Making Black Public Humanities in South Florida: Fugitive Pedagogies, Self-Making, and
Memory Work

By
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William García-Medina
M.A., Teachers College, Columbia University, 2016
M.A., University of Puerto Rico – Recinto Río Piedras, 2015
B.A., University of Puerto Rico – Recinto Río Piedras, 2013

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Co-Chair: Dr. Randal Maurice Jelks

_____

Co-Chair: Dr. Clarence Lang

_____

Dr. Peter Welsh

_____

Dr. Giselle Anatol

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Dr. Ayesha Hardison

_____

Dr. Nathan Wood

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The dissertation committee for William García-Medina certifies that this
is the approved version of the following dissertation:

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Co-Chair: Dr. Randal Maurice Jelks

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Co-Chair: Dr. Clarence Lang

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Abstract

"Making Black public humanities in South Florida: Fugitive Pedagogies, Self-Making, and Memory Work" seeks to make a contribution to the field of Black public humanities by examining the history and achievements of the African American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I argue that a project like this could serve as a preliminary litmus test by Black public humanities educators and administrators to determine the extent to which their centers are exemplary and inclusive. Although the field of public humanities has been extensively discussed in museum studies, there is little scholarship that examines how Black public humanities initiatives can be exemplary and academically useful to the field of public humanities, museum, and library studies as a whole. My study of the AARLCC through observation, participation, archival research and interviews has revealed that we have to pay attention to what these institutions are doing to maintain a public-facing and publicly-engaged humanities initiative. Their ability to create programming and events that center the general public has generated more public engagement and unity amongst its Black diverse community. Furthermore, they lead by example by creating multimodal events that use social media, virtual tours, and other platforms to achieve a higher public participation. In other words, they are a grassroots-created institution and a public-facing and public-centered one in its praxis.

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Introduction: Public Humanities, A Field Overview

As part of the 2018 American Historical Association conference which took place in Washington, D.C., I joined a tour to the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). As I approached the entrance, I saw numerous plaques of keystone corporate donors who funded the museum. The list included countless celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and the Michael Jordan family. The museum consisted of various rooms, one of which was showing a documentary by the successful Black American director, Ava Duvernay. The tour guide was a tall white man who introduced himself and uttered his first words: "This is not a museum of Black people, this is a museum of American history about African Americans." I found that comment interesting, but what I was surprised by was my own question that arose out of this experience: For whom are these national museums and cultural institutions?

This led me to reflect on my visit to the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI), a non-profit cultural institution located in the heart of Spanish Harlem in New York City. Unlike the NMAAHC, CCCADI is located in a neighborhood many tourists do not frequent. It is housed in a red building, which was previously a fire department. In 2015, I went to CCCADI for a workshop on African storytelling. I was a graduate student at Teachers College - Columbia University and was interested in Afro-diasporic culturally-relevant pedagogy. Entering the building I was welcomed by a spacious lobby filled with warm wood and bright colors, which was also used as a space for performances. I was greeted by the founder, Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, who is a Black Puerto Rican educator and activist. The space had a home-grown feel to it. During the workshop I was attending, several African stories and myths were told and a dance performance ensued. CCCADI as a Black-centered public space functions

differently than the NMAAHC. While the CCCADI also relies on public and government funds, it is not focused on the "American" story, but rather focuses on the African diaspora topics that interest the community. Their mission is to be an organization that "...advances cultural equity and justice for African descendant communities," which is clearly linked to the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement.[1] Although the NMAAHC also has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement's political trajectories, its mission is "To provide opportunities for those who are interested in African-American history and culture to explore and celebrate that history and culture."[2] The CCCADI is not about the history of Black Americans in the United States, but instead is an Afro-centric cultural center dedicated to the historical, cultural, and political reckoning of afro-diasporic communities. Both the NMAAHC and CCCADI are what we deem public humanities cultural institutions focused on having knowledge and experience about the human condition reach a broader audience.

Upon reflecting on my experiences with both of these institutions, I am led to ask: who is the "public" in these public humanities cultural institutions? Who are they by and for? More importantly: where and how do we, as public humanities scholars, engage Black public humanities? We know that public humanities has become a trendy concept and praxis in the connection between universities and public-facing scholarship, but yet there are limitations which have made inclusivity the narrative by which Black communities are part of the mainstream public humanities discussion. In the pages that follow, I delineate a few of these limitations with a close observation of what has been called "public humanities," considering who this "public" includes, and how its progressive "inclusivity" is defined in order to generate a

[1] "Mission," Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, accessed March 22, 2020, https://cccadi.org/mission-vision.
[2] "About the Museum," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed October 12, 2018, https://nmaahc.si.edu/about/about-museum.

better understanding of what is at stake in the field of public humanities. I explore how Black local communities and cultural institutions move and create such "humanistic knowledges" as pertinent to their own public histories, resisting erasure, and challenging the ways that the field of Black public humanities has become forgotten, illegible, and/or effaced within the broader field of public humanities. The actual practice of Black public humanities requires a consideration of structural inequalities that have made it almost impossible to consolidate the gap between who is considered the public and how this public participates in the making of such knowledges. Through my focused research of the African American Research Library and Cultural Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, I expand on this notion of Black public humanities by including a set of histories, practices of fugitive pedagogies, and Black memory work informed by self-making and community engagement. I illuminate the importance of this work and its contributions. It is important to note that the public humanities are being explored here in the work of cultural institutions, which include libraries and museums alongside each other. David Carr, a scholar of public cultural institutions, delineates cultural institutions as having: "the presence of a collection," "a systemic, continuous, organized knowledge structure," and "scholarship, information, and thought."[3] In this way, we can think of libraries like the AARLCC, museums like the NMAAHC, and cultural institutions such as the CCCADI as part of the same conversation within public humanities, and in my work, Black public humanities.

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[3] David Carr, *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (Altamira Press: Walnut Creek, CA, 2003), xv.

Public Humanities Definition and Engagement

The term "public humanities" came from national humanities institutions as an umbrella term to encompass a set of practices that would democratize humanistic knowledge through audience-oriented means. Robyn Schroeder in her article, "The Rise of the Public Humanists," defines the public humanities in the following way,

> Public humanities is the work of moving humanistic knowledge among individuals and groups of people. Some of the most common varieties of that work are translated scholarship; cultural organizing; production of programs, plays, performances, tours, festivals or other audience-oriented humanistic activities; and make activities, particularly art, music, writing; and generally, ways of making meaning socially, or making personal meaning in public space.[4]

To this end, in the 1960s and 1970s as described by Schroeder, there was a rise of left-leaning academics who believed in the democratization of knowledge. The concept of the public humanities arose with the help of those who were dissatisfied with institutional gatekeeping along with a desire to produce and disseminate knowledge to those considered the publics. It is then that the National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 used the term "public humanities" to create grants and opportunities that would encompass organizations doing the work that Schroeder describes above in her definition of "public humanities."[5] It must be made clear that these academics were not using the word "public humanities," but more so referring to the work of civic engagement, service learning, public history, museology, libraries, theatre, art, etc. However, "…by the late 1970s, academic humanists, cultural practitioners in contact with the NEH, and politicians concerned with the moral timbre of American life, increasingly

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[4] Robyn, Schroeder, "The Rise of the Public Humanists," in *Doing Public Humanities*, ed. Susan Smulyan (New York: Routledge, 2020), 6.
[5] Schroeder, "The Rise of the Public Humanists," 7.

bemoaned a divide between the academy and the public."[6] While the efforts to close the gap

between the public and the academy were radical for their time, it was utopianist at best because

it did not pay attention to the diversity of the American public. As Schroeder describes, "The

tensions, particularly around ideologies of race and racist rhetoric, that emerged in this

partnership, were sometimes pragmatically and sometimes unwittingly ignored in order to make

the Public Humanities, with its various utopianisms around active inclusion and humanities

praxis, possible."[7] In other words, there was a clear limitation of what public humanities could

do, what kind of public it could reach, and what kinds of public histories and civic engagement it

would involve itself with. Meaning, the public humanities, while public, limits itself to a more

mainstream ostensibly universalized public without particular attention to heterogeneity or

difference. That being the case, it is important for us to examine who is this "public" and what

elements create who that public is.

Who is The Public?

In searching for more literature in regard to the "public" in public humanities, it becomes

clear that the public is a political, socio-cultural, and philosophical term connected to higher

echelons of power relations. Officially, the term "public" within the context of public

humanities, involves public museums, cultural centers, libraries, and other non-academic

institutions.[8] However, some institutions like museums were not created with the working-class

communities in mind, but rather the elite class. As such, from their beginnings, they were

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[6] Ibid, 20. According to Schroeder, a vertical public humanities project maintains traditional expertise and endeavors to extend it "downward" to those otherwise lacking access to higher education. A horizontal approach to the public humanities valorizes participation, community leadership, and sharing or surrendering expert authority.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ideas surrounding the public, institutions and accessibility were challenged by members of the Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer among others who argued that the expansion of mass media and consumerism have led to the demise of the public sphere.

embroiled in the attempt to culture a public and encourage people to imagine and experience themselves as members of an ordered but nevertheless nation-state. Curator and theorist Simon Sheik offers provocative presentations of how the public is assigned places in society according to rigid social hierarchies. This process, Sheik argues, thwarts the complexity with which theories on public spaces become limited to economic flows and bourgeois logics. Sheikh argues, using the public as a way to categorize social phenomena stating the following, "I must add that the notion of the publics...is mainly a historical notion, a nineteenth-century concept based on specific ideas of subjectivity and citizenship, that cannot be so easily translated into the modular and hybrid societies of late global capital, into the postmodern as opposed to the emerging modern era."[9] In other words, the inseparability between citizenship and public within a western construct and its devastating effect on how we understand societies and their existence is at the center of most conceptions of the public.[10] Furthermore, Tony Bennet's *The Birth of the Museum* (1995), determined to expand dialogues surrounding museum collections and the public, explores how the public museum should be understood not just as a place of instruction, but as a reformatory of manners in which a wide range of regulated social routines and performances take place. Bennett is interested in the use of new materials such as cast-iron and sheet glass to permit enclosure and illumination of large spaces, the clearing of exhibits to the

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[9] Simon Sheikh, "Publics and Post-Publics: The Production of the Social," in *Art as a public issue: how art and its institutions reinvent the public dimension*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2008), 6.
Scholars like Jurgen Habermas interpreted the public sphere as a buffer zone between individuals and the state made up of: 1) political deliberation, 2) culture and, 3) the market place. The connections of cousin on the nation state, the realm of economic exchange and family relations have been critiqued by scholars like Sheikh the notion of counter publics. Sheik's arguments resonate with the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG), which resulted from South Asian scholars who were interested in post-colonial and post-imperial societies. Authors such as Erik Stokes, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak and focused on how the colonized have resisted the power of the colonizers, mainly the Western powers. Various global dynamic occurrences are often obfuscated and rendered invisible and frivolous by certain elites and their academic allies who attempt to preserve national, cultural and identity essentialist discourses.
[10] Like Stuart Hall's conceptualization of reception theory, (the audience's ability to decode, oppose and negotiate information from media outlets), the idea of post-public can be defined as the idea of counter public is *an in between* zone between the nation state and bourgeoisie notion of the public.

sides and centers of display areas to break up the public from a disaggregated mass into an

orderly flow, and the provision of elevated vantage points in the form of galleries in order to

introduce self-surveillance and hence, self-regulation, into museum architecture.

As Bennett argues, "…allowing the public to double as both the subject and the object of

a controlling look, the museum embodied what had been, for [Jeremy] Bentham, a major aim of

Panopticism, the democratic aspiration of a society rendered transparent to its own controlling

gaze."[11] Bennett is interested in what he calls the political rationality of the museum. As such,

the nation state with its emphasis on democratic principles purposely made the museum to

appear in public in order to control and maintain uneven social stratifications in society. As

Bennett argues,

> For in practice, of course, the space of representation shaped into being by the public
> museum was hijacked by all sorts of particular social ideologies; it was sexist in the
> gendered patterns of exclusions, racist in its assignation of the aboriginal populations of
> conquered territories to the lowest rungs of human evolution, and bourgeois in the respect
> that it was clearly articulated to bourgeois rhetorics of progress. For all that, it was an
> order of things and peoples that could be opened up to criticism from within as much, in
> purporting to tell the story of Man, it incorporated a principle and generality to which any
> particular museum display could be held to be partial, incomplete, inadequate.[12]

As such, Bennet underscores Foucault's elaboration of the role of modern forms of government

and the emergence of new technologies which aim at regulating the conduct of individuals and

differentiating populations. This intermingling of the publics as Bennett describes can

systematically and hegemonically maintain identities and experiences by certain discourses.

Meaning, it can infiltrate all aspects of society maintained by board members eager to keep their

stronghold on knowledge production and social stratification systems. Bennett argues, "In brief,

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[11] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 101.
[12] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 97.

although often little remarked, the exhibition of past regimes of punishment became, and remains, a major museological trope."[13] Many studies around museums have centered on the centrality of the state and its role in controlling populations in different ways. The museum has been described as an ideological panopticon by Bennett, and an illusory classless institution aimed at securing state power via rituals by scholars Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach.[14]

The "Progressive Inclusive" Turn

In the article "Public Humanities' (Victorian) Culture Problem," Mary Mullen's critique of the top-down interpretation of culture and public humanities also questions the ways in which the term public humanities systemically centers a Victorian model of culture and legitimacy overall. She writes,

> I contend that contemporary public humanities initiatives in the United States often depend upon the same logic as these Victorian thinkers, nominally including particular social groups and modes of organizing but refusing to legitimate their authority. Although scholars celebrate the public humanities because they are committed to the 'democratic impulse' or 'civic education', these programs reinforce Victorian divisions between popular and national culture, define democracy through the state and state institutions and maintain social and racial inequality.[15]

Mullen's critical assessment on the history of public humanities and its ties with Victorian thinking allude to the issue of Western modernity and its acknowledgement of an official knowledge while ignoring forms of knowledges from below. Although the history of museums, for instance, has been emphasized to have been started to be documented during the 20th century, especially after World War II, there are other stories which deserve equal merit. Schroeder's

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[13] Ibid, 95.
[14] Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: an Iconographic Analysis," *Marxist Perspectives* 4 (Winter 1978): 29.
[15] Mary L. Mullen, "Public Humanities' (Victorian) Culture Problem," *Cultural Studies (London, England)* 30, no. 2 (2016): 193.

definition of public humanities as "making personal meaning in a public space," suggests that we must reevaluate who and what is considered public humanities. She highlights, "It ought not to surprise us that the idea of "public humanities" was a phrase originally intended to widen the horizons of academic humanists, and not always by their allies; after all, the university and the state humanities councils comprised the bulk of the institutional apparatus that had any commitment even to the word humanities itself."[16] Here, Schroeder is clearly critically thinking beyond the Academy. However, it is clear that there are limitations to what this knowledge does and who does this kind of work. It is not specific how the horizons are being widened. To boot, some public humanists have considered a more praxis-oriented approach to understanding the public humanities. It is impossible to ignore institutions with influence in this area, such as the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage at Brown University. According to the center,

> … the Center for Public Humanities incubates a range of initiatives that spark new approaches, methods or collaborations in the field of public humanities. These initiatives include conferences, exhibitions, publications, tours, performances, events and digital media projects that shape our understanding of public history, museum practices and curation, digital humanities, preservation and cultural heritage, and the arts.[17]

These types of centers with institutional backing tend to be almost exclusively white and elite in terms of its faculty and alumni, which begs the question of considering who the center is for. My intention is not to critique the Center for Public Humanities at Brown or other institutions in the United States but rather underscore how meaning-making and the positionality affect the institutions and how we define the idea of public humanities.

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[16] Mullen, "Public Humanities," 191.
[17] "Initiatives," John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage, accessed February 18, 2020, https://www.brown.edu/academics/public-humanities/initiatives.

For example, Steven Lubar's "Seven Rules for Public Humanists" helps us understand how the concept of public humanities suggests certain guiding principles can be understood and discussed critically. While it is essential to focus on the complex social relationships that could define the public humanities, it is essential to be able to engage with scholars in the field. Lubar offers seven rules for public humanists: 1) It's not about you, 2) be a facilitator and translator as well as an expert, 3) scholarship starts with public engagement, 4) communities define community, 5) collaborate with artists, 6) think digital, and 7) humanists need practical skills.[18] Lubar's seven rules offer a guide for an analysis of such practical requirements for the field. However, Lubar's guide for public humanitists who stem from an academic background still centers a top-down approach. Still, Lubar attempts to re-center community within his analysis, which should not be overlooked.

Furthermore, we should ask ourselves: how do these seven rules relate to publics who are not white or, necessarily, elite? For instance, Lubar's, first rule, "it's not about you," recommends for practitioners to look outside of the university and search instead for what individuals and communities outside of the university need. Many of Lubar's examinations replicate similar arguments made by political activists and community activists such as founders of the Black Arts Movement. Particularly, his stance of "communities define communities" resonates with many political movements that sought to advocate for an array of interconnected issues (better working conditions, rally for social injustice, etc.) While Lubar advises on how the public and the humanities should be shared with communities, he does not acknowledge the roots of public humanities with Black, people of color social movements, and the philosophies

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[18] Steven Lubar, "Seven Rules for Public Humanities," Public Humanities & More, accessed September 9, 2019, http://stevenlubar.net/public-humanities/seven-rules-for-public-humanists/.

and actions that engaged these publics. Much less, does he consider that the scholar-experts might be part of these communities.

Overall, I have found the term "public humanities" baffling because although the public should always be considered within the humanities, my experience with higher education taught me that ivory towers were not always concerned with the needs of a public that consists of working-class communities of color. As Schroeder points out,

> Broadly, the history of the Public Humanities *eo 11ominee* arose in the last fifty years. It is, then, more recent in proliferation than its nested cousin "public history"; owes more to the public sector than its bosom friend "museology"; is more cultural and less political in orientation than "civic engagement"; and tends to refer to a different set of institutions than those of its associates which are oriented toward "community engagement" or "service learning."[19]

However, if we are to go with Schroeder's definition as "…the work of moving humanistic knowledge among individuals and groups of people," along with how she places that definition within public history and education, civic engagement, and museology, then there is a clear disconnect and lack of framework that doesn't allow us to see the interconnections between the cultural, educational, and the political. Although not directly intentional, Schroeder doesn't acknowledge how communities of color have already been doing this work, doesn't analyze public humanities critically, and circumnavigates the work that communities of color have been doing which function within the definition she offers. Her definition, while a great one, does not get applied to the work of communities as public humanities; instead, she sees this work merely as civic and community engagement. Communities of color created institutions too, but this gets elided by projects launched by institutional government and predominantly white institutions who do public humanities. I argue that people like historian and educator Carter G. Woodson, educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune, and historian and bibliophile Arturo

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[19] Schroeder, "The Rise of the Public Humanists," 6.

Alfonso Schomburg, while very much a part of what she defines as public humanities, are actually outside her purview as public humanities creators.

Initially, upon reading Schroeder's definition of public humanities, the Harlem Renaissance came to mind. The term public humanities resonates with the poetry, painting, literature, activism, jazz and swing, opera and dance contributed by many during the Harlem Renaissance. I also thought about The Tuskegee Institute, the Harlem step ladder orators like Hubert Harrison, the Afro-American Federation of Labor, Prince Hall Freemasonry, the UNIA movement, the African Blood Brotherhood, and the Black Arts Movement. Schroeder's analysis of the gap between the academy and public in the 1970s ignores the social movements taking place in higher education spaces as well as communal spaces that sought to create space for their community, which led to the Black and Puerto Rican Studies departments on the East coast and Ethnic and Mexican American Studies programs on the West coast of the United States. Simply, the term "public humanities" was not created with Black people or people of color in mind. This is not to say that Schroeder is explicitly leaving out Black people out of her analysis, however, they are not specifically central to her discourse.

The traditional understandings of the term public humanities center the idea that the humanities, in an academic sense, should reach the masses in meaningful ways. My concern is not that of institutional knowledges and the study of the human condition (known as the humanities) and how this knowledge reach[es] the public, but instead, that few scholars pay attention to the ways that the public—and, specifically, the Black public in my work—create knowledge by and for themselves. We must re-center the way that public humanities are not just about disseminating scholarship to the public, but the way the public forms and creates their own

systems or institutions of dissemination among and with their own communities and what the histories of this work are.

The AARLCC

My dissertation focuses on how Black public humanities challenges Schroeder's argument that public humanities is simply "the work of moving humanistic knowledge among individuals and groups of people." There is very little scholarly literature that examines how Black public humanities initiatives can be exemplary and academically useful to the field of public humanities, museum, and library studies as a whole. Library and museum studies tend to be divided in their literature, but their context tends to overlap in institutions like the AARLCC. My project encourages cultural institutions, curators, and educators to bridge the gap between museum and library studies through a public humanities lens. Black studies scholars have to be aware of the history of Black museums and cultural institutions in order to understand the trajectory of the relationship between self-making and the power dynamics sprung from multi-dimensional struggles. The AARLCC constructs meaning around Black public humanities and through their integration into the diverse Black community of Sistrunk in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The AARLCC opened in 2002 in the Sistrunk neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale, Florida as a branch of the Broward County Library system. Sistrunk, the historically Black American and West Indian neighborhood, has a rich history of Black civil rights, innovation, and initiatives. The AARLCC is one of the world's leading cultural institutions devoted to research, preservation, and exhibition of materials focused on Black American and African Diaspora experiences and is staffed primarily by diverse Black employees. Today, this 60,000-square-foot

facility is the third of its kind in the United States to house extensive collections related to a unique blend of West Indian, Black American, and African cultures. The research library houses more than 85,000 books, manuscripts, artifacts, and documents.

I went to the AARLCC after my advisor and I had a conversation about my interest in Florida due to its diverse Black population. As an Africana Studies scholar, my work has revolved mostly on Afro-Puerto Ricans, Black immigrants, and AfroLatinos/as/xs in the United States. Dr. Randal Jelks informed me of an institution that was about Black self-makings. I went to the AARLCC not knowing what to expect. Although I am academically trained as a historian and educator, I wasn't sure if doing research on a building was something I would do as I have never done any microhistories or public historical research in the past and had focused on cultural studies, cultural histories, and historical literacies in K-12 education. The term "African American" in the AARLCC's title gave me trepidation as I am not an Afro-Americanist per se, and more so an Africana Studies or African Diaspora Studies scholar interested in the relationships between Black Americans and other Black ethnic groups in the Americas. I was ready to plead with Dr. Jelks to do research in a site where more of my research interests were centered. After conducting some preliminary research in 2018 and visiting the AARLCC in early 2019, I realized that I was foolish to believe I should pass up on such an incredible site with so much material on Black diasporic life. Whenever I entered the building, there was always something taking place–the AARLCC is a gathering place, a meeting ground. From the fundraising for the construction of the building to the collaboration with people in the community to the programming, archives, exhibits, and theatre performances organized by the AARLCC, I understood why Dr. Jelks sent me there. As soon as I learned more on the history I

applied to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for permission to interview the founders,

directors, and everyone else involved in the AARLCC's creation and direction.

Methods

As an outsider, I opted for centering their voices as much as possible while also providing

my own frameworks. One's positionality and phenomenology around Blackness in great part

depends on what one is looking for. A great example is that of Arturo Schomburg, an Afro-

Puerto Rican bibliophile and emblematic figure of the Harlem Renaissance, and his quest for

expanding on the notions of hispano-African roots beyond the U.S.-British framework.

According to Cesar Salgado,

> Schomburg and [Alain] Locke partnered to tour Europe's great art museums together in
> 1926 as part of an evolving project on image fashioning by and about Africans and their
> descendants throughout Western and non-Western art history. …Schomburg focused on
> the capacity of African-descended "Latin" easel painters (i.e., of Mediterranean, Italian,
> Andalusian, and Spanish Caribbean heritage) to assimilate and advance the achievements
> of Renaissance visual and civic culture. In his essays on seventeenth-century School of
> Seville freedmen black painters Juan de Pareja and Sebastián Gómez and Spanish
> Caribbean master artists such as José Campeche and Pastor Argudín, Schomburg traced
> the emergence of a transatlantic Afro-Latino sovereign subject, one that shed his
> subordinate condition through strategies of Renaissance self-invention and perfectibility
> available through the mentor-apprentice structure prevalent in gremial artisan
> workshops.[20]

Similar to Schomburg, my interest in figures like Esther Rolle in relation to the AARLCC is in

trying to understand her complexity as a daughter of Black Bahamian immigrants. Black

communalism largely depends on how people view each other as a community. This added layer

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[20] César A. Salgado, "The Archive and Afro-Latina/o Field-Formation: Arturo Alfonso Schomburg at the Intersection of Puerto Rican and African American Studies and Literatures," in *The Cambridge History of Latina/o American Literature*, ed. John Morán González and Laura Lomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 332.

of community in such an ethnically diverse Black region is central to the importance of the

AARLCC.

I collected data through individual semi-structured interviews, field notes, document

analysis, and autoethnographic reflection. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with

staff members at the AARLCC, key collaborators in its creation, as well as previous keynote

speakers and writers who have written about the AARLCC. In January 2020, I secured approval

from the IRB to follow through with collecting data through interviews of people working for

and/or associated with the AARLCC. My first point of contact was the AARLCC director,

Makiba Foster. Through my connections with Foster, I was able to connect with Fort Lauderdale

area community activists, artists, and other current and prior AARLCC employees and

supporters. I communicated with these individuals through calls, emails, social media (e.g.

Facebook), and in-person at the AARLCC. I was able to recruit interviewees through email,

personal connections, social media, and via phone. Interviewees did not receive any monetary

compensation. Once interviewees agreed to an interview, in-person interviews took place in a

space of their own choosing, making sure that it was a safe space, or a space in which they felt

most comfortable—for some that was in their home, a coffee shop, or different spaces at the

AARLCC. Due to my limited research funds and the pandemic, many interviews were also

conducted via Zoom and telephone. Interviews via Zoom were audio/video recorded and

interviews in person were only audio recorded using my phone as well as the Otter

recording/transcription service software.

Once settled in the interview space, I went over the consent form, which I had already

shared with participants via email, and asked if they had any questions about it. In-person

interviewees would then sign the consent form, and virtual/phone interviewees would send me

the signed paperwork before we would begin the interview. I would remind them that the interview would be recorded and last anywhere between 1-2 hours, although we could always adjust the time and follow up as needed. Part of the interview process and protocols were always to empower the interviewee and remind them they had agency. For example, they were reminded that they could answer the questions as they saw best; they could also not answer all questions if they did not want to. They were also given the option to not use their real name and information, as well as end the conversation if at any point they felt uncomfortable or needed a break. In the end, all participants agreed to have their names and information shared as-is in the project, which is important to highlight. It is vital that the names of the participants remain connected to the data because these interviews are narratives about a specific era, place, and community that has historically been omitted. In order for these oral histories to be used by future scholars, researchers, and genealogists, the names of the interviewees must be documented and preserved. However, this would not have happened without the consent of the interviewees. In the appendix, I have included a copy of the consent form shared with them as well as the interview questions.

Furthermore, I conducted archival research in order to effectively triangulate my data and explored online digital collections and the newspaper clippings of the *South Florida Gazette* available through the AARLCC and the University of Miami libraries. Due to the pandemic, I had to work with the AARLCC's digital collections to get access to the Samuel Morrison papers they house. This collection is organized into five series with four sub-series with an emphasis from 1990-2003. Series 3: African American Research Library and Cultural Center consists of clippings, magazines, correspondence, business files, marketing brochures, and memorabilia relating to the design, construction, fundraising, and grand opening of the AARLCC. Also

donated with these papers were 45 books and 144 record albums. Hence, the last chapter of my

dissertation emerged out of the necessity to change with the times as well as expanding my

methods to include digital social media/internet archives. Online sources such as Eventbrite and

Facebook, provide a list of events and videos that have taken place at the AARLCC. Knowing

about these events has helped me find more information about the dynamics around

programming as well as conduct participant observation at some of these events such as their

SoFlo Book Festival, which was virtual in the summer of 2021.

Methodology & Definitions

Self-Making

In regard to my methodology, I follow Edmund T. Gordon's approach to African

diaspora studies as a crucial aspect of a Black public humanities-centered method, which lies in

the notion of self-making for people of African descent. I focus this at a local level of people of

African descent in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in the Sistrunk community. Gordon writes:

> … [O]ur idea of Diaspora focuses on Black agency and the processes of self-making; the Black/African Diaspora as a transnational cultural, intellectual, and, above all, political project that seeks to name, represent, and participate in Black people's historic efforts to construct our collective identities and constitute them through cultural–political practices dedicated to expressing our full humanity and seeking for liberation.[21]

Although many public humanities scholars have contributed significantly to the field, Black

people have been undertaking the notion of public humanities before it became an academic and

praxeological term. I explore this more closely in chapter 1 where I discuss "fugitive

pedagogies" as a central catalyst and approach of Black public humanities through scholar Jarvis

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[21] Edmund T. Gordon, "The Austin School Manifesto: An Approach to the Black or African Diaspora," *Cultural Dynamics* 19, no. 1 (2007): 93.

Givens' work on Carter G. Woodson. I extend that exploration of Black public humanities as a fugitive pedagogy that is pre-existent in Black public education, Black public histories, the Black Museum movement, and among Black bibliophiles and librarians. Hence, the interviews, archival research, and participant observation I have conducted at and with the AARLCC to date are pivotal to this project's understanding of Black public humanities as a conceptual, philosophical, and practical exploration of what is meant by Blackness and Public humanities.

In the context of the AARLCC, self-making also requires a particular focus on regional history and how it intersects (or not) with national politics. One could argue that the Sistrunk community partakes in a type of Black locality, which makes visible other forms of local Back politics that are not national in scale. This micro or hyper local Sistrunk community formation and sense of self direction does not rely on a Black national consensus. Rather, their understanding of community and identity takes a front seat as to how they engage in that given region. Historian Tara Zahra engages this idea as a kind of "national indifference" in her article "Imagined Communities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis" where she focuses on the concept of national indifference as a way to analyze and examine how regions prioritize their own development in ways that decenter a national agenda. As Zahra argues, "making indifference visible… enables historians to better understand the limits of nationalization and thereby challenge the nationalist narratives, categories, and frameworks that have traditionally dominated the historiography of Eastern Europe."[22] Although, Zahra mentions Eastern Europe specifically, the concept of indifference can be applied to the Sistrunk community. The Sistrunk community pays particular attention to its own neighborhood, which is evidenced in its strong

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[22] Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis in Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies," *Slavic Review* 69, no.1 (Spring 2010): 94.

communal organizational ties. That is not to say that the Sistrunk community is isolated but rather to suggest that there is a focus in developing and prioritizing their own community.

For these reasons, this project follows Rogers Brubaker's concept of identity as an analytical category of practice instead of a category of analysis. When conceptualizing categories of practice, Brubaker posits that "these are categories of everyday social experiences, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from experience-distant categories used by social analysts…such concepts as "race" "ethnicity," or "nation" are marked by close reciprocal connection and mutual influence between their practical and analytical uses."[23] In order to show Black self-makings, it is crucial to historicize and study *how* these self-makings are made in a given region. Thus, creating a "We, Black people" or "Black is Black" can create some form of unity, but it can also conceal specific Black communal interconnections by rendering them inconceivable, or even unrealistic. "We, Black people" can mean one thing when referring to white supremacy or "We, Black people" may refer to specific Black ethnicities when discussing or debating Black American and West Indian contributions to U.S. history. To add to this point, Brubaker's intervention rests upon the argument that,

> If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere. If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for—and sometimes realized by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups?[24]

Meaning, studying the AARLCC and the Sistrunk community without having to universalize Blackness as a category of analysis allows me to follow how the neighborhood has created its own sense of self. Black diverse groups living in proximity to each other also means they strive

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[23]Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 31.
[24] Brubaker, 29.

for things and collaborate beyond their ethnic and social adhesions. In other words, I consider

how the formation of these particular Black self-makings are influenced by region and historical

circumstances that allowed for the creation of the AARLCC, as well as the actual doing of

identity.

Black Memory Work

One of the recurring concepts that continues to be used by Black public humanists is

'Black Memory work'. I engage and think of Black memory work in the ways that scholars

doing Black public humanities work are engaged with it. The term itself is constantly used by

Black academics, educators, archivists among other sub disciplines and sub fields. For instance,

Geoff Ward and Jeffrey McCune, two Black professors at Washington University St. Louis, lead

a podcast titled *Black Memory Work*. They created this podcast during the COVID-19 pandemic

in order to create awareness of the particular effects the pandemic had on Black people. In the

first episode, Ward defines Black memory work by stating the following, "We use the theme

Black memory work to riff on this idea that Black Studies is in large part about the cultivation,

curation, preservation of Black collective memory and the idea that all of our projects in some

sense, in Black Studies are examples of Black memory work, this moment invites us to think

about that here."[25] Ward reminds the listener, that Black Studies from its very beginning was

intentional about representing collective memory from various social stratifications of Black

people in society. The podcast centers the voices of various scholars and researchers discussing

their scholarship and its connections to Black communities. Other professors such as Peter

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[25] Geoff Ward, "The Imperative of Black Memory Work," May 2, 2020, in *Black Memory Work*, produced by Geoff Ward and Jeffrey McCune, podcast, 07:58, https://anchor.fm/geoff-ward7/episodes/Ep--1-Bonus-The-Imperative-of-Black-Memory-Work-edhu3q.

Robinson and Riché Richardson at Cornell University taught a course titled "Black Memory

workers and their Spatial Practices," which focused on Black American heritage spaces in New

York City. Robinson went on to define the Black memory worker as, "someone embedded in the

culture, so it's not their job to preserve their community, it's a life practice."[26] This statement

creates tension for traditional scholars such as ethnohistorians, anthropologists, among other

disciplines and subfields that partake in preservation, documentation, research, and publication

of communities which does not require the scholar to be integrally connected to the community

itself. Some scholars would argue that being in community with the interviewees skews

objectivity within scholastic knowledges. The idea of differential ways of knowing can only be

taken at face value if the observer/scholar maintains a degree of separation in order to interpret

the data objectively. Again, these forms of knowing are not in operation when we take into

account Black memory work.

In their article titled "This Black Woman's Work: Exploring Archival Projects that

Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker," Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shanee' Murrain,

and Syla Hearn, remind us about the bigger scope: what is at stake when we are talking about

Black memory work, they write:

> Cultural memory workers focused on African American collections face numerous
> challenges: the risk of losing materials or communities themselves; partnering with
> organizations and administrations with differing and perhaps conflicting agendas;
> working on projects with limited or term funding; and the emotional labor of being a
> person of color in a predominantly white field trying to support communities that can
> often reflect their own experiences. How can libraries, museums, and archives bring these
> communities into the world of archives and empower them to protect and share their
> stories? How can archivists, particularly those of color, find support within their
> institutions and the archival profession, to accomplish the work of preserving African

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[26] Kathy Hovis, "Students Engage with 'Black Memory Workers' in NYC," Cornell Chronicle, January 14, 2022,
https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2022/01/students-engage-black-memory-workers-nyc.

American cultural heritage? How can archives support genuinely collaborative projects with diverse Black communities without co-opting their stories and collections?[27]

Scholars like Powell, Smith, Murrain, and Hearn engage Black memory work through an archivist lens while underscoring institutional dynamics that force Black memory workers to advocate for their own memories as well as the memories of those in Black communities otherwise ignored or (mis)interpreted by engaged scholars who document Black life through a rational approach that lacks the interstices of collective memory. Although different Black public humanists use the term Black memory work in a myriad of ways that are open to multiple meanings, they nonetheless agree on the need to preserve their own histories for future generations. I suggest that the risk of this term is that it has the capacity to homogenize Black people, which can be avoided as long as diverse Black bodies are allowed to partake in memory work such as Black queer folks, Black immigrants, Black folks with disabilities, etc. For Black memory work to function, there needs to be consideration of intersectional identities as well as special attention to their particular local geographical contexts.

The term "Black memory work" is central to this dissertation as it engages with self-making, knowledge formation, and collective memory. Writers like Minna Salami are decolonizing how we think about knowledge altogether. One of the main points that Salami makes is the need to reconceptualize the relationship between rational and emotional intelligence. She writes, "We need an approach to knowledge that synthesizes the imaginative and rational, the quantifiable and immeasurable, the intellectual and the emotional."[28] By being in conversations with various scholars in the fields of neuropsychology, such as Daniel

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[27]Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shanee' Murrain, and Skyla Hearn, "This [Black] Woman's Work: Exploring Archival Projects That Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker," *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies* 2, no. 1: 5.

[28] Minna Salami, Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone (New York: Amistad, 2014), 14.

Kahneman and his work on Dual Process Theory (DPT) and neuroscientist Antonio Damasio

among others, Salami recommends a new conceptualization, which she calls "sensuous

knowledge." Salami stresses that, "…when something is sensuous it affects not only your senses

but your entire being—your mind, body and soul."[29] Salami's argument is similar to Sylvia

Winter's argument of undoing Western forms of knowing instead of privileging the systems

through which knowledge is constituted. Wynter advocates for a need to unlink oneself from

western notions of "human" and "knowledge" through epistemic disobedience.[30] This

"decolonial option" proposed by both Salami and Wynter grounds us towards a path where

recording and disseminating knowledges from people classified as difference according to

Wynter can lead to a form of autopoiesis: seeing the world and knowing via a decolonial

narrativization.

FUBU

Throughout this research, it becomes evident how Black self-making is centered in Black

communities, and in particular, Black communities serving and creating resources for

themselves. Hence, much of the approaches imbued in Black memory work can be defined as

"For Us, By Us" (FUBU), which comes to a mainstream dialogue through the fashionwear brand

F.U.B.U, which was popular in the 1990s. According to the *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and*

Society, FUBU was one of the first lines of fashion wear geared toward the hip-hop generation,

and it was the first to market itself widely as a fashion brand designed for Black people and by

Black people, hence the phrase "For Us, By Us."[31] Despite FUBU being a statement of economic

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Walter D. Mignolo, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?" In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 107.

[31] Richard T. Schaefer, "FUBU Company," in *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, ed. Richard T. Schaefer, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), 517.

determination and cultural resistance, it shares some semblance with definitions of Black memory work in the sense that FUBU is about "gaining access to dominant economic structures and appropriating those structures to make the desire for alternative creative and social visions and avenues of inclusion transparent."[32] There is a clear consensus that the history of Black people needs to be written, preserved, and disseminated by Black people and for Black people in order to avoid the further cooptation of Black existence as can be seen with the hyper-commodification of Black culture in the United States and other parts of the globe. Black memory work is a FUBU philosophy that does not limit itself to the nation state, particular ethnicity, genders, and/or able-bodied essentialisms.

Thinking Black Publics and Black Public Spheres

In order to further elucidate and support the arguments of this chapter I briefly return to the discussion of who is the "public" in Black public humanities through the scholarship on Black public spheres. Many scholars have suggested a multiple dimensional approach for analyzing Black public spheres. For example, communications studies scholars like Catherine Squires in her article, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere" posits that, "the move away from the ideal of a single public sphere is important in that it allows recognition of the public struggles and political innovations of marginalized groups outside traditional or state-sanctioned public spaces and mainstream discourses dominated by white bourgeois males."[33] Squires' emphasis on multiple Black public spheres is relevant towards understanding the multiple dimensions and meanings of multiple Black public spheres. It is important because she considers how, "focusing

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Catherine R. Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (2002): 446.

on traditional political protest actions, such as boycotts or marches, may cause us to overlook important developments in inter- or intra-public discourse as well as publicity."[34] Too often, we count on the cultural industry to ascribe value to very traditional representations of resistance to the point where it homogenizes how many communities explore their subversiveness. A Black public humanities approach cannot rely on these traditional approaches to counter publics if it wishes to be *in community*. Squires reminds us that, "at different times in history, African Americans have been forced into enclaves by repressive state policies, and have used these enclave spaces to create discursive strategies and gather oppositional resources."[35] Indeed, the particular forms of resistance are not only ignored by mainstream society but also refuse to acknowledge these spheres because it does not align with their own ideologies around progress and civility.

Black public humanities cannot simply revolve around taking a keen interest in Black memory work without paying attention to multidimensional Black public spheres. Therefore, Squires presents an alternative vocabulary for multiple public spheres through an exploration of the history of the Black American public sphere. For Squires, there are three types of marginal publics: enclave, counterpublic, and satellite, which can be seen through the kinds of resources different publics have available to them. Firstly, Black enclaves are spaces of gathering and fighting for equality and self-making. However, as Squires underscores, Black enclaves are not often safe and are susceptible to institutional sanctions. Black enclave communities are much more enclosed or closed-off to those who may not already be a part of it. Secondly,

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[34] Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere," 447.
[35] Ibid, 458.

counterpublics are the more traditional depictions we have of the Civil Rights Movement such as

boycotts, marches, strikes etc. As argued by Squires,

> The counterpublic is signified by increased public communication between the
> marginal and dominant public spheres, both in face-to-face and mediated forms.
> Counterpublic discourses travel outside of safe, enclave spaces to argue against
> dominant conceptions of the group and to describe group interests.
> Counterpublics reject the performance of public transcripts and instead project the
> hidden transcripts, previously spoken only in enclaves, to dominant publics.
> Counterpublics test the reactions of wider publics by stating previously hidden
> opinions, launching persuasive campaigns to change the minds of dominant
> publics, or seeking solidarity with other marginal groups.[36]

Instead of staying within a chosen enclave, counterpublics are about making public certain rights

and claims by those in various communities who share certain experiences and systemic

injustices.

Squires emphasizes how "sit-ins, marches, boycotts, voter registration drives, as well as

the revaluation of African and Afrocentric arts, physical characteristics, and speech—were all

central elements of daily life for a large number of African Americans. This intense, widespread

involvement set the tone and agenda for Black politics and discourses."[37] A fundamental point

that Squires makes is that, "although counterpublics create more opportunities for intersphere

discussions, the members of dominant publics may monopolize these opportunities."[38] This is

important to take into account because it reveals how Black public humanities spaces can be

either controlled, manipulated, and hailed by stronger socio-political and economic forces. This

can explain why there is preference for the location of Black public humanities spaces, which are

part of a counterpublic sphere to exist within geographies of Black enclaves. To take case in

point, the AARLCC as a counterpublic Black sphere is located in the Black enclave of the

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[36] Ibid, 460.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid, 461.

Sistrunk neighborhood. This geopolitical setup allows for the AARLCC to create more cross

collaborations amongst its community members.

Lastly, For Squires, "Satellite public spheres are those that desire to be separate from

other publics. In contrast to an enclaved public, where distance from wider publics is the result of

oppression, satellite public spheres are formed by collectives that do not desire regular discourse

or interdependency with other publics. Satellite public spheres aim to maintain a solid group

identity and build independent institutions."[39] Squires offers the Nation of Islam as a Black

satellite public sphere. Occasionally satellites will intertwine with other spheres as explained by

Squires, "for the most part, however, this public stays in its own orbit usually crossing paths with

wider publics only at points of crisis."[40]

Chapter Descriptions

In chapter 1, "What are Black public humanities?: A Conceptual Framework" I explore

and define the concept of Black public humanities by analyzing the importance of fugitive

pedagogies, memory work, and self-makings. A fugitive pedagogical practice and approach

helps us recognize the continuous labor of Black communities in the realm of knowledge

formation. I discuss the work of Black public humanities practitioners such as Carter G.

Woodson, Mary McLeod Bethune, Drusilla Houston, Tessie McGee, and others who sought to

spread Black history and self-education amidst being instructed to do so otherwise. These

moments of fugitivity reveal a deeper desire to connect with Black audiences, not by educating

the public, but rather creating memory work that could be carried on by for future generations. I

thus explore the centrality and multidimensional aspects of Black public humanities by

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[39] Ibid, 463.
[40] Ibid, 464.

examining the origins of Black public history, Black education, and the transnational layers of Black interconnected histories in order to offer a better definition and understanding of the field. In other words, given the state of the field of public humanities as emerging into a wider audience, I argue that Black public humanities (BPH) is a pre-existing field and practice that we can acknowledge through a close look at the ways that Black diasporic communities in the United States have a history for innovating their own centers of knowledge production, public education, and archival praxis that is community-centered and community-engaged. As mentioned above, Black public humanities is For Us By Us (FUBU); and this chapter delineates how this "us" is afro-diasporic and self-making.

In Chapter 2, "The African American Research Library and Cultural Center on the Front Lines" I analyze the history and narratives collected through interviews to understand the dynamics that led to the creation of the AARLCC. Through weaving together the histories from the AARLCC, archives, and interviews with key figures in its formation and ongoing development, I tell the story of the creation of the AARLCC. The AARLCC's origin story is an impressive one that truly continues the legacy of its precursors such as the Mizell family, Dr. John Sistrunk, and the history of the Black community in Fort Lauderdale, but also serves as an ongoing blueprint for how other Black public humanities-centered institutions might think about their own journeys. I argue that the AARLCC is a Black public humanities institution because it is FUBU ("For Us By Us"). We are able to see this through the precursors that led to its creation, the process through which it came to be, and the ways it has evolved its thinking from its inception about who their community is and how they engage them. Their journey shows us a few things. On the one hand, it shows us what community collaboration can teach us about the larger questions of Black public humanities. While on the other, the political processes (money,

fundraising, local politics/politicians) that influence the formation of Black public humanities institutions like this one. And finally, it shows us how the community is functioning here, both as an ideal and a practice. Exploring the history of the AARLCC provides a lens that focuses on the importance of Black diverse communities and helps us understand the continuum of Black public humanities as a generational practice interested in self-making.

The third chapter "The AARLCC and a Genealogy of Black Memory Work in Esther Rolle's Legacy" delves into the multiple ways the AARLCC's For Us By Us (FUBU) approach to Black public humanities facilitates the Black memory work that celebrates Black Hollywood actor Esther Rolle—who grew up in Broward County's City of Pompano Beach. The AARLCC's celebration of Esther Rolle's 100th birthday centennial was forged by collaborations with local organizations, actors, and artists. I argue that these collaborations alongside their archive of Esther Rolle's papers allows us to see that just as the AARLCC is doing the Black memory work by commemorating Esther Rolle, it is also uncovering the Black memory work that Rolle did throughout her own work in community, culture, and activism. Black memory work is an activist praxis in that it takes on a fugitive pedagogy by educating, creating knowledge, and preserving history in order to teach and share it with a Black public that wouldn't have access to this information otherwise.

Lastly, in the final chapter "The AARLCC at the Crossroads of Digital Black Public Humanities" I argue that the For Us By Us (FUBU) approach is at the center of the digital Black public humanities work that the AARLCC does, which is part of a fugitive pedagogical praxis. We can see this in the online events that arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic such as the SoFlo Book Festival, the Virtual FlipN'Sip, Mark Anthony Neal's guest lecture "Stevie Wonder & the Power of Music" as well as their national digital collaborative project, "Archiving the

Black Web." A guiding question central to this chapter is: what is the AARLCC's relationship to digital Black public humanities as relevant to their fugitive pedagogical practices, Black memory work, and/or their FUBU approach? By focusing on a digital Black public humanities approach we are able to further venture into the processes, practices, approaches, benefits as well as the shortcomings of a digital Black self-making that is concerned with upholding authority over the sustainability of Black lives. For this reason, analyzing the AARLCC's relationship to not only digital Black public humanities approach will allow us to intertwine the praxis that results from a fugitive pedagogy invested in carving its own understanding of the past, present, and future.

I dedicate the conclusion to raising more questions about how this study of Black public humanities, its precursors, and the AARLCC might push us to ask about the limitations of the Black public spheres it documents and represents. In other words, I am interested in pursuing the Black public humanities framework presented here that forces us to consider Black public humanities at large and narratives of self-making that are also from urban, working-class, and spaces of "from below." In the conclusion, I provide an analysis of The Trap Music Museum founded by Atlanta rapper T.I., located in the Bankhead neighborhood of Atlanta as a way of making space for a more inclusive Black public humanities that doesn't only take on a respectable way of thinking of fugitivity. Instead, I delineate how we may push our thinking further to expand Black public humanities' approach of FUBU as one that considers the heterogeneity of Black diasporic communities to represent themselves for their own communities. The Trap Music Museum reminds us that space, place, and the community matters and we must highlight the ways that traditional Black museum institutions pigeon-hole themselves into a politic of Black respectability. Meaning that certain sectors of Black life like the trap, the hood, the ratchet, the number runners, the sex workers, the exotic dancers are not

included as knowledge producers or as people in the community that are worth remembering or centered in Black memory work. The Trap Music Museum allows us to raise these concerns, questions, and ruminations to holding us accountable to not repeat the same exclusions imposed on Black diasporic communities.

Conclusion

In the HBO Max show *Lovecraft Country* (2020), many of the main Black characters who happen to be self-educated bibliophiles are shown as possessing agency over their own knowledge formation. Characters such as George and Hippolyta Freeman are able to discover the ability to travel to the future into a distant planet. As Hippolyta and George are interacting with extraterrestrials, one can hear the voice of jazz musician and poet Sun Ra in the background stating how Black people are a myth. Sun Ra states that, "You don't exist in this society. If you did, your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights. You're not real, if you were, you'd have some status among the nations of the world. So, we're both myths. I don't come to you as a reality, I come to you as myths because that is what Black people are…myths."[41] BPH has historically been made invisible from our larger conversation of public humanities and civic engagement. As such, this scene has both an ironic discourse being that staging your invisibility is being done via HBO Max, a political discourse seen in our current neoliberal turn and cultural industries. Nonetheless, their message rings well with BPH in the sense that it tells us that Black people have no choice but to make their own realities and sustainability even if it relies on working through a system that is in of itself corrupt and systemically gatekept. Hence, it is by

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[41] *Lovecraft Country,* Season 1, episode 7, "I Am," directed by Charlotte Sieling, written by Misha Green and Shannon Houston, featuring Aunjanue Ellis and Courtney B. Vance, aired September 27, 2020, HBO Max, 2020, 52:23-53:25.

investigating the local, that we find how Black self-makings are configured according to their particular contexts. The strenuous fundraising, the grants, the donations, all of these added layers to public humanities is not exempt within a BPH framework. Instead, it signifies the reality of navigating bureaucracies at times, while at other times, it is concerned with using the human and overall communal resources it possesses.

This dissertation can be used as an educational tool for public humanities practitioners. I attempt to stay away from jargon as much as possible so as to increase the accessibility a text like this can have. Lately, many institutions have been hiring public humanists in order to create programming, projects, and events. Furthermore, the way the AARLCC uses its space and collaborates with the community should serve as a model to other institutions and organizations interested in doing this work. It is not simply about hiring public humanists, but rather being a part of and establishing relationships with local communities and listening to their needs, voices, and gems of knowledge.

Chapter 1: What are Black Public Humanities? A Conceptual Framework

Introduction: Precursors of Black Public Humanities & Fugitive Pedagogies

We know that public humanities has become a trendy concept in the connection between universities and public-facing scholarship, but yet there are limitations which have made inclusivity the narrative by which Black communities are part of the mainstream public humanities narrative. In this chapter, I call for the engagement of a pre-existing field and practice of what I call, "Black public humanities" (BPH). I argue that BPH is a framework and a practice that we can see as informed by public history and public education as they too are public humanities spaces. This chapter will delineate how different than public humanities, Black public humanities is For Us By Us (FUBU), with some discussion of how this "us" is: afro-diasporic and self-making. Furthermore, it highlights how a fugitive pedagogical practice, meaning the creation for access to alternative forms of knowledge, which is in resistance to systems of predominant white institutions and many times either overlooked, invisibilized, undervalued, or restricted, is an approach and impetus for Black public humanities. Education scholar Jarvis Givens allows us to think extensively of his notion of "fugitive pedagogy" against the backdrop of white surveillance and institutionalized racism, which often shows up through a disinvestment in Black communities as seen in the history of the creation of the AARLCC. For example, meanwhile the AARLCC's founding brought together multiple Black communities, leaders had to work against the local government's disinvestment in the Sistrunk community, which manifested through the small commitment of $3 million dollars towards the construction of the AARLCC, which required $10 million dollars, only if they secured the rest of the funds necessary to build it. It is here where we see the process of the creation of the AARLCC as a

fugitive pedagogy working to create a Black public humanities space even when bureaucracies have enacted institutional/systemic racism to restrict the presence of Broward County Black residents—I discuss this more at length in chapter two. This framework aids public humanists to recognize the continuous labor of Black and Afro-diasporic communities in the realm of knowledge formation.

Black Public History

By exploring a Black Studies approach to public humanities beyond reconciling academia with the publics we can uncover the source of discourses around community, the humanities, and knowledge production. One of the most iconic chapters that offers a thorough history of Black American public history is Jeffrey C. Stewart and Davis Ruffins' "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective 1824-1984."[42] In the past century and a half, attempts to define Afro-American public history have been characterized by several interrelated and persistent questions. Unlike Schroeder who contrasts the history of public history with that of public humanities, Stewart and Ruffins argument shows that Black public history rose concomitantly. It is unclear as to why and how the inkling for uncovering the roots of public humanities utterly overlooks the connections made by Black public historians and educators. Figures like Joel Rogers, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Zora Neal Hurston among others wrote histories for people of African descent. Another factor that influenced Black public history, as claimed by Stewart and Ruffins, was determined *by* Black audiences. The Great Migrations of 1915-1930 and the last migration, which consisted of migrants from the

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[42] Jeffrey C. Stewart and Davis Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective, 1824-1984" in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, (Philadephia: Temple University Press, 1986), 313.

Caribbean, led to a robust Black working-class as well as a Black middle class. With that, Black audiences emerged and became the focal point and primary audience for cultural and business initiatives.

Moreover, when reflecting on the history of Black American public history and public humanities, it is impossible to carry out such analysis without mentioning one of the pioneers of Black American public history and education, Carter G. Woodson. There have been different debates concerning Woodson's relationship with the Black community or lack thereof. Thus, exploring these debates will enrich our understanding for grasping the ideas around the publics, more specifically, the Black publics. According to Jeffrey C. Stewart and Davis Ruffins, Woodson was not necessarily interested in the Black working-class masses as he is portrayed in popular culture and Black intellectual circles. As stated by Stewart and Ruffins,

> A smaller but influential black middle class comprising small businessmen and women (the entrepreneurial, the bourgeois). The latter group became the bulwark of Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History as well as Black historical museums of the 1960's. Woodson's ASNLH arose amidst the racial violence and the William Walling's founding of the NAACP which later influenced the National Urban League. Similar to Arturo Schomburg's, renowned Afro-Puerto Rican bibliophile who collected the history of people of African descent, Woodson collected primary sources that were eventually placed in the Library of Congress.[43]

However, according to Stewart and Ruffins, "Yet the ASNLH resembled nineteenth-century literary and historical societies in that it catered more to the elite——the talented tenth, in DuBois' terminology——than to the black masses".[44]

It was Marcus Garvey, as asserted by Stewart and Ruffins, who was able to recruit the new urban Black working-class and middle class of his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) during the 1920's. At these meetings there were popular books, pamphlets,

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[43] Stewart and Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness," 308.
[44] Ibid, 313.

and essays that told of the Black contributions to world history and of a great civilized Africa

before European contact. Refuting Europe as the sole region of civilization became one of the

debating points for many Black public historians. Following in the intellectual lines of thought

by scholars such as Mullen, pamphlets, essays, novels, popular books in UNIA meetings,

challenge the Victorian model of knowledge stemming from intellectuals and scholars from

higher elites and the bourgeoisie. The emphasis on Black African history as a means to prove

civility to white people would diminish the importance of emphasizing a history that in many

ways belongs to people living in the African continent. As such, Stewart and Ruffins mention

fewer known figures like Drusilla Houston, an Oklahoma school teacher, who spent years in

libraries reading ancient history books in order to reconstruct the influence of Black Ethiopians

in Egyptian, Greek, and Mediterranean culture.[45] As evident in Stewart and Ruffins' emphasis,

> During the 1920's Woodson realized that the ASNLH had left out an important clientele for black history——the black masses …Impressed by Garvey's success in creating a mass movement for black pride, Woodson decided to direct more of the ASNLH's energies toward providing programs on black history to the general public. In 1926, he founded the association's Home Study Department and Lecture Bureau, which engaged scholars with graduate degrees to teach extension courses and offer public lectures on Afro-American history.[46]

An example of these non-official Black institutional spaces of knowledge production is

Schomburg's collection, which was located in his Brooklyn home and then at the 135th street

Branch of New York Public Library. Those documents and artifacts that took up space in

Schomburg's home would become Harlem's Cultural Center that eventually became the

Schomburg Center for Black History and Culture. Returning to Simon Sheik's notion of post-

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[45] Drusilla Houston pioneered the book Wonderful Ethiopians of the /ancient Cushite Empire (1926) for Black masses. This move was a way to find dignity in an era of extreme racial violence and white supremacist violation of civil rights against people of African descent in the United States.
[46] Stewart and Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness," 315.

public, the oscillation between the public and private sphere becomes challenged when considering Black spaces. As stated by Stewart and Ruffins, it was an early model of what Black museums would become in the 1960's——a community institution where people from different group and classes could interact, exchange ideas, and redefine their collective mission."[47] Moreover, the notion of a community institution for people of African descent to discuss, debate, and share ideas were paramount factors that would eventually lead to the Black museum movement as emphasized by historian Andrea Burns. As stated earlier, the literature in public humanities has overlooked the fact that Black public history would become the model most white public humanities scholars would propose during the latter half of the 20th century; ideas already exercised by Black people almost a century before.

Carter G. Woodson: Black Fugitive Pedagogies and BPH

Unlike Stewart and Ruffins, Jarvis R. Givens places Woodson's little known public education work within politics of fugitivity. Givens introduces his book, *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* and conceptual framework of "fugitive pedagogy" through the narrative of Tessie McGee, a teacher at the only Black school in Parish, Louisiana in 1933-1934. Public education at the time was "separate but equal" in the Jim Crow south meaning that although schools were segregated, public education curriculums were coming from a top-down white conservative formation that expected Black schools to teach the curriculums they were given. McGee defiantly and discreetly read Carter G. Woodson's "book on the negro" at the expense of getting caught in an all-white department of education. Givens writes,

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[47] Ibid, 315.

> She kept the book out of sight, understanding the likely repercussions were she to get caught. Like most black educators, Miss McGee was a public employee and vulnerable to the disciplinary practices of Jim Crow authorities. "But she read from that book," one of McGee's students recounted. "When the principal would come in, she would...simply lift her eyes to the outline that resided on the desk and teach us from the outline. When the principal disappeared, her eyes went back to the book in her lap." The scenario from Miss McGee's classroom illuminates what this book calls "*fugitive pedagogy*."[48]

Similar to Stewart and Ruffins' emphasis on Black public history, Givens makes a similar argument about Black public education. While Stewart and Ruffins mention Drusilla Houston, a Black educator who pioneered the book *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire* (1926), Givens centers Tessie McGee as transmitter of Black public knowledge formation. It should not surprise us that the erosion of the public and private spheres operate within communities who confront white racial domination in the Americas and other parts of the world. Thus, knowledge production and scholastic knowledge are not just limited to spaces of higher education. More importantly, Givens argues that Woodson's advocacy as an educator, principal, and a scholar within an anti-Black school and institutional apparatus, allowed teachers like McGee to undergo the subversive act of fugitive pedagogy that is, "Teachers like McGee gained access to these alternative scripts of knowledge through 'insurgent intellectual networks' to which they were connected——institutions like Woodson's ASNLH and Black teacher associations."[49] Givens emphasizes the role of Woodson within an insurgent intellectual network that rebelled against established schools of thought in the American School at every level, from the primary grades through the university.[50] For Givens, emphasizing Black school teachers forces a reinterpretation in terms of how we should analyze Black public history about Black public education, as well as Black public humanities in general. For Givens, Black women were

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[48] Jarvis Givens, *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 1-2.
[49] Givens, Fugitive Pedagogy, 6.
[50] Ibid, 82.

central to this dialogue as, "Black women made up the majority of the teaching profession from the first decade of the twentieth century."[51]

Givens argues that "Black education was a fugitive project from its inception—outlawed and defined as a criminal act regarding the slave population in the southern states and, at times, too, an object of suspicion and violent resistance in the North."[52] There is an intertwined connection between Black American's political struggles and the quest for freedom through education extended from their grassroots efforts in time of slavery and the formation of the Black teacher. As Givens asserts, "Teachers have historically been and must be repositioned as central political actors in the project of Black studies. By 'teacher' I am not referring to the Black American or Black Studies professor but particularly schoolteachers responsible for attending to the minds of young people and nurturing their aspirations."[53] Unlike Stewart and Ruffins, who situate Black public humanities within Black public history, Givens situates Black public education within the centrality of teachers since the times of U.S. slavery and post emancipation.

While Stewart and Ruffins, nor Givens explicitly use the term public humanities, I would argue that given the history of Black public history and Black public education it is clear that the narrated history of public humanities by scholars such as Robyn Schroeder, Simon Sheik, among others (as noted in the previous chapter) should be re-evaluated. Beyond reducing figures like Woodson as scholars, Givens instead problematizes that reductionist thinking by emphasizing how "Fugitivity enunciates subversive practices of black social life in the African diaspora, over and against the persistent violence of white supremacy and the technologies of surveillance and

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[51] Ibid, 83.
[52] Ibid, 3.
[53] Ibid, 239.

domination that were bound up in and animated by the chattel principal."[54] Looking through

Woodson's archives while searching for someone more than a scholar, Givens elucidates the

centrality of fugitivity as a distinguishing feature of Black public humanities. In this sense, not

only are Black spaces multifunctional but also multi-dimensional from the positionality of Black

communities and figures who inhabit them. As fugitive pedagogy brings to light, Woodson was

first and foremost a school teacher—having taught English, French, and History and having

served as a public school principal in West Virginia and Washington, D.C. His life's work was

influenced and made possible by the pedagogical work of Black schoolteachers.[55] As such, the

"talented tenth" stigma of Black middle-class elitism is reinterpreted under the notion that Black

people occupy a different role within Afro-modernity.[56]

Other Black educators and civil rights activists such as Mary McLeod Bethune also

believed in scholastic development from the ground up. Bethune, who would eventually become

a noted Black educator, humanitarian, statewoman, leader of the African American clubwoman

and in the 1930's, and a political appointee to the Franklin Roosevelt Administration, believed in

maintaining deep connections to other Black people in order to create what eventually became

the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls.[57] One of those

connections she maintained was with Carter G. Woodson, whom she recognized as an influential

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[54] Ibid, 10.

[55] Ibid, 5.

[56] Hanchard, M. "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora." *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 245–68. Hanchard writes, "What I shall call Afro-Modernity represents a particular understanding of modernity and modern subjectivity among people of African descent. At its broadest parameters, it consists of the selective incorporation of technologies, discourses, and institutions of the modern West within the cultural and political practices of African-derived peoples to create a form of relatively autonomous modernity distinct from its counterparts of Western Europe and North America. It is no mere mimicry of Western modernity but an innovation upon its precepts, forces, and features. Its contours have arisen from the encounters between people of African descent and Western colonialism not only on the African continent but also in the New World, Asia, and ultimately Europe itself."

[57] The Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls would eventually become an accredited high school. In 1931 the institute became an accredited junior college now called Bethune-Cookman College.

leader in Black public education and wrote to him to consider donating towards the creation of this school. As someone who grew up in cotton fields with her family members without the access to read and write, Bethune believed in Black self-makings especially for young Black girls. When renowned Black American sociologist and president of Fisk University, Charles S. Johnson interviewed her regarding her childhood she responded the following,

> I went out into what they called their playhouse in the yard where they did their studying. They had pencils, slates, magazines, and books. I picked up one of the books and one of the girls said to me — "You can't read that — put that down. I will show you some pictures over here," and when she said to me, "You can't read that — put that down," it just did something to my pride and to my heart that made me feel that someday I would read just as she was reading. I did put it down and followed her lead and looked at the picture book that she had. But I went away from there determined to learn how to read and that someday I would master for myself just what they were getting and it was that aim that I followed.[58]

The innovative spirit of Bethune is what is at stake when public humanities scholars opt for removing Black public humanists. Bethune's own practice and determination to read and create an institution for Black girls was also the result of a fugitive pedagogy—creating a school for Black girls when there wasn't one in a society that did not allow for such a thing to even exist. Self-making and self-mastery are central in this fugitivity that is Black public humanities in a Black feminist and intersectional manner. Woodson, McGee, and Bethune attended to the gaps created by segregation in the Jim Crow south. While Woodson created Black elite spaces, McGee used Woodson's work to educate young Black children, and Bethune created a school for girls in a moment when Black girls were left out of educational spaces. In other words, the Black public humanities work that was happening through their political and educational work had

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[58] Charles S. Johnson, Interview with Bethune [abridged] (1940) written by Mary McLeod Bethune, 1875-1955; edited by Audrey Thomas McCluskey, fl. 1994 and Elaine M. Smith, fl. 1980; in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building A Better World: Essays and Selected Documents* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 46-61.

different aims within their own Black communities. As discussed earlier, it is composed of multiple Black public spheres within specific geographical contexts. This is to say that the Black public is made up of Black elites, Black working-class, Black migrants, Black women and girls, and Black children in general. However, we understand that these different sectors didn't always see eye to eye. Nonetheless, through these histories we understand that Black fugitive pedagogies are central to Black public humanities then as they are now. Aside from Black public history and Black public education being pre-cursors (and part of) Black public humanities, the Black Museum movement was central to the institutionalization of Black public humanities on a broader scale.

The Black Museum Movement

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the United States witnessed what has often been called "The Museum Period" or "The Museum Age." With a well-known history of attempts to emulate and challenge their European counterparts, the U.S. sought to become a beacon of light for the world to admire. Prior to museums, the U.S. was known as a trailblazer for world expositions in cities such as New York (1859), Philadelphia (1876), and Chicago (1893), adapting cultural themes, branding the national superiority of the United States, and serving as a hub for leisure and innovative technological exchanges. Black Americans were not completely excluded from partaking in museums. However, many Black Americans created their own cultural institutions, which form part of a time known as the First Era of Black American public history (1825-1900). Historian Andrea Burns has underscored that "the first black era of black public history is generally said to fall between the late 1820's and the early 1900's, when African American elites in cities such as Philadelphia, New York, Boston

and Washington D.C. started to establish churches, benevolent associations, and improvement

and literary societies."[59] The struggle for Black American self-representation in public historical

and cultural venues dates back to the 19th century. According to Bettye Collier-Thomas,

> From 1865 to 1900, the phenomenal growth of black churches, benevolent institutions, normal schools and colleges and independent political and social organizations, spurred an increase in the number and kind of exhibitions available in the black community. Exhibits depicting historical figures such as Nat Turner, William Watkins, Dr. James Derham, and other figures of local and national fame became quite popular.[60]

Thus, the institutionalization of Black churches, schools, media, including film and radio, Black

letters, Black theatre, Black visual, arts, and even Black beauty culture in the first quarter of the

20th century was an unintended consequence of Jim Crow segregation. But it was the last three

decades of the 20th century that witnessed the proliferation of museums dedicated to presenting

Black Americans' experiences from the community's vantage point.

As such, the impact of the Black Museum Movement should be considered as an ideal

example of the deep-seated connection between civic engagement and museology. According to

Andrea Burns,

> The leaders of the "black museums movement" stood at the forefront in contesting and reinterpreting traditional depictions of African American history and culture. African American neighborhood museums took root in urban neighborhoods across the country after World War II. Black museum leaders designed their museum's mission, exhibits, and educational programs to counter skewed impressions of black history and culture that they believed was absorbing when visiting "traditional" museums."[61]

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[59] Andrea Burns, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (Amherst; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 7.

[60] Bettye Collier-Thomas, "An Historical Overview of Black Museums and Institutions with Museums Functions 1800-1980," *Negro History Bulletin* 44 (1981): 56.

[61] Andrea Alison Burns,"Show Me My Soul!": The Evolution of the Black Museum Movement in Postwar America," (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2008), 4, ProQuest (3328293), 4.

Thus, Black communities had to organize and create museums from the bottom up, not the other way around. There is a confluence between Black political organizing and the making of institutions that were dedicated to the publics. Within the history of the Black Museum Movement, the idea of civil rights organizing led to the creation of Black-led museums with social justice and access in mind, as well as communal prosperity. The idea of reaching and educating the publics from a Black Museum Movement perspective would in fact seem redundant. Burns claims that Black American museums eventually became engulfed by mainstream museums due to distancing themselves from their communities in order to expand their audience into a more mainstream one. This move de-centered Black publics and the communities' needs and voice.

Burns interest in connecting the Black Power movement with museums stems from her belief that,

> Museums, of course, have never functioned simply as repositories for dusty artifacts. Rather, they and their collections are a product of social relations, both past and present. The creators of African American neighborhood museums understood this, believing that their institution communicated a radical new agenda about power, memory, and identity. The African American museums that emerged during the 1960's and 1970's challenged and re-created new national memories and identities that incorporated the ideas, events, objects, and places tied to black identity.[62]

Following the historical thread explored by Stewart and Ruffins, by the 1960's, a new wave emerged dedicated to activism and the mobilization of the Black community by Black intellectuals of the 1960s. This era is most reminiscent and known to people in the 21st century. As stated by Stewart and Ruffins,

> The black intellectuals of the 1960's——older leftists, younger civil rights activists, community leaders, and members of the educational bourgeoise—founded numerous cultural institutions that reflected the emerging black ideological militancy and cultural authority. Dominated largely by an integrationist ideology in the early years of 1955 to

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[62] Burns, From Storefront to Monument, 4.

1965, this activist Afro-American public history turned nationalistic after 1965, fostering a critique of both the American status quo and black accommodation to it.[63]

In this sense, the NMAAHC (as previously discussed) is connected to the idea that Black-led museums and other institutions communicate a radical new agenda about power, memory, and identity while also operating within structures of power that do not necessarily spread to Black communities directly. Meaning that while the Black Museum Movement was forged out of community-engaged action, some of these institutions in the long run became enthralled by a national discourse and audience. However, I maintain that Black public humanities is centered in a fugitive pedagogical practice that emerges in the midst of anti-Black racism and white supremacy.

Diasporic Black Public Humanities in the U.S.

While Black public history and education are central pre-cursors to Black public humanities, so too, are the Black diasporic projects and leaders in Black community formation in the United States. Burns, Stewart and Ruffins, and Givens (to a certain extent) do not engage with transnational Blackness, which is a pivotal dimension that needs to be underscored in order to value the fullness of the ebbs and flows of afro-diasporic movement, migrations, and collaborations.[64] It is important to underscore that an understanding of Black public humanities becomes clear when we acknowledge fluidity and movement as afro-diasporic elements that we have gained a perspective through which we can recognize and accept differences—seeing "difference" as something that contributes to social justice and the creation of solidarities that are

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[63] Stewart and Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness," 327.
[64] See Frank Andre Guridy, Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2010).

interconnected. However, these diasporic phenomena can be better understood when we focus on

(trans)local perspectives. For example, transnational Blackness is not solely about consciousness

but more about centrifugal migrations that directly influence the way people of African descent

interact. To take case in point, Cara Caddoo's article, "Put Together to Please a Colored

Audience," documents the life of John E. Lewis, a Jamaican immigrant who arrived in Wichita,

Kansas after spending eight years of his youth in Mexico. Lewis and his brother George Johnson

moved to Wichita and dazzled the community when according to Caddoo, "Lewis had become

one of the first men—black or white—in the state of Kansas to own a motion picture

projector."[65] "The Race Man," as Lewis was called, demonstrates a Black diasporic and

"transnationalism from below" that sought to undergo self-making during the era of Jim Crow.

Black communities created their own schools, churches, venues of entertainment, and masonic

lodges that transcended national boundaries. As stated by Caddoo,

> Projected larger than life and viewable by entire groups of people, motion pictures were a thrilling new form of entertainment. Whether Lewis and Johnson showed religious scenes, newsreels, shots of nature, or cityscapes, their exhibit likely included several short films, each a few minutes in length, combined with a lecture or performance. Lewis and Johnson returned to Wichita the following month, probably for the holidays, and intermittently left again to exhibit their films in black churches and lodges across Kansas.[66]

Black immigrants like Lewis and Johnson were subjected to Jim Crow laws and statutes. But it is

important to highlight that there is an interconnection of Black struggle that informs Lewis and

Johnson's work. Lewis left Jamaica after the Morant Bay Rebellion, which was an insurgency of

Black Jamaicans protesting poverty, disenfranchisement, and the martial law proclaimed by

Governor Edward John Eyre, a white British man put in power by the British empire. The

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[65] Cara Caddoo, "'Put Together to Please a Colored Audience': Black Churches, Motion Pictures, and Migration at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *The Journal of American History* 101, no. 3 (December 2014), 778.
[66] Caddoo, "'Put Together to Please a Colored Audience'," 778.

rebellion took place two years after the U.S.'s emancipation proclamation. It is important to point out that Black liberation and emancipation were at the moment at the forefront for Black people, not just in the United States, but in the Americas. Lewis and Johnson fled a Jamaica that was not free and still new to its post-emancipatory state, while still being a British colony.

A diasporic approach to Black public humanities is more aligned with Africana Studies which argues for an acknowledgement between multiple "roots" and "routes" and thereby defying the stagnant nationalized identities between people of African descent. In *Diasporic Blackness*, Vanessa Valdés emphasizes the role that Arturo Alfonso Schomburg had as an AfroLatino in the United States. Schomburg, an Afro-Puerto Rican bibliophile, collected literature, art, slave narratives, and other materials of Afro-descendant peoples. Valdés writes the following,

> …In the case of Schomburg, one considers how his physical appearance implicitly required his audience to acknowledge and incorporate people of African descent from other places of the African diaspora, particularly those of hispanophone regions, in their conception of blackness…Schomburg's conception of blackness was one that was not predicated on national identification but instead on an insistence on its expansiveness; when he spoke of "Negro books", he talked not only about those written in English, but instead, of those written in all of the languages of the African diaspora. He insisted, then, that his audience, consisting of those physically present as well as those who read his speech as text, consider the diaspora in its greatest depth…[67]

Schomburg's stance may have been considered pan-Africanist within a transnational form. He was a co-founder of the Negro Society for Historical Research, served as Grand Secretary for the Grand Lodge of the state of New York (Prince Hall Masonry), and was a member of the American Negro Academy, which consisted of various people of African descent from many backgrounds. Schomburg's migration to the United States coincides with historian Frank

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[67] Vanessa Kimberly Valdés, *Diasporic Blackness: the Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 56.

Guridy's conceptualization of the "U.S.-Caribbean world," which he describes as "the intimate ties forged by Afro Cubans and African Americans... made possible by the emergence of cross-border transnational zones."[68] Schomburg was himself involved with many Antillean organizations in New York that sought to decolonize Puerto Rico and Cuba from the Spanish crown and later the United States. Schomburg's life and embodiment demonstrates a Black public humanities approach that works within and beyond the limitations of U.S. nation building and re-centers a Black transnational approach.

In particular, I want to pay close attention to the innovation of Black public humanities that are created beyond the "precepts, forces, and features" of western modernity. The ability for people of African descent to forge their own sense of modernity sits within a Black public humanities framework. That is to say that Schroeder's definition of public humanities as the "...work of moving humanistic knowledge among individuals and groups of people" depends on a trans-Atlantic white supremacist power structure that led people of African descent to create their own sense of community and modernity. In his article, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora" Michael Hanchard writes:

> At its broadest parameters, it [Afro-Modernity] consists of the selective incorporation of technologies, discourses, and institutions of the modern West within the cultural and political practices of African-derived peoples to create a form of relatively autonomous modernity distinct from its counterparts of Western Europe and North America. It is no mere mimicry of Western modernity but an innovation upon its precepts, forces, and features. ...Afro-Modernity can be seen as the negation of the idea of African and African-derived peoples as the antithesis of modernity.[69]

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[68] Guridy, Forging Diaspora, 7.
[69] Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity," 247-248.

By juxtaposing the concepts of Afro-modernity along with arguments and examples given by Givens, Stewart and Ruffins, and Black educators we can understand the practical approaches to communal building by people of African descent. The challenge of meeting the needs of Black communities while being tied to institutional power can be understood as a perpetual condition of Afro-modernity. For example, despite the institutionalization of museums, Black community-based museums became spaces for inclusionary dialogues that advocated for multiple Black voices. Although not always successful at intersecting the needs of different Black communities, the idea of empowering these communities by providing opportunities to professionals of color stood out from the traditional museums that tended to a broader, more white, public.

Moreover, Edmund T. Gordon's "The Austin School Manifesto: An Approach to the Black or African Diaspora," provides an accurate definition of diasporic blackness but also guides and underscores how to *do* diasporic Black Studies, and I would argue, by extension Black public humanities. According to Gordon, "Black and/or Africana Studies is concerned with Black collectivity, Black positioning in relation to power and social hierarchy, and Black agency regardless of national or other boundaries imposed upon us. It follows then that Africana/Black Studies is the intellectual and political work as well as the intellectual politics of the Black and/or African Diaspora."[70] This crucial framework should be distinguished from scholars like Lubar and Schroeder, thus emphasizing the interconnected tension that exists within Black Studies departments and Black communities, albeit emphasizing the activism that allowed Black Studies Departments to exist in the first place. Furthermore, this framework expands the conversation in the work of Stewart and Ruffins, Givens, and Burns by highlighting these afro-diasporic interconnections that go beyond U.S. national belonging and citizenship.

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[70] Gordon, "The Austin School Manifesto," 93.

Following Gordon, one crucial aspect of a Black public humanities-centered approach lies in the notion of self-making for people of African descent. Although many public humanities scholars, being mostly white, have contributed significantly to the field, Black people have been undertaking notions of public humanities before it became an academic and praxeological term. To quote Gordon,

> However, our notion of the Black/African diaspora moves far beyond the mobility and unity imposed on dominated subjects through their interpolation as Black. Rather, our idea of Diaspora focuses on Black Agency and the process of self-making; the Black/African Diaspora as a transnational, cultural, intellectual, and, above all, political project that seeks to name, represent, and participate in Black peoples historic efforts to construct our collective identities and constitute them through cultural-political practices dedicated to expressing our full humanity and seeking for liberation.[71]

For Gordon, methodologies are to be the conceptual frameworks of our research, and methods are the tools we use to carry out research and public-facing initiatives. The comprehension of methodology being driven by the goals of social change is at the core of a Black public humanities framework. One could argue that Gordon's approach to methodology shares similarities with that of Lubar's seven rules, thus proving the expression of similar language while Black public humanities approaches continue to be overlooked. However, in regards to the process of self-making and collective identities that Gordon refers to it is important that we take the local, regional, and/or their particular geographical contexts into account.

Conclusion

Black public humanities moves the conversation forward in ways that the more general public humanities cannot. Black public humanities is a framework through which we can see its pre-cursors, like the ones engaged with in this chapter (Woodson, McGee, Bethune, Lewis,

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[71] Ibid, 94.

Schomburg), as emerging amidst institutional and systemic racism rendering them as part of a

fugitive pedagogy. In a more contemporary conversation, Black public humanities continues to

be a fugitive pedagogy as my conversation with scholar Mark Anthony Neal reveals. Neal's *Left*

of Black web series at Duke University, which features interviews with Black Studies scholars,

had an immense influence on how I currently reflect on Black public humanities. When I

interviewed Dr. Neal and asked him to define Black public humanities, he responded the

following,

> There is a thing called Black public humanities. I think the thing that separates Black
> public humanities and public humanities is that Black public humanities functions with
> an always already understanding that there's a public that's literate about what you're
> talking about. That you're not just simply presenting humanities to teach folks who don't
> know…. You know, because when it comes down to Black folks, where Black folks
> didn't have access to the institutions, it didn't mean that they didn't learn. It didn't mean
> they didn't read, it didn't mean they didn't study, it just meant that they didn't have access
> to institutions of higher education. You know, ...what you find particularly among older
> Black Americans... in their 50s and 60s and 70s is that they have always been voracious
> readers.[72]

Beyond the vague definitions of public humanities as being composed by some organization

such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, public humanities mirrors hundreds of

years of Black marronage that took place ranging from Francois Makandal's secret meetings that

led to the Haitian Revolution to Dj Kool Herc using a light pole to perform his first house party

on Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx. According to Marc Anthony Neal,

> There's some guy who's never sat in the classroom that can school me on Stevie Wonder
> ...because, he's been listening to Stevie Wonder his whole life, has read every article
> about Stevie Wonder, has read all the wider notes and looked at all who was on every
> track and all that kind of stuff. So, you know, Black public humanities is aware that
> you're engaging an audience that is knowledgeable.

I like to think about the conceptual and ideological tensions between notions of self-making and

the need to participate within asymmetrical relations of power. Instead of providing a single

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[72] Dr. Mark Anthony Neal (James B. Duke Distinguished Professor of African American Studies at Duke
University) interview with the author, January 17, 2021.

definition and perception of Black public humanities, this reconceptualization is intended to find

spaces where Black public humanities exist like the gatherings, meetings, readings, plays,

discussions, and lectures, etc.

If public humanities is about producing an informed and critically thinking populace,

how do we contextualize and explore such a broad definition? Traditionally, libraries are

considered repositories of archives that are open to the public. Although nowadays libraries and

museums have developed into more community center spaces or cultural institutions, Black

public humanities spaces already exercised those modalities. Museums are also archival

repositories within a defined field, and cultural centers are very specific to certain ethnicities

with a different relationship to collections. However, many of these institutions are changing in

the ways they operate. In this case, libraries have created teen floors, and in museums, the

creation of museum educators has opened up new opportunities for reaching communities in

ways they have not before. Although the idea of public humanities tends to be reduced to a

public-oriented academic approach, institutions tend to defy the limitations ascribed to the term

of "public humanities."

That is not to say that Black public humanities institutions and organizations don't have

their own set of limitations. As Neal points out,

> Today the biggest limitation is always around the questions of resources both having
> enough resources, and also having the kinds of resources that allow for folks to be
> independent in thought, in terms of what they want to present as public humanities. ...One
> of the challenges of having to get resources on some of these foundations or even more
> significantly from the state... is that you know it limits the vision of what you might want
> to do based on what any institution or any state organization is willing to give them. It's
> also a grand challenge for public humanities depending on its location to really present
> the kinds of projects that speak to the diversity of the community.[73]

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[73] Ibid.

Resources have always been a problem; this is not new. What is new is that the arts and humanities are not rooted in community because of the economic destabilization of Black and Brown communities. Neal is alluding to one of the most unresolved conundrums in relation to Black public humanities in that the relationship between self-making and the reliability on such powerful institutions in order to maintain their autonomy. This conundrum does not mean that institutions are an overpowering presence in the self-making of Black peoples. This is to say that the NMAAHC as a national institution must exist within the limitations that its funders, donors, and shareholders ascribe, but at the same time they work within expansive possibilities.

In closing, in this chapter I have shown how the term public humanities arose during the second half of the 20th century in order to "democratize the humanities" and spread the scholastic thought and dialogues to a non-academic public. While that imperative may be interpreted as a positive one then and now, it still has many drawbacks. It ignores how communities produce knowledge, especially, Black communities, who have a history of having to use space in nontraditional ways. From churches, lodges, enslaved quarters, to HBCU'S, and museums. Black public humanities is FUBU—For Us By Us. The "us" here is not homogenous. The heterogeneity includes diverging political agendas—at times it is about respectability and upward mobility, at times it is not. Black publics are both creators and the audience. Black public humanities has always emphasized public humanities from the ground up and in multidimensional ways. Instead of imparting knowledge to the masses, Black publics encompass various political, socio-economic, cultural, and philosophical implications.

This investment in ourselves, our community, and in the life of the mind and the spirit will provide a visible of success in this community

Samuel F. Morrison--
Campaign for the AARLCC

Chapter 2: The African American Research and Cultural Center on the Front Lines

Introduction

In order to explore Black public humanities and its connection to the concept of community, it is pivotal to research Black public institutions and delve into their complex transformations and possibilities for the future. In this regard, I found the African American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in Fort Lauderdale to be an ideal place to explore and examine. In late January of 2020, I traveled to see the AARLCC for myself and was utterly convinced it was an ideal research library for a focused study. It should be noted that Black research libraries have existed since the early 1900's. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is considered one of the first research libraries of the New York Public Library (NYPL), which opened in 1905, followed by the Auburn Research Library in African American History (1961), and finally the African American Research Library and Cultural Center (2002). Although institutions such as Hampton University and Howard University are known to have archive repositories of people of African descent since the 19th century, research libraries and their transformation towards merging the aspects of research and collection in a public library space, specifically, began during the 20th century. Despite their long-standing history, their undeniable contribution to the success of Black archival preservation and service to communities came from histories of struggle and communal self-makings, which led to the formation of these

libraries. Like these previously mentioned Black cultural institutions, the African American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) is devoted to research, preservation, and exhibition of materials focused on Black American and African Diaspora experiences. It is located in the predominantly Black American and West Indian section of Broward County in Fort Lauderdale and is staffed primarily by diverse Black employees.

This chapter analyzes the history and narratives collected through interviews to understand the dynamics that led to the creation of the AARLCC. As discussed in the previous chapter, Black public humanities is FUBU ("For Us By Us"). This "us" as a Black communal collective, is not homogenous. Furthermore, Black public humanities as a praxis is informed by community, the precursors that led into it, and the kinds of resources that go into its formations and sustenance. The AARLCC in Fort Lauderdale as a Black humanities institution has its own set of precursors for its own establishment in the region. Within its formation as a community-engaged process while at times limited in its notion of Blackness, its praxis has become more in-tune with a diverse Black community made up of Black Americans, but also Haitians, Jamaicans, and other Black Caribbean neighbors—this is different than the Schomburg, which currently prides itself as a Black diaspora research library in Harlem, but does not currently have that community-engaged perspective in regards to its collections, community-engaged space that focuses on local artists, and the local communities' needs. This can be seen from their website, archive of prior programming and in my own experience as a Young Adult Information Assistant who worked at the Countee Cullen Branch of the NYPL which was the rear part of the Schomburg Center building. Often the Countee Cullen Branch is where local residents went for library and community resources—which were not offered at the Schomburg Center. This is to say, although both the Schomburg and the AARLCC are public research libraries, their

environments and engagement with the community are different. The AARLCC's founding brought together multiple Black communities and leaders that had to work against the backdrop of systemic racism. As we know, Black public humanities work is often underfunded or not created due to local governments not contributing to their institutionalization. In the face of this, the community of Broward County stood up to the challenge of the local government which only agreed to vouch for the creation of the AARLCC if the community fundraised the necessary resources to build it. It is here where we see the process of the creation of the AARLCC as a fugitive pedagogy working to create a Black public humanities space even when bureaucracies have enacted institutional/systemic racism to silence and displace Broward County Black residents.

Through weaving together the histories from the AARLCC archive and interviews with key figures in its formation and ongoing development I historicize the creation of the AARLCC. It is an impressive story that truly continues the legacy of its precursors, but also serves as a blueprint for how other Black public humanities-centered institutions might think about replicating and building similar institutions globally throughout the African diaspora. AARLCC is a Black public humanities institution because it is FUBU ("For Us By Us"). By historicizing AARLCC we are able to see the processes through which it came in existence, and how it has evolved in widening its communities and how they engage them. Their journey shows us a few things. On the one hand, it shows us what community collaboration can teach us about the larger questions of Black public humanities. While on the other, shows us the political processes (money, fundraising, local politics/politicians) that influence the formation of Black public humanities institutions like this one. And finally, it demonstrates how the community is functioning here, both as an ideal and a practice. Exploring the history of the AARLCC provides

a lens that focuses on the importance of Black diverse communities and helps us understand the

generational continuum of Black public humanities in self-making.

Fort Lauderdale

South Florida has always had a history of Black migration even before its incorporation

into the United States. It is a region that has seen many Black migrations and diasporas. Fort

Lauderdale became a military fort during the second Seminole War. Prior to the Seminoles, Fort

Lauderdale was the home of Tequesta natives for more than a thousand years. Spanish Florida

was established in 1513 by Spanish conquistadors, which included regions of southern Georgia.

For many years, Spanish Florida saw the arrival of enslaved Black Africans, meaning that the

Black presence in Florida has been in existence since before the inception of the United States.

In other words, Fort Lauderdale's Black history is quite distinct from what we understand as

United Statesian history in that it was influenced by Spanish North American conflict rather than

the birth of the United States via the establishment of the very first 13 colonies. However, due to

the U.S.'s project of expansion, it found the Spanish empire's regional power in the south as a

threat. To this end, the Spanish looked to undermine the U.S. Americans in the region by

sabotaging their greatest asset—enslaved Black Africans. The Spanish crown would announce

that any enslaved person arriving to their territory would be granted their freedom. This led to

many enslaved and free Blacks to escape to Spanish Florida—meaning that South Florida's

history is also one of Black people moving to and through this region for centuries in ways that

neither 1619 (the beginning of slavery in the United States) nor 1526 (the beginning of slavery in

Spanish Florida) can fully capture. The Black community in Fort Lauderdale is a result of nested

colonial conflicts between Spain and England which eventually led to the United States'

acquisition of Florida in 1822.

Fort Lauderdale should be viewed as a Black diasporic cosmopolitan place. The earliest

recorded Black settlers in Fort Lauderdale were mainly from Georgia, South Carolina, and the

Bahamas. These migration patterns to Fort Lauderdale took place after the United States invasion

of Florida of 1818. The area became abandoned until the Florida East Coast Railroad Company

built tracks in the region in the mid 1890's, which prompted peoples to settle. Scholars like

N.B.D. Connolly has documented regions in South Florida such as the rise and fall of Miami's

Overtown neighborhood known as one of the most prosperous "colored" communities in South

Florida. Connolly focuses on the life of federal housing broker Bill Sawyer and his role in

securing housing for Black Caribbean laborers who were coming to the region to work during

the Jim Crow era. He made his money by being a broker between Black migrants looking for

food and housing the federal government to make sure they stayed away from white

neighborhoods. His hustle was that of making money from the racist real estate system that

protected white South Florida residents. This is how the rise of Black diasporic neighborhoods in

South Florida formed, although they have been relegated solely as "African American." As such,

Connolly asserts that

> Upon closer look, though, this community was hardly typical. Unlike the majority of
> segregated Afro-America, this community [Overtown] was one where Cubans,
> Jamaicans, Bahamians, and American blacks shared fruit trees and family trees,
> clotheslines and bloodlines. Sawyer belonged to a community where blacks from across
> Africa's diaspora built viable institutions and espoused on American soil the same multi-
> ethnic, crossed class nationalism that peoples of color were building in the other
> Caribbean locales.[74]

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[74] N. D. B. Connolly, "Colored, Caribbean, and Condemned: Miami's Overtown District and the Cultural Expense of Progress, 1940-1970," *Caribbean Studies* 34, no. 1 (2006): 8.

In his mention of Broward County, Connolly writes, "Through their labor and alongside black migrants from northern Florida, Georgia, and other parts of the Caribbean, they built the segregated landscapes of Dade and Broward Counties, constructing at once an all-white tourist infrastructure and the all-black communities that would provide much of the labor for that infrastructure."[75] The racial collaborations between pluralistic Black people were forged against the backdrop of racial oppression at the local and global levels.

Although, contemporarily, the Bahamian population in Broward County has dwindled, it is important to note how migration has become a form of economic adaptation for Bahamian populations in southern Florida. As described by Raymond Mohl,

> The Bahamian immigration to Florida in the early twentieth century represented only one aspect of a larger pattern of Caribbean migration. As Geographer Bonham C. Richardson noted in his study, Caribbean Migrants, "West Indians have for generations migrated from and returned to their islands to sustain their local societies. In many smaller Caribbean islands, migration traditions are so pervasive and of such long standing that they are a way of life." Centuries of plantation agriculture in the Caribbean islands resulted in extensive deforestation and consequent soil erosion."[76]

While Bahamians were migrating due to colonial legacies of slavery and displacement, Black Americans migrating South were also migrating due to similar challenges. While other parts of Florida, especially northern Florida, had become centers of Black maroon communities since the 18th century, areas such as, Broward County, became a fugitive settlement for Black populations not only within the era of Jim Crow, but also reminiscent of generational trauma due to a nested colonial past. Black protest against nefarious Jim Crow laws in Broward County offers a window but also a continuum to the cultural and political foundations that drive racial collaboration in the

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[75] Ibid, 9.
[76] Raymond A. Mohl, "Black Immigrants: Bahamians in Early Twentieth-Century Miami," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1987): 275.

present. Similar to Overtown, Fort Lauderdale consists of a diverse Black community that came

to be as a result of the historical nested colonialism and imperialism from the Spanish and British

empires to the expansion of the United States.

The Mizell Family

In Fort Lauderdale, the Mizell family represents what may be defined as a paradigmatic

example of Black public humanities. They are a fundamental factor in the history of Black

communities in Fort Lauderdale and the eventual creation of the AARLCC. The Mizell story

begins with Isadore S. Mizell, the son of an ex-enslaved from Georgia, who settled just south of

Fort Lauderdale in Dania Beach in 1908 and became the largest independent farmer in Broward

County. It is here that Mizell met and then married Minnie Moore. Isadore and Minnie opened

the first Black church in the region along with the Dania School for Coloreds in order to allow

young kids of color to go to school. The Mizell family soon began to have a track record for

ensuring the growth of the Fort Lauderdale Black community. They sent their six daughters and

eight sons to high school, and ten of them then went on to college. One of their daughters, Ethel

Mizell Pappy, who for a time took classes in education at Columbia University, returned to teach

at Dania Beach. Their son, Dr. Von Mizell, was the first Black surgeon in Florida and the co-

founder of Provident Hospital, Fort Lauderdale's first medical facility for Black people.

Provident Hospital was opened in 1938 "…in a small wooden house in northwest Fort

Lauderdale by Dr. James S. Sistrunk. It remains as the only hospital in the county for African-

American citizens until 1964, when Broward General is finally integrated."[77] Provident Hospital

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[77] "A Broward County Historical Timeline." (booklet, Broward County, Florida, 2015), 8.

was opened after an incident in which a young Black man was shot by the prevailing Ku Klux

Klan in the area. In 1937, John McBride was shot in the stomach by a car full of white men

rumored to be part of the Ku Klux Klan. Hospitals in the area refused to admit McBride until Dr.

Mizell intervened. Eventually McBride was moved to a rundown sanitarium by the hospital

which contributed to his death. Dr. Mizell along with pioneering Black physician Dr. James

Sistrunk decided to fund Provident Hospital a year later in 1938. Dr. James Franklin Sistrunk,

co-founder of Provident Hospital, was born in Midway, Florida in 1891.[78] He graduated from

Meharry Medical College in Nashville and served in the U.S. armed forces during World War I.

Afterwards, Dr. Sistrunk moved to Fort Lauderdale in 1922 and although he was a qualified

surgeon, he could not perform surgical procedures in white hospitals. By opening Provident

Hospital with Dr. Von Mizell and becoming the Chief and Assistant Director of Obstetrics and

Gynecology, he was able to deliver 5,000 babies during his 44 years of practice.

Although Provident Hospital in Fort Lauderdale may seem like an independent case, in

fact, the activism and advocacy around building and sustaining a Black hospital is part of a larger

movement in the United States as seen through historian Vanessa Northington Gamble's book,

Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945 (1995). Gamble posits

that, "the history of the black hospital movement shows how black physicians made a place for

themselves within the profession of medicine between 1920 and 1945, a time when few of them

had options beyond the separate, but equal, black medical world."[79] The historical account of the

Black hospital movement provided by Gamble is aligned with the construction of Provident

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[78] In 1971, a street and a bridge were named after Sistrunk. N.W. 6th became Sistrunk Boulevard and the bridge connected to it that leads traffic over the North Fork River was renamed the J.F. Sistrunk Bridge. Both were dedicated to his name for his distinguished civil and medical service to the Black community.
[79] Vanessa Northington Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1995), xiii.

Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, which takes place towards the beginning of the Black hospital movement as suggested by Gamble. Gamble provides some perspective on the probable challenges faced by Dr. James Sistrunk in order to not only practice medicine, but also partake in establishing a Black hospital. According to Gamble,

> Any understanding of the black hospital movement is, of course, rooted in an analysis of the internal dynamics of the African American community itself, both locally and nationally. The ability of particular communities to support a hospital was often tied to factors specific to that community such as the size of the black population, the existence of a large black middle class, the number of black health-care professionals, the extent of support from other black institutions, and the degree of racism in hospital care that was thought to exist."[80]

Again, Gamble's analysis on the particular dynamics surrounding a Black hospital movement is integrally connected to the Provident Hospital in Fort Lauderdale. The Black community already had a history of self-making and collaboration, which facilitated the construction of the building. As already mentioned, the area did have a significant Black middle-class, including the Mizell's who were committed to self-determination, which was contingent upon having the necessary resources such as health care in order to thrive. As posited by Gamble, "physicians associated with the movement viewed the improvement of separate black medical institutions as the key to their professional survival."[81] Also, the degree in racism and segregation in the Fort Lauderdale area against Black patients was a tipping point that prompted the Mizell's, Sistrunk, and other community members as well as professionals to collaborate in the movement. Despite Gamble's research being focused on Tuskegee, Alabama; Chicago, Illinois; and Cleveland, Ohio, it clearly demonstrates that many Black communities in the United States were forced to collaborate in order to flourish.

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[80] Northington Gamble, Making a Place for Ourselves, xv.
[81] Ibid.

**Provident Hospital staff with
Dr. Von D. Mizell and Dr. J.L. Sistrunk**
Source: Fort Lauderdale History Center

Image from "A Broward County Historical Timeline," (booklet, Broward County, Florida, 2015), 8.

Provident Hospital was later closed after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when hospitals were desegregated. This was due to the government's stance on no longer providing funding to Black hospitals because they were segregated. Alas, as Vanessa Gamble's research on the aftermath of the Black hospital movement reveals, by the end of the Civil Rights Movement, the training of Black physicians and the growth of separate Black hospitals had seized. Consequently, the disintegration had devastating effects for Black hospitals,

> The efforts of the black hospital's reformers and the dollars white philanthropists had produced some improvements in historically black hospitals by World War II. But these changes were limited to only a few institutions. In 1923, approximately 202 black hospitals operated. Only six had internship programs and not one had a

residency program. Of the approximately 169 black hospitals that existed in 1929, the American Medical Association (AMA) approved fourteen for internship training and two for residencies; the American College of Surgeons (ACS) accredited only seventeen. By 1944, the number of black hospitals had decreased to 124.[82]

Gamble's research is crucial because it underlines how policies, de facto and de jure laws, as well as shifting political ideologies can have negative consequences for Black communities. The importance then, is to acknowledge the history of Black self-making that promulgated the Black public humanities' movements. Educating oneself while being in community with other Black professionals as well as Black blue-collar communities was crucial for getting things done. At this time, the practice of garnering white philanthropists to the cause had been at that point a century old practice of Black leaders such as Fredrick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. Although this practice still continues in the third millennium, it is important to note the self-efficacy of Black communities in carving out their own outcomes. Such is the case of the Mizell family and their constituents. After Provident Hospital lost its funding and resources, it was forced to close and the building then housed social service offices. In 1978 the building was demolished and later replaced by a community center named after Dr. Von D. Mizell in 1981.

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[82] Ibid, 183.
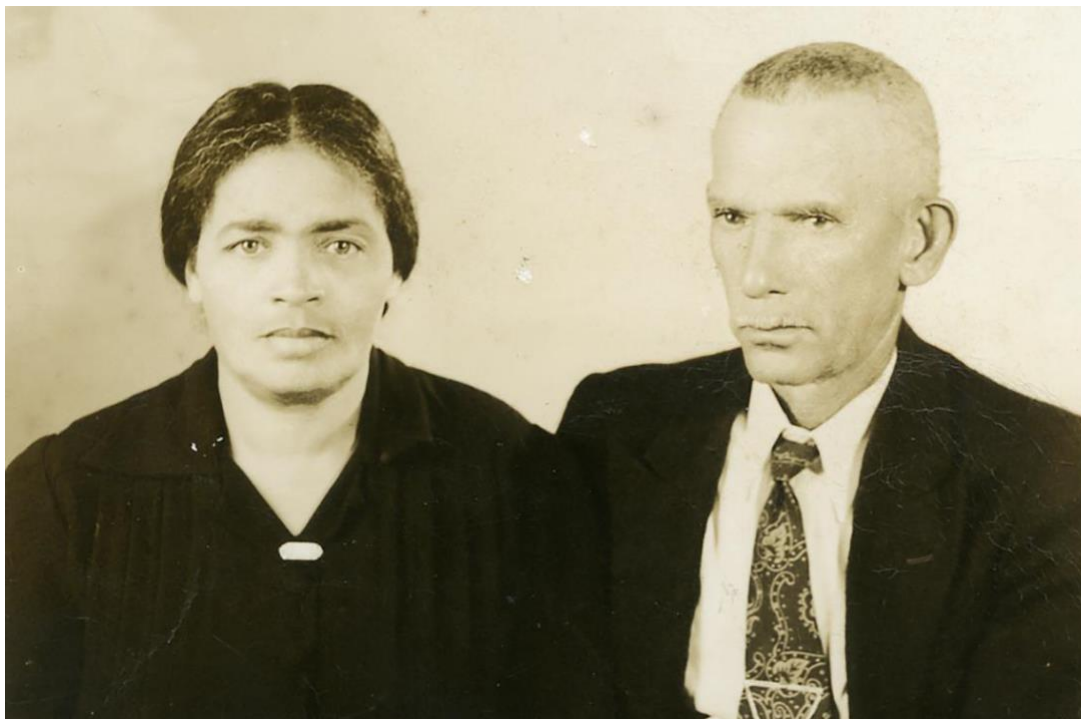
Minnie & Isadore Mizell, 1910. *Photography: Broward County Library Historical Archives.*

When the Mizell family arrived to the Dania Beach area in Fort Lauderdale, it was part of Dade County, Broward County emerged out of a combination of northern Dade county and southern Pompano Beach county in 1915.[83] Ivory Mizell, Von D. Mizell's younger brother, opened the only photo studio in the northwest section of Fort Lauderdale, and later joined the efforts in the 1940s and 1950s to stop the winter school closings for Black students to have to go labor in farms owned by white landowners.[84] While today, Broward County is heavily urban and residential, at the turn of the 20th century, it was still very much a farming area known for its cropping of tomatoes, pineapples, and cabbage. The Mizell family was also a major proponent of

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[83] John Dolen, "The Forgotten Story," Fort Lauderdale Magazine, May 3, 2021, https://fortlauderdalemagazine.com/the-forgotten-story/.

[84] Charles Moseley, 2010. "Broward's Black Medical Pioneers' Impact on Local Community Still Felt Today." Westside Gazette, Feb, 13, 2014, https://thewestsidegazette.com/browards-black-medical-pioneers-impact-on-local-community-still-felt-today/.

formal education. Earl, Bernice, and Bryan Mizell also became teachers following in the footsteps of their sister Ethel Mizell Pappy. This success story is accompanied by the moments when Dr. Von Mizell repeatedly feared for his life from the Klu Klux Klan who constantly threatened his life: "…the Ku Klux Klan planned to assassinate him, Don Mizell said. He had to have people come to his office at night to surround him, walk him to his car and ride shotgun. [The Klan] were coming almost every night looking to kill him."[85]

The Mizell family not only created spaces of learning and public health, but also joined activist efforts. In 1946, Ivory working with his sister Lorraine Mizell and others, took part in the first of the historic wade-ins at Fort Lauderdale Beach. To go to the beach, Black Fort Lauderdale residents would have to go to a southern suburb right outside the city and take a ferry across the Stranahan River that would take them to the sand strip beach between Whiskey Creek and the Atlantic Ocean. Young ferry boat captains like Alphonso Giles—who had just returned from World War II—took on the responsibility of transporting Black beach goers safely. During the Jim Crow era, Las Olas Beach of Fort Lauderdale was a bustling center of tourism, shopping, and vacationing, but was only accessible to white residents and visitors. The economic power in the region was limited to white folks and Black folks in the region had to create their own centers and institutions of economic, political, educational, leisure, and access to public health. The Mizell family is part of the legacy of Black public education and foundation for Black public humanities. It is important to remember that Black public humanities has an existing history and legacy often obscured in the larger dialogues of public humanities. The history of Black civic engagement and activism is not only present in protest and policy changes, but also in the

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[85] Robert Beatty, "Pioneering Mizell Family's History Spans 100 Years," South Florida Times, February 25, 2011, http://www.sfltimes.com/uncategorized/pioneering-mizell-familys-history-spans-100-years.

creation of resources by Black folks for Black folks in the community. The Mizell family's

legacy is taken on through the Von D. Mizell Library, which is the precursor of the AARLCC.

The AARLCC and Samuel Morrison

The AARLCC is a continuation of what Andrea Burns describes as the "Black Museum

Movement" She reminds us that,

> The early 1960s witnessed an explosion of museums specifically themed around
> African American history and culture; it was no coincidence that many black museum
> leaders played active roles in the concurrent groundswell of the Civil Rights Movement.
> Yet it was more than just integration with white society and equal treatment under the
> law that fueled the black museum movement. Through their promotion of a narrative of
> African American culture and history that was separate from (but grimly intertwined
> with) European culture, their encouragement of a uniquely "black" identity and
> consciousness, and their emphasis on the vital need for interaction between the museum
> and the city's African American communities, black museum leaders grounded their
> institutions in the radical ideology of what became known as the black power
> movement.[86]

The African American Research Library and Cultural Center was built at the heart of Sistrunk

Blvd. The Mizell family left a legacy that inspired others to follow in their steps. As such, these

histories of Black self-makings influenced important later generations such as figures like

Samuel Morrison, a library builder for Black communities, who was handpicked by Chicago's

first Black mayor Harold Washington, to oversee construction of the Chicago Public Library's

central branch.[87] Samuel Morrison took the baton from the Mizell family and others in the

community. In January 2020 during a research trip to Fort Lauderdale, I was able to meet and

interview Morrison. As I left the hotel to interview Samuel Morrison and visit the African

American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC), I noticed how the neighborhood

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[86] Burns, Show Me My Soul!, 8.
[87] Samuel Morrison (former Director of Broward County Libraries of Florida) interview with the author, January 29, 2020.

landscape changed dramatically. The neighborhood where I was lodging was more of a touristy strip of hotels on the beach of Fort Lauderdale—predominantly white and middle-class. It wasn't anything like the lush hotels of South Beach in Miami. Morrison lived in the same neighborhood as the AARLCC itself about five minutes away. The neighborhood looked like a typical south Florida neighborhood, colorful houses, palm trees, gardens, similar to a Caribbean urban landscape. Morrison preferred to be interviewed at his home. I thought to myself that this would also be a good idea since it would provide for him a space where he can speak more candidly about his involvement in the formation of the AARLCC. Once we got seated, he signed the consent form and I proceeded to interview him.

Morrison had a history of library building but one of his most significant projects in Chicago was to propose the construction of the library building from 1974 to 1987. His job consisted primarily of developing libraries for Cook County and expanding bonds in order to create more libraries. Morrison was responsible for finding sites and maintaining relationships with the builders and developers. In Chicago, Morrison helped develop more than a dozen libraries. Morrison returned to work for Broward County after working in Chicago with more experience and a better understanding of bond issues. In 1995, Samuel Morrison, was then the director of Broward County's Library division, where he visited the Von D. Mizell Library as part of his position. He saw the Mizell Library as an opportunity to expand and include a research library. He then presented his vision of an African American Research Library and Cultural Center to the county commission.

PERSPECTIVE SKETCH
OF
FRONT ENTRANCE

BROWARD COUNTY LIBRARIES DIVISION — AFRICAN – AMERICAN RESEARCH LIBRARY & CULTURAL CENTER

PAWA Complex Int'l, Inc. • Architects • Engineers • Planners • Surveyors • Environmental Scientists

Perspective sketch of front Entrance for the AARLCC. Morrison, Samuel. "Samuel F. Morrison Papers, 1948-2011." Series 3: African American Research Library and Cultural Center. AARLCC. Special Collections.

In my interview with Morrison himself, he described the arduous process of creating the

AARLCC, fundraising, and negotiating with the local government:

They told me, you have to raise the money if you're going to do it and I said fine I'll do it. My challenge was to raise $6 million dollars, which I did through a combination of grants. We had lots of local funding. We raised over $500,000 in the Black community here in Broward County, primarily here in this area, but lots of Black people throughout the county contributed: from clubs and organizations, churches, from thousand dollars to $10,000 and you know the Greek-lettered organizations agreed to contribute X number of dollars. Generally, in the neighborhood we raised almost $10,000. We had a $1 million contribution from a guy named Wayne Haizen, who you saw in the blockbuster. Yeah. So that was the largest contribution. And then, we had through a fundraising committee set up by the friends of the AARLCC. They used to be the Friends of the Von D. Mizell Library, headed by Ellyn Walters, who was the person who organized the fundraising activity and contacted all the clubs and organizations. She also arranged for me to go out and speak to them or went out and spoke to them herself. She died several years ago. But

she was a spark plug in Broward County to organize the fundraising campaign in the Black community.[88]

When I looked more closely and asked about Ellyn Walters, I found that her own background was pertinent to her involvement with the creation of the AARLCC. Born in Alachua County, Florida to Joseph and Rosetta Ferguson, she was one of eight children in the family. Walters moved to Broward County at the age of four. After her mother passed away, she moved with her Aunt Ethel Warren whom she called mother Annie T. Reed. Walters was an ardent educator. Having graduated from Florida A&M University (FAMU) with a bachelor's degree in elementary education Walters was committed to the St. John Methodist Church where she taught on Sundays. As an adult, Walters was fundamental for the success of both the Von D. Mizell library and the construction of the AARLCC. Walters had been associated with Friends of the Von D. Mizell Library since 1976. She became president in 1981 and served until 2002. As the Executive Chair of the Community Fundraising Committee, Walters was in charge of a volunteer group of community leaders to achieve a contribution of over $700,000 toward the construction of the AARLCC, which has a conference room named after her. As my interview with Julie Hunter would reveal, The Friends of the Von D. Mizell Library (which later became the Friends of the AARLCC), were an integral part of the development of the AARLCC.

Walters' legacy was so important to the AARLCC that when she passed away the wake took place in the building. She represents a bridge that connects the community performed by people prior to Morrison that led to the creation of the AARLCC. One can assume that without her devotion to the Von D. Mizell Library and the construction of the AARLCC, the building would have never been built. Walters left a legacy that has left her several awards including the

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[88] Ibid.

United Nations Broward County Chapter Distinguished Service Award, Broward County

Commission Ellyn F. Walters Appreciation Day, among others.

PROJECT BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Land	$ 387,000
Design	$ 720,000
Construction	$ 7,200,000
Equipment	$ 1,440,000
Art/Public	$ 187,200
Data Comm	$ 100,000
Library Materials	$ 600,000
TOTAL	$10,634,200

"Samuel F. Morrison Papers, 1948-2011." Series 3: African American Research Library and Cultural Center. AARLCC. Special collections.

Along with Walters and Morrison's efforts, the Black community donated more than

$500,000 dollars. Ranging from churches, sororities, and other organizations. As Morrison

stated, after the commission approved the plan and allocated partial funding, he was charged

with raising the rest of the money. He did it through grassroots outreach, which helped generate

donations from individuals (such as husband and wife actors Samuel Jackson & LaTanya

Richardson-Jackson), the church community, civic organizations, fraternities (such as Phi Beta

Sigma), sororities, service clubs, and corporations. Furthermore, Friends of the AARLCC

became a fundamental resource for the fundraising of the building. The replacement of the Von

D. Mizell Library with the AARLCC suggests the need to acknowledge precursors to Black self-

makings in order to continue recognizing the Black residents of the Broward County community.

AARLCC under construction Source: AARLCC Archives."Samuel F. Morrison Papers, 1948-2011." Series 3: African American Research Library and Cultural Center. AARLCC, Special Collections.

Today, this 60,000-square-foot facility is the third of its kind in the United States to

house extensive collections related to a unique blend of West Indian, Black American, and

African cultures. The research library houses more than 85,000 books, manuscripts, artifacts, and documents. In preparation for the opening of the AARLCC, Morrison traveled throughout the country to purchase collections that would enhance and represent the Black diversity of its residents. For example, he was able to acquire the Vivian D. and John H. Hewitt Collection which is a special collection at the AARLCC of Haitian art and artifacts.[89] Apart from this collection, the AARLCC also houses iconic actor Esther Rolle's papers (which I discuss in chapter 3), art and artifacts donated by

> …African art collectors Arthur B. Steinman and Mary Sue and Dr. Paul Peter Rosen, award-winning African-American artists Charles Mills and Jonathan Green, illustrators Ashley Bryan, Kadir Nelson and Jerry Pinkney, Jamaican artist Errol "Elgo" Lewis, Haitian and African art collectors John H. and Vivian D. Hewitt, aviator Barrington Irving, and prominent individuals such as Samuel F. Morrison, Dorris Avner and Dr. Nina Woods-Charles.[90]

In addition to these resources, it features permanent and travelling exhibits, a 300-seat state-of -the-art auditorium, a children's and teen space, and a computer training lab. The AARLCC is a big building and significantly sized Adinkra sign on the outside of the building. Near the entrance, there are names on the brick floors from those who contributed funds to support the construction and realization of the AARLCC. Near the entrance on the outside walls there are plaques that acknowledge other donors. The library has many plaques and items that acknowledge the contributions of those who made this place possible. Among them a pair of beautiful wooden columns that are the size of a tree trunk stand at opposing walls in the lobby. They have other Adinkra symbols and each one has the name of a donor: Samuel L. Jackson and LaTanya Richardson-Jackson inscribed on a name plate. From my interview with Morrison, I

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[89] Julie Hunter (former Associate Director of the Broward County Libraries of Florida) interview with the author, June 19, 2020.

[90] "Special Collections," Broward.org, October 13, 2019, https://www.broward.org/Library/Research/SpecialCollections/Pages/AARLCCSpecialCollections.aspx.

had learned that the Jacksons had contributed a big amount of money to the making and support

of the library among other famous Black actors who had attended the fundraising galas and

events. Upon entering the building visitors are greeted by a large lobby space with high ceilings

and a round front desk. The rotunda-like space allows visitors in the lobby to be seen from

anywhere. While this may feel welcoming and offer a panoramic view, it also encourages a

panopticon viewing that may encourage some self-surveillance in this cultural institution like I

discuss in the introduction in my engagement with Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum*. Black

interior designer Cecil Hayes who was brought on board by Samuel Morrison to do the interior

decoration and styling of the AARLCC shares in an interview that

> [he] wanted me so, so much to be part of this project, because the building was starting to not have any African motif in its design. And he really could not do anything about that, because he's the director of the library. But the county commissioners are the ones that hired the—voted on the architectural firm and all of the powers to be to make this building happen. And he actually was able to get me in to save the building in reference to the interior appearance of it.[91]

In other words, while the bureaucracies in place created a space of surveillance, Morrison and

Hayes sought to circumnavigate those restrictions by consistently advocating for an afro-

diasporic space where the residents could feel welcomed and valued. The panopticon

surveillance architecture is also broken up in the several more private spaces away from the

center such as the theatre, the book stacks, special collections room, and the exhibit gallery

space, which encourages visitors to sit alongside the exhibit with its lounge chairs and sofa

seating in the middle of the gallery.

Outside of the building, one of the first statues built during the completion of the site was

a monument called "The Bridge." The monument incorporates the symbol of the drum, an

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[91] Cecil Hayes, Samuel Adams, and Scott Stearns. 2016. *The HistoryMakers Video Oral History with Cecil Hayes.* Chicago, Illinois: The HistoryMakers.

instrument of African culture. As such, the African drum is juxtaposed with the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama and the eventual signing of the Voting Rights Act of August 6, 1965. Completing the monument is the Adinkra symbol that is placed atop the drum. It is a symbol of the Ashanti people of Ghana representing humility, strength, wisdom, and learning. It is a symbol that quickly stated that the AARLCC was to be a Black diasporic space that looked beyond Broward County and highlighted its connections to the African diaspora.

"A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people."

—Andrew Carnegie

"The Bridge"
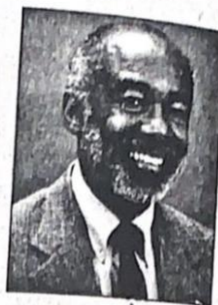
Conceptually, I view the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center as a bridge. The cultural and historical symbolism of the library represents a bridge from the past. It recalls the civil rights march in 1965 across the Pettis Bridge from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. In that context, it is a symbol of hope — a bridge across time and cultures — and an introduction to a world in which knowledge is the true power.

▶ A geographic bridge connecting the historically black community in Broward to the newly revitalized downtown Fort Lauderdale.

▶ A technological bridge of access to the new computer-oriented 21st century.

▶ An economic bridge offering services for small community businesses.

▶ An educational bridge providing lifelong learning to people of all ages.

▶ A cultural bridge to celebrate art, dance, theatre and literature.

This investment in ourselves, our community and the life of the mind and the spirit will provide a visible symbol of success for our youth and our community.

—Samuel F. Morrison
Library Director
Broward County Library

Morrison, Samuel. "Samuel F. Morrison Papers, 1948-2011." Series 3: African American Research Library and Cultural Center. AARLCC. Special collections.

Julie Hunter and the Georgia Connection

It is difficult to follow the influence of Samuel Morrison without recognizing the contributions of Julie Hunter. Both Morrison and Hunter are integrally connected with the vision of what became the AARLCC. Hunter began her career in 1965 as a reference librarian after receiving her Master's of Library and Information Science degree from Atlanta University. Hunter received her bachelor's degree in mathematics from Claflin University. Prior to joining the AARLCC, Hunter was the deputy and acting director of the Robert W. Woodruff Library of Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia; the assistant director of the DeKalb County Public Library system in Decatur, Georgia; and Library Administrator of the Auburn Avenue Research Library on Black History and Culture as well as the Acting Director with the Atlanta Fulton Library, both in Atlanta, Georgia. Although the AARLCC is often compared to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, and even colloquially called the "Schomburg of the South" at times, the AARLCC is more connected to the Auburn Avenue Research Library on Black History and Culture. According to Hunter,

> Sam was building an African American research library here in Fort Lauderdale, and he had looked and hired a young lady. She was employed. And I really had forgotten all about Sam and his African American research library. He came to Atlanta and looked at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American History and Culture for research and yes and, and he didn't really tap me at that time because I was still at the DeKalb Public Library, working on this one unit, and the second unit developed for African American history…[92]

As expressed by Hunter, "Sam came into Atlanta Fulton Public Library to make certain that he was going in the right direction."[93] After Morrison repeatedly asked her to join the AARLCC,

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

Hunter decided to join in September of 2002 when it opened to the public. As such, Hunter came

to Broward County as the Executive Director of the AARLCC. In 2007, she was promoted to

Associate Director for Public Services and served as the interim Director of Broward County

Libraries from January to April 2013.

Hunter was not new to the work of advocating for resources for Black communities as it

was something she was part of back in Georgia during her upbringing. As underscored by Hunter

> I do remember when we talk about police brutality now, we have police brutality and I guess that's the early 40s. And we could do nothing about it. So those are the kinds of things that affected me so I joined the NAACP, and I guess. Well I don't know whether I did it through the church. I attended Wesley United Methodist Church, it was a small church at that time. And I don't know whether we had a chapter in the church. I can't remember that. But I do remember a chapter, at the college.[94]

Like the Mizell family organized, funded, and opened institutions that would benefit the Sistrunk

community in the midst of the Jim Crow south, Hunter draws parallels to her participation in the

NAACP during a time of extreme police brutality and being part of institutions that were

amplifying the voices of Black communities then. Figures like Hunter demonstrate the

relationship between library building, public humanities, and civic engagement towards

achieving racial equality. The need for public humanities initiatives such as the creation of the

AARLCC is connected to the benefit of the community in spite of institutional racism. For

Hunter, her experiences with the NAACP are inseparable from being community librarians. She

says,

> I thought that I could put away my NAACP experience but it didn't work that way. I still had the feeling that I needed to work in collections that had to do with the Black experience, and that worked in that kind of atmosphere in the DeKalb County Public Library and in Atlanta Fulton Public Library and in Gwinnett County Library. Okay, Sam asked me while I was in Atlanta in the late 90s as head of the Auburn Avenue Research Library to join the AARLCC and provide public access to collections.[95]

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

Hunter's comments are important because it shows that with Morrison's ideas and Hunter's expertise they would make sure that the collections at the AARLCC would reach the community. One of the biggest distinguishing features of the AARLCC is that it was made to be not only a reference collection, but a circulation collection as well. It was important for these leaders that unlike traditional research libraries and collections are limited to researchers, the AARLCC would thrive by taking on fugitive pedagogy that made sure that open access to the community was central.

Hunter envisioned that people in the neighborhood would want their materials collected at the AARLCC and in conversation with their first distinguished scholar-in-residence after its opening, anthropologist Niara Sudarkasa, they both saw this as an opportunity to highlight the community's experiences and knowledge production. Sudarkasa is the first woman president of Lincoln University, one of the oldest HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and was born in Fort Lauderdale.[96] As Hunter recalls, "Sudarkasa envisioned the AARLCC as a center of Black intellectual thought."[97] It is unclear if the community agreed with that vision, but it is clear from the formation of the AARLCC that it was to serve both the community and serve as a research center. As Hunter describes, the "Von Mizell library was a precursor to the AARLCC. In fact, many of the documents were transported to the new location."[98] Part of Black public humanities as a framework is not just thinking about the pre-cursory history, but also the processes and attention to community needs that are part of the driving force—as we see with the AARLCC.

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[96] "Sudarkasa, Niara 1938—," Contemporary Black Biography, Encyclopedia.com, March 1, 2022, https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/sudarkasa-niara-1938.
[97] Hunter, interview with the author.
[98] Ibid.

Although the AARLCC sought to encompass everyone in the Black community of Sistrunk surrounding it through its engagement with Black diasporic approaches and cultural aesthetics, it initially had its limitations in regard to reaching Black Caribbean residents in the community. It was important to Hunter and Morrison that the AARLCC develop its Caribbean collection and outreach. For Hunter, part of this was being held accountable by its Black Caribbean residents. In the interview she states always having to make sure that any promotional materials went out with signifying words that included a broader Black community that was not limited to Black Americans—as Hunter understood that different to her own Georgia context, Broward County was made up of a Black diaspora of Jamaicans, Black Cubans, Bahamians, Black Americans, amongst others. The care in this detail meant that she was attentive to the details of the community and the geo-political context of Blackness in South Florida. She says, "You know when anything went out, it always went out with 'African American and Afro-centric' to make certain that we were not just African American. Because some of the people from other islands, countries, and communities would indicate to us, 'well you know we're here and some of my materials are here and so you really represent us too'."[99] In my interview with Hunter she had difficulties appropriately naming Black Caribbean, West Indians, etc. as a nomenclature. Her limited lens only allowed her to go back to naming 'Black people from other African countries and islands.' At times she shares that their outreach was limited as expressed by these communities to staff at the AARLCC. She says, "People who felt that ...we did not reach out as much to those communities as we did for the African American community."[100] It's unclear why that was, but it is possible that Hunter's limited experience with diverse Black communities may have played a role. Different from Hunter, Morrison came from a background

[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

in California where he helped create libraries for farmworkers who were often Black and

Mexican American communities. This work led him to Florida the first time he lived there in the

late 1980s where he created libraries for farm workers there who were primarily Black Caribbean

immigrants. I bring this to light because it is clear that in order to do Black public humanities it is

important to admit the limitations that may be at play. Morrison reflects back on his time as

director and shared that as he wrapped up his time in 2003 he had wished there had been more

engagement with the Caribbean collection and connection in the community. He says, "Yeah, so

the other thing is that I hope to see more development of the library's connection to the

Caribbean. When I was still the library director, you know I made a couple of trips myself to

visit libraries in the Caribbean."[101] He commented how the leadership that came after him also

didn't take on this focus, although he understands that its latest leader Makiba Foster, who

previously worked at the Schomburg, will make the position her own and he supports her in that.

AARLC & Its Black Public Humanities Practices

Much has changed since Morrison, Hunter, and other staff members created and led the

AARLCC. The institution has had five directors since its inception: Arglenda Friday, Julie

Hunter, Alicia Antone, Elaina Norlin, and currently, Makiba Foster—all Black women, which

have left their mark on the AARLCC. Although it is important to highlight their contributions in

this dissertation, unfortunately, I was only able to secure research and interviews primarily on the

work of Julie Hunter and the current director Makiba Foster. Prior to being head of the

AARLCC, Makiba Foster worked at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture from a

research division where she served as Chief Librarian. Before becoming a librarian, researcher,

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[101] Morrison, interview with the author.

scholar, and educator, Foster assumed she would have a traditional academic career. Thanks to a mentor who introduced her to librarianship, Foster forgoed her PhD and pursued a Master's degree in Library and Information Studies. She went on to complete a second Master's in American Studies with a focus on African-American Popular Culture.

Foster arrived at the AARLCC in 2019 following Elaina Norlin's tenure as its regional manager. She sees the AARLCC as the multi-dimensional and hybrid space that it is: a library (with a circulating collection and research component via their Special Collections), a cultural center made up of a 300-seat theatre and, a museum that is 5,000 square feet that features many small regional and local exhibits.[102] Foster arrived at the AARLCC at a pivotal time in the midst of the movement for Black Lives, the rise of the use of social media to mobilize and create community online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the Trump administration and the state of Florida was once again an unwelcoming place for Black people. In other words, Foster's arrival to the AARLCC is marked by its social and political context and the height of anti-Blackness juxtaposed with public health access, and how Black communities like Sistrunk would continue to come together and survive.

Foster's focus and purpose during her time at the AARLCC has centered on the Sistrunk community being part of and seen by the AARLCC through archiving, collecting, and curating local and regional narratives and the lives of Black residents in the area. For her, it's about being a Black memory worker who cares about how the work being done by the AARLCC is received by the community. In our interview, she stated:

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[102] Makiba wishes that the Schomburg (where she previously worked) had not been so separated from the Countee Cullen library. For context: I worked at the Countee Cullen library during the same time that M Foster was working at the Schomburg. The CC library had a children's and young adult sections, this is where I worked as an information assistant in the YA section, and also ran teen programs for the local teens. there is no children's or teen's section at the Schomburg. it is strictly for research and as a cultural center which hosted programs weekly for adults and families. But this is not to say that outside of those programs, this was a space where folks (young and old) in the neighborhood would come to gather or hang out.

> We have universities, we have all kinds of libraries and archives and museums within spaces, and they are not representative of the community, the people who work in them don't really represent the community. So, it is important that people in a community see that their lives, their everyday lives, have some merit and value and that they're worth documenting. You don't have to be super famous.[103]

Foster's intervention here is important because for her, the AARLCC should document and archive the self-making of the community and be guided by the community. In other words, this is the FUBU (For Us By Us) element that I discussed in the prior chapter. For her, you do not have to be someone who matters to a mainstream audience, but someone who simply exists and finds home in Broward County, South Florida, Sistrunk, etc. Similar to Samuel Morrison, Foster takes the AARLCC as a center for the community where folks gather, read, learn, share, and exist, and there is documented proof of that existence.

While Morrison worked to fundraise for the foundation and creation of the AARLCC, Foster's work is centered in collecting and recruiting works for the collections from the community. She says,

> I would like to see the shift where we really start to, in the collections, represent that these lives are important, and that we do what's necessary to not only collect some of this stuff, but also from another like post-custodial lens is that we can't collect everything but we also are helpful to the community to build a kind of memory worker or memory kind of work to educate folks that you know, you have your own legacy within your family within your community. And these are the ways that you can document or preserve.[104]

Her work as a Black memory worker is about honoring everyday Black people in the neighborhood, even when the AARLCC may be under-resourced. Some of the most recent exhibits and programs put together by her and her team include: "Ebony Broad Sides: Celebration of the Masters" an exhibit of signed exhibit posters of 20th century Black American

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[103] Makiba Foster (Manager of the AARLCC), interview with the author, July 21, 2020.
[104] Foster, interview with the author.

artists, "The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole," which was an exploration of space and community through the lenses of art, architecture, photography, and poetry of community and life in Sistrunk. Furthermore, in the spring of 2021, the AARLCC celebrated the 100th birthday of the famous "Good Times" actor and activist Esther Rolle with "Let the Good Times Rolle: Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Esther Rolle at 100." The celebration included the debut of an original play of the same title and an exhibit that consisted of showcasing Rolle's papers, documents, and highlighting her life and activist work in Pompano Beach and Fort Lauderdale. It also featured visual artworks by local artists of Rolle.
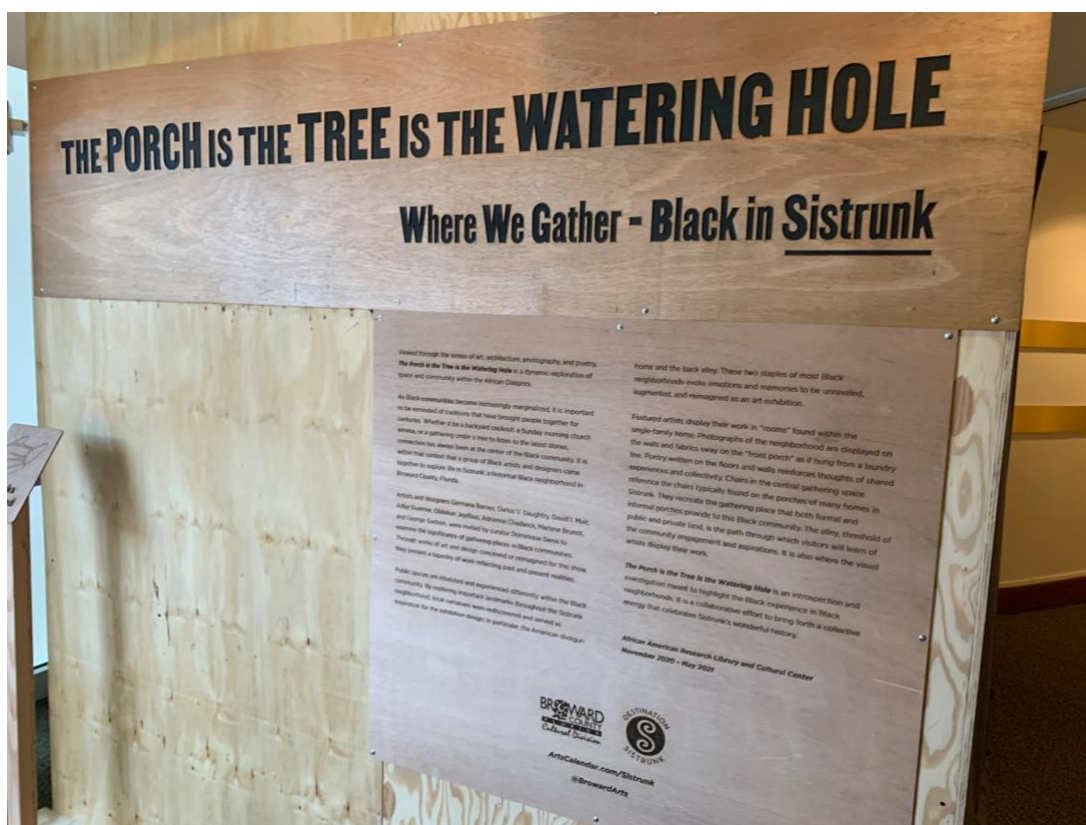

Photo of the entrance to the exhibit "The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole: Where We Gather - Black in Sistrunk." Photo by the author.

"The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole: Black in Sistrunk" curated by Haitian American architectural designer Dominique Denis was on view from November 2020 through May 2021. The exhibit captures Black life in Sistrunk by focusing on where and how Black people take up and claim space in Sistrunk. The project was a way of bringing together local and regional artists working in public art like Germane Barnes, David J. Muir, Darius V. Daughtry, Marlene Brunot, Adler Guerrier, Olalekun Jeyfous, Adrienne Chadwick, and George Gadson. The works of these artists are reminiscent of what Foster describes as Black memory work in a geocultural space like Sistrunk, which reminds us that Black public humanities work does not just focus on programming, but rather focuses on the inextricable and intertwined nature of the institution to its community. Thus, when analyzing a Black public humanities site, like the AARLCC, or this exhibit, one is never merely focusing on the site but rather the geographical imagination that makes up that community. For example, Germane Barnes' "Uneasy Lies The Head That Wears the Crown" is an installation of hair pick-shaped colorful chairs gathered as if there was a gathering of people sitting on a front porch or an alleyway. The colorful chairs are a congregation of Black residents who gather to share knowledge, experiences, joy, laughter, tears, and solace in the Black diasporic enclave of Sistrunk. The chairs remind us of the place of Black self-making to Black hair cultures taking place from salons to storefronts and porches, the history of the community itself, the Mizell family, the first Black hospital in Fort Lauderdale, or even the creation of the AARLCC. The chairs bridge the history of the African diaspora in the United States from pre- to post-Civil Rights Movements. The AARLCC is not just a museum, library, or cultural space. It has political connotations for how it becomes a gathering space as well that does not focus on profit and white-gazing audiences as the source of success. Instead,

the AARLCC creates a portal to which intergenerational and ancestral community members

meet. The "Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole" resembles a meeting post even if ephemeral.

Germane Barnes "Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown" (2020). Photo taken by the author.

A photograph from David I. Muir's "Where We Gather" (2000) photographic collection. These "photos were taken by the artist during his exploration of the Sistrunk neighborhood. His goal was to capture the essence of this historical Black neighborhood by looking at the informal ways people gather along sidewalks, under a tree, or on their porches" (Denish, from the photographic installation label, 2021). Photo taken by the author.

All of the works in the exhibits and programs put together by Foster's team have the regional and local focus in common, which shows Foster's vision. Perhaps even an unruly vision as scholar Gayatari Gopinath would describe in her work *Unruly Visions*: *The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* when it comes to these kinds of archival practices. Gopinath's scholarship allows us to see how Foster's archival practices of Black memory work mobilizes new ways of seeing both regions and archives, and that puts into play, through an affective

register, an intimate relation between the two. Similarly to Gopinath's analysis of queer visual

aesthetic practices, Foster's practices (including many of the local artists at Broward County)

function simultaneously as archival practices that suggest alternative understandings of time,

space, and relationality that have previously been obscured with the dominant systems of

archives in the region.[105] For example, when I asked Foster about the lack of digital presence and

difficulty in locating the AARLCC's archives and resources online, she informed me that

although it is beneficial for the AARLCC to be part of the Broward County Public Libraries

system in order to be sustainable (as Morrison describes in his interview), its presence was

occluded and depended on the county's libraries digital space. In other words, the AARLCC is

not fully independent of the Broward County Public Libraries system. Foster says,

> The Library System is really tightly controlled by Broward. I mean, clearly there
> is a Schomburg presence [online]. It's hard to find our presence in our system—
> internet systems website, and so we are part of Broward County Libraries….but I
> will say we do now have a webpage that will allow us to be able to have what you
> need, you know. So now there's been some progress, thankfully, to where we at
> least have a page that can do that. But yeah, I do think with the Schomburg they
> of course have a better presence that you can kind of understand that aligns with
> NYPL.[106]

Foster's leadership of the AARLCC has seen to it that it provides alternative understandings of

its time, space, and relationality to the public by creating avenues of digital presence. Not only is

her goal that the AARLCC is a place where local and regional Black communities and residents

are documented there, but also that people outside of the region—nationally and globally—

similar to the Schomburg, know about the AARLCC.

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[105] Gayatari Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*: *The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 5.
[106] Foster, interview with the author.

The importance of Black memory work through archiving and creating digital presence in the midst of a library system that obscures its presence is part of the fugitive pedagogy that the AARLCC continues to do through Foster's initiatives. Prior to arriving at the AARLCC, Foster had participated in innovative digital projects such as Mapping LGBTQ St. Louis, as well as a web archiving program at the Schomburg Center. Now at the AARLCC, the digital presence has increased and beyond the tight county restrictions to include projects such as "Archiving the Black Web," which have been pivotal national collaborations with the Queens Public Libraries, The Schomburg Center, Auburn Avenue Research Library, African American Museum and Library in Oakland, many HBCUs, and funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. "Archiving the Black Web" is set to create "...the framework necessary to build a digital web archive documenting the diversity of Black culture and content found on the web."[107] The Black Web is an extension of Black communities nationally that is a digital humanities and Black public humanities project led by Foster that is centered on self-making and FUBU, as the collaborators are Black organizations and institutions who are centering Black communities, events, and experiences. Furthermore, it advances Black librarianship by paying close attention to what happens and how to document digitally-born content.

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[107] "About Makiba," Archiving the Black Web, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**accessed October 21, 2021, https://archivingtheblackweb.org/makiba-foster/.

Conclusion

In closing, this study provided qualitative information about the staying power and struggles of an exemplary Black institution that is both of critical importance and surviving in lieu of threats to its existence. This study can serve as a preliminary litmus test by Black public humanities educators and administrators to determine the extent to which their centers are exemplary and inclusive. Although the field of public humanities has been extensively discussed in museum studies, very few scholars center on Black public humanities that currently exists in the field. There is very little literature that examines how Black public humanities initiatives can be exemplary and academically useful to the field of public humanities, museum, and library studies as a whole. By tracing the historical developments of Black public humanities and bringing to life the Black community in Fort Lauderdale, we can uncover not just generational trauma but also generational "memory work" as described by Foster in order to avoid Sistrunk Boulevard's history being forgotten. The AARLCC is a testament of the fascinating past of Broward County revolving around people who dotted and claimed a neighborhood towards self-making, which has reverberated into the AARLCC and beyond. We see this through the history of the Mizell family in Broward County, Provident Hospital, the Von D. Mizell Library and the civic engagement of this family and Black Fort Lauderdale residents fighting, resisting, and also creating centers of Black public health and education.

Although library and museum studies tend to be divided in their literature, their context tends to overlap in buildings like the AARLCC. My project challenges cultural institutions, curators, and educators to bridge the gap between museum and library studies. The literature around Black public histories should consider the uniqueness of research libraries like the AARLCC while acknowledging its differences with the Schomburg Center which does not have

a dedicated space for children and teens like the AARLCC. It is noteworthy that scholars like

David Carr reflect on the connections between museums and libraries:

> Museums and libraries are of one life—the ones that have invited me and the ones
> I have invited myself to see—to have assisted me in living a better, less
> accidental, more reflective existence. It is a life that is more coherent, less
> isolated: a life with more purpose, and less fear, but a life always asking, and
> always essentially unfinished. It is a thinking life that often remembers great
> collections, and so it a life that at times seems to be a collection itself.[108]

Similar to Carr, the AARLCC bridges the gap between museums and libraries by creating what

Carr considers, "a mind producing system, perhaps an organism, an embodiment of intentional

connections and cultural possibilities."[109] The AARLCC is a place that constructs meaning

around Black public humanities and their integration into diverse Black communities. Foster's

Black Diasporic programming and overall approach to Black public humanities serve as an

exemplary guide towards reconnecting with the deep history of a place profoundly shaped by

"memory workers." As posited by Foster,

> I would love for our place to be a place where there could be more intercultural exchange
> between the black diaspora here and I think that that we do, we celebrate all of that. We
> bring in speakers that represent all of that and so that's one of my goals is that I want to
> make sure that the community of blackness is built here. Question about community that
> we understand that it's, it's when someone sees you, they see black, they don't see...your
> heritage.[110]

Whether the AARLCC will attend to specific Black ethnic issues such as temporary protected

status (TPS) for Black migrants like Haitians or Bahamian refugees who are constantly affected

by natural disasters and citizenship issues is yet to be seen, nonetheless, it can be headed in that

direction. Indeed, the Broward County's geo-cultural space is not limited to the United States as

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[108] David Carr, *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003), xvii.
[109] Carr, The Promise of Cultural Institutions, 1.
[110] Foster, interview with the author.

many Bahamians along with other West Indians, have a history of returning to their island countries to maintain their family members. In the history of Broward County and by extension the AARLCC, it is crucial to take into account the multiple migrations that challenge a stagnant U.S. or Caribbean influence in the Broward County region. In this manner, understanding the particular migrations from Georgia, South Carolina, Jamaica, Haiti, or the Bahamas, the needs of members in the Broward County community can become a praxeological approach capable of addressing the issues. The AARLCC does not limit itself to a museum framework, it goes beyond that, which challenges our own framing of museum studies spaces for heritage studies. It is a hybrid space, which is what Black public humanities is about—from the bottom up, community-made, community-centered, and multi-dimensional. The AARLCC is not just a space, it is where people in the community come to for more than just an archive. If the several dimensions of museums continue to efface or ignore intergenerational institutions of Black self-making and fugitive pedagogy, we will continue to fracture those very same intergenerational linkages.

Chapter 3: The AARLCC and a Genealogy of Black Memory Work in Esther Rolle's Legacy

Introduction

One of the distinguishing features of the AARLCC is that it prioritizes multiple avenues for exercising Black memory work. In some occasions, it prioritizes the collection and in other, it prioritizes exhibits, events, meetings, and inter-organizational cooperation. In this chapter, I will delve into the multiple ways the AARLCC's For Us By Us (FUBU) approach to Black public humanities facilitates Black memory work, which I describe in the introduction through Geoff Ward and Jeffrey McCune's definition as "…this idea that Black Studies is in large part about the cultivation, curation, preservation of Black collective memory…"[111] Black memory workers advocate for their own memories as well as the memories of those in Black communities otherwise ignored or (mis)interpreted by engaged scholars who like documenting Black life through a rational approach that lacks the interstices of collective memory within a given region. Although different Black public humanists use the term Black memory work in a myriad of ways that are open to multiple meanings, they all nonetheless agree on the need to preserve their own histories for future generations. Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shanee' Murrain, and Skyla Hearn ask: "How can archivists, particularly those of color, find support within their institutions and the archival profession, to accomplish the work of preserving African American cultural heritage? How can archives support genuinely collaborative projects with diverse Black communities without co-opting their stories and collections?"[112] The AARLCC's approach of having Black archivists and engaging with local Black communities to preserve those histories, stories, and

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[111] Ward, "The Imperative of Black Memory Work."
[112] Powell, Chaitra, Holly Smith, Shanee' Murrain, and Skyla Hearn,"This [Black] Woman's Work," 5.

knowledges are part of the Black memory work they do. In particular, through its Black memory work the AARLCC celebrates Black Hollywood actor Esther Rolle—who grew up in Broward County's City of Pompano Beach. The AARLCC's celebration of Esther Rolle's 100th birthday centennial was forged by collaborations with local organizations, actors, and artists. These collaborations alongside their archive of Esther Rolle's papers allows us to see that just as the AARLCC is doing the Black memory work by commemorating Esther Rolle, it allows us to also uncover the Black memory work that Rolle did throughout her work, community, culture, and activism. Black memory work is an activist praxis in that it takes on a fugitive pedagogy by educating, creating knowledge, and preserving history in order to teach and share it with a Black public that wouldn't have access to this information otherwise.

My hope is that exploring these multi-dimensional approaches to Black memory work will be used by other organizations in order to expand narratives around their local Black communities. I argue that the AARLCC's archive and Black memory work, which is informed by a FUBU approach, is another example of Black public humanities and allows us to see Esther Rolle in a multi-dimensional perspective in the first place. In other words, we get to know Rolle as more than an actor and performer, but also as a community leader and activist. The AARLCC's work and archives challenges the popular cultural perspective that "Black actors are only actors" through their commemoration of Rolle in the production of the "Let the Good Times Rolle" play, exhibit, and social media events. At first glance, the Esther Rolle exhibit may appear to be one of vindicationism, a trope exercised by early 20th century Black public humanists such as Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B Dubois as explained by Andrea Burns,

> Black public historians like Woodson still drew from nineteenth-century intellectual
> traditions known as vindicationism, which historian Thomas J. Davis has defined it as
> akin to the "we, too, were here" syndrome—an approach that reveals itself in static,
> undifferentiated, impersonal exhibits that sweep across time with the aim of showing that

black people, like whites, were also here. Although many academics today deem vindicationism to be intellectually stale, it shouldn't be dismissed as an unimportant approach.[113]

Similarly, while Esther Rolle's successful career as an actress has been framed through vindicationism in Black popular culture, the AARLCC's Black memory work goes beyond this strategic vindicationism by offering depth to her work outside and through acting by highlighting her activism and advocacy for the Black community, which allows us to see far beyond that. Indeed, although celebrations around Black accomplishments have been reduced to vinidicationism and Black uplift, exploring Esther Rolle's legacy through the AARLCCS's archives forces us to reconsider how central her own self-making and being in community is to her experiences as seen through her personal papers and archives at the AARLCC. When we take into account the fact that much of the art and theater performance from the Esther Rolle exhibit and play was done by local artists and actors, we begin to understand how the Esther Rolle centennial goes beyond the idea of vindicationism. This is done by allowing a local Black community to partake in representing their own Black community for an audience of Black local residents—it is not self-representation for a white audience, it is a FUBU approach to this Black memory work, which is central to Black public humanities. Unlike other museums, the AARLCC's exhibit and theater performance does not reduce itself for the sake of visitors' leisure and pleasure, instead, it adds a context of communal transmission.

The first section of this chapter underscores how the AARLCC's approach of Esther Rolle's birthday centennial celebration is rooted in centering their community. In other words, it is very much a For Us By Us approach in that they collaborated with local community organizations, local artists, and actors, as well as re-centering the public when they were no

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[113] Burns, From Storefront to Monument, 8-9.

longer able to host the celebration as planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The AARLCC shifted gears and created a drive-in theatre for the performance as well as social media events to celebrate Esther Rolle as a way of making it accessible. Following in the spirit of the Black Museum Movement, the Esther Rolle centennial signifies a shift in how Black institutions engage the public by centering a Black culturally-relevant famous figure like Esther Rolle, who played Florida Evans in the widely-known show *Good Times,* in order to explore the dimensions of art, culture, and politics in Black memory work and self-making as intertwined.[114] Thus, exploring the political, cultural, and institutional representation of Esther Rolle within Black public humanities practices continues to blur the realm of politics and the public sphere and once again, reminds us that self-making is always in regards to the modern as well as the imaginative.

The AARLCC's exhibit, play, and archival collections of Esther Rolle offer us an insight into how Esther Rolle preserved the memory of other important Black figures through her activism and theatre work. The second section of this chapter highlights the memory work Rolle engages in by commissioning a play of Mary McLeod Bethune, of which she played the protagonist, how she memorialized her family and culture in *Good Times* and other cultural performances as well as in speaking about Afro-Dominican Garveyite activist Carlos Cooks. Ultimately, Rolle's and the AARLCC's memory work are counternarratives and fugitive pedagogical practices that are central to Black public humanities.

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[114] Similarly, the "Musical Crossroads" gallery exhibit at the NMAAHC draws in an audience through Black popular music to educate the public of the experiences of Black artists throughout history in the United States.

The AARLCC's FUBU Approach & Black Memory Work

Community Collaborations

In 2019 it was announced that a theatre production depicting Esther Rolle's life story,

"Let the Good Times Rolle," would be part of a centennial birthday celebration commemorating

Esther Rolle. This was a crucial moment for the AARLCC in defining and legitimizing its Black

public humanities approach as well as their legacy in the Fort Lauderdale area. The dates for the

play were first announced on May 7th 2020 on the Friends of the AARLCC Facebook website,

Twitter and Instagram,

> @withregram @rollewithaarlcc Mothers teach us to have confidence and believe in ourselves. Mothers knew from experience how important for people to believe in themselves in order for children to be whole, strong and grow with a healthy estimation of oneself. Mother's Day is around the corner and Esther Rolle represented black mothers like none other always strong and fierce in Good Times. Let The Good Times Rolle this November on the 6th – 8th of 2020! We are planning an amazing stage production, so stay tuned for some highlights and details to come. 😃
> ..... #AARLCC #EstherRolle #OurStory #MothersDay #StageProduction #LetTheGood TimesRolle.[115]

The AARLCC's social media presence allowed community members to follow up with the stage

production. The announcement was made two days before Mother's Day with the intent of

injecting promotion and a follow up. A following announcement with an Esther Rolle picture

stating "it's official" and "MD Simmons Production has been chosen by AARLCC to create a

documentary illuminating the life and legacy of Esther Rolle."[116] At this time, the world

witnessed the beginning stages of the COVID-19 global pandemic. By 26 of March 2020 the

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[115] Friends of AARLCC, "Mothers teach us to have confidence and belief in ourselves. Mothers knew from experience how important for people to believe in themselves in order for children to be whole…," Facebook, May 7, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/friendsofaarlcc/photos/a.741229949597958/1499391753781770/?type=3.
[116] M. Denise Simmons (@mdsproductions2), "#TGBTG We will produce a never been done before documentary on the life and times of #estherrolle! Thankful for @friendsofaarlcc…," Twitter, April 2, 2020, https://twitter.com/i/status/1245766798991069185.

United States had overtaken China and Italy with the highest number of confirmed cases in the world. As such, the Esther Rolle birthday centennial was under threat from the very beginning of its announcement. Makiba Foster, the Director of the AARLCC along with others chose Keith C. Wade to direct and Darius V. Daughtry to become Assistant Director of the stage production for "Let the Good Times Rolle." The production was financed by a number of grants including the Art of Community Grant from the Community Foundation of Broward County. The Community Foundation relied on Edward Hashek and John Jors Charitable Fund, Linda and Michael Carter Fund, and the Mary and Alex Mackenzie Community Impact Fund.

Original flyer posted on Friends of the AARLCC social media

The play was pivotal in memorializing Rolle not just as an actor, but as an activist and

member of the Broward County community.[117] The play becomes the connective tissue between

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[117] Unfortunately, due to the pandemic's limitations on my research and outreach, I was not able to secure a script of the play or a recording of the drive-in theatre production. The discussion of the play in this dissertation is limited to how its production process involved local Black artists and community organizations as part of a FUBU approach to Black public humanities.

the AARLCC and the greater Broward County. One of the successes of this play revolved around

strengthening ties between organizations and institutions that collaborated for the greater self-

making of this community. For example, Grace Kewl-Durfey who serves as Director of

Community Engagement at the Broward County Cultural Division and co-founder of Destination

Sistrunk, expressed the importance of inter-communal cooperation for the greater good of the

community. Destination Sistrunk dedicates itself to the cultural heritage of the Black community

in Broward County. Kewl-Durfey states the following,

> Destination Sistrunk is all about Black life, culture, history, and heritage. And
> AARLCC is one of our renowned facilities in Broward County. It is also within
> the Destination Sistrunk program area. So, for an incredible project like this, why
> would we not be involved as a partner? The City of Pompano, also with its
> historically Black neighborhood, is part of our Black Heritage network for
> Destination Sistrunk. So, it's about synergy and coming together to celebrate the
> spaces and the places of who we are as Black people in this country and in
> Broward County. All of our Black talent has continually been a beacon of light
> and hope for every one of us. Everyone knows *Good Times*. I grew up with *Good
> Times,* seeing Esther Rolle and seeing that there were spaces for people who look
> like me, having life experiences like me, being reflected on the TV made me feel
> that there were some things possible, so she was an incredible inspiration. And so
> also given that she's from Broward County and the city of Pompano, it's a direct
> reflection of the talent that we have produced here. […] Her activism, all the
> various ways—we don't just make it, we have to become movers and shakers, the
> evolution of us as a people. So, people like Esther Rolle we have to remember and
> we have to celebrate. And because they're coming from our home grown, our
> Earth, our blood here in Broward County it's a different light that we can hold
> to.[118]

Destination Sistrunk's collaboration with the AARLCC fits within the attitudes of a larger

community of organizations in the region that collaborated in making this centennial celebration

possible. Although these collaborations tend not to get national recognition, the notable, and

under-documented experiences of cross collaboration reveals the need for a return to the micro-

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[118] Broward County Library, "Rolle with AARLCC – A Birthday Bash and Toast to Our Leading Lady, Part I of V,"
Facebook Live, November 8, 2020, video, 40:24, https://fb.watch/bS_Dgtr2TX/

documentation of community self-makings by centering Black public humanities initiatives

beyond a top-down framework. For nearly two decades, the AARLCC has stood as a symbol of

the extravagant future for Black self-making in the Broward County area. The Esther Rolle

centennial celebration required collaboration and a common belief in self-determination beyond

a national agenda. As mentioned in the introduction, that is not to say that it is based on national

indifference as coined by Tara Zahra, but rather long-term communal affiliations.[119] These

associations between community and Black self-making beyond nation-building is fueled not

only by historical precedents of self-making in the region, but also various organizations that

cater to communal investment, as shown in the previous chapter. The fact that the show indeed

did go on despite being disrupted by a global pandemic is a testament of institutions like the

AARLCC who work to engage the Black local public, not as a customer, but as a neighbor,

collaborator, and participant in its memory work. Unlike other public cultural institutions that

rely on their public as paying customers and consumers.

For instance, Sheri Brown who is the Vice President of Community Impact for the

Community Foundation of Broward County, underscores the focal points of this cross-

collaboration and centering the local community artists when she says,

> The Community Foundation of Broward has great expectations for this project. We are so delighted that through our art of Community Focus Area, we're able to support the work that is being done especially in theatrical performances. Many times people who are engaged in the arts or consume the arts, they think of more of the visual arts and sculptures and things of that nature. So, we hope that through this project, we bring a higher profile to how we could proliferate more performing arts throughout the community. And we think that the Esther Rolle "Let the Good Times Rolle" project is a wonderful way to demonstrate the diversity in the arts to engage local talent. And we hope that through this project, we see our artists really rise from this investment and we are very grateful that the

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[119] Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

fund holders that support this project at the Community Foundation of Broward are going to be super pleased with what they see as a result of their investment.[120]

Indeed, what Brown describes here as the decision to host a play for a Black audience with an all-Black cast builds on the legacy of self-determination in Black theater by Black people.

It is important to remember that Black theater has radical roots from the beginning. According to Black theater scholar Larry Neal: "The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America.[121] In making this statement, Neal urges us to take into account the multiple dimensions of self-determination. Black aesthetics thus becomes the expression by which Black Power manifests itself under its own terms. When referring to LeRoi Jones, one of the pioneers of the Black Arts Movement, Neal posits that, "The Black Arts Theatre, the theatre of LeRoi Jones, is a radical alternative to the sterility of the American theatre."[122] In this sense, the stage production of "Let the Good Times Rolle" continues the radical tradition of self-manifestation through a Black public humanities approach that seeks to empower, educate, and center the Black community. On the other hand, when this does not happen it can result in devastating effects as seen in the Black Museum Movement during the latter half of the 20th century where a de-centering of the Black public and community shifted the success of such institutions. As Burns elaborates,

> One of the primary ways in which the black museum movement appeared to lose strength both publicly and privately stemmed from problems surrounding the intense relocation and expansion campaigns staged by many leaders of the African American museums throughout the 1970's and 1980's. Chicago's DuSable Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, Detroit's Museum of African

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[120] Broward County Library, "Rolle with AARLCC."
[121] Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," *The Drama Review: TDR* 12, no. 4 (1968): 29.
[122] Ibid, 33.

American History, and the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum expanded and relocated in an effort to attract new audiences, funding, and status….

...These types of public changes occasionally met with significant community resistance, even on the part of some museum staff members, who feared the disintegration of the grassroots spirit of their organizations. The physical manifestation of this grassroots spirit was embodied in the ordinariness of the very buildings and landscapes in which many of these museums were first housed—former movie theatres, modest apartment buildings, and clubhouses that historically catered to African Americans.[123]

As we reflect on the negative consequences of the many institutions that made up the Black Museum Movement mostly due to gravitating away from the local community, the AARLCC's success can be attributed for doing the contrary. Within this context, employing local artists may not seem substantial, but when we reflect on the failures of many Black public humanities spaces that attempted to expand at the expense of the community, staying local carries a meaningful element.

Hence, although the COVID-19 pandemic thwarted the AARLCC's efforts to put on the stage production for "Let the Good Times Rolle," at its location, they managed to show parts of the play virtually through the centennial celebration on Facebook, as well as host the play through a drive-in theatre. Makiba Foster shares that

Originally, the play was commissioned for Esther Rolle's 100th birthday on November 8, 2020. However, with an international health crisis, we opted to create a virtual celebration providing snippets of the play [...] Although we had hoped to bring this production to you inside of AARLCC's beautiful theatre, we are happy to offer this play in a groundbreaking way - as a socially distant outdoor drive-in event![124]

Foster along with her team spent a lot of time reaching out to community organizations in the area and were able to find support. Keeping the arts in the community is a crucial component of the AARLCC's success.

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[123] Burns, *From Storefront to Monument,* 182.
[124] Broward County Library, "Rolle with AARLCC."

Black Memory Work in the Production of "Let the Good Times Rolle" with Local Actors
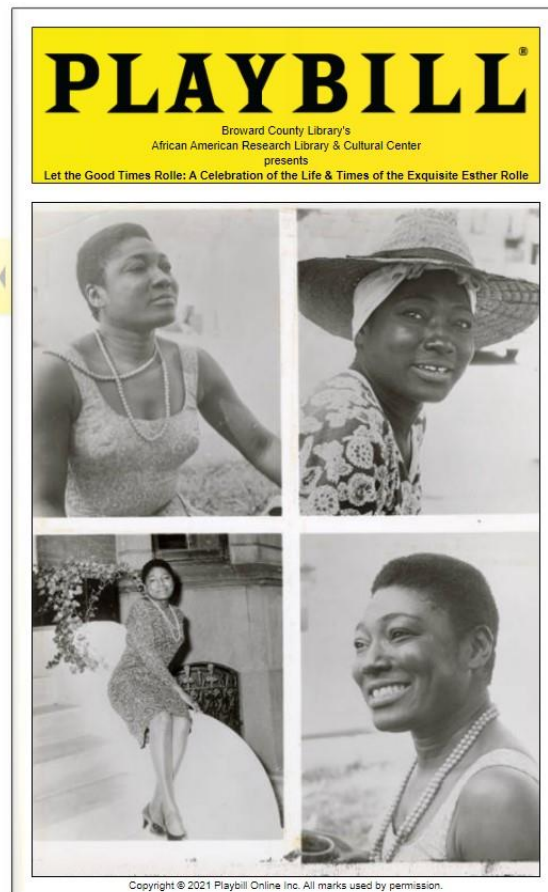
The playbill of "Let the Good Times Rolle" play. Obtained by the author in May 2021.

The AARLCC provides avenues for self-making by its commitment to endorse local artists. Whereas other institutions are searching for the renowned artists that can lead to prestige, the AARLCC instead focuses on local contexts as part of its Black memory work and self-making. Furthermore, the AARLCC sought to connect with the community by creating a virtual centennial birthday celebration of Esther Rolle through their Facebook account. The virtual event provided more information on the play as well as interviews with the cast about their own experiences in the play and what it meant for them to play their roles. The online event was titled

"A Birthday gift to Esther: Part 1 of the Virtual Centennial." Their virtual centennial shows the different cast members who play Esther Rolle at different stages in her life. Different actors play a different stage of her life and even dialogue with each other, which reflects the possible internal dialogue Rolle often had with herself. In the virtual event, the actors also shared their own analyses of the play. For instance, Christian-Joy Demeritt who plays the adult Esther Rolle expresses her own similarities with her describing how they are both Bahamian-American, from South Florida and dark skin and the influence Rolle had on her as an actor who fought against being type-casted or limited to her Florida Evans role, despite her age. Black theater has maintained a radical position and it is no surprise that the AARLCC opted for a theater performance in dedication to Esther Rolle. The actress Sumaiyah E. Wade, who plays the young Esther (Lil Girl) mentions her immigrant background as an important factor in her upbringing and the ways in which Rolle's life has influenced her to fulfill her life goals, such as acting. The play included stages in Rolle's life thereby showing her complexity to the audience.[125]

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[125] Broward County Library, "Rolle with AARLCC."

Let the Good Times Rolle filming of community partners for the Centennial Virtual Celebration held November 7-8, 2020.
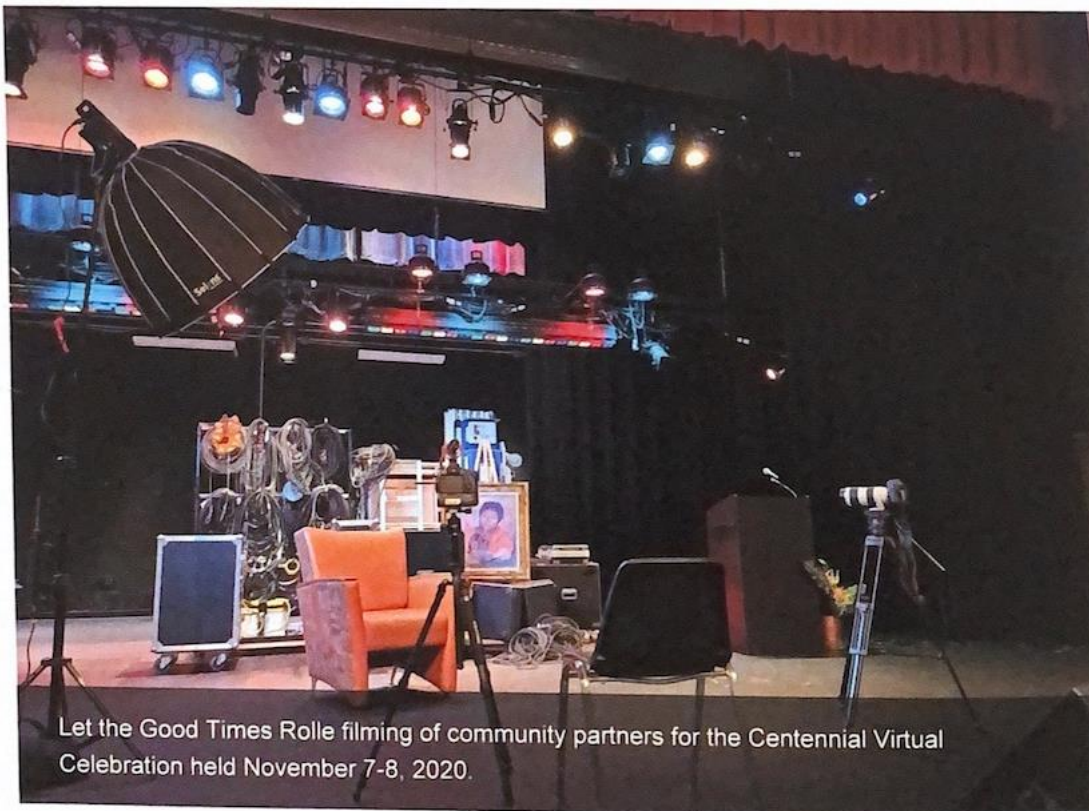
Photo of the stage for "Let the Good Times Rolle" play. From the playbill obtained by the author in May 2021.

From these interviews, we learn more about Rolle's influence on these young actors. As expressed by Joy Demeritt, the lead actor in "Let the Good Times Rolle,":

The most fascinating thing about her is that she wasn't just about *Good Times*, of course, it was probably her most popular role, but she's had so many wonderful, amazing roles that really broke barriers and did things that kind of weren't supposed to be done back in the 60s and 70s, and even earlier in the 50s. And she kind of hit it big later in life. And so, her life story is really encouraging to me. Even when it didn't seem like she was doing that well in her career. She still persevered and ended it with an amazing role in Rosewood, which was about a year before her death. So, I felt like she lived to play roles that weren't stereotypical, and she was able to succeed while being a bastion in Black culture.[126]

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[126] Broward County Library, "Rolle with AARLCC."

Meaning that although highlighting Rolle's resistance and advocacy in Hollywood are important

characteristics that describe her, it is equally important to pay attention to the relationship

between power, knowledge, and resistance in her context as a Black woman in the film and

media industry. Rolle's refusal to be type-casted into the housekeeper led her to continue

advocating for herself after she turned 40 and sought to get new roles as seen in movies such as

Summer of my German Soldier, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Ethnic Notions*, and

Rosewood among others.

However, a careful examination of Rolle requires an understanding of the racial and

gendered politics during the post-soul era. Black women were often scape-goated as being

responsible for the failures of the Black community but also with the country itself. According to

Angela Davis, "Media reports keep us painfully aware that African American women are the

most visible targets of the recent campaign to dismantle welfare. The demonization of welfare

mothers, however, was met with overwhelming silence, even from a successful African

American woman whose proximity was perhaps too great for them to imagine their sister's

fate."[127] It is safe to assume that these issues within Black communities created an added

challenge to artists like Rolle who were constantly attacked, policed, and critiqued without

taking into account the fact that many Black women such as her had to walk a different path in

order to make it in Hollywood. Evidently, the fact that Rolle was a local and determined to

challenge Hollywood to not be type-casted inspired the actors working on the play. They honor

her through their performance and partake in the Black memory work of Rolle, which they hope

to pass on to future generations. They are not just acting, they are actively participating in telling

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[127] Angela Y. Davis, "Women in Prison, *Essence* (September 2000), 216.

Rolle's story for a Black public local audience to remember her beyond what they might already

know.

"Let the Good Times Rolle": Exhibiting Local Artists

Within its community-centered approach, in addition to the play to commemorate Esther Rolle's

legacy on what would have been her100ᵗʰ birthday, they also put together an exhibit, which took

place in the gallery space of the building. In order to promote the exhibit, George Gadson, the

curator and one of the artists of the exhibit, provided a short introduction of the exhibit. The

exhibit includes South Florida artists: Yves Gabrielle, Rafael Cruz, Ivette Michelle, George

Gadson, and Robert McKnight. From the very beginning Gadson decided to represent artists

from the community. In the promotional video, Gadson states, "she represented the community

and we are glad and proud to know that she is from our South Florida community."[128] A painting

of Esther Rolle appears in front of the exhibit titled "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by

Robert McKnight. The labels states the following, "Portrait of Esther Rolle as

The Concerned Grand Mother (I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings). She won an

Emmy Award for the TV movie *Summer of My German Soldier* (1978) and for her film work

Driving Miss Daisy (1989), and *Rosewood* (1997)." The portrait sets the tone for the rest of the

exhibit by documenting Rolle's life and legacy by naming and depicting her expression through

McKnight's paintings.

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[128] Broward County Library, "George Gadson Presents the Esther Rolle Art Exhibit," Facebook, March 9, 2020, video, 00:57, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=34791608986576.

Entrance to the "Let the Good Times Rolle" exhibit, May 2021 (Photo taken by author)

"Let the Good Times Rolle" exhibit, May 2021 (Photo taken by author)

Photo of Robert McKnight's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" May 2021 (Photo by the author)

The AARLCC's dedication to promoting the local community is seen through their intentional purpose of exhibiting local artists' works about Esther Rolle instead of attempting to emulate other world-renowned museums, which often curate works within a theme without prioritizing local or regional artists. In this way, the AARLCC is concerned with creating an inward dialogue between community members. Although the exhibit was small, it contained various materials from The Esther Rolle Papers Collection, special collections and archives at the AARLCC. For example, there is a display of Rolle's trophy received by the Academy of the Arts and Sciences for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or Special for her role in *Summer of My German Soldier* in 1978. There was also a black and white photograph displayed

from this movie. Moreover, the exhibit shows Esther Rolle's dedication to racial justice as seen

in the documentary *Ethnic Notions* depicting caricatures of Black Americans in both the 19th and

20th centuries. Narrated by Esther Rolle, the film has a commentary which ties together the visual

images. It ends with a question: have these stereotypes changed and improved in our post-Civil

Rights era?

> …The negative stereotypes served historical purposes: when whites needed to believe
> that their slaves were not rebellious, they created caricatures of happy, singing, and
> shuffling darkies. During Reconstruction, when newly-emancipated Blacks were
> demanding the right to literacy as well as the vote, whites created caricatures of Blacks as
> dangerous, vicious animals. Children were always portrayed as animal-like, though
> lovable and cute. No recognition of the dignity of Black Americans was permitted.[129]

As such, the Esther Rolle exhibit is twofold. On the one hand, it reinforces traditional tropes of

racial uplift, respectability politics, and heteronormative ideas around family. For example, the

front billboard of the exhibit states the following: "...Best known for her role on the television

sitcom *Good Times*, in our collective consciousness, Esther Rolle has come to epitomize the idea

of the Black matriarch. Artists were asked to especially address these themes: Esther Rolle, *Good

Times,* Black womanhood, Black family, Blackness represented in film and television...." On the

other hand, it depicts Rolle's commitment to Black empowerment not often recognized or let

alone showcased within the need to limit Black actors to comedy and entertainment. Rolle

belongs to generations of racial uplift politics, which was to be criticized harshly by the post-soul

generations of the 80's and 90's. Scholars like Brittany Cooper argue that "respectability politics

are at their core a rage-management project. Learning to manage one's rage by daily tamping

down that rage is a response to routine assaults one one's dignity in a world where rage might get

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[129] *Ethnic Notions,* directed by Marlon Riggs (1986; San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel, 2021), Kanopy online
streaming service.

you killed or cause you to lose your job."[130] A controversy that was the episode "Thelma's problem" dealt with Evans' only daughter, a 16-year-old Thelma, who was being pressured by her boyfriend to become sexually active in their relationship. Allegedly, Rolle refused the script by arguing that "There is enough that's morally wrong on TV. Not on my show!"[131] In today's standards sex education is encouraged and there are multiple conversations to be had. In that moment, Rolle's respectability politics was a way of protecting Black women's reputation from promiscuity. Although it is not very radical or "modern," we must take into account her purpose and intention.

In her chapter "Grown Woman Theology" Cooper makes some important points to consider regarding teenage girls and sexual education,

> In places where abstinence is the only form of sex education, teen pregnancy rates are alarming. In places where access to contraception and proper information about birth control is available, teen pregnancy rates have decreased astronomically. What the poor Black girls in my school needed was the True Love Waits Campaign, but rather good information about sex, emotional maturity, and birth control. What was true for my grandmother in the 1950's was true for my Black girls' peers in the 1990's: "They just couldn't get the stuff".[132]

We should consider Rolle's context especially when it comes down to parading Black teenage sexuality in an era when Black women were being attacked for having kids and supposedly becoming "welfare queens.". As such, the figure of Esther Rolle lies within the crux of a civil rights generation. The artwork titled "Esther" by Rafael Cruz encapsulates a powerful consideration of Esther Rolle beyond her role as an actor. The label says: "Esther Rolle

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[130] Brittney Cooper, *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018), 151.

[131] Lou Haviland, "'Good Times': The 1 Episode That Star Esther Rolle Wouldn't Do—But Was Forced to by the Show's Producer," *Showbiz CheatSheet*, March 5, 2021, https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/good-times-1-episode-star-esther-rolle-wouldnt-forced-show-creator-norman-lear.html/.

[132] Cooper, *Eloquent Rage*, 134-135.

transcended all of the roles she's played in her life – stage and screen actor, dancer, mother,

activist and woman. She achieved iconic stature and we all owe her a great debt for blazing a

trail which we can follow."

A photo of Esther Rolle's Oscar award trophy for "Summer of My German Soldier" in 1978. May 2021. (Photo by the author)
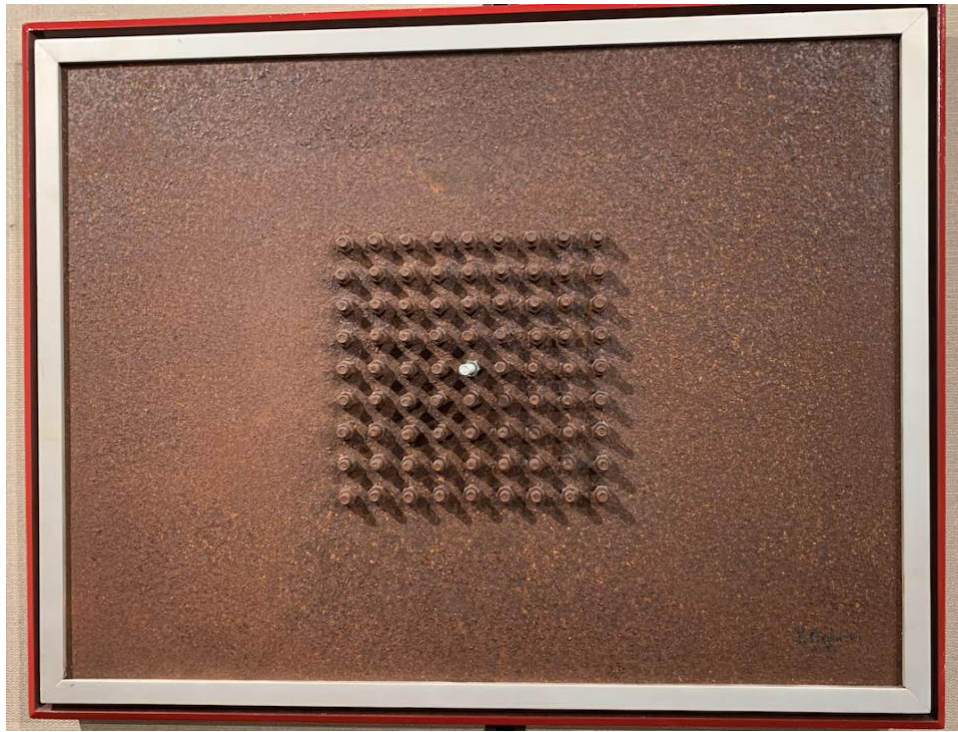
"Strength and Grace" by Yves Gabriel (Photo taken by author in May 2021)

The artwork titled "Strength and Grace" by artist Yves Gabriel serves as a visual

representation that shifts a facsimile dichotomization between racial uplift and a more militant

post-soul pro-Black ideology. The label states the following,

> With this painting, visual artist Yves Gabriel depicts a memorial for the Black suffragist woman who began the work that Esther Rolle took on with such grace and strength throughout her career and beyond. The galvanized bolt signifies the ascendance of Ms. Rolle who courageously used her agency as a Black woman to challenge a major television network to have a complete family unit represented in her show instead of the stereotypical visualization of a struggling single mother raising her children.

This multi-dimensional aspect of Rolle's life depicted by local artist Yves Gabriel usually

overlooked by a broader public knowledge of Esther Rolle is what Rodney Harrison calls

"unofficial heritage." That is, a series of values and practices that exist at a local community

level but are not included within the state's perception of its patrimony or national story, like

other well-known Black American political figures.[133] Unofficial heritage is a set of repetitive, entrenched, sometimes ritualized practices that link the values, beliefs, and memories of communities in the present with those of the past. Harrison's concept reveals an important aspect of the Esther Rolle exhibit; a Black public humanities approach that is dedicated to telling stories often overlooked but cherished by the local community. That is, although Rolle is supposed to represent Black uplift, the exhibit's emphasis on progress and Rolle's activism causes a historical change and a break with tradition and throws up unacknowledged tension in terms of our relationship with time and its filling passage. As such, the Esther Rolle exhibit operates beyond fulfilling a national agenda and operates as a counter site to nationalized Blackness by emphasizing the local and Black diasporic.

The times and context of Rolle's prime is part of the post-soul era, which as Richard Iton highlights, is part of the last two decades of the 20th century as pivotal. He writes, "…the remaking of the racial architecture that occurred post 1965 also suggests that the traditional frameworks for discussing and distinguishing black politics and discourses might need to be abandoned or, at the very least, troubled."[134] In other words, it was a time in which the nuance and complexities of Black political discourses varied among generations of Black people from the Civil Rights Movement, the post-soul, Black uplift, Black nationalism, and pan-Africanism, among other ideologies. Interestingly, Rolle was one of the seminal figures of Black popular culture who remarkably succeeded in encouraging Black self-makings and uplift even while that concept was being both challenged and embraced. Thus, Rolle is part of a larger conglomeration of Black actors who navigated the fine lines between subversiveness and integrationism. Others

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[133] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[134] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 22.

such as Hattie McDaniel known as the first Black American to win an Oscar for her role as

Mammy in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) also navigated the fine lines between being legible while

also being subversive in her music. Although McDaniel is known for staying out of politics and

being criticized by the NAACP for allegedly exacerbating the negative stereotypes associated

with Black people, McDaniel navigated the fine line many actors continue to navigate today. As

posited by Iton, "...it has been a common practice for black actors and movements to draw in

varying degrees from both integrationist and nationalist traditions, depending on the audience in

question and the prevailing circumstances."[135]

Esther Rolle's Black Memory Work

The AARLCC's vast archive on Esther Rolle's life allows us to understand how the stage

production and exhibit of "Let the Good Times Rolle" was created to portray her work and

activism. While the play and exhibit give the audience a layered look into her life through

different stages, the archive itself provides a more in-depth look at her experiences and work in

ways that allows us to see the memory work that the AARLCC is doing in acquiring Esther

Rolle's papers. The archive, I argue, creates a much deeper look into the multiple dimensions of

Rolle's life and allows us to see her own memory work of those that came before her as seen

through her work of commissioning Black playwright Steve Carter to write a one-woman play

about Mary McLeod Bethune (which she herself portrayed), remembering her own family and

culture through *Good Times* and calypso performances respectively, as well as her presentations

on Afro-Dominican Garveyite activist Carlos Cooks.

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[135] Ibid, 22.

Esther Rolle's Memory Work of Mary McLeod Bethune

In the Esther Rolle papers we find that her intentional approach to honoring those who came before her took place in stage acting. We can argue that Rolle's memory work through theatre is a "critical memory work." As Black theatre and performance studies scholar Harvey Young describes,

> Critical memory is the act of reflecting upon and sharing recollections of embodied black experience. It does not presume that black bodies have exactly the same memories, yet assists the process of identifying connections across black bodies and acknowledges that related histories of discrimination, violence, and migration result in similar experiences. Critical memory invites consideration of past practices that have affected the lives and shaped the experiences of black folk. It looks back in time from a present-day perspective and not only accounts for the evolution in culture but also enables an imagining of what life would be like had things been different. The appeal of critical memory is that it grants access to past experiences of select individuals. At the same time, it does not blind us to their (or our) present reality.[136]

To take case in point, Rolle's performance in "Bethune" chronicled the life of Mary MacLeod Bethune, an iconic Black educator, womanist, businesswoman, humanitarian, civil rights leader, and government official in the 20th century. The one-woman play, which Rolle described more accurately as "a dramatic lecture or historical storytelling," had its premiere in 1991 in Dallas, where it was produced by the Junior Black Academy of Arts and Letters.[137] The second performance, which took place during the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston Salem, North Carolina drew celebrities such as Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Denzel Washington, and Danny Glover among others, which proves the extent to which the play was extolled.

Although Bethune was born in 1875 and Rolle in 1920, almost forty years apart, we can argue that they shared undeniable parallels. As Young posits, "Critical memory assists the

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[136] Harvey Young, Embodying the Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 19-20.

[137] Dean Smith, "'Bethune' is Gospel of Hope," *The Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), August 10, 1991. Accessed by the author through the AARLCC's Esther Rolle Collection.

process of identifying similarities—shared experiences and attributes of being and becoming—

among black folk not by presuming that black bodies have the same memories but by

acknowledging that related histories create experiential overlap."[138] Both Bethune and Rolle

were born in the South, Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina and Esther Rolle was

born in Pompano Beach, Florida. They both had many siblings, Bethune had sixteen siblings

while Rolle had seventeen. Both their parents worked hard and sacrificed themselves to get their

own farms. However, Bethune grew up with her own set of challenges. She attended in

Mayesville, a one-room Black schoolhouse, Trinity Mission School, which was run by the

Presbyterian Board of Missions of Freedman. Bethune benefited from her previous generation

who set the stage for young Black children to go to school under segregation and post-

reconstruction. According to James Anderson,

> For a brief period during the late 1860's and 1870's ...all of the dominant white groups
> suspected that the ex-slaves were docile and tractable people. But the actions of the
> freedmen during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods convinced all parties that
> blacks had their own ideas about learning and self-improvement. Blacks soon made it
> apparent that they were committed to training their young for futures that prefigured full
> equality and autonomy.[139]

As explained by Anderson, white dominant groups did not anticipate the fugitive and furtive

pedagogy by Black educators and leaders that allowed Black children like Mary McLeod

Bethune to become a bewildering legacy to many white dominant groups who had no optimism

of Black self-making. Black educators and civil rights activists such as Bethune also believed in

scholastic development from the ground up. She would eventually become a political appointee

to the Franklin Roosevelt Administration as the Director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth

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[138] Young, Embodying the Black Experience, 18.
[139] James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 281.

Administration, where she remained until 1944 and Vice President of the National Association

for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP), a position she held for the rest of her life.

She believed in maintaining deep connections to other Black people in order to create

what eventually became the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls.

One of those connections she maintained was with Carter G. Woodson, whom she recognized as

an influential leader in Black public education and wrote to him to consider donating towards the

creation of this school. As someone who grew up in cotton fields with her family members

without the access to read and write, Bethune believed in Black self-makings especially for

young Black girls. Bethune's own practice and determination to read and create an institution for

Black girls was also the result of a fugitive pedagogy—creating a school for Black girls when

there wasn't one in a society that did not allow for such a thing to even exist. Self-making and

self-mastery are central to this fugitivity that is Black public humanities in a Black feminist and

intersectional way. According to the *Sun Sentinel*, prior to the performance Rolle said that, "This

is a woman who was called to go to San Francisco when they were formulating the idea of the

United Nations."[140] She adds, "For a woman of this stature not to be in the history books as a

major contributor to this society is nothing short of sick."[141] Rolle understood the importance of

staging Bethune's life in order to critically memorialize her in the midst of Black historical

erasure. To this end, Young reminds us about the importance of plays like this one when he

writes, "What is striking about these plays is that they challenge the muting effect of historical

erasure or historical misrepresentation by centering not the voice but the body."[142] In other

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[140] Smith, "'Bethune' is Gospel of Hope."
[141] Ibid.
[142] Young, Embodying the Black Experience, 166.

words, it is not just that Bethune or Rolle existed, but that their embodiment as Black women in a white world was pivotal to their experiences and their contributions to Black communities.

Rolle's Black memory work and her devotion to Bethune helps us understand in large part how and why the Esther Rolle Papers ended up at the AARLCC. Many who worked to make sure the Esther Rolle Papers ended up at the AARLCC took the lead in shaping Broward County's historical legacy, which consisted of a vision of education and public humanities at variance with a traditional view of museums, research center, library, and public humanities praxis. Bethune's belief in self-reliance and self -making spread over time to people like Rolle and were expressed in her performance of her. Meaning, the AARLCC is at the center of this connection between Bethune and Rolle because it chose to preserve the Esther Rolle Papers donated by family members. Undaunted by their challenges both Rolle and Bethune sustained in their beliefs in guidance from other members of the Black community, is transmitted by the AARLCC's own legacy of being created by the Mizell family and countless others. This assemblage of self-improvement takes on a new direction with Esther Rolle's own history around activism in and beyond theatre. The memory work that Rolle was doing through her involvement in researching, commissioning and performing of "Bethune" is an example of Black public humanities and bridging the role that activism plays in it. In other words, the fugitive pedagogy of memorializing Bethune and teaching her story through this theatre performance is part of a genealogy of Black radical theatre that stems back to the early 19th century. For example, as early as 1821, the African Company in New York City——the company of the African Grove Theatre–provided entertainment for a Black audience during times of slavery. The founder, William Alexander Brown was an immigrant from the West Indies who migrated to England and other parts of the Caribbean who had more exposure to theatre than others. Brown

sought to play mostly the classics such as *Othello* and *Richard III* for Black audiences of

different backgrounds: free, enslaved, middle class, working class, etc. Brown started to hold

performances in his backyard. Beyond the classics, the African Company also performed original

works such as *The Drama of King Shotaway*. It was about a 1795 Black Carib revolt against

Navy forces on the island of Saint Vincent. Black theatre, however, has always faced threat from

white retaliation for creating its own theatre. For example, the African Company had to move

frequently to different parts of New York City due to being harassed by the police as tensions

with abolishing slavery was at its heyday. A white man called Stephen Price orchestrated a

disturbance over the rival production of the African Company when it moved to Bleecker and

Mercer Streets and forced the company to shut down. Afterwards, it was mysteriously burned

down and was never heard of again after 1823.

Although the African Company existed over a hundred years before the creation of one of

the first Black sitcoms, *Good Times* in the 1970s, one can still draw parallels. To take case in

point, Rolle was constantly confronted by Mr. Hammond, a white producer of the show.

Historian Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar highlights about the show:

> Generally, they had white executive producers, mostly white directors, and writers. In
> fact, when "Good Times," which was set in a Chicago public housing project, debuted in
> 1974 with an all-black cast, all of the staff writers were white. Although the creators, Eric
> Monte and Michael Evans, were black, the show's white executive producer, Norman
> Lear, assembled an all-white team to bring the show into fruition, with depth, color, and
> dimension. …In the midst of the Black Arts Movement, with black playwrights,
> novelists, poets and other literati, the incongruence between black comedy, a black
> family and black politics fully conceived, written, produced and packaged by whites
> could not be lost.[143]

Furthermore, Larry Robinson, a Black actor who plays Mr. Hammond in the play "Let the Good

Times Rolle," provides some insight into her struggle as an actress with a white leading

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[143] Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, "The Black Arts Movement Reprise: Television and Black Art in the 21st Century,"
European Journal of American Studies 14, no. 1 (2019): 9.

production team, led by Mr. Hammond, which was one of Rolle's hardest life moments to

confront in her career. It is important to note that although today Rolle is highly regarded, many

did not approve of the sitcom. For example, in 1974, a writer by the name of Ax Man in article

titled, "Hot Skillet," wrote a scathing review of *Good Times* via the Chicago Metro News stating:

"Esther Rolle (Florida) and John Amos are modern day STEPPIN FETCHIT's, HATTIE

McDANIEL's, BUTTERFLY McQUEEN's, BILL BOJANGELS ROBINSON's and other

niggers who will do any disgraceful thing for money and a chance to be in front of television

cameras. The show will be presented again this fall if Blacks do not protest against it being

shown."[144] These sorts of commentary against artists were common during the 1970's, an era

driven by negotiations and conflicts taking place within Black American popular culture.[145]

Expressions of internal disagreements in regards to *Good Times* were in fact tied to

disenfranchisement and a radical political movement that deeply distrusted the Democratic party

during the beginning of the "crack epidemic" and post-Civil Rights Movement, which had not

delivered upon its promises. Architectural theorist Joseph Godlewski reminds us that *Good

Times* portrayed Chicago's Cabrini-Green public housing projects of the 1970s, which many felt

it to be the first Black sitcom to finally represent Black families in the ghetto in a positive

light.[146] However, he is right to point out that, "…*Good Times* oblique spatial message served to

undermine its otherwise progressive social agenda, legitimizing public disinvestments in social

housing while normalizing living conditions within."[147]

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[144] The Ax Man, "The Hot Skillet," *Chicago Metro News* (Chicago, IL), June 8, 1974: 4.
[145] It is important to note that there is a cultural and aesthetic shift during this time in the Black American film industry with the rise of blaxploitation films as well as films striving to represent the realities of working-class communities.
[146] Joseph Godlewski, "The Tragicomic Televisual Ghetto: Popular Representations of Race and Space at Chicago's Cabrini-Green," *Berkeley Planning Journal* 22, no. 1 (2009): 115.
[147] Godlewski, "The Tragicomic Televisual Ghetto," 120.

At this time, the biggest topic in regard to the entertainment and the Black American film industry was whether it was going to integrate into white dominant society or represent the politicized Black masses.[148] While Rolle was aware of the barriers impeding her success as an actor, she sought to change the status quo. Refusing to play just stereotypical roles paved the way for many to believe in the impossible.[149] Esther Rolle is mostly known as an emblematic symbol for Black womanhood in the United States due to her role in *Good Times*. Uncovering the relationship between the actor's agency and the Black American roles they play in the United States, allows us to further humanize and complicate the nuances and added dimensions of Black actors usually limited to their role within the culture and entertainment industry. It is important to note that while *Good Times* may have been critiqued as a new-age minstrelsy of a sitcom at times, the AARLCC's "Let the Good Times Rolle" play about Rolle's life provides a narrative of what it was like from the Black actor's point of view in working on the show—it is a clap back at the ownership of white television for a Black audience. The play employing local Black actors to represent different stages of Rolle's life reminds us that Black public humanities centers a Black audience for a Black audience. In other words, it challenges us to understand that what we have come to know as Black popular culture in media is not always produced by Black people, as we are consuming a white audience's perception of Black people. The production of the sitcom *Good Times*, just like the play "Let the Good Times Rolle" reminds us to be careful not to flatten the narratives of Black actors and Black popular culture even when the cultural product seems to re-inscribe the very stereotypes we actively work to dismantle.

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[148] Iton, *The Black Fantastic,* 25.

[149] See Christopher J. P. Sewell, "Mammies and Matriarchs: Tracing Images of the Black Female in Popular Culture 1950s to Present." *Journal of African American Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 308–26.

Rolle's Memory Work of Her Family through Good Times

Esther Rolle's own memory work is present in her connections between her family background and *Good Times*. Rolle's determination to work hard for her dreams is connected to her parent's determination to work hard as immigrants eager to become self-sustaining. Her mother, Lizzie Dane, grew up poor and illiterate in the Bahamas on Bimini Island. Her father, "… Jonathan Rolle was a cut above; on Nassau, his grandfather trained thoroughbred horses and dogs used by the British royal family on their visits to the Bahamas."[150] It is important to note that Rolle's success was due to her family system. As explained in a newspaper clipping, "As each child finished gratis education, the elder Rolles had to scrape up enough money to pay for boarding school. Jonathan earned a living by raising beans, peppers, and tomatoes on leased land. Children at home worked odd jobs, and each Saturday night the father collected their earnings to pay for the schooling of the youngsters away from home."[151] Although the audience understood Rolle's role in *Good Times* as part of a traditional Black American family, Rolle herself had a different interpretation of what Black family in *Good Times* meant for her. For example, Rolle was against the stereotypical trope of the single Black mother living in the public housing projects that the show's producers wanted to do. Instead, she wanted the show to portray a Black two-parent household. Ogbar writes, "Rolle later argued that, 'I introduced the black father to this country,' when she refused to accept the part unless there was a father to the household. This was the first time that a black main character on TV was both a father and husband."[152] Rolle's personal life was an example that she wanted to see on TV.

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[150] "Esther Rolle Talks About her 'Roots',"52. Newspaper clipping from the Esther Rolle Collection provided by the Broward County Digital Library Archives. No author, date, or source is shared in the clipping.
[151] "Esther Rolle Talks About her 'Roots',"52.
[152] Ogbar, "The Black Arts Movement Reprise," 9.

Her own experiences growing up with her parents was something she wanted to share with the world. When discussing her father and mother's relationship, she posited the following,

> He and mama never argued about anything personal—just about *things*. About the bible, or where a place was back in Nassau. And he'd finally say, I *know*, woman, I *know*. He didn't say it mean. It was like an endearment, the way my husband, James, in "Good Times" used to smile at me when he called me 'woman'. Our parents certainly never argued about us children—it would have been an insult to get a 'no' from one and go to the other for a 'yes.' They laid down strict rules—no lipstick, be home at night, no hair strengthening——all that until the girls were 18 and the boys 21.[153]

Rolle's comment may sound like simple nostalgia, however, the ways in which Rolle connects her family experience with Florida Evans's relationship with James in *Good Times* reveals that she drew parallels between the characters in the show. It is evident that she protested against the show's production team to disavow the representations of Black families. For instance, in his article "Mammies and Matriarchs" scholar Christopher J.P. Sewell writes:

> During the 1976–1977 seasons, Rolle quit the show in protest of the use of continued negative imagery as well as the killing off of her television husband in an accident in Georgia. She felt that the show simply played into the notions of the Black single matriarch who would have to struggle and maintain a façade. She did not agree with the notion that the Black woman had to be single to fit in with the common imagery about the Black woman and her family at the time.[154]

It is clear that her stern roles in and outside of movies, plays, and performances were also reminiscent of her own upbringing in a Black Caribbean working family that partook in Broward County's community engagement and sought to improve their children's life as well as that of their communities as seen through her father's involvement in Broward County, which I briefly discuss in the conclusion of this chapter.

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[153] "Esther Rolle Talks About her 'Roots'," 54.
[154] Sewell, "Mammies and Matriarchs," 319-320.

Rolle's Memory Work and Activism of her Black Caribbean Culture

Rolle's involvement with the Bahamian community is part of memorializing and doing

her own diasporic Black memory work. For example, amongst many of the genres Rolle

performed in, included Calypso musicals. A newspaper clipping published by the *Miami Times*

on March 3rd, 1956 praises Rolle's Calypso artistry,

> On last Friday night our cafetorium was the scene of gaiety in Calypso style. Pervading the program was the sinuous, loose-hipped, writhing movements of West Indian pantomime that gave the show life—and aroused the audience to laughter and applause. Esther Rolle, one of our own Miami girls, and star of the show, won the roaring applause of the audience. We extend our thanks to all our patrons, and friends for having made this affair a success.[155]

Her Bahamian influence in her upbringing in Pompano Beach and her commitment to these very

same communities is pivotal to an afro-diasporic lens to the study of Black public humanities.

Revealing Rolle's Bahamian roots and culture is crucial for understanding the particular

development of Black diasporic communities. By accentuating Rolle's family and their hardship

as Black immigrants in the South Florida region provides a new perspective for how we envision

the formation of Black communities in Broward County. Diasporic Blackness is not just about

acknowledging people of African descent in distinct parts of the world but rather, emphasizing

the multiple migrations that make up regions such as Fort Lauderdale. Such areas traverse

nationalized borders and challenge stagnant notions of Black identities and ethnicities in the

Americas.

Although one could argue that Rolle's decision to partake in Calypso performance was

nothing more than her artistic involvement, her activism around her Bahamian community

emphasizes how important it was to her that her Bahamian community be acknowledged. Her

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[155] George W. Carver, "The Calypso Carousel," *The Miami Times* (Miami, FL), March 03, 1956.

activism is part of a Black diasporic memory work to memorialize her Bahamian background as well. As expressed by this newspaper column, Rolle was an advocate for Bahamians, "Few people know the extent of her work to better the lives of black people, either as an outspoken critic of Hollywood stereotyping of African Americans or her many contributions to churches and civic groups in the United States and the Bahamas."[156] Indeed, although Rolle's advocacy within civic groups is barely becoming known to a wider audience, her Bahamian contributions are lesser known. A certificate dedicated to Esther Rolle in the AARLCC's archive reveals her involvement with the Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival in Coconut Grove. According to the Goombay Festival's mission,

> The Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival in Coconut Grove, Inc. is dedicated to recognizing, promoting, and educating the residents of Miami-Dade County as well as the tourists about the rich Bahamian and American heritage and what makes this such a unique and positive blend. The festival is held to bring about unity and bridge a cultural gap by building communities through the understanding of each other's likenesses and differences. The festival committee strives to provide a historical overview of the Bahamian culture, the commemoration of the early Coconut Grove settlers, and to introduce the music, authentic native food specialties, artifacts and crafts that are authentic to the island. We are also committed to educate and showcase the origins of the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band and the "RUSHIN" Junkanoos.[157]

Rolle's involvement with Bahamian organizations reveals that her own Black memory work extended itself from memorializing figures like Bethune to her own family and community.

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[156] "Rolle's Memorabilia a Perfect Fit For New Archive of Black History," Newspaper clipping from the Esther Rolle Collection provided by the Broward County Digital Library Archives. No author, date, or source is shared in the clipping.
[157] "Our Mission" Goombay Festival Coconut Grove, accessed April 4, 2021
https://www.goombayfestivalcoconutgrove.com/

A certificate honoring Esther Rolle for her support of the Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival in Coconut Grove signed by Mrs. Frankie S. Rolle, who was instrumental in founding the Goombay Festival in the 1970s.

Another example of Rolle's activist work centers on a letter written by former president of the African Diaspora Youth Development Foundation, Nab Eddy Bobo from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. In the letter, Bobo is utterly grateful for her participation in the non-profit organization and writes, "I greatly appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to share your sensitivity, perceptive, and cogent thoughts of Mr. Carlos Cooks, my and many others' revered teacher."[158] Beyond her clear involvement with non-profit organizations in the Virgin Islands, Rolle's participation in speaking about Afro-Dominican Garveyite Carlos Cooks' military and political activism reveals her commitment to memory work, liberation, and radical

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[158] Letter sent to Esther Rolle from Nab Eddie Bobo President of the African Diaspora Youth Development Foundation, Inc. in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands dated August 14, 1991. Esther Rolle Collection, African American Research Library and Cultural Center, Broward County Libraries.

self-making. Rolle's local and transnational activism is often left out of the wider narrative of her life. Indeed, remembering Rolle beyond the confines of the show *Good Times*, her background, which influenced much of her work in the communities that she was a part of, is a pivotal paradigmatic example that can become a blueprint for how we do Black public humanities work.

Conclusion

Rolle's life is part of the legacy of the creation of the AARLCC, as she is part of the Black community of Broward County and its Black history. One must certainly consider the parallels between Rolle's upbringing along with those of the Mizell's. Both the Mizell's as well as the Rolle family demonstrate a keen interest in paving the way for future Black communities in Broward County. The Mizell family's involvement with creating Provident Hospital, participating in the wade-ins alongside other Black organizations and leaders is central to a fugitive praxis of survival for Black communities in South Florida. Furthermore, it must be noted that the archive shows us that the Rolle family was contemporary of the Mizell family. For example, in the "Let the Good Times Rolle" exhibit in a corner of the room there was a glass display with a page from a report of the Provident Hospital Board of Trustees recognizing Dr. Von D. Mizell as important to Provident Hospital on behalf of the Board of Trustees. On the same page, although unclear if related to the report due to a line in the middle of the document dividing the sections, is a photo of none other than Deacon Jonathan Rolle—Esther Rolle's father. It is likely that Provident Hospital was also a place where they went for medical services during this time, meaning that Esther Rolle is part of a genealogy and legacy of a community where Black self-making and memory work is integral to its sustenance and knowledge production. Rolle's legacy is a result of mirrors and reflections she was surrounded by growing

up. Delving in her biography through an all-Black cast from regional actors looking for

opportunities is part of a fugitive pedagogy for us to learn from. One can observe these moments

of fugitive pedagogy both in Rolle's career in Black theatre as well as the play dedicated to her

through the AARLCC. The method of this region has been centered in a "For Us By Us"

(FUBU) in order to create and sustain community.
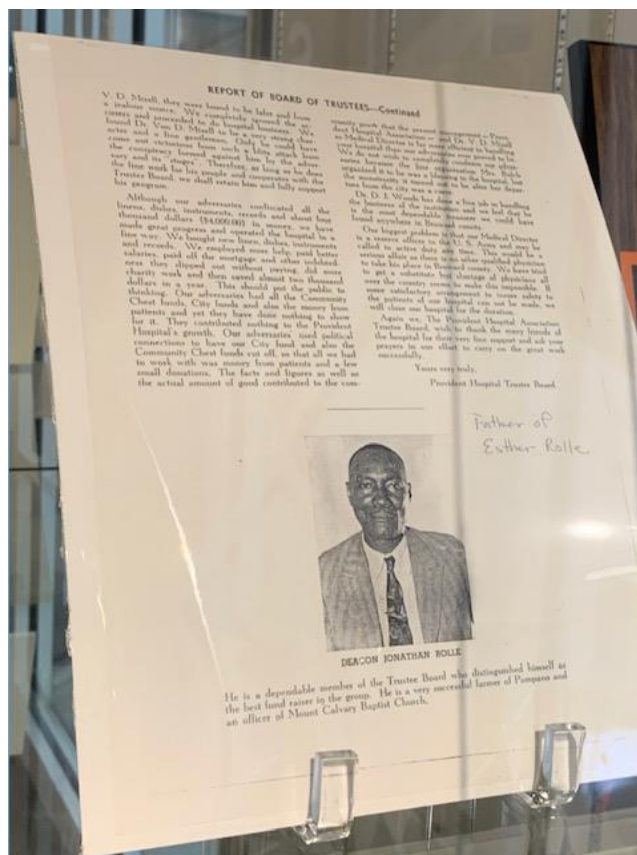
A page of a report of Provident Hospital's Board of Trustee's which includes a photo of Esther Rolle's father Jonathan Rolle. Photo taken by the author in May 2021.

The AARLCC's centennial celebration of Esther Rolle is an example of a For Us By Us

(FUBU) approach. We see this in their hiring of local artists and actors as well as collaborating

with regional organizations. This approach to the Black memory work of Esther Rolle is central

to the creation and the proliferation of Black public humanities. It is clear from the AARLCC's

work that Black public humanities projects are never done in isolation—but alongside community members. This is reflected in the Mizell family, the construction and development of the AARLCC, as well as in Esther Rolle's own upbringing. These communal practices activate and fill the needs of the community—whether it is hospitals, libraries, schools, representation on television, or sharing knowledge of those that came before them. As seen in this chapter, Black memory work and Black public humanities are centered in activism, movement, community connections, and partnerships.

In closing, this chapter has attempted to connect the Esther Rolle centennial which involved a play, an exhibit, and a robust archive, all dedicated to connecting the Fort Lauderdale community with the iconic figure of Esther Rolle. I have argued that in choosing Esther Rolle, a locally renowned artist many people in the community recognize, allowed for adding more context to her life as well as the work of the AARLCC. By using local artists, local grants, and a local figure as well as choosing plays and events creates syncretic possibilities that might develop within the realm of Black public humanities. Furthermore, by creating an archive, I was able to uncover the limitations of her story, particularly, her involvement with Bahamian and other Caribbean organizations and events. Although Rolle was reduced to Florida Evans in the show *Good Times*, the AARLCC along with several locals decided to expand on her life as well as her contributions to Black politics often overlooked and reduced to sitcoms. Against this backdrop, Rolle's work on Bethune places her as an articulation of Black public humanities and the echoes of a fugitive pedagogy. More precisely, we can begin to think through the ways mainstream media overlooks how communal and regional spaces are mutually constitutive.

With regard to the effect of community involvement in self-making, it is apparent that Black public humanities spaces such as the AARLCC contributes to, perhaps more accurately, a

geo-cultural and generational hub that would not exist otherwise. Academic public humanities, more often than not, operate from the perspective of bringing knowledge from the ivory tower to the community, as if, the community's own self-making and knowledge production was inexistent because it does not match what their "public" recognizes as humanistic knowledge. Consequently, we must pay attention to the idea of "memory work" at the center of the relationship between popular culture and Black politics in order to understand not just the moving of humanistic knowledge, but also to actively explore and discuss Black citizenship within a broader context. Although other Black institutions have chosen to cater to other audiences beyond their local Black communities, analyzing the success of the Esther Rolle centennial celebration demonstrates that events promulgated in spaces such as the AARLCC play an increasing role in defining a Black agenda of self-empowerment. Furthermore, it determines which issues will move from the community to a broader audience. Consequently, the AARLCC centers around self-determination by sharing their own communal stories. Although the AARLCC participates in national conversations around race, Black politics, and history, it is more dedicated to its regional Black community. By dedicating a multimodal and multi-dimensional centennial to Esther Rolle due to their impetus to honor someone they consider a local and a national icon, they circumnavigated the restrictions on being reduced to representing Black history and politics as being solely part of a mainstream conversation, a vision shared by many Black institutions.

Chapter 4: The AARLCC at the Crossroads of Digital Black Public Humanities

Introduction

The AARLCC's Black public humanities approach as discussed in previous chapters expands itself into the digital humanities realm. I argue that the For Us By Us (FUBU) approach is at the center of the Black public humanities work that they do through digital platforms as well, which is part of a fugitive pedagogical praxis. In chapter one and two, I engaged with Givens' concept of "fugitive pedagogies" to understand how the AARLCC's creation against the backdrop of institutionalized racism in its manifestation through disinvestment is an example of a fugitive pedagogy. In this chapter, fugitive pedagogies are seen in the AARLCC's work against the backlash of the COVID-19 global pandemic that highly impacted Black communities, businesses, and institutions. Meanwhile institutions like the AARLCC could have ceased all programming, events, and resources it offers to their community, instead, they converted their retail shop to a free COVID-19 testing site for residents in the vicinity that could not get to an urgent care clinic or hospital outside of Sistrunk. Furthermore, they moved programming and resources online to continue to be available for its users and community. Therefore, in this chapter I explore the relevance of Black public humanities as reflected online (also known as social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and the programs and events offered by the AARLCC. These online events arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the SoFlo Book Festival, the Virtual Flip & Sip, Mark Anthony Neal's guest lecture "Stevie Wonder & the Power of Music," as well as their national digital humanities collaborative project, "Archiving the Black Web." It is important to note that the idea of Black local

communities as a category of practice and analysis shifts in the online and digital genre because it is open to an online community that may or may not be part of the Broward County community. The challenge here is making space for the AARLCC's online presence in the midst of a pandemic that didn't allow for a physical communal space as well as the local Black Sistrunk community as central to Black self-makings. In other words, the digital space has the potential to fragment and impact the formation of local Black self-makings and community that form from physical proximities to and through the AARLCC and the Sistrunk neighborhood. In short, the Black online communal space is not as nationally indifferent as the enclave of Sistrunk.

Central to this chapter is how the AARLCC's use of digital and social media platforms to mobilize their Black public humanities work is relevant to their fugitive pedagogical practices, Black memory work, and/or their FUBU approach. Specifically, a sociological discourse analysis along with interview commentary from staff members at the AARLCC was conducted in order to understand how Black public humanities has used digital platforms in order to continue having dialogues on Black politics, history, culture, and race in Black digital spaces. The (dis)connections between the building of the AARLCC and its online presence encompasses varying levels of support to address issues and celebrate Black life amidst a global pandemic.

The year 2020 brought many environmental and political cataclysms: the COVID-19 global pandemic along with the Trump administration whose message of "Make America Great Again" widened the gap between conservatives and liberals in the United States. These cataclysms are not isolated to the United States but rather globally connected to other regions of the world. Many museums and libraries were affected and incapable of maintaining their staff while others struggled to work remotely and meet via Zoom, Web-ex, Google Hangout, and

other forms of real-time virtual applications. Thus, the global pandemic has both challenged traditional forms of museum work and challenged museum and library staff to come up with creative ways to serve their communities—even before the pandemic, museums already had a hard time keeping their doors open. In particular, we should ask: how has this pandemic affected Black cultural centers and how have they managed to survive or manage? What kind of strategies, programming, events, and marketing have Black cultural institutions executed in order to continue staying afloat?

In the first section of this chapter, I explore how the AARLCC develops and facilitates events by having an online presence and utilizing digital networks such as social media as a form of Black public humanities and fugitive pedagogy. In these projects, the AARLCC is intentional with who their local public is while seeking innovative and captivating ways to maintain the community informed and involved with knowledge production not just scholastically, but also cultural, as well as political. I argue that the For Us By Us (FUBU) approach is at the center of the Black public humanities work that they do online, which is part of a fugitive pedagogical praxis. We can see this in the online events that arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic such as the SoFlo Book Festival which hosted a plethora of interactive panels, activities, and recordings which involved regional and non-regional leaders, authors, and artists.

In section II, I will place particular emphasis on the Virtual Flip & Sip led by Randolph Dukes, a mixologist who taught the audience how to make a Six Breezy Martini as well as other drinks. I suggest that Duke's approach to re-centering Black people in spirit distilling such as Nathan "Nearest" Green who was the first headmaster distiller for Jack Daniel's whiskey distillery. This memory work shares the history of Green through teaching a Black audience a history that is not widely known. The workshop's pedagogic framework of teaching how to

make the cocktails imbued with history unknown to many engages in a social justice pedagogic

framework that passes on knowledge through mixology. At first glance, it may seem like a mere

activity that focuses on educating the public on how to make a martini, however, if one analyzes

literature related to historical literacy studies, one can clearly understand the importance of this

type of pedagogical approach to self-making.[159] My hope is that exploring the events and use of

technology will be used as a blueprint by other institutions in order to maximize how we can

create engaging and interactive events between the institution and the community.

Furthermore, section III places particular attention to Mark Anthony Neal's lecture

"Stevie Wonder & the Power of Music," an event dedicated to celebrating the life of Stevie

Wonder. This talk which took place on May 21, 2020 was done via Facebook Live as a way to

engage the community digitally despite the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated by the AARLCC,

> With the world under quarantine, our physical distance has been made more tolerable
> through the power of music with DJs across various social media platforms unifying
> hundreds of thousands of people through shared musical experiences. Tapping into this
> same energy of music and unity, Broward County Libraries in conjunction with the
> African American Research Library and Cultural Center invites us to help us celebrate an
> American music icon Stevie Wonder for his 70th birthday![160]

In the midst of the pandemic, the AARLCC opted to bring Dr. Neal to celebrate Stevie Wonder's

legacy as well as DJ Nune who hosts the podcast titled "Backroom Beats." I suggest that similar

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[159] See S. De la Paz, M. Felton, & C. Monte-Sano, *Reading, Thinking, and Writing About History: Teaching Argument Writing to Diverse Learners in the Common Core Classroom, Grades 6-12 (Common Core State Standards for Literacy)* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2014), M. Edinger, *Seeking History: Teaching with Primary Sources in grades 4-6* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), H. Graff, A. Mackinnon, & B. Sandin, B. *Understanding Literacy in Its Historical Contexts: Socio-Cultural History and the Legacy of Egil Johansson* (Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2009), Paul Gagnon, *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), and S. Wineburg, D. Martin, and C. Monte-Sano, *Reading Like a Historian: teaching Literacy in Middle School and High School* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2012).

[160] Broward County Library "Prof. Mark Neal LIVE: Stevie Wonder & the Power of Music," "Facebook LIVE discussion: Prof. Mark Neal will discuss Stevie Wonder's cultural significance and his musical catalog that spans close to six decades…," Facebook Event, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/events/676508043146811/

to Randolph Dukes, Neal's lecture does more than just summarize the life and legacy of Stevie Wonder. Neal as well as Dukes create Black memory work by tapping into a multitude of social media platforms provided by the AARLCC, one spreading the restoration of "Uncle Nearest" and the other by underscoring the importance of Stevie Wonder's music.

In section IV, we can see the For Us By Us (FUBU) approach and fugitive pedagogical praxis in their digital project, "Archiving the Black Web." In terms of its execution, Makiba Foster's piloting of this Black web project adopts contemporary approaches to digital memory work that requires an understanding of the importance of Black self-makings. In their website, "Archiving the Black Web" states the following,

> The expansive growth of the web and social media and the wide use of these platforms by Black people presents significant opportunities for archivists and other memory workers interested in documenting the contemporary Black experience. But while the web archiving practice and tools have grown over the past twenty-five years, it is a cost prohibiting archiving activity and presents access and resource challenges that prevent large sectors of the archives profession and especially Black collecting organizations from fully engaging in the practice.[161]

The project began from a concern of how Black digital life and activism was going to be preserved and conserved for the future generations. Considering that digital information tends to change or disappear constantly, this project has pushed back against that lack of access Black folks have been given at the institutional level.

Finally, in section V, I provide a brief analysis of what the risks and tensions are in who is the "us" in regards to whether the Black community being archived through a national project still upholds a diasporic and intersectional approach. I push the dialogue further to ask, how is "community" de-localized or de-centered in a national digital space? Since community is at the

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[161] "About Archiving the Black Web," Archiving the Black Web, accessed December 12, 2021, https://archivingtheblackweb.org/about/.

core of the AARLCC's success, then we have to reflect on how expanding a nationalized and homogenized understanding of Black memory work can either lead to diluting the centrality and plurality of Black lives and communities, or expand a more robust and interconnected assemblage of fugitive pedagogy work that takes the Broward County community in mind.

FUBU and Fugitive Pedagogies in SoFlo Book Festival and Black Cultural Lecture Series

SoFlo Book Festival

We can see the For Us By Us (FUBU) approach at the center of the virtual SoFlo Book Festival and Black cultural lecture series the AARLCC hosted as online events because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The South Florida Book Festival (SOFLOBOOKFEST) is the signature two-day annual event of the AARLCC, which started during the early 2000's. They have brought best-selling titles and events that highlight the Black experience. They use the hashtags #SOFLOBOOKFEST #EatDrinkRead #FlipNSip and #BookLife in order to gain a larger audience. Since then, the festival has created a plethora of events featuring different themes, perspectives thereby attracting a range of visitors and participants.[162] This virtual event allowed people from near and far to enjoy book discussions, free workshops, and cooking demonstrations at no cost. The SoFlo Book festival demonstrates the AARLCC's determination to continue Broward County's legacy of creating their own spaces as well as their own cultural hubs. When I asked Makiba Foster how she defined community she responded the following,

> I think community for me has always been about a certain mindset. Certain goals that people are believing and are wedded to in the sense that it could be a global community.

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[162] "Home," South Florida Book Festival, accessed May 2, 2021, http://www.sfloridabookfestival.com/.

> So, we can't be physically together of course with COVID-19. We're certainly understanding how communities built actual physical, being in physical spaces together is actually a mind that of joining values and beliefs.[163]

For Foster, spaces like the AARLCC are microcosms. Her comment on Black digital community, "of joining values and beliefs" alludes to Jessica Marie Johnson's assertion that, "Black digital practice is the revelation that black subjects have themselves taken up science, data, and coding, in other words, have commodified themselves and digitized and mediated through their won black freedom dreams, in order to hack their way into systems (whether modernity, science, or the West), thus living where they were 'never meant to survive'."[164] Communities taking space in these digital spaces means that one must reconceptualize what technology means beyond the Silicon Valley understanding of it. The AARLCC is using any means possible to survive, exist and create community–if need be, online, even if not entirely local. Black people use whatever is at their disposal, as well as innovate the missing tools to continue to be, exist, and form collective knowledges. Foster's notion of community explains much of the decisions that went into making digital events at the AARLCC. As explained by Foster, "I do have a local community and of course our life has been integral in my commitment to Black people and Black Lives. My personal is political and I'm thankful that I get to be able to come to work and do the work of preserving and celebrating and documenting the Black diaspora."[165] At the start of the pandemic, the AARLCC, like most cultural institutions, were closed to the public. However, the fascinating aspect of museums is that they are not merely buildings filled with artifacts and documents, they are also centers engaging with social media, which has

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[163] Makiba Foster (Manager of the AARLCC), interview with the author, July 21, 2020.
[164] Jessica Marie Johnson, "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads," *Social Text* 36, no. 4 (December 2018): 59.
[165] Foster, interview with the author.

revolutionized how museums not only promote exhibits and events, but have also begun to host events online. For instance, the Friends of the AARLCC's Facebook page has been promoting the AARLCC's events and thus created entirely new modalities for engaging a broader Black public. While this reaches a broader audience, which has the potential to change the kind of online programming and content that the AARLCC may put together, much of the content and programming is still about Black communities in South Florida.

Nathan "Nearest" Green and Flip & Sip Virtual

In 2019, the AARLCC and the Friends of the AARLCC created the "Eat, Drink, Read" event during the South Florida Book Festival.[166] The idea of the event was to, "sample literary-inspired culinary selections, enjoy craft cocktails and wine, and meet celebrity chef/cookbook authors."[167] The event featured three professionals and connoisseurs of food and health: Author and columnist Dr. A. J. Nuridin, Executive Chef, TV & Radio Personality Chef Juan Montier, and Author and Blogger Veronica Cervera.[168] However, during the pandemic in 2021, the AARLCC had to hold the event online.[169] The Flip & Sip event was led by Randolph Dukes, a mixologist who taught the audience how to make a Six Breezy Martini.[170] Dukes presented drinks and their histories as relevant to Black communities in the United States. The Flip & Sip is a traditional cocktail in many Black American communities in the United States that highlights and brings into light the influence of Black American liquor history often whitewashed. In the

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[166] "Book Life: 8th Annual South Florida Book Festival," South Florida Book Festival, accessed November 19, 2020, https://www.sfloridabookfestival.com/2019/.

[167] Ibid. https://www.sfloridabookfestival.com/2019/

[168] Ibid.

[169] "Book Life 2020 SoFlo Virtual Book Festival," South Florida Book Festival, accessed November 19, 2020, http://www.sfloridabookfestival.com/2020/.

[170] South Florida Book Festival, "Flip & Sip Virtual Lounge: Reveal of the 2020 Drink Hosted by Randolph Dukes," Facebook, July 17, 2020, video, 12:35, https://fb.watch/argW52ALMc/.

presentation, Dukes discusses Nathan "Nearest" Green, who was a master distiller known for teaching his techniques to North American distiller Jack Daniel. Green was hired as the first master distiller for Daniel as well as the first Black American distiller on record in the United States. Although the Flip & Sip Virtual Lounge may at first, appear to be about making a cocktail drink, one can quickly recognize the inner workings of the event. Unlike other events in the SoFlo Book Festival which hosted renowned academics and authors, the Flip & Sip created an informal approach to spread Black history. This particular event stood out because it centered pleasure and leisure. As such, speaking of a particular dimension of Black history and culture while teaching people how to connect with it through a praxis is at the core of Black public humanities. This informal approach to historical literacy is at the core of fugitive pedagogy. Restorative history is at the core of self-making, which provides opportunities for Black community members and individuals to embark in their own historical digging through public engagement and a materiality connected to the past and its present.

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Part of Nearest Green's legacy and history is being shared and recovered through the Uncle Nearest line of whiskeys. Jeffrey Wright, a renowned actor known for his lead role in HBO's *Westworld,* beautifully narrates the award-winning documentary "The Story of Nathan "Nearest" Green."[171] In the documentary, Wright guides the viewer through the past and present geographical landscapes of the plantation in which Nearest lived and worked during and after his enslavement. In a country where Black history is always at the center of political debate, the memory work executed by Dukes is on par with current conversations on historical literacy and social justice. Dukes' way of teaching the Black public of Nearest Green's legacy through making the Flip & Sip cocktail follows what education scholar Ruchi Agarwal suggests is necessary in engaging historical legacy and pedagogy from a social justice-informed approach, which she delineates as doing the following: 1) Inspiring wonder, 2) painting the picture, 3) application, 4) connecting the past to the present and, 5) facilitating change.[172] These concepts are integrally linked and are interdependent on each other. Inspiring wonder involves questioning material in our textbooks by thinking critically about the material presented. Agarwal develops the claim that:

> Inspiring wonder is the first tenet of the framework… as wonder is often what awakens and motivates people to connect to subject matter. Painting the picture involves providing multiple perspectives thereby gathering a myriad of information from primary and secondary resources. Application refers to people's ability to express the learned material in written and non-written forms. Connecting the past with the present involves social justice due to the present-day relevance of many issues that have existed in the past such as sexism, racism, and social inequality.[173]

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[171] Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey, "The Story of Nearest Green," Vimeo, March 19, 2019, video, 10:17, https://vimeo.com/325286687. **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

[172] See Ruchi Agarwal-Rangnath, *Social Studies, Literacy and Social Justice in the Common Core Classroom: A Guide for Teachers (*New York: Teachers College Press, 2013).

[173] Ibid, 12.

I suggest that Dukes' approach to using application as well as historical literacy provides an opportunity for thinking and reflecting in ways that are beneficial to the community beyond the memorizing of dates and events. History has the ability to help Black communities and Black people understand their own lives, inspire change, and connect with other Black people. A Black public humanities approach to historical thinking involves having an interest towards Black history beyond the school setting. These advances gained through the AARLCC's access to social media platforms creates an engaged pedagogical setting that involves creation, innovation, the transmission of historical knowledges through a culinary experience.

Screenshot of the opening of the video of "The Story of Nearest Green" taken by the author.

At the conclusion of Dukes' presentation and demonstration, Makiba Foster joins him and includes how Nearest's legacy has continued through the work of Black women in the contemporary spirit industry like Fawn Weaver who is the CEO and founder of the Uncle Nearest whiskey and distillery and the Cocktail Bandits duo Johnny Caldwell and Taneka

Reaves who run an event planning and cocktail connoisseur business. By engaging the interest of the public, the Flip & Sip Virtual became a way to give life to Nearest Green's story in addition to highlighting other Black local histories, which remind local Black communities like that of Sistrunk that they are not in isolation. In a filmed talk, Marc Anthony Neal alludes to the use of technology by Black people that have been whitewashed or overlooked in order to maintain an anti-Black perspective on defining technology, modernity and innovation.[174] Although Friends of the AARLCC was created as an organization that supported the fundraising for the creation of the AARLCC building itself, it has become an online bridge for those who may not be up to date with the AARLCC's events. Social media has been a pivotal means of communication and cultural creation for Black people around the world, thus creating very specific circles of conversation unbeknownst to other groups.[175] As Marc Anthony Neal argues in his TEDxDuke Talk, "A History of Black Folk on Twitter": "If we think about Twitter within the context of social media, we understand that when we go back to those original technologies (enslaved persons) or OT's, that original social media was in fact a field song."[176] Neal alludes to Black spaces always being in the forefront of technology for Black communities amidst colonization, Black subjugation and segregation. In the same vein, the birth of the AARLCC highlights how technology was used in order to promote the AARLCC and its local community via social media. To this end, while scholarship on the uses of social media by Black community organizations has been limited to activism, it is important to note that public administration scholars have considered how local non-profits use social media in general. For example, David A. Campbell,

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[174] TEDx Talks, "TEDxDuke - Mark Anthony Neal on A History of Black Folk in Twitter," YouTube, April 19, 2011, video, 11:04, https://youtu.be/GbPJNK4vw1s.

[175] For more on Black cybercultures see André Brock, Jr.'s *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures* (New York University Press, 2020).

[176] TEDx Talks, "Mark Anthony Neal on A History of Black Folk in Twitter."

Kristina T. Lambright, and Christopher J. Wells in their article ""Looking for Friends, Fans, and Followers? Social Media Use in Public and Nonprofit Human Services," posit that "One final way to understand nonprofit and local government organizations' approach to social media is to see it as a response to two competing demands: one emphasizing transparency and accountability and the other focused on dialogue and civic participation."[177] Through their research, they have found that, "Key reasons for using social media included marketing organizational activities, remaining relevant to key constituencies, and raising community awareness."[178] Putting this along with Neal's arguments highlights that the AARLCC's usage of social media and digital platforms like Facebook and YouTube have allowed them a way to encourage civic participation, engagement and proliferate Black public humanities work with the local Broward County community (and beyond).

Mark Anthony Neal's Stevie Wonder & the Power of Music

On Thursday May 21st 2020, Dr. Mark Anthony Neal was invited to speak on the legacy of Stevie Wonder and his political and musical impact worldwide. The AARLCC used Facebook Live to share this knowledge with many users who have access to this social media platform. Facebook users from all backgrounds and socio-economic classes were able to attend and access Dr. Neal's talk without having to know who he is or have a scholarly background on his work. More importantly, this event was utterly interactive because it was hosted via Facebook, thereby allowing community members to chime in and provide their thoughts in regard to Stevie Wonder in real time. Similar to Dukes, Neal presents the life of Stevie Wonder in an understandable

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[177] Campbell, David A., Kristina T. Lambright, and Christopher J. Wells. "Looking for Friends, Fans, and Followers? Social Media Use in Public and Nonprofit Human Services," 657.
[178] Ibid, 658.

language without using academic jargon making it accessible for a broader audience. Unlike the

SOFLO Book Festival, this speaker series event was not about a Black local history or event

being that Stevie Wonder, nor Dr. Neal are from South Florida or Broward County. During his

analysis of Wonder, Neal mentions moments in Stevie Wonder's career that provide a

connection to historical literacy. In his talk Neal mentions the following,

> And again, this is Stevie Wonder in its purest form, because it literally is all Stevie
> Wonder. *Innervisions* and of course in it there is a song called "Living for the City." And
> it's a song that becomes so critically important to the Black American story, the African
> American story in this country, because what he does in seven minutes is give a narration
> of what the second part of the Great Migration looks like. We have this figure in the song
> who's raised in the Deep South, who leaves the south to go to New York. For the promise
> that generations of Black folks had hoped to experience getting to New York, but New
> York in the 1970s was not the New York of the 1950s, it was not the New York of the
> 1920s. A period that we know… is the Harlem Renaissance, right? It's a very different
> New York and the song is about living for the city. Stevie Wonder narrates what comes
> from the crisis in the beginning of what we know as the Black underclass in the 1970s in
> New York, right? It is a narrative that if you listen closely between the lines across
> generations, you actually hear Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, pick up on the
> message, right, which becomes almost like an aftermath of living for the city.[179]

Neal provides intriguing perspectives of Wonder's life by emphasizing how important changes

and contributions to the music industry were to civil rights activism. To do this, Neal could have

used jargon academic language in order to make his points in regard to Stevie Wonder's

historical impact through his music. Instead, the AARLLCC choose to use Facebook Live as the

site where Neal's complex ideas can be disseminated and later discussed via the comments

section on Facebook by using plain language that can still exert fascinating perspectives and

reinterpretation of Stevie Wonder. As such, Black memory work also requires a careful balance

between using academic concepts and ideas while also attempting to make them accessible to the

broader publics. The careful balance Neal employs can be considered a type of Black public

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[179] Broward County Library, "Celebrating the Legacy of Stevie Wonder," Facebook Live, May 21, 2020, video, 55:36, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=287712748926528.

humanities fugitive pedagogical praxis worthy of emulation for transdisciplinary approaches to scholarship. Neal's linguistic approach to language and Black public humanities is in direct conversation with the politics around language and racial politics as language becomes a central dimension of Western hegemony.

In their book, *Articulate While Black* (2012), H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman address language and racial politics through an examination of former President Barack Obama's language use. While discussing data in regard to how college students interpret being "articulate" Alim and Smitherman reminds us that,

> Many in the Black community are aware of how their speech is perceived by White and other Americans. As linguists have noted, there are websites to the mockery of Black speech and every news report on Ebonics is followed by a litany of disgustingly racist diatribes online. In terms of our articulate analysis, we can historicize this linguistic monitoring within the American institution of slavery where we find ample evidence that the policing of black Language goes hand in hand with the policing of Black Bodies.[180]

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[180] H. Sammy Alim and Geneva Smitherman, *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language and Race in the U.S.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 49.

The conversation around language and Black public humanities is all the more important when we take into account the mistrust that exists from non-academics towards those in the academy. The AARLCC serves as an example of how to be in conversation with Black communities broadly by using the language and grammar most commonly understood in Black communities across Black public spheres. In particular, academics in pre-dominantly white institutions are to remember that to be in conversations with Black communities one must work to dismantle the policing and surveillance of Blackness. For example, as someone who grew up in New York City, I have experienced several instances where language has become a way of measuring how civilized and professional I am. When I was a fifth-grade social studies teacher in Texas, a teacher called the cops on me because they heard me utter the words "slicin' and dicin" to a custodial worker in response to him asking me how I was doing. I've also experienced this while I worked as a receptionist at a private school and having my boss tell me: "Don't say 'hey' at the front desk when welcoming parents into the school, 'hey' is for horses." The examples I could provide are countless, but the point is to underscore the reasons why many Black memory workers may end up alienating the public by using words without explaining them or refraining from using common language in order to captivate those who are listening and interacting. This is surely a colonial legacy that scholars like the renowned psychologist, activist, and writer Frantz Fanon have engaged with how Black people police their own use of language. Fanon suggests that there is white supremacist reason to why there is a lack of use of Creole in Martinique. He explains, "The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter,—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being in direct ratio to his mastery of the French

Language."[181] While Fanon situates the how and why linguistic Black self-policing can occur, it is a fugitive pedagogy to teach, share, and co-create knowledge from the community's language.

In his talk, Neal provides another musical example of Stevie Wonder's activism by pushing for the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday before it successfully became a national holiday in 1986. Neal underscores the following,

> You know, when you have a birthday party, you listen to Stevie Wonder's version of "Happy Birthday" … But "Happy Birthday" had become the Black birthday song. In some ways, a happy birthday song for many folks because as you know, you can't actually go into a restaurant and actually sing Happy Birthday, the original song, anymore because of copyright infringement. So, this song written by Stevie Wonder has become this kind of universal song about celebrating Happy Birthday. But of course, what's lost in that is that it was a song that he specifically wrote in celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday, which at the time that he released the single, we did not celebrate a national Martin Luther King birthday holiday. And this was Stevie and some of his most politically important moments, getting together with other groups of artists, like Gil Scott Heron, and activists like Jesse Jackson, and artists like Gladys Knight to talk about a way to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King.[182]

In this example, Neal is able to create what educators consider "culturally-relevant pedagogy" in order to connect Stevie Wonder to Black people's birthdays that tend to play the song "Happy Birthday" while also providing context to a broader public on its connection to Martin Luther King, Jr. Although there is small snippet in the song that mentions Martin Luther King Jr., Neal's decision to expand on the importance of Stevie Wonder's political career beyond being an artist centers a Black public humanities approach. Creating this event via Facebook Live, creates a fugitive pedagogic model for doing memory work with a broader Black audience in mind who may not be aware of the knowledge Neal is sharing.

The digital space creates an opportunity to reach a broader Black public and discuss Stevie Wonder's cultural and political legacy. This may not be understood as digital humanities,

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[181] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), 18.
[182] Broward County Library, "Celebrating the Legacy of Stevie Wonder."

however, I still place this methodical approach of engaging the Black community within the

conversation of digital Black humanities as historian and Black digital humanities scholar Kim

Gallon, in citing Alan Liu, suggests that Black digital humanities be engaged with "sociocultural

meaning."[183] Gallon's emphasis of Liu's "sociocultural meaning" is a way of explaining how

Stevie Wonder's life emerges and re-emerges through Neal's presentation. This is at the crux of

the systematic use of digital technologies and its application for a Black public humanities

praxis. As such, Neal's use of both common language in addition to a deep, nuanced, and critical

analysis allows for a better understanding of Stevie Wonder's music and activism. In addition to

the event featuring Dr. Neal, the AARLCC also included a local DJ event dedicated to Stevie

Wonder as noted in the comments section of the Facebook Live event. While the speaker series

did not have a local focus, the AARLCC did attempt to incorporate Black local artists that their

particular constituents are familiar with like DJ Nune.

By inviting a renowned scholar, like Dr. Neal, who has participated in public and digital

humanities projects in the past, an event like this allows us to value the praxeological dimensions

of Black public humanities. When I asked Dr. Neal how he felt about his language use, he

responded the following,

> I mean it's different from what I might have done in the classroom. If I was teaching, you
> know in that context, but so much about public scholarship and in public humanities is
> about talking and conversing in a way that's accessible to the public. And it doesn't mean
> talking down to the public, but it means, you know, finding a register that is accessible to
> as many people as possible.[184]

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[183] Kim Gallon, "Making a Case for Black Digital Humanities," In *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, ed.
Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2016). **Error!
Hyperlink reference not valid.**
[184] Dr. Mark Anthony Neal (James B. Duke Distinguished Professor of African American Studies at Duke
University) interview with the author, January 17, 2021.

When I decided to interview Dr. Neal and ask him his reflective thoughts in regard to the

Facebook Live Stevie Wonder event, he responded the following,

> I've always tried to be [involved in public scholarship] at least in these latter parts of my career. I'm open to doing work for institutions that normally wouldn't be able to pay me to do it. People who need content and need people to be able to contribute their time and expertise to them. The fact that I could do it and not have to leave my home made it, you know, easier to do (laughs). So, you know, I believe in those kinds of projects [Makiba Foster] asked, you know, if Stevie Wonder was in my wheelhouse. So, I was just very open to doing it and it seemed to me like ideal pandemic programming. The kind of programming that, you know, Makiba had the foresight to do given everything that was going on. And because it was already part of the kind of the projects that they were doing, it was just a matter of them shifting technologically to be able to do it on different platforms.[185]

As catastrophic as the COVID-19 pandemic has been, it also pushed institutions like the

AARLCC to think outside of the box and use technological means to engage a broader public

with topics that are both important and culturally relevant. The idea to go with Stevie Wonder is

a good way to attract the Black community intergenerationally. However, an event like this begs

the question: did the impact of the pandemic force the AARLCC to have to focus on a broader

Black public because the local would not be enough to carry its presence online? I wonder how

online spaces might decenter local Black communities in lieu of a broader Black audience that

may or may not be familiar with the region's Black life and history.

Insofar as Black public humanities is concerned, much of the language used by Black

public humanists shares some parallels with traditional proposals of opening to the public.

Meaning, although terms like culturally-relevant pedagogy became concepts used in education

departments during the latter half of the 20th century, they were already used by many educators

who taught at marginalized communities. Currently, it is not difficult to constantly overhear the

terms like "social justice," "access," "inclusive education," repeatedly used by many educators to

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[185] Dr. Mark Anthony Neal, interview with the author.

highlight the importance of the need to empower students in order to transform them into

productive citizens. The idea of living in a single world and supporting new modes of

cooperation can be referred to as an approach of communal pedagogy, which has been pivotal for

Black public humanities praxis.

"Archiving the Black Web"

In this section, I argue that the For Us By Us (FUBU) approach is at the center of the

Black public humanities work that the AARLCC does through their digital and social media

platforms, which is part of a fugitive pedagogical praxis as seen in their digital project,

"Archiving the Black Web" (ATBW). Beyond focusing on communal needs, the AARLCC

along with several other Black institutions across the United States collaborate in order to create

a Black archive that would span the United States and the African diaspora. For this endeavor,

the AARLCC made a partnership with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,

Spelman College archives, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Langston Hughes Community

Library, and the African American Museum and Library in Oakland. As Foster describes,

> The end goal is to continue to get funding to where we can create this Black knowledge
> institution collaborative to where regionally, or even internationally, we all have our part
> to do. I'm down here in South Florida this is the part that we're going to do in terms of
> archiving content for the Black web. And when all of those parts become a whole it
> becomes a really great opportunity to understand and document content.[186]

In this way, ATBW is a Black institutional collaborative project that creates a digital archive by

Black archivists and for Black people with special attention to contributing based on their

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[186] Makiba Foster, (Manager of the AARLCC), interview with the author, February 12, 2022.

regional enclaves. Their proposal stated the following in regard to the 'national need' for

archiving Black digital life,

> Black people in the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, and the rest of the Diaspora
> have a long history of participating in online spaces and continue to be important drivers
> of culture on the web. This is especially true on social media platforms like Twitter,
> Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsAPP, where research has shown that despite lower levels
> of access to broadband and the internet, black people participate on social media
> platforms at higher levels than other racial/ethnic groups. Black people use the Web in
> unique ways to create and share culture, to support businessmen, and to amplify and
> generate support for social justice issues.[187]

This extensive grant application demonstrates how Black institutions have sought to combine

their efforts to make sure Black digital histories not only survive, but also become a sustainably

archived extension of Black self-makings across multiple regions. Black communities create

their own archives and initiatives such as this one. Foster shares that creating ATBW is part of an

> …understanding that we couldn't afford to also… still wait around to get that in a good
> space, and then all this other information is possibly fading away because of the digital
> space. … this idea that most of us come from under resourced institutions, but what is it
> June Jordan said? 'We are the ones that we've been waiting for.' And in some ways, we
> can't afford to wait for the benevolence of PWIs… it's about trying to be just still within
> the continuum of our ancestors making a way out of no way.[188]

To this end, Michael Hanchard's notion of "racial time gap," which he offers in his article "Afro-

Modernity" comes to the fore in that Black institutions cannot simply wait for the benevolence of

white supremacist systems to create resources for Black communities. Although the project has

barely began to lift off and Foster describes it as an "exploratory" project, the website has

already hosted a virtual symposium, which had several recorded panels, with titles such as: "Not

new to dis, we true to dis — The Black Presence Online From Then to Now," "For the Culture

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[187] Broward Public Library Foundation (African American Research Library and Cultural Center), "Archiving the Black Web: A National Forum to Map the Landscape, Define the Issues, and Plan a Strategy for Documenting the Black Experience Online" (Project Proposal, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2020), 21 pages.
[188] Foster, interview with the author, February 12, 2022.

— Black Memory and Storytelling on the Web," "Contemporary Issues in Documenting Black Lives: Black Newspapers, Black Data, and Black Digital Archives," "There are Black People in the Future Web Archives," and "Close: Black Memory Workers Social." Furthermore, the ATBW website is constantly producing more videos on Black digital life although the events themselves are catered to a broader Black public, they highlight multiple Black and regional experiences that connect to each other and build on their similarities.

More importantly, the ATBW project is geared to fill a particular void. It is designed to connect Black memory workers beyond national borders in order to give access for people globally. The lack of access to digital humanities is at the core of Black digital humanities conversations. As argued by Kim Gallon, "Although work on racial, ethnic, and national differences is emerging in the digital humanities, discussions about the lineage of black studies within the digital humanities are almost nonexistent."[189] The idea of the digital relies on the concept of modernity and revisiting the old colonial and imperial question of who is and isn't human. Meaning, that if Blackness is antithetical to modernity within a colonialist framework, then how do institutions such as the AARLCC not only remind us of the importance of afro-modernity but also continue to adapt to a 21st century Black self-making project that still centeres the local? As argued by Gallon, "One of the essential features of the black digital humanities, then, is that it conceptualizes a relationship between blackness and the digital where black people's humanity is *not* given. The black digital humanities probes and disrupts the ontological notions that would have us accept humanity as a fixed category, an assumption that unproblematically emanates in the digital realm." [190] Parallel to these dialogues of Black digital

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[189] Gallon, "Making a Case for Black Digital Humanities," 42.
[190] Ibid, 46.

humanities, in my follow-up interview with Foster, she shared that ATWB, is not only about

being in community with other Black institutions, but in particular highlighting that

> … it is a sort of exploratory kind of project where we're bringing public research
> institutions who are committed to Black memory, Black culture, Black knowledge—these
> are Black knowledge institutions. So that includes HBCU libraries, all of those kinds of
> spaces, but also places like us. …I brought all those people along, to be able to think
> through a kind of project for us by us and how we will navigate exactly the digital space
> in terms of what that means in the archive and with the content that is being produced.
> Because at one point, some of the kind of cultural material, material culture that you
> would have gotten in the kind of more traditional sense—newspaper articles and stuff
> that are actual physical [material]—those things are now being produced online.[191]

In other words, it is not only about Black self-makings, but Black self-representation and

archiving that center Black life and humanity on and beyond traditional notions of archiving.

Foster offers that, "… in a lot of ways Archiving the Black Web is about documentation of every

day Black people… to be able to become known or tell their part in a way that can be really

documented as this is a regular shmegular, everyday person."[192] As Brubaker reminds us—it is

these everyday actions and instances that impact the formation of identities and, in regards to this

project, Black self-makings. I believe it is important to follow, document, engage and practice

what Black institutions are doing in terms of their relationship to the digital. By focusing on

Black digital humanities via a Black public humanities approach we will be able to further

venture into the processes, practices, approaches, benefits as well as the shortcomings of a digital

Black self-making that is concerned with upholding authority over the sustainability of Black

lives. For this reason, analyzing the AARLCC's relationship to the digital Black humanities as

well as its connection to a Black public humanities approach will allow us to intertwine the

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[191] Foster, interview with the author, February 12, 2022.
[192] Ibid.

praxis that results from a fugitive pedagogy invested in carving its own understanding of the past, present, and future.

Centering Black digital work will have a particular effect on how we engage with the Black digital humanities. Connecting Black digital memory workers furthers dialogues on particular Black issues, strategies, perspectives on how to archive Black digital content. The ATBW engages in a particular form of Black digital practice as expressed by Jessica Marie Johnson who ventures into slavery studies and underscores how digital technology has been used at the expense of a praxiological approach to tend to historical and generational trauma. For example, she argues the following, "In this iteration of black digital practice, black life is understood as deep and rich, full of infinite gender possibilities, kinship formations, and affective knowledges."[193] Meaning, Black digital practices are considered with self-making, which requires a desire for kinship and expanding Black stories, identities, and self-improvement. The ATBW will allow for Black-centered experiences to be documented and archived as opposed to traditional historians and their skewed understanding of what counts as an archive. Johnson offers a glaring example of the abuse and misuse of traditional historians and their lack of considerations when examining and archiving the histories of plantations in the southern region of the United States. She writes, "The impulse to revisit the plantation South from the perspective of black laborers and their experiences contributed to changing conceptions to data as historians struggled with which sources would be of value, what meaning could be gleaned from narratives and numbers, and what archival material appeared to be stable, objective, and quantifiable."[194] Traditional historians and digital humanists considered how to document the history of slavery with their Western understanding of knowledge production and objectivity. As

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[193] Johnson, "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads," 69.
[194] Ibid, 61.

expressed by Johnson, "Statistics on their own, enticing in their seeming neutrality, failed to address or unpack black life hidden behind the archetypes, caricatures, and nameless numbered registers of human property slave owners had left behind."[195] Johnson captures an impetus to proclaim the centrality of Black bodies within a context of taking ownership of their histories, which have always been at the center of control by white dominant societies in the Americas or those with white proximity via hegemonic domination.

In fact, Mark Anthony Neal and Johnson edited a special issue for *The Black Scholar* journal titled "Black Code" where they proposed the concept of Black Code Studies as a way to center and subvert social hierarchies by stating the following:

> As praxis, Black Code Studies moves beyond the dyad Black + Digital, transgressive as that pairing has proven to be. It is the viral blackness that, described by Wade, "subverts social hierarchies by putting the needs and desires of Black bodies at the center." It is the #Blktwitterstorians hashtag, created by Brown and Crutchfield to highlight black historians and history. It is blackness as a deep humanism and affect(ion) that confronts, as Driscoll shows, the biopolitics of the hexadecimal, and, as Greene-Hayes and James discuss, the biopolitics of organizing and everyday antiblackness.[196]

In other words, ATBW is a project that reflects what Neal and Johnson are describing as well as moving the task of archiving into hands of Black archivists who are centered in Black communities and have their ears pressed to the Black digital realms.

Taking community into consideration, because ATBW initiative is dedicated to provide a forum for Black professionals to do digital memory work nationally, I ask: How might Black archivists on a national platform inform the decision-making process for archiving Black digital life? Although we may think of the FUBU approach as central to doing Black public humanities, it is important to center and define the "us" in this project. In my first chapter, I discussed the

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[195] Ibid, 61.
[196] Jessica Marie Johnson and Mark Anthony Neal, "Introduction: Wild Seed in the Machine," *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research* 47, no. 3: Black Code (2017): 1.

"Us" in FUBU as being a Black diasporic and local "us" since the pre-cursors and legacies of

Black public humanities work is centered in this. The ATBW project while still in its inception,

as a national project, we must discuss the "Us" as tied to the decision-making process of what

becomes part of that archive of Black digital life. From the project's website and content, the

conversations are centered on Black American life that focuses on Black Lives Matter, Ferguson,

Black Twitter, storytelling, etc. While I cannot make any definitive statements, I do caution and

hope that ATWB will also archive the Black digital life pertaining to Black queer life, Black

girlhood and womanhood, Black boy joy, Black people living with disabilities, Black ratchet life,

Black immigrant life, amongst other iterations of Black life on the internet.

Centering Black public humanities work with a local or regional Black public in mind is

much more attainable and focused. ATWB's emphasis on multiple Black localities to create a

national Black digital archive will be more beneficial than a nationally-focused Black public

humanities approach. If one observes the videos promoting the ATWB, as well as their grant

proposals, one can observe the complication around making this project for the community while

also underscoring why this is of national benefit. The proposal for the National Leadership Grant

from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, which is the major grant that funds the

project, states the following,

> *Archiving the Black Web* is an attempt to balance out inequities in web archiving, with a
> focus on increasing Black web archive collections and closing the skills and knowledge
> gaps in black archiving organizations. *Archiving the Black Web* is proposing several
> deliverables that will have broad national and some international impact. Specifically, the
> strategic plan on Black web. The plan will lay the groundwork for smaller, less resource
> spaces, to address issues such as training, tools, ethics, and best practices for archiving.[197]

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[197] Broward Public Library Foundation (African American Research Library and Cultural Center), "Archiving the
Black Web: A National Forum to Map the Landscape, Define the Issues, and Plan a Strategy for Documenting the
Black Experience Online" (Project Proposal, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2020), 21 pages.

As can be easily observed, the ATWB had to demonstrate how the grant would fulfill a national

need as well as having "deliverables" for national purposes. As it is a national grant, the

language is different in comparison to Broward County grants the AARLCC has received.

Although the ATWB is not just based on the AARLCC but rather a partnership with other Black

institutions, on the proposal it appears less occupied with the local community as it is with

creating a national scope of Black digital history. As previously demonstrated, by focusing on a

local level, diverse Black regions in the United States, one can uncover a myriad of translocal,

transnational, and diasporic stories. The ATBW allows local practitioners to expand on their

already learned skills and engage in their community by providing local memory workers

intellectual and knowledge-based repertoires, which may indeed provide a multidimensional

praxis that may or may not directly involve community members. When one observes some of

their already shared videos on their website one gets a sense of communal goals. To take case in

point, in the panel titled "For the Culture — Black Memory Work and Storytelling on the Web,"

Renata Cherlise, founder of "Black Archives" posits,

> I'm uncovering more about my personal history and my family's history, and as I share
> these pieces, you know, through social media, through Instagram, through Black
> archives, I hope that it inspires other people to do the same, essentially, and to be
> intentional about how we tell stories, right? And I'm also speaking from a sense that I do
> a lot of archival production, sourcing for documentaries, and archival projects. And I
> think it's important that we allow space for a more nuanced storytelling and
> representation of what the Black experience is, you know, in the future, because just
> think, I'm not having people from the outside coming into our spaces, and documenting
> us coming into our communities and then we, as artists, we, as filmmakers, we, as people
> who are looking to preserve our stories, you know, have to utilize those materials to
> create our own projects and our own documentaries. And if there was intention from the
> beginning, if we had a way of creating our own space, our own archives, and being
> intentional about that, I think it brings a different lens to storytelling and to remembering.

And so, overall, 100 years from now, my vision is just to inspire folks to do the work now. So that our stories are more nuanced, you know, in the future.[198]

Cherlise proposes "nuanced storytelling" based on community and family-based stories that can be archived, discussed, displayed communally, and curated with nuance in mind. This nuance storytelling pushes against institutions who may have an impetus for dividing communities into distinct ethnoracial groups in an attempt of being inclusive but may very well decenter the localized narratives. Cherlise proposes a fundamental step towards revisiting the essential building blocks of Black public humanities work. Cherlise's statement is a contrast to when Black stories are restricted to nation building or influenced by other groups in power who wish to seem themselves within a certain Black narrative. Thus, by examining and documenting Black history in the United States beyond the nation, we can ensure that fugitive pedagogy is passed down to future generations.

Conclusion

During the pandemic, the AARLCC attempted to shift its approach to create programming and events by using culturally-relevant programming and events that would captivate people while also attempting to broaden their viewership via social media and other modes of technology. This chapter has paid close attention to how the AARLCC and its collaboration with other institutions and Black memory workers have shifted while also retaining the central idea of local Black self-making. For example, storytelling and self-archiving appear to be recurrent themes within Black digital spaces. One of the dangers to take into account when

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[198] Archiving The Black Web, "Panel 2: For the Culture – Black Memory and Storytelling on the Web," Archiving the Black Web, April 29, 2021, video, 01:17, https://archivingtheblackweb.org/schedule/.

it comes to technology and broader topics that contribute to memory work is the issue of who gets to be included and who does not. As previously mentioned, the benefits of collaborations such as the ATBW provide professional Black memory workers to receive culturally-relevant and supportive training that allows them to take these skills back to their community. However, including a range of topics and stories such as Black immigration, Black queerness, Black disabilities stories, and so forth will allow everyone in that digital space to feel welcomed and represented. At the local level, although there are clearly ethno-racial adhesions within Black communities, the idea of community tends to be a significant factor in bringing Black folks together. The AARLCCS's engagement, shift and existence within a Black digital public humanities realm shows the dialogue between efforts like the ATBW, the SoFlo Book festival (including the Flip & Sip Virtual), and Mark Anthony Neal's Facebook Live talk on Stevie Wonder, which is at the center of afro-modernity, self-making, and autonomy.

**Conclusion: Thinking Black Public Humanities Beyond Respectability**

In February 2022, I visited the AARLCC and was met with a space that was hustling and bustling with activities. It is very much a community-oriented space. There was a free COVID-19 testing clinic in what was previously the gift shop, there was a group of young Black girls who were part of a dance organization practicing in one of the rehearsal spaces. While part of the performing arts theatre was being renovated, the other half was hosting casting auditions for another Esther Rolle production that would be called "Head Above Water: The Life of Esther Rolle"—I even got to meet the director Darius V. Daughtry who shared with me that this second production would go more in depth into Rolle's life. The space was warmly welcoming, per usual, with a diversity of Black people. By the end of the visit, my partner and I found ourselves in the lobby seeing an AfroLatina actor leaving the audition while greeting one of the Black maintenance workers in Spanish. This led to a full-blown conversation between us and the maintenance worker, another Black Dominican man who entered delivering food also joined in on the conversation. We laughed, sharing Black diasporic cultural connections about how we look like we can be from anywhere in the Black diaspora. It is these moments of Black diasporic recognition and community building that are unique to places like the AARLCC in South Florida.

There was a new exhibit in the gallery space titled, "The Collector's Duet: The Lifelong Librarianship of Vivian D. Hewitt and Dorothy Porter Wesley." At the end of my follow-up interview with Makiba Foster, I perused the exhibit, which focused on the important contributions of Black women librarians like Hewitt and Porter Wesley whose librarianship during the 1940s through the 1980s embraced Black memory work. Meaning, that in order to embrace memory work, it is important to underscore those who have walked a similar path

before us. Porter as well as Hewitt represent a movement of scholars, educators, and librarians, and museologists concerned with preserving and disseminating the history of Black people while also ensuring that these histories remain in the hands of Black people. One of the most fascinating aspects of the exhibit is how it showed their resistance by using some of their struggles in the library world. What makes this exhibit interesting is that it is changing our perceptions on resistance and racial and social justice work. For example, through her careful analysis, Porter Wesley was able to learn that under the Dewey system, all topics related to Black people were codified under slavery. Porter Wesley's take on systemic book and materials being sterilized are some of the more subtle forms of resistance that librarians and educators such as Hewitt and Porter Wesley endured. In this sense, Black public humanities has always involved both direct and indirect forms of resistance such as de facto laws and policies as was the Dewey System. The exhibit featuring Hewitt and Porter Wesley thrives in book collecting and archiving within a white dominated library system that controls the main institutional gatekeeping on how the public learns. Although in the last decade or so, libraries have lost ground as the center of knowledge and dissemination of information, libraries have historically been regarded as centers and circulations of knowledge. As such, BPH approaches to disseminating memory work is not necessarily concerned with continuing the neo-liberal experience economies that predominate in the 21st century, rather it invokes the idea that brick by brick, Black memory work is being done by individuals who belong to local communities and contribute to that community's sense of Black self-makings as seen in Sistrunk.

The entrance to the Vivian D. Hewitt and Dorothy Porter Wesley exhibit at the AARLCC, photo taken by author (February 12, 2022).
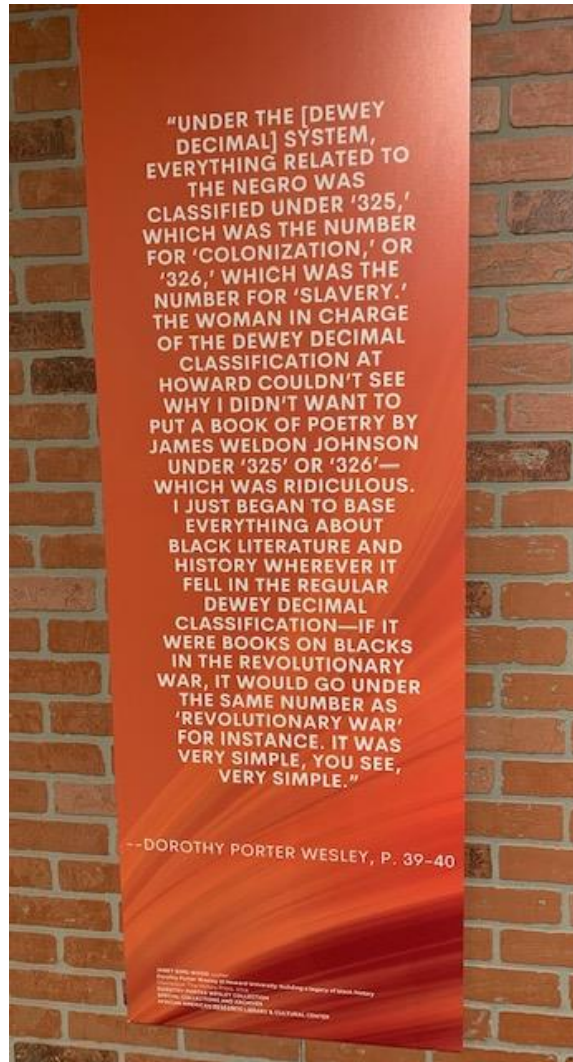
Oversized banner quoting Dorothy Porter Wesley's opposition to the Dewey Decimal System as part of the Collector's Duet exhibit at the AARLCC, photo taken by author (February 12, 2022).

While Black memory work is central to Black public humanities (BPH), I have also presented the ways that the approaches of BPH are centered in For Us, By Us (FUBU) and Black self-makings. However, these approaches also lead us to think more broadly about Black public humanities beyond spaces like the AARLCC. I dedicate this conclusion to raising more questions about how this study of Black public humanities, its precursors, and the AARLCC might push us to ask about the limitations of the Black public spheres it documents and represents. In other

words, I am interested in pursuing BPH as a framework that forces us to consider Black public

humanities and narratives of self-making that are also from urban, working-class, and spaces

traditionally thought of as deviant. Here, I am thinking about my visit to Atlanta rapper T.I.'s

Trap Music Museum located in the Bankhead neighborhood of Atlanta. Having many

dimensions to Black public spheres and Black self-makings that may be rejected otherwise

should be of central concern for the future study of public humanities. How do we record the

stories of resistance and subversiveness of local communities? BPH still has to think of this if we

are to move beyond a "success story" approach to memory work. What counts as memory work?

What memories do we prioritize and how do we frame them?

     In his book *Race Rebels,* Robin D.G. Kelley is concerned with working-class Black

people who did not belong to either "working-class" organizations or Black political movements.

Kelly aims to find the everyday resistance strategies of Black American working-class peoples.

As argued by Kelley, "I not only question whether a handful of 'representative Negroes' can

speak for the mass of working class African Americans, but also suggest that some of the most

dynamic struggles take place outside —indeed, sometimes in established organizations and

institutions."[199] In later chapters, Kelley underscores various examples of resistance, such as the

public transportation system, as an important battlefield where Black people are able to negotiate

and demand better transportation services, which dependent on fares for profit. In his chapter

titled, "The Riddle of the Zoot" Kelley goes on to argue that *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*,

"…obscures the oppositional meanings embedded in wartime Black youth. And none of

Malcom's biographers since have sought to understand the history and political character of the

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[199] Robin D.G Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 6.

subculture to which he belonged."[200] As such, the era of zoot suits predominated, and in many cases was frowned upon as leading to unrespectable and ghetto culture. However, according to Kelley, in many instances the culture's subversiveness was a symbol of resistance. Many within the zoot suit culture refused to enter World War II in order to enjoy their freedom and not have to fight off what many considered to be a "white man's war." Kelley posits,

> While the suit itself was not meant as a direct political statement, the social context in which it was created and worn rendered it so. The language and culture of zoot suiters represented a subversive refusal to be subservient. Young black males created a fast-paced, improvisational language which sharply contrasted with the passive stereotype of stuttering, tongue-tied Sambo; in a world where whites commonly addressed them as boy, zoot suiters made a fetish of calling them "man".[201]

The zoot suit culture for Kelley has more significance than merely a reflection of working-class denial to uplift themselves or seek better conditions in life. They were instead interacting with a socio-political world where self-making required reinvention and adaptation to a consumerist and social mobilization. One of the most important aspects of the zoot suit generation was the lindy hop musical genre which for Kelley, "represented the negation of Black bourgeois culture and reaffirmation of a subaltern culture that emphasizes pleasure, rejected work, and celebrated working-class racial identity."[202] To this respect, how does Black public humanities engage with cultures of Black deviance? How does it represent the stories from below, those subversive narratives that are also stories of survival and fugitivity?

The task of the Black public humanist is to reconstruct the particulars of Black communities by focusing on the materialities of everyday life. In 2018, during my time at the American Studies Association Conference, I had the opportunity to visit the Trap Music Museum

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[200] Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 162.
[201] Ibid, 166.
[202] Ibid, 168.

in Atlanta, Georgia, which was founded by Atlanta-based rapper T.I. Unlike most museums, this was a Black museum in the "hood" or a working-class Black community, where the museum-goers were predominantly Black visitors as well. Furthermore, unlike other Black museums, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Trap Music Museum focused on exhibiting the aesthetic of some of the issues that many Black urban working-class folks in Atlanta experience: the culture of the corner store, hip hop music and aesthetics, the coming together of people around street games, Black pain, Black joy, and the real issue of mass incarceration. The Trap Music Museum follows a For Us By Us (FUBU) approach that is doing Black memory work of remembering and reminding a local and broader audience of what propelled the creation of the trap sub-genre of hip-hop in Atlanta. T.I.'s own experiences and narratives of growing up in the Bankhead neighborhood, his engagement with gang and drug life as well as in the prison industrial complex, are part of the memory work. This memory work of his own life becomes a springboard for telling the story of other Atlanta-based trap rappers and residents of similar experiences through the Trap Music Museum. In a world where this sub-genre of hip-hop has become a multi-million-dollar industry depoliticized of its context, it is important to remember and be reminded of what's at stake for Black communities in Atlanta who still live in the trap. While T.I.'s story became one of capitalistic success through the support of the multiple Black hood communities across the country and then taken up by major record labels, the experiences that fueled the music production and process took the backseat in the memories of mainstream consumers. Spaces, such as the Trap Music Museum should also be considered part of a Black public humanities praxis that is "both/and"—meaning that it is a Black public cultural institution that educates and creates a necessary conversation worthy of our

attention, as well as centering violence, crime, joy, pleasure, and self-making all at the same time.

The Trap Music Museum is public-centered and provides a space for particular Black people in the Atlanta community to see themselves reflected. The Trap Music Museum and Bankhead may be considered more of a Black enclave. This also explains why The Trap Music Museum has been so successful as it is located in the middle of a predominantly working-class Black neighborhood. This makes it harder for White bourgeois public humanities or mainstream museums who wish to enforce their political views on Black people to intervene. As discussed in Chapter 1, Squires' concern for attributing value to the counter public shares similar concerns with that of Robin D.G Kelley's preoccupation with what counts as resistance. The trap element is also an important dimension to consider. For example, the political, cultural, and musical genre of Hip-hop music is a continuous process of glocalization, that is, a global-local vitality that depends upon the adaptability to each region's geo-cultural and political dynamic and aesthetics. Trap has been understood as akin to a less political dimension than what is referred to as earlier conscious hip-hop. For instance, many people associate and connect with early hip-hop's subversiveness, which revolves around intensified institutional racism, conditions of extreme poverty, and the draconian response to the rise of crack and cocaine and homelessness that plagued the streets during the 1980s. As KRS-One emphasizes in his Billboard hit single "Sound of Da Police" in his album *Return of the Boom Bap* (1993): "policeman come, we bust him out the park. I know this for a fact; you don't like how I act. You claim I'm selling crack but you be doing that." However, artists like T.I. can be paralleled with hip-hop's mogul, Jay Z as described in Mark Anthony Neal's *Looking for Leroy*, which centers around an urban hip-hop

cosmopolitanist image that becomes legible and illegible with established perceptions of identity and power.[203]
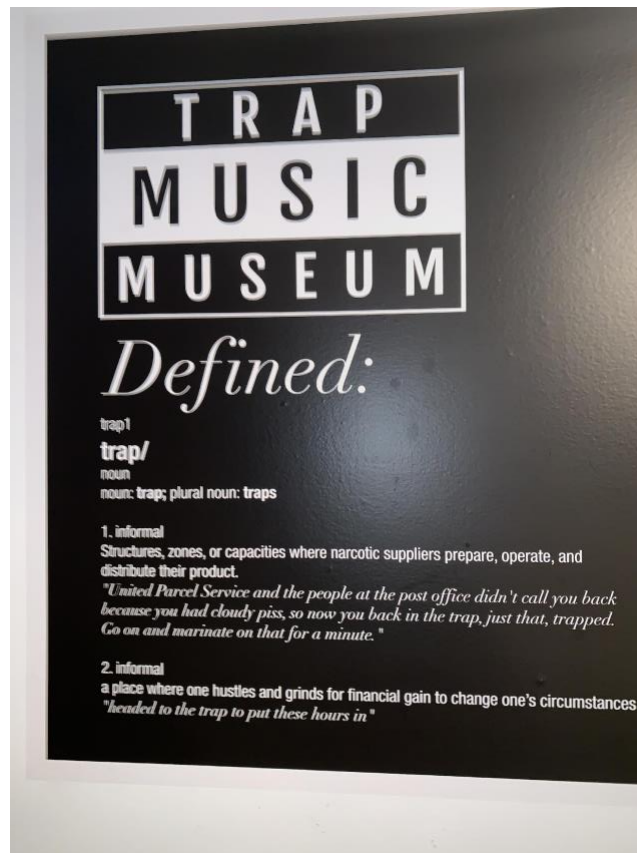
Museum label defining "trap" from the Trap Music Museum in the Bankhead neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia. Photo by author (November 2018).

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[203] See, Mark Anthony Neal, *Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

A snowman surrounded by faux bricks of Cocaine, often referred to as snow in hip-hop music.
Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by author (November 2018).
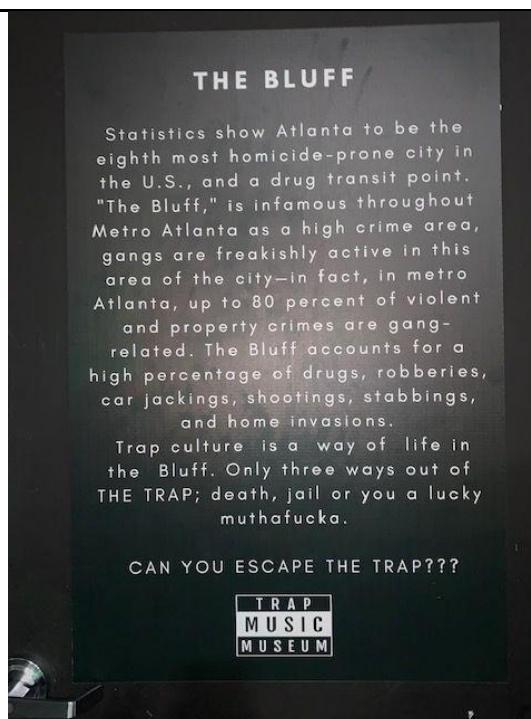
Label describing "The Bluff" in Atlanta in regards to crime and the trap.
Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by author (November 2018).

The Trap Music Museum employs a different language through counter discourse that would not be allowed in more mainstream museums that wish to maintain Black uplift ideals. Under that same vein, many Black public humanities spaces also would not embrace this type of approach towards Black memory work thus revealing the heterogeneity of Black memory work. As emphasized by Squires, "counterpublics are affected by their interactions with wider publics, often in ways not of their choosing. The state and dominant publics can undermine counterpublic discourses, performances, and movements."[204] As such, The Trap Music Museum is more akin to an enclave, but shares some elements to other Black public spheres. This can be expected in a globalized era where technology has the tendency to rupture these self-contained public spheres. As such, it was through the internet that I was able to locate the museum and partake in the exhibit. However, the question remains, should the sensationalism of prison, drug trafficking, hustling be considered educational or a worthy iteration of human knowledge that can lead to self-making? My response is that The Trap Music Museum should be considered a viable form of Black public humanities.

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[204] Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere," 462.

Last big room of the Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by the author (November 2018).

In *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture* (2013) cultural studies scholar Shelley Streeby offers the concept of "Sensational Counter-Sensationalisms." The fact is that most Black radical writers during the Harlem Renaissance positioned themselves with some form of sensationalism in line with the mainstream sensational media circulation of the time. There are no 'either or' reductionist approaches analyzed by Streeby as she makes sure to underscore the multiple struggles for dominance of reaching 'the negro masses' by using some form of sensationalism. Although sensationalism is regarded as inauthentic depictions of Black people that reinforces stereotypes and archetypes, which is a justified concern, Streeby has also demonstrated how sensationalism can also be used as a political tool in order to garner attention. In terms of pedagogy, I do not want to argue for or against sensationalism as a viable approach to public humanities but rather challenge us to reconsider other forms of knowledge formation that

may seem disingenuous, or as John Dewey would consider, non-educative. Furthermore, the dialogue around sensationalism as used by the film industry in movies like *Django Unchained* has the ability to reach a wider public as well as reveal the nuances around the "Uncle Tom" figure, which is usually ignored within Black intellectual circles concerned with respectability and upward mobility. The debate over sensationalism does concern a Black public humanities framework simply because it is at the center of the truth of Black people either being romanticized or vilified. As historian Daryl Michael Scott demonstrates in his book *Contempt and Pity,* where he argues that "racial liberals have used damage imagery primarily to justify policies of inclusion and rehabilitation."[205] Between sensationalism and damage imagery of Black people, The Trap Music Museum opens up the need for future dialogues around self-making and methods for employing a multi-dimensionality to this regional and local Black memory work. Similar to the use of sensationalism in the early 20th century print culture as discussed by Streeby, the Trap Music Museum also partakes in a sensationalism that both acknowledges the reality of the prison industrial complex while at the same time, presents it as part of the exhibit in order to be critical of it. In this sense, museum visitors who may or may not have an experience of being in prison or engaging in illicit activities are able to get an actual understanding of the possible realities. It would behoove us to downplay the fact that the montage of a prison toilet in a cell, as seen in the image below from the Trap Music Museum, is a clear thought in the minds of many folks in the local Black community.

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[205] Daryl M. Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xi.

Montage of a prison cell's toilet at the Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by author (November 2018).

One of the most fascinating aspects of The Trap Music Museum is its use of magazines and rapper's lyrics as primary sources. While for many historians, these primary documents may be worthless as they do not conform with the historical discipline's understanding of archives, it documents Black life in the contemporary popular culture of the trap. In her chapter, "Archiving Black Transnational Modernity: Scrapbooks, Stereopticon, and Social Movements" Streeby emphasizes Hubert Harrison's involvement with the Renaissance Casino, built in the early 1920s by a Caribbean businessman who supported the UNIA. The Renaissance was a complex comprised of a theater, ballroom, shops, a pool parlor, and a Chinese restaurant. Streeby urges scholars of Black diaspora studies to consider the importance of alternate modalities and archives of expression that exist or emerge within a given Black diasporic community and between

diasporic groups. Putting a strong emphasis on diasporic agency, Streeby highlights the

importance of Harrison's scrapbooks,

> In his scrapbooks, Harrison juxtaposed and layers ephemera, newspaper stories, photographs, cartoons, and advertisements from different times and places in order to revise and comment on narratives of race, empire, and internationalism in official histories, glossy mass circulation magazines, the daily newspapers of the big cities, the black press, radical periodicals, and other sources…[206]

Interpreting print culture that is outside of the traditional modes of primary documents allows us

to think about the Trap Music Museum's exhibit of hip-hop magazines, the sheets of paper with

the hip hop lyrics of songs and connect these Black cultural artifacts as central to telling the story

of a particular Black Atlanta lifestyle in the trap.

A casing of hip-hop magazines from the early 2000s that continue to document hip-hop and trap trends, politics, stories and culture. The Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by author (November 2018).

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[206] Shelley Streeby, *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 198.
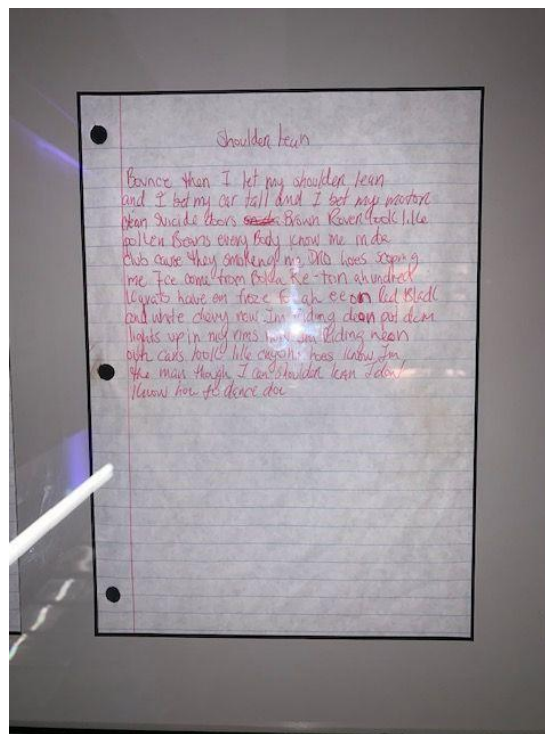
Primary document of TI's and Young Dro's writing of the song "Shoulda Lean." Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by author (November 2018).

The Black public humanist's task is to provide context and open up multiple dimensions of consideration without having to dismiss the context of working-class Black communities. For instance, in the picture below there is a montage of a supposedly typical living room in the hood with marijuana, Chinese food, 40 oz. bottles of Colt 45 beer, Newport cigarettes, and drug pills. Instead of either dismissing or sensationalizing the montage, the Black public humanist can provide some context for this montage by adding the sociological and historical meanings of these kinds of spaces either from research, community narratives and experiences, or even personal experiences. Historian LaShawn Harris reminds us of this through her own work in her book *Sex Workers, Psychics and Number Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy* where she argues "...that New York's burgeoning underground economy served as a catalyst in working-class black women's creation of employment opportunities,

occupational identities, and survival strategies that provided financial stability and a sense of labor autonomy and mobility."[207] This is to say that these forms of labor just like the illicit drugs and alcohol in the montage do not only represent a deviant Black Atlanta urban lifestyle, but reminds us to not disempower local Black folks who engage in this work, but instead to acknowledge the agency and different kind of mobility that still makes Black life possible. This kind of non-traditional unlicensed and unlawful work complicates "...normative tensions of respectability."[208] This nuanced understanding of underground life tends not to be extended to Black people at the local and broader level, as it is to other white and racialized groups as seen on television (*Peaky Blinders, Narcos, The Godfather*, etc.), let alone Black women. From a Black public humanities standpoint, one must consider that there are possibilities for revealing the realities of multiple Black experiences while also extending knowledge *with* the public about these realities.

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[207] LaShawn Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics and Number Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 2.
[208] Ibid, 3.

Montage of a stereotypical living room in a trap house. Trap Music Museum, Atlanta, Georgia. Photo taken by author (November 2018).

As Black public humanists, what is our role in thinking about the knowledge production, self-making and fugitivities that are happening in the margins of the margins? If we focus so much on narratives of progress and upward mobility, how are we being complicit in marginalizing Black urban local knowledges that also co-exist in these illicit spaces? Who are we to not acknowledge the humanity, empowerment, living, surviving, and thriving that also happens within the matrices of oppression? These questions are inspired by the very research and methods that this dissertation has presented in regard to what is Black public humanities as a praxis and conceptual framework. The praxeological and transdisciplinary approach to Black memory work and self-making that I have presented throughout this dissertation as seen in the

creation and work of the AARLCC, also make space for pushing our collective thinking and future research that considers institutions like the Trap Music Museum. The AARLCC has been a pivotal institution located on James Sistrunk Blvd in South Florida in a predominantly Black neighborhood. Throughout this dissertation I have emphasized the importance of generational memory work, fugitive pedagogy, self-making, and local histories in order to delineate how these practices result in a Black public humanities praxis. My objective has been to provide specific and actual hands-on examples of Black public humanities in order to provide educators and public humanists tools for research, scholarship, collaborations, events, projects, and praxis. If public humanists and community-engaged scholars are to seriously consider breaking bread with non-academics, it is important for them to engage in a decolonial practice outside of the neo-liberal trap of being gatekeepers of knowledge and social change. That is not to say, that knowledge "from below" is not at times controversial. Black communities at large still suffer from homophobia, nativism, sexism, classism, colorism, ableism, parochialism, along with a romanticized understanding of their history. My research has found that being *in community* at the local and regional levels increases the chances for dialogue. I attempted to refrain from using academic jargon as much as possible in order to focus on the actual memory work of practitioners such as Makiba Foster who without them, this dissertation would have not been possible. Scholars, memory workers, and public humanists, like Makiba Foster and her commitment to Black communities, are what I have centered in this study. For Foster,

> Black memory work is future work. Black memory even though it's past, its future…. I am motivated by who will come after me…it is also not about titles and education because a lot of this work has been done by people who understood who would come after them. It's still it's just like when Black folks have fought and died for freedoms that they never experienced…somebody thought that this was worth documenting to not only leave behind for people to understand the past in the future, but for me to be able to do

this could carry on their legacy of documenting the present for the future. My work is about making sure the longevity of this place stays.[209]

I agree with Foster in that the care for Black local communities should not be ephemeral, it should be passed down generationally in order to improve conditions and outcomes for those communities.

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[209] Foster, interview with the author, February 12, 2022.

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Appendix

Interview Questionnaire

Making Black Public Humanities in South Florida: African Diaspora, Public Histories, and Archives

Community Interview Questions

SIGN CONSENT FORMS: *(remind narrator that we will email them all forms signed as pdf files to designated email address, so double check their personal info with their initials next to it and have them re-sign forms if necessary).*

Start recording. (notify narrator)
      1. Is it okay if I start recording right away? We don't want to miss anything!
      2. Record with **TWO** devices

2.   INTRO → Thank you for joining me today in conversation. My name is William García-Medina and I use the pronouns **(he/him/his).** Today, I'm interviewing _____ (ask PRONOUNS), who currently lives in _____. It's _____(date) at (time) _____(AM/ PM).

3.   **Collect personal information form and go through details with interviewee** *(including pronoun reminder/ explanation).*
a.   **Sample language:** "Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in the Making Black Archives Oral History Project process that will help me to think about community-made archives and cultural institutions such as the African American Research Library and Cultural Center. I'm working on my dissertation and I'm so grateful that you are here!"
b.   **Disclaimers:** We want to make sure that you know that we are here to listen to your voice and celebrate YOUR story and contribution to the making of this community. If at any time you wish to either skip and /or elaborate on a specific question, please do so!

Part I: Identity – Life History Section

4.   Where were you born? Where are you from?

5.   How do you identify? Do you [also] identify as a Black Person or Person of Color (POC)? How/does this category shape your other identities?

6.   What is your first memory of self-identification as a PoC or Black Person?

7.   Are there other identities that you choose to identify with (pronouns, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, racial, mother, student …)?

8.   How did you and/ or your family make their way to Fort Lauderdale and/or its metropolitan area?

9.   Have you ever lived anywhere else other than Fort Lauderdale?

Part II: Place – Community & Home

10.   Do you claim Fort Lauderdale as home? What does home mean to you? Can you define home in your own words?

11.   At the same time, I'll ask similar questions about community. How do you define community and what types of communities are you a part of at this time?

12.   If Fort Lauderdale is not considered home, why (yes/no)? Where is home for you?

13.   Is there a meaningful place in Fort Lauderdale where you feel safe, welcomed, inclusive, and accessible? Are there multiple spaces in Fort Lauderdale where you feel prioritized as a _____?

14.   Do you think public cultural and archival/historical institutions are important for communities generally speaking?

I'd like to switch gears for a moment and think about community and home in relationship to the work you've done here in Fort Lauderdale. The African American Research Library and Cultural Center was completed in October 2002 with a ribbon cutting ceremony. I'm interested in finding out what happened behind the scenes before, during and afterwards from your perspective.

14. What was/is your role in relationship to the African American Research Library and Cultural Center and/or its afterlife?

15. Where did you find yourself in community with what this place has to offer?

Were you able to view/read any of the archives or collections currently housed there/here? Have you participated in any events? Were you part of the planning committee for the Research Library and Cultural Center? Do you follow them on social media? Fundraisers? Did you volunteer? Can you tell us what that was like for you to be in community with people at this institution? Did you share it with people? If so, how?

16. How do you think the African American Research Library and Cultural Center impacts your local communities?

Part III: Community Building and Public History Making

17. How did you imagine the African American Research Library and Cultural Center would bring people together? What did you assume would happen? What did you expect?

    In building community through this institution, were there moments where things didn't go according to your expectations? If so, can you tell me about that? Who did you reach out to for support? Or, did you find that there were others who felt the same?

    Were there times when you had to compromise your views and/or expectations?

    Being in community isn't always easy. What motivated you to continue to be part of this community when unexpected things happened? Which resources and strategies did you

learn that helped you to connect with the importance of telling and preserving the history of people of color in Fort Lauderdale?

18. What does community and public history mean to you now? Has your opinion changed after witnessing and/or participating in the making of this community and the African American Research Library and Cultural Center?

19. What lingering desires do you have for an afterlife where a group of Black, African, and Caribbean residents can gather and collaborate on future projects? – What can we do? What do you envision should be done?

20. How have your views on collaboration and community-making changed throughout your time here? Does this relate to family, kinship, or friendship in any way? Who did you learn this from? Which people have been key in shaping how you understand these relationships?

21. Is there anything else about your story that you'd like to add to this oral history interview?

22. What advice would you give to other people who want to work with others to create a public and accessible archive of their community history?

23. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me. I feel very honored to be gifted with your story. As a concluding question, after sharing so much about the slipperiness of together work, how are you reclaiming joy in your life and how do you hope to reclaim joyful moments in the afterlife of the African American Research Library and Cultural Center?

END with:

*** Thank you so much for taking the time and expending the energy to share your personal story with me. It has been a pleasure interviewing you and I look forward to reflecting on your experiences in this project.**

Research Consent Form

The University of Kansas Department of American Studies

Making Black Public Humanities in South Florida: African Diaspora, Public Histories, and Archives

Informed Consent Statement for Research

INTRODUCTION

The Department of American Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. *Y*ou may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to analyze the collected oral histories and interviews from the Fort Lauderdale community residents that have participated in the making, founding, and maintenance of the archives, cultural artifacts, and public histories at the African American Research Library and Cultural Center. This research is a two-part endeavor, encompassing 1) a local community-based public history and archives project for and by Fort Lauderdale residents who are Black and people of color, which is the African American Research Library and Cultural Center and 2) an oral history interview of those who are or have been involved with this institution, as well as those who the institution intends to serve-Black, African, and Caribbean community members. *Making Black Public Humanities in South Florida: African Diaspora, Public Histories, and Archives* will draw from these interviews, archival research, and participant observation conducted by William García-Medina who is also the principal investigator for this dissertation research study.

This timely research project about Black Public Humanities, archive-making in communities of color in Fort Lauderdale, Florida should not be neglected or overlooked. In thinking about the reach of the project and its vital intervention in public cultures and histories, I interpret this project as a celebration of the life and work, past and present, of Black people and other people of color in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; a monumental honoring of their presence, their creativity, and their labor as indispensable and integral members of this community. With the support of the University of Kansas, I plan to collect oral histories and interviews from residents of color who have stories they wish to share about their personal experiences in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and how they factor into the making of the African American Research Library and Cultural Center and its collections. After this initial phase of the project reaches completion, the oral histories and interviews will be transcribed and interpreted into a narrative that can become part of the archives at the Research Library and Cultural Center. It should be completed in its entirety by the end of January of 2021. The research project will be house primarily on KU ScholarWorks, a secure university owned repository.

KEY INFORMATION
•Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary.
• Your participation will take approximately 2-3 hours total.
• You will be asked to do the following procedures: participate in one more recorded interviews totaling no more than 2-3 hours at your discretion, participant has the option to decide what sections may or may not be included in the research or for publication, participant may use the real name or remain anonymous via a pseudonym, and participant will have the opportunity to receive a copy of the transcription of the interview after it has taken place. More detailed information on the procedures can be found below.
• There are no foreseeable risks, pains, or inconveniences associated with participating in this project.
• The experiences and cultural/spatial memories of Fort Lauderdale based Black people and people of color will be made accessible to those doing scholarly studies of cultural practices, public history, activism, Fort Lauderdale history, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies. This is extremely important as there are currently only a few public history projects about Black and people of color-led/organized community based participatory archival and public history projects focused on minoritized experiences in South Florida.
• Your alternative to participating in this research study is not to participate.

PROCEDURES

*Y*ou will be asked to participate in one or more interviews that may total between 2-3 hours in length depending on what your involvement with the African American Research Library and Cultural Center has been. These interviews will be recorded via a digital audio recorder. You have the option to ask the researcher to stop the recording at any point during the interview. After the interview is transcribed you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy, and may designate parts for deletion or for restricted use before published online or housed in an archival database.

*W*ith your permission, the transcript and/or audio clips will be uploaded to KU ScholarWorks, the institutional repository for the University of Kansas and, as needed, transferred into other electronic formats.

If you wish to remain anonymous, you may use a pseudonym and have the option to decline from having your audio clip included in KU ScholarWorks. You may use a pseudonym for your transcript and references to other names will also be altered. If you do not wish to have your transcript online you may have it remain offline in the care of the researcher.

NOTES ON COLLECTED DATA

The KU research sections of "Making Black Public Humanities in South Florida" (with IRB) will use some of personal information in the forms (in some capacity). I intend to use this information sheet, with permission from participants.

The personal/individual data collected includes, for example: name, age, date of birth (DOB), hometown, gender, pronouns, familial background, hobbies, and how one self identifies in the world, and so on. Oral history and interview participants must fill out the aforementioned personal information sheet for research purposes. *Y*our identifiable information may be removed from the data collected during this project, and the de-identified data will be used for future research without additional consent from you.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks, pains, or inconveniences associated with participating in this project.

BENEFITS

The experiences and cultural/spatial memories of Fort Lauderdale based Black people and people of color will be made accessible to those doing scholarly studies of cultural practices, public history, activism, Fort Lauderdale history, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies. This is extremely important as there are currently only a few public history projects about Black and people of color-led/organized community based participatory archival and public history projects focused on minoritized experiences in South Florida.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

No payment will be made to participants.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

If anonymity is requested, the researcher will use a pseudonym instead of your name. The

researcher will not share information about you, unless requested by law or unless you give written permission.

Otherwise, permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely (Therefore, any information submitted to me thus far including identifiable information submitted in your general information sheet will be used unless otherwise is requested). By signing this form you, the interviewee, gives permission to me, William García-Medina, for the use and disclosure of your identifiable information for public use as far as the dissertation/research project goes. This information and narratives provided in your interview be made available for use for the purposes of this type of data collection at any time in the future. This includes the rights to publish, reproduce, exhibit, distribute, broadcast, and digitize your name, likeness, image, voice, recordings, and transcripts and any other contribution by you to my research about and on the African American Research Library and Cultural Center (Tentative Diss Title: Making Black Public Humanities in South Florida: African Diaspora, Public Histories, and Archives) in whole or in part, and in written or electronic formats.

The participant shall retain nonexclusive rights to copy, use and publish only their interview in part or in full until their deaths, at which time their heirs, executors, and assigns will hold these rights.

A copy of the interview in digital and transcribed format will be delivered to the interviewee in digital or hard copy depending on the preference of the participant within a reasonable period of time after the interview has concluded.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

*Y*ou are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study,

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this project at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose identifiable information collected about you, in writing, at any time by sending your written request to*: William Garcia-Medina, 14 S.* 8th A*venue, Highland Park,* N*J 08904*. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above. Additionally, if your request for cancellation is received after the work has been published the researcher will exclude your information from future publication but cannot redact what has already been published.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email williamgarcia@ku.edu with concerns.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP).University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045- 7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

You have my permission to:

Use my real name
Use a pseudonym
Make streaming audio/ video clips available online via KU Scholar*Works*
Make available the transcribed interview online via KU Scholar*Works*
Place a time lock on the interview to be uploaded to KU ScholarWorks on (date)

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 + years old and that I have received a copy of this consent and Authorization form.

Type/Print Participant's Name
Date

Participant's Signature

Accepted and agreed:

By:

Signature:

Researcher Contact Information:

William García-Medina Principal Investigator Dept. of American Studies 213 Bailey Hall

University of Kansas Lawrence, KS 66045 Cell: (512) 888-3375

Dr. Randal Jelks Faculty Supervisor American Studies Dept. 213 Bailey Hall University of Kansas Lawrence, KS 66045 Office: (785) 864-9476