2022

Roots and Webs and Nets and Branches and Bulletin Boards and Banners and Newsletters and Mutual Aid Text Threads and Kin and Caretakers and Porches and Poems of Today and Spaces of Survival

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As I welcome Richmond, VA into my family, I find myself needing to make roots and webs and nets and branches that ground me, that place myself as a Black, queer, mixed race, artist, activist, educator, storyteller, and cultural worker in this city. I am called to the streets before I am called to my studio. I question what it means to be a part of an institution that is slowly eating this city up. I become a story collector. I need to know where I am and whose land I now call home.
Acknowledgement

First ancestors. This work didn't come out of thin air. This work, practice, generous offering is very much because of so much work that has come before me. To even be interested in wanting to do this research, ask these questions, and make this work is because of so many. **Here:** My thesis committee, advisors, readers, Cara Benedetto, Caitlin Cherry, Hope Ginsburg, nicole killian, and Sandy Zohore. Faculty, supporters, Amber Esseva, Brooke Inman, Massa Lemu, Alex Matzke, Nontsikelelo Mutiti, Courtnie Wolfgang, my Peers, so many! Collaborators, Archerd Aparejo, Amariise Carreras, Ayana Zaire Cotton, Ty Little, Agustine Zegars. **People:** HH Hiaasen, Suchi Branfman, Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle, Lee Rae Walsh, Kimi Hanauer, Marlee Grace, Tania Butterworth, Jade Mara Novarino, Kelley Ann Lindo, Sebete Dos Santos, Reuben Branfman, Clare Branfman, Joao Verissimo, Faythe Levine. **Places:** Cities I call home: East Village, NY, Los Angeles, CA, Desert Hot Springs, CA, Oakland, CA, Rio De Janeiro, Brasil, The Nook House Cultural Center/Nook Gallery [Oakland, CA], Catalpa Residency [Desert Hot Springs, CA], Marcus-David Peters Circle [Richmond, VA], Enslaved Peoples Trail [Richmond, VA], Pony Pasture [Richmond, VA], Parkwood Ave [Richmond, VA], DePillars Building Graduate Studio [Richmond, VA], Moments Cooperative and Community Space [Oakland, CA]. **Archive:** The PAPR Xerox Machine [Richmond, VA], School Paper Express, Endless Editions [New York City, NY], Childish Press [Portland, MA], Everywhere Press [Richmond, VA], Remote Intimacies Series with Leslie Lohman Museum and ONE Archive, Vancouver Art Book Fair.

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1 This “so many” is specifically calling attention to the books, posters, artist books, tapes, and prints that are part of my living bibliography. Full living bibliography is in Chapter 4: Archive.
2 Nook House Cultural Center, also known at Nook Gallery, Oakland, CA, 2015-2020. Since its birth in Fall 2015, Nook Gallery [Lisjan Ohlone Land, Oakland, CA] has given queer, trans, women, femme and artists of color an inclusive, accessible, and intimate site for visual art, lectures, workshops, critical dialogues, film screenings, meals, and performances. The seating nook, transformed into a gallery in our kitchen, gives the artist(s) a clear and unique space to work with and to present work within. [https://www.instagram.com/nook_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/nook_gallery)
3 Catalpa Residency, Desert Hot Springs, CA, where the original outline for this document was written. Catalpa Residency DHS is a space for activists and artists, prioritizing women, people of color, trans-spectrum and L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ folks, to create, rejuvenate, work and think deeply.
4 Marcus-David Peters Circle, previously called Robert E. Lee Circle, on Monument Ave and Allen Ave, Richmond, VA
5 Moments Cooperative and Community Space, Oakland, CA, was founded in the summer of 2020 to support the creative and material needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color on Occupied Lisjan Ohlone Land (Oakland) by providing physical space for community care, collaboration, and education. Opened in January 2021, Moments Co-op distributes resources and support through paid residency programs, a community fridge, and more. We seek to uplift QTBIPOC voices and visions in order to build the conditions for our communities to thrive here and now. [https://www.momentscooperative.com](https://www.momentscooperative.com)
6 Branfman-Verissimo, “Slow Looking, These Views are our Tools”, 2021
Ingredients:

Welcome

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   B. Nets: Organizing Structures Found in the Natural World, Community Organizing Spaces, and Building Community
   C. Branches: Placemaking

Chapter 2: People
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   B. Banners: Text + Patterns = Our New Language
   C. Mutual Aid Text Threads: Pedagogies of Care and Abolition
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   B. Spaces of Survival: Creating Sanctuary

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   A. Roots: Bibliography
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Epilogue
Vita

Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo (they/them/Lukaza) born in New York City, NY, is an artist, activist, educator, storyteller, & curator who lives/works between Lisjan Ohlone Land [Oakland, CA] and Powhatan Land [Richmond, VA]. Their work has been included in exhibitions and performances at Konsthall C [Stockholm, Sweden], SEPTEMBER Gallery [Kinderhook, NY], EFA Project Space [New York City, NY], Leslie Lohman Museum [New York City, NY], Yerba Buena Center for the Arts [San Francisco, CA], and Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive [Berkeley, CA], amongst others. They have been awarded residencies at Kala Art Institute [Berkeley, CA], ACRE Residency [Steuben, WI], Vermont Studio Center [Johnson, VT], Black Space Residency [San Francisco, CA], and Activation Residency [Woodridge, NY]. Their artist books and prints have been published by Endless Editions, Childish Books, Play Press, Press Press, Printed Matter Inc., Sming Sming, and Night Diver Press, and are in the permanent collections at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cynthia Sears Artist's Book Collection, California College of the Arts Printmaking Archive, the UC Santa Cruz Library, and San Francisco Museum of Art Library. Lukaza got their Bachelor of Fine Arts at California College of the Arts and Master of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University.
Welcome

The roots came first, then webs, always webs, seen and unseen, carried with me and found on the journey. I sat on Ro’s porch in the dead of summer 2020 in Jackson Ward, Richmond, VA. I had not yet memorized how to get places or the route from my studio to home. A floating phase as I learned to ground in a new place, far from anything that felt familiar. Yet as we sat on that porch, I was transported back to Oakland. I was in Richmond, I was in a space of comfort, I was in a space I didn’t really know and I was also in a space I really knew. Ryan, a mutual friend of ours, had connected us when I moved to Richmond. They suggested we meet because of shared organizing roots, working for Black queer futures, working for abolition, working for safety and survival of Black, Indigenous, Queer, Trans, Gender non-conforming, and people of color. Ryan was so right. We sat on that porch and our webs became more and more visible. “We are safer with each other. We see the worlds we’re trying to make and we lend our power to each other’s spell”\(^8\). We felt close and we elbow bumped for the first time. Those are webs right there. Webs in action. Seen, felt, held. Nets to catch and hold. Tiny knots supporting loose strands. Tied off, skip, tied off, skip, tied off, skip, tied off, skip…. a net had begun. Those tiny knots are helping those loose strands become a support structure. I made a net out of yellow string from the hardware store and haven’t taken it off my wall since the first week (August 2020) of being in Richmond. At the time, I didn’t quite understand my need for the net. But now that I do, I see that the net has multiplied and gotten so big that my whole world is coated in holding. Small knots, nodes of our webbed network, on that porch, rooting us close. Feeling at home together.

\(^8\) Emezi, “Dear Senthuran”, 68
This work began as a list, an ode to a list. This work is deeply tied to the list above. This list is the thread that holds this work together. A list of words can be a manifesto, a demand, a declaration, a deposition, a testimony, a poem. A list of words can be a banner, a sign, a letter, an ask, a bumper sticker, parts of a bulletin board, a newsletter, a map, directions, a text message, a boggle game, a tag, a marquee. We are swimming in an ecosystem made up of lists of text. An ode to a title, I made a long list of all the words and phrases that kept ringing in my head, and those words became this title. This is a list of tools and spaces that I have navigated to make work in, homes in, love in, kinship in. The thing I love the most about lists is that they are alive, they can be added onto. This work is forever, this research is forever.

A year after feeling comfy in this title, using it to name work, writing it on paper and taping it to my studio wall, and dissecting each word to hold a chapter in this document, I came across a very similar list, this time written by someone else. The webs were back, connecting these words with my ancestors and my roots. In 1974, Angela Davis wrote the first edition of her autobiography, edited by Toni Morrison. She organizes the book’s 396 pages into six parts: Nets, Rocks, Waters, Flames, Walls, and Bridges - all tools and strategies to tell her revolutionary history. A quote accompanies the beginning of each chapter, to frame and give poetic context to what comes next. A favorite of mine is, “walls turned sideways are bridges” which introduces the final chapter, Bridges. A blessing of shared and continued language.

The following pages are offerings, reflections, notes, observations, and images, of research, residue, questions, and ventures towards clarity. Chapter 1: Here: Webs, Nets, Branches; Chapter 2: People: Newsletters, Banners, Mutual Aid Text Threads, Kin and Caretakers; Chapter 3: Places: Bulletin Boards, Spaces of Survival; and Chapter 4: Archive: Roots and Poems of Today. This document is to be read and flipped through in no particular order. This writing is a web, tangled and blurry, crisp and clear. Some text is the image, while other text is more manifesting. I think of this collection as a stack that can easily be reordered, reshuffled, three hole punched and added to a plastic binder, printed on newsprint to become a poster wheat-pasted on the walls in the streets. Four chapters and no chapters; a soup, an altar, a vessel, a garden, a love letter.

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9 Davis, “Angels Davis: an Autobiography”, 347
10 Killian, “A Design Manifesting”, 2021
A key/guide to a deeper understanding of this offering:

Brown roboto mono font delineates work that is a previously finished work of art. These pieces can be viewed on their own, but in this document I have decided to let them also act as context clues to the surrounding written and visual offerings. I am thinking of this document as a blending of past, present, and future work, so I use this delineation tool to help guide you through all the layers. Always searching for ways to break the story, to interrupt and camouflage the ways this work is shared.
Glossary
This glossary is a guide. The words, notes, and images are guides and get defined throughout this document.

Roots
Webs
Nets
Branches

Bulletin Boards
Banners
Newsletters
Mutual Aid

Kin

Porches

Poems of Today
Spaces of Survival

Underground Roots

Mycelium

Bacteria

In Between

Collectivity

Caretakers

Utopia

The Commons
Diaspora
Nodes
Pods
Generosity
Multitudes

Homes
Land
Quilts

11 Mingus, “Pods and Pod Mapping Worksheet”, 2016. Pods are a term comparable to community making. Mingus says, “People can have multiple pods. The people you call to support you when you are being harmed may not be the same people you call on to support you when you have done harm, and vice versa. In general, pod people are often those you have relationship and trust with, though everyone has different criteria for their pods.”

12 The text within this scene is from a talk I was listening to by Grace Rosario Perkins, on her new solo show, “The Relevance of Your Data” at MOCA Tucson, AZ. https://www.nts.live/shows/miss-modular/episodes/miss-modular-25th-march-2022

13 Kimmerer, “Braiding Sweetgrass”, 17. Land is “everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the sources of all that sustain us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world (is)enacted.”
14 “Place as a network of relations” was said by Eli Clare during a talk he did as a part of “Love Hangover” produced by Arika. https://padlet.com/00Arika00/Love_Hangover
IMMACULATE HEART COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT RULES

Rule 1
Find a place you trust and then try trusting it for a while.

Rule 2
General duties of a student.

Rule 3
Pull everything out of your fellow students.

Rule 4
General duties of a teacher.

Rule 5
Pull everything out of your students.

Rule 6
Consider everything an experiment.

Rule 7
Be self-disciplined. This means choosing someone wise and disciplined to follow them.

Rule 8
Discipline is to follow in a good way.

Rule 9
Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

Rule 10
The only rule is work.

Rule 11
It's the people who do all of the work all the time who eventually come out on top.

Rule 12
Don't try to create and analyse at the same time. They're different processes.

Rule 13
Be happy wherever you can, make it enjoyable.

Rule 14
Think for yourself. It's lighter than you think.

We're speaking all of the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do it? By learning plenty of room for quantities containing helpful hints. Always be around come or go do everything that might come in handy later. There should be new fingers any week.

WRIGHTS DATE
April 15: Comments due back
April 21: Complete thesis due to advisor and committee
May: Electronic upload

THE MORE WE DANCE, THE BETTER OUR POEMS

ARTIZANS' WATERN

BLACK QUEEN

RESEARCH GRANT REPORTS
Polyrhythm

Plurality

Poetics

Worlding

Weaving

Affirming

Co-Learning
Patterns
Kinship
Flocking
Co-Breather
Friendship
Multiple
Ritual
Chapter 1: Here
A. Webs: Black Futures Are Past, Present, Future

We must go back to remember how to go forward. "There are Black people in the future"\textsuperscript{16}
In honor of the nonlinearity of time, the fluidity that we must move in and around when thinking about our ancestry and futurity work, we start with webs. We start with laying yellow fabric over a crate in the center of my studio, freshly cut pear blossoms in a vase go on the fabric, a pink candle is nudged into a ceramic vessel Zach made for me, today's tarot card and a picture of Audre Lorde. Webs to hold and bring us all into one space, an altar, an offering, a melding of time.

& now for past work to bring us to the present,

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\textsuperscript{16} Wormsley, Collymore, “There are Black People in the Future” 2021
The storyteller of the future is here to help guide us into brightness. And although it’s extremely hard to even imagine it right now, and it feels like it has hardly even been born, the future will be bright.

“While the large inequities of this world may never end, if you come with me, we can peek into a world where our friends and family feel supported in their lives, communities, work, practice. Just let me take you there for a little bit. Repeat after me: Yellow as survival tool, Brightness for the melanin skin in a sea of whiteness, Bright for living, Bright for strength, Bright for power, Bright for caution, Bright for those who are no longer with us, Bright for love & feeling loved, Bright for the sun, Bright for the complexities of blackness, Bright for preserving our stories, Bright for support & safety & care, Bright for sweetness during the hardest times, Bright for chosen family, Bright for making, Bright for us all being mixed up, Bright for feeling supported, Bright for anger & for resisting, Bright for all the incredible work Q.T.F.O.C. (Queer, Trans, People of Color) are doing right now— they are doing all the work, Bright for the mothers resisting and the youth resisting, Bright for the fact that we are dying everyday & bright for the folks fighting against the system, Bright for safe spaces, Bright for queering it all— all the time, Bright for feeling rested, Bright for recording & archiving the stories of black and brown bodies, Bright for knowing those stories by heart, Bright for telling those stories to our future generations, Bright for living in a world that is hard to live in, Bright for this future universe— that is now, As bright as yellow.”

The storyteller of the future is asking us to look this bright future in the eyes, in their eyes, and let your body be transported to a universe, a shining state, where queer, trans, people of color and womxn are at the forefront of our thoughts, where we all feel supported, where fighting for justice is a part of our every move.

“It’s going to feel tender, let’s enact what support looks like, what chosen family looks like, what safety looks like, what melanin skin looks like in a sea of whiteness.”

As Bright as Yellow handout example, 2018
As Bright as Yellow Manifesto

Yellow as survival tool
Brightness for the melanin skin in a sea of whiteness.
Bright for living.
Bright for strength.
Bright for power.
Bright for caution.
Bright for those who are no longer with us.
Bright for love & feeling loved.
Bright for the sun.
Bright for the complexities of blackness.
Bright for preserving our stories.
Bright for support & safety & care.
Bright for sweetness during the hardest times.
Bright for us all being mixed up.
Bright for feeling supported.
Bright for anger & for resisting.
Bright for all the incredible work Q.T.P.O.C. (Queer, Trans, People of Color) are doing right now, they are doing all the work.
Bright for the mothers resisting and the youth resisting.
Bright for the fact that we are dying everyday & bright for the folks fighting against the system.
Bright for telling those stories to our future generations.
Bright for living in a world that is hard to live in.

Bright for this future universe, that is now.
As bright as yellow.
In many ways, this performance feels like my coming of age work. The first iteration of the manifesto was painted on tyvek sheets while I was at the Vermont Studio Center in the summer of 2016. I used they/them pronouns when imagining and stepping into the Storyteller of the Future character. I had just cut my hair really short. To imagine a future universe through the making of this work, helped me to imagine and place my own multitudes. I was in an isolated town in Northern Vermont for a month, with a mostly white group of artists in a mostly white town. I felt otherworldly in that context, and to imagine and become a character with demands, dreams and brightness, felt like my way of escaping and becoming.

Each time I perform this work it changes and morphs slightly. Sometimes I perform solo, other times I work with a chorus/small cast, but I always perform with the audience. The two roles that are always present are The Storyteller of the Future and the audience. The idea of working with a chorus/small cast was to imagine what the in-between space would be. Who could be or allow for a bridging of past, present, future? Well maybe the chorus could do that! They welcomed and started the performance through a procession, helped to get my character into costume (the dressing was always in public), invited audience participation, gave context clues, and kept time. When the chorus was not present, the performance shifted so that my character held that role too.

At the core of this piece is the *As Bright as Yellow Manifesto*, presented and brought to life with the help of the audience. The printed manifesto is a take-away offering, a piece of art, and a tool for participation. Halfway through the performance, a text heavy printout on goldenrod yellow paper gets handed out to the audience, the character leads a call and response reading, line by line. Taking their time, the audience both reads from the manifesto they have just been handed and listens closely as the demands are being said aloud. There is rhythm, laughter, stumbling and awkward pauses, some lines are harder to say, sometimes the echo comes out differently. It’s all welcomed. I am interested in what it sounds like to repeat text vs. read it, and in how the vibrations of saying something aloud together across many voices rattles our bodies. Together, our voices, shouts, and asks channel us into this bright future, and at the end of the performance it always feels like we are a little bit closer to touching that future.
As Bright as Yellow, performance still from SOMArts Cultural Center, 2019
Future Work is the first work I made in Richmond, VA. Futurity as active work; as in progress and in body work; as in the streets work. I arrived in Richmond post a summer of uprisings and city-wide takeovers. A moment of exhaustion and bubbling liberation, the steamy end of summer when Richmond starts becoming overridden with college students, when activists make space for deliberate rest and reflection. The streets felt alive, like they did back home in Oakland, CA. Liberation work held by Black and brown folks was the throughline. This city felt awake and burnout did too. I have been watching this cycle of awake awake work and burnt-out work, the activist and movement work that I was a part of in the Bay Area. It always happens. Noticing it across cities felt both frustrating and comforting.

My new studio was still in boxes, freshly painted yellow floor, windows open to catch an occasional breeze, the large wooden table on wheels sat in the middle of the room, a white piece of cloth spread on top of the table, fabric dyes and acrylic paint, brushes of all kinds. “DEFEND BLACK TRANS FUTURES” in block letters with free abundant colors around each letter. The banner laid out on my studio table for a few days, slowly getting created with the help of new friends and studio neighbors.

This banner was my shield, my tool for greeting my first Richmond, VA protest. The Black Futures March on August 18th, 2020. I remember it was a super hot day, but that didn’t matter. The streets were where I needed to be. It was also the first day of the Fall semester aka my first day of graduate school. What better way to start off this new journey than with a march? As Mariame Kaba says, “hope is a discipline that we have to practice every single day” So in a way this two year practice/stay/chapter has been bound and held and encapsulated in the daily rituals and practices of sanctuary making, community building, and deliberate demanding of the world we want to live in.

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17 I always go to Jose Esteban Muñoz, “Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity” when thinking about futurity work. He says “…queer futurity that is attentive to the past for the purpose of critiquing a present”, 18. Futurity practices as centering the beyond, the pushing against to create new. I learn of these practices from Fred Moten, Jose Esteban Muñoz, Mia Mingus, Patrisse Cullors, Octavia Butler, Caitlin Gunn, Sarah Ahmad, Mariame Kaba, Grace Lee Boggs, Alexis Pauline Gumbs and the list goes on.

18 Kaba, “We Do This ’Til We Free Us”, 27
Future Work, used in the streets at the Black Futures March, 2020
B. Nets: Organizing Structures Found in the Natural World, Community Organizing Spaces, and the Ways Community Gets Built

I keep going back to *Emergent Strategies* to think about the ways we can learn from the natural world around us to study “the relationship between emergence and movement for social justice.”\(^{19}\) The underground root systems between plants, trees, bacteria, rhizomes,\(^{20}\) mycelium, the netting, the branches, and webs. These have become structures to ground the work and to learn from. We exist because of each other. We are practicing “biomimicry: the practice of mimicking the natural world,”\(^{21}\) so that we don’t exist in isolation. Mimicking nature’s relationships. Reaching out our arms to become bigger, more rooted beings.

I pause and ask why I choose to hold this work under Nets. Nets, diamond quilt squares, checkers, grids, webs, are all patterns I include in my work. These organizational forms are prime examples of fractals or never ending patterns. They are a never ending “feedback loop”\(^{22}\) made up of many repeated processes; generative, transforming to support, adjusting, and always learning to survive. This looping becomes a ritual and the feedback becomes a never ending gazing into eyes. Neverending is life long, feels beyond us, and puts our work in the context of centuries-long movement work. Neverending ties my work to thinkers and artists I never got to meet but whose words I continue to read, to speak, and to learn from. Neverending is collective care, strategizing on how to thrive and survive in non-institutional ways, beyond the state and biological family. “..we have the opportunity to dream and keep dreaming ways to build emergent, resilient, care webs.”\(^{23}\)

\(^{19}\) Brown, “Emergent Strategies”, 45  
\(^{21}\) Brown, “Emergent Strategies”, 46  
\(^{22}\) Brown, “Emergent Strategies”, 51  
\(^{23}\) Piepzna-Samarashinha, “Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice”, 35
Nets
Webs
Underground Roots
Mycelium
Bacteria
Inbetween
Collectivity
Utopia
Commons
Diaspora
Nodes
Homes
Knots
Mesh
Compost

Polyrhythm
Plurality
Poetics
Worlding
Weaving
Affirming
Co-learning
Co-breathing
Friendship
Patterns
Kinship
Flocking
C. Branches: Placemaking

There is some sort of deep level of comfort and a trusting of oneself when making work in a community that one has crafted and poured love into for many years. For the past 10 years, I have been grounded in the San Francisco Bay Area and Oakland communities, and those roots have supported my practice in a variety of ways. In safety and family, in acknowledgement of that location’s history and the countless activists, resisters, artists, and cultural workers who fought so that I could do my work. In knowing the history of the Black Panther Party in my neighborhood, knowing where all the BIQTPOC friendly spaces are, and knowing which bookstores carry stories about our people. In recognizing familiar faces, in seeing my practice being posted in the windows of countless homes, knowing people’s names and the routes of protests by heart, in being included in gatherings of Black women, and in having folks check on my safety after marches.

As I welcome Richmond, VA into my family, I find myself needing to make roots and webs and nets and branches that ground me, that place myself as a Black, queer, mixed race, artist, activist, storyteller, story archiver, curator, in this city. I am called to the streets before I am called to my studio. I question what it means to be a part of an institution that is slowly eating this city up. I become a story collector. I need to know where I am and whose land I now call home.  

Who is demanding a new Richmond where enslaved people were caged on this land, where our folks are still caged on this land? What has floated up and down the Powhatan River? Why is this city becoming less and less Black? Where can I buy fresh papayas and mangos? Where can I dig my hands in the dirt? What is the history of this city’s relationship to the police? Where do I dump my compost? How do I support as many Black businesses as possible? Where do I feel safe kissing my partner in public? Where can I walk alone? Are there other Black queer people here? Who are the Black activists who have fought for all these monuments to come down? Who is doing mutual aid work in this city? Which Black-owned CSA boxes can I sign up for? How do we make our own rituals in this new home?

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24 Alluding to the Afro & Indigenous peoples who have nurtured, raised, tilled, grown from and off this land that I and we and you occupy.
We are Who Keeps Resistance, 2020
Questions asked of Richmond, VA, Summer/Fall 2020:

Who and what holds the stories & history of your neighborhood? How is the history of resistance archived in this city? How are we re-claiming this land, that is our land? How does this city prioritize care? How does this institution prioritize care during an unprecedented moment? During a moment that is shining light on this broken system? How can we push push push this institution, built on whiteness and colonialism, to make sure that the legacies and histories of folks of color are cared for and archived? How does this city not prioritize care? How do you find your people in a new city? Who keeps the history in your neighborhood? Where will our safe spaces be? Let’s rename our city, one block at a time.

How are we re-claiming this land, that is our land? I met the owner of Maroon Freedom Farm at their booth at the RVA Black Farmers Market and they invited me to come and work on their land. Two weeks later, I drove 45 minutes south to their land. We weeded and harvested okra for hours. The soil owned by a black queer farmer, got stuck in my nails. When I asked Juniper (the owner) how they got this land, they said “reparations.”

Living on Powhatan Land.

It is surprisingly hard to find much current history about the Powhatan people. On Indigenous people’s day, I searched high and low on the internet, hoping to find an organization, community center, or collective to donate to. But everytime I typed Powhatan people into the google search bar, all I could find was past history or facts
about the town of Powhatan, VA, with no mention of the indigenous people. I did learn that Wahunsenacawh (or Powhatan), was the leader of the Algonquian-speaking tribes and that his child was the well-known Pocahantas. When I lived in Oakland, I would pay a monthly land tax to the Ohlone Tribe, for living on stolen land. I held that ritual close to my heart.

How does this city prioritize care? As we drove into Virginia, we googled the gun laws here. Anyone can open carry here in the state of Virginia, as long as the gun is visible. As if it couldn’t get worse, being in the heart of the confederacy, where white supremacy is a disease, my eyes started searching for guns everywhere I went. And then a week later at a teach-in organized by local black feminists, I spotted armed black folks. It felt liberating to see Black folks with guns. Reminding me of the legacy of armed Black Panther members in Oakland. Maybe there are pockets within these laws that we can reclaim and radicalize.

How does this institution prioritize care during an unprecedented moment? During a moment that is shining light on this broken system? I always catch myself feeling nervous to mention that I moved to Richmond to attend VCU. It’s hard to be deeply intertwined with a school, an institution that has eaten this city alive, gentrified this city and destroyed (and is still destroying) the Black community in Richmond City and Jackson Ward.

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27 The Jackson Ward Neighborhood was a hub for newly freed enslaved peoples during the time of reconstruction. In the 1920s it was one of the most bustling Black neighborhoods in the country. More context and history of the slow devastation to this neighborhood can be found here:
How can we push push push this institution, built on whiteness and colonialism, to make sure that the legacies and histories of folks of color, are cared for and archived? How does this city not prioritize care? On my way to the studio, I spotted a march. I couldn't see what their signs said, so I circled back around the block to get closer. I didn't see any folks of color in the crowd, I was suspicious. It turned out to be an anti-mask rally. I quickly drove away and had to prevent myself from throwing up in my car. It felt like an out of body experience. Their signs read “my body my choice” and they held pictures of enslaved people, muzzled. All I could think of was Escrava Anastasia, whose bust sits on my studio altar. A popular Afro-Brazilian saint, enslaved, resistance fighter, who was muzzled for life, for speaking up and fighting for freedom. 

How is it that not only are our bodies put on the line when folks don't wear masks but also that they use images of our bodies' mistreatment for their own good.

I had brought back Escrava Anastasia’s sculptural bust from Salvador, Bahia, a state in Brazil with the highest population of Black Brazilians, all descendants of enslaved people. She helps protect my studio, guides me through.

How do you find your people in a new city?
At the Black Futures March, on the Tuesday of the first week of school, I was introduced to this organization via their beautiful words “you are exactly where you are supposed to be.” My body

https://thejxnproject.org/. The JXN Project is a Richmond based organization that does "research based restorative historic preservation."
shivered. I felt like I was at home. I felt like Richmond was becoming my home, by way of this queer non-binary black activist voice echoing through the streets. That phrase, “you are exactly where you are supposed to be,” is written on a piece of scrap paper taped to my bedroom wall, so that I don’t forget that yes, I chose to be here and yes, I will find my people.

Let’s rename our city, one block at a time. I pass the Marcus-David Peters Circle on my way to the studio and say ASHE to Marcus and honk my car horn for black futures.

“JUSTICE FOR BREONNA TAYLOR” “BLACK TRANS LIVES MATTER” “BECOME UNGOVERNABLE” “VOTE OUT THE FASCISTS” “ACAB”

The monument pedestals that no longer hold confederate war “heroes” have now become new platforms for poems, stories, histories, and futures for the Fan neighborhood. I have been trying to capture them when I see a new poem, because the next time I pass by, it will probably be white washed over. White washing-policing-keeping our communities untouched and pristine. But as much as the longtime residents of the Fan might want to uphold those white supremacist values, we will continue writing, spray painting, drawing our poems of resistance, of today, all through the streets.

Who keeps the history in your neighborhood? I have invited professors in the Painting and Printmaking Department, Graphic Design Department, 28

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28 Marcus-Davis Peters Circle, formerly the piece of land that held the Robert E. Lee Monument, was renamed in the Summer of 2020. Marcus is a young Black disabled Richmond resident who was killed by the police. The renamed and reclaimed site was turned into a community gathering site, basketball court, popular place to BBQ and the start or end of many Richmond marches. In the Spring of 2021, the city installed a metal fence around the circle making it impossible for the community to gather in.
Sculpture as well as other VCU Arts members, folks from the Gender and Sexuality Studies and Arts Education Departments, to meet me outside for a studio visit in the streets. Asking them to introduce me to their neighborhoods and places in this city that feed them. Two Black artists, both VCU professors, introduced me to locations that have deeply informed and located me here in Richmond: Churchill, which used to be a historically Black neighborhood, and the James River, which was the biggest port that enslaved people were brought through on the East Coast.

I walked over to the start of the Slave Trail-Enslaved kidnapping trail. I closed my eyes and imagined a brightness procession-march-honoring, all along the “trail” length. Banners & instruments & songs & silence & smiles & tears & flowers & kids & elders & teens & costumes & everyday outfits & braids & baskets & webs & people writing & people drawing & people telling stories & people listening & People reading & people swimming & sun & skin getting darker & coating this pathway with an ongoing memorial to the history of this city.

**Where will our safe spaces be?** For the past three weeks, myself and a handful of other queer and trans artists have started a weekly river ritual. Just before the sun sets on Friday evenings, we immerse in the Powhatan River, to wash the week off and check in. Due to the unknown of covid-19, we can’t have each other over for dinner, we can’t find safety in the local dyke bar. So, we have created our own space and time. The end of the weeks are now marked by safety, community, and a new chosen family.

29 The timing spoken about here is between mid-August and early-September, 2020.
Questions asked of Richmond, VA, Spring 2022:
*I invite you to pause and answer these questions, as a reading break.

How are we re-claiming this land, that is our land?
How does this city prioritize care?
How does this institution prioritize care during an unprecedented moment? During a moment that is shining light on this broken system?

How does this city not prioritize care?
How do you find your people in a new city?
Let’s rename our city, one block at a time.
Who keeps the history in your neighborhood?
Where will our safe spaces be?
How are we re-claiming this land, that is our land? I met the owner of Maroon Freedom Farm at their booth at the RVA Black Farmers Market and they invited me to come and do work on their land. Two weeks later, I drove 45 minutes south to their land. We weeded and picked okra for hours and the dirt owned by a black queer farmer, got stuck in my nails. When I asked Juniper (the owner) how they got this land, they said “reparation.”

Living on Powhatan Land.
It is surprisingly hard to find much current history about the Powhatan people. On Indigenous people’s day, I searched high and low on the internet, hoping to find an organization, community center or collective to donate to. But everytime I typed Powhatan people into the google search bar, all I could find was past history or facts about the town of Powhatan, VA but with no mention of the indigenous people. I did learn that Wahunsenacawh (or Powhatan), was the leader of the Algonquian-speaking tribes and that his child was the well known Pocahontas.

When I lived in Oakland, I would pay a monthly land tax to the Ohlone Tribe, for living on stolen land and hold that ritual close to my heart. I am still searching for how one might support the Powhatan people of today.

How does this city prioritize care? As we drove into Virginia, we googled the open gun laws here. Anyone can open carry here in the state of Virginia, as long as the gun is visible. As if it couldn’t get worse, being in the heart of the confederacy, where white supremacy is a disease, my eyes started searching for guns everywhere I went. And then a week later at a teach-in organized by local black feminists, I spotted armed black folks, It felt so liberating seeing black folks with guns. It reminded me of the armed Black Panther members in Oakland. Maybe there are pockets within these laws, where we can radicalize them.
How does this institution prioritize care during an unprecedented moment? During a moment that is shining light on this broken system?

How can we push this institution, built on whiteness and colonialism, to make sure that the legacies and histories of folks of color, also get cared for and archived?

How does this city not prioritize care? On my way to the studio, I spotted a march, I couldn’t see what their signs said, so I drove closer. I didn’t see any folks of color in the crowd, so I was suspicious. It was an anti-mask rally. I quickly drove away and had to prevent myself from throwing up in my car. It felt like an out of body experience. Their signs read “my body my choice” and had pictures of enslaved people, muzzled. All I could think of was Escrava Anastasia, whose bust sits on my studio altar. A popular Afro-Brazilian Saint, enslaved, resistance fighter, who was muzzled for life, for speaking up and fighting for freedom.

How is it that not only are our bodies put on the line when folks don’t wear masks but also that they use images of our own bodies, mistreatment for their own good.

I brought back her sculptural bust from Salvador, Bahia, a state in Brazil with the highest population of black Brazilians, who are all descendants of enslaved people. She helps protect my studio.

How do you find your people in a new city?
At the Black Futures March, on the Tuesday of the first week of school, I was introduced to them via their beautiful words “you are exactly where you are supposed to be”. My body shivered, I felt like I was at home. I felt like Richmond was my home, by way of this queer non-binary black activist voice being echoed in the streets. That phrase is written on a piece of scrap paper and taped to my bedroom wall, so that I can’t forget that yes I chose to be here and yes I will find my people.

Three weeks later, a mutual friend put us in touch and I found myself sitting on their porch in Jackson Ward, feeling like we were old friends. Learning about the history of activism in RVA and dreaming up future performances that we want to collaborate on.

Next week I am meeting with a professor in the Gender and Women’s Studies Dept., who is going to talk about Black Lesbians in the South.
Let's rename our city, one block at a time. I pass the Marcus Davis Peters circle on my way to the studio and say ASHB to Marcus and honk my car horn for black futures.

"JUSTICE FOR BREONNA TAYLOR" "BLACK TRANS LIVES MATTER" "BECOME UNGOVERNABLE" "VOTE OUT THE FASCISTS" "ACAB"

The monument stands that no longer hold a southern war figure, have now become new platforms for poems, stories, histories, futures for the Fan neighborhood. I have been trying to capture them when I see a new poem, because the next time I pass it, it will probably be white washed over. White washing- policing- keeping our communities untouched and pristine. Well as much as the long time residents of the Fan might want to uphold those white supremicist values, we will continue writing our poems of today all over it.

Who keeps the history in your neighborhood? I have invited professors in my department, vcu arts from the gender studies and psychology departments, to meet me outside for a studio visit in the streets. Asking them to introduce me to their neighborhoods and places in this city that feed them. And so far, two black artists & VCU professors have introduced me to Churchill, which used to be a historically black neighborhood and the James River, which was the biggest port that enslaved people were brought through on the East Coast.

I walked over to the start of the Slave Trail- Enslaved kidnapping trail- I closed my eyes and pictured a brightness procession- march- honoring, all along the supposed trail length. Banners & instruments & songs & silence & smiles & tears & flowers & kids & elders & teens & costumes & everyday outfits & braids & baskets & webs & people writing & people drawing & people telling stories & people listening & People reading & people swimming & sun & skin getting darker & coating this pathway with an ongoing memorial to the history of this city.

AN ITERATION OF PIECE FOR MMA WILSON
The streets of Richmond became my studio, my sites of research and orientation, even before my Painting and Printmaking studio did. Feeling the need to be oriented within a community, to establish roots & webs within the knowledge of this complicated city, felt crucial. How do the stories I bring with me from Oakland, California sit side by side with, or lay right on top of, the conversations happening here?

The orientation and community-based techniques I brought with me, learned through years of practice in Oakland and Los Angeles, quickly became the tools I needed to lead with. Making community not only within the institution but also beyond it, centering a non-hierarchical way of learning, informed by deep listening, mutual aid, and centering myself within spaces/projects run by folks of color. Being intentional about prioritizing learning from, and financially supporting, local Black queer led projects. Making monthly financial donations to Race Capitol Podcast, Southerners on New Ground, and Maroon Grove Freedom Farm felt like an important place to start. This work is my work, just as it is my work to make my yellow-floored studio into a sanctuary within the physical space of grad school.

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30 Race Capitol Podcast is run by Chelsea Higgs Wise, Naomi "Nomi" Isaac, and Kalia Harris. I first learned about them through a teach-in they led at the Richmond Convention Center in the Summer of 2020. Their words and guidance in understanding the climate of the city in the wake of Black Liberation Summer felt like medicine to my ears.

31 Southerners on New Ground is an organization that focuses on supporting and organizing with Queer, Trans, folks of color living in the Southern part of the United States. I became a member in the Fall of 2020 and have primarily been involved with their Queer Census Campaign.

32 Started by Juniper. Maroon Grove Freedom Farm works on Black liberated land in Sussex County, VA. They have a wonderful episode on the Race Capital Podcast, where they discuss more about their farm and current struggles and movement building work.

33 Press Press, "Sanctuary Manifesto", 2018
https://presspress.info/content/3-document/1-manifesto-for-sanctuary-building-sanctuary-keeping/sanctuary-manifesto-poster.pdf
Yellow is my Sanctuary, 2020
We are making new rituals in this place together; a phrase I keep repeating, in work, in thought, in practice. Rituals here, rituals here, rituals of sanctuary here. I have always thought of yellow more as a material than a color. A material, a tool to pull out when I need sanctuary. As Press Press says, “How do you carry sanctuary with you everywhere you go?” I carry yellow with me everywhere I go, sometimes it’s seen and sometimes not. It’s my sanctuary brightness tool. In 2016, I started claiming this material as a tool in my practice. It helped me feel seen in spaces that didn’t center Black and brown queer, trans, and non-binary people. It reminded me of brightness and a future I wanted to always work towards and shine in, a world that centers us. This yellow is goldenrod yellow, school bus yellow, caution sign yellow, rain jacket yellow, crosswalk yellow. It feels warm, it bounces off white walls and takes up space, it is a cautionary color while also putting a smile on our face. The complexities of the color yellow is the work. Yellow paper, yellow floors, yellow cups, yellow beeswax candles, yellow shoes, yellow post its, yellow paper wrapped around a tincture to help me stay focused, yellow rope, yellow markers, paints, crayons, pencils, yellow fabric, three yellow poppies in a vase, yellow tape measure, yellow envelope, yellow plastic crate. Each ingredient in this yellow list is part of the way yellow invites sanctuary. It feels important to give this yellow a page in this collection of pages. Many many many pages, but this is a welcome to this important material of mine.

Placemaking through question asking, viewfinders, and yellow. Being seen, seeing and hiding, asking and listening, slow looking and rooting. The week I moved into the studio that would be mine for the two years in this MFA program, I painted my floors that yellow, this yellow, my sanctuary color. My mom and partner helped me mop before I laid down two coats of goldenrod yellow to a nasty gray and paint splattered floor. How do we claim spaces? How do we fit? How do we expand the fit? How do we make rituals around centering the margin? How do we shine through it all? How do we care for every inch of our inhabiting?

Posters lining the window in my studio, read:

BRIGHT FOR KNOWING THESE STORIES BY HEART
BRIGHT FOR ANGER
BRIGHT FOR REST

34 Press Press, “Sanctuary Manifesto”, 2018
https://presspress.info/content/3-document/1-manifesto-for-sanctuary-building-sanctuary-keeping/sanctuary-manifesto-poster.pdf
BRIGHT FOR YELLOW AS SURVIVAL TOOL
BRIGHT FOR LOVE AND FEELING LOVED
(lines from the As Bright as Yellow Manifesto)

This is how I learn of my place, my location, and my relationship to a long history of placemaking. This is how we make community; by speaking the same tongues across blocks and counties and city lines and states and countries. Our language is told through care acts and deep listening. And through asking why is it so difficult to find Black queer history in this city?

Our stories will always be in relation to the lived experiences and places we orbit. In a moment of being transported to a new location, a new community, I search for an understanding of how my lineage and legacy is interwoven into the stories of this place. And I cannot understand that interweaving without overlapping my histories with those of the people around me, who share my lived reality. A new place and the same place. Richmond is Oakland. Jackson Ward is the Lower Bottoms.

This work brings me closer to this landscape while also holding my deep roots in cities far away. Amplification of this interweaving works towards making me, us, we, feel seen, safe, resilient, protected. They become one here.

The viewfinder tool as an invitation for exploration, slow looking, walks, tours, maps, and learning from the ecosystem around you - people, places, animals, skies and sidewalks. A rectangle cut out of a piece of paper, a view is made. “You can make visual decisions- in fact, they are made for you.” A window into our same world but this time with focus and clarity. Like the ways that a film is made up of many frames. Our world is made up of many frames, pictures taken by our eyes and brains and minds constantly. As I hold a viewfinder up to this city, my neighborhood, and my block, wanting to locate myself, my lens is full of questions. My lens is slow looking and investigating this city through folks who have been here longer than I have. I become a viewfinder.

Upon arriving in Richmond, and in order to locate myself in my new community, I reached out to folks in my newly forming VCU (Virginia Commonwealth University) network, department, and beyond. To

35 And by “our” I mean B.I.Q.T.P.O.C. (Black, indigenous, queer, trans, people of color)
36 Corita Kent taught me about the viewfinder tool. To use it in the classrooms, our studios, and lives.
37 Kent, Steward, “Learning by Heart, Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit”, 26
Black activists and community members within this new home of mine. Framing these introductions around wanting to learn about this city through them, I invited them to join me on a walk, sit or zoom call in their neighborhood. I went on many in-person walks and virtual walks; sat in community gardens and on porches, learned to navigate this city through the knowledge and interests of these folks. I asked them about their relationship to these places, what relationship this neighborhood has to Black liberation, to resistance history, to the erasure of bodies of color and to the history that brought Black people here. I hold those walks with me everyday and everywhere I go. Those walks, conversations, meals, porch visits, marches, organizing meetings have served as navigation tools, modes of safety and exploration, roots to begin to call my own.

Below is a map and list of the people I went on walks with and the place(s) we went to.

A map/web of my walk partners, 2021
Reclamation Teach-in, led by Race Capitol Podcast, Richmond Coliseum, Downtown
Nontsikelelo Mutiti, a walk in the Church Hill Neighborhood, learning about the Black legacy in these streets
Jayme Canty, a conversation on zoom about Black Southern queer storytelling
Alex Matzke, a tour and volunteering at community gardens led by Richmond Food Justice Alliance in The Southside and Jackson Ward
Free them all, car protest, led by unknown organizers, Richmond City Justice Center
Madison Moore, a conversation on zoom about Black queer nightlife and bars in Richmond
Alexsis Rodgers Campaign for Mayor, volunteered through phone banking, pole working, and poster making
Caitlin Cherry, a walk in Shockoe Bottom and along the Enslaved People’s Trail
Massa Lemu, a conversation on zoom
Julian Glover, a conversation on zoom
Courtnie Wolfgang, a walk in Chimborazo Park
Lily Cox-Richards, a walk on Belle Island (right after a massive rainstorm- the water was at a record height)
Ro Keel and Dylan, a porch sit at Ro’s Jackson Ward apartment
Cara Benedetto, writing session outside with Dana Bishop Root, Bel Air Juniper, a day of weeding, planting, picking on their liberated land, maroon Grove Freedom Farm, Sussex County, VA
Nicole Killian, a walk in Chimborazo Park
Southerners on New Ground, local chapter members firepit gathering, Southside
Black Future March, led by Race Capital Podcast, Southerners on New Ground from City Hall to VCU Monroe Campus
NOV 3
VOTE FOR
BLACK QUEER
DISABLED
ABOLITIONIST
FUTURES
ARTISTS
SAY
PUBLIC
BLACK LIVES
GO VOTE
FOR JUSTICE
Above: *Posters for the Alexis Rodgers Campaign*, distributed via free PDF, 2021
Chapter 2: People
**A. Newsletters: Living and breathing history making**

Newsletters are printed tools. They are multiples, often printed in such mass quantities that we forget that they started with a matrix, \(^{38}\) and then there were many. I am captivated by the power of sharing news, asking questions, advertising, stating a view/opinion, sharing history, activating the public through the printed multiple. The printed multiple exists to be shared, to be a generous object and trace of a movement, event, happening, performance, party, protest, etc. It exists to inform. The multiple, which is what a print is, is an active form regardless of its timeline and light of day. Whether printing a lithograph or a risograph, a series of etchings or a one off xerox, the process-heavy form shines light on the maker and the soon to be viewer. The action of printing, re-rolling, changing out ink drums, brayers, paper, is needed in order to enact the action of getting passed a flier, seeing a poster wheatpaste to the side of a building, which is needed to enact that demand, grapple with the subject, and maybe even bring it home into your own community. Printmaking is an active tool in all its forms. By printing a multiple it loses its value, it becomes a graphic for the people. It becomes free of cost and untied from its original maker. It becomes open source, a resource, an advocate, a marker.

The layering on top of, below, side by side with my lived experience, and with the stories of deeply rooted Black and brown, queer, trans, gender non-conforming people in Richmond, VA. Living together and on top of my lived experience and the stories of deeply rooted Black and brown, queer, trans, gender non-conforming people in Oakland, California. Living together and on top of one another. Sometimes the words are easy to read, other times they are illegible. The alphabet as we know it turns into patterns and imagery and doesn’t read in one direction. Sometimes the words are hard to read, you have to move on. Other times they invite you to pause and read again. Living together and on top of each other.

A series of three 30” x 40” printed posters. Melding my place based discoveries with those of others. **WE ARE MAKING OUR OWN RITUALS IN THIS NEW PLACE TOGETHER, HOW TO BE HOME WHEN MY BODY CAN’T BE THERE, OTHER HERE? PASSING DOWN HISTORY THROUGH OUR HANDS, QUEER FOLKS FIND.** Even though they have painted layers that make them no longer unique or a “traditional” prints, I consider this work to be posters. I view those painted layers like ink. This large size resembles tabloids, billboards, protest signs, and flags. Starting small, becoming large, starting as a print, becoming more, becoming a newspaper to share these melding stories.

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\(^{38}\) “A Matrix is a physical surface that can be manipulated to hold ink, which is then transferred to paper.” All prints start with a matrix and then copies, editions, multiples are printed from and because of it. [https://www.ipcny.org/glossary](https://www.ipcny.org/glossary)
We are Making our own Rituals in This Place Together, 2020
Passing Down History Through our Hands, 2020
At a moment of rooting in my new Virginia home, I was called to my roots in printmaking as a material that I would use to process and become a Richmond resident. Hundreds of collages on goldenrod yellow paper, poster size paper, 11” x 17”, tabloid size for poster making. I waded through these new raw days of living far far away from what had been home. Layering my experiences side by side with new community, led and guided by my community walk partners. I started with questions that I was asking myself in the Summer/Fall 2020, writing both the questions and some of the answers on found paper, recycled paper and newsprint. Then I took them to the xerox printer and started breaking them down; making a new story. “Move a document while it is under exposure and the type in the copy will move too, sometimes distorting the text beyond readability.” Gliding the text across the screen to become a different form, letting the scanner light guide the fastness or slowness that I moved with the paper. Naturally overlapping, blurring together, embracing glitches and frictions to create new images, voices, ways of telling this living history. “Remixing is an act of self determination.”

This duet between me and the printing form becomes an improv dance, a partnership, a collaboration, a co-breathing choreography between me, the words, and the printmaker. I think back to Adrienne Marie Brown’s core principles of emergent strategies, point 7: “Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass–build the resilience by building the relationships.”

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39 Eichhorn “Adjusted margin: Xerography, Art and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century”, 42
40 Russell, “Glitch Feminism”, 133
41 Find Co-breathing in the glossary
42 Brown, “Emergent Strategy”, 42
**B. Banners: Text + Patterns = Our New Language**

Aren’t protest signs supposed to be easy to read? What does that even say? The only word I can make out is freedom? Is there a reason why I can’t read that banner? My work is deeply influenced by the strategies and tools that a protest collectively performs. In *A Broadcast, at Marcus-David Peters Circle*, I was specifically thinking about voice, occupation, amplification, the universality of protest chants, and the ways in which abstracted language can support the making of a new language. How will folks feel when invited to stay for a while, to share, listen, and gather?

*Welcome to A Broadcast, at Marcus-David Peters Circle, on occupied Powhatan Land, Wednesday, April 28, 2021, 5-7pm, Thursday, April 29, 2021, 2-4pm, The Southern park at Marcus-David Peters Circle, 1700 Monument Ave., jct. of Monument and Allen Aves., Richmond, Virginia***
Hold up a banner
What are your sites of resistance in this city?
Flip a tape
Take a listen & mic-check: repeat them
Your voice is important here
Your body is important here
Sit with us, move with us
Stay for as long or as little as you like

A Broadcast, an invitation to listen and use your body to support. An invitation to come to a selected site, to gather and form a crowd. To let our bodies become the support structures. To show up, to learn and repeat and share.

Gathering folks together at the Marcus-David Peters Circle, a site of resistance for me and my neighborhood, we are creating a transmission station with our bodies and presence. Say his name, Marcus-David Peters, ASHE.

Transmitting sounds of resistance and a message that our presence and occupation in this location is part of a living reclaimed history. The sounds of protest chants, collected by Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle, a curator and beloved friend located in Los Angeles, leads us in the demands of her streets. Asking us to scatter them into ours. The side by side telling of our stories, learning from each other in re-imagined ways, centering voices of color, calling our beloved far-away kin family into community. Our stories are to be passed down through our voices and hands.

Our transmission station only comes to life with others. Our transmission station only comes to life when we imagine that another world is possible. “Abolition is a placemaking endeavor.”

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43 Ruthie Wilson Gilmore
**A Broadcast at Marcus-David Peters Circle**, participants hold up banners and occupy space, 2021

**Banners for a site of resistance (Marcus-David Peters Circle):** mylar, acrylic paint, flashe, pvc pipes, 1-2 people to hold up each banner

We have nothing to lose but our chains, Black queer owned land, You are exactly where you are supposed to be, Rituals Here

**Sounds for a site of resistance (Marcus-David Peters Circle):** Cassette tape, tape player, batteries, someone to flip the tape

Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle’s Protest Chant Archive, 14:51,
We are making our own rituals here & How to be home when my body can’t be there, 04:51

**Sound clips from tapes**

**Altar:** Plastic crate, plywood, candle, sage, offerings, flowers, paper program
A Broadcast at Marcus-David Peters Circle, 2021
A Broadcast at Marcus-David Peters Circle, participants holding up a banner, 2021

(Above: A Broadcast at Marcus-David Peters Circle, participants holding up a banner, 2021)
A Broadcast at Marcus-David Peters Circle, participants gather with banners while listening to tapes, 2021
A Broadcast at Marcus-David Peters Circle, participants sit with banners while listening to tapes on the altar, 2021
The flier/announcement for the Broadcast
A Broadcast, an invitation to listen and use your body to support. An invitation to come to a selected site, to gather and form a crowd. To let our bodies become the support structures. To show up, to learn and repeat and share. I am drawn to using the methods of a broadcast: “to send out information by radio or television from a transmitting station, to scatter sound far and wide.” I am now at a point in which I want the work to be broadcast, sent out into the community’s hands and lives, returning to the first action I did when I moved here, the neighborhood walks. This broadcast is an experiment in looping back to that beginning. A feedback loop, as Adrienne Marie Brown might say. An echo, a chant, a wave of continued rituals and work.

Gathering folks together at the Marcus-David Peters Circle, a selected site of resistance for me and my neighborhood, we are creating a transmission station with our bodies and presence. Transmitting sounds of resistance and a message that our presence and occupation in this location are part of a living, reclaimed history. The sounds of protest chants, collected by Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle, a curator and beloved friend located in Los Angeles, California, leads us in the demands of her streets. Asking us to scatter them into ours. Making another version of over-layering, the side by side telling of our stories, learning from each other in re-imagined ways, centering voices of color, calling our beloved far-away kin family into community.

Our transmission station only comes to life when in community with others. So, for this iteration I have invited my Richmond community to join me at Marcus-David Peters Circle, to perform, enact, and honor stories of resistance. The raising of four translucent banners over the course of our broadcasting sessions invite us to imagine language from many perspectives and to experience histories of struggle through ever-transforming street chants. The banners can be read from either side and I ask attendees to join in holding this text up to the community. At the same time, we are viewing this evolving location, a site of resistance and occupation. In the Spring of 2021, the neighborhood watched MDP circle change yet again, with the installation of a fence barricade around the grassy park, installed by the City of Richmond. Not only has this had a physical effect on this reclaimed space, it has also obscured the tagged, written-on monument base, making it inaccessible and harder to read.

These banners and sound score, reflect and amplify the profoundly beautiful layering of poems and demands that live on the monument bases; broadcasting and calling attention to this site of resistance, reclaiming and retelling.

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44 Merriam-Webster Definition of Broadcast
45 Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle, curator, cultural worker, writer, https://www.emiliashaffer-delvalle.com/about
During the second broadcasting day, a friend, colleague and Richmond community member who was a part of the Black liberation protests in the Summer of 2020, spoke deeply about all the unseen labor and work of queer and trans folks of color that summer. She was one of those people. She watched folks of color come out to the Fan neighborhood and reclaim this city. She attended protests daily and brainstormed the renaming of that circle. We talked about the sudden erasure of that work, maintenance, and labor. About how unseen those roots are today but how they are the backbone of change, liberation, and the future of Richmond. Whenever I talk about the monuments being removed (to community, friends, and the public) I lead by centering the truth that this work is ONLY because of the deep and continued labor of Black and Brown, queer and trans organizers. We forget too easily, we let the white supremacist version become the norm. Too easily and quickly, we repeat, repeat, repeat without taking the time to correct, slow down, and make new language. I listened as she spoke of this work and time. We repeated Assata Shakur’s “It is our duty to fight for our freedom”46 chant over and over and over again, as it played on the tape. Web work, continued work, language that we say loud so that this history is stuck in our heads.

46 Shakur, “It is our duty to fight for our freedom”
C. Mutual Aid Text Threads: Pedagogies of Care and Abolition

When I Speak of the Erotic, India Verardi, student work made for our publication chapter, 2022

TO THE STREETS!

a course, a practice, a chant, a banner, a block

What would it look like to teach a class that reflects the feelings, materials, questions, research, and visions of my own studio practice? I hold my practice as an educator side by side and always in dialogue with being an artist, curator, storyteller, and activist.

TO THE STREETS! is a course that I am currently (Spring 2022) teaching and facilitating with a group of amazing undergraduate art students in
Virginia. We meet twice a week for 2 hours to read and question and
discourse and watch and perform and make work about our relationship to
the communities around us. The glue that holds our investigations
together is printmaking. A tool, material, and form of art making that
has always been about telling stories, sharing news, and informing
others around us. Our syllabus is our ingredient list, materials are
fluid yet important, the long legacy of social justice printmaking is
our base, experimentation is how we move and play. We are approaching
this class with care and slowness and patience, we are becoming a
collective body, our ingredient lists are changing, growing and
expanding!

TO THE STREETS! is a practice I have in and out of the studio, solo
and collectively. The banners I make, stories I tell, and books I bind
are all very much influenced by walks and protests and time spent in
the streets and community around me. I am constantly drawn to text and
poetry found and made in the streets and public. Vanity plates, store
fronts, murals, meals, billboards, bulletin boards, stories shared,
signs in windows, chalk drawings, wheatpaste posters, ice cream
trucks, overheard gossip, flyers stapled on poles, zines, newspapers,
community radio, yard signs, flags, mutual aid text threads. The public yet intimate acts that are exchanged and shared in, around and on the streets, feel so special and yet so everyday. I am interested in how universal the streets, sidewalks, and shared public space feel, and yet how differently we all experience them. I turn to the streets before I turn to my studio, I am fed constantly by all the ways we share a space like the streets.

TO THE STREETS! is many chants, TAKE IT TO THE STREETS AND FUCK THE POLICE! TAKE IT TO THE STREETS AND FUCK THE POLICE! WHOSE STREETS? OUR STREETS! WHOSE STREETS? OUR STREETS! TAKE IT TO THE STREETS, DEFUND THE POLICE! TAKE IT TO THE STREETS, DEFUND THE POLICE. WE MAD, WE LIT, WE TAKIN’ OVER THESE STREETS! WE MAD, WE LIT, WE TAKIN’ OVER THESE STREETS!
TO THE STREETS! asks us to return to a block in our neighborhood every week and listen, watch, see, be, perform acts of maintenance, learn, step back, step forward, go on a viewfinder walk, sweep the block.

Every few weeks, the TO THE STREETS! course explores different strategies that questions: What does it mean to make work in the public eye? How can our work affect or be affected by the spaces that surround us? What relationship does our work have to the communities that populate the streets?
TO THE STREETS! Ingredients*:
* “There should be new rules next week”—Corita Kent, 10 Rules for Teachers and Students

**Maintenance**

**Strategies:** Manifestos, maintenance/care acts, collective resource library (what do we all have to contribute to this course/community: resources, skills, interests, materials), community agreements

**Printmaking Tools:** Stencil making, viewfinder tool

**Readings:** Maintenance Manifesto by Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Black Panther Program Ten Point Program
Cheap Art Manifesto by Bread and Puppet Theater
Typography Messages of Protest for Civil Rights by Colette Gaiter for BIPOC Design History (video: 01:49:36)
Michael Swaine: "Mending for the People" Tenderloin National Forest, San Francisco (video: 07:00)
Becoming a microscope (a film about Corita Kent) by Aaron Rose

Performance/intervention
Strategies: Cantastoria street theater, wearable protest garments
Printmaking Tools: Screenprinting (drawing fluid, monoprint)
Readings: About Sung Paintings or Cantastoria by Clare Dolan
"Fire" Cantastoria by Bread and Puppet (video: 04:24)
Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper by Lucy Lippard and Adrian Piper
Protest Garment Lab, Aram Sifuentes and collaborators, 5 short videos
Crawl by Pope L.

Publication
Strategies: Radical publishing history/forms, queer strategie of resistance
Printmaking Tools: Risograph printing, artist books/zines
Readings: Urgent Craft: Radical Publishing During Crisis by Paul Soulellis
#freethemall Billboard Project, Fronteristxs Collective, 2020 (video: 01:07:24)
Center for the study of political graphics, Online Archive
Lesbian Herstory Archice, Online Archive
“All Printing Is Political: Fredy Perlman and the Detroit Printing Co-op” by Andrew Blauvelt

Collective
Strategies: Derive walk, mutual aid, collective action
Printmaking Tools: A walk score
Readings: Derive, The Art of Getting Lost by Public Street,
People’s Kitchen Collective Serves Up a Recipe for Resilience (video: 07:39)
'One of the biggest, baddest things we did': Black Panthers' free breakfasts, 50 years on by Ruth Gebreyesus

“You Are Not Entitled To Our Deaths: COVID, Abled Supremacy & Interdependence” By Mia Mingus


Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective and Collaborative Cultural Work by Press Press & The Institute for Expanded Research

Mutual Aid by Dean Spade, Characteristics of Mutual Aid vs. Charity /No Master No Flakes

TO THE STREETS! is a course, a practice, a chant, a banner, a block, a list of ingredients to be used and taught with and made with and I am honored to share the root of this course with you all!! Thanks to the Syllabus Project, my incredible, brave, and wonderful students who are making this course with me, and all the scholars, artists, thinkers, archives, listed above that we can learn with and from.

It has been an honor to teach this course side by side and in conversation with my thesis work. It has only solidified how much my pedagogy practice is in deep conversation with my studio and research practice. “To me the classroom continues to be a place where paradise can be realized, a place of passion and possibility, a place where spirit matters, where all that we learn and know leads us into greater connection, into greater understanding of life lived in community.” bell hooks challenges us to think of our classrooms as radical spaces, as ecosystems that reflect and bounce around ideas in our larger communities, so I think of all this work just like that. It’s been an ongoing practice to lead and learn from my classroom in the ways I do out in the non-institutional world. Re-structuring how we are assumed to be within college classrooms, letting the students take the lead, centering a shared knowledge over the assumption of the teacher holding all, project and research based learning, bringing our own multitudes of identities, backgrounds, and interests into the classroom as tools and parts of us to lead with, always taking from the institution/sharing the resources, bringing our own expertise to the table and not assuming that we only have to learn from this schooling institution, fighting back, and holding spaces and people in power accountable. As I co-learn with my students, I hold these re-imaginings as guides for how I work collectively in my own practice. I live by these standards and ask that galleries, museums, and shows that I take part in, do the same.

47 TO THE STREETS!, Syllabus Project, 2022, https://syllabusproject.org/to-the-streets/
48 bell hooks, Teaching Community, a Pedagogy of Hope, 2003
Chapter 3: Spaces
What are we without spaces for us, without land and homes and couches and porches that keep us safe and seen? Black women, non-binary, trans, femmes have taught me that intentional space creation is crucial to our survival. When I encounter a bulletin board either in a coffee shop or a campground, the way I navigate that space is through familiarity. Through seeing if there is a mirror of me and my desires on that cork board. It is also a space of searching and seeking connection, a favor, a babysitter, a specific wildflower in bloom, or the exchange of used furniture. Intentional Black-led spaces feel similar to bulletin boards in that way; we seek each other, always looking but not always sure where we will find us. I have been led by the words of the Combahee River Collective for many years now, they always appear when I need them and I keep their words close to my heart. Poets, artists, writers, academics, fed up with the limitations in the white feminist movement and the male dominated Civil Rights Movement, so they created new and intentional spaces led by Black lesbians! Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, Demita Frazier, Cheryl Clarke, Akasha Hull, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Chirlane McCray, and Audre Lorde. They are named after the Combahee River Raid, the first military raid to be led in full by a (Black) woman. On June 2, 1863, Harriet Tubman freed 150 enslaved peoples at the Combahee River Ferry in South Carolina. If the
spaces for us don't exist, we make them. If the battles haven't been fought, we fight them. I hold both the raid win and the work of the collective as guides for making our spaces and forms of resistance.

In the Fall of 2021, I found myself revisiting the Combahee River Collective statement\(^49\). I read it like I imagine people read the bible. Writing it in my notebooks and repeating lines aloud, it’s a text that I feel close proximity with. Even though the language is definitely out of date, it is useful to think of the ways they made their own demands, needs, dreams, and spaces of safety with each other. I think about the power of collective work, the power of working with your beloveds, wading through the muck of heteronormativity, sexism, racism, classism, patriarchy. I look to my ancestors who I never met, to greet their thoughts and be in dialogue together. I want to continue that work, I am continuing that work, we must continue that work, my work and our work is that work.

It may be because their name alludes to a place based resistance struggle, but this movement work always brings me back to land. What have our trees and birds and soil and water witnessed throughout history that we haven't? The natural world feels like a time traveler, a stand in for us and our lineages, a marker of then, a marker of now, and a marker in the future. Witness trees they call them, trees that saw lynchings and acted as markers along the underground railroad, gave sap to indigenous communities and bloomed for us this Spring. Trees that have seen more than our lifetime can hold. As I wandered around the forests and land of the VCU Rice Rivers Research Center, preparing for an outdoor showing of my work, I thought about what these very trees have witnessed. Virginia land (not unlike much of the South) is steeped in layers of complicated and often unspoken history. I asked the land and the leaves and the dirt what they have been witness to. I felt such a presence in those woods. I felt at home. I felt so safe.

Moving through a Portal of Black Resistance is hung between two witness trees in a forest on Occupied Weyanock land [Charles County, VA]. It is a portal itself into the words of the Combahee River Collective, into the words of Barbara Smith\(^50\), into the unseen labor of making and holding radical spaces and futures. The director of the research center walked a large ladder into my selected forest site and I asked him about what he knew of this land. Trying to not get my hopes up, I was overjoyed when he spoke of histories that mirrored my feeling of this being sacred land. He told me that he knows much of the land's history from indigenous communities that are scattered across the county. That the biggest work that the research center is doing, is working on returning the land back to how it was before it was a

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\(^{50}\) Taylor, Until Black Women Are Free, None of Us Will Be Free, 2020
summer camp, vacation destination, and plantation. As he started reading the text layers on my piece, he told me that it was uncanny that I was calling in the work of Harriet Tubman (not uncanny to me) because it is believed that she spent time with that land.

Moving through a Portal of Black Resistance, closeup, 2021
Moving through a Portal of Black Resistance, closeup, 2021
RITUALS HERE:
a four node project visioned & held by Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo
Spring 2022

HERE: The Anderson Gallery, Virginia Colonizer University, on occupied Powhatan and Shocquohocan Land [Richmond, VA]
April 8-22, 2022, Tuesday-Friday, 12:00-6pm, Saturday, 12:00-5pm

When a protest banner is held by many in the streets, it becomes a curtain. A curtain for the performance and embodiment of resistance, liberation, protest. When a piece of fabric is unrolled onto a wooden table, it becomes a tablecloth. Next come the dishes, food, and people. A meal is about to be shared. A conversation is about to begin. When many strings are knotted and tied together they become a net, a basket, a holder. Nets for carrying, nets for resting on, nets
to trap and transport. When the claiming of safe spaces becomes essential to survival, chosen communities, neighbors, friends, and lovers come together and become that needed space.

This web is a space for holding, for creating safety and dialogue. An invitation to work within it, around it, because of it. Becoming and echoing, forms, structures, patterns and ways that Black, Brown, Indigenous, queer, trans, gender non-conforming, people of color form kinship, radical community, spaces of survival and dialogues rooted in resistance.

April 8-22: open hours, use & be in the space outside of activation times
April 15: Lee Rae Walsh, our ingredients, workshop, 12:30-1:30pm, virtual
April 21: Lukaza Branfman-Verissmo and Marta Rodriguez Maleck, a conversation about shared language, 8:00-9pm, virtual
April 22: Gabrielle McHugh, netting in the round, workshop, 12:30-1:30pm, in-person
Culminating dance party, DJ Patricia Leal, 7:00-8pm, in-person & virtual
I have been thinking a lot about the spaces, people, and places that are crucial to our survival, individually and as a community. Whether momentarily, week to week, season by season, or life long. I imagine those spaces, people, and places serving as webs, seen and unseen, that we are constantly swimming in and through. They catch us, provide safety, push us forward to find others, help us find rest and pleasure. And they represent our many homes - present, past, and future. They are small barely recognizable gestures and huge warm hugs. These webs are growing, growing all around us, pulled out when they need to be seen, pulled out when we need to be loved on, they hide themselves in ways we don’t always see.

What does it look like to visualize, recognize, and embody those webs, networks, structures, and ways of organizing survival and kinship? And what better way than with the folks who make up my new, year and a half old, webbed community structures. I want to get inside this web-net-environment, light a candle, drink tea, and hear about what has been keeping you going these days. I want this to be a responsive space, letting us lean on and in, dreaming of other worlds.

Notes, history, past and present layers of Rituals Here

Rituals Here
Rituals Here: A Webbed Invocation
Rituals Here: a four node project

As I worked up toward this iteration of Rituals Here: a four node project (at the Anderson Gallery, Spring 2022), I made sure to test and give it the space it needed to grow and change. Starting with the fabric, the banner I call it. I wanted to imagine what it would look like for all my beloved people and family to hold

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51 Notes, history, past and present layers of Rituals Here, is a chapter within a chapter, a chapter that could be its own 100 page document. It is here in process and purpose. Rituals Here is fresh and becoming but it felt important to carve out a space within this larger document to place this work.
one banner together in the streets. I pictured the curtain like a fluid boundary that a banner creates in a march or protest. Banners line the front and the back of the crowd, almost acting like bookends, safety nets to the sea of people, holding us in and keeping us safe. It always feels better when you are between banners, rather than a block behind or a block ahead. The fabric feels like a soft shield from opposition, police, and surveillance. Using my tall studio walls, I started piecing together found and thrifted fabric, like you would paint a demand, saying, or phrase on a protest banner. Patterned strokes turned into letter forms, abstract loops became echoed chants, and bright colors demanded importance and urgency to the messages conveyed. Two fifteen by eight feet panels were created in my studio, later sewn up to make a circular form. A space to make rituals together, emphasis on the TOGETHERNESS. Each iteration leading up to this one helped me realize the space, figuring out how it felt to share intimate space again (post severe COVID-19 shutdowns and still in the pandemic) and how to craft intentional spaces of care, trust, kinship, and coming together.

*Rituals Here* (in my studio) become a space for me to invite collaborators, friends, and Richmond, VA community into. Folks that I had gone on walks with, folks who I had met at protests and art shows, roommates, classmates, teachers, visiting artists, and friends from out of town. Visitors had to enter the space by way of the larger than life banner. My studio became *Rituals Here*, I moved around and in conversation with this work constantly. A slit in the fabric acted like a door and a large wooden table on wheels was on the other side. A place for us to share a meal, drink tea, catch up, and begin talking about the ways we make community. We were making it and doing it and writing it all down. A piece of white butcher paper covered the table, crayons and pens laid out. A small altar in between us, a candle, flowers, books, objects of significance marked this as both a becoming space and an already birthed one. Soon our table became rich with words, notes, drawings, and dreams. This paper became the record holder, this surface became our books and tools to learn from.

In the Winter of 2021, I set up another iteration of the work. I called that iteration *Rituals Here: A Webbed Invocation*. The space was centered around a series of one on one activations. Visitors (mainly my school community) could set up 20 minutes sessions with myself in the space to craft, discuss, and make our own rituals together. It felt important to have more intimate experiences as a testing ground for this work. Like when you show the world new work, you have to ease into it, starting with a few viewers, then more and more after that. I wasn’t ready to fully release this work, it still felt like it was being shaped. I liked attaching the word “invocation” to this iteration. It gave this work power and was a reminder that it is us who have the power, importance, and duty to craft this space. I was also intrigued with the idea of what a
collective invocation into a becoming space could look like. To mark an in flux work with a name of much importance was like asking the participant to entrust this space and work. To consent into sharing and being a layer. I consider everyone who has been a part of this work as a mark maker on this project. The person who added the word “compost” to the list, the person who told me bell hooks had just passed as we began our session. My teacher who cried with me.

Upon entering into the banner space, I invited the guest to have a seat at a table across from me. I introduced how we would be using our limited time together, handed the participant a piece of yellow paper to take notes on, and asked them if there was anyone they would like to invite into the space. It could be a person, animal, being, place, memory, living, no longer living, in transition, etc. Together we held space and let the intentionality feed us for our invocation. I then asked the collaborator/visitor/participant to pick a question/prompt from a list and let that question guide our time together. We processed and reflected and wrote and cried and laughed together. All the prompts alluded to ideas of collectivity, our dependency on each other, ways we move about the world and ways that systems of power, oppression and hierarchy can prevent that. Questions like, how do you propagate care
networks?, what have you called your community in for these days?, what are your physical and spatial reminders of the future you want?, and what are your communities of accountability?

The ritual table full of notes, markings and important words, as well as candles and flowers, 2021

Both of these iterations became breeding grounds for the blossoming and final form of *Rituals Here: a four node project*. I watched and learned from the work and the ways it changed in each context and form. I gathered up all the layers of butcher paper notes and lived experiences and let that feed its final form. New challenges arose, space became a new and different factor, participation expanded, the meaning of ritual changed and grew, activation became clearer, materials shifted, candles stayed there, flowers stayed there, altars moved onto carts, and collaborators got woven into its webs. A four node project: here, people, places, archive, four key words that seemed to sum up all these layers of the work. **Here:** Richmond, VA, The Anderson Gallery (the prescribed location for all MFA candidates to hold their thesis shows), the inside and outside of the banner space, what gets held by these walls, **People:** Ty Little\(^2\),

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\(^2\) Ty Little, [www.tylittle.cargo.site](http://www.tylittle.cargo.site), [https://icavcu.org/events/ty-little-moving-text/](https://icavcu.org/events/ty-little-moving-text/)
Ayana Zaire Cotton⁵¹, agustine zegers⁵⁴, Amarise Carreras⁵⁵, Archerd Aparejo⁵⁶, collaborators whose work, practice, and relationships became key factors to the show, guests, the wanting to include more than just me, Places: places that have informed this work, my work, sites of resistance and belonging and safety, sites that give this work context and truth, Archive: What is left after this iteration comes down? How do we mark and multiply and preserve and learn from this work and not let it slip away? An archive, a memory, a takeaway, a screen print edition for tearing off and taking with, a broadsheet newspaper designed by Archerd Aparejo.

The banner space in Rituals Here: a four node project, 2022

Here: softness in a hard lined white walled gallery space. Curves, tenderness, welcoming, color, inviting in. An enveloped gallery, a changed space, a peering in, an instant sigh of relief, a place to hide, an action, a respite, a nap, a tent, a blanket, a home, a building, a presence. Fifteen feet by twenty feet by eight feet. Webs and nets and connective tissue and mycelium and rhizomes and neighborhood blocks. A woven

⁵⁴ agustine zegers, https://www.agustinezegers.com/
⁵⁵ Amarise Carreras, https://amarisecarreras.com/
⁵⁶ Archerd Aparejo, Archerda.com
cloth web structure to invite you in and hug you tight. A walk around the outer circle of the banner, a shimmy up against the white walls, a nook of peace, agustine’s seeded scent embroidered to five seems at different heights, for smelling, for observing a droplet of collective smells. Amarise’s photograph of a collective altar/still life from a collaborator gathering earlier this year, it echoes the colors of the banner, inviting you back to the corner where it is installed. A ladder in the other corner for shifting perspectives, a ladder is a must have ingredient. Future Work reads “DEFEND BLACK TRANS FUTURES” and is the first banner I made in Richmond, VA, it felt important to have it on the outer ring of the web banner, acting like a rooted supporter. The banner is hung with tension, yellow and orange sailing rope and pulleys, every inch of the space is considered, and is treated as a beloved puzzle piece, an ingredient to this soup of a project. Ty’s video corner, a pile of letters that made up her embodied poem, a stool and a projection of new work about accumulated movement, language creation and performance.

The outer ring of the structure, the active altar on the right side, 2022

57 Future Work is explained in Chapter 1: Here, A. Webs: Black Futures Are Past, Present, Future
Active Altar Ingredients List: Yellow enamel cups, a basket full of different colored rolls of tape, a blue mirror, a large paint brush, notepads, newsprint, a selection of my library/important books and texts to give and add to the space, tablecloth banner, seeding:submerging scent by agustine zegers, three oyster shells with kumquats in them, candles, fresh flowers (to be changed weekly), books from the library on display, fruit (oranges & mangoes) in a wooden bowl, a photo of Harriet Tubman, cassette tapes (we are making our new rituals here, A Broadcast and Seeding: Submerging Meditation), tape deck, sage, cart with wheels.

Here also included a series of activations, workshops and programming that ran in conjunction with the show. Because this work had been informed by so many people and experiences, it only felt right that all those layers and more be invited into the shaping of the space. Archived and dispersed through different channels, thinking about how this space could live on as its own entity while serving as a place of resource sharing, information, and knowledge. Knowing that this space wouldn’t stop after its two week run at the gallery, wanting this work to continue into the future and not be bound by a schedule, I decided to make it a living archive on instagram and google docs. How do projects live on past their original run? How do we revisit past work to be in dialogue with crafting the future we want to live?
Our schedule of activations, shared through tinyurl.com/ritualshe, where visitors could find participating collaborators' bios and registration links to virtual programming. The link, aka a google document, allowed for a space that could also be changed, added to, fluid and free of charge. Our final activation of this current iteration is on May 12, 2022, come join!

Lee Rae Walsh\(^{58}\) led a virtual workshop on what our ingredient lists are, how we make rituals, what materials go on our altars. We collectively made lists and poems on google docs\(^{59}\), turned our cameras on and off, shared our favorite tastes and felt close for an hour together on a Friday afternoon. Lee and I shared space in my studio, in early Ritual Here days and even though they now live in London, zoom brought us all back together in one room. I always zoomed in from the banner space. I set my computer up on the active altar and let the painted webs bring us together. Marta Rodriguez Maleck\(^{60}\) and I shared space around shared language and the overlaps of our practice. We asked each other questions that we had always wanted to ask about each other’s practice and of our own, we loved and laughed and shared

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\(^{58}\) e/ Lee/ rae walsh, https://eileenraewalsh.com/

\(^{59}\) The remnants of this workshop, defining ingredients, altars and rituals, live on in a google doc folder, take a look and ask yourself these questions! https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19o61z5RdSLPzHFagkWMkfalm1KpI2JF?usp=sharing

\(^{60}\) Marta Rodriguez Maleck, https://martarodriguezmaleck.com/
intimate truths about the intention and viewer of our work, we essentially had a deep beautiful check in, for the public to watch and be a part of. It felt brave and so good. And on the final day of the show, the banner became home to a net making workshop and form. Gabrielle McHugh⁶¹, a colleague of mine and fiber artist, led a flowing fluid group of us in the making of a collective net in the round. In every activation, the webs and nets and materials of the space came to life, fully seen by the guests and intentional time together. The ingredients, preparations for rituals, the questions and intimate friendship that it takes to support sustained survival, the literal web lines slipping off the banner to become a physical net, to hold us all tight.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is or can be an altar?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A location for a ritual ---- we are making new rituals here together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intentional spaces for reflection, reverence or centering (can be on a mantel, in an altoid box so it's portable, in the woods)

-AAAAA! I love an altoid box as an altar!!!!!!!!!

Can your desk at work in an office at a 9-5 job be an altar????

^yes! CAconrad also has some beautiful somatic poetry rituals about rituals while at work…
It seems the intention or energy behind the focus is important.
A feeling
A space/place you go to with intention
I need to dust my altars

My bathtub filled with all my favorite rocks and dried rose petals from the garden

My cluttered altars

My dashboard layered with dust, heart shaped rocks, and dried flowers from Texas highways
Spiral shaped letter holder sitting on the desk filled to the brim with notes and love letters
Studio walls
The alcove outside my studio where I sit and watch the birds and people

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⁶¹ Gabrielle McHugh, [https://www.gabriellemchugh.com/](https://www.gabriellemchugh.com/)
Are you thinking about your art as a contribution to (or part of) a movement? If so, what are the movements you are passionate about and what are your approaches to contribution? How does this fit in with the idea of collaboration?
People: as in all the windows into kinships of Richmond, VA. Taking my organizing and community building tools I practiced and learned from in Oakland and Los Angeles, CA. We make and craft and create and become together. I have learned of Richmond, VA through and because of these intentional relationships and it only felt right (as a newcomer to Richmond, VA) to treat the gallery like I have been navigating this new place. Friends of friends, artists I have admired and followed, my first housemate when I moved here, folks I have trusted. It felt important to not think of the show as the end product but rather approach each layer/component of this project with importance and power. Thanks to the VCU Graduate Research Grant, I was able to pay each collaborator for their time, role, and creation of new work. Always re-distributing institutional funds into the hands of working artists, writers, archivists, thinkers, always accessing the places of access within this work, leading with non-hierarchical forms of collaboration. We met one on one in my studio, visited collaborators’ studios and homes and gardens, went on walks in their neighborhood, checked in on eachother, and became friends. In March of 2022, we all gathered together, finally feeling safer to meet outside and share a meal. One of the things I kept hearing again and again from all these collaborators was that they wish they knew other radical, queer artists in this city. We gathered at Byrd Park on a sunny day, around a picnic blanket that echoed the fabric banner web space, covered in food offerings and a collectively made altar. In many ways that picnic felt like the opening of the show, like us all being together was the real start of this work being shared. This work was and is for us, and witnessing it bloom and become with others felt like the highest honor.
(Above: All five of us, gathered over a meal and being together, 2022)

Window mural and title with Ayana Zaire Cotton’s *Cykofa Artifacts*\(^{62}\) below, 2022

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\(^{62}\) Artifacts that are a part of *Cykofa Story*, [https://ayanazairecotton.com/Cykofa-Story](https://ayanazairecotton.com/Cykofa-Story)
Shared bibliography/words that root us, text by Catherine McKittrick, Angela Davis, Legacy Russell, Akwaeki Emezi, edition of 200 screen prints on newsprint, 2022
Inside of the banner, two paintings on mylar hang on the banner, 2022

Hands poke out of the banner, 2022
Traces of rubbings from the carved stools are spread out amongst the inside of the banner, 2022.
(Above: visitors interact with the space, 2022)

Ribbings to form a new list and orientation, 2022

A view of the space from the inside of the banner, 2022
Safety, Care, Love, Trust for Black Womxn, 2020
The layering

On top of

Below

Side by side

of my lived experience and the stories of deeply rooted Black and brown, queer, trans, gender non-conforming people in Richmond, VA

Living together and on top of each other

of my lived experience and the stories of deeply rooted Black and brown, queer, trans, gender non-conforming people in Oakland, CA

This is how I learn of my place and our relationship to it

This is how we make community, by speaking the same tongues

across states and counties and city lines and blocks and countries

Our language is told through care acts and slow looking, through asking why is it so hard to find any Black queer history in this city?

Living together and on top of each other

multi layered collages, paintings, prints: posters
Black Futures Matter, an ode to the car protests of 2020, window mural in Let’s Rename Our City at SEPTEMBER Gallery, 2021

on plastic/glass, a screen print transparency, a view from the inside that is different from the outside: windows

Sometimes the words are easy to read, other times they are illegible, the alphabet as we know it gets turned into patterns and imagery and doesn’t read in one way. Sometimes the words are hard to read, you have to move on, other times they ask you to pause and read again.

Living together and on top of each other

on Ro’s porch, in the streets of downtown Richmond, surrounded by queers bathing on river rocks, having nourishing check-ins, walking on the paths and trails of our forced migration, eating fresh papayas with lime, getting browner in hot southern sun, turning storefronts into the community centers of our dreams, learning from our elders, making kin in new spaces

helping me come to terms with the fact that our (and by our I mean B.I.Q.T.P.O.C.) stories will always be in relation to the lived experiences and places we orbit. At a moment of being transported to a

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63 In the Winter of 2021, I was honored to bring together work made in 2019-20 with fresh work made in graduate school, into a solo show at SEPTEMBER Gallery in Hudson, NY. http://septembergallery.com/space/lukaza-branfman-verissimo.html
new place, a new community, I search for an understanding of how my lineage and legacy has been interwoven into the stories of this place. And I cannot understand that interweaving without interweaving my stories with stories of the people around me who speak my lived reality. It’s a new place and the same place, Richmond is a new place and is Oakland. Jackson Ward very much feels like the lower bottoms.

These experiences are felt by many, all over this state, country, globe and this work amplifies these stories.

This amplification brings me closer to this landscape while also holding my deep roots in cities far far away. This amplification makes me, us, we feel seen, safe, resilient, protected. They become one here. They become one on these posters, windows, tapes. Amplification becomes my viewfinder.
Chapter 4: Archive
A. Roots: This bibliography is our storytelling/collective archival tool.

Roots feel like generosity.

A stack of books in my studio

Stacks and piles and rows of books, I was tempted to use this space to make a bibliography of my complete book collection (currently housed in my studio at VCU.) Although sometimes it feels like my work is tethered to every piece of text I have chosen to hold onto, I will spare this long document and just stick to the texts that had a more direct influence on this work. I think of niche archives, libraries, and collections that specialize in marginalized histories, such as queer history, lesbian history, afro-latina history, resistance history, political posters, etc, as ecosystems of community that we get to peer into and learn from. Our histories don’t always make it into books, sometimes they are recorded on tapes or told through pamphlets and lived experiences, in homes or passed down through song. When they get to become a multiple like a book or a poster, that ecosystem gets a little bit bigger. Roots feel like generosity. Sharing is at the root because that is how we learn of each other. I will add that I don’t think written text is the only form of history to be centered. Maybe the best part of those archives are the objects, pins, t-shirts, ephemera, and photographs, holding just as much (or more) importance as the written story. In many
ways, I hold this entire document as an archive, a close look into my practice; an embodiment, a living, breathing storytelling space.

A crate full of books in my studio

In crafting ways to include and weave together my collections, references, favorite articles, books, manifestos, zines, artist books, and posters into this document, I centered and learned from Legacy Russel’s talk On Footnotes. Several books in this bibliography also practice the radical act of using the footnote as a material, such as Dear Science and other stories by Katherine McKittrick and M Archive, after the end of the world by Alexis Pauline Gumbs. Russel talks about how the footnote lets us practice centering our reference linages. Similarly to the ways we consider specialized archives, how do we think of the community and text on the margins as centered and prioritized work; not only in form but in practice. Octavia Butler reminds us so beautifully that “writing lets you make your own worlds.” I have freed myself from the fit that this MFA mold wants to put me into a long time ago…. My bookshelf is swimming in these pages, my ancestors and future selves. Non-linearity can be confusing but I challenge the ways we butt up against discomfort and invite us to turn it into a guiding tool.

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65 https://charlierose.com/videos/28978


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66 This quote comes from a talk by Shawne Michaelin Holloway in the Spring of 2022. I had asked her about the form of the library in her practice and pedagogy work and this was part of her response! http://www.shawnemichaelinholloway.com/


Dineo Seshee Bopape. *Ile, Aye, Moya, La, Ndokh...harmonic Conversations...mm.* Richmond, VA: Institute Contemporary Art Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021.


PART 1: SETTING THE TABLE

I am imagining us sitting at a table, maybe this long table I am sitting at right now. Feeding each other long lists of poems, love letters, recipes of resistance, hot tea, pickles, time, networks of chosen family, dance parties, really sweaty ones, sea water, the most beautiful fall day, snacks, snacks, snacks, a world that doesn't rely on policing & surveillance.  

DANCE, SURVIVAL & NOURISHMENT
SUSTANANCE, SURVIVAL & NOURISHMENT

my friends & loved ones that I haven’t met yet & my ancestors & you & my chosen siblings & fellow kin, all at this table. Sustanence for the long haul, beauty always, even with the anger, survival — long lives — long continual strength to keep fighting, nourishment, the taste of liberation, freeing them all & learning from our resilient roots.

A candle is lit, let’s eat.
PART 2: BRIDGE THROUGH MY WINDOW BY AUDRE LORDE, PAGE 184

PART 3: SIX THINGS I IMAGINE ARE ALSO AT THIS MEAL WITH US

1. A TABLE CLOTH THAT IS ALSO A PROTEST BANNER
2. PERSIMMONS
3. THE PICTURES OF OUR ANCESTORS
4. WARM SUNLIGHT
5. EMBRACE
6. SINGING, SHOUTING, SILENCE, WISPERS, LAUGHS
MEALS IN SUSTAINABLE, SURVIVAL, NURTURANT ENVIRONMENT
MEALS OVER A BLOOMING GARDEN
MEALS IN THE RIVER, SUNSET AT THE RIVER
MEALS IN NATURAL FOOD UPLIFT
MEALS IN IMAGINATION

MEALS IN LETTERS
MEALS OVER CHIMNEY
MEALS IN PARKS & PORCHES
MEALS IN COMMUNITY

PART 4: UNITE

MEALS
FRESH FOOD
LEAVES IN FRUITS
MEALS IN CRUSHES
MEALS OVER THE WORLD
MEALS ON LUNCH BREAKS
MEALS IN BOXES & ZOON

MEALS IN BASKETS & MEALS IN COLLECTIVITY
DOWN IN BASKETS & MEALS IN OUR ENDOWEDNESS
BASKETBALL MEALS IN LAMPS BACK
RUNNING FRESH FOOD
HUNGING IT ALL
FRESH WATERS & MEALS IN KISSES
WATERS IN MEALS

BLACK TOY MEALS IN ABOLITION
ALWAYS CENTERING BLACK JOY
MEALS IN KNOWING ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE
MEALS FULL OF PLEASURE & GARLIC & SAUCE
MEALS WITH NO WORDS
MEALS IN SKYING ASHE
MEALS IN PEN PALS
MEALS IN FALLING IN LOVE MANY TIMES MEALS IN CARE
MEALS IN MULTINODES
MEALS IN RE-NAMING & CREATING NEW LANGUAGE
MEALS IN PAINT
MEALS IN SILENCE
MEALS IN LEARNING
MEALS IN OUR ONGOING HUNT FOR THE PERFECT UNDERWEAR
MEALS IN ALWAYS SAVING THE SCRAP MEALS IN THE LEFTOVERS & THE COMPOST
MEALS TOGETHER SOON & NOW & I'M ALWAYS HERE TODAY & THANK YOU & SEE YOU SOON❤️
Meals in Multitudes, my script and living altar, 2021
Meals in Multitudes, a performance still, 2021

**Video Documentation**

*Meals in Multitudes, shared/performed at Come to my Window 2, curated by Nico Fontana Press for Printed Matter Art Book Fair at NADA, 2021*
WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE TABLE?
WHAT DO YOU TAKE?
WHAT'S NOURISHING YOU THESE DAYS?
WHAT'S GIVING YOU THE ENERGY TO CONTINUE?
WHAT DOES LIBERATION TASTE LIKE?
HOW DO YOU LEARN FROM THE LAND AROUND YOU?
Let’s gather around a virtual table together, chop, write, peel, draw, and build a community sustenance and resistance meal. What do you bring to the table? What do you take? What’s nourishing you these days? Feeding your grieving body? What’s giving you the energy to keep going? What does liberation taste like? How do you learn from the land around you? During this hour-long gathering, join Jade and Lukaza as they guide you through a score of ingredients, preparation, eating, and sharing. Bring texts, poems, pictures—ingredients of your own to share at the table. They will take thirty minutes to prepare themselves a meal and thirty minutes to come together and share space.

*Resistance Salad;* a collective recipe, sharing reference images as an offering, 2021
Resistance Salad; a collective recipe, sharing all our offerings as a group, 2021

Video Documentation

Resistance Salad; a collective recipe, co-lead with Jade Mara Novarino, curated by Eloisa Aquino for Vancouver Art Book Fair, 2021
Poems of Today, 2020
Poems of today are written on the monument bases, on scrap paper in a neat stack on my studio desk, in found poems on the streets, on banners and handwritten menus for future meals together, in a messy stack on my kitchen table, poems of today are passed between me and my kin on our text threads, through pictures of sunsets and over 30 open tabs, poems of today are how we craft our new language. Poems of today look easy to read and scribbles and drawings and dreams and in hiding. I think of my work as archiving the living documents, words, peoples around me. A pile of books written by our ancestors of the past supports a pile of books written by our ancestors of today. We speak each other's language. We speak care, sustenance, survival, pleasure, rest, hard work. We speak into each other's hearts so that this living archive can be strong enough to hold us tight.

As I craft and hold poems of today, I think about how this was the first action of this document. I start with the roots because where would we be without our roots? Hot tea sipped in yellow enamel cups, keeping me warm as I pulled books, zines, pamphlets, flyers off my bookshelf and started sorting. First, a stack of books that are the backbone of my archive, my work, books I mention and work with on a
daily/monthly basis. Then a stack of books that I can’t live without, books that have moved with me across the country and that are my bread and butter. Pretty quickly the piles merged and I got excited about the idea of holding space for this collection, in this document. Instead of thinking of them as my bibliography, they became my poems of today that shape my work, practice, language, and ways of survival. What does this five plus page bibliography tell me about the way I need to hold space for this work? These stacks, now very large, are leaning, falling, spilling into the ecosystem of my studio, of my work, of my life.
Epilogue

Yesterday, April 23, 2022, I de-installed *Rituals Here, a four node project* that was my thesis exhibition. The title stems from text that I spoke of earlier in this document, *we are making new rituals here together*, the idea of this whole experience and way of life as material for new rituals. That all these beginnings, middles and ends have rituals that get created, formed, and held as spaces to come back to and use as future tools. On the eve of the de-install, I invited beloveds to join me for an in-person and virtual dance party, DJed by my friend in Oakland, California. Dance parties are rituals in and of themselves, they are spaces of release, celebration and embodiment. “To move is to remember,” to mark an ending with aliveness, honoring, and sweat, rather than the idea of this space/show/installation never happening again.

As I sweat, side by side my mom, friend who drove down from DC, beloveds in Oakland, partner, and aunt, I started embodying the work, I started breathing in all the experiences that I had in that space over the past two weeks, I started imagining the work beyond the white walled gallery space and into a park. The ways the fabric banner swayed and jumped when someone touched it or got close, we were making new rituals in that space together. Rituals so powerful that the “ending” or “closing” of the show slid away. I bring this closing ritual up here in the final pages of this document, because I feel similarly as I close this up. That the ending is a ritual, an embodiment and movement, a space to see transition as a tool not a definitive ending. My mom brought the show flowers two days before it transitioned, helped me wash the paint off of the windows, and filmed as the banner’s tension was released. She was a witness to this new ritual, I was the attendant. We filled the altar cart up with all the layers of the show, wrapped in plastic, tucked in crates and stuffed in yellow enamel cups and wheeled it home. We moved in silence, patience, and love. I am making new rituals in the writing and transcribing of this 100+ page document. We made new rituals in this transition.

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67 A quote that was texted to me from friend and artist Joseph Liatela after the dance party. Joseph uses embodiment practices in his work as an artist and we often talk for hours about the shared languages in our practices. This quote not only felt so good to read after the dance party but it also felt like it was deeply honoring the idea of ritual as remembering.