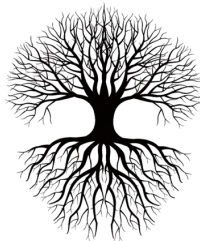# Tiffani Marie & Kenjus Watson

Tiffani and Kenjus met because of school. They both examine telomeres (repetitive regions of DNA at the ends of chromosomes that shorten as our cells divide) to better understand the impact of schooling through antiblack violence on our students. To employ schooling's lingo, Kenjus' work examines the cumulative biopsychosocial impacts, via telomere shortening, among a group of young black men who endure daily anti-blackness at their college. The study's findings suggest that their achievements and enrollment at UCLA did little to buffer the impacts of their social traumas. Instead, his findings suggest that their schooling likely exacerbated their physical health conditions. Tiffani's work examines the pedagogical practices that attenuate the harmful impacts of toxic stress in black children. Her study's findings suggest that the practices that promote better health for Black children are antithetical to the normative practices of schools. Tiffani and Kenjus connected through the intersections of their work highlighting the physiological impacts of anti-blackness in attempts to counter the forces that destabilize black humanity. In this instance, they connect through this work on the necessity of school abolition and critical re-membering through revelatory education.

Remembering an Apocalyptic Education: Revealing Life Beneath the Waves of Black Being

Tiffani Marie
tiffanimarie@h2oprod.org

Kenjus Watson
kenjus.watson@gmail.com

https://www.apocalypticeducation.org

We write, individually and collectively, as Black educators attempting to survive the ravages of schooling. Along with a host of Black people, we too believed our schooling was a means toward liberation – a saving grace and way to honor the resilience of our people and their resistance to national investment in their undoing.   We conflated our humanization with matriculation in schools. We now recognize the inextricable link between our social death and the function of schools. We have witnessed and experienced the social reproduction of Black death that schools rely upon for national order. As survivors, we lay to rest the schooling project, engaging Christina Sharpe's (2016) mournful meditation on the Wake to exhume how even critical education work can reinforce the very projects it seeks to fight against.

We hold ceremonial space for prospective and veteran educators across the K-20 continuum to reconceptualize their curricular posture and join us in a final farewell to schools. From Shujaa (1993), we distinguish schooling from education and propose the Root Work of Apocalyptic Education, a meditation, a posture, an epistemological stance rooted in African ancestral ways of knowing (Ani, 1994; Fu- Kiau, 2014) to help us make sense of our loss and usher us into new ways of existing and being beyond the afterlife of schooling.

*Both authors contributed equally to the preparation of this manuscript. Their names are listed alphabetically. This piece was crafted in September of 2019. The authors submitted this work, as it was originally rendered, in alignment with the aims of Root Work Journal.

Prelude

Slave life; freed life--every day was a test and a trial. Nothing could be counted on in a world where even when you were a solution you were a problem (Morrison, 2004, p. 302).

Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We are lucky this ghost is a baby (Morrison, 2004, p. 6).

Processional

Greetings family and welcome to all who have gathered in this space to commemorate the death of schools and mourn the passing of our beloved – the last vestiges of our hope in unearthing Black futures through or

within the violent regime of schooling. We join together today to reflect on what could have been at this stage of life. We also gather as a way to comfort the hearts of those who may be deeply impacted by these deaths. It is only natural to be sad today; the realization of loss can be devastating. We hope that you find solace in the stories that help us make meaning of our devastation as well as the traditions that undergird our grieving, releasing, and meditation process. This is all that remains.

Hymn

I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free - Nine Simone

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sEP0-8VAow

Order of Service

Our service begins with a scripture reading that we hope will orient the attendees. We then offer our respective testimonies and invocations to inform the community of our connection with schooling and summon our collective strength to reflect unflinchingly on the lives that are no more. We will then share relevant rituals of Black mourning (theories) we lean on to hold space for our grief (Sharpe, 2016). We utilize these rituals to provide the audience with an extended obituary, a biography of the exploits and decay of schooling and the commingled aspirations of Black people. After tracing the short life and inevitable death of these two entities, we bring the service to a close with a reveal of Apocalyptic Education (AE): a meditation, posture, and epistemological stance rooted in African ancestral ways of knowing that helps us to make sense of our loss.

MC Introduction

In the introduction of In the Wake, Christina Sharpe (2016) argues that Black scholars who study slavery (and its afterlives) must navigate inherently violent methods to generate acceptable research within the regime of schooling institutions:

For Black academics to produce legible work in the academy often means adhering to research methods that are, "drafted into the service of a larger, destructive force" (Saunders, 2008a, 67) thereby doing violence to our capacities to read, think, and imagine otherwise. Despite knowing otherwise, we are often disciplined into thinking through and along lines that reinscribe our own annihilation, reinforcing and reproducing what Sylvia Wynter (1994, 70) called our "narratively condemned status" (p. 13).

Sharpe implores us to utilize an "undisciplined" and "unscientific method" in studying Black life to disrupt the erasures, half-truths, misnamings, and dis(re)memberings that otherwise contaminate standard empirical approaches.

Like Sharpe, we (Tiffani and Kenjus) are too aware of the challenges inherent in attempts to etch out objective testimony concerning the predicaments of contemporary Black beingness from an inherently antiblack structure. We recognize that even our own goodwill endeavor has been preempted by instances of bad faith de-

fined as a) the symbolic and literal antiblack tools we have at our disposal to carry out such a task, b) the eventual location for such an entry, and c) the underlying catalyst for these kinds of projects (Gordan, 1995). Thus, in our simultaneous awareness, angst, indignation, and resignation, we are doing our best to unfold this piece with an "unscience" and "undisciplinarity" that Sharpe encourages. We pose questions, speak and listen to one another (along with a host of interlocutors), and offer space and solace, as well as discordant and synthesized contentions – not as an academic exercise, but as an invocation of educators in rebellious mourning. We hope to do as little harm as possible as we employ a "method...of sitting with, a gathering, and a tracking of phenomena that disproportionately and devastatingly affect Black people any and everywhere we are" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 13).

We write, individually and collectively, as Black people attempting to survive the ravages of schooling. Along with a host of Black people, we too believed our schooling was a means toward liberation, as a saving-grace, a way to honor the resilience of our people and their resistance to a national investment in their undoing. At one point, we conflated our humanization with matriculation in schools. As survivors, we now recognize the inextricable link between our social death and the function of schools. We have witnessed and experienced the social reproduction of black death that schools rely upon for national order. Thus, we write to educators, both prospective and veteran, those who seek to re-conceptualize their curricular posture, across the span of K-20 education to join us in final farewell to schools. Our dialogical approach is inspired by Saidiya Hartman and Frank Wilderson's analysis in *The Position of the Unthought* and is situated within a history of dialogic analysis (Angela Davis & Ice Cube, James Baldwin & Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) of call and response that we must re-member has always ushered us from one world ending toward new ways of thinking, being and existing. Dialogue offers a sacred and collective meaning-making experience. Our freedom cannot emerge from individualistic, capitalist endeavors. So, we think, struggle, write and celebrate together in this service.

Reflections

Tiffani

This is a difficult time for both of us. We both knew schooling and their lifelong partner, hopium. I loved school. I begged my mother to start school earlier than mandated simply because I wanted to go to that place that held my older brother during the day. Conveniently, I disregarded the memories of him attempting to escape school almost everyday, running down the street after my mother and me, begging us to not leave him with "them." I had come to only remember the commencements, the certificates, the ceremonies when throngs of family would gather to celebrate my survival of schooling, showering me with affirmations. Those memories held me through other experiences of alienation, imposter syndrome, and social death. Today, I have the courage to re-member the isolation, the anti-blackness, and the loss of so many peers as normative realities of schooling and the sense of belonging and humanization as conditional. Today, I have the courage to let go.

Kenjus

I suppose like most of those gathered today, I first met school when I was four or five years old. However, I must have been almost nine when I really got to know the pair we are laying to rest. I had asked my mom why our family had such a hard time getting our most basic needs met. I wanted to know if I could somehow change this. She encouraged me to develop a closer relationship with school and introduced me to my birth-right of hope that through this connection, the people we loved (and other people like us) would have more food, less violence, and a better life. Although these twin projects (schooling and hopium) are undeniably dead, after nearly 30 years of investment, I still feel their spectres in my work and in what I learn and some-times share with others. As a function of this very venue in which we are speaking, I feel their hold right now.

In fact, Tiffani and I met because of school. We both examine telomeres (repetitive regions of DNA at the ends of chromosomes that shorten as our cells divide) to better understand the impact of schooling through anti-black violence on our students. To employ schooling's lingo, my own work examines the cumulative biopsy-chosocial impacts, via telomere shortening, among a group of young black men who endure daily anti-blackness at their college. The study's findings suggest that their achievements and enrollment at UCLA did little to buffer the impacts of their social traumas. Instead, my findings suggest that their schooling likely exac-erbated their physical health conditions. Tiffani's work examines the pedagogical practices that attenuate the harmful impacts of toxic stress in black children. Her study's findings suggest that the practices that promote better health for Black children are antithetical to the normative practices of schools. We connected through the intersections of our work highlighting the physiological impacts of anti-blackness in attempts to counter the forces that destabilize black humanity. In this instance, we connect through their work on the necessity of school abolition and critical re-membering through revelatory education.

Looking out on those gathered today, we recognize some faces in this space as our colleagues (critical Black educators and researchers) who find themselves working in hollowed out husks-dead spaces. We also see our co-conspirators across multiple locations (including policy and advocacy groups) as well as countless Black people who know and have put their trust in schooling *as a vehicle* for mobility, uplift, and eventual re-demption. We understand it may be difficult to accept that this prospect is dead. We will do our best to help all of us come to terms with this loss.

Invocation

Tiffani:

Within her novel *Krik Krak* (1995), Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat shares the story of a young, pregnant woman, Célianne, who travels the Caribbean seas. Within one of the novel's short stories, "Children of the Sea", Célianne, though pregnant, remains stoic and immune to nausea caused by the odorous smells and the boat's rocking. Onlookers exchange stories about the baby's presumed violent conception to distract them-selves from the noxious odors of the sea and beginnings of sickness. Eventually, the baby is born and named Swiss, after the knife used to cut the child's umbilical cord. As time on the boat progresses, although the child

has yet to cry, Célianne remains entranced by the aesthetics of her new baby. She clenches the infant, refusing to allow any further harm to come its way and protects the baby from threats, both intramural and external. Eventually, boat dwellers have reason to believe that part of the stench is emanating from Célianne's baby. The infant has died. And instead of confronting the ever-present death, Célianne holds tighter to her decaying child (Danticat, 1995).

As an educator of fourteen years, I fear that we have engaged at some point, if not consistently these days, in similar institutional and pedagogical practices. While I do suggest that children are dying on our watch, the baby that I speak to, the one that has been dead for some time now and whose decay can no longer be ignored, is schools. I suggest that many of schooling's normative practices are strikingly similar to the infant in Célianne's arms: lifeless and numb. I am saddened to say that at their best, these normative practices have produced outliers, mere semblances of success within a rigged system that has been used to normalize and justify black suffering.

I realize this may feel heavy for some of us. To gather ourselves, we want to invite the reflections and meditations of our brother Resmaa Menakem (2017) who offers Black people a way to breathe through our sociohistorical triggers.

Take a moment to ground yourself in your own body. Notice the outline of your skin and the slight pressure of the air around it. Experience the firmer pressure of the chair, bed, or couch beneath you--or the ground or floor beneath your feet.

Can you sense hope in your body? Where? How does your body experience that hope? Is it a release or expansion? A tightening born of eagerness or anticipation?

What specific hopes accompany these sensations? The chance to heal? To be free of the burden of racialized trauma? To live a bigger, deeper life?

Do you experience any fear in your body? If so, where? How does it manifest? As tightness? As a painful radiance? As a dead, hard spot?

What worries accompany the fear? Are you afraid your life will be different in ways you can't predict? Are you afraid of facing...pain? Do you feel the raw, wordless fear---and, perhaps, excitement--that heralds change? What pictures appear in your mind as you experience that fear?

If your body feels both hopeful and afraid, congratulations. You're just where you need to be for what comes next (pg. 24).

Thank you Brother Menakem. We will return to this pause and practice throughout today's service.

Kenjus

Thank you for your moving testimony, Tiffani and for inviting Brother Menakem. Whenever I hear you talk about us holding on to a dead project, I am reminded of Derrick Bell's (1992) commonsense observation that despite whatever visible "peaks of progress" Black folks might achieve through formal education, the vast majority of our people will *always* experience schooling as a vehicle of their undoing (Bell, 2004; Mustaffa, 2017, Shujaa, 1993). For example, many of us know the US society uses Black students' advancements within and pushouts from compulsory schooling as the rubric to distinguish their level of value and worth in this society (Mustaffa, 2017). Unfortunately, I feel we and other Black critical educators have been coerced to tacitly endorse this sifting process, what Brother Jalil (Mustaffa, 2017) calls educational violence, as we fight protracted struggles for more equity, cultural relevance, access, retention, and success *in schooling* for more of our students. Sister Bettina Love (2018) traces our complicity to our aspirations. She reminds us that placing *hope* in the so-called grit of the few *or the many* Black "achievers" who obtain greater socio-psycho-economic security due to their school-derived success is akin to glorifying the traumatized "winners" of the Hunger Games and willfully deriding the dead bodies of the other "combatants."

Moreover, our brother Michael Dumas (2014) reminds us that we are no better off when the narrative gaze is adjusted from these survivors to attune the lens towards the prevalence of Black dismemberment in school, which also reinforces the logical and logistical arrangements of our suffering (Dumas, 2014; Hartman, 1997). As the narratively condemned (Wynter, 1993), "...about whom anything can be said or done" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 19), Black youth who "fail" at school are indicted in-kind and subsequently rendered more vulnerable to poverty (Harney and Moten, 2013), housing and food insecurity (Edwards, 2018), mental and physical health disparities (Dumas, 2014), a revolving door of incarceration (Laquan, 2017), stunted life chances (Patton, 2015) and premature death (Sojoyner, 2017). These young people (the dead and prematurely dying) are then rendered as cautionary antagonists of Horatio Alger-like parables (Blacks would be better off if they were just better in school) and repurposed as political cannon fodder for further investment into the never-ending neoliberal carousel of innovation, intervention, reform, incorporation, collapse, innovation, intervention, reform, incorporation, collapse...ad infinitum.

This crisis extends beyond foreboding tales of "good and bad negroes" when we take an account of the so-called Hunger Game "winners." The lived experiences of the ascendant and conventionally successful Black children and adults we obsessively cleave our collective aspirations to prove sobering. I'm sad to say that relative to other racial groups in the US, Black students who graduate from high school are more likely to: 1) attend community college in perpetuity (Iloh & Toldson, 2013); 2) become entrenched in the predatory, for-profit, *Lower Education* industrial complex (Cottom, 2017), 3) incur higher amounts of debt, borrow at higher rates, and default on their student loans regardless of the type of institution they attend(ed) (Jackson & Reynolds, 2013) 4) encounter daily institutional and structural forms of anti-blackness at purposively white and Hispanic serving institutions (Abrica, Garcia-Louis, and Chaddrick, 2019), 5) develop and/or exasperate existing mental health crises en route to degree attainment (Solórzano et. al, 2000), 6) develop physiological disruption and symptoms of racial battle fatigue (Smith, Allen, Danley, 2007), and 7) experience stress-related telomere-shortening and biological weathering (Watson, 2019). High-achieving members of our communities are also:

8) less likely to graduate from all post-secondary education (Dumas, 2014), 9) less likely to obtain gainful employment after college (Smith and Stovall, 2008), and 10) tend to lose financial gain obtained by their parents (Chetty, Hendren, Jones, and Porter, 2018). 11) are just as likely to experience incarceration as poor whites (Chetty et. al, 2018), 12) have a harder time evaluating Black people as positive on the Implicit Attitude Test (Dovidio et. al, 2008), and 13) experience increased vulnerability to stress-related diseases and premature death (Adelman, 2008; Smedley and Smedley, 2005; Smith, Hung, and Franklin, 2011; Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000). Indeed, despite the persistent strategy to double-down on efforts to improve Black educational achievement as a pathway to social mobility, economic reports predict the median wealth for Blacks in the US will fall to $0 by 2053 (Asante-Muhammad, Collins, Hoxie, Nieves, 2017). It is also worth reiterating that Black people living here on Turtle Island have not experienced significant increases in educational attainment, wealth, or life expectancy over the past 40 years of the rumored end of legal racial apartheid (Allen, McLewis, Jones, and Harris, 2018).

This mournful data suggests *all* Black participants across schooling are potential casualties of the very same Hunger Games (Love, 2018). Thus any ritual adherence to narratives (or educational theoretical frameworks) that uplift hope through the notion that Black people should fight for better schools, culturally relevant curricula, increased technology, aspirational mottos or resilient postures to access better life opportunities, at best, denies the longue durée of inevitable and widespread Black suffering. At worst, our naive hope in the promises of schooling justifies and necessitates dead and dying Black bodies to serve as bloody, counter-referential material for the tentative incorporation of a select few into a comprador class. While these well-worn lessons may feel familiar to some gathered today, we would like to offer a ritual, a way of seeing and moving, that might help all of us gain better understanding of these deaths' true circumstances.

Guiding Ritual (Theory)

Untethering Death from Life

The mourning process feels least burdensome to us when we lean on the wisdom of others to gain clarity about the exploits of the deceased. Our service today is possible in part due to the work of those within our most immediate community of Educational co-conspirators (Dumas and ross, 2016) who are unearthing a Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) to decipher and denounce how Black existence has been constructed as a problem through de jure and de facto systems and laws designed to restrict and discipline Black life.

In many ways, BlackCrit weaves together previous knowledge offered through Critical Race Theory (Bell,1989), Critical Black Feminisms (Collins, 1990; Hartman, 1997; hooks 2002; Lomax, 2018; Spillers, 1987, Wynter, 1979) and Afro-pessimism (Martinot and Sexton, 2003; Sexton, 2010; Wilderson, 2010). These interrelated theoretical lenses can help us process how schooling and our belief in its liberatory capacities derive from historical antiblack suffering embedded in racial chattel slavery, colonial conquests, gender and sexual normativity, and the structuring logics of racial capitalism (Rodriguez, 2020). We are relying on this wisdom to meditate intentionally on anti-blackness and, hopefully, untangle the projects of schooling and hopium that we've gathered to mourn from *education*.

In alignment with our ritual, we uplift the work of Shujaa (1993) to differentiate these dead projects from the very alive possibilities of education. Conversely, schooling is an extension of the enslavement and colonial processes in service to the preservation of the nation-state (Chomsky, 2014; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Its constitutive mechanisms are subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999) – intent on stripping Africans of our cultural languages, histories and ties to indigeneity. More specifically, schooling has functioned as a derivative of the violent "seasoning" our ancestors endured throughout the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Bailey, 2009). This violent severing of Africans from our lands, languages, and agency was intended to condition our ancestors for life on the plantation (Spillers, 1987).

We propose education. Shujaa (1933) argues that education involves the knowledge transmission of values, esthetics, and spiritual beliefs that give a culture its vitality. Education functions to sustain a group of people, rather than US schooling, which prepares black youth to collude in the processes of their own social death. Moreover, education is not limited to school structures. We are always thinking, learning and creating. Schools, at best, compromise our humanity and relationships with creating and learning because they are sites of social death.

Civil society used the seasoned bodies of our ancestors as the base of the United States economy as well as the counter reference point to the very notion of humanity (Hartman & Wilderson, 2003). Blackness remains the US's and the world's foil even as the expressive mechanisms of anti-blackness (chattel slavery, Jim Crow, mass incarceration, premature death) evolved overtime (Dumas and ross, 2016, Fanon, 1967; Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2003; Wilderson, 2010). This anti-blackness:

...is endemic...and...central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical and cultural dimensions of human life…but, anti-blackness is not simply racism against Black people. Rather anti-blackness refers to the broader antagonistic relationship between blackness and (the possibility of) humanity. (Dumas and ross, 2016, p. 14).

These interrelated rituals (theoretical lenses) help us extend Shujaa's work to highlight how anti-blackness reinforces the sociohistorical structure of inequity within schools. In this sense, schooling, and its possibility for our liberation, has always been dead. Our corrective interventions on schooling (i.e. multiculturalism, ethnic studies projects) are in fact proverbial Band-Aids on the body, applied after rigor mortis has set in. It is difficult to come to terms with the reality that in our own work we have attempted to perform life-saving measures on a corpse. While these interventions may attempt to respond to the daily terror imposed upon Black people in and outside of school, they fail to resolve the glaring reality that resuscitation is impossible.

There may be some amongst our mourners today who, like us, feel remorse and sometimes lack clarity on how best to move through this heavy ritual. We will offer a potential space for us to reflect in a moment. For now, let us pause and engage in Brother Menakem's grounding exercise once more.

(Please return to page 19 of the program to re-engage Menakem's meditation.)

Scripture Reading

At this time, we would like to read a passage from Christina Sharpe's (2016) mournful mediation on Black Be-ingness:

What happens when we recognize Black death as predictable ...constitutive ...normative, and for this so-called democracy, necessary? It is the ground we walk on. And that it is the ground...how we might begin to live in relation to this requirement for our death...what kinds of rupture might be opened up? What happens when we proceed as if we know this, anti-blackness, to be the ground on which we stand, the ground from which we attempt to speak, for instance, an "I" or a "we" who know, and "I" or a "we" who care" (Sharpe, 2016, p.7)?

We see Sharpe's (2016) concept as an applied praxis (a theory in action) of the established rituals we're uplift-ing in this service. For example, in alignment with BlackCrit, Sharpe understands anti-blackness to be en-demic to civil society. Sharpe offers the Wake to Black people contending with the violence of this society as an acknowledgement of and pathway towards our past, present, and future mournings. She describes this mourning process through three analogues of the Wake as: a) the track left on the water's disturbed surface by a ship or large body, b) an aWakening or consciousness, and c) a social gathering for the dead. While Sharpe's theory does not seek out solutions to the problem of blackness's irresolvable abjection, she offers a parallel aim of *Wake Work*: a praxis of tracking anti-blackness in order to ask, "...what, if anything, survives..." our preceding and ongoing abjection from civil society?

Our obituary will draw from Sharpe's three Wake references to track the lives of school and our commingled hopes as inherently antiblack and terrorizing formations. Additionally, in the spirit of Wake Work, we offer a *re-memory* (Morrison,1987) of Apocalyptic Education as a synthesis of practices that we believe precede and overgrow the death of schools. Let's turn to page 3 of *In the Wake* for our first meditation.

Obituary: The Life of School

Wake: The track left on the water's surface by a ship/the disturbance caused by a body swimming, or one that is moved in water; the air currents behind a body in flight; a region of disturbed flow. -Sharpe, 2016, pg. 3.

Kenjus

There are mysteries surrounding the birth of schools as well as our hopes in their liberatory capacities. How-ever, it may be helpful to employ our ritual lens and note that the current regime of civil society, "...demands...a sovereign right over violence. [Meaning] it can use whatever violence it wants for its own needs and have that violence always be understood as legitimate" (Wilderson, 2015). With this goal in mind, we can better understand that the "schooling" who lies before us was both the herald and progeny of the Western (antiblack) world. It was born into this world as a sustainable and repetitive technology aimed to-wards innovative strategies of standardization, containment, and above all, rationalization, to ensure that the

violence of the developing society, *entered our minds* as natural and legitimate (Shujaa, 1993; Watkins, 2001; Wilderson, 2015). Schooling was incubated in slave dungeons, labored on slave ships, and bred in more explicit forms on plantations.

Some of the first reports of the incubation of "schooling" were found in the slave dungeons that proliferated along the West African coast between the 15th and 19th centuries. The holding cell introduced our captive African ancestors to binary gender, competition, detention, and overcrowding – logics that have been transmitted across generations to contemporary schools (Brand, 2001; Hartman, 1997). Schooling was labored through slave ships or labor-atories (Spillers, 1987) in which captured Africans were transfigured into Blacks and learned "...which racist social distinctions become immediately recognizable and acceptable as *natural and* thus necessary" and legitimate (Kraehe and Lewis, 2018, p.7).

The gratuitous violence of the Black's first ontological instance, the Middle Passage, "wiped out metaphysics." Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks. This violence which turns a body into flesh, ripped apart literally and imaginatively, destroys the possibility of ontology because it positions the Black in an infinite and horrifying and open vulnerability, an object made available for any subject." –Wilderson, 2016

Anderson (1988) locates the actual birth of Black schooling in the 16th century when the first African captives arrived on the shores of the future United States. Like the cell and ship, the plantation was also a site of pedagogy. Two general trends regarding instruction emerged. First, critical scholars have suggested the enslaved attained *education* in service of varied strategies of resistance under the general rubric of Black life-making, define as "...the creative spaces of possibility and freedom Black people produce when practicing self-definition, self-care, and resistance" (Mustaffa, 2017, p. 712). A second line of work considers how mundane practices on the plantation further indoctrinated the enslaved into a legitimate regime of quotidian terror (Hartman, 1997; Sublette and Sublette, 2013; Watkins, 2001).

In regards to the first contention, it is undeniable that Blacks struggled daily to attain and exchange vital information, skills, and tools (i.e. education), particularly literacy in English (and other colonizing languages) to assist in their varied projects of rebellion, fugitivity, marronage, abolition, and (economic) independence (Dumas, 2014; Moten, 2013). However, as we shared in the invocation, archives regarding the uprisings and marronage of the enslaved are incomplete and distorted (Sharpe, 2016; Gumbs, 2018). Instead, the majority of our understanding about Black education efforts *towards resistance* tend to center an application of gaining and transmitting information for the purposes of abolition and economic independence, or what can broadly be understood as the obtainment of greater civil rights (Wilderson, 2017).

This slave education of captured Africans in the US consisted of assistance from abolitionist-minded Christian humanists or charitable entities (Anderson, 1998; Watkins, 2001). Other (relatively favored) slaves were drawn into the business practices of the plantation, including as record keeping, purchasing provisions, and so on (Watkins, 2001). Although seemingly less confrontational than violent rebellion or marronage, any material resource that provided the enslaved a potential pathway out of bondage represented a viable threat to the structure of the plantation and the lifeblood of the broader western project (Watkins, 2001). In other words, a poten-

tial crime was afoot anytime Blacks gathered or shared learning material with each other that might aid future efforts to obtain freedom, specifically the conspiracy to steal property (Moten, 2013). Literacy was understood as a pathway to (more) freedom and the enslaved were beaten for attempting to read (Dumas, 2014). Others risked torture and death in scraping together bits of paper to practice writing. Even when policies allowed for more access to education, any orientation towards the freedom of enslaved people was strictly policed and disrupted. It seems our collective aspirations in schooling as a pathway for freedom were birthed and socialized alongside these relentless pursuits of education because they were often intertwined and conflated with the more overtly violent plantation pedagogies.

The second trend regarding the formal birth of schooling more directly engages the plantation as an instructive site of terror. A former slave, Harriet Jacobs (1861) provides us with an outline of the crucial tenets of plantation pedagogy:

*The slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. **The lash and the foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers.** When she is fourteen or fifteen, her owner, or his sons, or the overseer, or perhaps all of them, begin to bribe her with presents. If these fail to accomplish their purpose, she is whipped or starved into submission to their will. Resistance is hopeless (p.50).*

According to Jacobs's account, the plantation functioned as a formal site of schooling that was saturated with terror. Its faculty members were licentious and abusive. Its curriculum encompassed torture, beating, and starvation. While the plantation's achievement outcomes were measured by the internalized futility of those in bondage. Collectively, these logics of the plantation legitimized the violence endured by the enslaved. In turn, every spectacle and mundane act of violence reinforced the Blacks' position as the unthought (Wilderson, 2015). The gratuitous, afilial, sexual violence of plantation "schooling" was so normative, legitimized, inevitable, and ubiquitous that it literally led to the increase of the captive population.

Some of us gathered may recall that the logics of anti-blackness can be tracked back to 652 AD when Arabs began abducting Africans explicitly for slavery (Anderson and Holley, 2007). However, in tracing the Trans-Atlantic trade, we've learned that the US colonies and settler-state siphoned Black bodies from across the globe from 1619 until members of Congress banned the country's participation in the flesh-trade in 1808 (Sublette and Sublette, 2013). Within the span of these 189 years, 389,000 (or less than half a million) kidnapped Africans were imported to what would become the present-day United States. However, by 1860, 52 years after the congressional ban:

*African slaves, bred like horses or sheep, became **four million** enslaved African Americans...How else can 389,000 people be made to procreate, under pain of torture or death, into 4 million people if they are not incarcerated and forced into sex? Slave breeding is a kind of forced sex that makes the words like rape and incarceration puny and inadequate…Slave men were forced to impregnate slave women. And slave women…were raised in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear (Wilderson, 2016).*
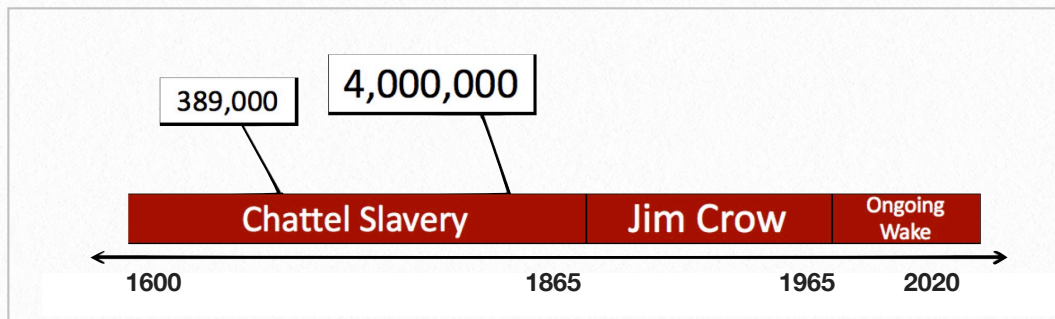
According to the 1860 US Census, the combined Black population (4.4 million) accounted for 12.6% of the total US population; an identical percentage to the present day. This slave accumulation was spurred on and incentivized by the 3/5ths compromise and led to the establishment of the electoral college (Finkelman, 2002). This is why anti-blackness can be thought of as "...the genome of electoral politics…[and] the genetic material of the organism called the United States" (Wilderson, 2016). As the above timeline suggests, the rationale[ii] of Black abjection that legitimized this violence was not eradicated through emancipation or expanded access to civil rights (Hartman, 1997). Stated plainly, because civil society owes its coherence and legitimacy to the on-going Wake or disturbed body of water, of plantation terror, no amount of schooling within or even radical education towards increased incorporation *into* such a place will ultimately undo the project. This problem of and for thought (Hartman & Wilderson, 2003) occurs as we consider the Black student body. Who are these students? Where did they come from? What might it mean for them to experience renewal through schooling in this society? Despite the possibilities of educational endeavors, schools were stillborn in their potential to serve as vehicles out of the dungeon, the hold of the ship, or the plantation.

As we continue to provide an obituary of the exploits of schools and our hope in the broader project of schooling, we will now consider Sharpe's second reference to the Wake.

Wake: The State of Wakefulness; Consciousness- Sharpe, 2016, pg. 4) The consciousness of being in the Wake of the unfinished project of emancipation; Being attuned not only to our individual circumstances, but also to those circumstances as they are an indication of, and related to, the larger antiblack world that structured all Black lives--

Although plantation schooling provided the blueprint for antiblack oppression, our brother Jalil Mustaffa (2017) reminds us that these locations also served as the foreground for future Black freedom and life-making. We can observe this phenomena in the two previously discussed trends of plantation schooling. We also see this dynamic emerging throughout our protracted struggle for Black liberation, in which schools have played an undeniably, duplicitous role (Stovall, 2018). For example, Phillis Wheatley was a formerly enslaved child who learned to read, write, and compose poetry to become "the first published Black human being in the United States" in 1773 (Sharpe, 2016), striking a blow against leading scientific notions of racist limitations on "intelligence". However, as Sharpe (2016) reminds us, Phillis's captors named her after the slave ship on which she arrived. This violence deserves our reflection. It is clear that "schooling" sometimes afforded educated Black people, *the slave aristocracy* (Bullock, 1967), opportunities[iii] to *cathect* or *perform* towards more

nuanced, resistant, and holistic ways of being. Such performances may appear to debunk the logics of our captivity and work towards more secure positions *within* civil society.

However, Sharpe's meditations in the Wake teach us that such "seasoning" through schooling was intended to turn African captives into "docile slaves" (Woodard, 2003; 2014). And although nearly every Black educational effort has been contested by some or many agents of the state, the harder truth is that schools have always been Trojan horses designed to preempt and disrupt possible Black rebellions. "America's apartheid had to be made workable. It needed to appear natural and ordained" (Watkins, 2001, pg.182). In response, hierarchical, compulsory schooling provided a means through which a Black comprador class could emerge to buffer and manage Black anger and angst. This Black elite was also intended to serve as inspiration, hope, and distraction for a people with a birthright to burn the entire project down. The more we discuss the exploits of schools and our aspirations in their possibilities I am encouraged to lift up Sharpe's (2016) sentiment that *the past is not past*.

So the same set of questions and issues are presenting themselves to us across these historical periods. It [is] the same story that is telling itself, but through the different technologies and processes of that particular period (Saunders, 2008a, 67 as cited in Sharpe, 2016, p. 5).

I imagine the Wake as an invitation for all of us to remain conscious that this "unfinished project of emancipation," not a lack of our widespread school achievement, is _the_ source for the daily and major precarities manifested as food and housing insecurity, health disruptions, premature death, broken relations, incarceration, and stunted purpose we've seen wreak havoc in the lives of our students, families, and communities. Such awareness should deter our attempts at resuscitating schools or peddling their post-mortem convulsions as valuable "hopium" for our people. This, we know, seems far easier said than done.

I am thinking here about my own literal investments in the re-animation of school as a teacher and researcher with young nieces and nephews, close family members who teach, and a newborn. I have very present kin in the entire game. I am also thinking about the conferences I've attended, the hotels and Airbnb spaces I've frequented, the clothes and technology I've purchased, and the whiskey I've consumed alongside colleagues as we lament and celebrate our work. Each of these violent delights rest somewhat on the false notion that my labor to indict and improve schools will ultimately, *structurally* improve Black life. Meanwhile, the very computer and phone I use to research and write about premature Black death are only operable thanks to precious minerals extracted by maimed and prematurely dying Black children in the Congo (Lovejoy, 2019).

Alongside these difficult reflections, I am invited back to the proverbial hold of the ship to bury any remnant of hope I have in schools each time I learn of a Black student being placed in handcuffs (Newman, Guiterrez, Hewsom, 2019), thrown about the room by student resource officers (Jarvie, 2015), tortured by peers and/or teachers to the point of suicide (Moyer, 2018), having their hair pulled out (Newton, 2019) or marred with permanent marker (Avery, 2019), attending schools named after their ancestors' captors (Mitchell, 2018), vying for charter vouchers (Green and Shapiro, 2020), denied food (Layton, 2019), denied bathroom breaks that cause wetting (Garcia, 2019) or bleeding through their clothes (Madani, 2018), denied clean water (Riley,

2019), tormented by roommates (Moye, 2017), harassed by campus police (Najman-Franks and Xia, 2019), sexually assaulted (King, 2018), displayed as a prop in school materials (Jaschik, 2019), taking high stakes tests (Heilig, 2018), or breathing poisonous air (Lambert, 2019). For those in the audience who still find it difficult to accept the death of schools or release remaining hope in their renewal, it is *my hope* that our accounting of schooling's exploits – these daily antiblack terrors, tortures, and disasters (Pierce, 1995; Solórzano, Yosso, Ceja, 2000) – help aWaken you to the necessity of this end.

Wake: a watch or vigil held beside the body of someone who has died, sometimes accompanied by ritual observances including eating and drinking- Sharpe, 2016, pg. 10.

Tiffani

The Black church embodies an intricate balance between life and death. It is the site of most Wakes, the place where we gather to make sense of a loss of life, a fundamental shift in the melodies that once sung us into existence. And at this particular gathering, the presence of the body, particularly the black body, provides context for how we can make sense of our plunder—if, and only if, we choose to look at it. There are very few of us who have not heard about, or experienced for that matter, the reverberation of jubilee, the elevation of tambourine calloused hands toward a heaven, a new world so to speak—an embodiment of imagined existences. I have even come to believe that what it means to catch the holy ghost, as my grandmother called it, is to escape the terrors, tortures, and disasters of our current world--the violence and captivity that Wilderson (2009) suggests are the "grammar and ghosts of our every gesture" and to experience a simplicity of life, as neither pursued nor captured, but merely as being. For Black people, this disposition has only come through the imagined, the out of body, the other-worldly. And while the Black church has been a critical space of imagined life and life claimed more abundantly, it has also been a conduit toward death. Hartman (1997) questions the significance of the exposed and violated Black body and what its exposure seems to yield. We argue that its viewing is less about black salience or the inhumanity of particular institutions. Rather, we suggest that critical examinations of responses to the dead body provide us with important opportunities for reflection. In many Wakes, I have observed congregants, when it is their time to view the body, to confront its existence, tense up, and leave the church altogether; alternatively, some walk by the body very quickly, so as to avoid seeing its rigor. Others talk to the body, pick it up from the casket, kiss it, hold on to it, refusing to let go, to let it be what it is: dead. It seems we all grieve differently.

As a classroom teacher, my colleagues and I have dealt with the everyday presence of death in schools in similar ways. The denial exists. The attempts to reposition the body remain. However, we differ from Wakes and other religious sites of death because we have not yet pronounced schools dead. Instead, the body, or schools rather, have continued to decay. At this point, it is almost impossible to avoid the stench of death within our curricula and college matriculation efforts. There are some of us who then ignore the presence of death, similar to Celienne, through denial. Others, whose efforts are predicated on a more conscious position, acknowledge the stench within academic papers, conferences, professional development, policy, conscious paraphernalia, within their curricula; they attempt to access the most sound pedagogical way to usher youth through the complexities of social death. However, their eventual collusion with the normative practices of

schools (i.e. capitalist assessment models, interminable school hours, confinement of bodies and thought), a bargaining with death so to speak, are but the flowers that surround the casket; their presence, despite how perfuming or maybe *because of* how fragrant, often distract us from the death that lay before us. This reflection is not an attempt to admonish those who are in denial or even those who bargain with schools. Rather, I would raise that both processes are components of a larger trajectory toward the acceptance of the death of schools. And if we are not yet ready to confront *why we* mask the smell of decay from schools, we can at least begin to confront *how*.

Denial

Within *Krik Krak*, Dandicat narrates that the presence of seeping water suggests the boat holding Célianne and other Haitian migrants has cracked significantly; as they become tasked with keeping the boat above water, they agree to toss their nonessentials to lighten the load. After parting with their belongings, they notice that Célianne is still holding the lifeless body. To them, the decision is simple. The baby prevents their progress, their ability to access life anew. To Célianne, the decision is much more complex. She questions: Who and what will she be without the baby? What will it mean for her to imagine life without it? Through pressure from boat dwellers, however, she is convinced to finally part ways with the dead child. She tosses the corpse overboard. And in a short amount of time, Célianne jumps into the water to save the dead baby, drowning in the process.

To add context, Célianne was raped and impregnated by the Macoutes—those whose portentous regime furthered the imperialist vision of their conquerors—and forced to carry their project within her, the way many black girls and women's wombs have been violently manufactured as slave ships (Sharpe, 2016). I imagine that when the baby died, Célianne saw its death as her own failure, instead of the inevitable product of centuries of conquest. She was troubled by parting ways with the shell because she began to see herself within the baby; their resemblance became uncanny. Therefore, the decision to throw it overboard, to free herself of its history and create new ways of determining her value, new ways of understanding herself outside of a rigid model of control, seemed more like she were losing herself rather than ties to her oppressive past.

In many ways, educators who carry denial about the death of schools continue to force children to develop intimate relationships with their violent histories—to embody them—so that even when they see signs of miscarriages of promises, when they recognize stillborn rhetoric, they still feel inclined to jump in after lifeless possibilities, drowning --joining many other black people whose bodies float amidst the tossing waves of neoliberal rhetoric (Almond, 1995; Dumas, 2013; Dumas; 2014). Essentially, the plastering of college admittance posters in elementary schools, the presence of respectability-laden school reformers, test score boosting advocacy efforts, and the jubilant, devastating charter school lotteries, are mere acts to perfume a dead baby. They suggest that if we simply (re)dress schooling practices or mask the predictability of school outcomes, then maybe we can access life in schooling.

 Current models of schooling (Raymond, 2002; Woodworth, et. al, 2008) propose that black youth invest in schools, embrace its normative practices, and internalize a rhetoric that forces them to embody their inevita-

ble failure, even when studies show that black people, regardless of their engagement and success within schools, still experience a lower quality of life than most others (Williams, 2001; Satcher, 2000; Bager et al, 2018; Pearson, 2008). Given these circumstances, one could argue that within a framework of schooling, the black body is only legible through suffering and death. Efforts to center anything other than the necessity of death are reflective of a culture of denial.

Bargaining

What then becomes of us who attempt to remain vigilant amidst the conspicuous demise of schools? We bargain. Educational theorists (Akom, 2003; Ginwright, 2015) and educators such as myself, maybe out of some sense of hope, have sought to identify sites of life within a very dead project of schooling; we have attempted to chart and document the ways in which schools can mimic life. Other scholars (hooks, 1994; Ginwright & James, 2002; Love, 2012) have documented how teachers can exist within schools as a way to resist the overwhelming culture of social death. Evidence of these attempts are present within models of Critical Pedagogy, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and, more recently, Ethnic Studies (Akom, 2003; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009; Milne, 2013; Cammarota, 2014; Ginwright, 2015). These models identify the loss of identity, cultural ties, and humanity that accompany our existence within schools, yet still celebrate increased engagement, grade point averages, and attendance as desirable outcomes. We bargain—with publishers, school administrators, funders. Most notably we bargain with our young people's humanity. This compromise is an imposition upon youth, namely that our love of learning must always come in close proximity to violence. Even when we have critiqued the simplicity within multiculturalism, shunned charter school efforts, and completely abandoned banter related to "grit" and "delayed gratification", we leave work fatigued, uncertain really, from the pressing truth that lay before us: many of our approaches still center the procedures and frameworks of schooling as redemptive; they embody beliefs that these measurements will secure black humanity and are worthy of investment, even when these criteria alone have reproduced social death for Black youth (Noguera, 2009; Love, 2019). They disregard the tremendous toll that schooling takes on the body, indifferent to the types of weathering that occur due to the normative practices and procedures of schools (Geronimus et. al, 2006; Baldridge, 2014; Dumas; 2014; Wun, 2016). Models of Critical Pedagogies, YPAR, and Ethnic Studies approaches still urge youth to bargain with the very system that causes them harm. This is not to suggest that these pedagogies have not been critical in their response to the daily terrors imposed upon Black youth; rather, in doing so, we may have left unchecked the daily terror that is schooling. Our greatest efforts to bargain within the rigidity of schools seems equivalent to hospicing a dead body.

Sometimes, out of fear of the unknown, holding on to the dead baby feels more bearable than conceiving its total disposal. Yet, just as Célianne was invited to consider the aftermath of a sunken corpse, we too are invited to imagine and maybe even embrace life after schooling. There were others on the boat that looked to Célianne and her baby's parting as part of a much larger and inevitable trajectory. We close today with the observations and reflections of one who chose to accept the death of Célianne's baby. It is our hope that their response to death may be considered and eventually replicated:

I must throw my book out now. It goes down to them, Célianne and her daughter and all those children of the sea who might soon be claiming me. I go to them now as though it was always meant to be, as through the very day that my mother birthed me, she had chosen me to live life eternal, among the children of the deep blue sea, those who have escaped the chains of slavery to form a world beneath the heavens and the blood-drenched earth where you live. Perhaps I was chosen from the beginning of time to live there with Agwe at the bottom of the sea...maybe this was my invitation to go (Dandicat, p. 27-28).

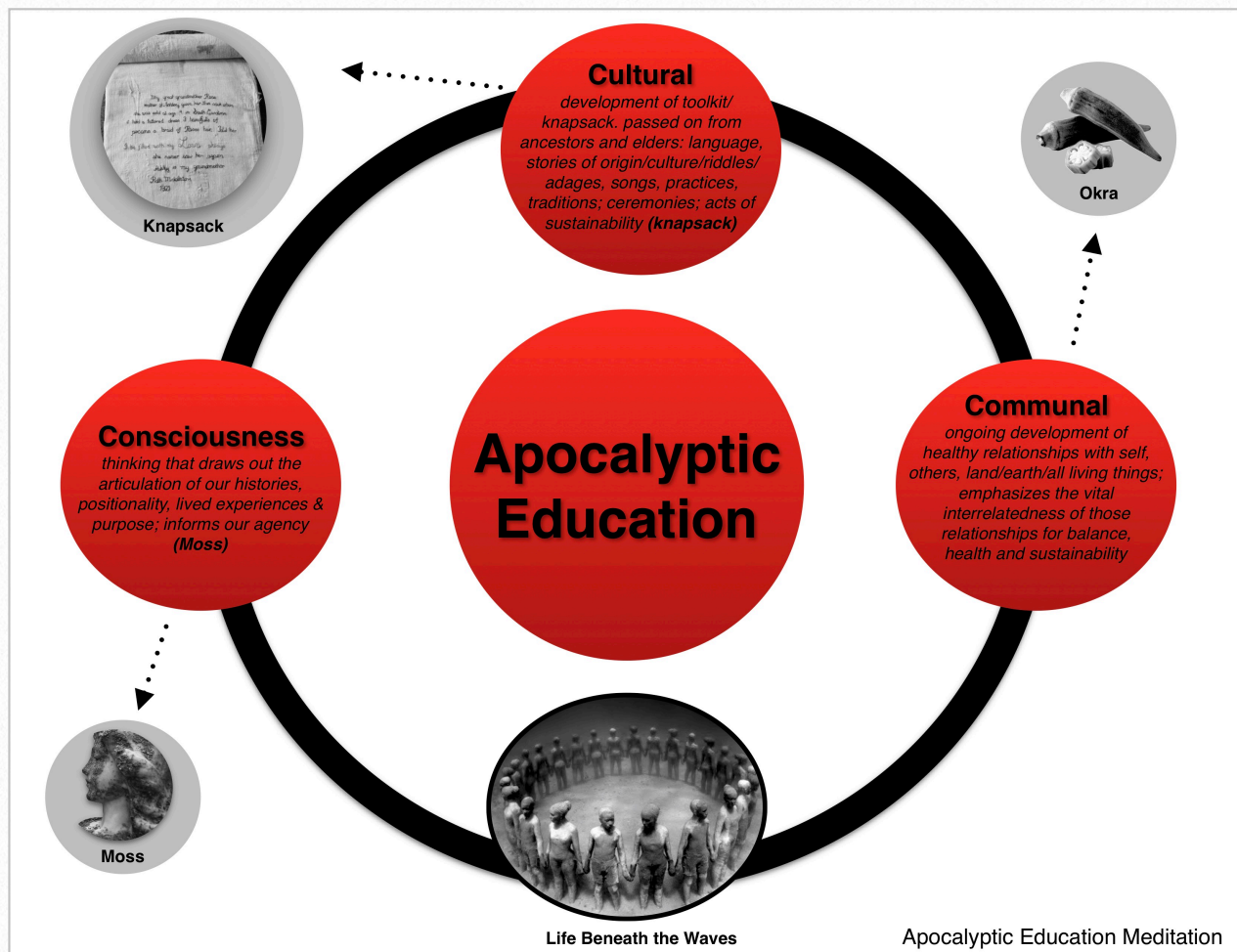### Towards an Apocalyptic Education

Many of us gathered are undoubtedly wondering, where do we go from here? This service has indeed been a heavy one; even though it yields release, healing is weighted. However, we are grateful that the Wake has served as a crucial ritual to help us make sense of what has died and further our indictment of schools as sites of loss, key societal mechanisms that legitimate and sustain anti-blackness, and just that. From these distinct encounters with the Wake, we've come to understand (re-member) that schools are and have always been antithetical to our lives and renewal. In our unfreedom, our attempts to gain freedom through schools, we have become complicit in the further harm of Black children, Black bodies, and Black futures. It is important that educators release, into the waves, any notion that we may be able to transform parasitic spaces and outcomes into more amenable sites of resistance for our communities.

What are we to do about this relentless wall created and emanating from the Wake? What might we say to each other and to our families in Black communities who continue to rely on schooling as a possible way from and out of calamity? To the many Black teachers, restorative justice counselors, curriculum leads who endlessly attempt to ensure that more life enters than leaves the children with whom they work? The administrators, researchers, policy advocates, activists wrapped up in the struggle of recuperating meaning for Black lives through any so-called school site? And if not schools, if not our hope in schools, what else remains?

As the Wake helps us declare the death of schools, in response, Christina Sharpe (2016) offers us **Wake Work**: *seeking out Black life-making that exists (and has always existed) in excess to our suffering*. To be clear, Wake Work is not intended to serve as a treatment plan for ridding the world of anti-blackness. Instead, Wake Work requires an everyday awareness that we are still very much in the echo of the historical disaster of chattel slavery. Armed with this explanatory rationale of our continued suffering, we are better equipped to sacredly mourn the scope of terrors visited upon our ancestors, to see each other more fully and honestly, and to continue to making space for and with each other to dance at our own funeral (this world constituted by our undoing) with collective alignment, rhythm, and soul (Sharpe, 2016). Wake Work traces those modes of being (Black fugitivity, marronage, community land trusts, Black Studies, Black Aesthetics, etc.) that perform *in excess and against* the primary project of schooling. While these modes may trouble the necessity of school and help mourn the dead, Wake Work suggests they eventually falter under the weight of the totalizing structure of anti-blackness. Still, Wake Work further helps us trouble long standing assumptions and (re)animate new (ancient) ground from which we might gather our collective footing and "travel to spaces" previously unimagined or anticipated (Sharpe, 2016).

From a previously unimagined (or forgotten) space, we celebrate and encourage our collective **Root Work**: *a deep, spiritual and earthed pathway that enables us to access other worlds and inform our understandings of what exists outside of this rigid model of control*. We now understand that there exist both the waves that destroy and the world beneath the waves. Once we have come to the end of the Wake and buried schools as curriculum builders, thinkers, and doers, we look beneath the waves for what's next. In the aftermath of this analysis and as a function of our Root Work, we uplift African ancestral knowledge systems as recessional, meditative even, that leads us toward new worlds through a framework we are naming Apocalyptic Education.

Re-membering Apocalyptic Education

Apocalyptic Education (AE) describes a life-alignment process (teaching) that is informed by ongoing, synthesized (bringing together) praxis (theory and action) engaged at the precipice and through the aftermath of the ending of world(s). This praxis, or Root Work, is grounded in a revelatory re-membering and transmission of African ancestral ways of feeling, knowing, being, and doing (of sacredness) aimed at quickening our return/renewal/Sankofa to an (outer) space before, beyond, uninhabitable by agents of our undoing. AE is a meditation first, a posture at times, and at others, an epistemological stance that helps us make sense of the loom-

ing worldly collapse as both necessary and tangential to our efforts toward communal wellness and sustainability.

For many of us, the term "apocalypse" has come to refer to *the complete and final destruction/the end of the world*. In the preceding pages, we've described how Black people have endured countless world-ending events that catalyzed the disruptive Wake of anti-blackness in our everyday lives. While we retain this meaning, particularly as it relates to African-descended people (Horne, 2018), we also uplift an alternative translation of the word *as a revelation or an unveiling or unfolding of things not previously known and which could not be known apart from the unveiling*. The long-standing posture of Afro-pessimism is not one of ambivalence or nihilism. It is actually a joy in the currently unthinkable: the undoing/destruction of a world predicated on Black undoing.

> ### Drape Tomania
> February 21 at 4:02 PM · 👥
>
> Remember, afropessimism doesn't mean you give up on yourself and life and culture and futurity. It is pessimism about the world system as we know it ever allowing Black freedom. And its most outspoken voices call for Black freedom struggle to help lead the way in taking that systen all the way down so that what Fanon calls "a new humanism" can be possible.
>
> *(Drape Tomania, 2020)*

Informed by a present consciousness that experiences the Wake of anti-blackness *as schooling itself*, Apocalyptic Education offers a collaborative synthesis (as opposed to Cartesian analysis) of the underlying logics animating radical Black movements (i.e. fugitivity, marronage, school abolition) centered on the structural irreconcilability between Black life and efforts to further incorporate Blacks into civil society. Although these projects may advocate for the end of the current world in favor of unveiling and revealing something different, we want to be clear with you all that Apocalyptic Education is nothing new. Marimba Ani (1999) reminds us that,

We are people of African ancestry living in denial of who we are. We are losing our children to systems which miseducate them. We need to work together as a family who supports its members and who is responsible for their welfare. We must use the most valuable asset that we have: That is the spirit of our people. It is that spirit that connects us to our Afrikan roots. Slowly, we are aWakening…The term "Sankofa" from Akan tradition in Ghana, West Africa tells us to return to the Source so that we can go forward with strength and clarity. Our cultural roots are the most ancient in the world. The spiritual concepts of our Ancestors gave birth to religious thought. African people believe in the oneness of the African family through sacred time, which unites the past, the present and the future. Our Ancestors live with us. They created the first civilizations thousands of years ago and they suffered the pain of the Maafa. And yet, they were able to endure the most disastrous and

dehumanizing circumstances ever perpetrated against a group of people, only because of the power of the African spirit. This is perhaps our moment of truth. We must do all that we can do to uplift our people. Otherwise, we are still denying who we are and bringing dishonor to our "family name;" to our Ancestors. The answer to our social dilemma is the resocialization of our people into the cultural value-system that affirms our spiritual being. Our Ancestors are calling us "home", back to our cultural selves. We must begin the process of Sankofa. -Marimba Ani, 1999

Thus, we advocate entering new worlds by first going back. If you can recall, we leaned on the three metaphors of the Wake to help us confirm the death of schools and our commingled aspirations. It is our hope to offer three related elements of Apocalyptic Education in constituting the Root Work we hope to do together. Each element of Apocalyptic Education engages re-membering, a critical memory and suturing of previously severed knowings, as a way to responsibly usher us from one ending world to life anew.

1. Cultural:

Rene De Cartes's philosophy, "I think therefore I am," serves as the guiding praxis of (ongoing) slavery and world conquest. This worldview legitimized the sexual violations that terrorize our DNA as well as the contemporary Hunger Games as reasonable formations deployed by sovereign entities in a necessarily competitive world. According to these Cartesian assumptions, Blacks are not simply lesser humans on a universal hierarchy. We are instead the nonpersons/negations which give coherence to the entire project. Thus, a more accurate framing of the philosophy of the world we inhabit may be: "The Black is Not (Not human, Not sovereign, Not good, Not alive, Not anything beyond a Thing), therefore I am (or I am relatively closer to being human, sovereign, good, alive, a person)" (Curry, 2017). Wake Work asks how might this foundational episteme be ruptured? "How can we think (and rethink and rethink) care laterally, in the register of the intramural, in a different relation than that of the violence of the state?" (Sharpe, 2016). In camaraderie with Wake Work, Apocalyptic Education uplifts the potential largeness of Black life in order to rupture this ongoing violent episteme of anti-blackness (Sharpe, 2016).

As previously mentioned, AE engages Root Work help us re-member, through repeated Sankofas, our deeper ways of being, knowing, and doing. Prior to, during, and after the ends of Black worlds, African-descended people lived according to cosmologies undergirded by principles of the Nguni Bantu philosophy of Ubuntu. Ubuntu means, "A person is a person because of other people" or "I am because we are," and has been practiced as an organizing spiritual principle amongst Indigenous African groups for more than 3,000 years. The broader cosmological principles of Ubuntu are present in various spiritual and cultural practices amongst Indigenous groups across the African continent and the globe. As an ancient technology, Ubuntu discards the immature, illegitimate, and disastrous logics of the world and functions as an edifying language of "we formations" by which we (will always) survive the apocalypse (Sharpe, 2016).

We can see the Root Work of Ubuntu and Apocalyptic Education employed in one particular instance of a world ending. In 2007, a mid-1800s unbleached cotton seed sack surfaced at a Tennessee flea market. The sellers did not know the historical particularities of the repeatedly patched sack. However, sewn on the lower

third of the sack was an embroidered 10 lens of text, stitched in three colors of cotton embroidery floss dated to 1921 that read:

My great grandmother Rose

mother of Ashley gave her this sack when

she was sold at age 9 in South Carolina

it held a tattered dress 3 handfulls

of pecans a braid of Roses hair Told her

It be filled with my Love always

she never saw her again

Ashley is my grandmother

-Ruth Middleton, 1921

'Ashely's sack' provides us with numerous examples of the praxis of Apocalyptic Education and is a response to the disrupted wave pattern echoing from the dungeon, ship, and licentious terrors of the plantation. The world undeniably ended for many of our ancestors, who, like Rose, could and did have their children ripped from them at any moment. The force of such violence is indeed totalizing. However, as Sharpe (and this sack) remind us, we did not know each other only by that force. Against the force, Rose offered her daughter Ashley necessities for the Apocalypse: Clothing, Food, Memory, as well as the never-ending Love carried within a vessel passed down through generations. Ashley experienced the end of the world when she was ripped from her mother. And yet, her mother's Root Work of preparing these items and passing them down through the language of Ubuntu buffered some of the amputation, allowing the love to be known four generations later.

Because our cells endured the Maafa (many endings of many worlds) of the dungeon, ship, and plantation, Wake Work reminds us to always be prepared for the eventual arrival of another apocalypse. However, because our cells emanate from Ubuntu, our deeper Root Work (at least 700 years prior to even the Arab slave trade) enables us to re-member the items passed to us from our ancestors (the African-insisted life) within the same DNA that was colonized through unspeakable violence. Ubuntu--I am because we are/ I exist because you exist/We are people because of our people--is an atemporal epigenetic declaration that the love from and of our people will, in the words of Stevie Wonder (1977), transcend the end(s) of the world(s) and always be with us.

2) Communal:

In her work Black, White and in Color, Hortense Spillers (2003) follows the human cartography of black life toward and in the United States. She vividly details the dynamics of the black captive body, and more specifically, the realities of black flesh. She suggests that before the *body*, "...there is the 'flesh,' that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography" (p. 67). She adds that the flesh endures the smacking of the whip, all day long, and that the "anatomical specifications of rupture, of altered human tissue, take on the objective description of laboratory prose-eyes beaten out, arms, backs, skulls branded, a left jaw, a right ankle, punctured; teeth missing, as the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet." Spillers (2003) asks us to consider the generational impacts of this phenomenon, as she calls it, of "marking and branding," questioning whether these experiences "transfer" from one generation to the next.

Another time, Spillers (2014) examines the analogous relationship between the generational effects of enslavement and the amputation of her sister's leg. She explains,

*My sister had a partial amputation on her right leg. She complained in the end of being in terrific pain. Even her leg hurt. But it was the phantom leg, cause half the leg was gone. But it was still hurting. So what I'm saying is that that's a **flesh memory**. We were available, **in the flesh**, to slave masters. **In the flesh!** Immediate. Hands on! I can pluck your little nappy head from wherever it is. Bang! "Don't care nothing about who your momma and daddy is and how many babies you got here." Bang! -Bang! That's flesh. Another word to explain it is empathy. The flesh gives empathy." –Spillers, 2014*

We engage Spillers' examination of the memory of our flesh as a critical component of Apocalyptic Education. Afropessism has been helpful in developing a body of work that explains the seemingly totalizing impacts of captivity and enslavement on the black body. We desire to further these arguments, by looking back, to consider what happens to the flesh when our memory extends beyond the slave trade.

Apocalyptic Education extends these offerings through a reflection on the migration of Okra. Oft used in stews and eaten with fufu, our West African ancestors used Okra as sustenance well before they were forced to migrate to the Americas. Faced with the captivity of Maafa, Okra seeds were consumed in order to prepare for the life-altering journey ahead. To secure the seeds, African people used their hair as a commodity of disguise; communally, seeds were braided into the hair of many African women, in what we come to recognize today as the cornrow hairstyle. As the seed was transplanted, so were memories of a life before enslavement.

Now, depending on one's theoretical framework, the presence of the plant in the United States, today, can be interpreted in primarily one of two ways. For some, it becomes the proverbial leg cut from the body of enslavement; the presence of the Okra seed represents an outcome of our captivity (i.e. Okra can be found in black cuisines like gumbo because enslaved Africans used scraps of food from their captors for their survival), that even when we commune to celebrate, to rest, to create sacred space together, we must feel the pain of our

captivity. In another way, Okra may be (re)membered as evidence of the relationship between sacred community and black sustainability, a communal tool to help transition black people from one world to the next.

Ultimately, it is the extension of our memory that impacts the power of our community and our livelihoods. And the Okra, like so many other cultural offerings, provide opportunity for re-membering. It is through such fellowship that we may understand that we are more than mere flesh wounds. We are seeds of abundance, prosperity and vitality, braided into the strands of black life. And only through community, are we grounded, cultivated, grown, and sustained. The individual black body has and will continue to be sustained through the body of black sacred interdependence. We must be armed with the awareness that the Okra is but a reminder of the relationship between sacred bond and our own cultural perpetuity.

3) Consciousness:

Who are the…ancestors? Ancestors are special people that have crossed over. And in our mind, we call them "dead." But coming from a Kongo culture, I would say, the Kongo themselves would not call the ancestors the dead ones. Even the word "dead" is not often used when someone is dead. The Ki Kongo would say, "Those who are in vacation." "The dead are not dead…they went into vacation after leaving…their skin empty body. It is like a snake shedding their skin and leaving it. The essential part has left. So, the same when a person "dies." It is like leaving a box, that prevented you to truly understand who you are. Because the only way you understand yourself and you try to communicate with other people is the box that you see yourself. But you are not your box. You are the mold on your box. -Fu Kiau, 2012

The word "apocalypse," has gained traction throughout the west. At the time of this writing, large portions of the Amazon rainforest, the lungs of Mother Earth, have been engulfed in flames for several weeks, sustaining incredible damage and drastically increasing planet-wide carbon dioxide and monoxide levels. The fires are a product of a recent revving up of vast deforestation, particularly in Brazil, owing its genesis to neoliberal capitalist logics of deregulation, resource extraction, and accumulation of goods to sell on the market in the name of unadulterated economic growth; essentially, land-clearing for the purposes of capitalist development.

The firestorm and subsequent damage to the balance of the ecosystem join an expansive compilation of existential crises (e.g. mass species extinction, a vast economic downfall, unsustainable reliance on fossil fuels, extreme global poverty and exploitation) that we are enduring and exacerbating the first "Anthropocene", or an ending of the worlds caused by humans. The usually measured International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released a damning report suggesting the current extent of ecological disruption is irreparable. Even in living toward a post-pandemic reality, all we can hope to do now is delay an inevitable, not-so-distant future in which much of the planet will feature climates that are inhabitable for humans and other living persons, fossil energy stores are depleted, and the worldwide economic system is underwater. The web of western civilization is indeed unraveling due to the weight of its own excesses.

We do not disagree with this premise or downplay the destruction such collapse has already had in the lives of the descendants of captive and displaced Africans on Turtle Island and throughout the globe. However, as

a synthesis of projects grounded in the spirit of maroonage, fugitivity, abolition, and rebellion, AE encourages us to re-member that the world has already collapsed many times for us. Secondly, our Root Work reminds us that, like Mother Earth (whom we are tied to through Ubuntu), our primary enemy is civil society itself because it is, "...predicted on our...mutilation and death" (Wilderson, 2017). In this way, the end of the "world," provides us with health and a means of dealing with what some are fearing and attempting to cope with as the inevitable, but that Black people, in touch with our epigenetic memory, call the already. Thus, the anarchy of blackness and the anarchy of the Earth (via global warming) can be understood as palpable, collective protestations against our common foe.

Here-in lies the silver lining at the end of the mushroom cloud (Tsing, 2016) hovering over our 1,398 years-long death-march through the entrails and residue of our captivity, dispersals, abuses and dis-memberings. And, having existed outside of civil society, Black people have crafted new ways of being and uplifted collective social organizations much like the ongoing collapse of the west would require us to do either way. Apocalyptic Education offers an extension of this work, centered in the "hope" and "imagination of our ancestors." It helps us come to terms and rejoice in the truth that for us, the end of the world is not a bad thing.

As previously mentioned, flowers are the symbols of educators' courageous yet futile efforts towards critical education within schools. They function to mask the smell of death and decay, and prolong the denial within mourning while veiling the fact that we're at a funeral. Dancy II, Edwards, and Davis, (2018) remind us,

The only way to establish Black human agency is to exit the system that insists upon Black dehumanization. Black counterintellectual and economic spaces would prioritize the survival and edification of all Black people. These spaces would center African ways of knowing and being in the world, as well as an exploration of the theoretical and technological legacies of African descended people (p. 190).

Instead of flowers to perfume a dead baby, Apocalyptic Education invites educators to align our methods and aims as a sort of moss that grows on top of the many statues of dead colonizers and slavers that dot the landscape of the plantation known as the United States.

When looking at different structures covered in moss, it does not always register that they are in fact alive. However, mosses, small flowerless plants found throughout the world, are relevant to our Apocalyptic Education efforts in that they retain and dispense water (the lifeblood of the planet). As indicators of pollution, they refuse to build in toxic environments, and they can stop their metabolism almost completely during the hot periods of the year when water is not available. They provide us with lessons on how to move more deliberately through the past and present disasters. Armed with the awareness that, like our ancestors who've transitioned, (social) or actual death is never more than a period of dormancy. Although Dionne Brand (2008) found ancestors in the tombs of the dungeon, we cannot mistake the map–the Wake of the ship–for the terrain: the vast ocean that absorbs and dissipates the Wake into nothingness with time, energy, and friction. Finally, moss—and the larger Apocalyptic Education endeavor-—encourages us to, as Anthony Trochez (2019) suggests, to: move with the rhythms of the Earth and overgrow the traps of modernity...to be present in the world as it really is, not the world as it has been constructed to be" (Trochez, 2019, p. 3). As we prepare for our col-

lective Sankofas toward new worlds, we invite others with open hearts to join hands as we lean into the many possible pathways of re-membering. While some of us here may find our home beneath the waves with Agwe, others will maroon on the peripheries of the end of the world. Still others will clumsily place one foot before the other and attempt to fly. To all of these rooted works we say, Ase.

Recessional

When I began to write something like Song of Solomon, I started out frankly, thinking about a story that I'd always heard. The one thing you say about a myth is that there's some truth in there, no matter how bizarre they may seem. And the one that I had always heard, that seemed like just a child's wish, was the one about Black people-Black slaves-who came to the US and under certain circumstances they would fly back to Africa. So that's, yeah that's an escape thing. It's a little psychological trick. I read a lot of those slave narratives...that they published in the (19)30s. And the interviewer would ask certain basic questions. He or she always ask that: 'Have you ever heard of flying Africans?' [laughter]. Everybody said one of two things: 'No I never saw any. But I heard about it.' Or they said, they had seen it. No one said, 'What are you talking about?!'... They all had heard it. So what is there about that? It's probably escape. It's also the move away from Earth into things that were more spiritual. It has a lot of connotations...So I'm thinking, 'how can I make a contemporary story about a Black man - a young Black man- who learns to fly or who makes his escape?' Not geographical escape back to Africa, but another mindset. How does he escape the prison, you know the cultural prison that he found himself in? - Toni Morrison

Hymn

I'll Fly Away

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abNlbWs1CTU

[i]Anthony Trochez (2019) suggests, "We live in a world predicated on the need for widespread violence and oppression" (p. 16). However, it is important to note the inherent distinction between the concepts of "world" and "Earth." Drawing once more from Trochez, "World and Earth" are not synonyms; the term 'world' is a social construct commonly used to describe…the ideological understandings of where we live and how we might want to live in these places (think worldview)… [while] the word 'Earth'…describe[s] our home which we share with all the living, breathing, feeling beings we share place with"(p.16) We uplift Trochez's distinction and utilize the word "world" in a similar way.

[ii]i.e. that Blacks are outside of civil society, inhabit the domain of the non-person, and have no access to familial or bodily integrity.

[iii]Opportunity: from the Latin Ob-,meaning "toward," and portu(m),meaning "port": What is opportunity in the Wake, and how is opportunity always framed?" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 3)

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