structure to follow, as it allows for Solidarity Family members to come to the table fully because we either get to reflect on or hear the reflections of our peers on themes that Poverty Scholarship has great insight to share about. This space to reflect on our own experiences of our relationships with mothers, for example, relates to a concept that is discussed at POOR called "Motherism," which contains all the cultural structures that promote us to separate from our mothers, of belittling and disrespecting our mothers.[58] It is connected to the idea of the "Away Nation" or "Separation Nation" as the prompt raises, which encourages us to live independently of the people who brought us into this world.

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[57] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, "Solidarity Family 5/17/21," May 17, 2021, 3.
[58] POOR Magazine, "POOR MAGAZINE: Mothers," *Poorpressprensapobre*, December 30, 2021, https://www.poorpress.net/product-page/poor-magazine-mothers.

These writing prompts are key vessels for us to routinely tap back into the emotional and embodied wisdoms of Poverty Scholarship. For those of us who are physically far from our homes and/or have difficult relationships with our mothers, reflecting on this reality can bring up a lot of pain. I speak from personal experience when I share about the pain of the moments when I felt/feel spiritually misaligned with my mother. Learning about Motherism and reflecting on what dream space I want to be in with my mother was a profound opportunity to reimagine a different way of relating to my mother, even if it is energetic. I am so grateful for these writing prompts, and for Tiny's ongoing investment of time and energy towards helping those of us with race, class, and/or academic privilege to see where we could find greater spiritual alignment in our foundational relationships, such as with the person who birthed us.

The impact of many Solidarity Family members reflecting and sharing our responses on a shared document and talking about our experiences is that we can get on the same page even though we are all calling in from separate locations. This allows us to individually and collectively make decisions to keep practicing Community Reparations. The writing prompts also importantly and necessarily dig deep into our personal experiences and feelings to show in our bodies how our freedoms are wrapped in each other's.

Toby shared that such practices and working with POOR have helped him feel more grounded in what he is capable of, and what is needed from him rather than what he wants people to think about him. For Paige, she says that after learning from POOR, her entire way she lives has changed—the things she does, what she prioritizes, how she spends her time, and how she thinks about herself in the movement. You might recall that Paige had come into POOR already having a sharp analysis of how to talk about her identities, but what POOR helped shift in her was the element of practicing her solidarity and healing through deep relationship building and showing up consistently on an ongoing basis. Poverty Scholarship's invitation for her to acknowledge the importance of her own liberation—which she feels receiving her cross-class partner's love—supported by her practices of Community Reparations has led her to an embodied understanding of her role to play. Of course she hasn't figured it all out, and that's part of the journey. For instance, she explained that she's "constantly fighting a battle of all the racism that's in [her] body, like all White people."[59] We are swimming against the mainstream current when we practice Poverty Scholarship's to unlearn White Supremacist, Settler Colonialist, Capitalist ways of being in the world, and it is natural for it to feel like a battle at times.

Additionally, following the leadership of Poor, Indigenous, Black, etc. leaders who are impacted the most does not mean we should not share our thoughts, experiences, and opinions. Oftentimes, activists with race, class, and/or academic privileges who have been trained to have a politically correct analysis of identity politics

[59] Paige Kirstein, Solidarity Family member interview.

mistakenly believe that following the leadership of those most impacted means that we have nothing to contribute, that they are always right and we are always wrong, or that we must make ourselves and our opinions as small as possible (as Morgan discussed she does when walking in Fruitvale). Toby reminded me that POOR supports our spiritual healing by challenging us to think for ourselves—we shouldn't just agree with them without reflection, nor should we erase our lived experiences. In fact, the opposite is true—we must prepare ourselves for disagreement, discomfort, and distrust while remembering as Toby said to "search for the grain of truth or the emotional truth when factual truth/reality isn't shared."[60]

Being embodied and connected to ongoing practice requires that we honor our stories, our own liberation, and our unique experiences without letting them overpower another's. We must walk in a balanced way between centering the voices of those most impacted, while also knowing that we have unique gifts to contribute which include the stories of how we are specifically spiritually harmed by these systems of oppression and must divest from them, now.

Conclusion

If Chapter Two was about the alternative linguistic and spatial scripts Poverty Scholarship offers the Solidarity Family to practice kinship solidarity across difference, then this chapter has been about practicing ethical belonging and rootedness within sameness and in the context of our relational geographies. It explored how crucial it is for us to be in the everyday practices of deepening and building trust with the people and places we come from. I asserted that how we practice belonging in all our relations are the geographies within, from, and to which we perform/practice ethical belonging. I proposed that being aware of our spatial contexts, spiritually healing, being held with loving accountability, and being embodied and connected to ongoing practice were four navigational tools that Poverty Scholarship offers people with race, class, and/or academic privilege to support our rootedness in the nitty gritty work of solidarity within sameness.

The stories and experiences shared in this chapter are important for anyone who is interested in doing the daily work of going against the grain of how our society operates and thinks in service of healing their spiritual wounds and emptiness caused by living within structures that assert power over others: White Supremacy, racial capitalism, Settler Colonialism, Patriarchy, etc. They are for people who see that we cannot practice kinship solidarity across difference without also practicing a solidarity of ethical belonging within sameness. For when we feel an ethical belonging within our home communities, we show up more whole, more rooted. When so many of us have lost touch with that which connects us to the larger arc of history—our ancestors, our descendants, our spiritual and geographic communities—we must attend to

[60] Kramer, Solidarity Family member interview.

reconnecting with that which returns us to our wholeness. My wish is that these stories support you in your journey to wholeness, and how crucial that journey is to our collective liberation.

Reflection Questions:

1. When have you recently felt despair, isolation, and shame? What do you see as the reason(s) for these feelings?
2. When did you first learn about our country's racial/class/gender/ability/nationality caste system?
3. What are some of the stories and feelings you have about being someone with race, class, and/or academic privilege? For example, do you feel lucky? Guilty? Embarrassed? Ashamed?
4. How do you feel after reading the stories in this chapter that share the ways Solidarity Family members have felt spiritually disconnected and how Poverty Scholarship helped them find practices of reconnecting?
5. What are some ways specific to you that you would like to practice accountability and ethical rootedness within your home communities?
6. How will you know when you feel rooted in all your relations—to yourself, to your family (of origin and chosen), to your communities, the land you live on, etc.?

CHAPTER FOUR
Centering and Communing with My/Our Bodies towards an Engaged Pedagogy of Solidarity in Mixed Company

In the introduction of this dissertation, I explored how feminist scholars of color think about solidarity. In the following two chapters, I discussed the Solidarity Family model designed by POOR Magazine, and some tangible practices of solidarity such as Community Reparations, describing how such practices have helped people with race, class, and/or academic privilege begin to heal from the spiritual harms of racial capitalism while we practice solidarity across difference, and within sameness. In this chapter, I zoom out and ask: *Can we teach people in mixed company how to practice solidarity both across difference and within sameness? What are some requirements for teaching solidarity as an engaged and embodied practice? Are there some contexts that are more conducive to teaching solidarity than others?* In many ways, the previous two chapters already begin to answer these questions with a "yes, and here's how" according to the Poverty Scholars at POOR Magazine.

For example, the practice of Community Reparations, which I elaborated on in detail in the previous two chapters, is the practical component of POOR Magazine's pedagogy of solidarity. While they never use this language, "pedagogy of solidarity" to describe the practices they teach, they are clear that the practice of Community Reparations must happen within learning and unlearning contexts. That is, we cannot expect any healing of our spiritual harms if we are only redistributing our wealth (in whatever form that takes), and not participating in the arduous *pedagogical* work of raising our critical consciousness. While Poverty Scholarship was taught to us in PeopleSkool, a radically different kind of school than formal academic institutions, the very name of "Poverty Scholarship" denotes the importance of learning to be in good relation with one another. During PeopleSkool, Poverty Scholars such as Tiny, Aunti Frances, Leroy, Muteado, and others who helped expose the myths of independence, bootstraps, and safety. In its place, we were taught Community Reparations, We-Search, and about connecting with our own ancestral stories and teachings.[1] Graduating from a couple weekends of PeopleSkool workshops was just the beginning of our (un)learning journeys. Ultimately, learning to pay Community Reparations with money and other resources is important, but an empty gesture if it isn't accompanied by the lifelong practice of unlearning and learning.

If Chapter Two was more explicitly about Poverty Scholars' teachings on solidarity, or their pedagogy of solidarity to guide people with race, class, and/or

[1] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019).

academic privilege to be in kinship solidarity with them across difference, then Chapter Three examined how people in the Solidarity Family have used Poverty Scholarship's pedagogy of solidarity to agitate and organize our own communities of origin—within sameness—by practicing ethical belonging while rooted within our relational geographies. I shared a range of stories from individuals in the Solidarity Family who have been practicing both Community Reparations as well as solidarity within sameness guided by Poverty Scholarship's pedagogy of solidarity. My goal was to support readers to look at their own lives in their uniqueness, and to see the particular skills they have, and the communities they belong to in which they could practice solidarity and Community Reparations. I also wanted to offer "real life" examples of how people have been practicing Community Reparations across difference and within sameness using Poverty Scholarship's pedagogy of solidarity to demystify its application, as well as to bring it back into the context of our everyday lives so as not to get stuck in any unrealistic or romanticized visions of solidarity. These real and hopefully relatable stories demonstrate how leveraging our access to wealth and power with the goal of healing from the harms of racial capitalism allows us—people with race, class, and/or academic privilege—to practice personal/collective liberation and healing.

This chapter extends the theme of (un)learning and education in the practice of solidarity from previous chapters, but expands beyond POOR Magazine and the context and unique demographics of the Solidarity Family (self-selected, mostly White organizers with a lot of class privilege and trust funds in 20s, 30s, 40s) to explore two spaces of learning with a wide variety of positionalities, and therefore mixed company—that is, where people have to practice solidarity share structural sameness and differences at the same time. I start in my university writing and research classrooms (18-19 year old university students from many racial and class backgrounds), and then reflect on an alternative learning space that I co-convene called the Church of Black feminist Thought (mostly queer Black women, gender non-conforming community members). I suggest that not only do these two different learning registers of formal academic versus community learning offer different possibilities and limitations, but they also offer two key practices of a successful pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company:

1) Centering the body: connecting "my" and "our"
2) Communing with ourselves and with one another: creating and nurturing community

Ultimately, what I hope to demonstrate in this chapter is what is possible within mixed learning spaces that isn't possible in spaces that are exclusively across difference and/or within sameness, such as at PeopleSkool or in the organizing that the Solidarity Family does with our own families and communities of origin.

(Critical) Pedagogies of Solidarity and Compassion

But first, how is Poverty Scholarship in conversation with what other scholars and facilitators have to say about a pedagogy of solidarity? Arguably the most well-known scholar of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, Brazilian philosopher and writer who lived from 1921-1997, actually spoke much about a pedagogy for solidarity. Readers may be more familiar with his most famous monograph, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written in 1970, or any of the other dozen books on various forms of pedagogy[2] he penned over the next thirty years including *Pedagogy of Solidarity.* But what does pedagogy mean, and why use it instead of other easier words like education, learning, and teaching? Comparing the word to "curriculum," critical pedagogy scholar Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández explains that the word pedagogy allows for a relational, goal-directed, and transformative experience—for both the teachers and students—whereas curriculum overemphasizes debates of inclusion and what the individual should know about difference. He offers that pedagogy highlights the process by which we are made by others *through* and *into* difference.[3] I would add that an effective pedagogy of solidarity must also highlight how we are structurally similar to some in order to expose the structures of oppression we are complicit to. Ultimately, pedagogy is a context-specific theory of how to learn and teach in relational and transformative ways, whereas discussions of curriculum are often limited to the content of what will be taught. While I would argue that the curriculum is also important, it does need to be in conversation with a theory of education or pedagogy that is liberatory and practice-oriented.

If pedagogy is a theory of approaching learning in relational and transformative ways, how does solidarity interact with it? Freire said that solidarity "goes side by side with a critical mind" by which he meant that we cannot practice solidarity if we are not able to learn to critically analyze the world we live in, and vice versa.[4] Or more specifically, Gaztambide-Fernández notes that in Freire's 1970 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire urges for a collective project of liberation which requires critical consciousness of "how *both oppressor and oppressed are bound together though power relations*."[5] That is, in order for us to practice solidarity in service of our collective liberation, we must learn how to critically examine the ways we are bound together through the power dynamics we all embody in this society. Poverty Scholarship and

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[2] *Pedagogy in Process, Pedagogy of the City, A Pedagogy of Liberation, Pedagogy of Hope, Pedagogy of the Heart, Pedagogy of Freedom*

[3] Rubén A Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 51.

[4] Paulo Freire, Ana Maria Araújo Freire, and Walter de Oliveira, *Pedagogy of Solidarity*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2016), 43, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315422817.

[5] Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity," 45.

being in the Solidarity Family, as you may recall, offer the space to critically examine our roles in the structures of oppression.

In this chapter I ask what is made differently possible when we do that critical examination in spaces with, if we are using Freire's language,[6] both the oppressor and oppressed. There are lessons that we can only learn from people who have been materially harmed by racial capitalism, and lessons that we can only learn from people who have been spiritually harmed by causing or participating in material harm. And so such a pedagogy of solidarity, I argue, should be co-created with people across difference *and* within sameness. But what are some things we should keep in mind?

In "The "Crisis of Pity" and the Radicalization of Solidarity: Toward Critical Pedagogies of Compassion," scholar Michalinos Zembylas offers that the need for a new pedagogy that will help radicalize solidarity is evidenced in the "crisis of pity" in our society, what he describes as "feeling sorry about those who suffer without necessarily taking action to alleviate the structural conditions and effects of suffering."[7] Instead, critical pedagogies of compassion approach the suffering of the other, among other things, through an understanding of our common human vulnerability, while acknowledging that we experience those vulnerabilities differently depending on our identity/positionality. Poverty Scholarship too, demands that we stop studying, pitying, objectifying the Poor, Indigenous, and houseless, and instead take action based on their visionary guidance to alleviate the material conditions and effects of suffering. With regards to our "common human vulnerability," however, Poverty Scholars (and I) more explicitly name that we are all harmed by racial capitalism—albeit differently.[8]

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[6] In the over fifty years since Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* many have elaborated how the categories of oppressor and oppressed are messy and not fixed, as different parts of our identities may be oppressed while others are not. And yet in many ways, our language is still as limiting even as it has changed. For example, the phrase I keep using to refer to my intended reader "people with race, class, and/or academic privilege" does not accurately describe what I spent several chapters exploring--that we/they/you may materially benefit from White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism and Capitalism, but we/they/you are spiritually hollowed out by these systems--but is a way to call in the people who identify with this imperfect title.

[7] Michalinos Zembylas, "The 'Crisis of Pity' and the Radicalization of Solidarity: Toward Critical Pedagogies of Compassion," *Educational Studies* 49, no. 6 (November 2013): 507, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2013.844148.

[8] To elaborate on how we experience human vulnerabilities differently, an example is that structurally speaking, a heterosexual, cisgender, White, able-bodied person born and raised in the U.S. and has a college degree and who has material wealth is most likely going to have much less *material* vulnerabilities than others. Notably, these sets of identity labels are at the far end of the spectrum of people with the least material vulnerabilities. For instance, I'm a queer, non-binary, assigned female at birth, mixed race Asian, disabled person born and raised in the U.S. who has class privilege via my formal education and the people I've met through elite schools. While I definitely have more material vulnerabilities (less material wealth) compared to someone who has the identities I first listed, my class and/or academic privilege, and in many

But what if people are not in agreement that we are all harmed by the structures of oppression? That is, is it possible to create a pedagogy of solidarity for those who do not share common realities and goals? In an interview late in his life, Freire spoke on the many forms of solidarity. One, he believes, is "the necessary solidarity which people who have the same dreams or similar political dreams have to have among themselves in order to struggle against the other side." He continues that "of course the other side also has to be solidary, and they are. Those who have power are solidary among themselves in order to prevent the collapse of the totality of power. They demonstrate every day solidarity among themselves. This is also solidarity."[9] Freire is pointing to the very real way we talk about solidarity using language and categories of people as being on opposing sides.

In "Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity," Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández traces how the pedagogy of solidarity has historically—in religious conversion and European nation building—required the naming of an opponent (whether explicit or subtle) against whom struggles are waged to achieve particular goals. We can see this today in the way the radical left emphasizes being *against* the police, or Trump supporters, and other conservative people. Thus, Gaztambide-Fernández urges us to decolonize our pedagogy of solidarity to "imagine human relations premised on the relationship between difference and interdependency, rather than similarity and a rational calculation of self-interests."[10] That is, we must first shift our common goal away from eliminating those who oppose us. And while it is unlikely that we can be in solidarity with people who do not want to be in solidarity with us, we can be sure that a pedagogy of solidarity does not reinstate a logic of domination and colonization.

Labor educator and academic Winnie Ng's journal article called "Pedagogy of solidarity: educating for an interracial working class movement" adds to the three more theoretical proposals above by providing an actual site where a pedagogy of solidarity was practiced. Recounting her research process which invited BIPOC labor activists in Toronto, Canada to form a solidarity circle to discuss how to achieve this goal, she

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ways, my light-skinned East-Asian and White appearance also afford me race privileges that grant me some material benefits such as being able to drive by a police car without worrying that they will racially profile me, having neutral or pleasant small talk in wealthy neighborhoods, etc. To learn more about how East Asian and East Asian Americans fit into the racial picture and hierarchy in the U.S. differently than other BIPOC, I highly recommend the book *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020) by Cathy Park Hong. I also recommend Anne Anlin Cheng's naming of the particular kind of injury endured by Asian women (which she calls the "yellow woman") as a result of the way we are represented as human and object in the U.S./West in her book *Ornamentalism* (2020).

[9] Freire, Freire, and de Oliveira, *Pedagogy of Solidarity*, 62.

[10] Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity," 49.

comments how the "research process also became one of the research outcomes."[11] Taking inspiration from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's famous book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999) which challenges the tendency to view research as separate from action,[12] Ng's research methodology and processes are in and of themselves an act of decolonization, and a practice of a pedagogy of solidarity. One question Ng leaves readers with is how the principles and components of the pedagogy of solidarity she delineated could be applied to a mixed race audience which includes White labor activists. She wonders what the prerequisites and preparation required would be to "ensure that the transformative power of the [solidarity] circle could remain intact."[13] As stated above, this chapter aims to answer her questions, albeit in the university and community contexts.

Of course beyond the archive of journal articles, I want to acknowledge the vibrant work on solidarity by political educators and facilitators who are not necessarily "teachers" or academics. Some examples include adrienne maree brown's latest book on facilitation called *Holding Change* (2021),[14] the work of brown's late mentor Grace Lee Boggs,[15] resources published by the AORTA collective,[16] Resmaa Menakem's book *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies,*[17] and that of the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC),[18] among many others. While the scope of this chapter does not allow me to address all of these works, I do explore Menakem's book and the EBMC below, and I encourage readers interested in more political education and facilitation to build solidarity to pursue these sources.

Centering the Body: Connecting My and Our

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[11] Winnie Ng, "Pedagogy of Solidarity: Educating for an Interracial Working Class Movement," ed. Jian Huang, *Journal of Workplace Learning* 24, no. 7/8 (September 7, 2012): 534, https://doi.org/10.1108/13665621211261007.

[12] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edition (London: Zed Books, 2012).

[13] Ng, "Pedagogy of Solidarity," 536.

[14] adrienne maree Brown, *Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation* (Chico: AK Press, 2021).

[15] Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography*, Reprint edition (Minneapolis ; London: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2016); Grace Lee Boggs, Scott Kurashige, and Danny Glover, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*, First Edition, Foreword by Danny Glover and Afterword with Immanuel Wallerstein (University of California Press, 2012).

[16] AORTA Collective, "AORTA Resource Zine" (AORTA, Spring 2014).

[17] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Central Recovery Press, 2017).

[18] "Resources For White People – East Bay Meditation Center," accessed March 31, 2022, https://eastbaymeditation.org/about/radical-inclusivity/resources-for-white-people/.

> "There's a way out of the mess [of White-body supremacy in the U.S.], and it requires each of us to begin with our own body. You and your body are important parts of the solution. . . Your body—all of our bodies—are where changing the status quo must begin."
>
> —*My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem

In his influential book, therapist, thinker, and organizer Resmaa Menakem insists that our way out of the violences of our status quo and "mess of White body supremacy" is through each of our bodies. That is because "the body, not the thinking (or rational) brain, is where we experience most of our pain, pleasure, and joy, and where we process most of what happens to us."[19] In other words, as important as critical theory is in naming, exposing, and shifting harmful paradigms into liberatory paradigms, healing happens most effectively when we center our bodies. Shifts in our language must happen as well, but without prioritizing the body we cannot fully transform our traumas, Menakem argues, because trauma lives in the body.[20] Menakem and many more are a part of a movement of somatic practitioners and other healers who see the body as central to our liberation work.[21]

However, I argue that the work of centering our bodies is not just about caring for our individual needs, but crucially, about learning how "my needs," the needs of an individual, are interconnected with "everyone's needs," or the needs of everyone in our society. But how do we explicitly prioritize the connection between the individual body and our collective bodies? Because I insist that we need to be as clear as possible that what feels freeing and enough to get one's individual body's needs may not feel freeing or like it is enough for another individual's body. For example, an individual body's needs might include what are seen as basic needs such as resting, eating, moving, and getting the healthcare/access we need, but also encompass the way the body is

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[19] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*.

[20] As he elaborates, the reason why so many of us have difficulties with healing our traumas is because our ancestors "spent centuries here under unrelentingly brutal conditions" so that our bodies "stored trauma and intense survival energy" to be passed on from generation to generation. And while he acknowledges that all of us were also passed down resilience and love, these aren't sufficient to completely heal all of the trauma, thus at least some of it continues to live in our bodies, affecting our own lives as well as those of others.

[21] generative somatics (https://generativesomatics.org/) is a great place to start if you're interested in learning more but you can also read this article by adrienne maree brown on what our bodies have to do with social change: https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2019/05/14/adrienne-maree-brown-social-change-body-pleasure-activism

connected to our spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being.[22] Therefore, a bodily need may be to be close to a body of water to relax or for ceremony, to be hugged so we feel connection and love, to light a candle to feel warmth, to make an altar to feel grounded, to meditate to feel more calm, and much more.

In turn, I look at the needs of our "collective bodies" as how our individual body's ability to get its needs met is contingent on the structures in place. The structures in place can be White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, and Capitalism, but they can also be Indigenous Sovereignty, radical self-love, and Decolonization. These structures come in all sizes. For example, on a smaller structural scale such as the graduate studies classroom—one I'm familiar with—my ability to meet the bodily needs I mentioned above are contingent on many things. How is the physical classroom designed? Is it big enough for us to have different ways of sitting/standing/stretching? How close is it to the bathroom? Is it accessible? But it is also about the way instructors name and model embodying different options and classroom cultures of acceptance around different bodily needs that come up for us when we are learning.

On a larger scale, anti-blackness and other forms of racism connected to White Supremacy affect how safe people feel living, working, and having fun both in public and private. An example of anti-Blackness is white fragility, which Menakem describes can lead to the confusing of "fear with danger, and comfort with safety."[23] I have experienced that in all White towns where the presence of anyone who strays too far from Whiteness is perceived as an immediate threat[24] or affront to the status quo, and that when everyone seemingly looks the same, there is simply an illusion of safety. And yet, the reality is that in a country structured by White Supremacist, physical/mental/spiritual safety is precariously contingent upon the absencing (through

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[22] Bay Area Nonviolent Communication has an excellent list of universal needs: https://baynvc.org/list-of-needs/

[23] As he puts it, "when a White body feels frightened by the presence of a Black one—whether or not an actual threat exists—it may lash out at the Black body in what it senses as necessary self-protection." He exclaims that this fight, flee, or freeze response is in fact triggered by "the activation of the ancient trauma that began as white-on-white violence in Europe centuries ago." This is crucial to remember that the immigrants who came to the U.S. and became "White," either directly or indirectly (by way of their ancestors) experienced violence towards them.

[24] Justin Phillips, "Albany Has an Unprecedented Amount of Black Leadership. But Is That Enough to Promote Change?," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 28, 2021, sec. Justin Phillips, https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/justinphillips/article/Albany-has-an-unprecedented-amount-of-Black-16493649.php. For example, in this article, the first Black female mayor of Albany frankly discusses the way a Black person rolling through the streets of Albany in a lowrider car would be pulled over by the cops. The extremely low percentage rate of Black residents in Albany and high percentage rates of White residents makes it even more pronounced when non-White people are in the city.

displacement, surveillance, racial profiling, harrassment, microaggressions, and more) of non-White or normative bodies.

Instead, true comfort and safety would necessitate the destruction of these structures of oppression, and the healing of our traumas so that we can learn to stop the cycle of hurting others (whether directly or indirectly) for our protection. When we are living with a clear conscience that our existence is not causing harm to others, and hopefully even benefiting others, we can experience true comfort and safety, free of guilt. It starts with acknowledging that the things that help some individual bodies feel safe are not only preventing us from getting the needs of our collective bodies met, but they are also causing violence to others.

Communing with Ourselves and With One Another: Creating and Nurturing Community

My two north stars when thinking of the importance of community in education are bell hooks, and Alexis Pauline Gumbs. "If we are to embody education as a practice of freedom, as I agree we must," hooks insists, "we must not only reconnect with our colleagues and students, but also with the world beyond the academy."[25] Gumbs asserts that community accountable pedagogy is created within a context in which people can *actually commune*.[26] The verb, to commune, comes from the 1300s from Old French *comunier* "to make common, to share" or *comun* "free, open, public," evolving in the late 14th century to mean "to talk intimately."[27] Another source suggests that the word "to commune" shares an etymological source with the word "to communicate," hence why communing also involves "convers[ing] together with sympathy and confidence; to interchange sentiments or feelings," as well as "to communicate (with) spiritually; to be together (with); to contemplate or absorb."[28]

These etymologies make a lot of sense to me as they relate to the connection between my personal body and all of our bodies; between the self and collective. Communing to me also looks, sounds, smells, and feels like our collective liberation, and I'm not the only one who thinks so. The East Bay Meditation Center[29] was started

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[25] bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2003).
[26] Julia Havard, Erica Cardwell, and Anandi Rao, "Anti-Oppressive Composition Pedagogies," *Radical Teacher* 115 (November 26, 2019): 2, https://doi.org/10.5195/rt.2019.729.
[27] "Commune | Etymology, Origin and Meaning of Commune by Etymonline," accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/commune.
[28] "Commune," in *Wiktionary*, January 22, 2022, https://en.wiktionary.org/w/index.php?title=commune&oldid=65409626.
[29] The East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) is a center in downtown Oakland, California with over 20 years of history, offering "meditation training and spiritual teachings from Buddhist and other wisdom traditions, with attention to social action, multiculturalism, and the diverse populations of the East Bay (San Francisco Bay Area) and beyond."

with the hopes of providing an accessible safe haven to commune with ourselves and with each other. I am particularly inspired by their Radical Inclusivity Practices:[30]

1. A generosity-based financial model
2. Accessible location in downtown Oakland close to public transportation
3. Spaces reserved for specific communities (i.e. LGBTQI, People of Color, Women of Color, people with disabilities, etc.)
4. Having a target percentage of POC in attendance of all public events
5. Following "agreements for multicultural interactions"[31]
6. Coming fragrance-free
7. Centering disability justice in their accessibility policy[32]

Essentially, these practices facilitate greater ease when it comes to communing both with ourselves as well as with those who are similar and different from us, for the purposes of our collective awakening and liberation.[33]

While I did not reference the EBMC's practices when I first started to teach or co-convene the Church of Black feminist thought gatherings, they inform my pedagogy now. I share this alignment because I think it can help readers see how these practices can be effective in more than one place. While it is important to recognize the different practices needed in specific contexts, and to not assume universality of these practices, for those wanting to create a mixed learning community that "provides an alternative to dominant culture values and practices of domination and inequity," as EBMC does, I think their list is a great starting place.[34] I hope that the following paragraphs demonstrate how these ideas can be adjusted, scaled, mirrored and complemented for the endeavors of community-based learning spaces beyond ours. At the core of

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[30] "Radical Inclusivity Practices – East Bay Meditation Center," accessed April 4, 2022, https://eastbaymeditation.org/about/radical-inclusivity/radical-inclusivity-practices/.

[31] East Bay Meditation Center, "Agreements for Multicultural Interactions at EBMC," n.d., https://eastbaymeditation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Agreemnts-Multicultural-Interactions-15.09.13.pdf.

[32] EBMC Leadership Sangha, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, and Mia Mingus, "Accessibility Policy for EBMC," 2012, https://eastbaymeditation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Accessibility-Policy-20120731.pdf.

[33] Larry Yang, *Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practice of Inclusivity and Community* (Wisdom Publications, 2017); Kazu Haga, Bernard LaFayette Jr, and David C. Jehnsen, *Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2020); "East Bay Meditation Center," https://eastbaymeditation.org/. If readers are interested in learning more about these practices in action, I highly recommend they visit the EBMC website. Their work is also discussed in books such as Larry Yang's *Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practice of Inclusivity and Community* and Kazu Haga's *Healing Resistance.*

[34] "Radical Inclusivity Practices – East Bay Meditation Center."

these practices, I believe, is the desire to create optimal conditions for communion—both with self and with others who are structurally similar and different.

In the University Writing and Research Classroom at Berkeley

Much like the contributors to Anti-Oppressive Composition Pedagogies, the 115th issue of *Radical Teacher: a socialist, feminist, and anti-racist journal on the theory and practice of teaching,* I can attest to how anti-oppressive pedagogies can be taught and practiced through the medium of writing and research.[35] As a graduate student instructor since 2017,[36] I have experienced the power and excitement of connecting what on first glance may appear to be a dry and objective set of tools to teach—thesis statements, supporting evidence, quotation sandwiches, abstracts, and conclusions—to get a good grade, with what is happening in our lives and society from the past to the future, and how to practice collective liberation with each other. In fact, what we ascribe to be the skills of "college level writing and research" does not exist in a vacuum, but is dynamically in relationship with the structures of oppression I have been talking about throughout this dissertation—White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, and Capitalism (and Patriarchy, and Ableism, etc.). They can therefore be used towards anti-oppressive and liberatory world making.

Exposing this connection isn't just more accurate to reality, it can also be a rewarding and energizing process. For instance, teaching Poverty Scholarship's critiques on exploitative research practices, and their proposal for I Journalism has an immediate impact on the ways students engage in writing and research in their lives. Reframing what we are learning as Linguistic Domination Skills teaches students the responsibility we have to use our writing and research skills with humility and awareness. I have seen how the more I connected what we were doing in the classroom with what was happening in our world, the more engaged and empowered students felt (and consequently I too feel).

Therefore, in my last semester of teaching at UC Berkeley I decided to more explicitly share with my 18 students[37] the theme of a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company. As the syllabus says:

> "we come from vastly different positionalities (race, class, nationality, ability, size, language, etc.) and our time at UC Berkeley is temporary. How can we use

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[35] Havard, Cardwell, and Rao, "Anti-Oppressive Composition Pedagogies."

[36] This is my last year of teaching in this formal setting of UC Berkeley's undergraduate courses, but the experience has led me to want to teach similar content in the future to non-college students.

[37] Although technically a Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS) class, most if not all of my students are *not* majors in our department, because it fulfills a campus-wide requirement to learn reading, composition, and research at the college level.

> the space of the classroom to take effective action and practice mutual aid towards personal and structural change? That is, can we leverage the specific resources of the university to humbly and critically engage in the lifelong practice of mutual aid for our collective liberation? More specifically, we will look at how to use our studying, writing, and research in embodied and community-accountable ways that activate our healing from systems of oppression."[38]

My hope was to use our real-time experiences in this mixed learning space[39] with each other to co-create such a pedagogy, rather than remaining in the realm of studying about structures of oppression or even how others have argued we get free. Given that the semester is 14 weeks long at UC Berkeley, and we meet twice a week for 80 minutes each, a central question is: how do we co-creation of a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company in this short amount of time?[40] I agree with bell hooks that one essential foundation is building trust. In *Teaching Community,* she insightfully observes that creating trust usually means figuring out *both* what we have in common *and* what makes us different.[41] And while we can and should do this with any group of people we want to build trust with, I contend that a classroom of mixed race and class students learning together for one semester is a particularly effective and empowering container for this. For not only is the classroom a space named explicitly for learning, but it can also act as a microcosm—students can apply their learnings with each other to other settings. hooks goes on to share that sometimes what we have in common is "having done the work of creating community," which includes engaging with our differences, "celebrating them when we can, and also rigorously confronting tensions as they arise."[42] In addition to the solidarity that arises from sharing values, beliefs, and yearnings, I make space in the semester for students to see our specific structural differences and similarities . As you will see in examples below, students respond that they feel less alone and more connected, demonstrating hooks' point that trust is built on seeing both our commonalities and differences.

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[38] Miyuki Baker, "R1B Embodied Study for Our Collective Liberation Spring 2022 Syllabus," Spring 2022, 1.

[39] Like the rest of UC Berkeley, my classes have been very mixed race and class: predominantly Latinx, Asian American, from East Asia or Europe, some White European American, and only a handful who are Black and/or Indigenous. From our discussions, it has also been clear that students come from a wide range of class backgrounds as well.

[40] hooks, *Teaching Community*, 2003, 14. bell hooks argues that "the classroom is one the most dynamic work settings precisely because we are given such a short amount of time to do so much."

[41] bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2003), 109.

[42] hooks, *Teaching Community*, 2003, 110.

I propose that the university classroom can be a site of connection with ourselves, each other, and the world, where we can practice using reading, writing and conducting research to be in solidarity across difference as well as within sameness. That it can strengthen our embodied experiences of interdependence with each other, allowing us to co-create and practice a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company. Below, I offer some interpretive reflections on the following practices:

1) meditation, body check-ins & body breaks
2) reflecting on the benefits and harms we've experienced from being in college
3) reflecting on how liberation feels, sounds, smells, tastes, looks like to them
4) Embodied Study Practice with Support and Accountability Pods

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1) Meditation, Body check-ins & Body breaks

Take a deep breath. Notice the places where your body comes into contact with the floor, earth, or chair. Feel the weight of gravity, and let it help you to relax any areas you are holding back. What heart or mind state is present? What are the sensations in your body right now? Where do you feel your breath the strongest? I invite you to be here in your body right now.

I usually start my classes with a guided meditation similar to the one above. Sometimes I'll share a bit of poetry. And every semester, my students comment on how much they appreciate having the five minutes at the beginning of class to pause, close their eyes, observe their sensations and breath, sharing that they feel so much more relaxed and prepared for class and the day afterwards. After meditation, I follow with a check-in, sometimes with a prompt such as "share one thing you're grateful for" or "share a phrase of what you're bringing to class today," but other times, I leave it open ended and simply ask them how they're doing. Finally, a little after halfway through the class, we take a five minute body break. All together, the meditation, check in, and body break takes fifteen minutes out of the 80 minutes we have together. I find that acknowledging our bodies together at the beginning, and then during class is grounding and sets a different tone, both for me and my students.

While these three practices—meditating, checking in, and taking body breaks—are nothing new, I am frequently reminded by my students that my class is the only class where they have experienced them.[43] To me, these three practices are the core building blocks of a classroom that centers the body and builds community. In addition to this time for students (and I) to listen to our bodies and to each other, I

[43] This may be because most of my students are not Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies students, coming from a wide range of majors and/or tracks.

also ask students how the readings and presentations make their bodies feel, and where in their body they feel a certain feeling.

This practice was especially poignant and put to the test in response to a documentary we watched last semester called *Race: The Power of an Illusion.* In it, countless scholars, historians and scientists detail U.S. histories of biological racism and essentialism in the field of science, as well as many examples of how the U.S. government has used racist science to justify the genocide, enslavement, colonization, and abuse of those racialized as non-White peoples around the world. Not only does the film talk about these gruesome events, but it also shows graphic images such as those of enslaved Africans being lynched, indigenous Filipino peoples on display at the U.S. world fair at the turn of the 19th century, and more.[44] While I told my students that they could always look away or find things to do with their hands while watching, it was still hard to be present for. On one of the days in particular, some of my students shared back that they felt especially disturbed and physically affected by the documentary.

As Michalinos Zembylas discusses in "The 'Crisis of Pity' and the Radicalization of Solidarity: Toward Critical Pedagogies of Compassion," when students witness the suffering of others, they may feel self-pity, blame, or guilt.[45] In some ways, this documentary was slightly different in that it was about the ways different groups of "us" in the United States were and are treated, exposing the very structures that produce the process of racialization. Because the documentary also showed the intentional and geographically linked creation of Whiteness through housing policies, loans, and cultural propaganda, White and non-White students alike were all addressed. Still, the fact that the people who became White were not shown being brutalized in the same way, many must have had feelings of self-pity, blame, and/or guilt, which they then expressed as feeling "disturbed" and physically affected.

But this naming of how their bodies were feeling was made possible because we had created a strong precedent of being attuned to our bodies' sensations and needs. As one of my students' feedback at the end of the semester said, "I learned how to listen to others, but also how to listen to myself, my body, and my heart."[46] And because I knew how the students were feeling, I was able to follow up with some words about how witnessing the suffering of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in this country can sometimes reinforce the belief that only BIPOC are harmed (and subconsciously, come to expect this) by racial capitalism in this country. I explained that in fact we are all harmed, albeit very differently.

The goal of showing this documentary was to remember and feel in our bodies the stakes of why we so urgently need to practice our collective liberation. But their response was a wakeup call to me for the need to carefully scaffold and frame around

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[44] *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, Documentary (California Newsreel, ITVS International, 2003).
[45] Zembylas, "The 'Crisis of Pity' and the Radicalization of Solidarity," 507.
[46] Students at UC Berkeley, "Fall 2021 End of Semester Course Evaluations," December 2021.

the different kinds of suffering so as not to exacerbate the crisis of pity. In addition, because there are many different identities in the classroom, the different ways we might respond to the same film could be addressed. And while the practice of centering my/our bodies in this practice helped us to process the intensity and content of the film, if I could screen it again, I would have liked to more explicitly lay bare the different positionalities in our classroom that were structurally different and/or structurally same with those represented in the film. I would also make breakout rooms for different affinity groups for students to process their feelings before sharing with the whole class, as I have begun doing this semester.

2) Reflecting on the benefits and harms we've experienced from being in college

Learning from the film experience, and inspired by the Empathy Exercise at PeopleSkool,[47] I led a writing prompt on the very first day of class this semester after a guided meditation that asked students to reflect on how college had benefited them (or that they hoped would benefit them in the future) as well as how it had harmed them. I then had them type their responses on a shared document, and then read all of the responses out loud. The purpose of this activity was to invite students to see that there was both great difference as well as similarities in responses, and as a result, to see that what they thought was personal was actually tied to the structures of power in our society. For example, many students named in the benefits the ability to network with many interesting and talented people, to hopefully secure a stable job in the future, and to practice being independent, while common examples in the harms were student debt, alienation/isolation/depression, imposter syndrome, and missing home. Finally, when I asked them to share how they felt in their bodies when listening to each other's responses, they noticed their bodies relaxing, relieved that they were not alone. In this way, I was able to start the semester with a very real and personal share that demonstrated the relationship between my/our—between the personal and collective experiences.

3) Reflecting on how liberation feels, sounds, smells, tastes, looks like to them

We also reflect on questions that community accountable scholar Sista Docta Alexis Pauline Gumbs asks in one of her online classes.[48] They are: 1) Who are the communities we're accountable to? (i.e. immigrant, BIPOC, first-generation students, queer, Bay Area, etc.); 2) What does liberation smell, sound, look, and feel like? To

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[47] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019).

[48] "Combahee Throughline Immersion Practice," Sangodare & Alexis for Mobile Homecoming Trust, accessed March 7, 2022, https://sangodare.podia.com/combahee-throughline-immersion-practice.

these questions I add: 3) What is something you can do to practice liberation? These questions were especially powerful for my students last semester after we had spent the first few weeks in the trenches of critical race theory, during which we focused on all that is wrong with the representations of race in our society. I could feel the weight of all that critical theory, and how moving to practices and feelings of freedom they already have access to was desperately needed.[49] Students have responded very positively to this activity, sharing they felt enlivened, empowered and good in their bodies. Many if not all (including myself) have at one point felt what Eva Boodman calls "critique fatigue," or "the discouragement, demoralization, and disempowerment that groups of students may collectively experience when there is too much 'critical' content (that is, content aiming to reveal and explain the patterns and mechanisms of oppression) and not enough structured skill-building to allow students to respond creatively, emotionally, practically, and politically/institutionally to the information they are being asked to take in—even if, and *especially* if, it relates to their own experience."[50]

Usually, I have students free write for ten minutes in response to these questions—a moment to commune with ourselves—and then they take turns interviewing each other in pairs—a moment to commune with each other. After this, I had students join a collective online document where I prompted them to type in/paste their responses to each of the questions. The initial effect was cacophony—students accidentally erasing what others had written, lines appearing and disappearing, and multi-colored lines flashing, with students' names accompanying them, indicating where they were typing. I invited students to volunteer to read a few lines at a time outloud, while the rest of us listened to the creative, moving, poetic lines of the way students accessed freedom through their many senses.

Freedom felt like "whooshing through the air on a zipline" and "the swing in the river I played with my family in"; sounded like "the climax of an orchestral piece in major as the violins strum to the pace of my heart beat" and "a cacophony of sound, like the laughter of friends running through a tunnel and the soft breathing of a fulfilled life coming to an end"; tasted like "the flavor of *al pastor* on my first nights back in Mexico," and "sweet like a marshmallow;" and looked like a "communal celebration."[51]

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[49] Learning from the students' critical fatigue prior to doing this activity last semester, I intentionally assigned readings at the beginning of this semester which included constructive ideas for our collective liberation. One of those readings was Winnie Ng's "Pedagogy of Solidarity," with the added intention to more transparently invite them into seeing our class/semester as a container to co-create and practice the kinds of solidarity that we wanted to embody and see outside of the classroom.

[50] Eva Boodman, "Radical Scaffolding Against Critique Fatigue," *Radical Teacher* 115 (November 26, 2019): 28, https://doi.org/10.5195/rt.2019.669.

[51] Fall 2021 R1A class, UC Berkeley Students, "Our Collective Liberation Fall 2021," Fall 2021.

In addition to centering our bodies by paying attention to the sounds, smells, visions, feelings, tastes of freedom—things that our bodies experience—creating a collective document filled with our sensory responses of liberation helped us to have an embodied feeling of our community, even as we gathered online. And while this activity was more focused on what liberation felt like for each individual, the fact that the first question asked them to think about the specific communities they were accountable to—their families, POC, Asians, the Mexican community, Black people, White people, Latina, Kanaka Maoli, neurodivergent academia, English as a second language, the French community, LGBTQ, first-generation college student community, international students—meant that we had a larger frame than the individual. Since we did this activity after five weeks of the semester, the students were already accustomed to checking in with their bodies and translating feelings in their bodies into words that expressed freedom, and had already built some trust with each other to share vulnerably. In short, we were able to commune with each other.

Reflection Question: Take a moment now or later to answer these questions as well: 1) Who are the communities you, dear reader, are accountable to? 2) What does liberation smell, sound, look, and feel like? 3) What is something you can do to practice liberation?

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4) Embodied Study Practice with Support and Accountability Partners/Pods

Another way I encourage students to build and feel community within the class throughout the semester, is by assigning what I call Support and Accountability Partners/Pods, or SAPs at the beginning of the semester. SAPs are two to three students who check in with each other every week at a set time, either in person or on the phone/computer for at least five minutes. They take turns asking each other how the week is going, and if their partner needs any support or accountability on anything. In previous semesters, some SAP pairs have gone on to become best friends, and at the very least, they have 1-2 people that will check in on them about the class content and their lives. I also use the SAP format to take attendance. If not everyone is there, I ask folks to see if their SAP is there and to let me know if not. I also ask those who missed class checking with their SAP, and those whose SAPs are missing to check in with them. Even if not all students feel connected to every student in the class, they are invited to connect with at least 1-2 other students.

In addition to checking in, each pair or pod has to co-facilitate what I call an Embodied Study Practice during class on one day out of the semester. These practices are not traditional presentations, though I ask them to share something of relevance to the class themes. Instead, they think of a practice or more that the entire class can do that will support us to learn differently by activating different senses in our bodies than

a traditional classroom would. One SAP had us learn how to fold an origami heart, and then write down words on our hearts that resonated from a video of Asian American women sharing testimonials. Another taught us some self-defense Aikido moves after showing us a couple of videos of Trans Women of Color and Disabled people talking about their experiences with harassment and abuse. Yet another facilitated a karaoke style dance party. I have found that these practices bring SAPs closer together, as well as the class, which sometimes breaks out into laughter, silence, and other shared emotional expressions, as well as different embodied experiences. And because these practices are done collectively, and offer different and creative points of access into information or knowledge, we are, as Ng described of her research participants, invigorated and empowered by being able to "reimagine and articulate a reality beyond words and text."[52]

As both Ng and Gaztambide-Fernández name, building relations and having an embodied understanding of our interdependence is tantamount to an effective decolonizing pedagogy of solidarity. In one of the Embodied Study Practices, the SAP shared a video of Italian opera producers and singers talking about how much they loved the tragic story of Madame Butterfly. Given that much of our theoretical focus of the class was on the unique gendered racialization of the "yellow woman" that scholar Anne Anlin Cheng discusses,[53] everyone cringed as we watched the White Italian singers on Youtube playing Japanese characters (invented by Giacomo Puccini, a White Italian) in kimonos, and White makeup. After being invited to share the feelings and sensations we felt during the video on a common document, the pair shared the next component of their practice—a singalong.

In preparation, they met on campus by the creek under redwood trees with a song from each of their mother tongues (Mandarin and Spanish) which they taught each other, then recorded themselves singing together. In class, they shared the song lyrics and invited the class to sing along as we watched the recording of them singing together in the redwoods. They explained that after the Madame Butterfly video, they wanted to do something that would respectfully be in relationship with each other's differences that would also feel good in both of their bodies. The result was a powerful embodied practice that centered the body of my/our, activated the parts of our brains and bodies that receives and co-creates music and song. Music, many reflected, touched something different in our bodies, and witnessing their communing inspired us to also join in with more eagerness.

As bell hooks says in *Teaching to Transgress, "*The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the

[52] Ng, "Pedagogy of Solidarity," 531.
[53] Anne Cheng, *Ornamentalism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

opportunity to labor for freedom."[54] For me, and hopefully for readers, these examples from my teaching at UC Berkeley demonstrate its liberatory potential, especially because it is a unique site of both structural differences and sameness.

Co-convening The Church of Black feminist Thought

> "Away from the corporate university classroom, from teaching in a degree-centered context, I was able to focus more on the practice of teaching and learning. I especially began to contemplate those forms of teaching and learning that take place outside the structured classroom. . .to me the best context for teaching was, of course, one where students chose to come because they wanted to learn, from me, from one another."
>
> –bell hooks, *Teaching Community*, page 21[55]

While the university classroom can be a space of liberation for students and teachers alike, as discussed in the section on teaching in the university, I was physically, emotionally, and spiritually saved by bringing the ideas of the academy to learn and teach alongside mixed community outside of the structured classroom when my

[54] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 207.
[55] bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2003), 21.

collaborator Ra Malika Imhotep and I were preparing for our Qualifying Exams.[56] Similar to how hooks describes above, it was in a non-academic community context that I was able to focus on communing with myself, community, and the ideas of the thinkers as integral to my learning. We discussed Black feminist thought with many bodies—mostly Black women who were not formal academic students—in the room over food, drink, movement, meditation, and music. No longer was I wrestling with my imposter syndrome as I tried to decipher Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* or Hortense Spillers' *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe.* Instead, we responded to these texts as they related to our own lives, and how they helped us to "live with theory" rather than "mastery over them."[57]

The Church of Black feminist Thought is what co-convener Ra Malika Imhotep and I call an embodied spiritual-political education project, conceived of in 2018. During the entire year of 2019, we met monthly in person and once online (during the California "wild" fires) to study the works of Black feminist thinkers who inhabited the genres of art, activism, and academia, and in some cases, those who blurred those edges or inhabited many/all of those genres. Each month, I would draw a portrait of the thinker, and Ra would write an invocation, or an introduction, for/about the thinker that we would share with our community in our newsletter and on social media. We would then meet on a Sunday of the month with 8-30 participants to discuss the

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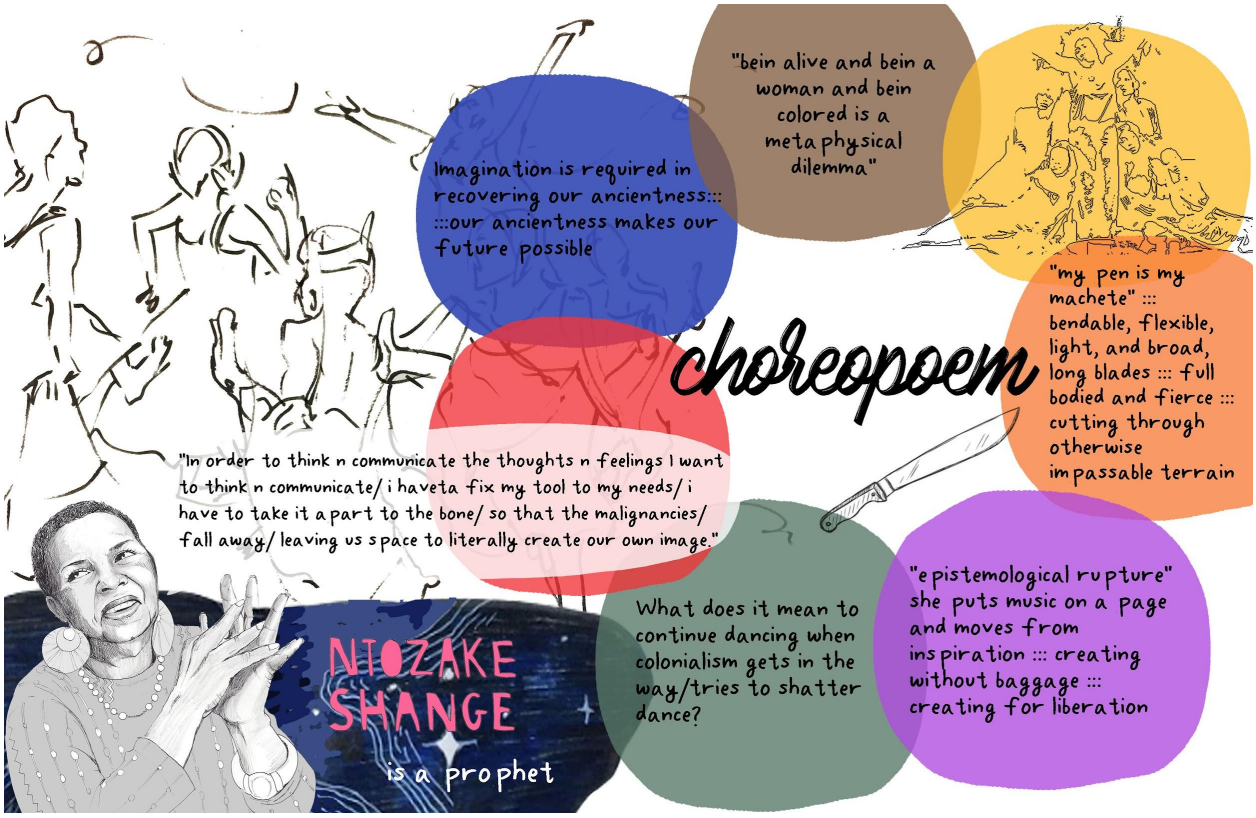
[56] In my department, the Qualifying Exams look like compiling and studying 30+ books and articles for three different fields (100+ total) with the guidance of professors who then prepare essay prompts at the end of the year that we write three separate essays over the course of four days in response to, after which is an oral exam. We are sent out of the room for half an hour, during which our committee deliberates on whether we've passed or not, as well as to discuss our dissertation proposal. It is a big metaphorical ring of fire to pass through after the first two years of coursework, with much food and ritual involved—graduate students bring us food and send us supportive messages during the four days of writing, and we bring food for our committee to eat for the exam. Once we "qualify" we can move onto the dissertation phase. Although I had contact with my professors throughout the year, my mental health was severely affected by there suddenly being no classmates to work through the ideas I was encountering. I was afraid of the four days of essay writing and of being unqualified, accumulated from two years of imposter syndrome, even though I was assured by my professors that I would "be fine." I'm not the only one to experience the Qualifying Exams in this way. I give some of this context to say that it was in this isolating and anxiety-filled year that Malika and I decided to start a community learning project. While some people were surprised that we embarked on this project during what is a decidedly difficult year, organizing a space for community members to think with us and with 12 Black feminist thinkers was actually one of the best things we could have done for our Qualifying Exams year. That is becuase we found a way to re-engage in education as a project of freedom by practicing Black feminist study, which Dr. Brandi Wilkins Catanese describes as "talking, listening, moving, resting, risking, holding, falling, laughing, dancing, creating, singing, breaking bread, writing, learning, wondering, understanding, accepting, rejecting, leading, following the lifework."

[57] Ra Malika Imhotep and Miyuki Baker, *Black Feminist Study Theory Atlas* (Oakland, 2019), 11.

thinker's ideas through some of their quotes, and share personal experiences. These gatherings would be replete with potluck foods, check-ins, dancing, etc. After a year of these gatherings, Ra and I reviewed the notes we had from the gatherings and created what we called theory maps, graphic and word-filled pages that shared some of the highlights of what we learned together (see below).



With the 12 theory maps and invocations, we created a theory atlas of Black feminist study. We launched the atlas at an art show we curated called "Communion," hosted at Ashara Ekundayo Gallery in Oakland, where we highlighted local Black artists. Since the show and the publishing of the atlas, we have had a few one-off gatherings that focused on themes rather than individual Black feminist thinkers, such as radical placemaking. We have also been invited to co-facilitate a workshop on Black feminist solidarity to accepted prospective students of color to UC Berkeley.

And yet our first gatherings were on campus with mostly graduate students, not people from the greater community as we had been hoping. We heard from the few community members who did come that they felt dread and anxiety being on campus, due to the ongoing violence—physical and emotional—and anti-Blackness on university campuses and formal academic spaces. This coincided with Ashara Ekundayo, a Black feminist cultural organizer who ran a gallery in downtown Oakland to showcase Black women and gender non-conforming people's art, messaging us for the second time saying that we should host our gatherings at her gallery. So halfway through the year, we moved the group to her gallery, and found that a wider array of

community members joined. Of course, the fact that the gallery—with its target audience being primarily Black women—publicized the gatherings on their platforms meant that our study sessions transformed into being majority Black women who were not students.

And while we realized we needed to be off campus for us to serve our primary audience, Black women, GNC, non-binary people, with or without academic affiliation, we have always been an intentionally open space with regards to race. As we say in the dedication page of our theory atlas, Church is for "all the black womxn + black feminists + womanists whose lives and labors enable us to imagine a better world" *as well as for* "all those ready to *live, learn, and love alongside*" those black womxn, feminists, and womanists. As a multiracial collective, this was our way of saying that we are centering Black people and their liberation, but that we welcomed others regardless of their identity if they shared a common goal. That said, me and Malika's collaboration was confusing for some attendees, specifically wondering how an Asian person could be co-facilitating Black feminist study sessions. The two of us had always had internal intentionality around our interracial collaboration. For example, we consciously chose different parts of the study sessions to facilitate (i.e. Malika was more often the first person to welcome people and frame the study session while I would often play the role of timekeeper, and facilitate freewrites and group work), but we had never had an open conversation about these things. After hearing more conversations about Black and Asian solidarity histories after the Atlanta shootings of Asian sex workers in 2021, we decided to broach the topic more publicly on The Reparations Show,[58] which Ra was invited to host in May 2021.

One of my main takeaways from that conversation was that although we crucially share the vision of celebrating Black feminist thought, we didn't start collaborating to intentionally continue the legacy of Asian and Black solidarity work. Rather, we continue to collaborate interracially because we care for each other as friends and admire how each other's gifts can support our shared visions. We have of course learned along the way to care about the specific histories of Black and Asian solidarity work. But just because we aren't always consciously or intentionally articulating a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company doesn't mean that the dynamics of our mixed collaboration aren't playing out. I hope that my autoethnographic reflections to follow can help explore our collaborative relationship, as well as in the CoBfT study sessions as they relate to how we might practice a pedagogy of solidarity in mixed company.

One place to start is around our decisions to make our study sessions free (unless we had a guest instructor or speaker who we wanted to pay, in which case we asked for donations), while creating two prices for our theory atlas. Reflecting on the former, I think we agreed to make the sessions free because we felt a responsibility to

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[58] FRIGID New York, *The Reparations Show Hosted By: Ra Malika Imhotep*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s951m4XYWfA.

leverage our shared academic resources for our communities. We also internalized how the academy and society does not compensate or financially value intellectual and cultural work. I compare this to the way a White classmate in my undergraduate studies created a lucrative moving business that capitalized on the fact that a large quantity of students were moving every semester/year. Whereas he saw a group of people who would help his business succeed, Malika and I did not want to/did not think of monetizing our efforts until 18 months into our collaboration when we had a material object, our theory atlas.

And for the theory atlas, we created two prices—one for Black people, and one for non-Black people. This was typically understood and respected by those who came into contact with the theory atlas. We did this in a way to acknowledge the inequities Black people continue to face, but also to prioritize their access to the content. In turn, the higher price for non-Black people was a way to acknowledge the way many non-Black people have typically had greater access to material wealth, so paying higher was a practice of solidarity to compensate for the lower price we had for Black buyers. But not all non-Black people have race and class privilege, which I realized belatedly after selling the atlas at the higher price to an indigenous Latinx student. In retrospect, I wish we had a more intersectional approach to the pricing of the atlases, and it is not too late to change it. In the future, I hope we can improve our pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company in this way of addressing structural differences and similarities within our society's structures of power with flexible structural decisions around the pricing of the atlas.

As mentioned in the introduction, the positionalities of graduate students in the academy are uneven, depending on our race, class, etc. And so while both of us receive stipends/salaries as PhD students/graduate student instructors (which is not always the case),[59] we are still "extremely low income."[60] Still, as two graduate students of color who grew up lower-income, our stipends—in addition to the access to class

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[59] Many graduate students even within the same university do not have funding, and must find their own work as Teaching Assistants or full/part-time work off campus to afford their studies. Some departments, especially in STEM pay their graduate students double or more than those in the humanities. When I started my PhD program, our departments, Performance Studies and African American Studies paid us around $20,000 after taxes to live in the Bay Area. For me, this was the first time I had a consistent income. And yet as I mentioned in the introduction, the class position and background someone starts a PhD program with really shapes the classed experience of having such a low income for a very long time, even if it's consistent. Therefore, the fact that my income has been below the poverty line for all of my adult life has a noticeable effect and changes the way I approach the future, compared to colleagues who have financial support from their families, or who have inheritances.

[60] Megan Kirkeby, "Revised State Income Limits for 2021" (Division of Housing Policy Development, December 31, 2021), https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/income-limits/state-and-federal-income-limits/docs/income-limits-2021.pdf.

and academic privilege (i.e. status, connections, resources and support) in graduate school—we have felt more stability during graduate school despite our positions in the larger economic system, which led to our desire to offer our labor for free. But within this shared reality, our lower-income backgrounds and continued realities as extremely low income are different because of our different races. My experience of being lower-income was/is influenced by having a White father, and an East Asian immigrant mother living in New England, whereas Malika's was influenced by having Black parents and growing up in the South. We have different structural and cultural relationships to money and resources that must be acknowledged. And while I'm certainly not claiming that each of our family's specific ways of making meaning about being low income can represent how all Asian, White, and Black people interact with being low income differently, I do believe they can give us some clues of the broad strokes.

In my family, despite qualifying for welfare assistance, my White father would tell my mother who asked if we could apply that it wasn't for "people like us." Although he never spelled it out, I think he did mean White people, based on comments he made in other moments about welfare recipients. A large part of his self-image is also as the small-business owning entrepreneur, and believes capitalism to be inherently good, and this country to be a land of great and equal opportunities, despite being financially poor. On the other hand, my East Asian immigrant mother instilled in me that this country left people like us—lower income—to die, and that I needed to work towards being secure financially and in my career if I wanted to survive. My family's stories have influenced the way I previously saw myself, but becoming conscious of them while also learning about the structures of power, I have found my agency to shift the narratives, however slowly. And so, I now know I can be on welfare *and* have race, class, and academic privileges, relative to others, and be able to make conscious choices of how to practice solidarity from this positionality.

Shifting from the solidarity we practice within the context of our interracial collaboration, an opportunity for a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company arose during our study sessions when one of the gallery attendants, who is mixed race Asian and White, offered her time to come on Sundays without compensation to open the gallery. She also bought pizza for the group on a day when our potluck variety was lacking. When participants offered to chip in, she said it was her contribution as a non-Black person in the space. This was received with silence, and because we didn't check in about how that comment felt, that silence could have meant any number of things like: "great, that makes sense, thanks;" "no one asked you to do that;" "we pitched in food too, that doesn't make sense," or even "that's offensive." Whereas the first act of solidarity was only known to a few of us when the gallery owner informed us, the second was made publicly known to the group by the assistant. Did the publicness of her contribution as a non-Black person take away from its ability to deepen solidarity in mixed company? Maybe; maybe not. Could her tone or follow up conversations change the initial reception of her comment? Might the age,

professions, personalities, and closeness of the people gathered that day have an impact on how that comment was received? My intention here isn't to pick apart her decision to state her monetary contributions in relation to being not-Black, but rather to note that context matters. That is, it is helpful to think about how our speech and actions support or hinder building deeper relations of solidarity depending on who is listening. In retrospect, I wish that as co-conveners, we could have used this opportunity in the moment to have intentional dialogue about it in the context of CoBfT's vision of solidarity in mixed company. In many ways, I am hoping that this paragraph can be a starting place.

Another opportunity to practice solidarity with mixed company was in how we formed smaller groups to discuss the thinker's quotes. Both in-person and Zoom groups have been formed by chance because we either counted off numbers 1 to 4, or Zoom automatically created the groups. But since these smaller groups were intimate spaces to share personal experiences as they related to the theory, I found that being a non-Black participant in these groups made some of my Black group mates uncomfortable. This was even more pronounced if there was more than one non-Black participant in a group. Malika and I have discussed that it could be useful in the future to explicitly create a group that is for the non-Black participants. This would support some spaces to be reserved for Black women, GNC, and other people, as the EBMC encourages in their Radical Inclusivity Practices. Since we would come back to the mixed space of our bigger group, this would allow us to hold both structural difference and sameness within the study sessions.

Returning now to the themes addressed at the beginning of this chapter, I strongly believe that it is because we have prioritized centering our individual and collective bodies, and communing with ourselves and each other, that we are able to navigate the dynamics of solidarity in mixed company discussed above. For instance, Malika and I have always had the philosophy that *if the work cannot hold our bodies, something needs to be adjusted.* Often that looked like our personal bodies, but it was also a collective of two bodies, so if one of us needed more time, less commitments, or anything else, then the priorities of the collective shifted. This has happened when we were looking at grant due dates, invitations to do consulting work, to present at conferences, etc. This is such a simple practice and example of us centering the bodies of my/our, that it feels almost redundant to talk about it in detail, but I would argue that it's just not common in most settings. In the particular setting of collaborating and co-convening a space to embody solidarity in mixed company, this centering of our bodies became indispensable.

Speaking of embodying solidarity, the late Linda Marie Thurston, who was active in the campaign to free political prisoners including Mumia Abu-Jamal, said in an interview in 2019 after decades of abolitionist organizing:

> "I guess I've come full circle after all these years, realizing that we need the political analysis, we need the political education, we need the strategizing, we need more bodies, and we need resources. But we also damn sure better remember that we're human beings and *we need to support one another on all levels or we're not going to make it.* Sometimes our failure is as simple as calling a meeting at dinnertime and not having so much as a pitcher of water at the table. If we're going to survive, if we're going to succeed, if we're going to win, if we're going to free folks, we've got to get better at doing the human piece of building movement by building community."[61]

Malika shared this quote at the end of our conversation on The Reparations Show, after I told Ra that making a smoothie for Ra, and caring for Ra was just as, if not more important as the theories, the words, and intentions of solidarity. That centering our bodies as co-conveners, collaborators, and chosen family was what sustained our movement work. That we must never forget that. Echoing the very title of this dissertation, Ra noted: "Yeah, it's that everyday practice." I appreciate Thurston highlighting such an everyday practice of needing to remember to have a pitcher of water at dinnertime convenings, and Ra for sharing Thurston's reflections because centering our bodies' needs is at the heart of our work and ability to embody solidarity together in both our structural differences and similarities.

In study sessions, we extended this philosophy to center our bodies by inviting people to "come when you can" with the disclaimer of what time Ra would read the invocation, which marked the start of looking at the Black feminist thinker of the month. We offered this to support access for people who feel anxiety, or who couldn't spend the entirety of three hours we allocated to the gathering because of work or needing to go about their day at their own pace. We also held space for communion by:

1. Calling ourselves a church, making altars, and having potluck food
2. Starting with meditation, journaling, and check-ins
3. Valuing what each person already knows and has experienced, while also offering a frame of reference for what we're doing with readings we send in advance and then sharing an invocation about the thinker

For the first practice, while we recognized that the word "church" has an explicitly Christian connotation, specifically of being a building where Christians congregate, it can also be, as Dr. Brandi Wilkins Catanese wrote in our preface, "a way of being in relation to others in relation to shared values and ideals."[62] What we did want to bring

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[61] Matt Meyers, "Linda Thurston Talks Community," *PM Press* (blog), July 31, 2019, https://blog.pmpress.org/2019/07/31/linda-thurston-talks-community/.
[62] Ra Malika Imhotep and Miyuki Baker, *Black Feminist Study Theory Atlas* (Oakland, 2019), 9.

from the cultural or personal knowledge of church was the sacredness, space for contemplation/reflection, and the conviviality that happens after church at the snacks table. Therefore, we invited participants to bring a dish or drink to share, and we always had an altar set up to honor the thinker we were studying. These elements were important to us to convey to the participants that this was a space for both self-reflection as well as nurturing sacred community. The second practice is one that Malika and I use when we are co-working or planning anything together. And similar to its function in the university classroom, it is a way to have time to commune with ourselves, and then to share/hear the stories of the collective. Hearing what each person was bringing to the gathering would help us connect our individual feelings with the feelings of the collective. In the final practice, while we always share a folder before gatherings filled with readings by the thinker we are about to study, and invite people to check them out, we do not require reading. Instead, we ask people to come with what they already know. While this does mean that some people have more from the readings to draw from than others, it has made it much more accessible of a space. In contrast with mainstream learning spaces, where there is often a focus on what the learner still needs to know, this practice at Church gatherings honors the wisdom and knowledge we *already* have from our everyday lives, as well as that which we inherited from our ancestors. It honors that we are already enough, as we are.[63]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I started by asking what thinkers other than the Poverty Scholars had to say about an effective pedagogy of solidarity. I first explored several thinkers' proposals and practices for starting the urgent work of raising the critical consciousness for us to be in everyday solidary relations with each other. They argued that we must divest from teaching and practicing a solidarity that reinscribes colonial and White body supremacist logics which create a feelings of pity (towards the self or

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[63] "Black Feminist Breathing Chorus," Sangodare & Alexis for Mobile Homecoming Trust, accessed March 22, 2022, https://sangodare.podia.com/breathingchorus. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs discusses in her Black feminist Breathing Chorus for the Combahee River Collective (CRC), the value of Black women is not contingent on what they do, but rather is before all of that, and goes without question. "You are priceless just because you are" as she puts it. She offers that all the extractive labor of Black women gets reinvested in their spiritual well-being. Our practice of honoring and protecting how people show up as they are--before reading the essays by the thinkers we celebrated--was thus crucial in putting those words by the CRC and Gumbs into practice. And of course, all of us could stand to use the reminder that we are valuable and sacred simply for existing. Such a reminder is a crucial foundation for being interested in centering our personal and collective bodies, or for communing with ourselves and each other. It resists the myths taught to us by White Body Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, and Capitalism, that we are only valuable if we are productive, are consumers, and are in a competition for resources and status.

the other), and saviorship. Instead, several argued for a decolonial and radical solidarity that reminds us of our interdependence and interconnection with all beings through nurturing genuine relations. One that takes the body as our common denominator from which to heal and notice the imprint of the structures of violence we are trying to dismantle. To review, here are some components that others have raised:

1. be an everyday embodied practice that can hold our wholeness (Ng)
2. raise our critical consciousness (Freire)
3. be critically compassionate (Zembylas)
4. be decolonizing in its goals (Ng and Gaztambide-Fernández)
5. build relations that remind us of our interdependence (Gaztambide-Fernández and Ng)
6. be radically inclusive and accessible (EBMC)
7. center (the needs and traumas of) our own bodies and the bodies of all beings (Menakem)
8. hold space to commune with ourselves and with others (EBMC)

In particular, I shared reflections and analysis of the two pedagogical sites I'm a part of to illuminate the importance of the last two—centering our own and all of our bodies, and communing with ourselves and each other—in a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company. As I explained in the section on teaching in the university, one of my main arguments is that we ought to see the university as a place of possibility with regards to preparing students for a life of practicing a pedagogy of solidarity with mixed company. This is because the shared goal of learning college-level writing and research offers structural sameness—however uneven—to be strategically leveraged together, even if there is great structural difference among students. And that through offering creative and relational practices in the classroom that centered my/our bodies and nurtured a way to commune with ourselves and each other *while* reading and analyzing structural critiques of racial capitalism (critically examining power and privilege), my students will be more prepared in the future to take personal and collective co-responsibility for systemic change.

In the section on co-convening the Church of Black feminist Thought study sessions, I offered that Malika and I leveraged our own class and/or academic privileges to hold the container for community-accountable scholarship that practices collective liberation. And yet I also demonstrated the ways we hold structural differences within our interracial/class collaboration. The practices of centering and communing with my/our bodies have been crucial in helping us navigate a pedagogy of solidarity with mixed company.

Ultimately, I believe that both the formal and community sites of education I discuss support the practices of a pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company, although they each have their unique offerings and limitations. For instance, the university

classroom is a set group of people who are committed to working together for a set amount of time, which can allow for a more sustained intensity in our collaboration than the study sessions we hosted with the CoBfT, whose participants changed from month to month. One of the strengths of the community classroom is that because there are no grades or other evaluations of attendance and performance, we can commune together more easily with the knowledge that we all truly want to be there. Of course these two formats don't have to be so separate. While Malika and I started the Church to learn in ways beyond the confines of a traditional classroom and formal academic institution, we dreamed that the Theory Atlas could be used by teachers in traditional classrooms, in addition to families, activists, and community members as a way to bridge these different learning spaces. Both of us have used pedagogical structures from our CoBfT study sessions in our university classrooms, and gave students the option of making theory maps to incorporate a different approach to making meaning of theory.

Finally, if you remember nothing else, I want to repeat the importance of connecting self and collective bodies in an effective pedagogy of solidarity for mixed company. We must remember the relationship between the two in our pedagogies of solidarity even if we may be focusing on one or the other. This is because they are interconnected, and mutually affected. Without structural change, we cannot have personal healing. Without personal change, we cannot expect structural change. How do we live each day in our individual bodies and lives while being connected to the collective bodies? How do we practice and embody ways of taking care of both in our everyday lives and in our relationships? These are questions I ask you to sit with at the end of this chapter. I hope these theories and practices of a pedagogy of solidarity will be useful for readers on their own learning journeys, both as educators/facilitators and learners[64] as we strive to be in good relation with all beings, especially when engaging in mixed company.

[64] This is because I believe that learning and teaching/facilitating go hand in hand, especially in the arena of solidarity. As I emphasized in the previous chapter, we must continue to unpack what we have been taught by structures of oppression, and learn or relearn what brings us together to practice collective freedom, at the same time as we help steward these un/learnings in spaces of sameness to support others in their learning journeys. Additionally, learning does not stop at the point of receiving a diploma from high school or college, for example, but is rather a lifelong process.

CHAPTER FIVE
Conclusion:

This dissertation is ultimately a call to ongoing practices of solidarity in our everyday lives, even if the practice needed is to reflect or to pause. My hope is that this document has shed light on the power of being in/building relationships of deep trust, so that we *can* keep showing up in the everyday practices of solidarity across difference, within sameness, and in mixed company, from a place of openness and curiosity. But at the end of this dissertation, you might be experiencing a gap between what your heart sees, and what your thinking mind believes is possible. You might even be experiencing a whole range of uncomfortable emotions—fear, anxiety, shame, self-judgment, etc.—that is affecting your ability to hear your voice of wisdom telling you what the smallest next step for you might be after reading this dissertation.

To that, I offer the following questions my life coach asks of me at the end of our sessions:

1. What is *one* thing you learned from our session?
2. What are you willing to be acknowledged for?
3. Given what you've seen, what is one small, sweet step you're willing to take?
4. Who or what can support you in taking that step?

What can be so powerful about answering these questions is that in reflecting within myself and then sharing with my coach, I am connecting the wisdom that emerged from our time together to something positive that I brought to the session, finding a way to put my learnings into action, and then being in relationship with the world to support my action. And yet sometimes at the very end, after my wisdom has shown me a course of action, I get stuck or scared again. In these moments, my coach gently reminds me that it would be so normal for my thinking mind to take a moment to catch up with what my heart has seen. When this happens, she asks me "what are you more interested in looking at?" to invite my curiosity, and see what might help me stay focused on the next step.[1]

In fact, much of my coaching during the past two+ years was around writing this dissertation. There were many challenging days because it felt hard to face the task at hand to tell the truths I wanted to tell, and the strength I needed to be one of the voices to tell it. But when I asked myself what one small thing that interested me about continuing, I saw the faces and hearts of people in my community, the families of my

[1] "About - Academy for Coaching Excellence," November 15, 2021, https://acecoachtraining.com/about/. My coach was trained with the Academy for Coaching Excellence (ACE), a training I also went through and highly recommend!

beloved friends, and others with race, class, and/or academic privilege. People who might be called to read the words I've gathered from the brilliant and courageous people who shared their life experiences and scholarship with me so that others might experience some ease to practice solidarity in ways that are in service of our collective healing. This, I realized, was what Poverty Scholars meant when they talked about humility. I felt humbled, and indebted to reciprocate on behalf of all that I was gifted by the Poverty Scholars, Solidarity Family members, my students, and members of the Church of Black feminist Thought. And so below, I offer some reflections on what I believe is an essential ingredient in our everyday practices of solidarity: humble reciprocity. Perhaps it will spark ideas for what else will support you to keep practicing solidarity.

Humble Reciprocity

Humility and gratitude are related emotions, but the etymologies are vastly different. Whereas gratitude comes from words that mean to favor, celebrate, and sing praise,[2] humility derives from *humus,* which means earth.[3] In spiritual practices around the world, a common way to feel grounded when we're suffering is to physically touch the earth, and to conjure up what we're grateful for. Humility is, therefore, a type of gratitude for the earth which connects us all. I suggest that reciprocity, the act of giving back, is humility in practice. I offer humble reciprocity as a crucial element for those of us with race, class, and/or academic privilege seeking to be in right relationship, and practice solidarity in a different way, particularly when we're feeling stuck and immobilized by our emotions.

Poverty Scholarship describes that humility is often missing from the organizing of people with race, class, and/or academic privilege—and I would add, daily living—because we hold the innate belief that we can "go anywhere, do anything, save everything, fix everything, take care of everything, and be a part of everything." Of course, this stems from the spiritual toll—numbness, emptiness, disconnection, etc.—of participating in racial capitalism, and other systems of power, which I described in Chapter Three. Instead, *Poverty Scholarship* offers that we "move softly on Pachamama, thinking first about others who live in any given place—who are there, fight there, are from there."[4] If we have humility when we engage with each other, whether across difference, within sameness, or in mixed company, we will feel more

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[2] "Gratitude | Etymology, Origin and Meaning of Gratitude by Etymonline," accessed April 6, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/gratitude.

[3] "Humility | Etymology, Origin and Meaning of Humility by Etymonline," accessed April 6, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/humility.

[4] Lisa "Tiny" Gray-Garcia, Dee Garcia, and The POOR Magazine Family, *Poverty Scholarship Poor People-Led Theory, Art, Words & Tears Across Mama Earth* (POOR Press, 2019), 335.

rooted from the experience of seeing that our viewpoint is but one of many. What might a next small sweet step that moves softly, humbly, in reciprocity look like?

Expanding on the concept of reciprocity and its sweetness, Indigenous ethnobotanist Robin Wall Kimmerer beautifully describes the way braiding sweetgrass involves two people connected by a plant. The sweetest way to braid a sheaf of sweetgrass (or *wiingaashk* in Potawatomi, meaning "the sweet-smelling hair of Mother Earth"), Kimmerer emphasizes, is to have "someone else hold the end so that you pull gently against each other, all the while leaning in, head to head, chatting and laughing, watching each other's hands, one holding steady while the other shifts the slim bundles over one another, each in its turn. Linked by sweetgrass, there is reciprocity between you, linked by sweetgrass, the holder as vital as the braider."[5] Can we as people of race, class, and/or academic privilege learn from this description of reciprocity?

On a podcast episode called "On Settler Responsibility and Reciprocity," local Indigenous leader Corrina Gould[6] emphasized the need for reciprocity in terms of being good guests so that they can be the good hosts they see it their duty to be.[7] She explained that the fourth and fifth graders she speaks to all understand how to be a good guest. Don't touch anything without permission, ask first, say thank you. She recounted that adults, on the other hand, have a much harder time facing the horrific truths of our history and present day treatment of indigenous peoples and land, and that it takes much more work to get the message through about being a good guest and having us act on this understanding.

But I think we need to appeal to the inner child within us. That fourth or fifth grader still resides within us[8] and Corinna's words and explanation really spoke to that part of me. It got through the layers of big words and literature reviews on solidarity, and its neighboring ideas. How can we all walk on this land in right relationship with

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[5] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, First Paperback edition (Minneapolis, Minn: Milkweed Editions, 2015), ix.

[6] Corrina Gould is the spokesperson for the Confederated Villages of Lisjan/Ohlone. She was born and raised in Oakland, CA, the territory of Huichin. She is an activist that has worked on preserving and protecting the ancient burial sites of her ancestors in the Bay Area for decades. She is the Co-founder and a Lead Organizer for Indian People Organizing for Change, a small Native run grassroots organization and co-founder of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an urban Indigenous women's community organization working to return land to Indigenous stewardship in San Francisco's East Bay.

[7] For the Wild, "CORRINA GOULD on Settler Responsibility and Reciprocity," For the Wild, accessed November 11, 2020, https://forthewild.world/listen/corrina-gould-on-settler-responsibility-and-reciprocity-208.

[8] Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love*, 1st edition (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018). In *The Body Is Not an Apology,* Sonya Renee Taylor says that radical self love does not have to be (and cannot be) found externally because the two year old who was delighted by their body still lives within us.

the land and how can we be good guests to the indigenous peoples whose land we are on? Gould invites non-indigenous guests on Huichin Ohlone Land (S.F. Bay Area) to pay a voluntary tax or the Shu'umi Land Tax to support the rematriation of land.[9] This voluntary tax is supported by the spirit of humble reciprocity, for when we see how much we are benefitting from being on this land, we are humbled, and are moved to voluntarily give back.

POOR Magazine's concept of being a good daughter or good relative, of being a good guest, and "starting in a good way" are thus shorthand to remind us to act with humble reciprocity. And the invitation to learn in PeopleSkool and practice Community Reparations, is an incredible gift for people with race, class, and/or academic privilege. When we can remember it as an incredible gift, we can see ourselves as mentees to Poverty Scholars who give back our gifts and redistribute our wealth with deep gratitude for the healing we experience when we act in ways that are ethical, and in good relationship with all our relations. I say "when we can remember it as such," because we must be able to access our humble gratitude in order to humbly reciprocate. When we forget, we may make mistakes, but as Solidarity Family member Toby put it, "with family, the door's kind of open. It doesn't mean you never have boundaries but you can't pretend you don't know who they are if there's harm." The practice of being a "good daughter/son/child" in these contexts then is about keeping our doors open, treating each other with respect, practicing humble reciprocity, and listening to the original instructions of our hosts.[10]

Of course, the original instructions may cause deep discomfort and tension within us. As Tuck and Yang point out, because actual decolonization (returning stolen indigenous land) eliminates the property rights and sovereignty or people with race, class, and/or academic privilege, our solidarity requires a "*dangerous understanding of*

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[9] "Shuumi Land Tax," *The Sogorea Te Land Trust* (blog), https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/shuumi-land-tax/. *Indigenous Tech — Corrina Gould, "Sogorea Te' Land Trust,"* accessed April 6, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4mj_gSZWGE. Citing Steven Newcomb, Shawnee/Lenape Executive Director of the Indigenous Law Institute Gould explained that rematriation is more than just about the physical returning land that was previously stolen. In fact, rematriation acknowledges the *spiritual relationship between people and the land*, and restores this sacred relationship that one can have with their ancestral lands, without external interference. For people not in the S.F. Bay Area, she encourages them to seek out the indigenous peoples of the land they are on, and practice reparations with money and land. Presentation on the Sogorea Te' Land Trust in the opening talk for BCNM's Indigenous Tech Speaker series in September 2020.

[10] Corrina Gould explains that we all have original instructions—if we are not on the land of our ancestors (or lands, for those of us with mixed ancestry), it is our duty to find out the original instructions of our people. But, she emphasizes, it is equally important to listen to the original instructions of the peoples who are the original inhabitants (and descendants) of the land we are currently on. In the case of Gould, her original instructions talk about making sure everyone is provided for.

uncommonality that un-coalesces coalition politics. . .[which] may feel very unfriendly."[11] They and other indigenous thinkers argue that the purpose of decolonization is not to reconcile, but to recognize the incommensurability of the circumstances. While I do agree that the circumstances are absolutely incommensurable, from my perspective as a Solidarity Family member, the effectiveness of Poverty Scholarship lies in its ability to strategically call out our duty and responsibility to pay Community Reparations and "unsell" land, we are also held in what Cynthia described as dignity and grace. Tuck and Yang may raise their eyebrows with these terms and wonder whether Solidarity Family members are prone to replicating what they critique as the "Settler's moves towards innocence." But I would argue that Poverty Scholars encourage us to be in solidarity with both dignity and humility. Dignity is, I believe, our ability to love one another—even if we do not like each other. As the famous Martin Luther King Jr. quote goes, "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."[12] We need a kind of justice that does not recreate the harms of racial capitalism and colonization. I agree with King that we must infuse our organizing with love, and that includes a healthy love of ourselves that allows us to keep showing up for our relations, for justice, and for power that is infused with love for all beings.

This brings me to the Combahee River Collective, the Black feminist, Lesbian, Socialist group started in 1974 and named after the river in South Carolina where Harriet Tubman freed 700 enslaved Africans.[13] I feel humble reciprocity in response to their 1977 "Combahee River Collective Statement," which is thoroughly infused with power and justice guided by love for self and the collective. In it, they boldly propose that "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression."[14] For in the CRC's view, the intersectional identities they hold—being Black, lesbian, women—have helped them know in an embodied way that "the major systems of oppression are interlocking."[15] That White Supremacy, capitalism, Settler Colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia, ableism are interwoven, inseparable, and co-constitutive, or made together.

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[11] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 35, https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630.

[12] Martin Luther King Jr, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), 38.

[13] Helen Leichner, "Combahee River Raid (June 2, 1863)," December 21, 2012, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-raid-june-2-1863/.

[14] The Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," 1977, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-collective-statement-1977.

[15] The Combahee River Collective, 1.

As I paid particular attention to in the last chapter, connecting our body with the bodies of everyone else, what Black feminist theories on intersectionality[16] have in common is that our collective freedom is interconnected from the structural level; that is, legal, political, cultural, and social practices larger than the individual. And if our freedom is connected, then our unfreedom is also connected. This is not to say that our individual actions do not matter; no: individual racist, sexist, classist actions are harmful and add to our unfreedom. But we are misguided when we isolate individuals as the problem, such as is the case every time we believe that justice has been served, or that we are closer to liberation when an individual police officer who has taken the life of a Black or Brown person is imprisoned. Rather, in this example of police brutality, Black feminist theories of intersectionality illuminate the need for structural analyses in which the police officer's actions are seen as a product of a gendered, White Supremacist, Capitalist Prison Industrial Complex that requires the policing, incarceration, and killing of Black and Brown bodies to help White bodies feel safe. And as I, following Poverty Scholars, have been arguing in this dissertation, people with race, class, and/or academic privilege must practice solidarity in ways that reflect our commitment to divesting from the whole structure of racial capitalism, which hurts all of us, even as it may materially benefit us.

So to be clear, when the CRC names that Black women's freedom would result in everyone else's freedom, they are not talking about the material freedom or resources of individual Black women freeing me, or my aunt living in Japan who experiences her intersectional identities quite differently than Black women around the world. As they explain, "our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression." In other words, because their identities hold so many interlocking modes of oppressions—race, class, gender, etc.—at what they say is their "position at the bottom" of the American capitalistic economy, a Black feminist movement the frees them would necessarily require that every *system* of oppression—racism, classism, sexism, ableism, etc. —be destroyed.

Returning to my aunt in Japan, it might be difficult for some to see where her life is connected to the life of Black women. Even if there weren't Black women living in

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[16] Frances M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 166–76; Maegan Parker Brooks and Davis W. Houck, "'Nobody's Free Until Everybody's Free,': Speech Delivered at the Founding of the National Women's Political Caucus, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1971," in *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer* (University Press of Mississippi, 2010), https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781604738223.003.0017; Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings* (The New Press, 2017). While the Black feminist origins of theories of intersectionality, when cited at all, are attributed to legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw writing in 1989, there is a rich lineage starting with Frances Beal writing in 1969 about the "Double Jeopardy" faced by the Black woman, Fannie Lou Hamer, who said in 1971 that "nobody's free until everybody's free," and of course the statement published in 1977 by the Combahee River Collective Statement from which I pulled the quote above.

Japan (which there are actually many[17]), the argument is that when the systems of oppression were eradicated, then people everywhere would be freed, even if everyone experienced those systems differently. Therefore, what I appreciate about the CRC statement is that it is truly inclusive of us all, even as it holds so specifically the identity politics of a group of Black feminist Lesbian socialists in Boston. People with race, class, and/or academic privilege are indeed included in the "everyone else" that the CRC names. Similarly then, I would add to the Black feminist lineage of intersectionality above, the movement for Black Lives (AKA The Black Lives Matter Movement), which in its simultaneous centering of both individual Black people's wellbeing *as well as* the destruction of structures in our society that violate their freedom, serves our collective liberation. I will repeat the co-founder of BLM Alicia Garza's message here that the statement "Black lives matter," does *not* negate the fact that other lives also matter.[18] In the CRC framework, however, it will not be until Black lives are structurally freed—when the structures that oppress Black people are eliminated—that the rest of us will be freed too.

The CRC also asserts that "The most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression."[19] Although this may appear to mean we cannot practice solidarity across difference, I would argue that their emphasis is on where we are organizing from, agreeing with Poverty Scholars that we must practice "I" journalism, interrogating our own stories and how we are impacted by racial capitalism, for example. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter Three, organizing from our own identities—within sameness—as we practice solidarity with the self-determined movements of Black, poor, indigenous, and other peoples, is crucial in our ability to feel rooted and ethical belonging. While it is true that our identities can and do shift, whether by our own choices or structural/cultural shifts,[20] this dissertation springs from the assertions made by the CRC and Poverty Scholarship that organizing from our own identities and experiences is crucial for our collective liberation.

"Allowing the Reality to be Present"

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[17] Naomi Osaka, the Olympic and award winning tennis player is not the first or the last Japanese Black woman to exist, but the documentary of her life (2021) was one of the first mainstream TV series to widely expose the two way tension she experiences from both Japanese and American audiences for her intersectional identity as Japanese and Black.

[18] Bloomberg Quicktake: Originals, *Black Lives Matter Co-Founder: Our Goal Is to Make All Lives Matter*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB_D1FbYh7M.

[19] The Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," 4.

[20] With regards to cultural shifts in identity, I'm thinking about how Irish, Italian, and Jewish people were originally not included in the racial category and project of Whiteness/White people.

I want to live in a world that's big enough to hold my good days and my bad days. As I already discussed above, I want to live in a world that moves from a place of love. In addition to the perspective from King, Lama Rod Owens—Buddhist minister, writer, and activist of radical dharma—defines love as "allowing the reality to be present so we can see it and really figure out how to change it."[21] The invitation in this project for me has been to hold that kind of space for myself and other people with race, class, and/or academic privilege. I wanted to write a dissertation that would hold that kind of space for my readers who come from all walks of life, who are at various stages of growth and understanding. I want to use this conclusion to repeat that my intention for these pages is to meet people with race, class, and/or academic privilege where they're/you're at, while also being truthful about what we must take accountability for in order to heal. Granted, to pick this book up, you are probably at least interested in what it looks like for us to transform our relationship to each other because you have perhaps felt that something was missing, hurting, or not quite right. And if you have read any of the words on the page and felt that I was admonishing, patronizing, or alienating you, that is *not* my intention.

I remember my former therapist[22] once reminding me that it's okay if not everyone is an activist. It was a shocking statement for me to hear. She continued, "people can do good things at the small level, like maybe someone brings a meal over to their neighbor, or maybe someone is a therapist—like me—supporting those who are activists, people like you." Before the Covid19 pandemic began, my social web was primarily people in the same age bracket as me, and her comment helped expose my bubble of activist thinking. The false bubble that said we must all explicitly be working towards social justice in order to be worthy. But we are all worthy. We all deserve to feel belonging. While I certainly have my days of scarcity and judgmental thinking, I have come to experience that unless we have conversations about solidarity and the healing practices (personal and collective in tandem) with a capacious and accessible, non-judgemental, and loving approach, we will not achieve liberation.

Thank you for reading until the end—even if you skipped around. I hope that this unfinished and evolving set of ideas on the pages here have supported you to confront and support the hurts within you, and offered alternative ways of being rooted in all your relations as you practice solidarity across difference, within sameness, and in mixed company. May this writing support you to get friendly with change—both in your personal and our collective lives—for our collective liberation demands that we be willing to be made and unmade each and every day.

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[21] Lama Rod Owens, *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation through Anger* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2020), 152–53.

[22] Shoutout to Orit Weksler!

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