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CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA:
A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS OF LAND-BASED
COMMUNITY CARE

by
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ABSTRACT

“Cultural Resistance in the African Diaspora: A Historical and Contemporary Analysis of Land-Based Community Care” explores the use of land for the self-liberation and sustenance of African and African descendant peoples. It argues that collective cultivation of land is key to the development of African-derived cultures and forms the foundation of resistance against Western-capitalist cultural domination. Maroon societies, also known as runaway communities, of the 16th to 19th centuries are one of the earliest examples of land-based resistance in slave colonies that have contributed to the development of what we now call the African Diaspora. *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, an anthology edited by Richard Price, and other texts inform the “Historical Analysis” of these communities. Additional literature reviews of *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement* by Monica M. White and *African American Folk Healing* by Stephanie Y. Mitchem provide more recent Historical U.S.-based models of Black land-based living and healing. A personal interview with a Black healer-artist and reviews of Black farms, gardens, and herbalist collectives inform this paper’s “Contemporary Analysis” of the topic. The goal of this text is to expand general knowledge of and inspire action towards land-based community care in people of the African Diaspora.

Key Words: cultural resistance, African Diaspora, self-sufficiency, self-liberation, maroon societies, agricultural cooperatives, folk healing, African based religions, pleasure, community, care

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INTRODUCTION

Wherever there is oppression and subjugation, there is resistance. Since the start of the Atlantic Slave Trade, kidnapped Africans carried seeds, freedom dreams, and their unique cultures with them to the so-called New World. The earliest and most pervasive form of resistance—following suicide—was the act of stealing oneself away.¹ The communities that self-liberated Africans created are called maroon societies. Cedric Robinson’s path-breaking book *Black Marxism: The Making of The Black Radical Tradition* guides us through “the recovery and the reconstruction of these events,” revealing histories of resistance, rebellion, and revolution that are absent from popular education.² Maroon societies can provide significant insights into methods of Afro-American resistance.

Six common themes and characteristics of Black resistance emerge from the 16th century to our present day. The first is proximity to African roots, as many of those who rebelled were recently imported to the colonies and knew a life outside of their present bondage. The second characteristic is allyship, primarily between runaway enslaved Africans and indigenous American peoples pushed out of their territories by European colonizers. The third recurring aspect is violent resistance, such as guerilla warfare exercised by maroons against colonial military forces. It is important to note that violence was a rare form of resistance that was never as severe as the violence enacted by the master class against the enslaved. In the context of

¹ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 66.

² Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism, revised and updated third edition: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 149, ProQuest Ebook Central.

slavery, violence by the dominated against the dominator was always an act of self-defense. In a similar vein, distinguishing resistance in the 17th and 18th centuries from contemporary resistance, Robinson asserts that

This violence was not inspired by an external object, it was not understood as a part of an attack on a system, or an engagement with abstraction of oppressive structures and relations. Rather it was their “Jonestown,” our Nongqawuse: The renunciation of actual being for historical being; the preservation of the ontological totality granted by a metaphysical system that had never allowed for property in either the physical, philosophical, temporal, legal, social, or psychic senses. For them defeat or victory was an internal affair.³

From allyship and violent resistance flows the fourth characteristic of maroon life—kinship. Even before landing in the colonies, captured Africans would find some relief and care in one another and entrusted each other with their lives in resistance against domination. Successful runaway communities did not always exile themselves from slave society. Maroons also made kin with some of their allies, such as the enslaved or assimilated freemen. The fifth characteristic involves access to land, which permits the maroon society to be sufficiently clandestine and self-sustaining. The sixth and final characteristic, which connects closely to the fifth, is religion and ritual. It enhanced and grounded kidnapped Africans’ relationship with the land and their fellow community members. The words and medicines of spiritual and religious leaders on the plantation and in maroon societies protected and empowered their communities.

The relationship between land, religion, and ritual in the survival, healing, and liberation of enslaved Africans is this paper’s primary topic of inquiry. A great Black revolutionary named Malcolm X once said that “land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom,

³ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 168.

justice and equality....”⁴ Our Black ancestors took agency over their own physical, psychological, spiritual, and social well-being by cultivating and claiming the land they were forced upon using African-derived rituals and practices. Many of the rituals and religious traditions explored in this paper center land—water and earth, in particular—in their practices. This topic is also of personal interest to me, as many African-derived land-based practices have contributed to my own personal growth and development.

Saidiya Hartman provides another framework for us to view land-based religions and rituals as a significant driving force of resistance:

Stealing away was the vehicle for the redemptive figuration of dispossessed individual and community, reconstituting kin relations, contravening the object status of chattel, transforming pleasure, and investing in the body as a site of sensual activity, sociality, and possibility, and last, redressing the pained body.⁵

Kidnapped Africans were dispossessed of their homes and their freedoms, but preserved “inward nonmaterial” possessions, “such as religion and magic, the most retained African survivals.”⁶ Many primarily found redemption of self and spirit in practicing their religions and spiritual rituals. In the South, for example, forests near plantations provided a secret cover for these practices and personal gardens where the enslaved could grow food and herbs that they could not forage. Following Hartman, we can begin to see reconstituted community and kinship—in other words, re-humanization—as key consequences to this act of agency. The body, like land, was captured, objectified, and pillaged by Europeans for profit and was constantly under

⁴ Quoted in Monica M. White. *Freedom Farmers : Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*. Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 17.

⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 66.

⁶ Jessie Ruth Gaston, “The Case of Voodoo in New Orleans,” in *Africanisms in American Culture*, ed. Joseph E. Holloway (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 146.

reconstruction and reclamation by those it was stolen from. The language of “stealing away” centers the body as a site of healing, liberation, and transformation. Engaging with the latter part of the above quote leads us to pleasure, or feeling good, as a key part of resistance—part and parcel of rituals of “redemptive figuration.” Dancing, singing, and sharing food are communal rituals of pleasure and self-agency. “Redressing the pained body,” or healing, is also essential to pleasure. From this context arises the central inquiry of this paper — *How do land-based rituals of the African Diaspora catalyze Black resistance and sustain Black lives in the United States?*

A brief overview of maroon societies and a deeper dive into the six characteristics of resistance will begin to answer this question and foreground our understanding of cultural resistance in the African Diaspora. *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement* by Monica M. White and *African American Folk Healing* by Stephanie Y. Mitchem further our understanding of the evolution of Black cultural resistance in the United States into the 20th century, after the so-called abolition of slavery. In reality, slavery in the U.S. evolved into Jim Crow segregation, requiring Black folks to retain and create their own systems of support and survival. We’ll look at Black agricultural cooperatives, healing practices, and peer education, which demonstrate that land is necessary for self-agency, nourishment, and care.

The contemporary sphere of this study is also focused on land-based cultural resistance in the United States. I conducted one personal interview with a young Black artist, gardener, and healer. The interview and the writing of this paper take place on Tongva land (also known as Claremont/Upland/Pomona), where Tongva elders and leaders still live and teach us settlers

methods of co-living with the land. Contemporary movements for food sovereignty and community-centered care have also highlighted and led to the founding of many more Black farms and cooperatives. Their websites, external news articles, and social media pages make knowledge of their work and impact accessible to a wide audience, and I include summaries of a few organizations with links to their sites for your own reference.

Framework: Cultural Resistance & Community

Cultural Resistance is a term I learned from the anthology *Cultural Resistance Reader* by Stephen Duncombe. While he provides multiple definitions, for the purposes of this paper I focus on the first:

Cultural resistance and political action

- cultural resistance creates a “free space”:

ideologically: space to create new language, meanings, and visions of the future

materially: place to build community, networks, and organizational models

7

Accessible text: *Cultural resistance and political action*.

Bullet point: cultural resistance creates a “free space”:

ideologically: space to create new language, meanings, and visions of the future

Materially: place to build community, networks, and organizational models.

The cultures of maroon societies create and take up “free space”—a space to be free. Many maroon societies practiced their own religions and established their own political structures, ensuring the loyalty of all members and the long term survival of their communities. Within

⁷ Stephen Duncombe, *Cultural Resistance Reader* (London: Verso, 2002), 8.

cultural resistance, Stephen Duncombe also provides us with the idea of “scales of cultural resistance”:

Scales of cultural resistance

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| • unconsciously political | appropriation | self-consciously political |
| • individual | subculture | society |
| • survival | rebellion | revolution |

8

Accessible text: *Scales of cultural resistance*. unconsciously political, individual, survival, appropriation, subculture, rebellion, self-consciously political, society, revolution.

A key addition would be *collective*—acts of cultural resistance carried out by a group.

Subculture, rebellion, revolution, and society, for example, would fall under the *collective* scale of cultural resistance. The development of slave gardens are an example of cultural resistance on the scale of unconsciously political, survival, and individual or collective. Maroon societies embody many of these scales as well, with the creation of their own “society” through self-governance and the disruption of dominant slave society; “survival” by running away and fighting against slave catchers to resist the slow death of slavery; “rebellion” while raiding plantations for supplies and slaves, or fleeing the plantation in groups; “subculture” when speaking in their African mother tongue or blending it with colonial language; “unconsciously political,” since individual maroons were more concerned with their own survival than with the destruction of slave society; and sometimes “consciously political,” since some maroon societies negotiated peace treaties with colonial powers for self-sustenance.

⁸ Duncombe, *Cultural Resistance*, 8.

Collectivity often leads to community—a group of living beings with shared traits and values who consistently care for one another. Community requires collectivity but collectivity does not require community. Plantation field work serves as an example of collectivity, in which tens to hundreds of enslaved Black folks would line up in rows, sowing and harvesting crops for the white man's profit. Their collective condition of suffering *and* shared cultural, linguistic, and spiritual roots, however, permitted them to cultivate community with one another. Whether spoken or simply suggested, they established a contract of continuous care with one another; those who betrayed the group, by revealing escape plans to slaveholders for example, were excluded from the community (while still participating in *collective* work). It is the community that has sustained cultural resistance over generations.

Cultural resistance exists in opposition to cultural domination. Cultural domination under colonialism is the imposition and naturalization of European hegemonic values on the cultures of African, Asian, and indigenous American peoples. It is also the fabrication of history—primarily the narrative that Greece, Rome, and then Europe are the creators of human civilization and that Africa contributed nothing to the development of human societies.⁹ Within the hierarchization of peoples and all other living beings, the Anglo-Saxon Man made himself master. I write all this to call into question one of the greatest myths of cultural domination in modern and contemporary society under global capitalism (the former being founded in the early 16th century at the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade): that industrialization, urbanization and monetization, manifest as the destruction and domination of nature and its caretakers, is

⁹ “How Europe Twisted History to Destroy African Culture,” YouTube video, 16:52, posted by “2nacheki,” August 22, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6_j8SWQ50g&t=28s.

definitive of progress. This myth has created a false binary between nature and culture, between humans and other living beings. Therefore, centering land in our liberation and living in close connection to Earth-as-sacred-being is a key form of cultural resistance.

Black cultural resistance is everyday resistance, and it is closely linked with religion and spirituality.¹⁰ Culture is ritual songs and dances and folklore.¹¹ In Puerto Rico, Kokobalé is a dance of defense of the island, similar to Brazilian capoeira. Dancers gyrate around a machete or a stick, vying to see who will snatch it up first. The dance then continues with a call-and-response and arm and leg movements to block their partner's attacks. There are breaks, too, when the dancer-opponents distance themselves from each other, shake their bodies, and mock one another. It is how their enslaved ancestors learned to fight in preparation for rebellion and against punishments, according to Yazmín Morales, the Arts & Culture Coordinator at El Puente.¹² Puerto Rico also boasts of bomba and plena, dances that allowed the enslaved to express discontent with their condition and commune together. In North Carolina tobacco factories during the 20th century, Black workers sang religious hymns in unison as subtle protests against low wage difficult work and to ground their sense of collective identity.¹³ The

¹⁰ The term everyday resistance comes from Robin Kelley. Robin D. G. Kelley. ““We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” (*The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1, 1993), 79.

¹¹ Angela Davis responded to a student, and others in the past, who thanked her for her sacrifice—and as implied, her suffering. She asserted that she did not choose to suffer and critiqued the false opposition between the work of organizing for radical change and enjoying life. Music and art, for example, are at the core of resistance, she asserted, not an aside or a relief from the work. Angela Davis, (Class session with Angela Davis, Pomona College, Claremont, CA, Oct. 27, 2021).

¹² Yazmín Morales, “Revisiting the Afro-Puerto Rican Musical Traditions of Plena and Bomba through a Woman’s Perspective” (PowerPoint Presentation and Dance Workshop, Racial Justice Initiative, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, October 25, 2021).

¹³ Kelley, “We are not what we seem,” 75.

strong presence of such dances, songs, stories, and expressions of pleasure today constitute cultural resistance in the African Diaspora. Descendants of the enslaved remember and honor the legacies of their ancestors with and in their bodies, on the land their ancestors restructured and reclaimed.

Resistance is not just a series of past events or a theoretical framework; resistance is present collective-community action. We should all be part of these processes and I hope this paper inspires you to take care of Earth where you are; to further generate cultures of community care and restitution, continuously striving for liberation.

MAROON SOCIETIES

Resistance is fundamental to Black life in the African Diaspora. The presence of maroon societies within European colonies since the early history of the Atlantic Slave Trade challenges the traditional Western docile slave narrative:

Wherever there were slave plantations, there was resistance in the form of runaways and slave revolts; and wherever mountains, swamps, or forests permitted the escaped slaves to gather, they formed communities.¹⁴

“Maroon” comes from the Spanish word *cimarrón*, which originally referred to domestic cattle that had fled to the hills.¹⁵ In the Dominican Republic, as early as 1512, *cimarrones* fled Spanish plantations to remote mountainous jungle areas to live freely and independently with indigenous Tainos or on their own.¹⁶ Also derived from *cimarrón* is the English word marronage, which means flight. In other words, maroon societies were runaway communities. *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, an anthology edited by Richard Price, explores their spirit and structure in the Spanish Americas, the French Caribbean, the United States, Brazil, Jamaica, and the Guianas. They were known as “*palenques, quilombos, mocambos, cumbes, ladeiras, or mambises*” in the various colonies of the Atlantic Slave Trade.¹⁷ ¹⁸ No maroon

¹⁴ Barbara Klamon Kopytoff, “The Early Development of Jamaican Maroon Societies,” (William and Mary Quarterly 35, no. 2, April 1978), 287, quoted in Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 135.

¹⁵ Richard Price, introduction to *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, ed. Richard Price (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 1.

¹⁶ “Cimarrón Spirit: Afro-Dominican Maroon Culture,” directed by Ruben Duran (2015), Kanopy.

¹⁷ In early accounts, runaway communities in Brazil were often referred to as *mocambos* rather than *quilombos*. *Mocambo* likely comes from the word *mu-kambo* in Ambundu, which means a hideout. Brazil hosted the largest maroon society in the New World, known as the kingdom of Palmares. R.K. Kent, “Palmares: An African State in Brazil,” in Price, *Maroon Societies*, 174 and Bastide, “The Other Quilombos,” in Price, *Maroon Societies*, 192.

¹⁸ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 1.

society was identical, but one thing they had in common was that “to be viable, maroon communities had to be almost inaccessible, and villages were typically located in inhospitable, out-of-the-way areas.”¹⁹ Land was central to the actuality of maroon societies, providing a safeguard where they lacked in physical weapons.

Resistance does not necessarily entail complete separation from systems of domination. Some maroon societies maintained their ties with colonial society. Bahian mocambos, for example, were situated close to towns and farms, although still inaccessible.²⁰ This made the act of stealing away more viable for enslaved Africans seeking freedom. Trickery and other barriers to legal freedom made this form of resistance necessary. Some of the enslaved, for example, made contracts for freedom with their masters, contingent upon self-purchase. When they managed to gather the money, however, their masters often broke their promise and kept them in bondage. Similarly, many freedmen were illegally sold back into slavery by slavecatchers.²¹ The maroon society stood as a shining beacon for those suffering under the colonial system and as a threat to the economic and social systems of the colonies themselves.

The nature and potentiality of maroon societies is illustrated in the largest and longest reigning *quilombo* in Pernambuco, Brazil—the Negro Republic of Palmares. The name comes from the word *palmares*, meaning any area covered by palm trees.²² It stood from roughly 1605 to 1694

¹⁹ Bastide, “The Other Quilombos,” in Price, *Maroon Societies*, 5.

²⁰ Stuart B. Schwartz, “The Mocambo: Slave Resistance in Colonial Bahia,” in Price, *Maroon Societies*, 211.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

²² Kent, “Palmares,” 174-5.

and grew rapidly between 1645 and 1672, a period of relative peace. The republic consisted of many *mocambos*, spread out as boroughs or neighborhoods in the interior of Alagoas.²³ It grew from two major *palmares* to ten *palmares* between the years of 1645 to 1672, ranging from 800 to 6000 inhabitants each.²⁴ The capital of Palmares boasted of a chapel and priest, 1500 houses, and a council house in the main square alongside the king's residence. It was also "fortified with parapets full of caltrops" as a protective measure.²⁵ The capital was called *Macoco*, most likely after the animal that was killed there to initiate the site.²⁶

This ritual and others indicate that Palmares was heavily influenced by Central African structures and cultures, although Amerindian and Brazilian-Portuguese people and cultures also had a large influence on the *quilombo*. The names of most of the *mocambo* chiefs were of Central African origin, and none were *crioulos*—meaning they were African-born arrivals.²⁷ The king's name was *Ganga-Zumba*, which means Great Lord in Kimbundu, a Bantu language.²⁸ When people approached him, subjects and outsiders alike, they would prostrate before him and strike palm leaves with their hands.²⁹ He ruled "with iron justice... When some Negroes attempt to flee, he sends *crioulos* after them and once retaken their death is swift and of the kind to instill fear."³⁰

²³ Schwartz, "The Mocambo," 211.

²⁴ Kent, "Palmares," 177.

²⁵ *Relação* in Carneiro 1958:203-4, quoted in Kent, "Palmares," 180.

²⁶ Kent, "Palmares," 188.

²⁷ Kent also indicates one name of Amerindian origin, which demonstrates cross cultural exchange and intermarriage between maroons and Indians. *Ibid.*, 180-1.

²⁸ Mildred Europa Taylor, "Ganga Zumba, an African royal who escaped slavery and created a kingdom of his own in Brazil," *Face2FaceAfrica*, September 30, 2020, <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/the-story-of-an-african-royal-who-escaped-slavery-and-created-a-kingdom-of-his-own-in-brazil12>.

²⁹ Kent, "Palmares," 179 and 188.

³⁰ *Relação* in Carneiro 1958:255-58, quoted in *Ibid.*, 178.

This was meant to protect the Black republic, as insider word of their whereabouts and internal structure would be extremely destructive. Uniquely, most residents of Palmares were native and born into freedom. The *palmaristas* gained new members during raids, or *razzias*, of Portuguese slave ships and plantations.³¹ The enslaved members of their society were able to earn their freedom during subsequent *razzias* by stealing another, but those who escaped the plantation to Palmares of their own volition were allowed to live as freely as the natives, presumably after a period of vetting and initiation.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Palmares spanned over 13,000 square miles!³² It was able to survive for so long due to horticulture, trade in allyship with *moradores*, military training and raids, and its location on the land.³³ The republic of Palmares was spread throughout hard to reach areas, requiring invaders to cut through thick brush, venture by foot for over twenty days, and suffer through fatigue, hunger and thirst.³⁴ During their *razzias*, the maroons also stole gold and silver to trade with *moradores* in exchange for guns and information on upcoming military raids and expeditions against them. In the Palmares city of *Suburpia*, maroons were trained to fight and forge weapons; violence in self defense was a necessity.³⁵ *Suburpia* was ruled by the king's brother Gana Zona. Of lesser influence on the survival of Palmares was king Ganga-Zumba's peace treaties with each new governor of the colonial state Pernambuco; they'd agree to avoid the colonial towns if the raiders left them alone. Of course, it was more symbolic

³¹ Ibid., 180.

³² Ibid., 183.

³³ *Moradores* were local settlers in the Portuguese Colony of Brazil. Ibid., 1.

³⁴ Ibid., 182 and 186.

³⁵ *Relacão* in Carneiro 1958:203-4, quoted in Ibid., 180.

than effective, since neither side kept their promise. Near the end of the seventeenth century, colonial military raids had become so frequent that king Ganga-Zumba made a desperate compromise. The republic's treaty of 1678 stated that

only peace could end the difficulties of Palmares, peace which so many governors and leaders had proffered but never stuck to... they [Palmaristas] have never desired war; that they only fought to save their own lives; that they were being left without *ciudades*, without supplies, without wives... it is only the liberty of those born in Palmares that is now being sought while those who fled from our [Brazilian-Portuguese] people will be returned [*Relacão* in Carneiro 1958:219].³⁶

This demonstrates that the destruction of slavery was not their primary goal—that would come later, during the 19th century, when maroon societies were greatly reduced in number so that armed insurrections became more common, being the only accessible means of liberation.³⁷

Community survival was their goal. Similarly, elsewhere in Brazil, “the fugitives of the Buraco de Tatú had no intention of a total war of liberation against the slave-owning segments of the population.”³⁸ To reiterate the words of Robinson (cited earlier), “defeat or victory were an internal affair.” The victory of Palmares depended on their sustained existence as an independent republic, whatever that took. These treaties remain of little importance, however, since the maroons did not return slaves who fled to them and the *moradores* did not cease their attempts to destroy Palmares. The latter succeeded in February of 1694.

While slavery and systemic anti-Black violence continued to regenerate, maroon societies continued to sprout and fight for their existence; some still exist today. So, *what can maroon*

³⁶ Ibid., 219, quoted in Ibid., 184.

³⁷ Kent, “Palmares,” 171.

³⁸ Schwartz, “The Mocambo,” 219.

societies teach us about community care? The chapel and priest in Palmares, for example, provided individual and collective spiritual care for the community, as did other spiritual leaders and healers. *Razzias* fulfilled the community's material needs and provided escape for people still imprisoned on plantations. Maroons planted gardens and foraged for their own food and medicines to feed and heal the group. Maroon men would train to defend their community members and the land they cultivated against attack, although there were countless women leaders such as Queen Nanny and Harriett Tubman who led military action to protect their community as well.³⁹ Under the umbrella of marronage, after maroon societies, is *petit marronage*—repetitive or periodic truancy with temporary goals such as visiting a relative or lover on a neighboring plantation or obtaining more to eat for the night by ‘stealing’ some food from the master’s pot.^{40 41} This demonstrates that care as resistance is a spectrum, differing in form amongst enslaved individuals and communities; often, one form leads and bleeds into another. Each manifestation of resistance presented below, in maroon societies and sometimes plantations, incorporates some or all of the six characteristics. In analyzing them, we can begin to understand the roots of Black cultural resistance in the African Diaspora and its manifestation in our contemporary age.

³⁹ Harriet Tubman led the Combahee River raid on June 2, 1863—the only military campaign in U.S. history led by a woman. She freed over 700 slaves at the Port Royal region of South Carolina. See COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE, “History,” Accessed April 22, 2022, <http://combaheerivercollective.weebly.com/history.html> and Helen Leichner, “Combahee River Raid (June 2, 1863),” BlackPast.org, December 21, 2012, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-raid-june-2-1863/>.

⁴⁰ In 1727, in Louisiana of the United States, another maroon society, or “outlaw village,” was discovered, called des Natanapallé. Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 179.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

I. Proximity to African Roots

European colonies within the Atlantic Slave Trade required the continuous import of kidnapped Africans to sustain their brutal economies. By 1798, in Brazil, there were 1,500,000 enslaved folks and the majority were of African or Afro-Brazilian origin.⁴² Rebellions and revolts were often led by Africans recently imported into the colonies. Accounts show that Black resistance in Brazil included “nine Bahian revolts between 1807 and 1835, which involved a number of Hausa, Yoruba, and Kwa-speaking groups, as well as the Ogboni Society, Muslim *alufas*, and even a back-to-Africa movement.”⁴³ In San Domingo—the colony of Haiti and home of the first independent Black republic—the majority of the negro population was African born and were known there as *bossales*.^{44 45}

In Jamaica, within and outside the plantation, obeah men and women and myalists—spiritual leaders—were often born in Africa. They shared herbal remedies and rituals for healing and protection, inducing abortion, preventing contraception, and harming enemies. Similarly, leaders in the maroon societies of Brazil were often African-born and male and served as military leaders and spiritual guides. They imported African forms of defense into their societies: “covered traps and sharpened stakes were used for village protection in Africa from Nigeria southward to the old kingdom of the Kongo and were also used to protect the Afro-Brazilian encampment of Palmares.”⁴⁶ Proximity to Africa also provided strict ideological unity amongst

⁴² Schwarz, “The Mocambo,” 204.

⁴³ Kent, “Palmares,” 171-172.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁵ Jean Casimir, introduction to *The Haitians: A Decolonial History*, Jean Casimir and Walter D. Mingolo (University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469660509_casimir.

⁴⁶ Schwartz, “The Mocambo,” 221.

community members. This was of extreme importance, as Black and indigenous spies were often hired by powers within the colonies to infiltrate the communities. Maroon societies were under constant attack, as their existence threatened the institution of slavery. Robinson writes of this phenomenon, “the so-called ‘superstitious’ injunctions of the religious leaders not only served the purpose of creating a sense of the new society but also ensured the minimum of discipline essential in movements such as these.”⁴⁷

The living memories of each new arrival fueled collective resistance to subjugation and dehumanization, leaving a legacy for their descendants born into slavery to follow. Their sustained connection to Africa was the source of their ontological being. Jamaican maroons, for example, continue to identify themselves as African and descendants of “Granny Nanny.” Despite varying accounts, the consensus is that Queen Nanny of the Windward Maroons travelled from the Gold Coast as a free person, with her own domestic slaves, to investigate what was happening to her people.⁴⁸ Upon witnessing their condition, she helped them escape into the jungle mountains, provided them with food and medicine, and led them against British attempts to destroy their newfound community. An interviewee in the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* says of her legacy, “Black people were not meant to have any notion of freedom in them head. And here you are, these people [Nanny and maroons] are saying no, there’s a better life, there’s a better way... she compares with all the great heroines we know of.”

⁴⁷ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 166.

⁴⁸ *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*, directed by Roy T. Anderson (Action 4 Reel Flimworks, 2015), Kanopy.

⁴⁹ Their shared African roots and living memory of their power as a people continues to nourish their community and culture.

II. Allyship

Maroon societies often made contact with indigenous communities, whether through warring and conflict, or more importantly, through collaboration.

Throughout Afro-America, Indians interacted with slaves, whether as fellow sufferers, as trading partners, or in other capacities... Life as maroons meant numerous new challenges to daily survival, but it was on a base of technical knowledge developed in the interaction between Indians and blacks on plantations that most of the remarkable maroon adaptations were built.⁵⁰

Indigenous American medicinal knowledge and technology contributed to the healing and survival of Black runaways. The enslaved and the self-liberated adopted indigenous American methods of hammock weaving, pottery making, fish drugging, and manioc processing.⁵¹ In Brazil, until about 1640, there were still indigenous American slaves on Bahian plantations and there are records of marriage and subsequent consanguinity between Black folks and indigenous Americans.⁵²

In addition to Afro-indigenous American relations, history notes that freedmen and those still enslaved on plantations would aid *mocambo* inhabitants.⁵³ A *crioulo* farmer named João Baptista, for example, would supply the maroons of Buraco de Tatú with firewood.⁵⁴ Black

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 12.

⁵¹ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 12.

⁵² Schwartz, "The Mocambo," 216.

⁵³ Ibid., 208.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 219.

people in the city of Salvador also “aided the *quilombo* by helping its inhabitants enter the city at night to steal powder and shot.”⁵⁵ In Cuba, this allyship was similarly economic in nature; the enslaved would sell the maroons’ beeswax, honey, and leather in urban markets to earn money, supplying them with tools and firearms in exchange for the goods.⁵⁶ The acts of resistance in the economic sphere listed above exemplify collectivity—action taken as a group for the benefit of the group. Allyship is resistance on the scale of the collective, although it often led to kinship and community, as we will explore in subsequent sections.

III. Violence

Since maroon societies were under constant attack, they employed creative defensive and offensive strategies to maintain their freedom. Maroons engaged in guerilla warfare with colonial soldiers, using their environments to their advantage and their craftsmanship to create weapons, such as bows and arrows and slingshots. Saramakas in Surinam, for example, built a palisaded village on a hill for which the only entrance was a steep sunken path: “As the colonial troops advanced up this path, the maroons rolled large logs down it, crushing them.”⁵⁷ In Jamaica, soldiers led by Queen Nanny would conceal themselves in leaves and cut the English soldiers with machetes when they got close.⁵⁸ Another guerilla warfare tactic employed by the maroons involved laying leaves and sticks over quicksand or deeply dug trenches, creating the illusion of a walking path. Pursuing soldiers would step into the area and fall in, becoming trapped and vulnerable to attack.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 13.

⁵⁷ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 7.

⁵⁸ Today, Jamaican maroons continue this practice of dressing in vines and leaves to honor their ancestors.

There were, of course, limits to their violence. Following the legacy of maroons centuries later, Nat Turner, for instance, spared poor whites in his rebellion. Participants in the Chilembwe uprising in 1915 forcibly marched European women and children away from the ensuing violence in the colonist settlement.⁵⁹ Many Western scholars are often surprised by the general lack of violence of the oppressed in response to the cruelty to which they were subjected; the revenge they imagine reflects a colonized mentality. “The need for retribution is an impulse implanted into us by the state,” said Angela Davis in a visiting class seminar, and our ancestors resisted this impulse by staying true to their own set of values.⁶⁰

IV. Kinship

The nature of land limited and stimulated kinship bonds among the enslaved. Kinship, for the purposes of this text, is synonymous with community. Even during the voyage to the New World, kidnapped Africans created bonds with the people laid on top and next to them. As Kent says, “Misfortune can bring about the brotherhood of the unfortunate,” but it was not only collective misfortune that defined kinship amongst the enslaved.⁶¹ Storytelling, as imagined by Yaa Gyasi in her novel *Homegoing*, and shared languages were also important to the development of their relationships with one another. These relationships mirrored West African kinship structures, where extended family—as opposed to the Western nuclear family—played a central role in

⁵⁹ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 168.

⁶⁰ Angela Davis, (Class session with Angela Davis, Pomona College, Claremont, CA, Oct. 27, 2021).

⁶¹ R. K. Kent, “African Revolt in Bahia: 24-25 January 1835,” *Journal of Social History* (Oxford University Press) 3, no. 4 (Summer 1970): 344 quoted in Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 155.

community cultivation, survival, and spiritual and physical care.⁶² Over time, with the birth of children on plantations or in maroon societies, kinship was also shaped by blood relations.

These alliances sparked and sustained *petit marronage*. If someone's brother or child was sold to a neighboring plantation, for example, the enslaved took great risks to visit them. Enslaved women who worked in the kitchen would sneak loafs of bread and pieces of meat for themselves, their children, or their close friends—practicing what White calls “rituals of solidarity.”⁶³

Similarly, to plan a revolt or to run away with a group of people required as much trust in one another as risk. Resistance, very rarely, was an individual act.

V. Land & Community Space

Maroons, creoles, and other Black folks born of the Atlantic Slave Trade had a living relationship with land shaped by indigenous African and indigenous American values. Land and community space are not separate ideas; land is necessary for the cultivation of community space and land *is* community space. The forest provided clandestine churches and clinics for enslaved and self-liberated peoples. In West African countries that made up the Mande Empire, community members would perform the Kassa dance during harvest—an expression of pleasure and thankfulness to the land and spirits.⁶⁴ Kidnapped Africans brought seeds, recipes, and cultivation skills with them that aided their survival on the plantation, allowing them to find

⁶² Karen McCarthy Brown, “Afro-Caribbean Spirituality: A Haitian Case Study,” in *Vodou in Haitian Life & Culture: Invisible Powers*, ed. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 5.

⁶³ White, *Freedom Farmers*, 15.

⁶⁴ Willy Soul. Quiz for African Aesthetics dance class.

sustenance and sanctity in the land. Monica M. White writes in the introduction to her book, “slave gardens represented independent production grounds and can be understood as a strategy of resistance to a corrupt system and an effort to create food security.”⁶⁵

These skills were also useful in runaway communities, where they lived in symbiotic relationship with other living beings—with the trees, who gave shade; the birds, who warned them of intruders; the swamp, who swallowed their enemies; and the river, who provided bodily moisture, cleanliness and pleasure. We can imagine that they cared for the land as much as the land cared for them. It was not easy, of course, for those who stole themselves away to adjust to their new environments:

The maroon viewpoint... suggests that the harsh natural environments of early communities at first presented terrifying obstacles, and that it was only with a great deal of suffering, and by bringing to bear the full range of their collective cultural experience and creativity, that they were able to adapt and survive.⁶⁶

Under the constraints of colonial violence, sickness, and death, they built community in collaboration with one another. Maroons would hunt and—in Brazil and Cuba, where maroon societies resided close to the coast—fish for sustenance.⁶⁷ Being indigenous to their own African lands, they approached the problems these new environments’ presented with the knowledge and few tools they already had: “In their struggle to stay alive, enslaved Africans drew deeply upon the agricultural expertise and the crops of their own heritage, while adopting the knowledge systems and plants bequeathed to them by Amerindians.”⁶⁸ Cultivating a living and sacred

⁶⁵ White, *Freedom Farmers*, 13.

⁶⁶ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁸ White, *Freedom Farmers*, 11.

relationship with land is very indigenous in nature.^{69 70} Therefore, spirituality and religion was also important for the maroons' kinship with land and spirits (or land as spirit), as will be explored in the following section.

VI. Religion & Ritual

African-derived religions and rituals, which often deviated from colonial religious systems, shaped the daily lives and cultures of the enslaved. They adapted their religious practices to the conditions and constraints of slave society. Yoruba Ifa, for example, has great influence in Brazilian Candomblé and Cuban Regla de Ocha, while the Dahomean religion of *vodu* influences Vodun in the Dominican Republic, Vodou in Haiti, and voodoo in New Orleans.⁷¹ African religions have survived and adapted because they are naturally accommodating to change. Jessie Ruth Gaston writes that “the Fon of the Kingdom of Dahomey were known to incorporate certain religious practices of the people they conquered or who conquered them.... These adjustments guaranteed that the tradition survived at least to some degree.”⁷² Wole Soyinka makes a similar assertion about Ifa:

[Yoruba] Traditional religion is not only accommodating, it is liberating, and this seems logical, because whenever a new phenomenon impinged on the consciousness of the Yoruba – whether a historical event, a technological or scientific encounter – they do not

⁶⁹ Ehime Ora (@ehimeora), “First Palace in Osun’s Sacred Grove / Osun-Osogbo, Nigeria,” Twitter (*photo, thread*), October 29, 2021, <https://twitter.com/ehimeora/status/1454167432252346373>.

⁷⁰ In Yorubaland, before colonization, every town used to have its own sacred grove. The earth nurtured community and vice versa. “Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Nigeria is one of the few remaining primary high forests in the region. The Grove is also a natural herbal pharmacy containing over 400 species of plants, some endemic, of which more than 200 species are known for their medicinal uses.” “Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, accessed November 27, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/>.

⁷¹ Gaston, “Voodoo in New Orleans,” 111-2.

⁷² Gaston, “Voodoo in New Orleans,” 139.

bring down the barriers – close the doors. They say: Let us look at this phenomenon and see what we have that corresponds to it in our own tradition, that is a kind of analogue to this experience. ... That's why the corpus of Ifa is constantly reinforced and augmented, even from the history of other religions with which Ifa comes into contact. You have Ifa verses which deal with Islam, you have Ifa verses which deal with Christianity. Yoruba religion attunes itself and accommodates the unknown very readily.⁷³

The versatile nature of African religions provided the enslaved with tools to cope with and confront their condition. They adapted their religions into activities with no official institutional entity, known as conjure, rootwork, prayer, dance, and song. Brown asserts that “healing is the *primary* business of these religious systems.”⁷⁴

The ritual of storytelling, in which supernatural stories of flight and superhuman strength were passed from ear to ear, also sustained Black life. One superstition amongst the enslaved was that if they did not eat salt during their life, they would be able to fly back to Africa.⁷⁵ Their strong sense of the supernatural permitted them to retain faith in liberation.

The spiritual reserve of enslaved Africans was rich and useful for healing, maintaining their sense of culture and self, and fighting against domination. In Jamaica, the Windward and Leeward maroons practiced obeah and myalism:

Obeah was both a genuine religion and a potent source of medicine. Obeah (like the Haitian *Voodoo*, or the Jamaican variant *Myalism*, or Trinidadian *Shango*) sought

⁷³ Wole Soyinka, interview by Ulli Beier, *Isokan Yoruba Magazine*, Vol 3 no. 3, June 1, 1997, <http://eleda.org/blog/1997/06/01/wole-soyinka-on-yoruba-religion-a-conversation-with-ulli-beier%E2%80%9494english/>.

⁷⁴ McCarthy Brown, “A Haitian Case Study,” 2.

⁷⁵ Monica Schuler, “*Alas, Alas, Kongo*”: *A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 93, quoted in Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 169.

ritualistic links with the spirit world beyond the shadows and the sacred trees, providing a mystical sense of continuity between the living, the dead, and those yet to be born. . . . Obeah functioned largely in the numerous rebellions of the slaves. This was particularly the case with the obeah-men from the Gold Coast. In the plotting of these rebellions the obeah-man was essential in administering oaths of secrecy, and, in cases, distributing fetishes which were supposed to immunize the insurgents from the arms of the whites.⁷⁶

This sense of connection with the natural and spiritual worlds was a source of power for Black folks. Many were not afraid to fight back or die because death was not the end.⁷⁷ Using the herbs and plants they found and grew for healing and the swamps and treacherous mountains for protection also allowed them to cultivate a dynamic material and spiritual relationship with Earth. This is illustrated in a story still told by the Saramaka “Bush Negroes” today: After months of wandering, early runaways in Surinam arrived at the Gaánlío river in a jungle that would soon become their home, but they found the water undrinkable. “It was only after performing major rituals, under the protection of what was to become the central oracle-deity of the region, that they were able finally to purify the river and settle by its banks.”⁷⁸ They began to honor the river as a deity itself, recognizing its central role in their livelihood and caring for it as it cared for them. Practices such as these informed our ancestors’ relationship with Earth as provider and protector.

⁷⁶ Orlando Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), 185-195, quoted in Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 136.

⁷⁷ Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, 195-196.

⁷⁸ Price, *Maroon Societies*, 6.

BLACK CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN THE U.S. DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

By the beginning of the 19th century, most maroon societies had been wiped out and much more of the land occupied by colonial-settlers. Yet, the reclamation of land as a space for ontological and economic liberation still took place after the abolition of slavery in the United States, among the descendants of enslaved Africans and maroons.⁷⁹ The U.S. South is this section's focus for land-based community care in the 20th century, based on Monica White's study of Black farmers and Stephanie Y. Mitchem's study of folk healing practices in the Black community. While many Black Southerners fled to the industrializing North for jobs and to escape the suffocating hold of Jim Crow segregation in what is called the Great Migration, many others remained in the South. Because the white neo-colonial state severely limited their access to healing institutions and economic security, they had to update and innovate alternative methods of survival. Kelley writes that,

Grass-roots black community organizations such as mutual benefit societies, church groups, and gospel quartets were crucial to black people's survival. Through them, African Americans created and sustained bonds of community, mutual support networks, and a collectivist ethos that shaped black working-class political struggle.⁸⁰

The Black Church, home of African-American Christianity, had become a spiritual hub for Black Southerners. Although white European enslavers had forced Christianity upon their ancestors, Black folks made the religion their own by incorporating their African practices—a blending process Mitchem calls hybridization.⁸¹ Black church members and ministers cared for their

⁷⁹ Yes, there were maroon societies in the United States. See Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States" in Price, *Maroon Societies*.

⁸⁰ Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem," 80.

⁸¹ Mitchem, Stephanie, *African American Folk Healing* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 132.

community using healing practices often found in vodou and conjure; this was (and is) especially true of charismatic churches. Faith healing, then, is folk healing grounded in Christianity.

Ministers would place their hands on anyone who came to them and, through God's power, heal issues of the body and mind.⁸²

Chapters one, three, and six of *African American Folk Healing* by Stephanie Y. Mitchem inform my analysis of the role of folk and faith healing practices in community care. A key primary source for her book is the Federal Writers' Project's (FWP) Slave Narratives, which gathered oral histories from 2300 Black men and women throughout the South between 1936 and 1938. They include accounts of hoodoo, folk remedies, and conjure. We also glean from *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement* that food is central to spiritual, physical and community healing. This book is rich in the study of agricultural cooperatives, another key form of Black cultural resistance based on allyship, kinship, and land and/as community space. Rituals of sowing and harvest, healing, and the social event known as the cookout reinforced community spaces and Black folks' bodies as sites of pleasure.

I. AgriCultural Resistance

Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver and W.E.B. DuBois advocated that agricultural education "be a tool that black farmers [sic] use to survive in racially hostile and economically oppressive environments."⁸³ Washington, himself a survivor of slavery, founded the Tuskegee Institute in 1881 after years of field research in the Alabama Black Belt.

⁸² Ibid., 133-134.

⁸³ White, *Freedom Farmers*, 42

Community members themselves informed and inspired the school's courses, the annual Negro Farmer's conference, and its moveable schools that distributed agricultural innovations and tools to farmers across the South—the first widespread educational initiative of its kind in the United States.⁸⁴ These programs created spaces for Black farmers to build kinship with one another and pool their resources to create black agricultural cooperatives. Carver, an agricultural scientist also committed to the Tuskegee Institute, disseminated his research on the importance of crop rotation and composting, wild food identification, food and seed preservation and diversification, and home beautification in published bulletins and through moveable schools for illiterate farmers.⁸⁵ DuBois' studies legitimized the importance of such agricultural work in the Black community. Black agricultural cooperatives do provide Black people with economic and political autonomy and uplift.⁸⁶

Fannie Lou Hamer is particularly exemplary in the agricultural movement, as she was a Black woman activist with no formal high school or university education. All her life, she advocated for voting rights for Black folks. She called Sunflower County in Mississippi home—a predominantly Black town that suffered from high rates of hunger and malnutrition. Having intimate knowledge of such suffering, a gift for words, and many years of experience as a political organizer, she was able to “articulate and identify the collective's objectives” and take action to create a system of community care.⁸⁷ She allied with groups and organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women, Measure for Measure—a civil rights organization in

⁸⁴ Ibid., 31-34.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 42-44.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 70.

Madison, Wisconsin—and Young People of Harvard University to raise money for the town's salvation: Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC).

The objectives of Freedom Farm were to build affordable and safe housing, provide full- and part-time managerial, agricultural and trade jobs, and develop an agricultural cooperative that would feed the people. Political education and voter registration were also central to Hamer's work at Freedom Farm. Between 1967 and 1976, FFC was owned and worked by over 1500 member families and the cooperative owned over 692 acres of land.⁸⁸ As *moradores* constantly attempted to infiltrate and destroy maroon societies, white political leaders and law enforcement officials continuously worked to undermine these efforts. National and local support helped sustain the FFC for some time. Co-op members planted subsistence crops on the land and fed themselves largely through community gardening. The rest of the land was used for housing, growing cash crops to pay for the land mortgage, grazing cattle, raising catfish, and breeding and feeding hundreds of pigs—one of FFC's most successful long-term investments, dubbed the Pig Bank. The Pig Bank fed member families and provided them with supplemental income when pigs were sold.

Due to natural disasters and a reduction in donors, FFC could not pay their land mortgage nor sustain their social service programs to become independent. Fannie Lou Hamer herself began to suffer with health issues. They had to sell their land to pay overdue taxes in 1976.⁸⁹ Despite its demise, FFC provides us with an important model for community land-based living. Monica

⁸⁸ Ibid., 65 & 73.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 86.

White describes “agricultural cooperatives as a space and place to practice freedom” and “build sustainable communities through alternative community structures.”⁹⁰ The work of Black 20th century Southern leaders continues to inform land-based cultural resistance in the U.S.—cultural resistance on a self-consciously political societal scale.

II. Folk & Faith Healing

“The folk,” according to Mitchem, refers primarily to Black Southerners. The term, which academics used to refer to historical peoples, became a signifier for Black Southerners during the Great Migrations.⁹¹ By 1970, only 53 percent of Black Americans resided in the South, as opposed to 89 percent in 1910.⁹² Black Southerners took their dialects, mannerisms, and cultures with them to the urban North and white outsiders further designated them to a lower class—the folk. The folk also referred to Black Americans who stayed in the South, often in rural areas. Yet Mitchem retains this term, perhaps to reinforce and refer to the historicity of Black community healing. It flourished during slavery, and even moreso under Jim Crow segregation, when Black people could more easily avoid the white gaze. Robin Kelley writes in his essay “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South” that “African Americans turned segregation into ‘congregation’... Jim Crow ordinances ensured that churches, bars, social clubs, barbershops, beauty salons, even alleys, remained ‘black’ space.”⁹³ Within these sites of pleasure, separate from but still under the domain of dominant society,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 5-6.

⁹¹ Mitchem, *Folk Healing*, 32.

⁹² Stewart E. Tolnay, *The Bottom Rung: African American Family Life on Southern Farms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 21–23. Quoted in Ibid., 55.

⁹³ Kelley, “We are not what we seem,” 79.

Black people could get free, organize resistance, and build kinship so that healing remained a community affair.

Folk healers were known and trusted in their communities, and concerned themselves with healing *and* wellness. Wellness reflects a holistic view of healing and “implies a temporary condition rather than a possession” in opposition to the commercialized and commodified concept of health that is often promoted in American medical culture.⁹⁴ Institutional healthcare was very dangerous for Black folks, since white doctors, nurses, and medical students experimented with their bodies; in the 1970s and 80s, over 700,000 Southern Black women were sterilized without their consent.⁹⁵ One of those women was Fannie Lou Hamer.⁹⁶ Folk medicines were safer and more trustworthy, and included charms and mojo bags; directives to change or initiate certain behaviors and habits; and rituals in community or one-on-one, sometimes directed through the interpretation of clients’ dreams and other signs.⁹⁷ Black ancestors and folk healers received remedies through visions and whispers.⁹⁸ They often used plants that were available in farming communities for their prescribed medicines or foraged for plants in the woods.⁹⁹ Herbs were for physical cures while roots were used for intrapersonal, energetic work.¹⁰⁰ Folk & faith healing could also be known as *hoodoo* and *conjure*: “a set of practices and beliefs that draw on nature and its perceived energies in order to shape preferred conditions.”¹⁰¹ Folk healers

⁹⁴ Mitchem, *Folk Healing*, 29.

⁹⁵ Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 90 quoted in *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹⁶ White, *Freedom Farmers*, 66.

⁹⁷ Mitchem, *Folk Healing*, 16 & 27.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 & 56.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

distributed creative curatives and preventatives that worked, although they and their clients could not always explain why, demonstrating that communities placed great faith in their healers.

Mitchem makes frequent reference to folk healers as a reflection of “African-derived concepts of the person who stands in relation to community, nature, and society.”¹⁰² African religions and values continued to thrive in the South through healing and daily practices because missionaries didn’t always recognize their expressions; in other words, folk healing has retained some proximity to its African roots.¹⁰³ Robin Kelley similarly wrote of Black Southerners, “reliance on the divine or on the netherworlds of conjure was rarely, if ever, the only resistance or defense strategy used by black working people, but in their minds, bodies, and social relationships, this was real power.”¹⁰⁴ Community members freely shared knowledge and medicines of folk healers with one another—neighbor to neighbor, grandmother to child, and employee to boss, to name a few. Folk healing travelled up North with migrating Southerners as a result, and was also recorded in the early 1970s in the Folk Archives at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Folk healing practices were as adaptable and accommodating as the African religions from which they descended. Ms. Georgia Mae Howell, a Folk Archive interviewee, adapted her aunt’s remedy for drying up breast milk when she was suffering from excessive flow:

So my aunt Elizabeth came up to see me and she let me know that camphorated oil worked, to rub my breasts with that, and that would help dry the milk up. And when you pump the milk out, take it out and throw it on a hot brick on the fireplace. Well at that time I didn’t have a fireplace so I had to throw the milk in a heater. Well I had to reduce

¹⁰² Ibid., 28

¹⁰³ Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 91 quoted in Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁴ Kelley, “We Are Not What We Seem,” 88.

that remedy because it worked too good and it really dried me up, and I wanted to feed my baby.¹⁰⁵

Many of the interviewees in the Folk Archives mentioned that they had also received knowledge of folk medicines from Native American family members, which speaks again to the role of cross-cultural kinship in Black healing and cultural resistance.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, because Northerners did not have easy access to plants or ritual settings, such as a fireplace, a few established new businesses that sold to others the oils, salts, herbs, and roots necessary for folk remedies. Consistent access to healing was and is essential to feeling good physically, spiritually, and mentally. Such collaborations and adaptations keep folk healing alive and present even now in the 21st century. In the following section, we will explore contemporary strategies of cultural resistance and community care—the dynamic cultivation of subcultures based on land and Earth work.

¹⁰⁵ West, collector, November 20, 1970, Wayne State University Folklore Archives Collection, tape 710, #4114 quoted in Mitchem, *Folk Healing*, 61.

¹⁰⁶ White, *Freedom Farmers*, 59.

CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE

As white supremacist systems of injustice continue to harm Black folks and limit their access to health and economic institutions, Black folks continue to utilize and innovate their own life-affirming systems of care. Black farmers, healers, and activists show us that there is life in the land. Within their work, we can identify at least five of the six characteristics of resistance that shaped our understanding of maroon societies and cultural resistance in the 20th century: proximity to African roots, allyship, land & community space, kinship, and religion & ritual. Allyship through fundraising and collaboration plays a significant role in contemporary Black cultural resistance, as separation between peoples of different races, ages, classes, and religions has diminished due to Black activism over the years (thank you, Rosa Parks) and social media. Black healers and farmers create kin with their allies and the people they serve; they put a lot of love into the work they do. Many of them also learn from, pray to, and honor their ancestors in their work, retaining a proximity to their African roots through religious and (spi)ritual practice. Lastly, the purchase of land to grow crops, heal, live, and learn in community is key to Black healing, survival, and cultural resistance.

I. Organizations

Ancestral Herbiary and **Ewewa Academy: School of Herbal Medicine** are based in Ferguson, Missouri and founded by Iya Ifayomi Fasola. Ifayomi is “a Ferguson native with roots in Mississippi and an Ifa Priestess also initiated in Egbe and Olokun. While having a life experience with Rootwork, she has a background in Organic Chemistry & Nutritional Wellness. She

incorporates her experience as a Iyanifa, studies with Mvskokxe (Muskogee) elders, into her work. Ifayomi combines her knowledge of herbal medicine, nutritional counseling, homeopathy, study as an Iyanifa, & Onisegun, along with other tools to help you manage your overall health. She focuses on wellness and emphasizes prevention and self-care. We seek to heal the underlying causes of health problems and not just the symptoms.”¹⁰⁷

Ancestral Herbiary is the home of her healing work, and potential clients can make appointments for herbal, generational, or bone & root consultations online and in person. They offer a sliding scale and free open clinics to keep their services accessible to the community. Ifayomi recently founded Ewewa Academy to share her knowledge with developing herbalists and spiritual practitioners both virtually and in person.¹⁰⁸ If you don’t have the time or money to take classes, however, their newsletter offers free herbal education and wellness tips.¹⁰⁹

“**Rise & Root Farm** is a five-acre farm, run cooperatively by four owners who are women, intergenerational, multi-racial, and LGBTQ. We’re located in the Black Dirt region of Orange County, NY, in the lower Hudson Valley. The farm is rooted in social justice, and through the healing power of food and farming we work to build a more equitable food system. We are blessed to steward the land we grow on and to have the opportunity to support our communities through farming. We invite people, especially from the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, to

¹⁰⁷ Ancestral Herbiary, “Meet the Team,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://ancestralherbiary.com/meet-the-team/>.

¹⁰⁸ Ewewa Academy, “Home Page,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.ewewaacademy.com/>.

¹⁰⁹ Ifayomi Fasola, “Weekly Newsletter of Ancestral Herbiary - Revue,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <http://newsletter.ancestralherbiary.com/>.

come to the farm through a variety of events, and find a welcoming agricultural space. We are strongly rooted in New York City and committed to engaging rural and urban communities through food and farming. We have worked with community gardens and urban farms in NYC and beyond, and we have dedicated our lives to increasing the number of people growing and eating good food.”¹¹⁰

Oshun Swim School was founded by Chandikra Francis in 2018, and hosts swimming workshops in Seattle, New York, and Oakland. “Through Afro-Indigenous centered swim and water based workshops, Oshun Swim School offers BIPOC womxn and non-binary people a safer space to explore our relationship with water. With healing-centered and trauma-informed instruction, we support students to connect to water from their center, and grow into embodied, joyful swimmers. This work centers frontline communities who have been historically excluded from swim environments, yet who bear the brunt of the climate crisis, and for whom swim skills are most essential. Oshun is the Orisha (West African Yoruba deity) of rivers and lakes. She represents pleasure, healing, and all of the things that make life worth living. Despite personal, generational, and historic traumas, we envision womxn of color, queer folks, and other historically excluded communities, having an Oshun infused experience in water.”¹¹¹

Remy founded **Goodwitch.NYC** in 2013, inspired by her own lifelong experience with chronic pain as an uninsured woman in the United States. “The artist created GOODWITCH with the

¹¹⁰ Rise & Root Farm, “About Us,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.riseandrootfarm.com/index#/rise-root-farm-1>

¹¹¹ “Home,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <http://www.oshunswimschool.com/>.

aim of establishing an interdisciplinary community that incorporates plant medicine, art installations and performances, and events focused on establishing a new language around healing.”¹¹² In 2020, Remy founded the **Herbal Mutual Aid Network (HMAN)** in collaboration with Black artist Yves, in response to George Floyd’s murder.¹¹³ HMAN is “a grassroots organization providing plant-based care as reparations; a living care Network of herbalists, farmers, gardeners, donors, artists, organizers, volunteers + recipients, co-founded by GOODWITCH + Yves B. Golden in May of 2020.”¹¹⁴ I myself received free tinctures from them during the summer of 2020 that served to heighten my connection with my ancestors and help me achieve emotional balance when I was feeling overwhelmed. When speaking of medicines such as these in her interviews, Remy makes sure to interrogate the term “alternative;” it’s an important consideration for my work, although I retain the term due to time constraints:

When people use the words “alternative medicine,” that’s only true from a really limited perspective. Traditional plant medicine is primary care for many people all over the world. There are many reasons why people may not feel safe around biomedical practitioners. There’s a lot of violence towards Black people, especially Black women, in the history of the biomedical industry. The herbs we’re providing aren’t meant to replace going to the doctor when you need to go to the doctor—it’s there for people to connect and feel more empowered as they go about managing their care.¹¹⁵

The **Black Farmers Collective** is an organization founded in Washington state that aims to “build a Black-led food system by developing a cooperative network of food system actors,

¹¹² Lindsay MaHarry, “GOODWITCH Brews Up Health-Conscious Plant Medicine for the Artistically Inclined,” December 17, 2019, <https://merryjane.com/culture/goodwitch-brews-up-health-conscious-plant-medicine-for-the-artistically-inclined>.

¹¹³ Aliza Abarbanel. “The Herbal Mutual Aid Network Creates Free Tinctures for Black Organizers.” *Bon Appétit*, August 6, 2020. <https://www.bonappetit.com/story/mutual-aid-herb-network>.

¹¹⁴ “GOODWITCH.” Accessed April 22, 2022. <http://goodwitch.nyc/projects/herbal-mutual-aid-network>.

¹¹⁵ Abarbanel, “The Herbal Mutual Aid Network Creates Free Tinctures for Black Organizers.”

acquiring and stewarding land, facilitating food system education, and creating space for Black liberation in healing and joy. We envision Black liberation through food sovereignty, in spaces built on cooperation and interconnectedness with the environment and the community, where our knowledge and creativity are boundless.”¹¹⁶

“**Gangstas to Growers (G2G)** is a social enterprise [based in Atlanta, Georgia] focused on building worker-owned cooperatives that provide opportunities for employment, empowerment, and entrepreneurship in agriculture for at-risk and formerly incarcerated youth. The mission is to end the cycle of poverty within our community, to provide a space of healing, to help support a black-run food system and to end recidivism.”¹¹⁷

“**Soul Fire Farm** was founded in 2010 by a Black-Jewish family living in the South End of Albany, NY where they struggled to find fresh food to feed their young children. Their neighbors asked them to create “the farm for the people” and in 2006 the family began to seed the vision on 80 acres of Mohican land in nearby Grafton, NY. After four years of building soil and infrastructure on the land, the farm opened in fall 2010 with a doorstep vegetable and egg delivery program for low-income community members.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Black Farmers Collective, “Black Farmers Collective,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.blackfarmerscollective.com>.

¹¹⁷ “The Come Up Project,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.gangstastogrowers.com/>.

¹¹⁸ Google Docs, “Soul Fire Farm Community FAQ,” Accessed April 20, 2022, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bwn153phRVk-q1Hr4OMnOv_xK9pQPR40bIWk7r4WBMs/edit?usp=embed_facebook.

“Soul Fire Farm is an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system. We raise and distribute life-giving food as a means to end food apartheid. With deep reverence for the land and wisdom of our ancestors, we work to reclaim our collective right to belong to the earth and to have agency in the food system. We bring diverse communities together on this healing land to share skills on sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism, health, and environmental justice. We are training the next generation of activist-farmers and strengthening the movements for food sovereignty and community self-determination. Our food sovereignty programs reach over 160,000 people each year, including farmer training for Black and Brown growers, reparations and land return initiatives for northeast farmers, food justice workshops for urban youth, home gardens for city-dwellers living under food apartheid, doorstep harvest delivery for food insecure households, and systems and policy education for public decision-makers.”¹¹⁹

Hood Herbalism offers “online herbal education for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.” It is “an autonomous and community based herbal education project. We gather to unlearn and decentralize colonial ways of understanding plant knowledge. Hood Herbalism offers a blend of community conversation, self-reflection, teaching and medicine making demonstrations. Each class includes: Opening and closing check-ins; Medicine making technique & demonstration; Shared exploration of the day's topic; Plant Play- After class, you will have the week to practice making medicine and engaging with class material. [It includes] access to an extensive collection of books and resources along with a list of supplies for each week.” It was founded by Berenice

¹¹⁹ SOUL FIRE FARM, “SOUL FIRE FARM,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.soulfirefarm.org/>.

Dimas, a “a queer herbalist who was born in Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) and grew up on Tongva lands (El Monte, CA) since I was 3 years old. My Ancestors are from Michoacan, El Valle de Toluca, and Guanajuato in Mexico.”¹²⁰ They offer payment plans and accommodations for anyone interested in the course.

Harriet’s Apothecary is “an intergenerational, healing collective led by the brilliance and wisdom of Black Cis Women, Queer and Trans healers, artists, health professionals, magicians, activists and ancestors. Our village, founded by Harriet Tubman and Adaku Utah on April 6 2014, is committed to co-creating accessible, affordable, liberatory, all-body loving, all-gender honoring, community healing spaces that recognize, inspire, and deepen the healing genius of people who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of color and the allies that love us.”¹²¹

Adaku Utah is an “an Igbo Queer teacher, organizer, healer and ritual artist committed to cultivating movements that are strategic, sustainable and mutually nourishing.”¹²² They offer a variety of resources, such as community workshops through their Freedom Schools, Holiday Bazaar and Swag Swap, Training and Consulting Workshops and Healing Spaces for non-profit and community organizations, Black Healer Leadership Development, and so much more.

At the top of the list is Community Healing Villages: “Every season, we offer community healing villages that encompass free to sliding scale, body-affirming, love-drenched potions,

¹²⁰ Hood Herbalism, “Hood Herbalism,” Accessed April 22, 2022, <https://hoodherbalism.com/hood-herbalism/>.

¹²¹ HARRIET’S APOTHECARY, “WHO WE ARE,” Accessed April 22, 2022, <http://www.harrietsapothecary.com/who-we-are>.

¹²² ADAKU UTAH, “ADAKU UTAH,” Accessed April 22, 2022, <http://www.adakuutah.com>.

prescriptions and customized individual and group healing services to restore and expand our community's abilities to transform stress and heal trauma. Services and offerings include art therapy, somatics bodywork, nutritional counseling, acupressure, acupuncture, essential oil therapy, thai yoga massage, reiki, arts-based herbalism, intuitive face painting, lomi lomi Hawaiian massage plant based medicine making, healing haircuts, spiritual divinations, peer to peer counseling sessions, healing justice workshops, internalized oppression healing cyphers and more. Each of our healing offerings are rooted in an anti-oppressive, trauma informed practice, inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities, body sizes and deeply committed to working with the intelligence of your vessel and your guides.”¹²³

Rock Steady Farm “is a queer* owned and operated cooperative vegetable farm rooted in social justice, food access and farmer training [based in Millerton, NY]. We were founded in 2015, and manage a total of 12 acres. In addition to our holistic, sustainable farming practices, we are working to increase equity in the food system and create safer spaces for queer and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) farmers to thrive. We believe that all people have a right to healthy, delicious produce. Our vegetables feed a [500-member sliding scale CSA](#), which includes no-cost and subsidized shares made possible through our [Food Access Fund](#). We also offer wholesale to select restaurants, food pantries and organizations. Our work is grounded in close [community partnerships](#) with other land based projects, neighbors, and non-profits who are also working to build equity in our region and beyond. Our newest focus area is our public

¹²³ HARRIET'S APOTHECARY, “WHAT WE DO,” Accessed April 22, 2022, <http://www.harrietsapothecary.com/what-we-do>.

programs, geared to train and support other LGBTQIA+ farmers, educate the broader community and fuel movements for systemic change.”¹²⁴

Uprooted & Rising is “a network of campus-based groups (pods) and community-based networks (branches) organizing local and national campaigns for food sovereignty. We are a supermajority Black, Indigenous, and People of Color movement led by people who have been historically marginalized in our food system. We include students, workers, faculty, food producers, and community members that institutions of higher education are meant to serve. We aim to create a culture shift for food sovereignty through public action, digital organizing, and creative storytelling. We help support our autonomous pods and branches to resist Big Food institutions in their own communities through training, coalition building, popular education, and direct action. We draw inspiration from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship’s Block, Build, Be strategy, and implement by BLOCKING big food expansion, BUILDING a movement for food sovereignty, and BEING in community to heal and grow. We leverage momentum to connect individual stories to an international, decolonial, anti-imperialist movement for food sovereignty.”¹²⁵

“Our power is grounded in the global struggle to resist the Big Food agenda, which has demonstrated that food sovereignty is not only possible but practical and essential for the survival of our people. Our power is grounded in our belief that we can break the cycle of

¹²⁴ Rock Steady Farm, “Our Mission,” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.rocksteadyfarm.com/about>.

¹²⁵ Uprooted & Rising, “What We Do,” Accessed April 24, 2022, <https://www.uprootedandrising.org/what-we-do>.

exploitation. We can ensure that dignity for food work; nourishment from the food we eat; and sustainability in farming, ranching, and fishing are the norms and not the exception. Our power is grounded in understanding the roots of the problem—the long history of displacement, discrimination, and marginalization at the hands of imperialist interests. But ultimately, our power is the influence we have when we speak up, walk away, and defect from a system that doesn't serve us or our futures. We are committed to ending higher education's support for Big Food corporations and white supremacy in the food system and directing the energy of our generation towards food sovereignty. And we believe that we will win.”¹²⁶

Buena Vista Community Garden or **Buena Vista Jardín Comunitario** is “a community compost garden and urban farm cooperative organized by the United Voices of Pomona for Environmental Justice (UVP). UVP has a long history of organizing against pollutive and corrupt waste management and industry practices in Pomona, and in 2018 we chose to pursue a positive example of waste management and community well-being through the establishment of the Buena Vista Community Garden.”¹²⁷ The support of donors and investors financially sustains this nearby community garden. Claremont Colleges students are welcome to volunteer there; check out their Instagram for work hours.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Uprooted & Rising, “Story,” Accessed April 24, 2022, <https://www.uprootedandrising.org/story>.

¹²⁷ “Buena Vista Community Garden - About Us,” Accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.bvcg.info/about-us>.

¹²⁸ Instagram, Accessed April, 25, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/buenavistacommunitygarden/>

II. Interview with Elizabeth Jones

Elizabeth Jones is a 26-year-old Black non-binary artist-gardener-healer-spiritualist from Northern California. They exemplify how it looks and feels to live out land-based spirituality and care on an individual scale and shared some compelling reflections on cultural resistance during our phone call.

Elizabeth's relationship with Earth began at a young age, almost subconsciously. When they first learned to walk, they would follow their cat around the backyard, waddling on their little legs, encompassed by tall trees as if traversing a forest. Elizabeth would observe and talk to ants and little red spider mites, who always had messages to share in return. Between 4 and 7 years of age, they and their classmates would leave offerings of trinkets, made of grass and sticks, in a fairy tree hollow; magical, isn't it?

As community hunger and malnutrition inspired Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative, Elizabeth's personal health struggles have helped to cultivate their sensitivity to energy and non-human life. While suffering from depression, their therapist taught them mindfulness: tuning in to the tiniest shifts in feeling and becoming present to the moment. Meditation is their grounding practice. So, they shared a meditation story with me. They were sitting silently on a hill, breathing deeply and slowly, for quite some time. Suddenly, the wind quickened, whipping around them, and a beetle landed nearby. Elizabeth honored this moment as a culmination of energy—theirs and that of nature, everything dancing together. Whenever Elizabeth tunes in, they notice the whipping of the wind.

Mindfulness is also useful in daily life. After they were diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, they began to notice the messages their body sent without the meter; how it feels when their blood sugar is too low, too high, or just right. This keeps them present with themselves and their environment, guiding their responses to internal and external stimuli. Moving with mindfulness allows them to recognize their triggers or when a person or place makes them feel uncomfortable or at peace, so that they can respond appropriately. In their own words, “If I’m doing the things that help me feel connected to spirit and self, I’ll feel the pull elsewhere to go talk to a tree... [welcoming] the energy and pull of a plant to talk.” Its presence can feel like a warm hug or a dose of laughter, but the feelings don’t translate quite well into words. Mindfulness has fostered their ability to heal themselves and to help and heal others.

When someone is sick and requests their help, their first step is to ask Spirit for guidance. Sometimes they ask aloud or use other methods of divination. For example, they may choose a book of remedies or recipes and open to a page with their eyes closed. More often, they can walk outside in their garden, conversing energetically with plants, allowing them to offer themselves as medicine for the recipient. They always ask Spirit to bless and charge the plant, and do the same with crystals and rocks when they use them. In their inter- and intra- personal healing processes, they do breathwork and sometimes gift or utilize crystals and rocks. In their interpersonal healing, when there’s a heavy burden on their heart, they will write a long stream-of-thought letter and burn it. Sometimes things feel the same, or slightly different, or the

burden is lifted. Nothing is perfect or guaranteed. Living in spiritual awareness is really about living in the present, they said, not for the future and how one thinks it should be.

This spiritual consciousness has guided Elizabeth away from community gardening to art. When I asked them to talk more about the importance of the former in relation to self-sufficiency, they pushed back a bit, nuancing the conversation. In college, they were drawn to community garden work and learning total self sufficiency, but interest in the latter was born out of distrust of people. Land cultivation requires trusting human relationships, not just the self. They became overwhelmed trying to do so much on their own. If more of their peers took 15 minutes of their time to weed the land, water the plants, and put food scraps in the right place for composting, it would ease their burden. It wasn't just a people issue, though; the land had greater needs.

Elizabeth still finds stability in tending their own garden, cooking for their friends and housemates, and saving seeds. They learned with experience that interplanting domesticated food crops, such as broccoli and kale, with native plants keeps the garden healthy. They don't have to weed or water the garden as often. The native plants keep the soil moist and contain more microbes that keep them all happy. The plants take care of each other because they know that they all do well when one is doing well. They asserted that more humans need to learn from the plants and practice, live, and breathe community care.

There must also be a balance between self-sufficiency and the existing structures and systems. Specialization in human collectives and communities is very important. A few people can become skilled housebuilders; others can grow fields of lavender to make calming, healing

salves for the people; and everyone can barter their skills for goods and vice versa because no one can do everything. Agency and independence requires some dependence on others, as we've learned from maroon societies and the agricultural cooperatives in the U.S. Elizabeth also has been refining their artistic skills in service to inter- and intra-personal healing. A few years ago, when they started again to practice vulnerability with people, they learned that a lot of their fellow college students were also suffering from isolation and loneliness. This evolved into a project of talking to people about their healing journeys.

This process of exchange and interdependency is a form of resistance, Elizabeth shared. Resistance can feel like defense, but they're focusing on it as flow. Getting in touch with the mind and the self in order to find where one's desires and passions lie is resistance. Being vulnerable with others, making meals with people, and working in service to community rather than the dominant patriarchal, carceral systems we still live with is resistance. I asked Elizabeth to bridge this reflection with cultural resistance as our conversation came to a close, and they advocated that seed sharing is an important part of cultural resistance as well. The Demeter Seed Library is a food system's working group at UC Santa Cruz that helps to cultivate the biological diversity of agriculture and lead us toward "a world where food and medicine are grown freely."¹²⁹ It exemplifies cultural resistance on a self-consciously political collective scale. Seeds hold people's stories, sustain their lives, and give them agency over their own feeding and healing.

¹²⁹ "Demeter Seed Library," Accessed April 22, 2022, <https://agroecology.ucsc.edu/farm-to-college/fswg/demeter-seed.html>.

CONCLUSION

Ever since the creation of the African Diaspora as we know it, Black cultural resistance has been alive and well. Enslaved and self-liberated Africans have planted and passed down seeds and stories of survival and self-sustenance, living out what Elizabeth Jones described as the flow of resistance. From the 16th to the 21st century, Black folks have created and adapted practices of cultural resistance rooted in land and community care. Like her ancestors, Ifayomi Fasola has created kinship with indigenous Mvskokxe (Muskogee) elders, whose knowledge and guidance informs her healing practice. Nigerian religions and rituals ground her work for Ancestral Herbiary. Soul Fire Farm similarly follows in the steps of Washington's Tuskegee Institute and Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative, being a holistic farm founded by community members for the community, directly informed by their expressed needs and desires.

As neocolonial global capitalist powers continue to colonize, urbanize, and destruct our land, it is important for us to practice holistic care on collective, community, and individual scales. The Landback Movement and Food Sovereignty movements are consciously-political community and collective actions, respectively, that demand private companies and governments to return the land to the people who care for it best. It is important to uplift this work in the flow of cultural resistance. Land is the basis of liberation, so we need to practice allyship with indigenous American peoples in service to it. We all have an innate conscious or unconscious (spi)ritual kinship with Earth. Local and global lands provide the herbs, roots, fruits, grains, and vegetables we use for foods and medicines. Whether we obtain them from grocery outlets,

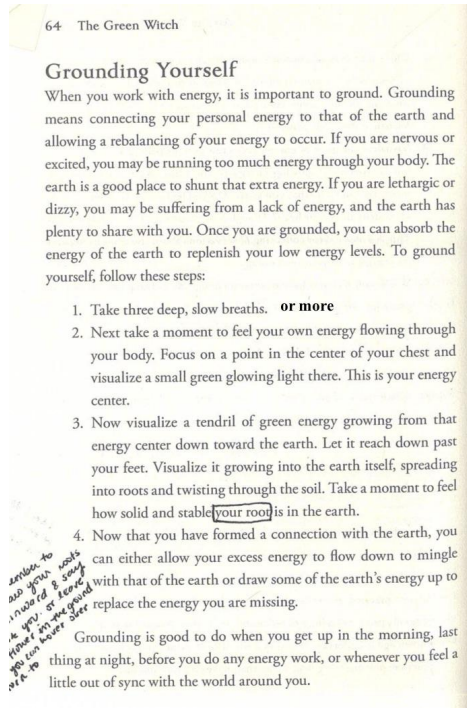
spiritual stores, farmer's markets, or a community farm or garden, we must advocate for and practice care with the land and the people who cultivate it because they help care for us, too.

On an individual scale, cultivate a daily (spi)ritual of thanking Earth for giving you breath and life. Learn more about land-based healing remedies by taking classes with Hood Herbalism and Ewewa Academy, or through GOODWITCH's Patreon and free online library. You can boil a mucus-clearing tea of fresh ginger root, orange peels, and honey if you're feeling stuffed up or keep a lavender plant by your bed for sweet sleep. Honor and cleanse everything you eat. Allow this prayer from racial justice trainer Jessica Aranda to guide you:

Bless this food and the hands that have planted its seeds, cultivated it, harvested it, seen it sprout, killed it, prepared it, transported it, washed it, sold it, bought it, cooked it, and brought it to this table. Thank you to all of the plants, mushrooms, animals, and minerals that gave of themselves to create this meal. Please clear it of any heavy energy and help it to nourish my mind, body, and soul. May I be at one with the Universe as I enjoy this meal.¹³⁰

And take some time to land-in yourself each day. It should feel good.

¹³⁰ United We Dream, "The Undocumented Cookbook, by Immigrants," Accessed April 24, 2022, <https://unitedwedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Draft-3-Merged.pdf>



These are acts of everyday resistance that constitute community- and self-care. Land is central to our collective survival and sustained cultural resistance. Honor the spirits and people who cared for our cross-cultural interspecies communities in the past and those who nurture them now, seeding pathways for a safe and healthy future.¹³¹

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¹³¹ Arin Murphy-Hiscock, *The Green Witch: Your Complete Guide to the Natural Magic of Herbs, Flowers, Essential Oils, and More* (Avon Massachusetts: Adams Media, 2017), 64.

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