

freedom. I was reading literature that told the story of my ancestors, and I remember being proud to be Black. It was more than pride, I was glad. It was my Decolonializing Self-Awakening, a moment where you understand who you are in this universe and you know you belong.

Our Villages Today Are Different

I can almost benchmark when I noticed the changes happening in our Villages. By the mid-70's we were losing our political gain. The FBI was successful and destroying the momentum of the Black Panther's as they were either fighting for their freedom in the courts of law or electing to leave the movement or to another country for their Nationalist reasons (Grant, 1996). By the time the prolific Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton got out of jail we were in the 80's and in the beginning of the crack epidemic, in which he succumbed. The best visual that captured change in our communities was one scene in the Mario Van Peebles' movie "New Jack City." It was the scene where five young men were singing Doo Wop on their neighborhood block when it was flourishing and it slowly fades to 3 years later, with only three guys singing, slovenly clothed, trying to keep warm over a garbage can fire pit. My real life image was driving down approximately 60th and South King Drive and everyone came out on the streets, hanging out their windows and balconies, celebrating one of the Chicago Bulls Basketball Team Championships. We were all honking our horns, screaming and shouting, having a good time. It did not matter what neighborhood you were from in Chicago at that moment. Then ten years later that whole block of buildings was abandoned. Hip Hop and sagging pants were on its way and gangster rap and drive-by shootings became the norm, we were leaving our Dark Matter. The places, spaces, and mechanisms that allowed us to express and be ourselves as a people are

either reduced or no longer exist. Our "Soul" has been corrupted, copied, defused, marginalized, captured and stolen. Or basically, we were being Culturally Appropriated to the point where Prince and Michael Jackson had to take a stance. Our Dark Matter has been synthesized, criminalized, subjugated and uneducated. This is how oppression sustains itself. Dark Matter becomes a theoretical concept that benchmarks the peak of the existence of oppression where the oppressed becomes conveniently invisible to society, perceived as inferior and loses its protective factors, in this case the village, and the norms become distorted and destructive. We are all "Bigger" now. Thus opening the gateway to a Metaphysical Catastrophe.

Cost

Along with policies and practices that create an economic disadvantage for communities of color, violence has played a significant role in our country's legacy of oppression. Our system of government is built on a foundation of depriving people of color of their rights and controlling people of color through violence. The regime of slavery was upheld through violence at the hands of slave owners and the law, laying the groundwork for a long history of discrimination, violence, and oppression at the hands of our government and society at large (Buitrigo et al. 2017). What we fail to realize is that there is a cost to colonialism. According to the Chicago Department of Public Health (2018), the average life expectancy in Chicago between Low Hardship Communities and High Hardship Communities is 8 years and the gap significantly widened by 3.4 years beginning in 2012. Violence is one of the largest contributors to this gap. The Chicago region's homicide rate would drop by 30 percent—the equivalent of saving 229 lives in Chicago in 2016—if we reduced the level of segregation

between African Americans and Whites to the national median (Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2017). If 167 more people had lived that year, they would have had earnings of some \$170 million throughout their lifetimes (Shapiro, 2012). The Chicago region would have saved some \$65 million in policing costs and an estimated \$218 million in corrections costs. Residential real estate values would have increased by at least \$6 billion (Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2017).

Accelerating Forward: Another Wave in the Universe

The damage has been done, and there is no turning back. How do we free ourselves to capture our own self-determination?

First, we must understand the paradox of resilience. The APA (2014) defines resilience as "the process of adapting well in the face of diversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress. Although I find resilience to be an attribute of survival it also has a double edge to it. When you go through trauma, you usually go through a fight, flight, or freeze collectively but to be resilient; you tend to suppress the most harmful aspects of the situation individually. That is the double edge of resilience. You find a way to push past the traumatic situation but what we need is healing. But these experiences are often kept secret, as are our courageous battles to overcome them (Jay, 2017). Is this where we go wrong? We hold our secrets so close to our chest when we should be telling our children and share with our village about our struggles so they can learn from them. When we keep secrets and suppress our trauma we suffer alone. We "dis-ease", high-blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer. We must understand that trauma and healing are collective experiences, therefore we must heal collectively. In order to promote well-being, we must work collectively. Our Village needs

to control the conditions of our life circumstances which is a function of social justice. In order to do this, we must have a sense of hope, ability to pursue dreams, and facilitate our well-being (Ginwright 2010).

I could never get my grandmother to share the stories of our family history. Thank goodness my mother did. A friend told me that their big family secret is that they killed their plantation master and buried him. This was a secret the family shared but they controlled their condition to gain their collective freedom. This story was not told in fear or fright I heard a story that demonstrated how this family healed collectively. When we decolonize space, we heal through sharing our stories.

When I was young every summer, we would visit my grandparents on the farm in Alabama. We would always drive south. I remember that certain situations would trigger anxiety in me during the trip, such as, driving in stormy weather because I was afraid we would have an accident; get lost on the road, harassed by strangers and never see home again. However deep the stress, the collective healing came from being with my family no matter what the trigger.

I didn't know much about racism at the time, but I recall my father being treated poorly by a White Waitress and my mother had to step in and smooth the situation over. These were not traumatic events, just stressful. My parents, my protectors, were being threatened, but when I reflect on these situations today, could these stressful moments still have an impact on me? To this day I prefer to drive because it makes me feel like I have control over where I am going. Whether the weather is good or bad, if I am lost or not, if I am driving I am not upset. How about my father, being harassed by the White waitress? Were there incidents later in his life that triggered unconscious memories

of that waitress? Could this have been yet another “universe” wave of oppression? Did this situation represent the rat that tormented Malawi and Bigger? Was my father Malawi, representing the men of his generation? Could Bigger represent our young men today facing neighborhood violence and police brutality? Like Malawi, my father was psychologically stolen from the safety of his village while trying to provide a simple meal for his family? Could this have been a stressor that was the catalyst of his high blood pressure? As a family, we never talked about the situation. However, I know he was not a fan of going to any restaurant or gas station on the road when driving in the south. My grandmother would make our lunches for our trip home, and we stopped at many bushes when we needed to go to the restroom. At the time I was too young to understand the dynamics of the south. Of course, I learned more about racism as I got older but I can't help but wonder if I got sick on that trip because someone at that restaurant put something in my hamburger.

The Normalization and Ordinary Actions of Self-Defeating Behaviors: A Calling for Our Villages

As a Community Psychology practitioner working in many communities that are going through a Metaphysical Catastrophe, you will see villages with sounds of gunfire mixed with underfunded community efforts, giving children some poor semblance of a childhood. A space filled with a Dark Energy where corruption goes unnoticed between all of the abandoned houses and lifeless backyards. These war-torn playpens where this extraordinary behavior takes place and becomes normal and ordinary in colonial contexts and wherever there are colonial subjects (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). It is the result of these inequities in society driven by the impact of racism, poverty and oppression that sparked my servitude. One day I shared

this story in front of academics that were interested in my work in the community.

My question: How do you heal a community? How do you heal a community from seeing Arnold Mireles gun down because he stood up to the gangs? And what about the little girl in our community named Neenee that was ready to go back to school after Labor Day weekend but lost that chance to a bullet? I was talking to a teenager that lives in the community, and he had expressed that he had been shot in the leg three times. I asked him about his well-being and what was going on in school. He said, "School? I don't go to school much, and when I do, I am wondering why am I still alive, and will I get home safe." So, last summer I surveyed 126 people in the community to better understand the impact of violence. I learned that 51% had witnessed a shooting. All I could think about is, if you have to live with that kind of trauma then what must your life look like? Walking to the store for a bottle of milk looking over your shoulder to see if someone might harm you---can't go to the park- can't sit in a car. Then this past January this one girl in the community, Sakina, my only community girl that could handle the boys playing basketball, was ambushed by a spray of bullets. See, you don't understand, she was my hope for the future, she was the glimpse of what my mother must have been like on the basketball court in her youth. Sakina was JUST TAKEN.... Never to see another day. (Samuel, 2016)

I thought it was important to share my sacred story to Decolonialize my space. There are Villages that are still out there but they are in a metaphysical catastrophe in which they think life is normal and ordinary. Their sheer ability to adapt in this violent culture already makes them resilient because they are surviving the best way they can. Malawi was

resilient, Bigger was resilient. But what we need is healing, a Collective Healing that will spare the lives of all of the Neenee's and Sakina's out there. We need an awakening that will spark the engagement of our Village to heal collectively by preparing our youth to walk in our shoes, be educated, vote, tell our stories often, lead with self-determination, be radical, stand for something, stand for the future of our children because they are our legacies and gateway to eternal life in our Universe of Dark Matter.

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