

Healing Bodies: Micro-sites of Sovereignty as Places for Refuge, Regeneration, and World-Building

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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Marine Affairs

University of Washington

2024

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree: School of Marine and Environmental Affairs

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Abstract

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This community engaged thesis project centers the strength-based perspectives of Black and Native American communities engaging in regenerative land care practices within the Coast Salish Territories known today as Seattle, Washington. Representing the significant themes of Black Liberation, Indigenous Sovereignty, social and environmental justice; the communities that I engage with explore the vital need for healing, dreaming, and knowledge sharing that is derived from being in spaces activated by political resistance. These spaces demonstrate the power of Black and Native communities cultivating alternative ways of being and knowing as they work towards attaining our hopes and dreams of a decolonial and just future. Those futures reflect our shared yet distinct community desires, the re-contextualization of our histories and place-based approaches for our collective care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the communities of Black, Native and other Indigenous peoples who I have formed and sustained relationships with, learn from, and alongside. The exchange of knowledge that has been shared with me held and nourished me throughout the process of creating this thesis and inspires me to continue doing this work. I share this thesis in hopes that generations to come will continue working towards our collective liberation for the land and our communities. Thank you to my parents, Syria Powell, Evan Liu, Bryce Lewis-Smith, Reuben Martinez, Michael Buck, and Dr. Django Paris for your continued support. On a special note I would also like to thank Dr. P.J. Griffin, Dr. Sameer Shah, Isabel Lavellee, and Miriam Zmiewski-Angelova for the time, energy, and care you showed in sharing your thoughtful edits.

Introduction

On October 4th, 2023, Black Star Farmers (BSF) was notified of Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR) plans to remove the land project that was just shy of 4 years old, known as the Black Lives Memorial Garden (BLMG), which emerged through the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP) also known as CHAZ (Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone). "The Black Lives Memorial Garden stands tall as a symbolic representation of resistance, grief, and healing." (Black Star Farmers, 2023). BSF, a coalition of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color stewarding the garden, were informed that SPR would be removing the garden the week of October 10th, a date which left little time and space for people to mobilize around the garden and bring awareness of its removal to the public. Parks and Recreation did not show up until the early morning of October 24th. SPR and the Seattle Police Department (SPD) were met by a peaceful sit-in demonstrating an immediate community response to the removal of the garden. With the garden at the threat of destruction, the communities of Black, Brown, White allies, working class and unhoused people organized and gathered within the garden in hopes of deterring yet another displacement from the SPD and SPR. This act of resistance and refusal served to protect this living monument that emerged from the Black-led uprisings during the summer of 2020.

The actions of October 24th were reminiscent of those that took place during the George Floyd protest and many other land protests that precede, and proceed, the Black Lives Memorial Garden, and continue to persist beyond this space. CHOP took place in the summer of 2020 at the height of COVID-19 amidst nationwide uprisings surrounding the murder of George Floyd, magnifying the history of police violence within Black, Native American, and Brown communities. The territory of CHOP became the focal point of Black Lives Matter protests in Seattle, as activists called to "defund the police by 50 percent, invest in Black communities and

free all prisoners” (Wilbur and Small-Rodriguez, 2022). A message shared throughout the protest confronting the systemic issues of police violence and prison industrial complex.

On June 7th, 2020, the Seattle Police Department abandoned the Capitol Hill precinct and June 8th, 2020, protesters began to occupy the Capital Hill area, which became known as CHAZ, and later CHOP. Adjacent to CHOP/CHAZ lies a Park known as Cal Anderson, where community activists began planting edible foods near the park's southeastern edge. From June 9th-11th, 2020, additional garden beds were built. More housed and unhoused people gathered to camp around the garden. From June 11th-30th 2020, the community continued bringing resources and developing systems to maintain and improve the space (greenhouses, irrigation, composting systems). The garden was an attempt to meet needs arising from the community occupying the land to access food. On July 1st, 2020, CHOP was swept by police and city representatives under the orders of Mayor Jenny Durkan. In a Cascade PBS article, Venice Buhain points out that “CHOP was largely cleared from the streets and sidewalks after about a month of occupation, though marches and rallies continued in the neighborhood, the garden remained” for three and a half years (Buhain, 2023). Despite the clearing of CHOP, the BLMG continued to evolve to meet the needs of BIPOC and allies looking to reconnect with the land in the middle of the city. During the rise of COVID-19, unemployment rates soared an all time low, leaving many people unable to meet their basic needs of access to proper wellness care, nutritional foods, and secure housing. From July 1st, 2020 - August 2022, the garden space began to freely distribute produce to the community members of people living on site or those involved in the garden space. In addition, earthworkers¹ began to harvest herbs and make

¹ An earthworker understood within BSF describes someone who tending to the with the intention of growing towards building a reciprocal relationship

medicine for the community. The community within CHOP continued to peacefully occupy this area until its removal; holding space to memorialize Black, Native American and Brown lives lost to police violence through hosting candlelit vigils to honor their lives and other events that centered on political education and community healing. Between August 2022-December 2023, BLMG began transitioning to a perennial space where mutual aid gatherings, community led activists continued to use the garden as a place of refuge and collaboration. The community built within CHOP continued to create alliances with unhoused park residents and the earthworkers from Black Star Farmers to share plant medicine and regenerative land care practices.

Throughout the history of social movements, acts of resistance through land occupation often come with grave consequences and opposition from the state. Due to CHOP's origin, various tactics have been used to dismantle the garden over the years. Despite SPR's failed attempt to remove the garden in October 2023, the BLMG endured another two months. However, it was not until the early morning of December 27th, SPR arrived unannounced with the SPD and dismantled the garden. The timing of these actions were seen as strategic, knowing that many people would still be with their families during the holiday season and unable to organize to protest SPR's actions backed by the SPD. In a public statement, SPR said that the BLMG was removed so that it may be replaced with turf, also stating that the garden was inhibiting access for public use, and the the removal of the garden would reduce issues of public health and safety that SPR claimed that the garden created² (Schulkin, 2023). The removal of the garden displaced plants that had been cultivated through this regenerative land project held by

² “...the temporary garden has created unsafe conditions for all park users, including the vandalism of Cal Anderson public bathrooms, public drug use, unauthorized camping, and a significant rodent problem, along with other issues.” (Schulkin, 2023).

various community organizations, and unhoused community members who have hosted multiple mutual aid fairs and co-resisted in defense of the land and the legacy that this space holds.

In a letter to the community, Black Star Farmers wrote a response to the garden's threat of destruction in their public call, an article titled "Join us in keeping the Black Lives Memorial Garden Alive" (2023), they describe the BLMG as a space to honor the lives of Black and Indigenous people who have lost their lives due to police violence within "Washington state and beyond" (Black Star Farmers, 2023). Manifested through occupied protest and empowered by civil unrest, the garden was "a source of joy and healing for many members of the Capitol Hill community for the past three and a half years." (Black Star Farmers, 2023). The letter continued to describe how the garden "symbolizes a deep connection to this city's legacy of occupation protests led by the poor and working class, queer community and people of color... The garden is home to many native plants that are vital for the regeneration of the Capitol Hill urban ecosystem." (Black Star Farmers, 2023).

BSF argues that SPR should "recognize this historical context and should thus support opportunities for marginalized peoples to reconnect with the land, even if it does not fit within their current paradigm...." of cities public land use (Black Star Farmers, 2023). Within the BLMG, organizers cultivated an alternative space that existed outside the confines of day-to-day life within racial capitalism. These actions allowed the communities connected to BLMG to co-create an otherwise way of being in relationship with the land and people, stewarding community efforts towards reconnection, exemplified by the garden, where their roots still remain within the community. The story of the Black Lives Memorial Garden teaches us that other worlds are possible within occupied spaces. Yet, this story also illuminates the ongoing policies rooted in

settler colonialism and racial capitalism that seek to disrupt Black Liberation, Indigenous sovereignty, and reciprocal healing between land and our communities.

In this thesis I will address several questions about the role of environmental justice in movements for Black Liberation and Indigenous Sovereignty. Specifically, I will ask how systems of racial capitalism and settler colonialism have and continue to impact Black and Native American communities' social and ecological relationships, and how place-making and land healing contribute to regeneration for Black and Native American people. As Black and Native American communities gather in occupied protests, we have seen the importance of creating radical ways of developing holistic relationships within our diverse communities. Land plays a major role in marginalized communities' ability to access power and feel empowered. Land is what has brought Black and Native communities together, and through various colonial tactics, it has been used as a tool to separate us from one another, both people and our more than human relations³. When these regenerative spaces emerge, it gives Black and Native communities an opportunity to co-create sites of healing through cultivating a connection with the land that often exists outside of the colonial context of ownership, care and freedom. Scholars describe the intersections of healing and environmental justice, writing that healing within environmental injustice is a “multidimensional, structural and embodied process that opens up the discussion about the scale of climate and environmental justice” (González-Hidalgo et al., 2022: 8). This thesis draws on an understanding of environmental justice that includes healing for both the people, land and its ecosystems to begin repairing the harm and damage that has been done through decades in the creation of the colonial enterprise.

³ Shifting away from the human centric view of land relations, I refer to the Indigenous context of more than human to include plants, animals, waters, ecosystems, landscapes, and/or spiritual beings that live within multiple planes of existence (Johnson-Jennings et al. 2020).

African and Native American communities have faced a violent history of genocide, enslavement, imprisonment, and land theft, along with disruption of ideologies, knowledge systems, worldviews, psyche, spiritual well-being, and essence of the Indigenous people (Papa Rawiri Wright, 2024)⁴. Nevertheless, there is a groundswell of Black and Indigenous resistance around the world. From Black Lives Matter to Land Back and Free Palestine, our interconnected struggles face similar barriers to liberation, sovereignty and solidarity. This thesis is centered on sharing some of the stories taking place within Seattle, Washington, the original homelands of the Suquamish, Duwamish, Muckleshoot, and other Coast Salish peoples.

I am a transplant who grew up on the unceded territories of the Nisenan people (Nevada City Rancheria), in an area that is known today as Sacramento, California. This area is located within the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's and is made up of three major rivers: the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and the American. I identify as an African American woman who is the descendant of African peoples held in bondage to colonizers and settlers. I honor my ancestral ties to the communities of Black and Native peoples born on the lands of the Cherokee and Muscogee-Creek Nations, along with my other heritage of Caribbean and White ancestry. Both sides of my family made their way from Africa, through the Middle Passage to the South, Oklahoma and Texas and then finally to California. My desire to learn more about my own ancestry motivated me to learn more about my own ancestry, family history and culture which led me to the creation of this project. I followed my desire to show up in solidarity for the movements of the Black and Native communities who are doing the work to liberate the land and themselves by engaging in

⁴ Papa Rawiri Wright, Co-chair of Te Rūnanga Nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa (National Council for Te Aho Matua immersion school). I heard the term “colonialization” from a presentation that he gave while I was visiting during the Winter of 2024. He expands on how colonization is an aspect of how colonists stole Māori lands and further includes the concept of colonialization to describe the disruption of the Māori way of life.

regenerative land care, and throughout this journey I've seen parts of myself reflected in the stories and revelations that are shared in this project.

In the thesis, I will draw on ideas from the theories I have seen, heard, and felt throughout various African American/Black, Native American, and other Indigenous communities that I have established relationships with and will describe some themes around how they understand and pursue regenerative futures. I hope this project will empower communities to continue doing the work that is vital for our well-being. And that they are able to share their stories around the world of challenges with equality, regeneration, cultivating alternative worlds that form the basis of transformation leading us closer towards attaining our desires for social and environmental justice.

Background

Below I outlined the long histories of uprootedness, dispossession, resistance and refusal, so as to contextualize the experience of Black and Indigenous communities in Seattle today. Weaving together the stories of Native and Black people enacting their rights to define their own sovereignty and liberation, I detail the political ecologies⁵ of their respective histories and communities to frame their inherent desires for social change.

Coast Salish Territories and the creation of Seattle

The greater Seattle area is a part of the Coast Salish territories and homelands of the Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Duwamish nations. Seattle was named after Chief Si'ahl (1780-1866), the leader of the Suquamish, Duwamish, and other Indigenous nations located in the central Puget Sound. Traditionally known as ǰwəlč in Lushootseed (traditional language for tribes in this

⁵ Political ecology is the study of the relationships between political, economic and social factors with environmental issues and changes. (Robbins, 2021).

region) the word is translated to mean Puget Sound described as “saltwater is heard as the waves wash onto the shores or the sound of saltwater waves washing onto the beach” (Puyallup Tribe, n.d.). British colonialists were the first to “discover” the region in 1792 (Haulman, 2016: 17). Though white settlement in present-day Seattle truly began in 1851 upon the arrival of a small group of people from Illinois (Thrush, 2006: 98). Shortly after, near the end of December 1854 to the end of January 1855, the Treaty of Medicine Creek & the Treaty of Point Elliott were signed to ensure Indigenous nations’ rights to land via small reservations. These documents also maintained the protection of their rights to continue access to their usual and accustomed territories for the practices of sustenance such as fishing, hunting, and gathering (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, n.d.).

In 1856, discussions between the Muckleshoot and other neighboring tribes met with Governor Isaac Ingalls Stevens centered around their dissatisfaction with the current reservation established under the treaties (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, n.d.). After much advocacy in 1857, the President of the United States Franklin Pierce agreed to establish the Muckleshoot reservation through executive order⁶. The bounds of the reservation land were to include “a wedge of land beginning at the junction of the White and Green Rivers” (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, n.d.). This promise ultimately fell through and was not included in President Pierce's executive order, members of the Muckleshoot Nation between 1859 and 1868, tribal lobbied to obtain the lands promised to them so that they may be able to expand their reservation territory to include the area of land between the White and Green River. The unfulfilled promise was almost met through another Executive Order of 18567 that was to be signed by President

⁶ On January 20, 1857, President Franklin Pierce set an Executive Order to have land "set apart as the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation, for the exclusive use of the Indians."

Andrew Johnson in 1868 to expand the bounds of the reservation, but was ultimately looked over and never signed (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, n.d.). The federal government took no actions to approve or disapprove of these terms to expand the territory. Further encroachment from settlers began to displace more and more native communities, forcing them to leave their usual and accustomed villages and move onto the reservation. Even so they still maintained the understanding that the treaties would protect their rights for fishing, hunting, and gathering outside of the reservation lands (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, n.d.).

However, some tribal members refused to leave the villages that encapsulated their homelands, Native American people continued their traditional lifeways “along the waterways and shorelines of Seattle’s urbanizing and industrializing landscape” (Thrush, 2006: 89). Between the 1860s and 1880s, settlers found that the land could not easily be converted into farmland without transforming the entire watershed (Klinge, 2005). The pioneers engaged in the massive transformations of the “landscape, including the creation of a ship canal linking Puget Sound with Lake Washington and the straightening of the Duwamish River.” (Thrush, 2006: 89). These transformations changed the topography of the four rivers that once ran through Seattle now merged to become known as the Duwamish River; cut through Salish Sea, the artificial straightening of the Duwamish River and the reshaping of Lake Washington changed the output of the lake from South to West (Thrush, 2006). The lake was lowered by about twenty feet, exposing creeks, wetland areas and beaches to be “paved, culverted, drained, and bulkheaded” (Thrush, 2006: 91).

These efforts sought to modernize the region and improve living conditions for settlers although these modifications continued to cause more social conflict between White settlers, the Muckleshoot, Duwamish and other local Native peoples who struggled to continue their

traditional way of life amidst urbanization. Though living on nearby reservations, they still maintained connections to places within the city that were essential to sustain their community's well-being and often returned to places of their ancestors (Thrush, 2006). Urban sprawl drastically changed this abundant landscape as urbanization of Seattle's watershed had many impacts on the Native communities in which the harms of settlement disrupted the Indigenous people's usual and accustomed socio-cultural ecologies. The straightening of rivers, lowering of lakes, filling of tidelands, and building of canals became nearly inhabitable for the survival of Salmon and other culturally relevant species and culturally significant places to coexist with the spread of urbanization, that pushed Native communities further and further out on to the outskirts of the emerging city (Thrush, 2006). Settlement mutilated the land, changing these landscapes to fit colonial visions of land ownership and control over resources. But this has not deterred Native communities from reclaiming their rights to access their traditional and accustomed territories beyond the reservation.

American Indian Movement and Red Power

Settler dispossession of Native lands has attempted to uproot and erase Indigenous way of life and being in relationship with the places they are the rightful stewards of (Mays 2021). However, because of the treaties of Medicine Creek and Point Elliott, the tribes throughout contemporary Washington State still retain their rights to fish, hunt, and gather traditional foods and medicines in their usual and accustomed lands (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, n.d.). During the 1960s, Native communities took action against the state government of Washington and Oregon who were attempting to prohibit their communities from accessing their traditional fishing grounds, a political conflict later termed the "Fish Wars" (Wilkson, 2024: 1-8). Through protest and other acts of refusal Native communities stood up for their rights secured by treaties. Their

actions empowered Native communities across Turtle Island to rise up and protest against the government for breaking their treaty rights to fish in their usual and accustomed territories. Seeing the Civil Rights Movement and Black Panther Party (BPP) mobilize for Black liberation and equality, Native Americans mirrored the movement through their own lens of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, which sparked the pan- Indigenous movement known as American Indian Movement (AIM) also referred to as the Red Power Movement. The Black and Red Power Movement simultaneously worked to gain self-determination and liberation for their perspective communities. Recognizing their shared and distinct struggle the groups came together to organize, learn from one another, and stand together in solidarity with one another (Mays, 2021).

AIM worked to address systems of oppression and harm that many Native communities were facing under the confines of settler state such as police brutality, education, racial inequality, housing, well-being, food security, and other barriers that were inhibiting Native Americans from enacting their self-determination and collective continuance (Bellecourt, 2019). AIM aimed to transform their current circumstances and live into their dreams of a better world for their communities. These kinds of resistance also took place through occupied protests such as the Occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969, the Fort Lawton Takeover in 1970 and Wounded Knee Occupation in 1973 (Smith and Warrior, 1996.) One of the local initiatives that took place during AIM was the Fort Lawton Takeover of 1970. Tucked away in the Magnolia neighborhood of Seattle, right off the cliffs that caress the Puget Sound and nestled within the largest forests of Seattle, lies Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center.

Once White settlers began expanding into the area known today as Discovery Park, they forcibly removed the Indigenous people from their ancestral homelands. This area became

known as Fort Lawton and served as a military-occupied zone for 80 years (Whitebear, 1994). After generations land dispossession and brutal acts of harm towards the Indigenous communities, divisive tools such as the Indian Relocation Act of 1965⁷ caused Native communities within urban⁸ areas seeking to find spaces for their communities to get the support and resources necessary to do more than survive the hardships they continued to endure. The American Indian movement empowered Natives to reclaim Fort Lawton for access to places for urban Natives to enact their self-determination. The Takeover of Fort Lawton occurred in the Spring of 1970, co-organized by Bernie Whitebear (Colville) Bob, Bob Satiacum (Puyallup), along with other allies and comrades, they cited their rights under 1865 US-Indian treaties, that called for return of surplus military land to their original landowners (Hughes, 2023). Thus emerged the United Indians of All Tribes Federation (UIATF) that banded together to represent the Indigenous peoples living within Seattle. In reclaiming the land Satiacum said “We the Native Americans reclaim the land known as Fort Lawton in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery. We feel that this land of Fort Lawton is more suitable to pursue an Indian way of life, as determined by our own standards. By this we mean, this place does not resemble most Indian reservations” (Hughes, 2023).

These words followed the occupation of Fort Lawton, which had led to The UIATF acquiring 20 acres of land with a renewable 99-year lease and ignited the land back movement

⁷ The Indian Relocation Act under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was a part of the Termination Era of 1953 to 1969. This marked a series of policies for the termination and relocation of Native peoples. During this time treaties were ended, tribes were disbanded, and their unceded lands were sold by the U.S. government. Congress terminated 109 tribes across the United States. This era marked the end of protections of trust status for all Native-owned lands as the U.S. government sold the land to individuals. (Howard University School of Law, 2023)

⁸ 1953 Urban Indian Relocation Program: “Voluntary” relocation program run by the BIA that promised Natives secure housing and good jobs if they moved to the cities. This became a method of forced assimilation and a series of failed promises from the BIA.

within Coast Salish territories. The hopes and dreams of this space emerged through Indigenous resistance, self-determination, and continued stewardship. Today, Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center “provide[s] educational, cultural and social services that reconnect[s] Indigenous people in the Puget Sound region to their heritage by strengthening their sense of belonging and significance as Native people” (Daybreak Star, 2018). The UIATF occupation and other accomplishments that took place during AIM invoked a desire to revitalize Indigenous culture through reconnection with the land that informs Native identities, languages, knowledge systems, and relationships (Johnson-Jennings, et al. 2020).

Slavery, Transatlantic Slave Trade, and Resistance

Black relationships to Turtle Island hold many complexities. The process of European colonization across much of the African continent led to the enslavement and removal of Black people from their Indigenous homelands to then be placed on the Indigenous lands of North America that were wrongfully occupied by White settlers (Mays, 2021). Jessica Hernandez’s, *Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science* (2022), describes the relationship of African Americans to the America’s stating that:

For non-Indigenous peoples, becoming a welcomed guest is a life-long journey because they inherit the role of settlers. Settlers are those who are not Indigenous to the continents of the Americas, and to me, settlers do not include Black folks, who were forcefully taken from their ancestral homelands during slavery. This is the embodiment of how the United States was built. It was built on stolen lands and built on stolen Indigenous peoples from the continent of Africa...Black people are Indigenous; their Indigeneity was fractured over generations of slavery, segregation, and discrimination they have endured when they were displaced from their ancestral homelands. Like Indigenous peoples, Black people have also been caretaking and stewarding our lands since slavery. This was an inherited knowledge system; they were not taught how to caretake or steward the land, as they already knew how to do this, and this is what colonizers and settlers took advantage of. (Hernandez, 2022: 3).

The transatlantic slave trade resulted in the abduction of Indigenous African peoples, lands, and materials. Native Americans faced similar realities of enslavement and land theft to that of the

arrivants from Africa who experienced colonization in their homelands. Indigenous Americans were the first to be enslaved by colonizers upon arrival or “discovery” (Reséndez, 2016). This widely unacknowledged history of the Americas excludes underlying scars on the land of devastation and harm to Native American or First Nation communities in which colonizers enslaved Native people who belonged to the land and forced them to use their bodies against their kin for the economic gain of the settler colonial regime. War, the spread of disease, illness, and enslavement of Native American/Indigenous people continued throughout the waves of colonization in the Americas; these actions severely impacted the Native American populations and informed the persistence of slavery in the Americas (Reséndez, 2016).

As Europeans gained more control over Indigenous lands, the demand for labor in the European colonies, brought with it indentured servants, and the enslavement of Indigenous Native Americans and later Africans, that became essential for the production of cash crops (Galenson, 1984). Native enslavement persisted throughout the Americas, though it was eclipsed by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which became another vital source that generated the western economy (Howdice Brown III et al. 2021). Throughout the centuries of enslavement of Native Americans and African peoples across the Americas would rise up in resistance to slavery. Their uprisings called for the recognition of our humanity as Black and Native people walking in solidarity and also separately as a means to address sovereignty, freedom and equality (Mays, 2021).

One example of Black and Native American coalition building is the Seminole community and the Black Maroons of Florida. The group of once enslaved Africans, forged their freedom through escaping the plantation and building coalitions with the local Native community of Muskogee-creek descendant peoples who formed a new group called the Seminole

(Alexander, 2022). Recognizing their shared struggles the group of Black and Natives fled to evade the decimation of their cultures that White settlers had brought upon them. Together they found refuge in the Florida forests (Alexander, 2022). Although Spain claimed all of Florida, the Seminoles and their Black maroon allies survived in the vast tropical wilderness of jungles and swamps that shaped the landscapes. Together they defended themselves against the settler regime and preserved their freedom in the forest. The Florida Native American communities protected Black Seminoles from re-enslavement and in return the Black community fought alongside them to defend the land as they migrated alongside their Native American comrades and crossed the traditional territories of the Muscogee-Creek peoples (Alexander, 2022). They continued to maintain and sustain their relationships of co-resistance that demonstrated their sovereignty, humanity, and freedom. Black freedom generated outrage, leading to the Civil War that divided the North and South on the moral issue of slavery. This ultimately led to massive migration post-slavery as our ancestors also dreamed of a better life on Turtle Island for themselves and their families in places that had not yet been tainted by enslavement (Shally-Jensen, 2022).

Black Migration to the North

In order for African Americans to obtain their liberation prior to the Civil War they had to leave the South (Miles, 2019). We recognize these stories from the well-known Harriet Tubman and the underground railroad that she used to help enslaved people as they risked their lives making their way North towards freedom. During the Civil War the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st of 1863 signed by President Abraham Lincoln called for the release of African descendant people from bondage (or slavery), though it was not fully enforced until June 19th, 1865; this date marks the date of liberation that we know celebrate as Juneteenth.

After the Civil War, came Reconstruction and the Jim Crow laws that upheld the mistreatment of African American people through segregation. In efforts to find a more liberated space for African Americans to raise their families lead to the First Great Migration. This was a time period when millions of African Americans migrated from the rural south to the region's urban areas in the north that took place over a span of more than 50 years, from 1916 to 1970 (Shally-Jensen, 2022). In the aftermath of Black political struggle many people of African American heritage began to leave the South and headed North in an effort to seek a place for their liberation, building communities in the cities of Chicago, New York, Detroit, and across the way to Oakland and Seattle (Shally-Jensen, 2022). Seeking liberation in the North did not allow them to escape the hatred that slavery produced. Black life in Washington state continued with the struggles for African Americans to attain their dreams of liberation, though they encountered many of the same hostilities that they had faced in the south. Such visions of true liberation continue to be something “that exceeds any American concept of freedom” (Yang, 2024). As liberation cannot only be limited to a place, it is also a way of existing in the space that allows for communities to feel unshackled by colonial oppression, implementing actions so that we may work towards attaining our desired futures.

During the Black migration, Seattle became a destination for African Americans to set roots with the hopes of obtaining access to economic wealth and social equality. Black life in Seattle brought with it new challenges as Black folks found themselves in familiar circumstances to that of what they experienced elsewhere in the South. Segregation played a major role in African Americans not being able to access better jobs, accumulate generational wealth, and were confined to purchasing houses only within redlined neighborhoods of the city. One of the most popular areas for Black belonging within the city is the Central District (aka the C.D.). The

C.D. back in the 1960's and 1970's was one of the most diverse communities in Seattle, with a largely Black population. Centered in the C.D., the Seattle Black Panther Party (BPP) was the second chapter established in the United States, after Oakland (Hinchliffe, 2021). The Panthers mobilized in response to police brutality and in critique of the state power and sought self-determination for Black communities. Realizing that going up against the state may not lead to the kind of changes that the Panthers desired they continued their work and focused on uplifting disenfranchised people; implementing the initial frameworks for the first social programs such as the free food program, free adult education, and universal health care. Through oppression sustained its hold; the Black community persisted in cultivating many different communities throughout Washington state in the pockets that have persisted beyond the redlining and the tech boom within Seattle and Tacoma. We can still see these efforts to revitalize the once strong Black community located in the Central District of Seattle as gentrification has forced many of the Black residents further and further into the outskirts of the city, yet this area still holds its power and legacy as a historically Black neighborhood.

Literature Review

The inspiration for this project emerged from ontological⁹ and epistemological¹⁰ frameworks, cradled within the Black, Native American, and Indigenous communities that I am responsible to and in relationship with. In this section, I review the scholarship of Black and Indigenous ecologies, so as to better contextualize my engagement and learning from within several micro-sites that embody the principles of Black Liberation, Indigenous Sovereignty, land occupation, place-making, regeneration, reciprocal healing, and world-building.

⁹ Ontology is the nature of reality and its relations

¹⁰ Epistemology is nature of thinking, how we know what we know

Black/African American people sought liberation and freedom from the confines of settler-colonialism – often on their own and sometimes in solidarity with Native American and other marginalized communities as they worked towards a more liberated future looking at their shared yet distinct struggles for political power, justice and equality. Working to illuminate other aspects of environmental justice to be inclusive of cultivating more accessible spaces for Black and Native people to be able to engage in land care practices further informing our understanding of the prospective communities “deep connection to land...re-centering storylines on cultural connections to ecologies” and the historical context of land acquisition (Harris, 2022: 841). Black and Native community-led efforts of regenerative land care “challenges the dominant frames” of our communities’ ability to “develop collective capabilities and resources to respond to the conditions” that inhibit us from fulfilling our goals of liberation and sovereignty (Harris, 2022: 841). The description of ecological justice that “includes cosmological, customary and kinship relationships with the land, in contrast to legal and political treatment of the land and resources or property”, best depicts the histories of the Black and Native communities that have utilized occupied protests as a means to reclaim their relationship to place and challenge the Western view of land as a commodity (Harris, 2022: 85). Here in there lies the invitation to recognize Black and Native communities’ deep connections to the land in occupied spaces and their reliance on creating place-based understandings for regenerative land care that is empowered and led by community action and desires to live towards an otherwise or alternative future (Tuck and Yang, 2018; Harris, 2022). This calls for the re-imagining of new relationships between humans and more than human connections that responds to the histories of land dispossession and stolen labor that creates the conditions for occupied protest that emerges from our yearning for spaces that facilitate reconnection and healing.

Black Ecologies and Marronage

Celeste Winston, an African American geographer, conveys the “framework of Maroon geographies” and describes how these physical spaces served as a vital source for enslaved Africans, Indigenous and poor White people to find refuge from the harms of racial capitalism and classism (Winston, 2021). There are historical accounts of these interactions are detailed in a report by a British colonialist and naturalist in Hans Sloane's book *Voyage to Jamaica* (1705 actual voyage 1687), in which he depicts enslaved Taínos (Native Caribbean peoples) and African peoples exchanging traditional ecological knowledge about medicinal plants. Many of the enslaved people had aspirations of leaving the plantation, returning to their way of life and sought radical actions towards acquiring their liberation in order to do so. The Jamaican Maroons were enslaved Africans who escaped and made their way into the mountain, joining the Taíno community; who to escape enslavement and colonization. As Africans crossed the Middle Passage, they took remnants of their homelands with them, unsure of if and when they would return they braided the seeds in their hair (Carlisle & Salvador, 2022: 82). Bringing their traditional plants allowed them to forge new relations with the lands and the people of the New World. They planted gardens cultivating agro-forest, and forest gardens provided “refuge for the non-human displaced by the plantation system...” food security and medicine to enslaved peoples (Carlisle, L., & Salvador, R., 2022 pg. 82). These spaces were vital for helping the land “stewards transform their dispossession in resistance.

Forest foods and medicines figured prominently in the lives of “maroons”--escaped slaves who founded independent communities often in the woods-- and provided critical nourishment to fugitive slaves on their way to freedom. ” (Carlisle, L., & Salvador, R., 2022: 82). The act of maroonage cultivated a world outside of colonization, colonization, and racial

capitalism. This coalition between Black and First Nation communities re-established relationships between Indigenous communities who were experiencing the harms of enslavement and joined together to resist their oppression as they worked towards liberation and sovereignty creating new worlds or parallel universes to what existed outside of these spaces. Maroon geographies embody the understanding that “freedom is a place” and the ways in which Black and Indigenous peoples have transformed lands “deemed undesirable and inaccessible” toward pathways for liberation (Winston, 2021). Through the act of placemaking and world-building marginalized communities continue to cultivate spaces for refuge. Redefining our identities and relationships to place has revolutionary potential to also cultivate new social and political paradigms.

Indigenous Ecologies

Several concepts from Indigenous studies are crucial to understand, contemporary land care practices, specifically the paradigm of reciprocity, the concept of collective continuance, and importance of land-based education. The term reciprocity would most accurately describe Indigenous frameworks for connections between the land, more than human kin and people. Reciprocity is the act of giving a gift in return; it is the giving and taking in relationship with the land. The act of reciprocity requires the recognition of our responsibilities to the land and all beings that we are intricately tied to (Kimmer, 2013). A reciprocal relationship is to work towards cultivating and maintaining respectful relationships with the land and with one another through a decolonial lens rooted in the fundamental understanding that whatever you do to the land; the land does to you and you do to your community. Reciprocity also includes the “revitalization of Indigenous educational practices” that are directly linked to language derived

from land based practices and relationships (Bang, 2020). This work aims to prioritize a regenerative practice design working to prepare “young people to tend to the land, community, and one another” with the “ recognition of the value of Indigenous leadership and governance as relevant not only to Indigenous nations but to all people and, in fact, vital to the survival of the planet itself” (Bang, 2020).

Potawatomi author and scholar Kyle Whyte, explores the intersections of between “collective continuance” and self-determination (Whyte, 2017: 3). The word continuance is related to “Indigenous survival,” and self-determination refers to the Indigenous community's ability and drive to engage in their own governance and traditional practices (Caldwell et al., 2018:153). Self-determination includes leadership over cultural identity, economies, health, and politics (Caldwell et al. 2018). This paves the way for Indigenous communities “to sustain, revitalize, and continue their social, cultural, and ecological integrity under conditions of settler colonial oppression” (Caldwell et al. 2018:154). This encompasses the terms collective self-determination and Indigenous planning, which is defined as:

...practical activities whereby a collective, such as a society or community or nation, envisions different futures that are more or less desirable for itself and its members, determines what capacities and strategies must be developed today to be prepared for different future scenarios, and revisits and revises its current capacities for preparedness to adjust to current and expected challenges (Caldwell et al. 2018: 155).

This collective includes Indigenous community members, plants, animals, and ecosystems their communities are responsible to/for and are in relationship with (Caldwell et al. 2018). Collective continuance in this context centers on Indigenous planning, which conveys the ensured futurity of the community's capacity to continue engaging in their social (through forms of storytelling/passing down knowledge), traditional, cultural, ceremonial, and ecological practices that influence the guiding principles for forward planning (Whyte, 2017). The idea of collective

continuance is focused on futurity because it centers the embodied hopes that members of a society have for the next generations (Whyte, 2017).

The above frameworks also encourage forms of regenerative placemaking which are informed by our community values, place-based understandings, and other tools passed down in community over generations. This collective process of planning is disrupted by colonial desires that dismisses or devalues alternative forms of knowledge that are gathered through the community and passed down throughout generations. Ensuring the futurity and/or collective continuance of our cultures, relationships, and well-being in ancestral work. As we learn more about cultures, relationships and their ancestral history, we recognize that our healing is tied to the healing of the land and intricately woven into the histories of colonization (Whyte, 2017). As Black and Native people we continue to walk on the path of our ancestors towards liberation we find that this work is how we will be able to live into our desired futures of liberation and sovereignty.

Black Liberation and Indigenous Sovereignty

In some ways, the Great Migration upheld the displacement of Indigenous people from their homelands. Black survival “utterly depended on either forming alliances of kinship with Native people or putting down stakes on taken lands controlled by the U.S. nation-state or its White citizens: the squatters, soldiers, and land speculators who formed the advance guard of settler colonial intrusion and entrenchment” (Miles, 2019: 419). Black occupancy on Native lands is a complex and nuanced subject that requires deeper thinking in terms of our histories with land and place as it relates to settler colonialism.

Tiya Miles, an African American historian whose work is on the intersections of African and Native American studies, grapples with the complexities of Black migration on Indigenous lands through a critical lens. In her work “Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide”, Miles redefines Black identity as it extends beyond the confines of settler-colonialism and enslavement. The focus on how do we talk about:

“African American residence on Native lands without flattening their realities, protecting them from critiques of power, or reproducing boldface lines between “settler” and “native”? Amadahy and Lawrence prefer the phrase “ambiguous settlers” for Afro-Canadians. Jodi A. Byrd, a theorist of colonialism and indigeneity, offers the term “arrivants,” which she borrows from Caribbean writer Kamau Brathwaite, “to signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe.” Figuring African American arrivants as a third category separate from native and settler recognizes the difference enslavement makes and expands our ability to perceive a spectrum of relations” (Miles, 2019:423).

Within the spectrum of relationships between land, Native communities, African American, Whites, and Immigrants, the need to find a space to call home become a pertinent desire. African Americans and Native American communities continuously experienced a pattern of uprooting or a required starting anew on the grounds that through displacement cultivated by diaspora or the forcible removal of Indigenous communities to be (re)moved onto Indian reservations, reducing their territories through treaties, breaking treaty agreements, or lack thereof attempting to erase Indigenous tribes omitting them of their rights to land, territory, and sovereignty (Miles, 2019; see also Mays, 2021). The movements towards looking for liberation made certain types of migration an ambivalent form of settlement enforced by colonial power structures (Miles, 2019).

In the book *An Afro-Indigenous History of the United States* by Kyle T. Mays (Saginaw Chippewa and Black), conveys the intersections of Black Liberation and Indigenous Sovereignty and self-determination, intricately tying our freedom to one another through our shared yet distinct struggles with settler-colonialism. The occurrence of Black and Native American-led

movements within North America dates back to the late 60s through the 70s with the Black and Red Power Movement. The movements worked to inform Black Liberation and Indigenous Sovereignty. The two groups worked to cultivate a transformation within society to generate a better future for oppressed communities that addressed the systemic issues of racial capitalism, settler-colonialism and white supremacy (Mays, 2021). The belief that unity and liberation between Black and Native peoples were possible because of their:

shared oppression and colonial situation...the history of unity and oppression has laid the basis for a new unity in struggle among third world peoples. And this growing unity is the best assurance that a world free of racism, oppression, exploitation and truly new world can be born¹¹...Black radical intellectuals and activists held this belief; however, the settler state has erased our collective memories and our imagination about what might be possible for our collective freedom (Mays, 2021: 108).

Mays explores the possibilities of new worlds co-created by Black and Indigenous through the work of Deloria Jr. a Standing Rock Sioux member. In reference to Deloria's work Mays comes to find that he was exploring the possibility of Black and Indigenous communities forming a new society in which we "share a common space, where we live and work together-- imagining the aftermath of ongoing dispossession." (Mays, 2021:111; see also Simpson, 2015). There are endless possibilities that can exist in the kind of resistance and world-building that is created when Black and Indigenous communities are in relationship with one another and beyond that co-regulating our healing with the Earth. The microcosmos of spaces that exists today, and those that have existed in the past that inform our present, to support the repair of the multiplicity of relationships with the land, each other, thus reorienting our understanding of place and our

¹¹ Mays uses the text for this section "The Third World", *Black Scholar* 7, no.9 (June 1976), cover page.

responsibilities to generate transformations that informs more a sustainable and regenerative future for our communities and the land itself.

Methods

Research Frameworks

My research works to build a deeper understanding of the ways in which Black, Native American, and Indigenous people are creating spaces for place-making. Shifting our conversation to the ways our communities are actively working together to decolonize and recontextualize our relationships and the narratives of North American history. When we look at the historical context of Black, Native American and Indigenous communities, we see how their shared, yet distinct, histories are intertwined in our socio-political struggles. Throughout this work I centered a transformational approach to addressing issues of injustice by focusing on addressing the institutional structures that negatively impact marginalized communities. I will highlight the movements, ideologies, and frameworks held within Black and Native communities. Following this transformational approach I draw on three methodological frameworks and principles including: Indigenous methodologies, Black Radical Tradition, and Community Engaged Research methods.

Indigenous Methodologies

Shawn Wilson's (Opaskwayak Cree) *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* utilizes Indigenous Methodologies that center protocols around relationships and relational accountability.¹² Wilson explains the importance of relational research in the following way:

¹² Relational accountability refers to the researchers responsibilities to the communities that they are engaging with

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge... you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research (Wilson, 2008: 56-57).

Wilson uses the term “Relational accountability” to conceptualize the understandings of how relationality and responsibility include reciprocal relationships that are at the core of Indigenous ontologies, or the study of the nature, types, and criteria of values and of value judgments especially within research ethics (Wilson, 2008; also see Bang, 2020). Relational accountability has been a vital piece of this work. From the outset, it has been necessary for me to examine my own identities as an African American woman and how these experiences influenced my perspectives, methods, and commitments. The relationships with the land and communities that I am now a part of, are held within these micro-sites, and have played a major role in guiding my research questions including my continued engagement beyond this research. This thesis also highlights our responsibilities to the communities that we engage in research practices design that relies on reciprocal relationships.

The production of knowledge and frameworks within this thesis are a culmination of the shared understanding and remembrance of our responsibilities to the land and to one another as we work towards healing for the kind of world we dream of. While focusing my research on the more visionary aspects of ecological justice I was very much inspired by the work of Eve Tuck’s (Unanga̋/Aleut) work *Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities* and the focus on “desire-based research” (Tuck, 2009: 416). While recognizing the entanglements¹³ that Black and First

¹³ Entanglements refers to the interdependence in which “dispossessed and disenfranchised communities” in some ways rely upon the same systems that have harmed us to solve and/or

Nations must navigate, Tuck “accounts for the multiplicity, complexity, and contradiction of desire,” along with “how desire reaches for contrasting realities, even simultaneously,” and even works through the very systems we continue to make efforts to change (Tuck, 2009: 418).

Desire-based research re-centers community desire as opposed to damage-centered research which focuses on the tragedy within communities. Desire-based frameworks center the way that communities have overcome those tragedies and continue to work towards their desired futures (Tuck, 2009). Tuck calls for research within historically oppressed communities to move away from the over-analysis of the pain and loss that our communities face, as this will not grant us the reparations that we are looking for but only further perpetuates harm. We now must shift towards desire-based research, which “...accounts for the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities” (Tuck, 2009: 417).

Black Radical Tradition

Black scholar Cedric Robinson coined the term Black Radical Tradition in his 1983 article titled *C. L. R. James and the Black Radical Tradition* (1983). This article accounted for the history of Black struggle and Pan-African Resistance detailing the intersectionality of injustice, revolutionary actions, and desires for liberation. The BRT framework aims to address anti-Blackness and promote efforts towards decolonization, intersectionality, and abolition (Robinson, 1983; see also Mays, 2021). Within Black decolonial understandings, this tradition stands as “a collection of cultural, intellectual, action-orientated labor aimed at disrupting social,

address the problems we are facing (Tuck, 2009: 416). Entanglements represent the interconnected complexities in dismantling systems of oppression (ex: capitalism). Entanglements are described “most broadly, as one way of marking points of intersection and interconnection” (Dennison, 2017). In other words entanglements are the ways through which communities often work through existing structures towards their own goals, ultimately beyond these structures.

political, economic, and cultural norms originating in anticolonial and antislavery efforts.” (Thomas and Chavous, 2019). The tradition of Black radicalism demonstrates the acts of resistance to colonial power structures rooted in “slavery, imperialism, and capitalism”, but is not limited to the ontological understandings of the “cultural traditions, beliefs and values” that originates from the ship revolts upon the arrival of in bondage Indigenous African people to Native American lands that make up the region of Turtle Island, and the Maroon communities that co-resisted with other Indigenous communities against enslavement, “from abolition to civil rights”, including the Black Power Movement that inspired a wave of Indigenous movements around the world, to the Black Lives Matter protest that continue this legacy of Black Radical Tradition (Thomas and Chavous, 2019). As a methodology of collective resistance and decolonial struggle, the Black Radical Tradition exemplifies the desire and strengths based perspectives of the Black community.

Community-engaged Research Methods

Ancestrally, the cultural identities of the Black (African) and Native American communities are both tied to their languages, cultural heritage, rituals, and ecologies that are rooted in place-based knowledge. As these communities in the U.S. have historically taken a leadership role as agents of societal and political change, I aim to uplift their voices and re-envision our relations with place through co-creating shared ideologies and regenerative practices. This thesis is a form of community-engaged research based on three years of relationships I worked to cultivate relationships with Black and Native communities engaged in regenerative land care in Seattle. Specifically, this project has been influenced by the approaches

of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)¹⁴ as my methods were informed by a collaborative approach toward raising awareness of community power through collective actions in reciprocity with land. Some of the qualities of the CBPR include grounded-theory, through the process of developing co-created questions for each of the organizations (Leavy, 2017). My shares similarities with that of CBPR in that the framing of my questions were informed by my participation in public events that were either hosted by the organization as a whole or individual member from the organization (Leavy, 2017). I focused the questions on their shared motivations for regenerative land care practices, centering on intersectionality of Black Liberation and Indigenous Sovereignty. The discussion also included how the spaces created either through land occupation or resistance invited community engagement with Black and Indigenous to enact reciprocal healing within these sites. My continued relationships with the communities play a central role in deepening my understanding of the community's desire for their land projects to uplift and help tell their stories.

CBPR is often done with the intention of producing knowledge that will result in direct policy change. However, this project pursues social change in a different capacity, by supporting embodying coalition building across other Black and Native community-led organizations and social movements. My goal for this project is also to demonstrate an alternative to research done within communities, in bridging the gap between observing and moving towards a model of shared power with the communities I engaged by sharing their stories, expertise, and experiences

¹⁴ “CBPR emerges out of a social justice and action-oriented transformative paradigm. Inquiry practices are informed by the belief that social research has an ethical mandate to serve community interests, and those interests are best identified by the communities themselves. CBPR philosophy developed in, and draws on, multiple disciplines, area studies, and theoretical schools of thought, including (but not limited to) sociology, psychology, critical pedagogy within education, feminism, critical race theory, and indigenous studies.” (Leavy, 2017: 223)

to display the work they are committed to doing (Muhammad et al. 2015). This in many ways challenges the dominant/normative structures of education, socio-ecological, political and economic structures, in hopes that this will expand our academic learning to become inclusive of community-engaged research, learning, and action. My intention with this thesis is to uplift the voices of Black and Native American communities living within Seattle, the traditional homelands of the Suquamish, Duwamish, and Muckleshoot Tribe¹⁵.

Methods and Practices

After living in Seattle for about a year I became aware of the large presence of tribal communities whose lands I was now living on. Throughout the year I began to educate myself around the stories of Native American people of this place, relationships between Natives and African Americans, and to build a deeper understanding of how to be in right relationship¹⁶ with these lands living in diaspora (Bang et al. 2020). Because of my interests in land-based pedagogies and desire to build community, I specifically built relationships with people from various Black and Indigenous-led organizations focused on land care. A majority of the work I have been doing for the past year and half has been community-building, volunteering with these organizations, and working on a collaborative storytelling project called the Coastal Futures Archive. There are three land projects that I have either worked alongside or engaged with in some capacity that has informed and shaped my thesis process: Black Star Famers (BSF),

¹⁵ The Suquamish, Muckleshoot, and Duwamish descendant Tribes continue to push for sovereignty and self-determination, as an act of resistance towards the U.S. government's failure to uphold Treaties and attempt to erase Indigenous peoples and lands. I have not yet had an opportunity to connect with the Suquamish and the Muckleshoot/Duwamish communities. I recognize that their stories are valuable and a missing element of this work.

¹⁶ Being in right relationship is a concept that includes an intentional cultivation of building respectful relationships with others and the land. In order to be in right relationship we must understand the histories and social dynamics that play a role in social inequalities.

Daybreak Star's Yahowt Food and Restoration Project, and Wa Na Wari's BLOOM Food Justice series. In this capacity I participated in these organizations through various activities including, attending land stewardship events, assisting in co-facilitated learning opportunities, and building connections between individuals to strengthen relationships and share knowledge across groups. This work is part of participant observation and engaged ethnography¹⁷ through ethical commitment to the land projects that I participated in and aligned with their epistemological claim to gain a better understanding of their own relationships to place and being.

Through cultivating meaningful relationships within these communities that I have become a part of, these spaces have acted as a place to facilitate my co-learning experience beyond the University. Attending regular events, often weekly, the frameworks of my thesis began to unfold and enabled me to spend a lot of time with the land stewards¹⁸ talking and learning about theoretical frameworks for this project and gaining a better understanding of the general ideas of regenerative land care. In some cases, I served as a support for engaging as a steward, hosting events, and played a co-leadership role held within these organizations. As I became more comfortable, and if the time felt appropriate, I then asked if they would be interested in participating in my thesis and if they agreed I arrange time to have a semi-formal interview, often with a small group for the organization. I would tailor the questions around their specific land projects based on conversations that I had with them while participating and

¹⁷ Engaged ethnography is essentially the interdisciplinary practice of community engaged research that includes advocacy, activism, knowledge sharing, stories and co-developing projects; analyzed through the use of qualitative methods that work to demonstrate community understandings and desires. Decolonial research practice is designed to transform existing power relations by implementing co-produced research design with participants who support the research process.

¹⁸ Following the practice of BSF, I refer to the people within each of these organizations as "land stewards." Land stewards are those who work with the land regardless of status or ownership of the land.

attending events. I sent the participants a list of questions in advance and asked how they would like to be identified for this project, either by name, nickname, or to remain anonymous. Many participants also described their backgrounds including cultural identities or their relationship to Seattle which I have included as appropriate.

As an example, the first action that I took towards my thesis included completing an interview with Black Star Farmers for the Coastal Futures Archive (CFA)¹⁹. Through a series of meetings, we co-created the questions and also produced a podcast episode that is featured on the CFA platform. The interview session included the questions: How do we arrive in right-relationship with a place that we do not come from? How does your work relate to community healing? What does food sovereignty mean to you? What does Black Liberation mean to you? What are your thoughts on the connection between Indigenous Sovereignty and Black liberation? What are your visions for the future when you think of reimagining urban farmland? What are your thoughts on Environmental Restoration/justice? And regenerative economies? These co-created questions were brought before the organization's leaders for their approval, along with stories about the birth of the organization. I followed a similar process for all of the individuals and or groups that I interviewed. I also hosted a majority of the interviews on site so as to add an element of deriving their answers from their environment and inviting more stories about the land.

I spoke with some of the members of the organization about how we would like for the research to be designed and informed through qualitative methods, including storytelling and interviews. I used grounded theory to analyze my interviews (Charmaz, 2006). After uploading

¹⁹ CFA is a website created to gather digital stories from organizations and coalitions working to repair and restore Pacific Northwest coastal ecologies. See: <https://coastalfutures.podbean.com/>

the interviews to ATLAS t.i, I created codes to draw out the major themes that emerged from the interviews. The research practice design is built on co-generated knowledge which challenges the colonial practices of research by moving from “power over” to a “power-with” model by using community informed understandings of the various questions addressed in this project and the intersecting themes that animate the work of each organization I worked with (Cacari-Stone et al. 2014).

Organizational Partners

Black Star Farmers

Black Star Farmers emerged out of the Black Lives Matter protest in Seattle. This uprising ultimately led to the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ) or Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP). The work of “Black Star Farmers (BSF) is a coalition of people with diverse identities working towards the radical reclamation of land and food sovereignty for all beings. We achieve this through land stewardship, mutual aid, education, and direct action. The goals of BSF are to reclaim “Black and Indigenous relationships with the land, improve BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, & other People of Color) communities food sovereignty, and facilitate difficult discussions about racial inequality and patriarchy that comes up within their organization and exists beyond that space. Black Star Farmers cultivate “relationships with plants, and traditional medicines to create self-sufficient communities.” (BSF n.d.). The interview with Black Star Farmers took place on March 17th, 2023. We focused on their interests in the work that they are doing regarding placemaking, community healing, and social and environmental justice.

I first came in contact with BSF through attending a small gathering with a friend from work where I was then introduced to three members of the collective Marcus, Stephanie and

M.D. I remember having conversations with them about me entering into this program and my study/research interests. Looking back I now realize that this conversation sparked the first inklings of this thesis. Being that I was new to Seattle I felt that it was important for me to get involved in community efforts and began to attend events at their various sites. These events were focused on engaging with people within the BIPOC community who were interested in addressing topics such as power dynamics, anti-oppression and reconnection to the land. Because of their roots connected to the Black Lives Matter Movement, space is held to honor the Black, Native and other Indigenous community members' lives that have been lost due to police violence. After sometime volunteering at the medicine garden, I was asked to support as a land steward while members of BSF were away. In this role, I would tend to the land and step in to help host weekly gatherings in various sites as well as connecting them with an opportunity to share their stories through the CFA project; we formed a reciprocal relationship that granted me not only but deeper insights to the ways in which BSF is organized.

Daybreak Star- Food Sovereignty and Teaching Forest

Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center has a restoration initiative through partnerships with the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, Na'ah Illahee Fund, Futures Rising, the Green Seattle Partnership, and its own Indigenous Advisory Council. This work is overseen by the Indigenous Advisory Council, a group of mostly elders who cultivate policies and protocols for land care, the implementation of culturally relevant plants, and providing guidance for shaping land management practices that are grounded in Indigenous philosophies. The community members serve as active knowledge holders and cultural keepers working to create spaces to integrate Indigenous knowledge and culturally informed ways of knowing. This collaboration is formally worked under the Yahowt Indigenous Food Program and is now operating under a

decentralized model of care in which multiple organizations are involved in land stewardship practices at this site. The principles of the original partnership with the Yahowt program who leads “numerous projects and cohorts related to Indigenous ecology, traditional food and medicine stewardship, and environmental restoration projects. The goal of this work is to build traditional ecological and modern knowledge, skills, and networks while developing community-based solutions for environmental and climate justice” (Na'ah Illahee Fund). The overarching goals of this work are informed by:

Indigenous women who are committed to strengthening balanced connections with the land and waters of Mother Earth that support all our relations. We place a high value on growing and harvesting our own foods and medicines and sharing old teachings in new and relevant ways, suited for the times we currently find ourselves in. We see the land as a living, breathing entity and design our work around this concept. As humans, we do not dominate over nature, but work in relationship with Mother Earth to strengthen her living systems in acts of support, reciprocity and respect. As a community, we value our children, elders, guests, and more than human relatives - committing to provide a hub for intergenerational relationships to be made as we nurture unity among all people who share the planet. We value sustainable practices, and consider future generations in all our choices. We seek to build an Indigenous-led movement towards regenerative economies (Na'ah Illahee Fund, n.d.).

Infused with the same principles this space is now under the care of various Indigenous led land efforts to continue cultivating relationships. My first experience here was when I attend an event to support planting a traditional food called Wapato (also known as Indian Potato). It was there that I met Shameka Gagnier (Black, descendant of peoples from the Carolinas & Purepecha region), founder of the Futures Rising organization, and Shanoa Pinkman (Yakama Nation and Southern Cheyenne), Yahowt Food and Land Restoration specialist, who were hosting the event. The protocol for their events was an invitation to invite your ancestors, honoring the original stewards of this land and acknowledging the history of the Daybreak Star. Meeting both Shameka and Shanoa at Daybreak Star and participating in their community events created the

groundwork for further interviews as I developed a deeper understanding of their land-care projects which are the subject of this thesis. Shameka, Shanoa, and I spent extensive time together discussing the themes in this thesis, and even graciously hosting a “work party” for one of my courses where my colleagues and classmates were able to come and learn about the history of Daybreak Star and engage in land care practices that created space for embodied learning about the practice of Indigenous placemaking. So, it was only natural for them to share their work and perspectives through a formal interview in Fall of 2023.

BLOOM Food Justice Series at Wa Na Wari

Wa Na Wari located in the historically Black area of the Central District came to fruition an organization called BLOOM. This collective was also born out of the pandemic as a means to support Black and Indigenous youth in combating mental health issues connected to isolation. Black and Indigenous youth experience some of the highest rates of suicide. These rates were exacerbated by the COVID-19 which gave rise to a desire to bring youth on the land which allowed for safer interactions amidst a global pandemic. Much of their work is centered around cultivating deeper relationships with the land and cross-cultural connections between Black, Native American and Latinx youth that centers Indigenous methodologies of land stewardship. BLOOM is a collective of Black/African, Native, Latinx youth who work to understand Indigenous methodologies of land stewardship practices; infusing elements of art and culturally relevant practices for community engagement. Placed in one of the few Black homes left in the C.D. it carries the legacy and continued desire for self-sufficiency and land reclamation for Black and Native communities.

Over the summer a member from BSF invited me to attend an event at Wa Na Wari where they were hosting space centered around Black healing. During the event I noticed a small

garden where people were gathered with beautiful art pieces in it. I became acquainted with some of the members who created the beautiful artwork displayed in the garden space and who were also participants in BLOOM. I continued to attend events at Wa Na Wari and was invited to join a meeting for BLOOM where I got to meet a number of youth and Davida Ingram, who is a local artist that supported the codesigned community led project. This project aims to center the interest of the participants' lived experiences that shapes the program, by supporting the needs and the desire to invite joy into this space. I told Davida I thought her work with BLOOM was a natural fit with many of the themes I was exploring in my thesis, and she agreed. We arranged an interview on ZOOM in Fall of 2023.

Interview Themes

The shared frameworks of reciprocal healing, community care, and regenerative futures are forms of environmental justice that move Black and Indigenous communities beyond racial capitalism and settler colonialism. Each of these frameworks expands our understanding of relationships beyond the social (human to human) but includes as well human and non-human relations. Reciprocal healing is a value shared across the organization I worked with and focuses on practices to heal the land and our communities at the same time. The concept of community care refers to the ways in which each organization focuses a portion of its work toward direct support of the community beyond members of the organization itself. Lastly, regenerative futures refers to the desires, hopes and dreams held within our communities to have a healthier environment and generative spaces for youth to continue building towards an otherwise transformative future (Maynard and Simpson, 2022). Reciprocal healing, community care, and enacting regenerative futures are central themes for how place-making and land healing contribute to regeneration Black Liberation and Indigenous Sovereignty.

Reciprocal Healing

One of the practices that best embodies reciprocal healing is regenerative land care practices that are inclusive of Indigenous methodologies of land stewardship. Reciprocal healing in this context solely focuses on the community's desire to heal the land that is built on cultivating respectful relationships. Through the process of reciprocal healing we are able to repair the multiplicity relationships that have been impacted by settler-colonial interventions. We are in a never-ending process of detangling ourselves from oppressive structures to healing is a vital part of this process.

BSF

BSF engages with the practice of reciprocal healing on many different levels including being in right relationship and regenerative forms of care. Right relationship for this community refers to one's or a group of people's interactions with the land in a respectful manner by also honoring the First peoples of these lands through understanding the histories of the land and those who taken care of the land since time immemorial. Being in right relationship is a lifelong process that requires one to continue building intimate relationships with the land.

As a group of people with varying backgrounds and identities of Black, Lantinx, Asian, Indigenous, White heritage that also share intersections of those who identify as Queer, working class and poor people. The notion of reciprocal healing encompasses the many ways in which we must choose to be in respectful relationships with the land and one another that allows for the shared yet distinct experiences of community members to exist without weaponizing ones identity. They work to fully embrace the intersectionality that exists to shape our privileges and disadvantages in society and towards a more equitable system. I interviewed four members of

BSF: M.D. Stephanie, Marcus, & Xander who are all land stewards and work at the various sites that BSF cares for.

M.D. describes the ways that colonization has disrupted BIPOC people's relationships with the land. expanding the conversation to explore the process of repairing those in some cases served relationships by intentionally building stronger connections to the places we live, visit, and or share kinship ties to. They understand “right relationship” as an “ongoing everyday process” to deepen relations of place beyond the ways in which colonial structures normalize living as if we were “just passing through.” In a similar way, Stephanie talks about shifting our understanding of land to reorient our relationships with the invitation “to release the idea of food as commodity, humans as commodity, land as commodity and upend that completely and really” go forward in the practice of opening our minds to “create spaces for a new way of being”, that moves us away from the extractive practices. Stephanie says “This is not reinventing anything, which is exactly speaking to the importance of centering and learning from Indigenous ways of being, because I believe that Indigenous ways of being are inherently anti-capitalist anti-imperialist. Inherently being in right relationship with the land. So, I think a lot of what we are intending to do is to be lifelong learners.”

For Stephanie, climate change reveals the inadequacy of a “sustainability” framework and the demands we adopt a perspective of regeneration and reciprocal healing. “As we are past the point of sustainability. The earth is craving, crying out to us to be regenerating. We can't just be sustaining... Because the Earth needs us to be giving back to them; we need to be reciprocating all of the energy that it has been given to us over the past many, many, many millennia of years. And we need to be focusing on figuring out how to care for the earth rather than extract” from the Earth. Likewise, M.D. calls for a “mind shift in viewing the Earth as we

learn from our Indigenous Kin who value ‘the Earth as a living relative.’ The invitation of M.D. and Stephanie to re-center our relationships, strengthens our understanding of the ways in which we can rebuild our relationships to place.

In order to truly work to understand our place within the ecosystem and start cultivating deep relationships within the places that we live or even visit. We must understand the history of colonization and how it continues to disrupt the multiplicity of relationships infringing on Indigenous people’s rights to self-determination, sovereignty, and the implications of Black liberation in this intersection. When we are in right relationship with the land it “inherently means that we do right by the First peoples of these lands.”

Marcus articulates reciprocal relationships as it requires someone to be in right relationship with one’s self and how our energy and way of being is an “integral part of nature. And in order for us to be able to connect with nature around us, we have to be in touch with the nature within us. Also think about the effort of moving between practice and reflection.” Taking the time to engage in acts of reciprocal healing also allows for us to be able to reflect on how we can integrate what we learned from the land.

Daybreak Star- Food Sovereignty and Learning Forest

Cultivating reciprocal relationships or connections between oneself and our more than human kin is an act of decolonizing our relationships and restoring cultural practices that center on being in relationship with the land. Black and Native communities engaging in land work provides us with this ability to reconnect and deconstruct colonial power structures that stand to separate us from one another. The center conversations about liberation and reparations, Shameka says “All of those things are deeply tied to bigger healing in thinking about the Earth herself and Her body. Just like the reverberations of that co-creation within all these

communities, coming together healing, co-creating and tending creates conditions for rematriation.” They continue stating that healing does not only happen to “happen on the land, but it also happens in our bodies, and our nervous systems.” The process of reciprocal healing embodies the notion of co-regulation in which we are re-centering our relationships to place; through facilitating deeper, more intimate connections with the land and cultivating attunement with the environment around us.

Planting culturally relevant foods plays a vital role in urban Natives being able to access their traditional foods and engaged in the revitalizing and regenerating of traditional ecological knowledge and language. These efforts inform their responsibilities and relationships to the land; cultivating a space for Native folks to engage in their cultural practices that aids in facilitation of their healing. Shanoa stated, “I feel like when it comes to land work, regeneration isn't just the land itself physically healing, but it's about how we heal as well. Because there's so much history of displacement and forced relocation and baggage and trauma in disconnect from our language, from our land, and this work. Well, what we were able to do at Daybreak Star Cultural Center is just a small microcosm. Small space where we can feel safe to practice our cultural teachings to learn about how the land takes care of us and how we can take care of it. And then making our offerings and doing our prayers. Everything we do there it's like a ceremony and ceremonies help heal.” In this way, for Shanoa, reconnecting with the land is understood as a reciprocal form of ecological and cultural healing.

BLOOM Food Justice Series

Wa Na Wari is located in the heart of Seattle's Central district and is a stable for Black community healing. During COVID food became a necessity for community members seeking pathways to sustain their communities and supplement their groceries as the prices for food

increased. A garden was the perfect fit to help solve these issues. In speaking with one of the co-founders for BLOOM, Davida Ingram spoke about finding out the results after testing the soil run by a project by Dr. Melanie Malone, from the University of Washington, found that there were high traces of lead in the soil. Looking for ways to continue the project, their collaboration with Indigenous community members brought in culturally relevant knowledge to aid in the healing of the land. Indigenous leaders such as Ixtlilxochitl Salinas Whitehawk, Pah-tu Pit, and other Indigenous mentors collaborated with BLOOM to find alternative ways to not only sustain the food program but also to heal the land in the process. This sharing of Traditional Ecological Knowledge helped to expand the program and engage in these practices in a good way which left little to no “risk of being transactional”, but allowed for Black, Native, and Latinx youth to engage in this work to be done as intentionally as possible. When one of the Indigenous collaborators mentioned that “there are plant relatives that can work with up taking the heavy metals in the land.” They began to plant sunflowers, “the blending of Indigenous knowledge systems and Black Liberation insight of Dr. Melanie Malone, where we kind of ended up with a combination of bringing in soil to use for the garden.”

“Dirt is Dead, Soil is Alive” became a principle for the continued healing of the land. In “working with young people so that they can understand living systems” and what makes soil alive, really are plants and or role in taking care of them. The importance of re-centering relationships to the land and soil is a tangible way to decolonize expanding our understanding of community to also include the land, plants, animals, and people. BLOOM also works to build strong respectful relationships with Indigenous community members through decolonial actions of cross-cultural knowledge sharing. Davida also articulates these reciprocal relationships through a similar lens stating that “So when it comes to thinking about land, stewardship

BLOOM in its own, like very simple, modest way, is helping us think about. Well, what's our relationship to the land? Just for me, personally, I would say. I think our oppression of one another sociologically comes as our natural outcropping of what we do to plants, minerals and the animal relatives that are non-human. And so, it's not surprising that by the time we messed up the air and the soil and the water, that we've also done a wide range of damage to one another.” For Davida, our understanding of our responsibilities to land, people and place are all interconnected.

Community Care

Community care is another vital aspect of this work across all of these organizations as much of this work was built on community building and learning how to be in relationship with one another. Growing medicinal plants and food to share with community members; creating pathways for accessible healing and food security were incremental ways to disrupt racial capitalism that often only allows for those who have access to wealth to be able to attain adequate health care and nutritionally rich foods. All of the sites emerged from the pandemic that displaced many of the gaps of accessibility for mostly marginalized communities; through this organizing communities worked to advocate for themselves about these underlying injustices that occur and the ways in which at-risk or vulnerable communities are pushed to remain resilient in the midst of global tragedy (Kiaka, 2017). How do we work to sustain ourselves, our communities and the environment around us when we are faced with these kinds of hardships? These relationships between the land, Black and Native communities in this context are widely built on strong relationships and community care that allows for us to be able to sustain ourselves. Identifying some of the major causes for this disconnect or severing of relationships from the land and people stems from the continued harms of colonization and racial capitalism

that produces individualism and hierarchical models of power. Moving beyond the notion of community just as people; our community broadens to include people, places we are in relationship with, and more than human beings that reside within these spaces.

BSF

Black Star Farmers practices a non-hierarchical decision-making process. M.D. explains that Much of their work is centered around “learning how to be together again in community without reconfiguring hierarchical systems...There's a lot to learn about how we can be together; work together skillfully without weaponizing our identities or life experiences against each other. So, a lot of the work that we also do is centered around, how do we not only stop ravaging, treating the earth as a commodity, but how do we also stop doing that to each other? And how do we actually learn to care for each other and deconstruct the different ways that we've caused each other harm so that we may live into a different story.” These shifts require us to examine the ways that these entanglements within systems of oppression. In order to begin detangling Marcus says we must actively “move away from capitalism and imperialism.” Marcus continues stating that “I think those systems have created forms of ownership that lead to extraction and lead to non-communal decision making which creates forms of hierarchy and also leads to power dynamics that destroy this world or that are destroying this world and have also destroyed our relationship to the land.” BSF members in large part understand their responsibilities to one another and to the land as ways of resisting colonial logics by engaging in non-hierarchical systems. M.D. explains that the principles of shared power are “fused into the way that we are stewarding the land” by growing plants and medicines to be shared widely beyond the members of the organization.

The various spaces that BSF stewards hold within them a space for medicinal plants. These medicinal plants are harvested for communal use which allows community members to freely access herbal blends to aid in alternative ways of healing and for educational purposes so that community members may be able to learn about how to create medicinal blends and share knowledge. When we think about community care we recognize that it goes beyond the notion of individual self-care and onto our ability to show up as a community member and understanding what it may take for us to be able to show up in a good way as we all bring something to the table that supports the whole. Xans describes the ways in which many communities “have been in survival mode for so long,” and the historical trauma of being “separated and stripped from our heritage, stripped from our foods.” Through the work of BSF, they continue, “We’re able to put those together and share these skills, share these foods, and share our history. It’s how I’m able to heal and how I see our work as healing.” They also described the importance of “healing as a community” and addressing “collective traumas” through shared practices such as “eating good culturally relevant foods” -- one of the many ways that BSF engages in community care.

Daybreak Star- Food Sovereignty and Learning Forest

As members of a diverse community of Native American and other Indigenous communities gather on this site; healing centered on re-grounding our relationships with one another. This site provides a space of refuge for Indigenous communities to be able engage practices of cultural revitalization. Shanoa sees Daybreak Star as “just a small microcosm where we can feel safe to practice our cultural teachings and to learn about how the land takes care of us and how we can take care of the land...Everything we do there it's like a ceremony. And ceremonies help heal trauma that we may not even still be aware of yet and that we're barely learning to unpack, depending on where we're at. So, I feel like the work we do, we're trying to

create that space to enable that to happen.” Unpacking the various shared traumas caused by a “history of displacement, forced relocation, baggage, and trauma in that disconnect from our languages, from our lands.” This work is not only about the “land itself physically healing, but it's about how we heal as well” through revitalizing those connections that have been lost due to colonization and engaging in creation of building new relationships with our environment.

Shanoa further describes community healing as “listening; it's an individual as well as a group effort. And with, especially with everything being so inter-tribal, I think things mean differently for people in different ways. I know for myself, the last couple of years have really helped me gain a deeper appreciation for my language and our cultural knowledge. I have been able to kind of make deeper connections with folks from Yakama...Because I feel like there's so many people that care about the land, and that want to help nourish the relationship with the land.” There is a shared understanding within land work that Shameka describes their work at the Daybreak Star as “a collective healing space where people come together to do work together.” For Shameka, this differs from “Western healing spaces,” where “people are all by themselves, and really kind of disconnected from their place in the circle, their place in community, their responsibilities.” They see their land care work as facilitating more opportunities for holistic healing and care in community “There's something about doing land work in general,” they add, but also “doing land work as an Indigenous person, with other Indigenous people... that holds more space for that collective healing, and co-regulation, with all these incredibly powerful beings around us that hold us all the time.”

The Daybreak Star garden and forest site also provide an opportunity for sharing traditional ecological knowledge and language revitalization through interactions with various programs throughout Daybreak Star and the wider urban Indigenous community. This work

includes planting traditional foods, medicines, and applying culturally relevant knowledge systems for this kind of implementation. Wider service to the community also includes job training for Indigenous youth, land stewardship education, and immersive play and place-based learning spaces for the Daybreak Star Preschool. Finally, Shanoa describes how this micro-site also supports ceremony and culturally specific activities for First Nation communities to continue to safely engage in cultural practices that calls for us to “decolonize and re-indigenize” spaces for land care.

BLOOM

BLOOM engages in the practice of community care by focusing on addressing the circumstances that were produced by the pandemic weighing more heavily on BIPOC youth who were experiencing the highest rates of suicide. Unable to engage in the normal activities that youth usually would in order to have a sense of community, the Pandemic constructed a sense of isolation that people around the world are still recovering from today. When Dean Jackson, Founder of Hilltop Urban Garden suggested “looking at gardening as a way of protecting young people and taking good care of them” a seed was planted for how to combat the issues that youth were facing through cultivating a sense of community and belonging.

Davida describes the meaning behind BLOOM as they are “built on growing cycles, you plant seeds and you hope that they BLOOM, you want them to grow. It's perfect. It's also about growing the community. So, I would say in a much more intentional and broader sense around, how do you do that? The types of social relationships that make the kind of community that anybody would want to be a part of and that's across different forms of embodiment. So it's not about melanin. It's not about your gender identity, it's actually about your humanity and the

ability to see other people's humanity when you get together with them.” Community care is a central aspect of the work to uplift BIPOC youth and empower them to nurture meaningful relationships with land and one another that promotes the frameworks of “Black Liberation, Indigenous Sovereignty, BIPOC solidarity and beloved community.” These same themes frame the notion of what is emerging from these micro-sites of sovereignty and co-creating regenerative futures. Through this work are actively building alternative ways of being that informs the world a future world that we want to live in and are living towards “institutional change always with the intention and outcome of new generations, having a better life and oftentimes a better and healthier life than what was on offer to me.” In the process of community care we are working to build deeper relationships with place as we continuously define those relationships balancing the needs of our communities while also accounting for our responsibilities to the land.

Regenerative Futures

Finally, I asked each of my interview participants to describe their visions of a regenerative future. Each one described a future that was inclusive of renewing relationships between one another and the land, a desire for youth to lead the way, and creating spaces for our desires to exist in the present moment. Although these themes show up different contextually in that the communities hold different backgrounds that frame their answers.

BSF

M.D. describes their vision of the future stating that they “really to see people come back into that deep relationship with each other and the earth, really is to see each other, to recognize each other again as part of the earth. And to live lives that reflect that, from what we eat, to how we spend our time, to the gifts we give and receive, letting ourselves be rooted again in the earth,

and to walk in the power that inherently comes from our connection with the earth. So, you know, in practice, that means saving our seeds year by year. Our food comes from our, our seed and sharing with each other and organizing in place-based clusters of community. Resisting the homogenization, that's forced on us a grounding into place. And that place is where each of us finds our identity and our belonging in the land.”

When asking this question, we also wanted to invite conversation about their hopes and dreams for the next generation. Kindred (age two and youngest member of BSF) was present during the interview. We asked Stephanie about their visions for their baby Kindred. Stephanie shared that “my vision is land reform, like aggressive land reform; And that land needs to be redistributed to the masses of people. Think of land that belongs to the people that is feeding the people... Well what kind of future do I imagine for my baby? I imagine a future where my baby is trusted to know what to do with their body and to know how to be with the Earth. I imagine a future where they have space and time and freedom to be with the Earth. I feel like they're already living out the future that I imagined for them. But even Yeah, yeah, they're running barefoot in this garden. Eating sage plants, eating dirt, playing in the mud, and being part of conversations like this, I feel like that's the future that I imagined for them is a future that they're actively building being a part of building” a space that is “not commodified that is freely accessible... That grows plants that are native to the land itself.”

Marcus looks to “Afro-futuristic writers” such as Octavia Butler, who have influenced his visions for the future focusing on “urban farming, in particular...we're living that future in the present day, and we're organizing. And I think for me, instead of focusing too much on what the futures will look like, because then you kind of have now everyone's fighting for a vision of the future, instead of us collectively, creating space for the future to exist in the present

moment...for me, what I'm focused on, is thinking about how can we organize to liberate our futures, more so than trying to live out those futures? Because if we liberate ourselves, then all futures, not all there are some features that cannot exist, but many futures can actually come into being and we can have this beautiful world.” He continues talking about the aspects of regeneration critiquing how “our society has this resistance to change, resistance to letting the next generation be different, letting them take us somewhere, and I think part of that work that we need to do is just let the next generation be different. Let them choose a different direction, let them choose a new future.” Lead by “our youth or when the next generation or when a whole, a group of people that we aren't connected to are choosing to live a different way than we live, you have to release that control in order for that” change “to happen... I'm excited to see this next generation, my child, come into this world and take the next step and whatever direction that is, as long as we lay the right groundwork, then they can kind of figure out what's next. They have to figure out the next move, because, you know, we're limited by our experiences, and by creating space for them to have different experiences, they're gonna go to a place that we can't imagine. So, we just got to keep laying the groundwork and releasing control over what direction is necessarily where that goes.” Creating space for the next generation to pave the way for transformation, is foundational in building a regenerative future. Together we are able to build something beyond our circumstances and live into a future that is beyond our imaginations.

Daybreak Star Food Sovereignty and Teaching Forest

Shanoa's visions of the future includes “reminding ourselves that our body remembers” and our “blood” holds the memory of the land so that we recall how to engage in “kind land work” we are doing. “As we plant; we nourish and take care of the land because it's a two-way

relationship... I feel like the best way I'm trying to understand it, it's like you plant it there and you're hoping it's gonna grow you're hoping it's gonna take up the vision that you have of what it'll look like when it grows and, how other people will be blessed in a way by it as they walk by and how it'll help benefit the insects and the birds and animals. You know, we're planting all these things with intention to help them and I feel like there is kind of a collective dream in that sense...as we pray, and offer medicine, it's a spiritual kind of binding to, we're trying to help do this in a good way, and we'll, we'll take care of you, and we'll help you, you know, we need to hear that call back as well.” They also include youth in their answer, she states that it is “very humbling and beautiful part of the work that I enjoy the most is being able to create that space and make that opportunity for our youth and for communities to come together...and learn about the history of the land and connecting on other ways that we can help move that land work forward.” Reconnecting to place is key to building a regenerative future that relies on reciprocal relationships; embodied through our actions of giving back we better able to serve the needs of the land and create spaces that support both human and more than human beings relationships to place.

BLOOM

Davida envisions a future “world that's healthy, and has harmony, requires some rethinking of certain oppressive ways to being... I think that is what I love about abolition is the notion that we can live without prisons, and you know the literal part would be dismantling the institutions...”. Speaking from the perspective of an abolitionist she weaves in the prison industrial complex into the conversation of intersectionality of injustice that on Black and Native communities face. Her dream also includes living in a “world where we're deeply respectful and

considerate caring for it's not just one another as humans” but for the land as well. "I think human consciousness will grow a place that is absolutely needed to be around us, being better guardians and caregivers. not in a savior way, but in that humble and no way of understanding how to take care of the land and from that understanding a little bit more space so that we can take better care of one another I think the harmonized world..." Davida further describes how being in right relationship with Indigenous communities, as a Black identifying woman, is a vital aspect of solidarity and necessary to create the kind of transformation and collective healing we desire. She describes her own efforts of being a “good relative to my Indigenous community members that I am relatives with and even if there's friction there, I'd rather see us develop the tools to work. As whatever those tensions might be, so that we can be good relatives to one another, and also good relatives to the other beings that are just as important to us may they be birds or animals, or minerals or vegetables.” She continues by stating that “it would probably be important for Black and Native communities to have some closed conversations around how we're showing up for one another... It requires intentionality, thoughtfulness, and consideration around how you interact... Besides, I really meant what I said, that our ancestors always know who we are. So, I would imagine, when it's time for me to cross over. I would like to be in good standing with my ancestors, who endured whatever they endured and I would like them to say, I like how she turned out. So that's enough for me.” Davida's vision for the future encompasses the full spectrum of justice ranging from abolition to land stewardship, she conveys the deep need for a future that includes introspection and reflection on our relationships between one another and the environments that we live in and care for.

When discussing visions of the future, the concept of regeneration was in the background of many of our conversations. In the context of land care practices, such as regeneration requires a breaking down of the old materials which serve as a proactive layer for the soil and carbon sequestration, so as to ensure the next generation of plants have access to healthy and biologically diverse soil for their nourishment. When approaching Black and Native lead actions for social and environmental justice we look to our elders informed by the knowledge that is passed down from our ancestors throughout generations, who create the foundation for our desired futures and what we are working to change in order to achieve our hopes and dreams for a better world.

In *Healing Grounds: Climate, Justice, and the Deep Roots of Regenerative Farming* (2022), the authors illuminate how Black, Native, Asian, and Latinx communities participating in regenerative land care practices centering on the historical context for each community and diverse, ancestral based approaches towards combating climate change. The disruption of ecological systems through colonization and colonialization invokes Black and Native communities to engage in dreaming or world-building, which “requires a kind of trust across generations”, ensuring the futurity and/or collective continuance (Whyte, 2017) of our cultures, relationships, and well-being is ancestral work passed down throughout generations. “Everything goes back to the land. If you want to heal— the planet, our communities, racism— it’s going back to the land together.” (Carlisle & Salvador: 164). Our collective healing is related to the notion that “healing the climate means healing the land... [and] healing [the] land means healing colonization” (Carlisle & Salvador, 2022: 177). The disruption of Black and Indigenous relationships to place through colonization and colonialization is etched into our history and the

lands, waters, and air that has been contaminated by the dominant power structures. Healing the land cannot be separated from healing and reparations to the communities who have been the most impacted by global climate change.

A regenerative future is about cultivating a world that reflects the vision that we have for a decolonial future and ensuring that there is something left for generations to come, as the world that we are building now; influences the next generations who are watching us. Throughout generations of care for the land and one another we are able to make changes that transcend and transform the current socio-ecological model and move to build a new paradigm of reciprocal relationships informed by our hopes and dreams for the future shared to us by our elders, ancestors, the needs of the land and lead in power-with our communities as future ancestors. As we build and live towards a regenerative future we determine the vital need for transformation; ensuring our shared yet distinct visions and desires for our youth and future generations will come to fruition. Resistance plays a key role in creating spaces for revolutionary ways of being to exist in world that reflects the desires of marginalized peoples. Our relationships strengthen our connections as we work to re-story our understanding of ourselves, our commitments, and responsibilities to the land and one another. We can learn from the land and through the land care practices that we engage with. Being that within the work of regenerative land care we are not only using old materials to nourish the soil we are also making time for the land to rest solidifying deeper relationships to capture carbon that continues to impact the Earth. Regeneration relies on the hope that we can continue to build off of where we started and allow for new things to bloom throughout generations of care for the land and their people.

Conclusion

Although the lands that hold BSF, the Daybreak Star Food Sovereignty and Teaching Forest, and BLOOM encompasses a small region of Seattle with multiple garden spaces; the broader understanding of land is built on place-based histories and the values of the communities that care for the land. These micro-sites of sovereignty serve as places for Black and Indigenous people to enact our rights to dream, be in relationship with the land, care for one another, and build a regenerative future. Each of these organizations practice reciprocal healing, community care, and regenerative futures by engaging within the multiplicity of our relationships is reflective of how we treat one another. The organizations recognize their responsibilities of taking care of the land and one another requires the cultivation of respectful relationships between the land and people to mitigate the harms that have disrupted the severed the relationships replicated by colonization. There is a shared understanding of our responsibilities to the land. From the perspective of reciprocity these organization actions towards the land defense are a representative of their shared values with the perspective communities that conveys a deeper connection to the places that they are in relationship with. I have heard a similar sentiment within the Māori context through the saying “Papatūānuku” which means the Earth and Her whole being; what moves Her and this saying also extends what you do to the land the land does to you and you do to your community.

While I was visiting the Suquamish Museum and noted Chief Si'ahl's (Seattle) famous speech. This speech is controversial while debate exists between “local historians, tribal people, and others” about. “the veracity of the speech, it remains a powerful—and on a global scale, extremely popular—story about the social, and even spiritual, costs of ecological transformation and Native dispossession” (Thrush, 2006: 93). I have chosen parts of this speech to highlight the

themes and frameworks of liberation and sovereignty related to this thesis. Chief Si'ahl sets the scene by conveying the atmosphere of what was happening at the time as hostilities arose between the Indigenous communities and settlers. In his words:

Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion upon my people for centuries untold, and which to us appears changeless and eternal, may change... My words are like the stars that never change. Whatever Seattle says, the great chief at Washington can rely upon with as much certainty as he can upon the return of the sun or the seasons. The white chief says that Big Chief at Washington sends us greetings of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him for we know he has little need of our friendship in return. His people are many. They are like the grass that covers vast prairies. My people are few. They resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain. The great, and I presume — good, White Chief sends us word that he wishes to buy our land but is willing to allow us enough to live comfortably. (Chief Si'ahl's 1854 Oration)

Throughout the speech, he describes “a time when our people covered the land” and how settlement impacted the Native community, stating that those days have “since passed away with the greatness of tribes that are now but a mournful memory.” He questions Christianity and the relationship to the divine, alluding to colonialization and the Doctrine of Discovery 1493²⁰, stating, “Your God is not our God! Your God loves your people and hates mine! He has forsaken His Red children... Your God makes your people wax stronger every day. Soon they will fill all the land. How then, can we be brothers? How can your God become our God and renew our prosperity and awaken in us dreams of returning greatness?”

When reading this speech, you can feel the essence of his people's relationship to the land. Chief Si'ahl depicts this reciprocal relationship, relaying the power struggles of self-determination, sovereignty, cultural survival, and hopes of revival for his community.

Throughout the speech, there is a reference to how colonization has displaced the Suquamish,

²⁰ The [Doctrine of Discovery 1493](#) This document stated that any lands not inhabited by Christians were available to “discovered”, claimed and exploited by Europeans to spread Christianity, and Catholicism was to be spread everywhere to claim lands and the harm to Indigenous people in the name of God

Muckleshoot, Duwamish communities built on a foundation of deception through the colonial powers. His place-based understanding of greater Seattle's beautiful landscapes encapsulates the Puget Sound region intimately, naming the life force of his ancestral homelands and its properties, demonstrates the values and responsibilities of the Indigenous people and all their relations. Seemingly questioning settler colonialism and the stance white people's relationship to this place. This speech leaves us with a yearning to uplift the ways in which Indigenous peoples who remain on the land today desire to renew their prosperity and re-awakening in them their dreams of returning greatness (Chief Si'ahl's 1854 Oration). In referencing the dead he reiterates that their ancestors are still with us. The ancestors of these lands remain alongside us as we work towards decolonizing our minds, bodies, and spirits. "For the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of world" (Chief Si'ahl's 1854 Oration) reverberates the presence of the Indigenous people and their continued dreaming of transforming their circumstances as "death is not the end of a cycle it is a transition in the cycle" (Wilbur and Small-Rodriguez, 2022). The speech remains a staple for environmentalists, yet its origins run much deeper than this recently formed ideology, it is the embodiment of deeper understandings of place and relationships, sovereignty, and the revitalization of culture.

Black and Indigenous place-making within Coast Salish Territories is linked to our fight for liberation and sovereignty through acts of resistance, coalition, land protection, cultural preservation/revitalization, and continued hope in dreaming of regenerative futures. Factors of vulnerability interplays with issues of social, political, systemic, and institutional roles of harm and how it relates to environmental health, individual and collective well-being. Many of these changes can only be made through the actions of working towards an otherwise/alternative future that is seen within the social justice movements for Black and Indigenous communities across

Turtle Island. These movements demonstrate that our shared yet distinct struggles for liberation are entangled with, but not limited to, colonization that lays the foreground for racial capitalism. Moving away from these oppressive structures would require a transformation of our systems that is grounded in building trust, respect and reciprocity. While we embark on a journey towards deconstructing colonization, detangling our liberation and sovereignty from oppressive structures, we simultaneously recontextualize our stories, and engage in process towards co-creating new systems built on the foundation of collective action. In this work we hold the understanding that our systems, too, should reflect the living system's continuous ability to evolve, regenerate and transform, as reflected within these micro-sites of Sovereignty we are able to co-create and live into a regenerative future one that allows for us as Black, Native and Indigenous peoples around the world to heal; renewing our prosperity and awakening in us our dreams of returning greatness.

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