

Black Futures: Exploring Centring Black Perspectives and Voices in Imagining Future Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

Time bends, folds, and dances in the hands of those who dare to imagine future possibilities beyond the confines of linear progress. In the liminal space between what was and what could be, where Black folks can redefine their social order and engage in critical reflection about their identities and experiences, Black storytelling becomes a portal, a living archive of memory and possibility. Here, ancestral whispers guide the creation of speculative worlds, where the echoes of joy, imagination, and affirmations of life shape the contours of what is yet to come. Pause in the "now," a fluid moment where the past and future collide, to listen deeply to the narratives that have been silenced, erased, or overlooked. Through the transformative power of storytelling, journey into the rich mosaic of Black existence, bringing together fragments of history, culture, and imagination. This is a reclamation, a refusal to accept futures built on exclusion and erasure. It is a call to centre Black voices, to honour the complexity of Blackness, and to craft visions of the future that resonate with authenticity and collective empowerment. In this speculative exploration, storytelling transcends its role as a method and becomes a tool for imagining, and a beacon of possibility for a world yet to be imagined.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take a first step in acknowledging that the land that I live and create on is Tkaronto, which is a Mohawk word meaning “the place in the water where the trees are standing.” It is on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee confederacy, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Wendat and many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. Meaning that this land that I created this major research project⁴ on is Indigenous land and it will be respected as such.

For Black folks, this especially involves taking into account how our presence as folks who did not ‘arrive’ here in the same way as white people - and instead were most likely forced here (directly or indirectly) by factors of white supremacy - still perpetuates harm against Indigenous people that we are responsible for. This also involves acknowledging the often overlooked presence of Black Indigenous people who have to deal with both anti-Black racism and colonialism in very different ways than others.

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Preface: End How You Start

For real, we always ready

We stay ready so we ain't got to get ready

You know what I'm sayin'?

For real, for real

But [REDACTED] on this journey, you know

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] before we part, I gotta give it up to you like this, you know [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] there ain't no such thing as beginnings, you know

It's only the ends that count, you know

You end how you start, remember that, you know

[REDACTED] so, you know

Show me where you start, and then we can find the means that justify the ends that you arrived at, you see

This is gon' be [REDACTED] a heavy game right here [REDACTED]

I hope you can receive this [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you just gotta [REDACTED] make the end

Reflect the beginning, you see

You exist in between those two extremes simultaneously, you can't even help it, you know

[REDACTED] so, you won't understand what the end stands on until you see it [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I have never seen [REDACTED] nothing like this before

Juxtaposition through sound

This is amazing, [REDACTED] you know

You are what you have when you stop doing what you did to get what you got, [REDACTED] you know

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And that's, that, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the future

Lowkey [REDACTED] ain't [REDACTED] the end

The end is just a [REDACTED] start, you start how you finish

So here goes a mystery

[REDACTED]

Ha [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] say it twice [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you know

[REDACTED] you know

[REDACTED]

*I bid you farewell, the end is [REDACTED] one's ability
Ability has no end
We're the start [REDACTED]
We only know the nature of a thing when it gracefully bows out and allows it's lessons to instruct the
learned, okay?
So, who can see forever on the clear day over here
[REDACTED]
Hey, and if I can't teach you nothing, I can't reach you, you know
[REDACTED]
The revolution is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] history [REDACTED]
you heard?
You in a renaissance, act like you know
Peace and love, I hope you enjoyed*

As Performed by AA Rashid: [End how You start](#)

I have always been curious about the concept of the beginning and end. Maybe that's why I am intrigued about the future and want to understand foresight more deeply. When I first heard these words from AA Rashid, I could only focus on the sample, "Mother's Theme (Mama)" by Willie Hutch, which was layered underneath. The sample plays a key role in this spoken word piece continuing to repeat itself without ending. This sample is a metaphor connecting to what Rashid is talking about. 'End how you start' became my mantra as I moved through this research, trying to understand what I was doing and why I was here. This research began as a question to myself: How might I see myself in the future and feel what I have been told is intangible? It is a question of imagining, creating, and daring to believe in something beyond what I've been given. And so the journey I have been on has been as much about personal discovery as it has been about collective storytelling, a way for Black folks to see, mend, and imagine our future possibilities. It is also a way for me to explore the absence of Black perspectives, the lack of representation in foresight, and the methods and tools used. Understanding that Black folks have been left out of futures thinking.

"We are the futures our ancestors imagined" was a phrase I heard in many of the conversations I had with Black folks when discussing the future, and throughout this journey, it has brought me comfort and responsibility in equal measure. I have been reminded that our ability to dream, envision, and build is both an inheritance and a duty. To see ourselves in the future, we must see ourselves today and in the past. We must ask questions about what it means to be Black, alive, and joyous in this moment and in the past. Lastly, we must explore the stories we've been told about who we are and be radical in telling the unheard ones; stories about our relationship to the physical, to each other, to our art, to our culture, and spirituality.

In the conversations I had and the literature I explored on this journey, I could feel the deep weight of history pressing against my imagination. I was grappling with the ways Black folks have been forced to

build other people's futures, how the tools of colonialism have shaped our worldviews and how foresight and the practice of shaping the future lacked the voices and perspectives of Black folks.

At the same time, in my experiences, I felt the beauty of our imagination and the power of our creativity. I saw how our togetherness can transform our communities and how the pain of invisibility can give rise to the joy of being seen. Each of these moments I experienced, whether through the conversations I had with my father or watching my son experience his view of the world, it reminded me that the messenger is as important as the message. That to envision our futures, we have to centre the voices of Black folks in the practice of the future.

The tools and techniques utilized in futures practices are wrapped up in the dominant institutionalized frames weighted in the language of colonial expansion, exclusion, conquest, and erasure. Visions of the future are being designed to map out how major corporations, government agencies, and non-profit industries can become more resilient in the face of uncertainty and more prepared to deal with change to remain profitable. There has been a rush towards modernity. In an effort for these groups to sustain themselves, they have been reinforcing practices that work towards sustaining the status quo and that negatively impact Black communities. As Davis (2022) stated, this occurs when the tools to imagine and create futures "are unevenly distributed, locking up trends of an unequal and unjust past into patterns of future injustice."

Black futures are rooted in Black folks having the expertise to read the past in a way that reveals the future. The few Black professional futurists that exist, such as Dr. Lonny Avi Brooks (2014), share a dream "to ensure that long-oppressed racial minority and diverse voices can articulate themselves in the futures imagined in the practices of long-term thinking and in the professional areas of foresight." Authentic alternative futures, one where Black futures are intact, accounted for, self-determined, and powerful, will require approaches not rooted in anti-Blackness. Therefore, to step into a new reality, the dominant Western practice of shaping the future must be de-centred.

This research is my first step in understanding how we might imagine and shape futures rooted in Black folk's truths and the infinite possibilities of our being. It is a question of how we might create a landscape where Black folks are no longer bound by the tools of the master but are free to design, innovate, and thrive on our terms. These questions embed themselves within my research question: **How might the practice of the future in long-term thinking and foresight centre Black voices and perspectives?**

Afrofuturism & 2.0, Critical Black Futures, Black Futurism

Afrofuturism & Afrofuturism 2.0, Critical Black Futures, and Black Futurism each provided a unique but interconnected perspective that informed my research. Their distinct approaches to speculative imagination, critical engagement with socio-political realities, and the centring of diverse Black

experiences offered me a lens through which to explore the absence of Black perspectives in foresight practices and to imagine futures that reflect the complexity and richness of Black identities.

Afrofuturism, as articulated by Kodwo Eshun (2023), operates as a speculative and imaginative lens through which Black identities and experiences are reimaged across the chronopolitical terrain of past, present, and future. It emphasizes the role of speculative fiction, art, and technology in challenging historical narratives and envisioning new possibilities. A new take, Afrofuturism 2.0, outlined by Reynaldo Anderson and Esther Jones is an advanced, twenty-first-century evolution of Afrofuturism that redefines Black identity through the lens of technogenesis, counter-histories, and speculative innovation. It reflects a dynamic interplay of transdisciplinary practices, appropriating and hacking the tools and paradigms of network software, database logic, cultural analytics, and deep remix ability to challenge and expand traditional narratives (Anderson, 2023). In the case of my research, Afrofuturism and Afrofuturism 2.0 allowed me to situate my work within a broader continuum of Black cultural expression and informed the creation of my Black speculative fiction story as a means to explore the layered narratives of Black experiences and insights that were gathered.

Critical Black Futures, however, takes a more explicitly critical and interdisciplinary approach to futures thinking that examines the historical and systemic forces shaping Black realities. Rooted in a Pan-African transdisciplinary framework, it acknowledges the complex intersectionality of Black experiences and the historical contexts of oppression that shape contemporary realities (Butler, 2021). Critical Black Futures prioritizes a grounded critique of socio-political structures, such as neoliberal capitalism, and centers the development of localized frameworks that respond to the specific needs of Black communities (Butler, 2021). In my research, Critical Black Futures ensured that the speculative narratives inspired by Afrofuturism were firmly rooted in the insights and guiding principles for imagining future possibilities, complementing the imaginative dimensions of my project.

Black Futurism, while sharing thematic overlaps with both Afrofuturism and Critical Black Futures, emphasizes the particularities of Black experiences and socio-political realities. It is historically contingent, deeply informed by the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and systemic racism, and seeks to interrogate power dynamics while promoting justice and equity. Black Futurism focuses on the diversity within Black communities, shaped by geography, culture, gender, and class (Scott, 2021). Its emphasis on cultural and artistic expression, coupled with its interrogation of systemic inequalities, informed my research's commitment to crafting futures that are both representative and transformative.

In utilizing the speculative creativity of Afrofuturism, the critical practice of Critical Black Futures, and the socio-political specificity of Black Futurism, my foundation for addressing the absence of Black perspectives in foresight practices and designing tools that centre Black voices in imagining and shaping alternative futures was robust and dynamic. This helped to ensure that my work reflected the richness and complexity of Black experiences across time, space, and identity.

It's Black Folks, not Black People.

Throughout this research, I made the deliberate choice to use the term “Black folks” rather than “Black people” when referring to individuals from the Black diaspora. For me, “Black people” feels more formal, evoking an academic or professional tone that creates a sense of distance, as though I was speaking at someone rather than in conversation with them. In contrast, “Black folks” carries a sense of warmth, familiarity, and inclusivity. It feels conversational and intimate, qualities I want this research to embody for members of the Black community who read it. This choice was intentional in order to foster connection rather than formality or detachment.

Future Possibilities and the Future Possibility Space

The concept of the future possibility space, and unlocking the future possibilities that exist within this space, is threaded throughout my research. This space is imagined as an “alternative space-time container,” where potential futures exist not as abstract ideas but as tangible entities that are alive and accessible, even if they remain unseen in our earthly experience (Meghji, 2024). It challenges the traditional view that the future does not exist until it is realized, offering a radical perspective that these possibilities are already present, waiting to be engaged with and brought into being.

What becomes pivotal to this idea is the understanding that the future possibility realm is a space of imagination and creativity, a fertile ground where Black folks can dream, explore, and shape the futures they desire. For Black communities, whose voices and perspectives have historically been excluded from mainstream foresight practices, this realm becomes a revolutionary space for reclaiming agency and asserting our visions. By stepping into this conceptual space, Black folks can navigate past narratives of erasure and oppression, accessing possibilities that honour our histories, aspirations, and identities.

Engaging with the realm of future possibility requires intentional envisioning and action. It is not just about imagining futures but about cultivating the tools, practices, and strategies to materialize those future possibilities into reality. My research draws on this approach by developing principles that act as a starting point to help uncover these latent possibilities. Therefore when reading this research, Black futures and future possibilities are one and the same.

Endarkened Storywork

Endarkened Storywork is a means of reclaiming narratives that have historically been marginalized or erased, creating a space where Black voices can be heard, valued, and celebrated (Toliver 2022). It serves as an essential methodological framework for my research and is grounded in storytelling practices through the creation of a Black speculative fiction story that honours the lived experiences of Black folks. Drawing from Indigenous Storywork (ISW) and Endarkened Feminist Epistemology (EFE), this

methodological approach emphasizes cultural and spiritual reclamation, challenging traditional academic paradigms while fostering healing and affirmation (Toliver 2022).

Storytelling is not just a mode of communication but a holistic process that integrates emotional, spiritual, and communal dimensions. Endarkened Storywork places the cultural memories, ancestral wisdom, and spiritual traditions of Black folks at the forefront, recognizing our integral role in shaping identity and experience (Toliver 2022). By approaching storytelling as a practice of nurturing and healing, this methodology allows my research to counter negative societal narratives, focusing instead on creativity, imagination, affirmations of life and collective well-being to imagine future possibilities. It ensures that my research process is as much about connection and affirmation as it is about knowledge production.

Endarkened Storywork also serves as a powerful critique of traditional research methodologies, which often fail to adequately represent or engage with Black experiences. By advocating for storytelling as a legitimate form of knowledge, this framework challenges the dominance of Western Eurocentric academic norms and proposes alternative ways of understanding and documenting the world. Through this lens, my research becomes a vehicle for exploring the richness of Black narratives, using my Black speculative fiction story to illuminate the complexities of Blackness, pluralities of identities, counter anti-Blackness, and imagine future possibilities.

Themes of Inquiry

This research operates at the intersection of six pivotal themes that were identified from the synthesis of data collected from the literature review and semi-structured interviews — A Black Worldview, Black Geographies, Black Temporal Relationships, Blackness and (Black) Identity, Black Modes of Thinking and Knowing and The Lived Realities. Each of these areas provides a distinct yet interconnected lens through which the scope of inquiry is framed and explored in the context of this research. Below, I outline each theme.

A Black Worldview

Worldviews are often shaped by dominant cultural narratives that define how individuals and communities understand, interpret, and navigate the world. A Black worldview offers a framework for navigating the present, challenging dominant systems and narratives by centring collective well-being, ancestral wisdom, and spirituality. It is not merely a way of seeing the world; it is a transformative practice of living that reflects the richness of Black life. There is not just one Black worldview; instead, there are many ways Black folks view the world, shaped by the diversity of Black experiences and identities.

A key characteristic of a Black worldview is its emphasis on relationality and interconnectedness. For Black communities, individual well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the collective. This ethos values community, mutual aid, and solidarity as essential for navigating systemic challenges. Spaces like barbershops, churches, and digital platforms have become hubs of cultural exchange, wisdom-sharing, and imagination. These communal relationships are not confined to physical spaces but extend across time, connecting present-day individuals to their ancestors and descendants in an ongoing dialogue of imagination and creativity.

Moreover, a Black worldview often integrates spirituality as a way of understanding and transforming reality. Spiritual practices rooted in cosmologies provide a lens to explore the interconnectedness of the material and metaphysical worlds. For Black folks, spirituality is not limited to religious rituals but is woven into daily life as a source of clarity, purpose, and healing. This spiritual grounding enables Black individuals and communities to imagine, resist historical traumas, and affirm their identities while creating pathways toward the realm of future possibilities

Black Geographies

Geography, at its core, is the study of the earth's surface and its myriad systems, those being physical, biological, and social. Traditionally, it investigates the complex relationships between human societies and their surrounding ecological systems, tracing how these interactions shape landscapes and spatial patterns. However, Black geography moves beyond such static conceptualizations. It reframes geography as a dynamic and relational practice centred on the lived experiences, spatial creativity, and the affirmations of Black communities.

Through this lens, Black geography becomes an evolving narrative of place-making, where Black histories, cultures, and identities are intertwined across spatial and temporal dimensions. It is a practice rooted in creativity, embodied knowledge, and storytelling, offering a way to understand place not as a fixed point but as a process that affirms Black life and possibility. This approach disrupts dominant geographic paradigms, replacing them with a more nuanced vision that celebrates interconnectedness and honours the ways Black folks navigate, resist, and reimagine their worlds.

Rather than adhering to linear narratives of history, often dominated by the legacy of transatlantic slavery, Black geography expands these frameworks to reflect the rich multiplicity of Black existence. It recognizes the importance of both historical and speculative perspectives, exploring the interplay between past histories, present realities, and future imaginaries. This intersectional analysis highlights the horizontal networks of the Black diaspora while delving into the vertical layers of time and meaning.

For Black communities, Black geography is a space of imagination and a catalyst for radical possibilities. It invites a rethinking of how we construct and inhabit the spaces around us, centring Black agency and creative expression. At its heart, Black geography is a call to reclaim the narratives of space and time, transforming them into dimensions where Black life not only endures but thrives.

Black Temporal Relationships

Time is often understood as a sequential progression, a straight line from past to present to future. This linear conceptualization of time dominates Western thought, emphasizing progress and forward movement. However, Black temporal relationships challenge this framework, offering an alternative view deeply rooted in relationality, cyclical patterns, and the interconnectedness of time. For Black communities, time is not a rigid construct but a living, breathing phenomenon shaped by history, culture, and imagination. It is a framework that resists the constraints of linearity and reclaims the agency to define one's temporal existence.

From this lens, Black temporal relationships embody the dynamic interplay of past, present, and future. They emphasize the active presence of history in shaping current realities and guiding future aspirations. This approach positions the past as a source of ancestral wisdom and creativity rather than a distant, disconnected point. Similarly, the future is not a far-off destination but a site of imagination and possibility, created through intentional actions in the present. These relationships are cyclical, fluid, and iterative, reflecting a worldview that values continuity, memory, and the transformative potential of time.

Black temporal relationships also challenge dominant temporal structures that have historically marginalized Black experiences. They resist fragmentation by maintaining a dialogue with the past through storytelling, rituals, and cultural production. Practices like oral histories and ancestral reverence ensure that the wisdom of the past remains an active force in navigating the present and envisioning future possibilities.

At their core, Black temporal relationships are acts of reclamation and affirmations of Black life. In a world where systemic oppression often weaponizes time through cycles of poverty, delayed justice, or the relentless demands of productivity, Black communities have developed temporal practices that defy these constraints. Restorative practices, such as prioritizing rest and self-care, challenge the capitalist commodification of time, reclaiming it as a space for healing and renewal. Similarly, cultural expressions like jazz improvisation or speculative Black art disrupt linear notions of time, blending historical memory with speculative futures to create temporal experiences that are uniquely liberatory.

For Black folks, Black temporal relationships represent a radical reimagining of time as a resource for resistance, creativity, and collective empowerment. They reject the notion that time is fixed or neutral, instead positioning it as an active force that can be shaped, challenged, and redefined. At the intersection of history, imagination, and community lies the possibility of futures that honour the past while embracing the boundless potential of the present. Black temporal relationships are a call to action, a way to reclaim time as a tool for liberation and transformation.

Blackness and (Black) Identity

A spectrum of experiences, histories, and identities shaped by cultural, geographical, and personal contexts embody Blackness. It is not a monolith that defines all Black folks; instead, it embraces the

weave of identities that reflect the diversity of the Black communities globally. Blackness is deeply relational, relying on the communal bonds and shared experiences of the Black community to enhance its quality, depth, and emotional impact. In the face of adversity, Blackness uses creativity, oral traditions and storytelling to preserve its memory and feeling to transmit its cultural values across generations. Artistic expressions like jazz, hip-hop, and poetry use Black creativity to challenge dominant paradigms and allow Black folks to be exposed to the force or frequency of Blackness frequency that matches their natural frequency. One interviewee remarked, "Improvisation is our superpower." Forming the ability for Black folks to reclaim their imagination and use it strategically to navigate and reshape societal structures. Blackness and (Black) identity are dynamic forces. Blackness serves as a creative, restorative, and imaginative power, while Black identity is the rhythmic vibration through which individuals define themselves and their communities. Together, they offer pathways to envision and build futures that celebrate diversity and the boundless possibilities of Black life.

Black Modes of Thinking and Knowing

To understand Black modes of thinking and knowing is to delve into a world where knowledge is vibrant, embodied, and communal. This epistemological framework resists the dominant paradigms of disembodied rationality often associated with Western European traditions and instead is rooted in lived realities. Prioritizing the body as a dynamic site of wisdom, memory, and meaning, a living archive that defies abstraction and intellectualization. For Black folks, knowing is not confined to the mind but flows through the senses, emotions, and actions. The body remembers, intuitively navigating a world shaped by systemic challenges, offering a counter-narrative to detached modes of Western European knowledge production.

Within Black modes of thinking and knowing lies an intrinsic relationality, a recognition that the self is inseparably woven into the fabric of community, ancestry, and environment. It embraces Ubuntu, the philosophy that "I am because we are," emphasizing interconnectedness as the foundation of thinking and knowing. These ways are holistic, valuing the emotional and spiritual as much as the cognitive, and they challenge reductive interpretations of knowledge that exclude these dimensions.

Storytelling, for example, transcends its role as mere narrative art. It becomes a repository of cultural memory. Black communities use stories to navigate and critique the worlds we inhabit while envisioning new possibilities. Practices like storytelling or song assert the humanity of Black individuals and communities, directly challenging narratives of erasure and dehumanization. These acts of creation and expression celebrate Blackness as inherently powerful, offering a profound affirmation of life.

Dance and movement similarly function as expressions of Black modes of thinking and knowing. These are not just artistic forms but acts of collective remembering and cultural preservation. Each step and rhythm embodies histories of identities and joy, creating a dynamic archive that bridges generations and geographies. Dance is more than an artistic expression; it is a communal practice that encodes histories, emotions, and identities that words alone cannot capture. The communal nature of these practices

underscores the belief that knowledge is co-created and shared, a reflection of the broader relational worldview inherent in Black epistemologies.

Creativity and imagination are equally vital. They are not luxuries but necessities, tools for self-determination and transformation. Whether through artistic expression, imagining futures rooted in Black experiences, or everyday acts of improvisation, Black communities use creativity and imagination to transcend systemic limitations and bridge between ancestral wisdom and visionary thinking. Black modes of thinking and knowing do more than challenge the status quo; they offer alternative frameworks for understanding the world. They emphasize the richness of relationality, the wisdom of lived experience, and the transformative power of creativity and imagination.

The Lived Realities

Black lived realities are a dynamic interaction of the past, trauma, and systemic inequities woven through the social, cultural, and spatial dimensions of life. These lived realities are deeply intertwined with generational trauma, violence, and the daily negotiations of identity and space. They reflect the experiences of navigating a world that has often sought to marginalize and undervalue Black lives while simultaneously showcasing the strength, beauty, creativity and imagination of Black folks.

Generational trauma is a defining aspect of Black lived realities, where the psychological and emotional wounds of the past continue to shape the present and our future possibilities. This trauma, encoded in familial and communal structures, shapes the ways Black communities navigate the present. In Black folks, it manifests as mental health disparities, with conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These intersecting traumas create a cycle of harm, where the wounds of one generation affect the well-being and opportunities of the next. But far from being merely a psychological phenomenon, generational trauma finds itself in the structural inequities of education, healthcare, and housing systems, which continue to disadvantage Black folks. The state-sanctioned violence, such as police brutality, coexists with the structural violence of economic disenfranchisement and underfunded public systems, depriving Black communities of essential resources.

Marginalization and representation also mark the lived realities of Black folks. Systemic exclusion from decision-making processes and cultural narratives maintains a sense of invisibility and devaluation. Blackness, as constructed through the dominant Western European lens, is often reduced to stereotypes that are a false portrayal of Black folks. The lived realities of Black folks grapple with the marginalization of identity in dominant spaces. From educational institutions to professional environments, Black individuals have to navigate predominantly white spaces that demand conformity through practices like code-switching. This constant negotiation often leads to feelings of hyper-visibility and invisibility, exacerbating the emotional labour required to assert identity and agency. These dynamics are mirrored in the spatial politics of gentrification, which displaces Black folks from neighbourhoods that once provided cultural and social anchors, further complicating their sense of belonging.

Black lived realities reveal the world Black individuals and communities navigate, one that often denies their humanity while asserting their right to exist fully and authentically. Through these lived realities, we see not only the scars of systemic violence but also the unyielding spirit that drives Black folks to reimagine our place in the world.

How to Read the Research

In reading this document, I invite you to engage with it on your terms. There are multiple pathways to navigate its contents as it is structured in a non-traditional academic format. This was done intentionally to allow for the reading experience to invite you to use your imagination. The project itself blends elements of storytelling, personal reflection and academic research in order to explore Black futures. Whether you approach it with curiosity, introspection, or a desire for academic analysis, this work is designed to resonate with diverse intentions and energies. I encourage you to select the journey that feels most aligned with your desires, as each pathway offers a unique lens into the themes explored and my own thoughts.

Each layer you will be presented with is intentionally interconnected, offering a dynamic reading experience that mirrors the plurality of Black identities and perspectives that exist. This document is not intended to be read linearly but instead encourages exploration. Whichever path you choose, the goal is to create a space where you can reflect, imagine, and connect with the themes. So whether you choose to explore the Black speculative fiction story that weaves memory and imagination into a narrative of possibility or my personal reflections that ground the research in my lived experiences or the traditional academic research, this is your journey, and I am only here as a guide.

Read the Black Speculative Fiction Story and the Personal Reflections and skip the Research Gathered.

This reading journey offers an emotional and narrative-driven experience. By starting with the Black Speculative Fiction Story, you are immersed in a vivid, imaginative world that embodies the core themes and insights of the research. Reading it this way engages you on a personal and creative level, prompting you to think beyond conventional narratives.

Following the story, the Personal Reflections provide an intimate lens into my thoughts, offering a glimpse into the human side of the work and connecting the speculative ideas back to real-world contexts. By skipping the Research Gathered & Research Design, you are avoiding the dense, academic analysis and instead focusing on the storytelling and emotional elements of the project, making this path ideal for those who prefer a more personal and creative engagement with the material.

Read the Research Gathered & Research Design, the Black Speculative Fiction Story and skip the Personal Reflections.

This reading journey prioritizes a more structured and analytical approach. By starting with the Research Gathered & Research Design, you gain a comprehensive understanding of the academic and theoretical underpinnings of the project. This section outlines the themes and insights that inform the speculative narrative, grounding the report in the research. Readers who value insights and contextual depth will appreciate this entry point.

Moving onto the Black Speculative Fiction Story, you can see how the research findings are creatively translated into a narrative form. The story acts as a bridge between the abstract and the tangible, offering an imaginative depiction of the possibilities explored in the research. Skipping the Personal Reflections ensures that the focus remains on the connection between the academic work and the speculative narrative, making this path ideal for those seeking a balance of intellectual rigour and creative exploration.

Read the Black Speculative Fiction Story, the Personal Reflections and the Research Gathered & Research Design

This comprehensive journey offers the fullest and most immersive experience of the report. Beginning with the Black Speculative Fiction Story, you are drawn into an imaginative and emotionally engaging narrative that sets the tone for the entire project. The story serves as both an introduction and a thematic centrepiece, encapsulating the insights and aspirations of the research.

Next, the Personal Reflections provide context and a deeper understanding of my journey. This section connects the Black speculative story to the lived experiences and motivations behind the work, adding a layer of authenticity and relatability. Finally, the Research Gathered & Research Design section allows you to delve into the data that form the backbone of the project. This holistic reading path ensures a complete understanding of the report, appealing to those who want to explore both the creative and analytical dimensions of the work.

Rooted in Possibilities, Dancing With Time: The Black Speculative Fiction Story

The Groove of Belonging: The Nature of Black Futures

Time had shifted, and the world as we knew it had changed. The environments we used to live in were not designed for us; that much was always evident. However, this sanctuary we created was our own masterpiece. Looking up, the skies still appeared boundless and timeless, an endless painting of colours that defied earthly understanding. Swirls of deep indigo and golden streams reflected the bustling energy of the communities down below like a vibrant pulse.

Beneath the skies, there was something greater: The Collective. It was not a single place, but rather an interconnected network of sanctuaries called 'Nodes' that buzzed with vitality, yet seemed to exist outside of time. Each node within the Collective was more than just a physical location in the transitional space. It was a living recollection, a beat in the ongoing journey of Black geographies. These sanctuaries embodied a sense of belonging, holding onto histories as tangible as their gardens and as elusive as their collective aspirations. These landscapes were no longer constrained by the linear constraints of the past. Here, past, present, and future intertwined into one living entity where every corner told a story and each shadow reverberated with the cyclical rhythms of the people who now defined them.

The streets were bustling with the rhythm of footsteps, and the atmosphere was heavy with a buzz that echoed hints of ancestral melodies intermingling with the low chatter of vibrant markets and communal areas. As I strolled through my node, FUBU, each structure's front was adorned with living murals that changed with the passing seasons, representing the shared story of those who resided here. FUBU was a repository, an ethereal landscape, and a testament to Black existence and creativity. A community that was recreated, reconstructed, and reclaimed.

I made my way through the twisting alleys, my fingertips tracing the rough surface of the ancient walls that surrounded it. I knew every brick was a treasure, carrying the memories of countless generations

who had lived before me. Their voices whispered in the breeze, reminding me to honour their legacy and reclaim my heritage. This place was more than just a home; it was a sacred space filled with conflicting emotions and thoughts.

I paused and scanned the area, standing at the edge of The Grove. This central hub is more than just an ordinary park to FUBU; it holds deep significance for me. The roots of the ancient sequoias that surround me reach into soil that has been sanctified through ritual. As I breathe in the familiar scent of the park, I feel a sense of warmth and safety, knowing that this is a place where stories are shared and histories intertwined. Above me, the leaves rustle like whispers, revealing the secrets of imagination and creativity. Each tree holds a unique story, etched not only in bark but also in augmented reality symbols that dance across my vision when I focus my gaze. These symbols tell their own tales narrated by ancestral voices that have been recorded, preserving their meanings for future generations. For me, The Grove represents a sense of belonging and serves as a constant reminder of the unbreakable bonds within my community.

"Look to your roots," my grandmother would always advise. "They hold the secrets of where you're meant to grow."

Even though she had passed away, her words lived on in the digital archives of the Collective. Through the Infinite Tree, a vast network of ancestral wisdom, her voice remained as crisp as if she were standing right next to me. Whenever I found myself lost in doubts and questions about my path, the recording would gently remind me, "Don't focus too much on the 'where,' but remember your 'why.'"

Today, the weight of uncertainty felt heavier than ever. The Collective had prospered for decades, but beneath its vibrant exterior and pulsing rhythms, cracks were beginning to appear. Not in the physical structures, which were designed to be durable and self-renewing. The cracks existed within the people themselves - in their trust, their hope, and their ability to see beyond their immediate struggles and envision a future full of possibilities.

I often pondered how The Collective could endure so much pain and still thrive. I thought of my mother, who had made countless sacrifices so that I could stand here now, firmly grounded yet yearning for something more. Her story was one of constantly moving through fear and uncertainty, always in search of survival.

But I realized that simply surviving was not enough. Survival was a destination imposed upon me by those who sought to control and limit it. My own life, like my mother's, had been shaped by journeys instead of straight paths - fluid, cyclical voyages through memories and time. "We are not just travellers," my mother once told me with a mixture of sadness and determination. "We are journeyers. The destination is not a place; it is who we become along the shapes it takes."

My task was seemingly simple, yet its scope was immense: I was to embark on a journey through the nodes, gathering stories and insights, and ultimately return with a blueprint for collective renewal and to see our future possibilities. But this journey was not solely about physical travel; it delved into the layers of time, memory, and identity that shaped Black geographies.

I began at The Corner, a symbolic intersection in The Grove. Here, I saw children playing games passed down from their great-grandparents, enhanced with holographic projections that transformed their skips and chants into dazzling visual displays. Elders gathered on benches shaped like Sankofa birds, stitching stories of the past into the fabric of the now. Vendors sold goods adorned with ancestral designs, embodying the Collective's values of reclamation and innovation.

But even amidst the vibrant energy of The Corner, there were shadows. A group of youth stood apart from the bustling activity, their faces illuminated not by the warm glow of sunlight but by the cold light of their devices. Their isolation felt like a silent rebellion against the very principles of the Collective. I observed them from a distance, sensing the weight of their unspoken questions: How can one belong when the spaces meant to embrace you feel like cages? How does one envision futures when survival seems like the only option?

My first destination was the Node called Portmore, a vast urban sanctuary in the midst of once chaotic and divided streets. The city had been reconstructed with care, honouring and acknowledging the lives lost due to systemic neglect. Here, reclamation was not just an idea but a physical practice. Walls that were once covered in protest graffiti now showcased murals celebrating joy and healing. Gardens bloomed where asphalt had once suffocated the soil, and solar panels adorned every rooftop like precious gems.

"Welcome Kya," said Jahara, one of the stewards of Portmore, as I arrived. Her voice was warm but tinged with weariness. "The elders have been anticipating your arrival."

I followed Jahara into the Council Circle, a space where decisions were made through consensus rather than hierarchy. The circle was adorned with artifacts: a drum from Jamaica, a jacket embroidered with stories that captured the beauty of our people, and a hologram of The Loop - each representing a piece of our diasporic journey.

The elders greeted me with nods and understanding smiles. They embodied the ethos of the Collective - their words carried the weight of our history and the hopes of the future. "Tell us," one elder began, "how does The Grove thrive?"

"It is strong," I replied, "but there is uneasiness. The youth are restless and the weight of our past hangs heavily over us."

The elder nodded solemnly. "That heaviness is part of the process of transformation. It is not new, but it must be acknowledged and tended to. That is why you are here, to help us tend to it."

The gravity of my mission had seeped into the core of my being. This was only the initial stage - not just a visit to different nodes, but to uncover how to repair the breaks and divisions within The Collective. The survival of our community depended on more than just its physical structures; it hinged on our capacity to look beyond mere existence and towards the limitless possibilities of our interconnectedness as a people.

As I left the circle, Jahara handed me a small vial. "What is this?" I asked.

"It is seeds," Jahara replied. "From the sequoia tree in Portmore. Wherever you go, plant it. Let it be a reminder of what deep roots can become."

I clutched the vial tightly as I stepped out of the Council Circle. It was time to begin my journey - to visit the different nodes of The Collective and uncover the secrets to it. I looked down at the vial Jahara had given me, and felt a surge of life. These seeds represented more than just the potential for growth; they were a symbol of hope and future possibilities.

Seeds of Imagination: Black Futurity

My journey through the interconnected nodes of the Collective was a blend of both physical movement and deep introspection. Each step I took seemed to stir up echoes of ancestral whispers that intertwined with my thoughts. The vial of sequoia seeds I carried in my satchel served as a symbol for the literal and metaphorical roots I held within.

My journey had begun in Portmore, setting the tone for what was to come. But now, the lessons learned there were heavily on my mind and left me feeling restless. As I moved deeper into the Collective's network, I couldn't escape the echoes of the elders' voices that followed me.

"Tend to the heaviness...Tend to the heaviness...Tend to the heaviness."

They had issued a challenge - to confront the unspoken tensions within the Collective and bridge the growing divide.

The next node on my path was Flylo, a sanctuary perched on a cliff overlooking the ocean. It was known as a place where dreams converged. Its gravity-defying design featured lush terraces and suspended gardens nourished by mist harvested from the ocean. Flylo was a place for reflection and dreaming, and I knew it would bring new challenges and revelations to my journey.

Flylo's paved pathways of polished onyx glimmered in the aftermath of a light rain, reflecting the warm lanterns strung between the towering trees. I strolled through the winding roads of Flylo with purposeful steps, my senses heightened by the unique energy of this sanctuary. Known for its rhythmic flow, each moment in Flylo building on each other in a seamless harmony.

I found myself drawn to a bustling square, lured by the distant sound of drumbeats played by a young boy. His small hands hit the makeshift drum with precision, drawing smiles from those passing by. I stopped to watch him, my senses overwhelmed by the familiar beats. They reminded me of my mother's voice - comforting yet powerful. There has always been something captivating about rhythm, how it can hold memories and possibilities all at once.

On the other side of the square, a group of elders gathered on low benches, their laughter mingling with soft conversations. Their presence grounded the lively atmosphere, providing a steady pulse beneath the lively surface. I thought of The Grove back home and the Infinite Tree where my grandmother's voice and spirit still lived on. I could almost hear her words: "Let the roots guide your growth."

In the centre of the square, a large sculpture of interlocking rings caught my attention. As it rotated slowly, I noticed intricate patterns etched into its surface, reflecting like sequins on a dress. But this wasn't just a work of art; it was also a memory keeper. If I placed my hand on its cool surface, I could feel moments from those who came before. I felt hesitant, unsure if I was ready to feel those moments.

Instead, I turned towards a corner where a woman was skillfully weaving beams of light into a delicate fabric. The threads shifted as they were interlaced, changing colours like the sky before a storm. I approached the woman cautiously, intrigued by the mesmerizing display.

"What is this?" I asked.

The woman glanced up briefly, her hands never ceasing their movements. "It's an art piece," she replied. "Of sorts."

"An art piece of what?" I asked

"Of us. Of everything." She replied back

I furrowed my brow, trying to understand. The woman's smile held a knowing quality, almost teasing. "Look closer," she encouraged.

I drew nearer and studied the art piece carefully. At first, it appeared chaotic, with the threads weaving and tangling in confusing ways. But as my eyes adjusted, I began to see patterns emerge - spirals and waves pulsing with an almost imperceptible rhythm. It was as if the art piece itself was alive, breathing alongside me.

"It's beautiful," I remarked softly.

The woman nodded in agreement. "It's not finished. But then again, neither are we."

The woman's words settled within me, filling me like a warm bowl of chicken foot soup that my grandmother used to cook. I thought about my purpose and my journey in that moment. It wasn't just about

gathering stories or creating a blueprint for collective renewal. It was about trying to understand how we can see and feel the future possibilities that exist.

I reached into my satchel and pulled out a sequoia seed from their vial. "May I add this to your art piece?" I asked.

The woman nodded, her smile softening. "Everything belongs."

Carefully, I placed the seed among the threads, its presence altering the rhythm of the art piece. A new pattern emerged, one that seemed to pulsate with a rhythm I felt in my heart.

"You carry something heavy," the woman observed softly. "But heaviness is not a burden. It's a rhythm waiting to be balanced."

As I stepped back, the woman added one final strand to the cloth. It glimmered like sunlight on water, and I felt something shift within me, as though I were also part of the art piece.

Shortly after, Nia, a young archivist tasked with preserving the living histories of the Collective, greeted me. Her hair was adorned with beads that glowed faintly, each containing fragments of ancestral wisdom. She exuded a calm energy as if she herself were one of the threads holding the sanctuary together.

"You've come to find something," Nia stated warmly yet intently.

I paused, contemplating my response before speaking. "It's more than just something. It's a way to mend the cracks within The Collective."

Nia nodded, understanding my words, the soft jingles of her beads filling the silence. "Then let us take a walk. The threads are always here, waiting for us to connect them."

Together, I moved with Nia through a series of reflective pools scattered throughout the land. Each pool not only mirrored the sky above, but also held within it memories from my past. As we stopped by one pool, I saw a vivid memory of my grandmother braiding my hair and humming a tune that carried with it unspoken stories. Another pool reflected the protests that had sparked the creation of the Collective, moments that were both painful and transformative.

"Memory," Nia said, "is alive. These pools hold more than just images; they carry vibrations, the essence of what has been and what could be. That is why we archive, not to preserve, but to have a conversation with time."

Nia's words struck a chord with me, as I grappled with the idea that memory was not a burden to carry, but a partner in creation. I had come to understand that my identity was not stagnant; it flourished in its diversity and ability to vibrate on different frequencies throughout my life.

"How do you hold onto your memories without letting them weigh you down?" I asked.

Nia paused, gazing towards the horizon where the ocean met the sky. "We don't hold onto them," she replied. "We dance with them. Memory is a partner, not a weight. It's how we honour our ancestors while dreaming beyond their imaginations."

That evening, I joined the fire that burned at the heart of Flylo's community. Elders, children, artists, and travellers all sat together around the fire. The flickering flames cast dancing shadows on our faces as they shared stories and visions. I took my place among them.

An elder began to speak, their voice deep and steady. They told a story about a river that refused to flow in one direction, its waters looping and turning, carrying the past and future in its currents. The river's journey was not easy; it faced obstacles like rocks and falls, storms and droughts, but it never stopped moving. "The river is us," the elder said, their eyes scanning around the fire. "It carries our stories, our dreams, our imagination."

The fire crackled louder, almost as if it was agreeing. I watched the flames dance, my mind wandering. I thought about my mother, whose sacrifices had paved the way for me to be here and about the youth I had seen earlier with their faces lit up by the cold glow of their screens. How could I help them see what I was only beginning to understand, that they were a part of something vast and infinite, and that their stories mattered?

One of the youth spoke with a quieter yet equally powerful voice. They described a garden where everything planted held a memory and every bloom held a possibility. This garden was tended not by one person, but by many hands, each bringing their own care. "The garden thrives because it is shared," they said. "Its beauty comes from the harmony of its differences."

As the night deepened, the fire continued to burn its warmth comforting against the cool night air. Off in the distance stood the sculpture of the memory keeper I avoided earlier, its rings slowly

spinning. I felt drawn to it, walking towards it with unsteady yet determined steps.

As my hand rested on its surface, I began to feel its whispers. At first, they were barely audible, like the rustling of leaves, but soon they grew louder and merged into a chorus of voices. Each one shared a moment I could feel, not just hear, a fragment of time that connected to the next. I felt myself being swept into their feelings, my heartbeat in sync with their rhythms.

The voices seemed to whisper, "You are a part of us, and we are a part of you. Feel these moments"

Tears welled up in my eyes as I stepped back, overwhelmed yet comforted by the connection. The feeling of the Collective was not something to be found; it was something to be felt and trusted.

As I walked away, the glow of the memory keeper faded, but its essence remained within me. The feelings of the moments pulsed through me. And so I made the decision to plant a seed, for this was a place of growth and blossoming.

The Resonance of Us: Black Identities

My journey through the nodes brought me to a space unlike any I had encountered before. The Node of Hoprock was where The Collective intertwined and formed something both complex and boundless, evoking inspiration. It was the meeting place for people from all corners of the Collective, with an atmosphere buzzing with possibility and streets bathed in the ever-shifting colours of twilight. Here, the fragments of lives and glimpses into potential futures were held, pulsing with rhythms both familiar and foreign. But above all, Hoprock was a feeling, one that engulfed me as soon as I entered it. Difficult to put into words, but it was like being immersed in a warm haze of neck-cranking bass lines and samples from past vibrations drifting through the air and structures. Hoprock stood as a testament to improvisation and its ability to connect those who entered to something greater than themselves.

The entrance to Hoprock was carved through narrow passages in sandstone cliffs. To truly explore Hoprock, I had to understand my relationship with it. Stepping into Hoprock, I felt the air change around me, thick with potential. A vast jam space unfolded before me, its surface covered in a mosaic. People flowed through the space in a

deliberate yet spontaneous rhythm. The community partied in fluid patterns, tracing invisible lines of connection.

I couldn't resist the pull of the energy of Hoprock - it was like a magnet drawing me closer with each step. I felt a sense of belonging here, an unspoken invitation to join in and contribute to the party. Without hesitation, I immersed myself in the flow of the party. My body moved instinctively, guided by the beats and melodies that surrounded me. As I partied, I observed those around me - some were lost in their own movements, while others connected with each other through eye contact or a subtle touch on the shoulder.

I felt like I could stay in this moment forever, but as I continued to party, I spotted three individuals dressed in outfits unlike anything I had seen before. I figured they were the stewards of Hoprock, each giving off their own distinctive energy and frequency that seemed to radiate through their clothes.

My attention was captured by Laina, one of the stewards on Hoprock. She gave off a sense of grounding with her resonant voice and intricate braided hairstyle that represented her life experiences. She greeted me as I approached.

"Welcome to Hoprock," she said, her eyes warm yet perceptive. "This is where we feel the rhythmic vibrations of The Collective."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Here, it's not about telling stories; it's about feeling them. They are lived, layered, and transformed. You'll see." Laina motioned for me to follow her and the other stewards deeper into Hoprock.

Our path led to maker spaces where people of all ages sat in small groups, their voices rising and falling in a harmonious cadence. One group was led by a young poet named Jelani, his words flowing with poetic potential of spoken word.

"This life isn't linear," Jelani spoke, "It loops, bends, and folds. There is nothing behind us; it's within us, shaping every step we take in this reality."

I nodded thoughtfully while feeling the truth of his words resonate within me. I thought of the cycles I had witnessed so far throughout the nodes: the stories, the feelings and rituals. This reality wasn't something to escape or endure; it was a partner in my journey.

Another steward tapped me on my shoulder and said "Follow me. There is more to see."

We made our way through another pathway and I entered a doorway guided by the steward.

"What's good? I go by Ayanna, and I am The Chronicler of Rhythms. Your energy has been felt and I appreciate you. While you're here, I would love for you to experience my maker space because it is a must on your journey."

I responded with "Bet" and gave her a dap.

Ayanna's studio was a riot of colour and texture. Canvases leaned against the walls, their surfaces alive with swirling shapes and jagged lines. Sculptures made of soil and clay filled every corner, their forms fluid and abstract.

"This is where I make sense of things," Ayanna mentioned, gesturing towards a half-finished painting. It was chaotic yet strangely harmonious, as though it captured the tension and beauty of transformation.

"Sit down Kya and let me explain how I found my way to Hoprock. I used to live in a node that was very rigid and structured, but I always felt like I didn't fit in. I craved something more, something that allowed me to express myself freely."

"So, you came here?" I asked.

"Yes," Ayanna replied with a smile. "And it changed everything for me. Here, I found the freedom to create without limitations, without worrying about fitting into someone else's idea of who I should be."

Ayanna showed me some of her recent pieces, intricate collages made of recycled materials, each one describing a moment.

"I use my art as a way to connect with my inner self," she continued. "It's like meditation for me, a way to tap into my identity."

I tilted my head, studying the layers of the painting. "It feels like it's showing me something," I commented.

Ayanna smiled. "That's because it is. It's showing you future possibilities."

"Future possibilities?" I asked, intrigued.

"Yes," Ayanna replied. "I use my art to envision and manifest the future. I believe that our thoughts and intentions have the power to shape our realities."

My mind was racing with questions. "But how do you know what the future holds?"

Ayanna chuckled. "I don't have all the answers, but I trust in my intuition and the signs around me. Everything is connected, and by tapping into that connection, I can manifest future possibilities."

I nodded, understandingly. I have always been a believer in intuition and the interconnectedness of all things.

Ayanna continued, "That's why I invite others into my space to create with me. Together, we can co-create a better future for ourselves and others."

I looked around at all of her creations; each one bursting with vibrant energy and purpose. I could feel my own creative energy bubbling up inside me.

"I want to create something too," I said confidently.

Ayanna beamed at me. "Of course! Everyone is welcome here."

I hesitated for a moment before approaching a blank canvas on an easel. I picked up a paintbrush and dipped it into a jar of bright green paint.

As I started to paint, I felt a surge of joy rush through me. Before I knew it, I was lost in my creation; brushstrokes blending together in perfect harmony.

When I stepped back to admire the finished painting, I was amazed at what I had created. It was a beautiful depiction of growth and transformation; full of vibrant colours and fluid shapes.

Ayanna smiled at my creation. "You're truly gifted," She said sincerely.

"Thank you," I replied humbly. "This experience has been eye-opening for me."

Ayanna grinned mischievously, "Well, your journey is never over. There's still so much to see and experience."

I felt a spark of recognition and asked Ayanna, "Do you think we're always having a conversation with the past?"

Ayanna nodded, as she dipped a brush into a pot of deep purple paint. "Absolutely. But it's not just a conversation; it's a remix. We take what has been given, layer it with who we are now, and create our version of new. That is the resonance."

Laina led me to another maker space. As we entered the courtyard, I was struck by the energy and excitement of the people gathered there.

Laina introduced me to Omari, who greeted us with a warm smile. He had a regal presence and his movements were deliberate and graceful.

"Welcome, sisters," Omari said with a deep bow. "We are honoured to have you join us in our dance."

As he spoke, the other members of the group joined hands and formed a circle around us. The sunlight filtered through the trees above, casting a warm glow on our faces.

Without any hesitation, Omari began to move, leading us in a series of steps and turns. As I followed along, I could feel an ancient wisdom and power within the movements.

Omari's words echoed throughout the space, "this is not just a dance but living archives that preserved stories and truths from generations past."

Each step held its own significance, representing different elements of nature or key moments in history. I felt connected to something greater than myself as we moved together as one.

As the dance came to an end, we all stood still for a moment, catching our breath and feeling the energy coursing through our bodies.

Omari turned to me with a smile. "You have great potential as a dancer."

I blushed at his compliment. "Thank you," I replied humbly.

Do you have any interest in learning these sacred dances?"

I grinned widely. "Of course! It would be an honour."

Omari nodded approvingly before turning back to address everyone else. "Now let us continue with our dance."

My body became a vessel for the weight of stories I didn't fully understand but could feel deeply. As I moved, I felt connected to those around me, to the ancestors who had danced these rhythms before, and to the futures we were creating together.

After the dance, Laina brought me to a quieter corner of the maker spaces where Amara, the third steward, introduced herself.

"I am Amara," she said with calloused hands and stained nails from sculpting stones. "You have seen my work displayed throughout Hopprock."

Her workshop was cluttered with fragments: pieces of rock, metal, and glass that looked chaotic at first glance but revealed patterns when viewed closely.

"Creativity is determination," Amara explained while working on her latest piece. "It's about finding the frequencies that align. When I carve, I'm not just shaping the stone; I'm listening to it, feeling where it wants to go."

As I watched Amara work, I couldn't help but be in awe of her talent. She seemed to have a deep connection with the stones, almost as if they were speaking to her.

"Creativity is not about imposing your will onto something," she explained as she worked. "It's about listening and responding to the natural rhythms and energies of the world."

I realized then that each steward had their own unique form of creativity and expression, all deeply rooted in respect for the natural world.

"Do you have a craft or skill that you specialize in?" Amara asked me, her chisel still dancing across the stone.

"I...I don't think so," I replied honestly. "I've never really had the opportunity to explore my creativity."

Amara nodded thoughtfully. "Well, perhaps it is time for you to discover your own unique resonance."

With those words ringing in my head, I left Amara's workshop feeling inspired but also overwhelmed. How was I supposed to find my own form of creativity when I didn't even know where to begin?

As night fell upon Hopprock, the community transformed. Spotlights lit up the jam space, casting patterns on the mosaic ground and bringing the lively vibe of Hopprock to life. Everyone gathered in the jam space, their voices blending into a song that seemed to rise from the earth itself.

Laina placed her hand on my shoulder. "You have felt our rhythmic vibrations and how they come together in resonance. Now, it's your turn to add your own."

I hesitated, "What if my rhythm doesn't fit?"

"Every vibration has its place," Laina reassured me. "It's not about fitting; it's about resonating. Trust your rhythm vibration."

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, trying to block out the doubts and insecurities that were holding me back. Slowly, I let the vibe of Hopprock wash over me, feeling its pulsating energy as it flowed through my body.

Without even realizing it, I started moving my feet and swaying to the beat. It wasn't a conscious decision; my body seemed to move on its own accord, responding to the rhythm vibrations of the communities.

As I let go and surrendered to the music, something inside me clicked. For the first time in a long time, I felt connected not just to my surroundings but also to myself. It was as if each note played by the instruments and each voice lifted in song was a part of me, resonating with my own inner vibration.

A smile spread across my face as I opened my eyes and joined in with the others, adding my own voice to the chorus. As our voices intertwined and our movements synchronized, I understood what Amara had meant when she said creativity was about finding the frequencies that align.

In that moment, I realized that I didn't need a specific craft or skill to create; all I needed was to embrace who I was and allow myself to resonate with others. That was where true creativity lay, in connection and collaboration.

As the night went on and we continued jamming together under the stars, I felt like a part of something bigger than myself. And for once, instead of feeling lost or alone, I felt like I belonged.

I may not have found a specific craft or skill during my time at Hopprock, but what I discovered was much more valuable, a sense of purpose and belonging within our beautiful communities.

And as we sang into the night, our voices rising and falling in perfect harmony with one another, I dipped my hand into my satchel and grabbed a seed from the vial, it was time to plant another one.

Awaken the Vibrations: Discovery of Black Future Possibilities

The journey back to my home node, FUBU, was going to be a difficult one, both physically and emotionally. I knew I had to use creativity in order to make it there. But first, I was going to have to cross the Bridge of Healing, a structure that seemed suspended above a void. As I approached the bridge, I couldn't see a physical structure and began to worry.

But as I got closer, the bridge started to materialize before my eyes. I stopped and thought to myself, "What the rass is happening here?"

It suddenly became clear to me that the Bridge of Healing was not a physical entity; rather, it was a dynamic space that only revealed itself to those who carried the resonance of the Collective within them, those who had embraced imagination. It existed beyond the constraints of space and time, serving as a connection to a reality where our futures stretched out like constellations in an infinite sky.

Above me, the planets pulsed with different colours and rhythms, mirroring some unseen energy. I finally understood - I wasn't just returning to my home node of FUBU. Instead, I was heading towards Lumina, the realm of future possibilities. This was not a mere sanctuary or crossroads; it was a place that affirmed our lives. Here, all paths converged and transformed into a symphony of imagination and creativity.

On the other side of the bridge, Lumina revealed itself as a sprawling expanse of shifting landscapes. One moment, I saw rolling meadows bathed in golden light; the next, a dense forest where the trees whispered secrets to the wind. Each step I took transformed the ground as if my very presence was rewriting the possibilities of the space.

Waiting for me was Adama, the Keeper of Possibilities. Adama's presence was commanding, their features ageless, as if they possessed the knowledge of our futures.

"You've come far," Adama said, their voice resonant and melodic. "Do you know what you seek?"

I paused, unsure of how to answer. "I seek to know how we can imagine futures where all of us thrive and how we can mend the cracks in The Collective." I finally replied.

Adama's gaze softened. "Then let us walk."

They guided me to the Quilt of Possibilities, a representation of dreams, fears, and aspirations from all corners of the Collective. The Quilt was constantly shifting, reflecting the thoughts and actions of those around it.

Adama pointed towards the changing symbols. "These are the imprints of our ancestors, who shaped the foundation of our possibilities with their imagination. Their wisdom guides us as we navigate the now while imagining what could be."

I approached the Quilt cautiously, careful not to disturb the reflective surface surrounding it. Adama nodded towards the Quilt.

"This is where our possibilities come together," Adama said calmly. "Every thought, dream, and act of imagination leaves an imprint here. The Quilt not only shows us what could be, but also what we can feel."

I placed my hand on the surface of the Quilt and immediately I was filled with visions, drawing me in. I saw glimpses of thriving communities built on principles of care and healing, technologies that harmonized with nature and amplified ancestral wisdom, spaces pulsing with joy and creativity, redefining progress with feelings. I saw Our lives being celebrated and futures being co-created rather than imposed.

One image caught my eye, a young girl standing before a crowd, speaking about unbounded dreams and breaking free from constraints. Behind her, a mural depicted ancestors and descendants dancing through generations. It was a future where being Us was not a struggle but a celebration, connecting and elevating all who felt its rhythm.

"How do we make this real? How do we honour them?" I asked, my voice trembling with emotion.

Adama's expression turned serious. "By understanding that the future is not a destination but a practice. It's in every choice we make, every story we tell, every connection we nurture. We create these possibilities together. Our joy, rest, and healing are affirmations of life; they are acts of resistance and our imaginations are acts of resilience."

Adama then guided me to a platform overlooking Lumina, where a group of artists were using salvaged materials from the old world. One sculptor in particular, Amahle, was shaping a figure with shards of glass and metal, her movements precise and practiced. The unfinished figure radiated strength and beauty.

"This is how we undo," Amahle said without looking up. "We take what was meant to break us and shape it into something that supports us. We don't just dismantle; we build."

I watched in awe as Amahle transformed the sharp shards into a figure that embodied imagination.

The ethos of the Collective lingered in my mind, their refusal to abide by conventional norms and values. Amahle's art was more than just a form of expression; it served as a blueprint for our future possibilities.

"Each piece holds memories," Amahle added. "Not just of what was, but of what could be. We're not erasing the past; we're transforming it through who we are."

I stood there, finally beginning to understand everything.

"Well Kya, that's all I have to show you," Adama concluded.

"But actually there's something special happening tonight." She smiled.

I was led by Adama to the Sound of Ancestors, a wide open space surrounded by mountains where all members of The Collective gathered.

They formed a circle with each person taking their place, illuminated by the glow of each other. This was a pivotal moment for me and my time in Lumina. I joined the circle and looked inward, seeing not just my reflection but also the faces of those around me, filled with joy. I felt their stories, dreams, struggles, and triumphs together as The Collective.

In that moment, something came over me and I took a deep breath before speaking. My voice started off quietly but grew stronger with each word.

"I've witnessed how we carry our past, present, and future," I began.

"How we braid them together into something that resonates beyond us. But I've also seen the fractures, the silences, the spaces where we still struggle to see and be seen. They are part of the pattern," I said.

"They remind us that creation is not about perfection but about presence. What matters is how we move through them, how we transform them into something whole."

I continued to speak of the lessons I had learned, and the vision I carried. I spoke of a future not defined by survival but by flourishing, where Our lives were affirmed in their multiplicity and beauty.

"We are the architects of our futures," I said, my voice carrying the force of generations. "But we do not build alone. Our strength lies in our connections. The future is not anyone's to give or take; it is ours to imagine and create."

As I finished, the space erupted in a chorus of voices, their energy resonating throughout. The Sound of Ancestors filled with light, its surface shifting to reflect the collective vision of those gathered.

And in that moment, the cracks that had threatened to divide the Collective began to mend, not through answers but through connection.

And as the echoes of their voices filled the air, I felt a profound sense of belonging. I was what Black meant to me, a note in the symphony, a part of the infinite rhythm that was The Collective.

As the gathering dispersed, I lingered in the Sound of Ancestors, I reached into my satchel and took out a sequoia seed that Jahara had given me in Portmore. With careful hands, I planted it at the edge of the Sound of Ancestors, its soil rich with the dreams and hopes shared that night. As I covered the seed, I whispered, "Grow strong, and remind us of who we are and who we can become."

As the sun climbed higher in the sky, I turned to make my way back across the Bridge of Reflection. But this time, I felt different, lighter. The journey had changed me, not by offering any concrete solutions but by revealing the endless potential hidden within the Collective's connectedness.

I realized that this journey was not mine alone; it was ours. It was a symphony of possibilities woven together by our shared existence. And the lesson of the Collective became clear: it wasn't about finding one definitive future, but rather embracing the multitude of rhythms and visions that exist. It was a dance of imagination and creation, uniting us and empowering us to shape our futures.

As I reentered the familiar streets of my community, I could feel the rhythmic vibrations of my neighbours more intensely than ever before. I saw people of all ages and walks of life - young and old, creators and thinkers - each contributing their unique frequencies to our collective resonance. The Collective wasn't just a physical place or destination; it was a living testament to the infinite possibilities of Black futures.

Suddenly, my eyes fluttered open after being hit by the itis from devouring a hefty plate of oxtail and rice & peas at the Blocko.

"What just happened? Did I really just fall into a deep sleep right after eating and wake up in a whole different world?" I muttered to myself as I shook off the drowsiness.

Feeling dazed from my dream, I sprang out of bed and headed outside to soak in the last remnants of good vibes of the Blocko at Oakwood and Eglinton Ave. I was ready to dance to my own rhythm and feel the collective vibrations around me. With pride, I yelled out, "Time to go manifest our futures!"

Companion Chapters

The Companion Chapters serve as an intricate roadmap to understanding the ideas, themes, and insights that culminated in the creation of the Black speculative fiction story. These chapters offer a reflective and analytical perspective on the processes, thoughts, and voices that informed the narrative for the story. They are not an exhaustive recounting of every detail but rather a curated collection of reflections, research, and revelations that bridge the creative and the critical. By looping together my personal reflections, interview and literature review insights, and thematic analysis, the Companion Chapters guide you through the “how” of the story, illuminating the layers of meaning embedded within the narrative of the story.

These chapters are an exploration of space, time, identity, and relationality, all viewed through a Black-centred lens. The narrative's foundation rests on ideas such as temporal fluidity, where past, present, and future are in constant dialogue, and Black geographies, which emphasize the symbolic and material significance of spaces and places. These themes are interwoven with insights drawn from interviews and a comprehensive literature review, grounding the story in experiences and shared memories. From community spaces that nurture belonging and continuity to ancestral lands that hold histories of affirming Black lives and imagination, the Companion Chapters delve into the relationships between Black identity, space, and time.

The chapters also reflect on the critical role of creativity and imagination as tools for envisioning futures and affirmations of Black life. Anchored in themes such as radical imagination and ancestral knowledge, they highlight the transformative potential of Black epistemologies and artistic practices in reimagining futures free from systemic constraints. These chapters do more than explain the story; they invite you into a co-creative process, encouraging you to reflect, connect, and imagine alongside the narrative. By centring Black voices and perspectives, the Companion Chapters contextualize the story and assert the importance of Black futures that are collective and expansive.

Research Design

The design of my research was intentionally guided by principles that centre the experiences, voices, perspectives, and knowledge systems of Black folks. To address my primary research question, I utilized a combination of methods and tools drawn from foresight. However, The Design Council's (2005) conventional design thinking framework I was hoping to use, ‘the double diamond,’ I found did not adequately incorporate the perspectives and voices of Black folks.

Design approaches continuously target and hurt Black folks by leaving us out of the equation when considering designs. The thought of a Black-Centred Design approach would offer a framework by which the complexities of Blackness can act as an ethos for creating more equitable and just emerging solutions. When it comes down to it, it's about designing a better future or utilizing the future to stay profitable. Regardless of which of these two we focus on, the perspective is Western Euro-centric and does not involve Black folks; it incorporates everyone else but Black folks. It is hard to understand the

possibilities and actions we can take today to support Black folks in seeking liberation and joy, without ignoring how the design of the future does not include Black folks throughout history and the present.

Therefore, I framed my research by adapting the double diamond design process to ensure that Black folks and their experiences were centred. This framework unfolded in four distinct phases that build on Feukeu et al. (2021) design principles of endogenous capacity-building: **Self-Reflection**, **Being Together**, **Acting Together**, and **Being Transformed into Fate**. Each phase provided an opportunity to ground my work in Black ways of knowing and being, ensuring that the process was reflective, participatory, and intentionally aligned with the desires and aspirations of Black folks.

Approaching my research through these phases allowed me to anchor my insights and outcomes within the Black community rather than abstract concepts disconnected from our realities. **Self-Reflection** gave me the space to interrogate my positionality as a Black researcher and how my lived experiences informed my understanding of Black futures. **Being Together** emphasized the importance of collective understanding and consensus-building with Black folks while **Acting Together** centred collaborative action to address shared struggles and envision transformative solutions. Finally, **Being Transformed into Fate** embraced the recognition that this work is larger than myself, seeking to co-create liberatory spaces that pave the way for collective empowerment.

Each phase was guided by secondary research questions that broke down and supported my overarching research question, creating a dynamic and responsive framework. This approach, grounded in the Black experience, was complemented by tools and methods specifically tailored to exploring Black futures, ensuring that the outcomes were meaningful and resonated with Black folks.

Four Phases of the Research Design Approach

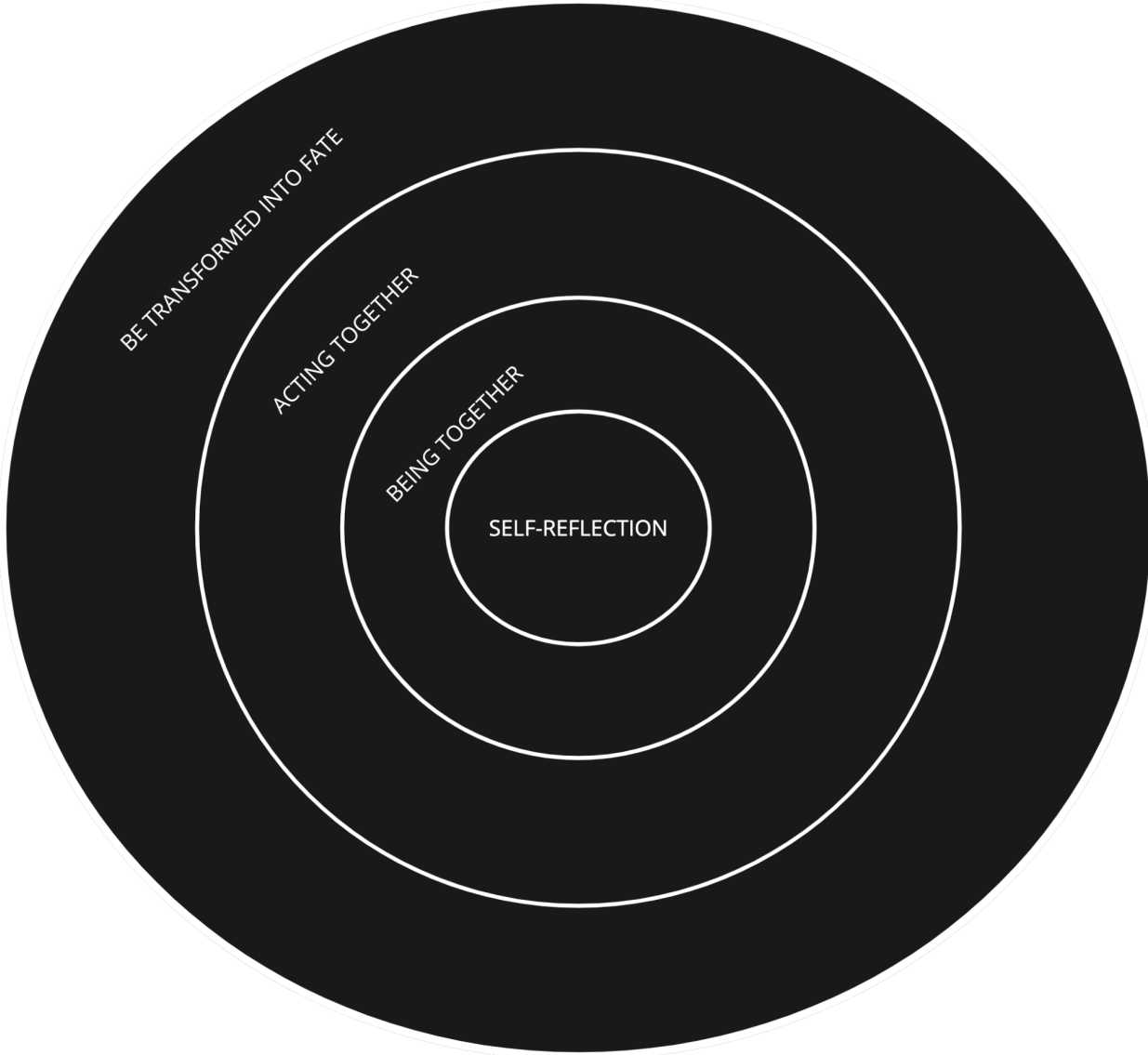


Figure 1. An illustration of the four phases of the research design approach

		Self-Reflection	Being Together
Guiding Questions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can this work support the Black community? • What journey am I embarking on with this work? • What path is being designed through this work? • Why is this conversation important to me? • What are the paradigms and pathways that this work is grounded in? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the Black modes of thinking and knowing (worldview)? • How do Black folks approach thinking and knowing? • What are the firmly held convictions and assumptions about the world for Black Folks? • How do Black Folks view the world? • What conflicting and harmonious positions do Black folks hold about how they view the world?
	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Semi-structured Interviews with Subject Matter Experts • Thematic Coding • Affinity Mapping
		Acting Together	Being Transformed into Fate
Guiding Questions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the Black visions of the future? • What are the conceptions of time by Black Folks? • How do Black folks make use of the future? • How is the future conceptualized by Black Folks? • How do Black folks practice envisioning the future? • What tools and methods have been used and adopted to explore the future? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a decolonized futures practice that gives birth to authentic alternative futures? • How might we centre the Black body in the futures practice? • How might Black folks harness the values of the past and present? • What is the intersection of Blackness and a futures practice? • How might we create a plurality of inspired visions of the future? • How might we open up space for other paradigms to exist in our consciousness?
	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Semi-structured Interviews with Subject Matter Experts • Thematic Coding • Affinity Mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causal Layered Analysis • Storytelling (Black Speculative Fiction)

Table 1. A visual representation of the four phases of the research design approach.

Self-Reflection

The journey begins with *Self-Reflection*, a phase that emphasizes personal introspection and understanding. As a Black researcher, this step is an opportunity to deeply engage with what this work means to me and Black folks. It involves considering the significance of exploring Black futures in the present day and recognizing how my lived experiences shape my approach to this research. Throughout the process, self-reflecting provided a continuous mechanism for grounding the work in Black perspectives and ensuring its authenticity.

Being Together

The second phase, *Being Together*, focuses on establishing consensus and collective understanding among community members, leaders, and advocates. This phase is essential for fostering solidarity and mutual respect, forming the foundation of my Black-centred research approach. It honours the interconnectedness of Black folks and creates a space for shared experiences and perspectives. By grounding the research with intention and aligning it with the aspirations of Black folks, this phase builds a strong sense of trust and commitment.

Acting Together

The third phase transitions from collective existence to collective action. *Acting Together* is about exploring our imagination and building our strength through dialogue, reflection, and collaboration. This phase provides an opportunity to honour, reconcile, and heal from past and present struggles while celebrating Black life. It also encourages the exploration of diverse narratives, identities, and expertise, challenging conventional research norms. By centring Black voices and perspectives, this phase advocates for innovative and inclusive methodologies, ensuring that the research process amplifies marginalized voices and generates actionable solutions for Black folks.

Being Transformed into Fate

The final phase, *Being Transformed into Fate*, acknowledges the responsibility of this research. It is not merely a scholarly endeavour but a commitment to co-create future possibilities with Black folks. This phase reflects the belief that through shared agency and intentional action, Black folks can move from necessity to empowerment, shaping their destinies in meaningful ways.

This transformative phase focuses on transcending entrenched systems and beliefs to envision and create alternative futures that are equitable and liberatory. It emphasizes the importance of co-creation, ensuring that the work is larger than individual efforts and contributes to collective transformation. Through this phase, the research seeks to recognize the interconnectedness of past, present, and future, enabling Black folks to actively shape our path forward.

Data Collection Methods

I employed a mixed-methods approach for my research, combining qualitative and reflective techniques to gather rich data centring Black experiences and perspectives. This dual approach allowed for integrating personal insights with broader, community-driven perspectives to explore Black futures' complex and layered dimensions.

Literature Review

A literature review, defined as "a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding a specific topic" that identifies both what is known and unknown (Creswell, 1994, pp. 20-21), was conducted as a broad exploration to define the boundaries of my research and orient me within the areas of Black Studies, Black Speculative Arts, and the futures practice. The literature review connected my research to ongoing dialogues within the Black community, identified gaps in the existing literature, and established a foundation for the research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Furthermore, it aimed to:

- **Define complex terms:** Building a shared understanding of key concepts like Black epistemologies, time, Black futurity, Blackness and Black Identity.
- **Identify historical contexts:** Tracing how past and present factors have shaped the current state of futures thinking for Black folks.
- **Highlight gaps in existing knowledge and engage with existing narratives:** Exploring how Black folks view and perceive the future and revealing the unexplored ways Black folks practice envisioning and conceptualizing futures.

The literature review also drew on futures material that has existed, focusing on Black Histories alongside a deep dive into the local traditions, cultures and values of Black folks from the Afro-Atlantic. A significant amount of diverse literature was reviewed (although not all are cited in this report), including academic papers, books and journals. Additionally, regular and consistent engagement with non-academic sources, such as blogs and podcasts, provided valuable insights into the ongoing discussions and perspectives surrounding Black futures. This extensive literature review established a foundational understanding within the research focus area and generated significant data, providing a robust basis for addressing the secondary research questions.

Subject Matter Expert Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts served as the primary research method of data collection, offering a nuanced and flexible approach to exploring Black futures. I interviewed seventeen (17) individuals in fields such as the arts, academia, design and foresight. These participants represented diverse, intersectional identities within the Black community, bringing a wealth of knowledge and lived experiences to the conversation. This method allowed for open-ended, exploratory discussions, encouraging participants to share their expert opinions in response to the questions I developed.

The design of these interviews was intentional and community-centred. Participants were invited through a formal process involving an invitation letter and consent form, ensuring they understood the

purpose and scope of the research. The interviews were conducted virtually over 60 to 90 minutes and fostered an environment of trust and openness. The flexible format allowed for organic dialogue, prioritizing participants' lived experiences while ensuring their contributions guided the research framework. Audio recordings and physical notes captured the richness of these conversations, enabling me to remain present during the discussions while preserving the depth of the insights shared. This approach honoured the participants' expertise and helped refine the research scope by challenging assumptions, identifying gaps, and expanding the possibilities for envisioning Black futures.

The data collected through these interviews was analyzed using thematic coding and affinity mapping. By clustering insights into themes, I was able to identify patterns that aligned with the literature review or revealed new dimensions of understanding.

Data Processing and Analysis

In my research, **Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)**, **affinity mapping**, and **thematic coding** played pivotal roles in the processing and analyzing of the data to uncover insights about Black futures. These tools, each with their unique strengths, provided a comprehensive framework for exploring the lived experiences, cultural narratives, and systemic dynamics shaping Black futures. Altogether, they allowed me to move beyond surface-level observations, diving deeply into the complexities of Blackness, time, and identity.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

I utilized the **Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)** a transformative futures research method developed by Sohail Inayatullah that examines issues through four distinct levels of understanding: the litany (surface-level data and trends), social causes (structural and systemic factors), discourse/worldview (deep-seated ideologies), and myth/metaphor (foundational cultural narratives). Unlike traditional methodologies focused on prediction, CLA creates a framework for exploring deeper systemic insights and envisioning transformative alternatives (Inayatullah, 2009).

CLA's layered approach offered me a lens through which to navigate the complexities of lived Black experiences and systemic structures while uncovering the hidden cultural narratives and metaphors that inform Black folks' visions of the future. It allowed me to delve into the intricacies of time, community, and imagination, engaging with the relational and cyclical nature of Black epistemologies. Through situating surface-level challenges within deeper historical and cultural contexts, I could illuminate interconnectedness, collective well-being, affirmations of life and transformative possibilities that shape Black futures. By applying this framework to the data gathered from the interviews and literature review, I revealed critical shifts in the understanding of Black futures, identified the current climate for Black folks and developed alternative futures built off the understanding of the current climate.

Affinity Mapping

Affinity mapping, originally developed as the KJ Technique by anthropologist Jiro Kawakita in the 1960s (Kawakita, 1982), is a creative and systematic method for organizing qualitative data into conceptual categories. Clustering related ideas or observations based on their affinity helps identify overarching themes within a dataset. Historically used in team-based settings, affinity mapping emphasizes experiential and intuitive processes, often employing visual tools like sticky notes to label, sort iteratively, and group data (Scupin, 1997).

I employed **affinity mapping** to cluster related data points from the literature review analysis and semi-structured interviews. This clustering process served as a bridge between raw data and conceptual understanding, providing clarity and structure to the vast amount of collected qualitative information. It also provided a visual and iterative approach to sensemaking, helping to identify themes and patterns within the narratives shared by participants.

What made affinity mapping particularly powerful in this project was its iterative nature. As the research evolved, the mapping process was revisited and refined, with each iteration revealing new insights and allowing previously unnoticed connections to surface. It not only helped me visualize the relationships between various themes but also allowed me to identify key points for shaping Black futures.

Thematic Coding

Thematic coding was instrumental in identifying recurring patterns and themes within the qualitative data. Thematic coding is a form of qualitative analysis that involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a common theme or idea, allowing the researcher to index the text into categories and, therefore, establish a “framework of thematic ideas about it” (Gibbs, 2007).

Using an inductive coding process, I developed a set of codes from the interview transcripts that allowed for key insights to be captured, which were then grouped into broader themes. These themes brought to life the literature review and the ways participants envisioned alternative futures and articulated the values and principles essential to shaping Black futures. The iterative nature of thematic coding allowed me to remain open to emerging ideas, ensuring that the analysis authentically reflected the depth and diversity of participant perspectives.

Research Limitations

The research methods employed in this project were chosen based on the knowledge available when the proposal was crafted. However, as the research unfolded and I embarked on a journey of self-discovery, removing layers to myself, it helped me deepen my understanding of my community. This evolution required me to reevaluate and adjust the methods and tools I initially planned to use, as they did not align with the outlook and desires of Black folks at the heart of this study.

One significant limitation lay in the scope of the community of focus due to time constraints. While the research centred on Black folks from the Afro-Atlantic, it did not extend to include participants from the African continent. This focus narrowed the perspectives included and left out insights that could have emerged from exploring the interconnected experiences of Black folks across the broader Diaspora. Expanding the scope to incorporate voices from Africa could have enriched the findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of Black futures across the cultural and historical contexts of the diaspora.

Another limitation was the inability to capture the diversity of participant perspectives within the Afro-Atlantic focus due to team capacity. The semi-structured interviews did not capture identifying characteristics such as Black youth below the age of 19 with non-academic lived experiences. Including more varied ages and lived experiences might have allowed for a broader range of responses, fostering more divergent and inclusive insights into shaping Black futures. Despite these limitations, the

adjustments made throughout the project reflect a commitment to centring Black folks' lived experiences and outlooks.

Lastly, a limitation of this research lies in the deliberate focus on Black perspectives and voices within futures practices, leaving Western European foresight methodologies largely unexamined. This limited the ability to contrast Black visions of the future with the dominant Western European frameworks that have long shaped and controlled the field. The exclusion of these Western European foresight practices restricted the research's capacity to directly interrogate how colonial legacies of expansion, exclusion, and erasure are embedded in dominant tools and techniques used to imagine the future. Given the time constraints of this research project, prioritizing one perspective over a comparative analysis was necessary but posed limitations to the study's scope and contextualization. Despite this limitation, centring Black perspectives and voices was intentional and transformative. With additional time and resources, including Western European foresight practices could have allowed for a deeper critique of dominant frameworks while offering pathways for a more integrative and inclusive futures practice.

Companion One: The Nature of Black Futures

Personal Reflection

In the time that I have spent researching for this project and even before that, I found myself constantly reflecting on the idea of space and place and, more specifically, what my relationship to space and place is. For me, life has always felt like I was travelling towards something, to or through something. When I broke that thought down further, I realized that the keyword is "travel" and that life has been sold to me as travelling.

To not think about how I got here, how Black folks got here, and what 'here' is, not just the lands that I am currently situated on but the reality that I am living in and constantly having to navigate is very difficult. The idea of travel has always been taught to me as moving towards a destination, a linear outlook on life that was centred on a Dominant Western European outlook of the world. So the question for me has become, 'What does it mean to travel in this reality as a Black bodied individual? And what are the landscapes of this reality that we are navigating?' Throughout my life, travelling within this reality has been moving through fear and confronting terror because to get to the 'destination', to a future that I see for myself, I must survive. Survival has been the linear destination and the future I have been travelling towards, and all that I do is navigate this reality to make sure I make it to a place of survival.

This idea of travelling became even more apparent when I thought about my mother's life. In her focus on providing for my future and ensuring my survival, she could never imagine her future. Her sacrifices symbolize the entrapment of many Black lives in the present moment, moving through fear and confronting terror toward that destination of survival. Travelling enforces a rigidness that denies us of the fluid, cyclical nature of our experiences. In trying to answer the question of where do 'what is' and 'what will or could be' intersect? I recognized that Black futures do not consist of travelling; Black futures

are a journey, and navigating this reality is a journey for Black folks. Thinking about the future for Black folks in the context of travelling is neither a safe space nor a brave space.

Our journey rejects this linear notion of time and is focused on the collectiveness of Black folks across pasts, presents and futures. The idea of journeying through the Black geographies as evolving landscapes unfolded in my thoughts while thinking about this chapter. These landscapes connect broken pasts to the reality of future possibilities. When I think of the landscapes of Black futures, I am reminded of how our memories, fractured as they may be, serve as the foundation for deciphering our future possibilities. Our landscape is dynamic, and the future we are crafting is dynamic; it is not a destination. It takes on different shapes not by singular, linear visions but by the intricate interplay of relationships, histories, and creative expressions of Black folks. I have been thinking more about something Shawn Wilson (2008) wrote, “Reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth,” meaning knowledge or truth cannot be something isolated. By building a relationship with our ancestral knowledge, we create a closeness to our ancestors, whose strength and knowledge are vital to seeing and feeling future possibilities. Our ancestors help us to understand space and place in Black geographies as more than mere locations. Black geographies reclaims space and place as physical, emotional, and spiritual. Spaces and places are the sanctuaries where cultural memory and belonging are nurtured.

I have been reminded that the spiritual dimension plays a significant role in this work, and the idea of ancestral knowledge and temporal fluidity speak to that. The relationality and interconnectedness that describe a Black worldview have shown me that the affirmations of Black life and our existence are not isolated but tied to our ancestors, communities, and nature. We are not travelling; we are on a journey. Black futures are not a distant point to be reached but a space already alive and breathing in the present moment, shaped by the relationship of past and future with our identities and Blackness as our guide.

The Research Gathered

Black Geography Sub-Themes

Belonging and Cultural Continuity through the Symbolic Value of Spaces

The intersection of space, identity, and culture creates a complex blend that influences Black individuals' collective and personal experiences. The symbolic power of spaces like barbershops lies in their ability to preserve oral histories and nurture identity. “As a Black man, having a barber who you’re close with means the world. We talk about everything — marriage, being fathers, just being better all-around men” (Lee, 2023). Black folks feel similar about spaces like beauty salons, community hubs, and block parties or house parties. Interviewees viewed these spaces as beyond mere physical location. They are domains of cultural affirmation and belonging, acting as the glue that binds communities together in the face of systemic marginalization.

Dismantled or dispersed Black communities use these domains to rebuild through collective memory and cultural events. For example, an interviewee described "the corner" as a powerful symbol of informal knowledge exchange and connection. Similarly, festivals and cultural gatherings were framed as temporary yet profound reminders of Black histories, identities, and possibilities. These expressions of solidarity demonstrate the adaptability of Black geographies in fostering community and belonging, even when Black communities are being taken apart.

Reclamation and Affirmations of Life through the Materiality of Space

The materiality of space, the physical buildings, objects, and landscapes Black communities inhabit anchor Black geographies in history and affirmations of life. These spaces serve as tangible links to the past, embodying struggles, triumphs, and cultural legacies, acting as sites of memory. In exploring Katherine McKittrick's work, she drew on Toni Morrison's concept of the site of memory to explore how Black lives are often dehumanized and stripped of their interiority by the world. The site of memory serves as a framework "to re-imagine a different worldview, wherein black lives are validated through black intellectual histories and the physical landscape" (McKittrick 2006).

Interviewees highlighted ancestral lands as pivotal sites of memory and joy, where the physical world becomes a repository of intangible heritage and a foundation for future identities. These spaces not only mark history but actively resist systemic erasure by asserting Black agency and providing affirmations of Black life. One interviewee detailed how a predominantly Black neighbourhood was revitalized into a centre of cultural expression, where art and architecture intersected to reimagine narratives and inspire alternative futures. Beyond their physicality, these spaces symbolize imagination, creativity and self-determination, providing platforms for reclaiming Black stories, voices and life.

Therefore, unlike the symbolic focus on culture and connection, this theme emphasizes the physical and tangible aspects of space as tools for reclamation and agency. Black geographies reveal the fluidity of Blackness and how it is harnessed by Black folks as we understand our identity. For example, one interviewee described how moving abroad from a predominantly Black homeland forced them to confront new challenges of racialization, transforming their sense of self. Through this theme, affirmations of Black life are viewed as resistance in these material spaces.

Spatial Intersections of Time

The perception of time, where past, present, and future are intricately connected and coexist, emerged as a theme across the interviews, acknowledging spatial environments are imbued with layers of historical, cultural, and social time, creating dynamic intersections. Recognizing the intersection of space and time allows for a more dynamic and inclusive representation of Black experiences (Wright, 2015). Instead of fixed narratives, this approach deconstructs conventional geographic frameworks, opening pathways for reimagining space and time as fluid, interconnected, and reflective of lived realities (Wright, 2015).

Wright (2015) proposes the concept of "epiphenomenal time" as an alternative to the dominant linear, progressive model of time. Essentially, epiphenomenal time rejects the notion of time as a linear, forward-moving progression and instead sees the past, present, and future as intertwined and constantly in flux. Rather than a fixed, sequential timeline, epiphenomenal time emphasizes the precarity and contingency of the present moment, which is always open to multiple possibilities and trajectories (Wright, 2015). Several of the folks interviewed for this research described this present moment as one in constant flux, rich with opportunities to shape futures that centre on adaptability, imagination, and creative potential. The ways Black folks experience and express future possibilities are tied to the spatial contexts in which they exist. This emphasizes the embodied nature of Black experiences, where time and space are integral to the performance and negotiation of future possibilities, rejecting transcendent, universal perspectives.

A Black Worldview Sub-Themes

Interconnectedness and Relationality

A fundamental aspect of a Black worldview is its emphasis on interconnectedness and relationality. Black folks are not isolated entities but deeply embedded within a web of relationships that include family, community, nature, and ancestors. This collective ethos challenges dominant individualistic paradigms and prioritizes mutual aid, solidarity, and communal well-being. Interviewees highlighted the centrality of community in seeing the world. For example, one interviewee noted, "Community isn't just a physical space; it's an emotional and energetic connection to others." Black folks ways of knowing are deeply rooted in self-awareness, community and cultural memory, grounded in the intersection of time and space. This perspective emphasizes seeking and embracing the cultural traditions that connect the Black experience, while interpreting life experiences through a multidimensional lens (Carroll, 2012). Recognizing the interconnectedness of all things, it situates the present experiences of Black people as inherently linked to our ancestors and the historical journeys of Black communities across space and time (Carroll, 2012).

Relationality is deeply woven into Black folk's cultural practices, such as storytelling, which not only preserves history but also fosters communal problem-solving and helps to resist extractive and linear methods of knowledge production. For example, an interviewee shared how the Block parties they went to in Brooklyn became a space not just for partying but for learning about life and imagining futures through dancing, sharing stories and feeling. Relationality also extends to the environmental and spiritual dimensions. Many interviewees highlighted the importance of reconnecting with nature to foster community and healing. Take, for instance, gardening. It not only provides sustenance but also symbolizes hope and possibility, fostering connections within Black communities, the ability to nourish our bodies and enabling the cultivation of both physical and metaphorical seeds of possibility. For Black folks, nature is an integral part of the communal fabric rather than a resource to be exploited. Relational

knowing is about collectively thriving through shared experiences, mutual support, and collaborative practices.

Ancestral Knowledge and Cyclical Perspectives

Ancestral knowledge and cyclical perspectives characterize how Black folks view the world. The influence of ancestors weaves through every aspect of a Black worldview, serving as a guiding light for decisions and a bridge between past, present, and future. Interviewees frequently invoked their ancestors as a source of strength and as active collaborators in their journey. One interviewee shared, “My ancestors are not just historical figures; they’re active participants in my decision-making and my visions for the future.” This connection gives Black folks a sense of continuity and purpose, helping us to ground ourselves in the legacy of our imagination and creativity.

Ancestral influence is not limited to familial ties; it extends to cultural icons, historical movements, and the broader legacy of Black communities. An interviewee envisioned being an ancestor who would inspire future generations to see themselves in “the pluralities of identities within the Black diaspora,” underscoring the importance of connecting scattered histories. This forward-looking view of ancestry honours the past and invites descendants to reimagine their collective potential, demonstrating that the past, present, and future exist in dialogue.

Spirituality and the Dimensions of Existence

Spirituality focuses on the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, and metaphysical dimensions of existence. Spirituality is simply the Black paradigm for expressing extracognitive phenomena such as inspiration, passion, feelings, beliefs, intuition and vision, and compassion (Ngara, 2008). Spiritual beliefs and practices provide the landscape for imaginative thinking and guidance for Black individuals and communities. Within a Black worldview, spirituality is deeply personal yet inherently collective, connecting individuals to self, their community, and the natural world. Interviewees often described spirituality as a grounding force that offers clarity and purpose. As one interviewee mentioned, “Spirituality isn’t just a belief system; it’s a way of life that connects us to our ancestors, our communities, and our purpose.” It is our spiritual practices that foster inner peace and self-awareness that allow Black folks to see the world through a lens other than one that centres on historical traumas.

In embracing spirituality, Black folks integrate the seen and unseen, as well as the material and the metaphysical. Part of deciphering the realm of future possibility is understanding that we exist in more than one world. This perspective highlights reality's fluidity, viewing Earth as an experience rather than an absolute, capable of interacting with other realms. Suggesting that the futures practice requires spirituality to imagine and engage with the multiple worlds we inhabit (Meghji, 2024). In spirituality, Black folks find the strength to remember we are more than just at this moment.

Companion Two: Black Futurity

Personal Reflection

At this juncture, I was reminded of my journey to know my identity through understanding myself, all while learning what Blackness is to me. Before, I never thought about the complexity of Blackness. To be honest, growing up, I never saw it as being complex, and I did not think about Blackness in relationship to time, my identity and the future. Exploring these themes brought up hidden feelings I never knew were there, thoughts I had buried deep down or found ways to forget. I have never thought of my journey as being the same journey all Black folks are on. There might be similarities, but I never thought there was this monolithic view of our journey or of Blackness. As I committed to experiencing life during the time of this research because it was impossible to separate my lived experiences from the research. I was forced to think deeply about how Black folks think of themselves, not as a singular narrative but as a spectrum of experiences and identities. Our lived reality is made up of intersecting and divergent lives, and if you stop to recognize this, you can see and feel the strength and power of Blackness.

Looking back at my life, I always felt boxed in by society's definitions of what it meant to be Black, definitions that were either imposed by the white gaze, the dominant cultural norms or those within the Black communities who had internalized these definitions and projected them. I was forced to navigate this tension, sifting through the noise to uncover my authentic self. I let my hair grow, and as my dreads took shape, I felt something coming over me that I could not find words to explain. I wasn't moving through the world as a version of myself; I was moving through this reality as myself. I learnt that Blackness isn't something you put on; it's something you embrace when you finally understand yourself. With music being so intertwined in my life, I have started to recognize Blackness as a resonance. It is where an object or system vibrates with greater amplitude when exposed to an external force or frequency that matches its natural frequency. In music, resonance occurs when the frequency of a sound wave matches the natural frequency of an object or space, causing it to vibrate more intensely and produce a richer, fuller sound. When I understood myself, which is my natural frequency, I could tap into the frequency of Blackness, as multifaceted as it is, to produce a richer, fuller sound of myself.

My identity, our identity, is not solely about who we are but also about what we do, how we live, create, affirm our lives, and imagine. I have come to see Black futures as a design practice that embraces the resonance of Blackness, highlighting the need for spaces that centre the authentic, unfiltered versions of ourselves. For me, Black futures is less about abstract possibilities and more about crafting environments where our plurality of identities can thrive. This involves acknowledging and engaging with the fluidity of our temporal relationships, where the past, present, and future coexist and inform one another.

I have constantly grappled with the idea of memory as a living archive, a vital tool for cultural recovery and resisting erasure. Memory, for Black folks, isn't just about preserving the past; it's about using those stories to shape our present and imagine future possibilities. I found myself reflecting on the dreams of our ancestors and wondering what aspirations guided their decisions. Were they able to dream freely, or

was their imagination constrained by the weight of systemic oppression? These questions pushed me to think about how dreaming and visioning are acts of resistance or, what I have come to term them, affirmations of life and tools for crafting collective future possibilities that honour the sacrifices and aspirations of those who came before us. When I think about our ancestors, I consistently begin to question my understanding of relationality versus relationships, especially in the context of Black futures. Thinking about the dynamic interplay of Black perspectives illuminated the importance of understanding ourselves not only as individuals but as interconnected beings within a larger web of existence. This relationality becomes a foundation for seeing future possibilities that are inclusive, expansive, and rooted in collective agency. It is through our connections, ancestral, communal, and intergenerational, that we find the strength to imagine futures unbounded by the limitations imposed on us. The voices of the past have always spoken to me, and their vibration has always been there to be felt. I just needed to know who I was to experience the reality that was seasoned to our taste and cooked with all our joy. This is where our future possibilities exist collectively, and I am grateful that I now know this.

The Research Gathered

Black Temporal Relationships Sub-Themes

Temporal Fluidity: Interconnected Past, Present, and Future

The interconnectedness of past, present, and future is a central tenet of Black temporal relationships where Black folks embrace a fluid and cyclical understanding where past, present, and future exist in constant dialogue. This perspective allows Black communities to remain deeply connected to historical legacies while reimagining transformative futures. It was often mentioned in the interviews that time is layered and relational, reflecting traditions where the past, present, and future coexist. One of the interviewees emphasized the “cyclical” nature of time, illustrating how “past struggles and triumphs” remain ever-present, shaping contemporary realities and aspirations. According to Wright (2015), “linear spacetime assumes a chronological progression, where time drives space forward from past to present to future.” However, in the context of temporal fluidity, time is not a sequence but an ever-evolving “now” that contains the past and future within it. The “now” is dynamic and continuous, rejecting discrete divisions between present and future (Wright, 2015). This perspective emphasizes the primacy of the present moment as a space where past, present, and future merge, existing not as causes and effects but as a unified, fluid experience.

The use of specific events can serve as temporal markers that demand recognition and reflection, where an individual can place themselves in that history as a point of reflection and as a way to see the future possibilities (Wright 2015). For example, one interviewee highlighted George Floyd’s death, stating, “We are not transcending it; we are sitting with it,” acknowledging its enduring resonance within a continuum of affirmations of life and liberation and that enduring resonance is Blackness. It is important to understand that such moments do not exist in isolation but are situated within an expansive historical

context that fuels our imagination and the ability to use creativity to see future possibilities and create them.

Embracing an epiphenomenal concept of spacetime recognizes that Blackness, at any given moment, encompasses not only class, gender, and sexuality but also the full range of intersecting identities and collective experiences (Wright, 2015). When connected to intersectional temporalities, this highlights how Black women and gender-diverse individuals carry the past into the present, shaping their multidimensional identities (O'Neill, 2021). It calls to attention the need to continuously re-engage with the past to understand its layered influence on the present and future within a unified, ever-evolving "now."

It is an understanding that the pluralities of Black identities that exist bring forth diverse experiences that help us to understand these experiences through the fluid and cyclical understanding of time. This reveals that temporal fluidity allows Black folks to see time as layered, relational, and transformative. By rejecting linear timelines, Black folks reframe the present moment as a space for active engagement with history and possibility. When time is not merely chronological but an intersection of spiritual, historical, and speculative dimensions, the idea of "time-hopping" through dreams or ancestral connections is easier to grasp, reinforcing the sense that the past remains alive and integral to envisioning future possibilities through the interplay between ancestral knowledge and imagination.

Ancestral Guidance: Time as Continuity and Legacy

Ancestral relationships within Black temporalities offer a source of guidance, accountability, and continuity across generations. They serve as temporal anchors, linking generations across time and shaping identities. Interviewees frequently referenced ancestors as active presences that inform their daily lives, decisions, and future possibilities. Black folks often see themselves as a "pathway-opener" for future generations, framing their role as both a bearer of ancestral wisdom and a creator of new possibilities that are part of an intergenerational continuum. This reinforces the intergenerational nature of Black temporalities, where the past serves as a foundation for shaping both the present and the future. There is a sense of accountability, referred to by interviewees as "seven generations thinking," that ties actions in the present to the well-being of future descendants while honouring the imaginations and lessons of those who came before. This aligns with the Haudenosaunee nations' core value of the Seventh Generation. While their traditions emphasize shared labour, responsibility to family, clan, and nation, and gratitude toward nature and the Creator for sustenance, the Seventh Generation principle extends this perspective to include future generations, considering the well-being of those yet to be born who will inherit the world (Haudenosaunee Confederacy, 2021a).

Wright (2015) emphasizes the need to "situate Blackness within dynamic historical contexts and moments," demonstrating how ancestral wisdom serves as a temporal anchor to foster imagination,

creativity and accountability. The “present” is thus not a fixed or objective reality but is co-created through embodied experiences and cultural practices.

Black temporal relationships centre on lived, embodied experiences or intuition as vital forms of temporal knowledge. These and memory play a critical role in sustaining ancestral connections and reinforcing identity. Interviewees described how sensory practices, such as cooking, storytelling, and music, act as repositories of time or how communal rituals and practices, such as festivals or block parties, serve as vehicles for preserving shared histories, passing down knowledge, and fostering connections across time.

Specifically, one interviewee described storytelling as “an act of resistance,” ensuring that cultural identity remains intact despite historical disruptions. Similarly, an interviewee recounted how their family’s expressive engagement with music and art shaped their temporal awareness, underscoring the importance of sensory and emotional experiences in shaping one’s understanding of time through artistic expression. The literature points to positioning memory as a strategy for resisting erasure while fostering imagination and cultural continuity, enabling Black communities to reinterpret and reclaim their narratives while envisioning liberatory futures. Remembering is portrayed as an act of resistance against the erasure of Black histories. Asserting that reclaiming memory enables Black individuals to confront and disrupt narratives imposed by colonial and oppressive systems (Eshnu, 2003).

Temporal Resistance: Reclaiming Time and Agency

Black temporalities are marked by acts of resistance that challenge dominant Western frameworks of linear progress, which often marginalize or erase Black experiences. Those frameworks are rooted in colonialism and systemic oppression. Acts of reclaiming time and agency often intersected with speculative practices, where interviewees reimagined futures that repair and expand upon historical legacies, particularly through art, community organizing, and education. Interviewees described reclaiming time as a powerful act of agency that restores historical continuity while envisioning new possibilities. One interviewee emphasized the importance of creating spaces of “joy and innovation” as tools for temporal resistance, reframing the present moment as an opportunity to disrupt oppressive structures. Similarly, another interviewee spoke about intergenerational living and community-building as present-moment opportunities to create physical and social infrastructures that sustain collective well-being and are active ways to disrupt oppressive structures.

This reclamation aligns with Afrofuturism’s transformative potential as a strategy for reclaiming time. By rejecting reductive narratives of history, Afrofuturism allows Black communities to reimagine futures that are dynamic, liberatory, and deeply connected to historical consciousness. It centres on the Black imagination, making future possibilities visible. As Womack (2013) stated, “Afrofuturism allows us to think and rethink the potentially liberating dimensions of cultural, historical and technological possibilities together while challenging and refuting traditional, Western, temporal logics of linearity and delineation in a conceptualization of one interconnected temporal continuum.” Afrofuturism can be seen as an effort to reclaim the histories of alternative futures imagined in a century resistant to Afrodiasporic

visions. It also serves as a platform for developing tools that critically engage with and challenge the existing political landscape (Anderson & Curry, 2021, p. 126). One interviewee observed, “Time has been taken from us, but reclaiming it is about building something new while honouring where we came from.” Reclaiming time opens expansive possibilities for imagining liberatory futures grounded in collective agency and historical reclamation.

The concept of temporal resistance also highlights the role of cultural production, including art, music, and storytelling, as tools for disrupting imposed timelines that often exclude Black experiences. These practices allow Black individuals to reclaim agency over their narratives, fostering collective imagination and creativity. An interviewee spoke about the importance of reclaiming Black imagination as a tool for world-building, rejecting Western Eurocentric linear progress models in favour of multifaceted, liberatory futures. “My work aims to free the imagination of mental constraints that coloniality typically guides us towards so that Black people can cultivate the destinies that reflect their dreams.” Black imagination is vital in challenging the imposed temporality of progress and development while fostering possibilities rooted in Black lived realities and aspirations.

Blackness and (Black) Identity Sub-Themes

The Resonance: The Multiplicity and Complexity of Blackness

a) Memory and the Black Radical Imagination

Blackness redefines conventional constructs of time, viewing the past, present, and future as interconnected dimensions that inform its complexity. This temporal fluidity is central to understanding Blackness, enabling a holistic approach to memory, imagination, and futurity. Memory serves as a repository of history and a catalyst for envisioning alternative futures. Oral traditions, music, and rituals preserve collective memories that inspire innovation and affirmations of Black life. As an interviewee said “Our memories are seeds we plant in the soil of tomorrow,” reminding us that these seeds are the feelings and memories of Blackness that we can experience through our journey in defining ourselves.

Blackness leverages the radical imagination to envision futures that transcend systemic limitations. As mentioned by Berardi (2011), radical imagination is “The ability to recombine the contents of our experience of exploitation, of suffering, of exhaustion, in a way that would label creation of a new *retournelle*. Calling for a new relationship between the environment and the human organism.” The radical imagination engages with the present to envision something currently absent, a redefined relationship between and within matter (Keeling, 2019). The Black radical imagination draws from the long history of Black existence, reconfiguring its elements to inspire new forms of connection for everyone (Keeling, 2019). While the historical conditions of Black existence have often been marked by oppression and a denial of humanity, they also reveal pathways to transcend these limitations and imagine new possibilities for being.

Community-driven practices, where collective creativity becomes a tool for envisioning and building equitable futures is where radical imagination thrives. Practices such as communal art projects, festivals or Block parties are spaces where imagination and action intersect. An interviewee shared, "Our gatherings are where ideas are born. They are spaces to dream, collaborate, and act." Through utilizing radical imagination, Blackness empowers each Black individual to see, feel, smell, hear and taste the worlds where we thrive.

b) Healing, Restorative Ecological Practices

Affirmations of Black life are the hallmark of Blackness. They encompass the healing and restorative powers of Blackness. Healing begins by understanding the world through the lens of the Black experience, which is essential for both individual and collective growth (Dirshe, 2020). Centring Blackness challenges the oppressive systems of white supremacy, dismantling the racial hierarchies that have dehumanized Black people while creating space for everyone to thrive (Dirshe, 2020). This process acknowledges the trauma of the past while imagining a world where societal structures are reorganized to promote equity and collective healing. When we embrace collective care and joy, we are reframing resistance as affirmations of life and the creation of spaces where Black folks can thrive and heal. This is when, as Black individuals, we begin to vibrate with greater amplitude and tap into the realm of future possibilities. As one interviewee noted, "Rest is revolutionary for people whose ancestors were denied it."

The amplitude that Blackness provides allows Black individuals to utilize cultural practices such as art therapy, communal gardening, and restorative justice circles to face healing historical and intergenerational traumas. Physical spaces dedicated to Black safety, creativity, and vulnerability are vital for this healing process. These environments offer protection and recognition, allowing Black individuals to reclaim their humanity and identity (Dirshe, 2020). By fostering a deeper relationship with Blackness, these spaces reprogram how communities connect, offering a vision of a society built on mutual care and understanding (Dirshe, 2020). Through these acts, healing becomes not just possible but transformative for Black communities and society. In addition, the connection of Blackness to ecological practices reminds Black folks that our journey through our Black geography plays a role in being able to tap into the force that Blackness provides. It was mentioned many times during interviews that our relationship with the earth is part of our identity, especially when Black folks think about the purpose of sustainability in cultural preservation.

The Rhythmic Vibration: Defining Self, Your (Black) Identity

a) The Journey of Self

The journey of self within (Black) identity begins by moving beyond external, postcolonial labels and embracing self-definition rooted in personal and communal narratives. Several interviewees discussed

the importance of reclaiming identity as a creative and restorative act, free from colonial constructs. As one interviewee stated, "When I see myself, I do not see the shadow of what the world has placed on me. I see the light of my own making." This reclamation aligns with theoretical frameworks like Frantz Fanon's decolonization of the mind, where liberation begins with self-awareness and self-affirmation. Decolonization is a transformative process through which the colonized reclaim their humanity and become fully realized individuals. This transformation does not stem from external forces but from an internal awakening, where self-awareness and the rejection of colonial ideologies lead to affirming one's identity and creating a liberated self (Fanon, 1963).

Focusing on how individuals define themselves, (Black) identity becomes an act of affirming Black life and authenticity, emphasizing personal agency over imposed narratives. In part, (Black) identity is inherently shaped by our pasts, but only after we understand our identity. These events from our past inform collective memory and influence individual narratives. By framing identity as intertwined with our pasts, Black folks honour our temporal fluidity.

b) Intersectionality, Adaptation and Cultural Plurality

Within the intersections, layered identities exist within Black communities. There are overlapping parts of ourselves that play a major role in how we interact with the world around us. Part of our journey is understanding what those intersections are for each of us so that we can make sense of the now but, more importantly, embrace the resonance known as Blackness. Understanding Blackness in a way that is entirely inclusive and non-hierarchical involves embracing it as the convergence of constructs that situate Black folks both within historical contexts and the present moment in which Blackness is being envisioned. These constructs, shaped by history, culture, and ancestry, are grounded in a framework of time and space that is often linear and progress-oriented, influencing how Blackness is imagined and mediated in the "now" (Wright, 2015). One interviewee remarked, "Being a Black queer woman means navigating spaces where each part of me demands recognition and respect." In an ever-changing world, the adaptability within (Black) identity allows individuals and communities to redefine themselves in response to external challenges while maintaining a sense of continuity rooted in cultural heritage. We can use Blackness to become fluid and creative as we imagine future possibilities.

The diversity within (Black) identity challenges reductive portrayals often perpetuated in dominant narratives. Representing (Black) identity authentically requires acknowledging its multiplicity, a richness that emerges from Black experiences, regional distinctions, and individual expressions. Interviewees emphasized the importance of embracing this plurality, with one stating, "Black identity is as diverse as the stars in the sky; each shines uniquely yet contributes to a greater constellation."

Black Modes of Thinking and Knowing Sub-Themes

Embodied and Experiential Knowledge

Black folks utilize embodied and experiential ways of thinking and knowing, which is the counter-narrative to Western epistemologies that often privilege abstraction, intellectualization, and disembodiment. The body is not merely a vessel for the mind but a dynamic, living archive, a site where wisdom, memory, and meaning are stored and enacted. For Black folks, the body remembers what the mind sometimes forgets. Our lived experiences, emotions, and sensory encounters are central to understanding and meaning-making.

At the heart of this theme lies storytelling, a powerful medium of embodied knowledge transmission. Stories often passed down through generations, serve not only as entertainment or documentation but as enactments of culture and identity. Some interviewees spoke about their parents or grandparents not needing to use measurements when cooking because the cooking process was more than just a written memory. As one interviewee put it, “Your hands tell you when it’s enough.” Bodily intuition or embodied knowledge forms the basis of cultural and generational knowledge for Black folks. Cooking becomes a sensory ritual where the body becomes a tool of learning and knowing that transcends just recounting events; it becomes a transformative experience that anchors knowledge within the body.

Dance and movement further demonstrate the centrality of embodied knowledge in preserving and communicating cultural memory. Dance is more than just an artistic practice but an act of collective remembering and identity formation. It was repeatedly highlighted in the interviews that dance and movement serve as both a form of expression and mediums for knowledge-sharing, bridging generations and geographies. Dancing together for Black folks is not just about the steps; it’s about remembering who we are and where we come from. Rhythms, gestures, and communal practices constitute a living archive, encoding histories and emotions that words alone cannot capture. The body functions as both a medium and a repository of our history.

Embodied knowledge also emerges as a life-affirming tool and an instrument for imagination that can be used against systemic oppression. Black folks have historically turned to practices such as song and performative storytelling to assert their humanity and counter-narratives of erasure. For example, blues music, rooted in the United States, is characterized by raw, emotive performances and vocal expressions that convey the lived experiences of Black folks. It has historically served as a powerful medium for Black folks to assert their humanity and resist erasure (Speight Vaughn, 2019). These practices serve as reminders of connection and affirmations of Black lives, reinforcing the community's strength in facing systemic challenges. They reclaim the body as a site of agency, contesting systems that seek to dehumanize Black folks. Instead, they celebrate and demonstrate Blackness as inherently dignified and powerful, capable of sustaining Black communities and fostering a shared sense of hope and purpose.

Black folks' lived experiences help to centre the reality in which we live. When we are in the room together, feeling the tension, hearing each other's stories, and navigating our emotions, the relationality

and direct engagement become grounding knowledge to explore our pasts and present and see future possibilities. Knowledge is deeply rooted in the lives of Black folks, not just those publicly seen or heard but, more importantly, the quiet lives that are less explored. The reality of lived experiences reveals insights that cannot be captured through detached observation or analysis. Through embodied and experiential knowledge, Black folks prioritize connection, healing and community as a holistic vision of knowledge-making.

Imagination and Creativity

Lifelines to Black modes of thinking and knowing, creativity, and imagination serve as transformative tools for decoding the past, navigating the present, and reimagining the world, i.e. tapping into our future possibilities. They are not simply aesthetic or intellectual expressions but affirmations of life, enabling Black communities to reclaim suppressed histories and envision futures that centre joy and self-determination. Through shared practices of storytelling, music, and art, imagination becomes a collective process, weaving the past and present into a vision for the future, enabling Black folks and communities to transcend the limitations of their present realities. Through creative expression and the Resonance known as Blackness, Black folks explore alternative realities, articulate their aspirations, and shape their destinies.

Creativity, embedded in artistic practices such as storytelling, music, dance, and visual arts, critiques dominant paradigms and offers alternative futures. As one interviewee emphasized, “Creativity isn’t just about creating art. It’s about creating ourselves, our communities, and our futures.” By centring intuition, emotion, and collective dreaming, creativity asserts itself as a valid and transformative mode of inquiry. For example, poetry, deeply rooted in the “now,” reaches toward a reimagined future, a different present, accessible through a collective sense of yearning and shared imagination. In imagining future possibilities, poetic knowledge is crucial, challenging current realities’ perceived clarity and dominance. Disrupting these perceptions opens new ways of seeing, feeling, and imagining possibilities for a transformed world (Keeling, 2019).

Another interviewee highlighted how art and storytelling become acts of reclamation and described creativity as “a way to make sense of what wasn’t written for us.” For instance, photography was cited as a medium to rewrite histories: “When I take a photo, it’s not just about the subject, it’s about filling in the gaps, capturing the nuances of our lives that history books omit.” This speaks to counter-memory, a type of memory that opposes and disrupts dominant narratives or official histories. It focuses on recalling and expressing experiences, events, and perspectives that have been overlooked, suppressed, or erased from mainstream historical records (Hooks, 1997). By asserting our historical presence, Black folks construct alternative narratives that empower future generations and challenge dominant paradigms. Counter-memory is foundational to self-determination; It allows Black folks to understand and change the present by reframing the past in ways that empower future generations.

At the heart of creativity lies fluidity and improvisation, hallmarks of Black artistic traditions and everyday life. Improvisation, evident in genres like jazz, hip-hop, and spoken word poetry, reflects an

ability to navigate challenges and transform constraints into opportunities (Womack, 2013). An interviewee reflected on improvisation as “the art of making something extraordinary out of the ordinary,” whether through jazz, hip-hop, or everyday problem-solving. Unlike Western European frameworks that often perceive improvisation as a reaction to failure, Black folks see it as a dynamic process that advances creativity and imagination. Improvisation extends beyond the arts to everyday problem-solving and innovation, where Black communities repurpose existing tools to create new meanings and possibilities (Womack, 2013). In this sense, creativity is a way for Black folks to thrive.

Imagination is deeply intertwined with joy and the act of dreaming beyond systemic limitations expressed through creative practices that transmit Black knowledge and values. It is a radical act that bridges historical consciousness and visionary thinking, connecting ancestral knowledge with intergenerational aspirations. This interaction ensures that the past informs the future, anchoring the act of imagining in a continuum of affirmations of life. As one interviewee explained, “Our imagination isn’t a luxury. It’s how we survive. It’s how we see what they told us we couldn’t have.” This ability to imagine a future disrupts exclusionary systems and creates space for alternative possibilities. Imagination is not just a tool for envisioning. It is a blueprint for constructing futures that are authentic, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the lived realities of Black communities. Encouraging Black folks to envision themselves and their ideas in the future inspires innovators and free thinkers to draw from the richness of the past while exploring endless future possibilities. Imagination is essential, yet it is often stifled in pursuing conformity and adherence to societal norms (Womack, 2013). Creativity and imagination stand as transformative forces in every story shared, art piece created, and community gathering. They challenge dominant paradigms while centring voices and experiences that have long been marginalized. These practices affirm the boundless future possibilities, turning dreams into actions and ideas into movements.

Community

It is through community that identities are shaped, narratives are reclaimed, and futures are imagined. Rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu, “I am because we are.” Black folks prioritize collective well-being over individual pursuits, creating networks of interdependence and care. As one interviewee reflected, “Our strength has always come from the connections we build, the lessons we pass on, and the ways we hold each other up.” Black folks engage in communal storytelling, intergenerational mentorship, and collective rituals to sustain cultural continuity and nurture future visions. These practices reinforce the relational nature of knowledge, wherein wisdom is co-created and shared across generations and social networks. One interviewee described family gatherings as “sacred spaces where wisdom is shared through stories, laughter, and even silence.” These interactions demonstrate how community provides the scaffolding for understanding and enacting Black identities, offering a space where individual and collective experiences intersect. Dialogue between generations is particularly vital. It ensures that suppressed histories and ancestral knowledge are recovered, honoured, and reintegrated into the present. This intergenerational exchange becomes a foundation for future-making, as it empowers Black communities to envision and create alternative futures rooted in their cultural values and shared aspirations.

Community also recognizes the interconnectedness of ancestors, present-day Black communities, and future generations. Relationships within and across Black communities provide the framework for understanding and enacting identities while gathering and transmitting knowledge. Embracing the multiplicity of perspectives within these relationships enriches the collective imagination of Black communities (Wright, 2015). Intergenerational dialogue and the knowledge gained from connecting with ancestral wisdom allow Black communities to recover suppressed narratives and use them as foundational knowledge. This process fosters a sense of agency that spans temporal and spatial dimensions, linking past struggles with present realities and future possibilities.

Community is deeply interconnected with creativity and imagination, with visioning often emerging as a shared, collaborative process. Events such as block parties or festivals exemplify this dynamic, where collective aspirations are expressed through joy, connection, and cultural celebration. These gatherings act as incubators of imagination, where Black folks come together to co-create narratives that reflect collective aspirations and diverse perspectives. As an interviewee noted, “At these gatherings, it’s not just about celebrating. It’s about imagining. Every dance, every story shared, every laugh is a piece of the puzzle of what could be.” Through these shared experiences, imagination and creativity become a communal act, a collective dreaming that strengthens community bonds and opens pathways to future possibilities from all perspectives.

When knowledge is co-produced through shared experiences, dialogue, and collaboration, it reflects the lived realities and aspirations of Black communities. By centring communal experiences and memories, Black folks reclaim agency over how knowledge is produced, preserved, and shared. Knowledge becomes a living, relational process that evolves through collective engagement, adapting to new challenges and opportunities while remaining rooted in cultural continuity. As one interviewee put it simply, “Knowledge in our community isn’t about who has the most degrees; it’s about who shows up, who listens, who cares.”

The Lived Realities Sub-Themes

Trauma and Violence

Generational trauma, the transmission of psychological and emotional wounds across generations, is part of the lived realities of Black folks. Psychological trauma in Black communities can be understood through the framework of historical and intergenerational trauma, which suggests that individuals may continue to endure the impacts of traumatic experiences faced by their ancestors across generations (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014). The fear, pain, and loss experienced by our ancestors become encoded in familial dynamics, influencing how subsequent generations navigate the world. This intergenerational burden manifests in mental health disparities, with conditions like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Trauma is also inflicted through societal neglect. The systemic underfunding of Black neighbourhoods, schools, and healthcare systems signifies a form of violence that is less visible but equally damaging. This

structural violence deprives Black communities of the resources needed to heal and flourish, continuing cycles of inequality and harm.

Violence against Black communities is both systemic and interpersonal, creating a pervasive sense of vulnerability and loss. Police brutality serves as one of the most visible forms of violence, disproportionately targeting Black individuals. These acts of state-sanctioned aggression instill fear, anger, and grief in Black communities, creating a climate where safety is uncertain, even in spaces meant to be protective. One interviewee shared how a single incident of racial profiling rippled through their family, altering how they navigated public spaces: "After that night running into the police, my father made sure we never left the house without a plan to come back safely." The psychological impact of such violence extends far beyond its immediate victims, deeply affecting Black families and communities that must cope with the fear and loss it generates.

Interpersonal violence, often rooted in the structural inequities that frame Black life, compounds the trauma experienced by Black individuals. One interviewee spoke about their experience growing up in an economically marginalized neighbourhood, describing how scarcity fostered environments of competition and conflict: "When resources are limited, sometimes even your neighbour feels like a threat." This normalization maintains cycles of trauma, where the wounds of one generation are inherited by the next.

Marginalization and Representation

Marginalization is a common reality for Black folks, manifesting across societal structures and institutions. From education and healthcare to technology and governance, systemic inequities create significant barriers to access and participation. Black folks often find themselves excluded from decision-making processes and dominant narratives, leading to feelings of invisibility and devaluation. As one interviewee stated, "There are these invisible barriers everywhere that you don't see until you try to move forward, and then they're just there, stopping you from participating fully." Systemic oppression manifests as an intricate web of institutional inequities that trap Black folks at nearly every stage of life. These systems intersect and build up to create an ecosystem where Black folks are forced to navigate life from a disadvantaged starting point.

Throughout time, Blackness has been constructed through the lens of stereotypes and marginalization, perpetuated by media and cultural narratives. An interviewee reflected on how these portrayals shaped their self-image: "The world saw me as a problem before it saw me as a person." This misrepresentation reduces the complexity of Black identities to monolithic depictions, often associated with poverty or criminality. These portrayals of Black folks not only dehumanize but also force societal perceptions of Black potential and humanity. These reductive portrayals, rooted in what one interviewee described as the "white gaze," dominate the public consciousness and strip away the richness and diversity of Black experiences. Interviewees emphasized how media fails to reflect the complexity of Black lives and instead speaks to a narrative that prioritizes sensationalism over authenticity.

Dominant narratives often position Western European ways of knowing as universal, dismissing the legitimacy of Black modes of thinking and knowing and relegating Black knowledge systems to the margins. Cultural expressions and oral traditions often go unrecognized in academic and institutional spaces. One interviewee shared how their family's oral histories were dismissed in academic settings as "folklore" despite their role in preserving community knowledge. This erasure denies the legitimacy of knowledge systems that have sustained Black communities for centuries and instead keeps a monocultural worldview going that stifles innovation and creativity.

Navigating Spaces and Showing Up as Us

Black folks often find themselves navigating predominantly white spaces where their identities are scrutinized, stereotyped, and subjected to microaggressions. This constant negotiation involves adapting our self-presentation, commonly called code-switching. While code-switching can serve as a survival mechanism, it also shows the pressure to conform to dominant cultural norms as one interviewee mentioned, "Code-switching feels like a survival skill at this point. It's what you do to navigate, but at the same time, it takes so much from you. You're not really showing up as yourself." This adaptation often comes at the expense of authenticity, as Black folks feel compelled to suppress aspects of their cultural identity to gain acceptance or avoid conflict.

Interviewees frequently expressed the loneliness of being the only Black person in their workplace, classroom, or social circle. This isolation of being the sole or one of few Black individuals in spaces adds to the emotional labour required to navigate them, which is exhausting, bringing up feelings of alienation and invisibility. As an interviewee mentioned, "You're either invisible or hyper-visible, there's no in-between. And when they do see you, it's as a symbol, not as a person." This hyper-visibility leads to the feeling of tokenism, where Black folks are seen as representatives of all Black communities rather than as multifaceted individuals with unique identities and experiences. The tension between hyper-visibility and invisibility demonstrates the complex challenges Black folks face in asserting their identities within spaces not designed with them in mind.

Black experiences are deeply shaped by the spatial politics of displacement and the ongoing quest for belonging. Gentrification is an example of this, transforming historically Black neighbourhoods into spaces that no longer reflect or serve the communities that once thrived there. As an interviewee spoke to, "Gentrification doesn't just displace people, it erases history. These neighbourhoods once told the story of our community, and now they're unrecognizable." These spatial inequities reflect a struggle for belonging and the right to be in spaces without fear of erasure or displacement. These practices disrupt Black social networks, displace residents, and bring to light economic inequalities by not prioritizing Black communities. Spatial politics in Black lived realities reflect a dual struggle: resisting displacement and exclusion while forging spaces that affirm identity and community.

Companion Three: Discovery of Black Future Possibilities

Personal Reflection

As I took time to reflect on how I got to this point, I confronted and weaved together themes that deeply resonated with my lived experience, the insights drawn from my research, and the layered complexities of Black existence. I was struck by how deeply the themes of collective empowerment, decolonization, intergenerational collaboration and ancestral wisdom resonated with my personal journey. This was not just a creative exercise; it was an emotional and intellectual experience, an exploration of what it means to see and be seen, to navigate reality while fostering imagination, and to feel futures rooted in us. I felt as if I was stepping into our collective rhythm, a rhythm that has always been present, though often silenced or overlooked. This is the space where the interconnected symphony plays.

Visibility and invisibility have always played a role in my lived experiences in a world shaped by dominant narratives. I saw this play out heavily in the film *NOPE*, where the dynamics of enslavement, resistance, and liberation were explored through multilayered storylines. The characters, whether human or symbolic, battled with their roles, their reflections, and the constraints imposed upon them (Peele, 2022). The stillness of the cloud, unmoved by time, stands as a striking metaphor for Black temporalities, rejecting linear progress in favour of a cyclical, layered understanding of past, present, and future. It reminded me of how Black culture, through music, dance, and storytelling, has always created spaces that bend and reshape time. Whether through the one drop in reggae or the emphasized "one" in funk music, these rhythmic innovations are artistic expressions and powerful acts of reclaiming agency over how we perceive and experience time. I now understand how Black futures must be envisioned and experienced, not as a relentless march forward but as an intricate dance between past, present, and future.

As I took time to reflect, even just the thought of what a 'reflection' is stood out to me, not only as a literal visual element but as a metaphor for this duality Black folks often navigate. The reflective surfaces encountered by the characters, from the horse's camera to the alien's shiny exterior, symbolize the double consciousness that W.E.B. Du Bois spoke about so deeply. This idea of seeing oneself through the eyes of others while striving to define oneself on one's terms mirrors the constant negotiation I have constantly endured in a world that frequently demands performance while denying full recognition. I have had to reflect on my own experiences of being both visible and invisible, of being "seen" yet not understood. The film brought to life for me the importance of self-recognition and communal validation. Seeing oneself and being seen disrupts the tokenism, exploitation, and performativity often demanded in a Western European-dominant world. It is an affirmation of Black life, a powerful reclamation of agency.

The multiplicity of experiences portrayed in *NOPE* reminded me that the Black experience is not monolithic. There is work, hustle, and the relentless navigation of a capitalist system that often reduces Black lives to labour and survival. I recognized that I am done with the narratives of always working,

always striving, and risking oneself to survive as my lived reality. It is joy, rest, creativity, and a defiant refusal to conform through using our imagination that I want to be my reality. This multiplicity mirrors the broader journey of Black futures, a journey that requires both an anchoring in the truths of the past and a radical imagining of what is possible where we centre joy, rest and community. My revelation in this research was collective empowerment. It all made sense to me at the moment in the film when both siblings signalled, “I see you.” More than a gesture, it was an affirmation of life against erasure. It reminded me of the head nod, that silent yet powerful acknowledgment among Black folks. This shared moment of recognition and solidarity has been foundational to my collective journey. It reinforced my belief that imagining Black futures cannot be an individual endeavour. It requires a collective effort where vulnerability and interconnectedness are strengths, not weaknesses.

Being able to be vulnerable has been of great importance to me, and in exploring vulnerability, I have been moved by the power of creativity and imagination as essential for Black futures. Feeling and self-discovery are central to how Black folks imagine future possibilities, so when thinking about Black futures, it is critical that the tools that Black folks develop to imagine our futures start with an understanding of who we are. The noise of systemic oppression often drowns out our vibrations, making it difficult to feel, let alone imagine. But when we quiet the noise, when we allow ourselves to feel, we unlock the ability to improvise, to innovate, and to dream. This is why Black creativity is unique; it is proof of our capacity to transform our broken pasts into radical acts of world-building, shaping futures where affirmations of Black life are everything.

Research Gathered

Making Sense of Future Possibilities

Black Futures as a Space for Collective Empowerment

The future is not an individual endeavour in which we travel towards, but instead, it is a journey that Black folks are collectively on where all voices and identities are seen, heard and valued, especially those historically marginalized within Black communities. The future is not one that is just for each individual Black person; it is one in which we each are conduits, allowing for other voices outside of ourselves to be able to manifest the future possibilities that they see.

Black folks are inherently collective, and as such, a futures practice must prioritize collective engagements and strength, emphasizing intergenerational collaboration, shared goals, and interconnectedness and recognizing the importance of individual Black communities and environmental well-being. Take, for example, “the head nod” that Black folks give each other to let each other know “I see you” even though to everyone else you are invisible. It is a subtle but powerful form of acknowledgement that speaks to the collective empowerment that is needed for us to see future possibilities. When Black folks can escape invisibility to become visible, this step is much easier to take together than separately. Knowing that no matter what you see as future possibilities, we see it together

and experience it together. Being empowered to step into a space of vulnerability because of the collective. By navigating away from the Western European individualistic paradigm and focusing on collective empowerment, Black folks develop speculative stories that focus on our shared achievements and mutual care rather than singular heroes. The stories of cooperative problem-solving reinforce communal visions of well-being. Single heroes and individualism in our storytelling do not allow for the relationships within communities and across generations to be seen, which are central to envisioning and shaping future possibilities. Black communities thrive when we work together across identities and experiences.

Decolonization as a Pathway to Authentic Black Futures

A futures practice that centres Black voices and perspectives must transcend the constraints of Western epistemologies, engaging with decolonial frameworks that honour ancestral knowledge and cultural sovereignty. Decolonization involves critique and creation, dismantling oppressive structures while building new ones. Black futures should centre on Black epistemologies and no longer look at defining the purpose of the future through progress and growth. Instead, it should be redefined through community well-being, affirmations of Black life, creativity, and imagination.

Black epistemologies, traditions, and symbols in imagining future possibilities ensure cultural relevance and resonance known as Blackness. Embedding our values, traditions, cultural symbols and metaphors into all aspects of futures thinking and practice connects Black folks across the Black diaspora to share knowledge and practices in imagining future possibilities that focus on Black folks' modes of thinking and knowing. Black cultural symbols and art serve as lenses to interpret the future and as tools to frame and communicate Black futures. As heard in the interviews, “Our culture is a compass, guiding us toward our collective liberation from colonial practices.”

Black folks' lived experiences, historical narratives, and cultural identities are foundational. Our pathway towards authentic Black futures desires emotional and cultural ground to make abstract possibilities tangible. Recognizing the value of ancestral wisdom and the lived experiences of Black folks as a form of technology provides a shift away from the dominant Western European future practices that don't recognize Black folks. Authentic Black futures then arise when creativity, imagination and affirmations of Black life are the drivers of change that impact the journey of decolonization.

Black futures focuses on innovation that respects, amplifies and celebrates Black identities and diversity. Redefining who the experts are and recognizing that Black folks are knowledge holders and futurists alone challenges the dominance of Western European foresight methodologies. Moving away from linear, Western Eurocentric models of progress toward relational and cyclical perspectives that prioritize equity and sustainability. Replacing extractive and top-down approaches with participatory, community-centred methods. Decolonization intersects with community, providing a foundation for reimagining systems through cultural sovereignty. As one interviewee mentioned, “When we think about decolonization, it's not just removing something but also imagining what else can exist in its place.”

Intergenerational Collaboration and Ancestral Wisdom as a Compass

Future possibilities for Black folks are rooted in a cyclical understanding of time, where past, present, and future inform one another in a dynamic, interconnected and relational way. In rejecting the Western European linear conception of time in favour of a non-linear conception of time, interconnected temporality frames Black futures as a continuation of ancestral knowledge and woven systems where the relationship between Black folks, communities, nature, and spirituality are at the forefront.

Ancestral knowledge, narratives, and traditions are living resources that serve as guidance for navigating the now and making sense of future possibilities by providing us with the grounding and perspective that we need. By utilizing the lived experiences of our ancestors that offer valuable lessons to inspire our imagination, Black folks can shape our long-term thinking and strategies that are identified in our future possibilities. Therefore, by incorporating tools like epiphenomenal time mapping, Black folks situate themselves in “the now” while drawing on their past and tapping into future possibilities, viewing the imagination and affirmations of our ancestors' lives as blueprints for crafting transformative futures.

Next to this is the exchange of wisdom across generations through dialogue that combines the lived experiences of elders with the visions of youth prioritizing intergenerational healing and affirmations of Black life. As mentioned by an interviewee, “Youth involvement is critical... my role is to create a container so people can articulate the futures they want.” This provides Black folks with the ability to design Black futures through generational cycles rather than fixed milestones and ensure future possibilities consider impact across multiple generations. It becomes imperative that we heal our cyclical timeline by recognizing and addressing intergenerational trauma as part of our future possibilities. This approach values ancestral wisdom and seeks to honour the imagination of past generations.

Engaging With (or Experiencing) Future Possibilities

Community as an Evolving Practice

Black communities are dynamic and multifaceted, as they can adapt to cultural, technological, social, and emotional shifts. Unlike static or monolithic perceptions of community, Black communities are ecosystems of shared values, mutual aid, and interdependence. They encompass physical gatherings and virtual, emotional, and energetic spaces where Black folks can connect and thrive. This evolution reflects the diversity and multiplicity of Black identities and narratives, resisting homogenization and fostering inclusive definitions of Blackness.

In imagining future possibilities, the community is the backbone, a sanctuary where Black folks feel protected, connected, and empowered to engage with future possibilities. The idea of community as both a haven and a catalyst for change is central to engaging with future possibilities that reflect the diversity and agency of Black voices.

Continuously redefining community is essential in different contexts to meet the desire for a global and intersectional Black experience. Whether in physical neighbourhoods, online platforms, or cultural movements, research participants asserted that Black communities must be inclusive. Virtual spaces, for instance, have become critical in connecting Black folks across geographical and generational boundaries, while cultural movements anchor Black communities in shared heritage and values. These evolving spaces ensure that Black futures remain accessible, dynamic, and reflective of the lived realities of Black folks worldwide.

Intersectionality plays a crucial role in shaping community as an evolving practice, ensuring that Black futures reflect the diversity within Black identities. Gender, sexuality, ability, age, and class intersect to create a weave of experiences that must be acknowledged and integrated into community-building practices. This intersectionality allows Black communities to avoid flattening or erasing individual experiences, fostering spaces where all voices are valued and celebrated.

As an interviewee stated, “We talk about community without necessarily knowing what it is and what it does... community can be virtual, energetic, or emotional.” This highlights the need to move beyond traditional definitions and embrace the fluidity of Black communities. By recognizing the evolving nature of Black communities, Black futures can create frameworks that centre identities and Blackness. Through intentional design and collaboration, these evolving Black communities will serve as the foundation for imagining and realizing thriving Black future possibilities.

The Energy of Radical Imagination and Creativity as Tools for Transformation

Imagination and creativity are fundamental tools for Black folks to explore the realm of future possibilities and manifest transformative futures. They allow Black folks to explore future possibilities unbound by systemic limitations, blending reality with the speculative to challenge the reality Black folks live in and envision thriving, liberated societies. Through imagination, Black communities reclaim agency over our narratives and develop futures rooted in the rhythmic vibration of our identities and the resonance known as Blackness.

Imagination is a radical act of resistance. It enables Black communities to deconstruct systemic inequities and envision alternative realities. Black futures harnesses this power to explore the full resonance of Blackness, using creativity to articulate and manifest transformative possibilities. Artistic practices, including music, dance, and visual arts, act as mediums and repositories for Black folks' hopes, aspirations and future possibilities. For instance, the improvisational traditions of jazz and hip-hop reflect imagination and creativity, offering ways for navigating uncertainty and creating innovation. These forms of practice are not only acts of expression but also tools for envisioning futures where Black communities thrive.

The connection between imagination, creativity, and lived experience is central to Black futures. Embodied knowledge, which values intuition, emotions, and physical expressions alongside intellectual analysis, deepens the connection to future possibilities. Movement, dance, and performance are powerful mediums for exploring future possibilities, symbolizing transformation. They help to create

emotional resonance, evoking hope, healing, and empowerment while making abstract futures tangible and actionable.

Artistic expression provides a fertile ground for reimagining the future. Black folks use storytelling, music, and art not just to endure the reality we live in but to challenge dominant narratives and envision alternatives. Merging our ancestral knowledge with creativity and imagination allows Black folks to unlock equitable societies free from systemic constraints and complete with the desires of Black communities. When the narratives of Black folks are rooted in Black radical imagination, they amplify the underrepresented voices of Black communities and inspire us to envision futures where affirmations of life are at the forefront.

Improvisation, as mentioned earlier, is an essential element of creativity within Black futures. Drawing from traditions like jazz and hip-hop, Black folks approach the future with fluidity, treating uncertainty as a space for innovation. This improvisational ethos allows for the exploration of possibilities in constrained environments, turning limitations into opportunities. By embracing creativity and flexibility as strengths, Black communities generate imaginative pathways to transformative futures and it is through imagination and creativity that Black futures become not just possibilities but powerful realities, shaping a world where Black lives flourish.

Seeing and Visualizing Future Possibilities

Affirmations of Black Lives and Healing as Radical Future Possibilities

Future possibilities for Black folks are not confined to narratives of survival or resistance; instead, they are affirmations of Black life. Those being joy, healing, self-care and the celebration of Black identities and culture. The affirmation of Black lives transcends existence, embracing thriving in our reality as being able to feel future possibilities and see and experience them. As an interviewee pointed out, "It's not just about surviving the challenges ahead; it's about how we commune and share, creating a heartfelt, energetic connection." By centring joy, healing, and well-being, Black futures shift the focus from overcoming systemic barriers to imagining empowered, healing realities. This approach not only acknowledges the trauma experienced by Black communities but also creates pathways for collective flourishing.

Healing is foundational to imagining future possibilities. Healing is not only about addressing generational and systemic traumas but also about creating systems that actively nurture mental, physical, and spiritual well-being for Black folks. Black futures centres on rest, joy, and self-care, prioritizing well-being over survival. Black folks engage in rituals, celebrations, and artistic expressions that act as conduits to affirmations of life. They serve as sanctuaries for joy and healing, allowing Black folks and communities to reconnect with themselves and each other while envisioning thriving futures. Black joy is an affirmation of life seen as resistance, challenging deficit-based narratives that reduce Black futures to survival. Joy and celebration disrupt our reality by affirming Black humanity, potential, and

vibrancy. These expressions transform the act of envisioning the future into an emotionally resonant and culturally empowering experience.

Community and affirmations of life are intertwined, with our collective experiences and outcomes emphasizing the importance of shared healing and well-being. By integrating joy and healing into Black futures, Black folks recognize that emotional and communal well-being is inseparable from our future possibilities. This ensures that imagining futures is as transformative and liberating as the outcomes themselves.

Ultimately, affirming Black lives through joy and healing reframes the purpose of imagining future possibilities. Rather than solely addressing systemic problems, Black futures focuses on building thriving Black communities that celebrate life. By embedding joy and healing into Black futures, we challenge traditional problem-solving paradigms and centre flourishing as the primary goal. Black futures are affirmations of life, where Black communities are empowered to envision and realize transformative possibilities that honour our past, embrace our now, and imagine boundless future possibilities.

‘Not Like Us’: Centring Identities and Blackness

‘Not Like Us’ emphasizes the diversity, complexity, and multiplicity of Black identities in Black futures. It challenges reductive, monolithic narratives of Blackness and celebrates its myriad expressions and resonance. Black futures prioritizes intersectionality, recognizing the varied lived experiences of Black folks shaped by gender, sexuality, geography, and ability which play a role in how each Black person defines Black in their terms. As an interviewee articulated, “What does the word ‘Black’ mean to different folks, and what does it need to become?” This invites critical reflection on the evolving definitions of Blackness and why it is seen as a resonance that is a force Black folks can tap into through their rhythmic vibration known as their identity.

A foundational aspect of ‘Not Like Us’ is the shift from reactive to proactive roles in shaping future possibilities. The lived reality of Black folks has often forced us to navigate futures dictated by external forces. ‘Not Like Us’ asserts the necessity of centring Black voices and agency in the design of futures, empowering Black communities to lead this process actively. This proactive approach acknowledges the autonomy and capacity of Black individuals and communities to shape their desires on their terms, unbound by systemic constraints. As one interviewee said, “What happens when we remove the shackles of our minds?” It serves as a call to unlearn limitations and imagine equitable, thriving systems.

Blackness is not tied to a singular Black identity but a spectrum of experiences and ways of seeing oneself that intersect with other social, cultural, and personal factors. Black futures must embrace this diversity, ensuring that voices across genders, sexualities, geographies, and abilities are represented and celebrated. Futures that fail to integrate these perspectives risk reinforcing exclusion and failing to capture the richness of Black identities.

‘Not Like Us’ is a call to celebrate the resonance known as Blackness while affirming its transformative power in imagining future possibilities. By centring the plurality of Black identities that exist now and

before, 'Not Like Us' ensures that Black futures are as dynamic and multifaceted as the communities they represent. It invites critical reflection, creative action and imagination, fostering systems and spaces where Black voices lead, thrive, and shape future possibilities for generations to come. Although 'Not Like Us' was a diss track created by Kendrick Lamar, if you step back and look at the moments it created, it is easy to see how the song has become a beacon for Black folks to find our own rhythmic vibration that connects to the resonance we call Blackness.

Discussion: Nurturing Black Futures Possibilities

Without a doubt, there is a glaring absence of Black voices and perspectives in foresight, which showcases the colonial underpinnings of the field. There is a need to shift the centre of foresight to a space where Black voices can critique, challenge, and create future possibilities. As it currently exists, foresight predominantly privileges Western European epistemologies and frameworks, marginalizing other ways of knowing and being by overlooking the narratives and methodologies of Black folks. This exclusion not only stifles the richness of futures thinking but also perpetuates inequities by failing to reflect the lived experiences and desires of Black folks. Black ways of knowing emphasize relational and cyclical understandings of time, rooted in ancestral wisdom and intergenerational collaboration. These views offer us tremendous opportunities to reshape how societies conceptualize progress, sustainability, and equity. They stand in stark contrast to the current mainstream futures practices that look to create opportunities to erase or tokenize Black voices by failing to engage with the complexity and depth of Black experiences and Blackness. It is time for Black folks to honour the cultural, spiritual, and historical contexts that shape our worldviews. This is what Black Futures is all about: shifting the centre of foresight to a place where Black folks no longer must rely on the paradigms of the dominant Western European culture to shape future possibilities.

Therefore, as a first step, here are five guiding principles that can help Black folks on their journey of practicing the future with our voices and from our perspectives.

Guiding Principle #1: Relationality and intergenerational collaboration collectively empower the pluralities of our identities and experiences that exist to shape our future possibilities.

The centrality of relationality and intergenerational collaboration is foundational for crafting authentic and inclusive Black futures. Black futures are inherently collective, rooted in solidarity and mutual care, and guided by the interplay of relationships across Black identities, generations, and geographies. This relational framework focuses on connections not only within present Black communities but also across time, meshing together the wisdom of ancestors, the lived experiences of current generations, and the aspirations of descendants (Eshun, 2022).

Intergenerational collaboration is essential to a Black futures practice, as it fosters a dynamic exchange between the wisdom of elders and the creativity of youth, fostering a rich and inclusive approach to imagining future possibilities. Elders, as the custodians of historical imagination and cultural memory, provide an anchor to the past, grounding Black futures in the lived experiences of Black folks, the affirmations of Black life and the multiplicities of Black identities that exist. Simultaneously, youth, in turn, bring innovative perspectives, harnessing modern technologies and creative practices to amplify and reinterpret these lessons for contemporary contexts. By intentionally creating spaces for dialogue and co-creation, Black futures can enable the intentional transfer of knowledge, bridging the past and future into a shared continuum of possibilities through the now, reflecting the richness and diversity of Black identities and experiences (Wright, 2015). This guiding principle shows that Black futures are not isolated endeavours but collective journeys where relationality becomes the foundation for shaping transformative, inclusive future possibilities.

Guiding Principle #2: Artistic expression catalyzes envisioning and shaping our future possibilities, harnessing creativity and Black radical imagination as transformational tools.

Artistic expression has always been a cornerstone for Black folks to explore and manifest future possibilities. Through music, dance, visual arts, and storytelling, Black folks have not only expressed our lived experiences but also carved out pathways for transformation. Black radical Imagination moves beyond resistance and looks to affirmations of Black life, offering a practice of reimagining systems, relationships, and identities. The act of radical reimagining goes beyond merely dismantling oppressive power structures. It involves the transformative act of rebuilding, grounded in a mindset of possibility and innovation (Hill-Jarrett, 2023). Improvisation and chopping samples, for example, serve as metaphors for futures thinking, demonstrating adaptability, innovation, and the ability to turn constraints into opportunities. By acknowledging creativity as essential, Black futures shifts the focus from mere survival to thriving, where we celebrate joy, rest, and community as radical acts of world-building.

Black futures views imagination as resilience, and at the same time, creativity becomes a dual force, resisting systemic inequities while envisioning and shaping transformative future possibilities. This dual role emphasizes the necessity of integrating cultural narratives, artistic practices, and ancestral wisdom into foresight methodologies. The arts are not merely tools for imagination; they are methodologies for future possibilities, they evoke feelings, which is what Black folks need to practice the future. As mentioned by Johnson & Lubin (2017), “Afro-diasporic art is characterized by a constant interplay of disruption, reversal, surprise, and concealment, employing material objects to reshape social dynamics, imagine and realize new possibilities, and forge pathways where none appear to exist.” Black folks utilize the ability to feel to reclaim agency, challenge dominant paradigms, and co-create futures that honour cultural authenticity and collective aspirations. By embedding these practices into futures work, Black folks can craft deeply personal yet universally resonant narratives.

Guiding Principle #3 Joy, healing, and community well-being (emotional, spiritual, and physical) are essential in cultivating future possibilities that affirm Black lives.

Joy and healing serve as transformative pillars that disrupt narratives of deficit and survival. Practices like rest, self-care, and communal celebration not only affirm the richness of Black life but also create vital spaces for thriving and flourishing. These acts of care are not merely supplementary; they are central to imagining future possibilities where Black folks can fully embrace who we are. By prioritizing joy and well-being, a Black futures challenges the systems that fail to see us and perpetuate struggle as the defining characteristic of Blackness and Black identities. Instead, they cultivate spaces where empowerment, collective care, and flourishing take precedence, shifting the narrative toward abundance and possibilities. As an interviewee highlighted "We need to shift the narrative from survival to flourishing. Black futures are about imagining abundance, not scarcity, and ensuring that every one of us can embrace that abundance fully."

The integration of healing, particularly in addressing intergenerational trauma, is a foundational element in crafting transformative Black future possibilities. Rituals, artistic expressions, and collective care provide pathways for reconnection, fostering a sense of wholeness and belonging. In one of the conversations, an interviewee mentioned, "The work we do today is about healing past wounds while planting seeds for future generations to thrive. This dual focus is critical in crafting futures that uplift us." This approach reframes futures work not as a problem-solving exercise but as a life-affirming practice that centres emotional and spiritual dimensions often overlooked in conventional foresight. In emphasizing the creation of liberatory spaces where rest and celebration are future possibilities that affirm Black lives, the purpose of foresight is instantly redefined for Black folks.

Guiding Principle #4: Embrace the 'messiness.'

The question, "What can Blackness become?" encapsulates the transformative essence of imagining future possibilities, framing Blackness not as static but as a dynamic and adaptive energy. This aligns very much with the thoughts of an interviewee, "Blackness is fluid. It's shaped by so many layers, personal, cultural, and historical, and it doesn't fit into one tidy box. I think that's its power. It evolves and adapts in ways that are beautiful and unexpected." This perspective recognizes that Blackness is continuously vibrating at different frequencies through imagination, creativity, and affirmations of life. Its powerful energy is essential for shaping future possibilities, and when Black identities unlock it, pathways for more inclusive and expansive conversations on imagining future possibilities are created. The fluidity and multifaceted nature of Blackness can be tapped into through Black identities that have been shaped by historical, cultural, and personal contexts, resisting essentialist definitions: who you believe yourself to be is who you are, and that is important.

Blackness helps us Black folks to embrace the "messiness" of feeling and manifesting future possibilities. Challenging the notion of singular, tidy solutions, advocating instead for frameworks that embrace

complexity and contradictions. As an interviewee stated, "There's value in the tension, in the discomfort. That's where creativity thrives. If we try to make Black futures too neat, we're just replicating systems that already exist." This "messiness" is not a limitation but a generative space where diverse and even conflicting ideas can coexist, inform, and enrich one another. Taking this approach, we can move beyond rigid boundaries and be encouraged to see complexity as a strength that fosters innovative and inclusive pathways where we honour the full spectrum of Black identities and the resonance known as Blackness.

Guiding Principle #5: Lead with the youth.

Black youth are not just inheritors of Black futures; they are active agents in reshaping narratives and driving transformative change. They bring fresh perspectives that must be untainted by entrenched systems and hold immense potential to redefine what the futures can look like for Black folks. Their creativity, values, and aspirations add unique dimensions to future possibilities, and they should be afforded opportunities to hone their skills and articulate their visions for more inclusive and equitable futures. Many interviewees spoke to this in-depth, mentioning, "Black youth are already doing the work, they're organizing, they're creating, and they're dreaming of futures that we can't even fully grasp yet. Our role is to give them the resources and space to manifest those dreams."

If Black youth are able to engage in critical self-reflection by interrogating their personal biases, this will support them in embracing their identity amongst the fluidity and multiplicity of Black identities that exist. Blackness can be confusing in the early stages of knowing yourself, but by engaging with critical self-reflection, Black youth can be supported in recognizing that Blackness takes on different meanings across geographies, histories, and personal experiences. As an interviewee said, "The journey of self-discovery for young Black people is about embracing contradictions, being proud of who you are while remaining open to learning from others in the diaspora." In prioritizing self-awareness, Black youth can build authentic relationships with each other and Black communities, creating an environment where they can define their identities free from colonial frameworks. Centre Black youth as conduits of change; the pathways they see and manifest are our future possibilities.

Conclusion

This major research project was designed to centre Black experiences, perspectives, and knowledge systems, challenging conventional frameworks that exclude Black voices and perspectives. The project unfolded across four phases: Self-Reflection, Being Together, Acting Together, and Being Transformed into Fate. A framework rooted in acknowledging the historical exclusion of Black folks from design processes and that authentically reflected the lived realities and aspirations of Black folks.

Through a literature review, which provided a foundational understanding of Black Studies, Black Speculative Arts, and Foresight. I examined complex terms such as Black epistemologies, time, and futurity, while also exploring historical contexts that shaped the present landscape of futures thinking for Black folks. This expansive exploration illuminated gaps in existing knowledge and emphasized the importance of Black voices in imagining future possibilities, setting the stage for the other phases of my research. I complemented the theoretical groundwork by conducting seventeen semi-structured interviews with experts from the arts, academia, design, and foresight fields, representing a range of intersectional Black identities.

These interviews offered a nuanced, community-centred approach to collecting the data, fostering trust and openness to ensure authentic dialogue with all the interviewees. Utilizing thematic coding and affinity mapping, the insights gathered were synthesized to inform the research outcomes. All of this came together as a Black speculative fiction story, developed using Endarkened Storywork, a methodology grounded in storytelling, cultural reclamation, and spiritual affirmation. This story serves as both a creative and analytical tool, highlighting the richness of Black narratives and imagining future possibilities that centre Blackness and our identities.

Throughout this journey, I have come to understand that Black futures are not just about envisioning a better tomorrow but about mending the fractured narratives of our past. It is about using the complexity of Blackness, the intersections of our identities, histories, and experiences, as a lens for manifesting futures that embrace, recognize, and uplift us. By bringing together these intersections, we create frameworks for imagining futures where Black folks are not invisible and instead where our stories, affirmations of life, creativity, and imagination shape the very fabric of what is.

I present this work with immense gratitude for the voices that have helped shape it and for the ancestors whose dreams I walk within. I invite you into this space of imagination, reflection, and storytelling, not just as an observer but as a participant. Together, let us tell our stories. Let us mend what has been broken and imagine what has yet to be. Let us see ourselves in the future not as an act of hope but as an act of knowing, of being, and of becoming.

Further Considerations: Technology as a Site of Liberation and Cultural Alignment in a Black Futures Practice

Exploring and addressing the duality of technology as both a tool for liberation and a potential agent of exclusion will be important. I believe technology must be engaged as a critical space for disruption in understanding what it means for us to embed ethical and cultural frameworks into technological development. In navigating the tension between opportunity and caution, how might we centre culturally attuned approaches to technology? Designing systems that prioritize inclusion, equity, and ethical considerations while actively countering historical patterns of exclusion and surveillance. In centring Black epistemologies, can technologies serve as instruments of liberation, amplifying voices and

creating spaces where innovation is driven by the desires and aspirations of Black communities? Can technology align with the multiplicity of Black experiences, enabling futures where technological development is deeply rooted in justice, cultural sovereignty, and collective well-being?

Next Steps: Exploring Artistic Expression -The Visionary Role of Black Speculative Artists in the creation of Methodologies for Imagining future possibilities

Black artists occupy a critical role in shaping futures by merging creative expression with social critique and crafting blueprints for imagining future possibilities that are both visionary and actionable. Through their work, they bridge aesthetics with activism, envisioning worlds that centre Black existence. Black artists disrupt dominant narratives, offering alternative possibilities that celebrate the richness and multiplicity of Black identities. Their art becomes a tool for reflection and transformation, inviting Black audiences to question existing systems while imagining futures rooted in equity, creativity, and collective flourishing.

Black Speculative Arts extend beyond storytelling to function as a methodological approach for theorizing, exploring and enacting futures that are spatial, social and culturally transformational. It can allow Black communities to test ideas, confront systemic fears, and reimagine possibilities within imaginative, safe spaces. The affective dimensions of Black Speculative art, its ability to evoke joy, sorrow, imagination, and hope, are central to this transformative power it holds.

How might the creative practices of Black Speculative artists act as tools for seeing and manifesting future possibilities that honour both ancestral wisdom and the now? Looking to understand how not only the intellect but also how the heart and body generate emotional and physiological responses that allow Black folks to understand future possibilities.

Closing Reflection

The future is not a far-off concept or something vague and intangible; it is a collaborative effort moulded by the experiences, stories, and dreams of Black folks.

Imagine....In this ever-changing world, Black folks stand at the forefront of cultural, technological, and societal development. Their dynamic cultural background, rich in the Black Diaspora's customs, forms a beautiful mosaic that lays the groundwork for humanity to thrive upon. Future generations are guided by the powerful narratives of Black culture, shaping everything from art and governance to community living. The rhythm of Black identities beats strongly, leaving an indelible mark on global consciousness with its rich legacy of imagination, creativity, and interconnectedness.

Our journeys encourage us to imagine future possibilities and celebrate the beauty and diverse expressions of Black folks.

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