

“Tell Me About That World”:
Speculative Archive Mixtape
Towards a Black Feminist Listening Practice



Taylor Thompson
Graduate School of Arts and Science, Columbia University
Carlin Zia, Advisor
April 22, 2021

Graduate Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree
in Oral History, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my parents, who let me dream big and cheered me on through the research and experimentation process of this project. Thank you Carlin Zia for your invaluable academic support throughout the process of writing and researching. Thank you Mary Marshall Clark and Amy Starecheski for your encouragement and guidance. Thank you to my classmates, the community we were able to forge in this challenging time means a great deal to me and helped ground me in the work. And thank you to the narrators of the project, quite literally without you there would be no thesis, but beyond that, I am grateful for the opportunity to record your stories and I am grateful for the trust you have instilled me with to find and build an archive worthy of those narratives.

Dedication:

For my project's narrators

&

For the women in my bones

*This is not naive optimism/ This is rigor/ This is craft/ This is calling what be not as though it is/
This is creation/ I had to minister to myself/ had to learn the alchemy and then lend the words/ I
had to remember my Joy/ had to speak it into being/ And when I looked up from my blood soaked
hands, I saw that it was good.*

-Alysia Harris, No Poems Inside the Victorian House

The only grace you can have is the grace you can imagine.

Toni Morrison, Beloved

Author's Note:

“Tell Me About That World”: Speculative Archive Mixtape, Towards a Black Feminist Listening Practice is meant to be viewed and navigated via [website format](#). You are currently viewing the pdf hard copy. Please visit the website linked below for the full and intentioned viewing experience. Please enjoy!

Link: <https://twt.sandbox.library.columbia.edu/>

A Black Feminist Listening Practice: On Loving Witness

The folks you will listen to here are dreaming about and strategizing towards diverse ways out of white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and racial capitalism. We have to learn to listen to each other talk about those dreams. We have to learn to use those sites of sharing as ones of world(s)-building, places where we dream together, critically and deliberately, to build a universe under which many worlds and many bodies can breathe, find love, survive. This essay and guide is my take on that practice.

We have an opportunity to dream expansively about the future, and it is up to us to do so deliberately and with love, and with a measure of rigor that reflects the stakes of the crises at hand. What world are you seeking to usher in with your love, with your labour? I ask anticipating that each person who reads or listens to this essay possesses their own rendering of that future world. I ask anticipating that there is a way to take pleasure in that difference. Our dreams do not have to be the same in order for them to be powerful or of service to a greater vision of mutual-liberation. In fact, by virtue of their difference they possess the potential to be constellated—we can draw lines between our dreams, trace the shapes the connections make, and out of those constellations we can *find doorways*. We can build a way out made from the shapes our dreams make when constellated; I speak here of doorways conjured and drawn, based in our capacities to communicate with one another about those dreams, always with love.

When our dreams are constellated they reveal a topography *of the possible*—a map upon which to orient our organizing, labour, and love. When our dreams are constellated, we can learn to understand where and when our dreams *foreclose others'*. We can learn to understand where and

when our dreams reflect others'. Then we can begin the labour of parsing just why, and how, and at what cost, our dreams interface with one another.

This is important because how we learn to listen to and share our dreams with one another—how we learn to read and orient ourselves by these maps—matters. For it will prove instrumental in our capacities to bring those dreams of liberation to fruition. Here I lay a blueprint for communicating and listening to one another as a liberatory practice. This is a blueprint for being in critical relation to one another in our dreaming, in our storytelling, and in our sharing. It is in this work that we can learn to listen as a practice of *loving witness*. And it is through the process of listening that we can learn to be critical and hopeful and deliberate about the worlds and words we build, share, and bring into space. We've just got to practice.

So, here we are, together, at the lip of some listening practice that even I do not all the way understand—I only know that it was handed down to me from the women in my bones, an ancestral practice of listening that reflects the love I know we are capable of embodying. It is born from a deep understanding of, and respect for, the interconnectedness of all of our survivals. I respect the intimacy of our freedoms. I understand *how none of us will be free until we all are (loved)*. Which is to say that this is a listening practice that reflects the stakes of the world(s) we are trying to protect, to reproduce, to gestate, to make, to usher into the future.

The future is your next breath

-Alexis De Veaux

Breathe now. I mean it. In through the nose out through the mouth if you can.

Again.

And with your next breath, I ask of you: listen to your breathing.

This orientation of black feminist listening practice, as I propose it, is not about “hearing”, it is about critically consuming information. It is about coming to know the world around you consciously and with love—allowing for deep, unsettling complexity and learning to breathe through it. Listen to your breathing.

Black feminist listening practice is a practice towards (re)membering a world and a future that must be(come) real. And as such, who better to listen with now than those building “impossible” economies and intentional community care infrastructures?

In this oral history project, I asked my narrators to **tell me about the worlds** they hope to (re)produce, or come to know, through their organizing. In preparing to ask these questions of my narrators, I remember first trying to answer the question myself. *I had to try the alchemy and then lend the worlds.* For me, ever since I was able to locate language around ancestral maps charting us towards some liberation we dream of, when I think of the world I want to build, I feel this pull in my chest towards the love I feel we deserve. That pull in my chest, I guess I’d call it faith. For it is the evidence of a world and a future I have not seen, but for which I do hope, and in which I do believe. I feel the pull like a tether, vibrating in my chest just now, a c(h)ord pulling me across and through the topography of our dreams, and towards some warm thing, like

the sun, or water, or whatever I need to survive. I am pulled towards that world the way I am compelled to take my next breath.

I am learning to take responsibility for my frequencies. I can lower them to reach you. I can reflect before I speak out. Echolocation is not the same as mind-reading. Some of this magic is just the complexity of being a mammal alive in sound. I can hear what I cannot yet see. I can make a whole world of resonance. And live in it. Swim through it.

-Alexis Pauline Gumbs

_____*

Listen to your breathing because *the future is your next breath*. Listen to the future and remember this: it is possible to *hear what you cannot yet see*. Listen:

Audio Portion

Taylor

[quietly] I always like to remember that Harriet Tubman celebrated the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States 3 years earlier than the emancipation was codified by law. She reportedly had a vision and when she came to, she announced: “My people are free!”

Taylor:

Oxford Languages Dictionary defines Testimony as “Evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something.” What appeared to Harriet Tubman—what she imagined and envisioned—became the proof she needed to testify to what was coming.

Taylor:

What this tells me is that what we imagine matters to the material world we live in. And so when I listen to what my narrators imagine—what they think brilliantly about, what they see in their mind’s eye—sometimes I like to take it as testimony.

Taylor:

This is a study in faith, in the tether, in testimony, in time, in our capacities to imagine expansively and radically, in our capacities to claim and name the love we deserve.

Tania Maree Giordani:

My ideal place is to have like a huge loft building, or like a huge warehouse, by the water, in Brooklyn. And I want there to be the grocery stores: free.

Tania Maree Giordani:

And on the first floor, like, we need a lot of third spaces, especially for like Black and Brown people. We need more spaces to go to, like a third space. And so I would love to be able to create a situation that has that. And so on the first floor, the grocery store on one side. And then I also want there to be like a cafe. And the cafe will also be the third space. And like all the first floor, like going around the building, I want there to be different salons. And so for one of the salons...

[fade out clip 1]

[fade in clip 2]

Tania Maree Giordani:

I really, really, really want to open a therapy center that is sliding scale— the first slide of the scale being zero for most people. I really would only want to charge the people who A) have the means to pay—so basically donation based therapy—or being able to charge insurance and us being able to subsidize the cost so that there is no copay for the patient. And I want them to be able to get long term treatment at the center if...

End of Audio Portion

When you listened to Tania Maree and me, did you remember to listen for your breath? You must. For this practice is about holding in your mind: the future you imagine (and the future you inhabit with your next breath) as well as the narrators' imagined future, all at once. That is the work: to hold multiple worlds/futures—that may not look, or feel, or *be* commensurable—and allow each of those futures to breathe. You must negotiate a relationship with each. And I can't tell you what the relationship should be, but I can tell you that it must stem from an understanding that there can be multiple ways of knowing the world, and future—and one way does not have to dominate another in order to be brought into existence, to be legitimate and necessary.

This is not to say that when we listen to people, broadly, talk about their imagined futures, we should always read those futures as benevolent. For example, there are speculative futures held in the minds of many that demand my death and probably yours. I cannot recommend that you listen to those violent worlds with the same hope. But I can recommend that you listen analytically to them as well. When you can, and when it feels it would be useful to you, a black feminist listening practice can also facilitate the expository engagement and subsequent abolitionist strategy necessary for dismantling those worlds and futures that demand our deaths.

The futures that the narrators advocate for in this project are loving. I believe that the narrators are growing always in their understanding of what it is to build worlds outside of white-supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, ableism and racial-capitalism. Which is to say that the worlds that the narrators offer here are worth listening to; they are worth being taken seriously and borne witness to with love.

The form of listening I propose we practice is a rigorous one. What I ask of you now, I do not take lightly. I implore you to engage with this speculative archive because I am interested in what it means to learn to sit with diverse worlds and diverse hoped-for-futures, and to hold space for those worlds as a measure of expanding our stamina, and capacities, to think about what must be(come) real. What must be(come) real, that we might bring into being *a pluriverse*, “*a world where many worlds are possible*”—under which we all have what we need to survive and be loved. Know this: in listening to others’ imaginations, we hone our own. Remember to breathe:

Audio Portion

Taylor Thompson 27:32

Thank you. I liked how you kind of started theorizing around what it means to do mutual aid work. And you said that it's about educating people on why you should care.

Trasonia 27:47

Yeah.

Taylor Thompson 27:48

I really like that. And I also noticed the three major tenets—on the Instagram at the very least—of Queens Liberation Project, it says “organize, educate, liberate.” And I’m curious about, like, the role that specifically, “educate,” plays in your own understanding of the work.

Trasonia 28:56

The education standpoint, because it's not really necessarily that we're gonna like gonna sit down and have like, classes, you know, but it's more so education, and that you have to unlearn and relearn stuff. So when it comes to mutual aid, American capitalism doesn't teach us how to care for each other, like at all. We have to unlearn and then relearn how to do that. And so the education part for me is like, teaching people that you don't need this, you know. That all of this

oppressive system around us is actually not necessary. And we can just walk outside of it, like two steps. And all of a sudden, we're free, and we can help each other, you know. The hardest part of getting free is to realize that you can just sort of let go of the system and leave, you know. I don't have to look down on unhoused people.

Taylor Thompson 30:11

Yeah. I appreciate how you framed it at least in a context of a stepping out. I'm curious about: what do you think is outside?

Trasonia 30:26

Grass, and birds, and the sun? You know: a future. There's just—so for me there's no future in this. There's only more destruction and more hatred and more greed. America is constantly escalating its violence across the world. And I think people are seeing it more so now, because of the response that's happening because of this virus. People are hurting, like a lot. And mutual aid is like sort of the exact opposite of that. It is stepping outside. Instead of like: “You either get a job and pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and bla, bla, bla, bla, bla,” you know, all that. It's like: Well, no, I have sugar, my neighbor has flour, we can make a cake together and both of us can have cake. And we can eat it too.

Trasonia 31:31

It doesn't have to be like a whole—everything doesn't have to be a competition. And so like, cutthroat and scary. Things are actually kind of beautiful.

End of Audio Portion

When the narrators speak, we can learn to listen *in and to* multiple dimensions—multiple registers, if you will. I argue that listening—critically consuming information—can be a complex and textured experience, in which there are many facets to feel out, many threads to pull. For example, the words that the narrators are speaking are just one thread in the experience of listening. The mental image of that future that they conjure in you is another thread. Your very

breath is another. The way your body reacts to the narrators' worlds and words, another. The first thought you have upon hearing their voice, another. In the next audio portion you listen to, I encourage you to explore those threads and facets—ask those questions of yourself. For the facets, the threads, go on, and on, and on. And what I suggest here is that we can learn to embrace the texture of deliberate listening, even when it may chafe and it may grate. In other words, we can build stamina in our listening practices and resist the urge of oversimplification.

Learning to isolate and identify those different threads and also let them be woven together is a method of reading and coming to know, the complex texture of freedom. This practice is one I attempt to embody with the specific purpose of honoring the communities, the literature, the people who brought me to this space in which I am able to embrace our ability to imagine otherwise. To imagine better. To imagine the world(s) we deserve. This is listening as ceremony, as study in *how we get free*. Remember to breathe:

Audio Portion

Taylor Thompson 51:55

I'm finding it more and more important to kind of like, speak to that world. And I think it's challenging sometimes too.

Catie 52:09

Yeah, it's hard to imagine, it's hard to imagine. Okay, okay, if I can go down this train of thought a little bit farther. I remember early in the pandemic, I just kept thinking, like, I don't understand why the government hasn't just temporarily—it wouldn't even have to be permanent—just temporarily, say to Amazon and Whole Foods and Freshdirect, locally, or something, like "We need your infrastructure. We need to keep our society alive and healthy. And right now, like, we can't do that, by letting people with money, get your services and letting people without money not get your services." And we just made sure that everybody got food and toilet paper and

masks and all the basics just sent right to them, right. And I just kept imagining this. And I actually, like went down a lot of weird thought twists about like, like, Why can't we just do this? It seemed so simple to me. And then it was just like, No, that's just never—that's not how America has ever worked. That's not how—our capitalist society just can't work that way. The idea of removing something like food from a profit-motive, is so, so, so far from the way that we work. And so I guess the question is, like, I'm not 100% sure. Am I just like that radical? Am I really just like, so politically off the deep end, that the idea of nationalizing Amazon to make sure everybody gets food is insane? Or like, is that just like the end? Is that really just the end? Like if you imagine a situation where nobody falls through the cracks? Is that really the only way? I'm not sure.

End of Audio Portion

You may try to translate their worlds and futures into your own vocabulary, your own experiences, your own epistemes and I argue, you have to be prepared for there to be *no direct translation*. Be prepared for that world not to adapt to your own understanding of reality. You can trust that the world the narrator calls for, and are called to, may be a world that you will never not come to know, just as you can trust that it may be a world that you will want to come to know. Both options are okay. I purpose that this listening practice opens us to a reality and a *world where many worlds can exist*, incommensurable but nonetheless loved and respected, for this is a study in loving witness.

_____ * _____

The form of listening I propose we practice is a rigorous one. And I am not asking you to leave this page good at it, or even totally liking the idea. I simply ask that you practice, if only once, and remember the feeling. I am still growing in my understanding of the type of listening I am called towards. So I am practicing too. This is a space for experimentation. This is a space for stretching and training.

Self-Guided Reflection

As you listen to the segments, as well as the mixtape, try to navigate these questions after, or during the selected clip.

1. How did your body move, change, or feel while listening to the narrator? How did your face move, change or feel?
2. What did you think as soon as you heard the narrators' voice?
3. Who did the narrator make you think of and why? What face did you see in your mind?
4. What did you think of immediately after hearing the narrative?
5. What hopes do you have for the narrative?
6. What questions do you have about the narrative?
7. What do you make of the criticisms, hopes, and questions you hold about the narrative, and why?
8. Use your senses: did the statements bring any images, tastes, sounds, smells, to mind?

Audio Portion

Djoulie 12:21

Yes. My goal is—a lot of private practices do not accept insurance, because insurances are rightfully so a pain in the ass to work with. They do sometimes take like thirty days to pay you for one session. And by then you've already had like three or four sessions. [unclear] and every insurance doesn't pay the same amount. So for me, one of the things is like, I knew that I was gonna accept insurance, I knew that as painful as it would have been—as annoying—that this was something that I was willing to do. And I want to start my private practice part time while I'm still working. So that way, I am able to allow myself to take insurance and serve the community. And also there's something called Sliding Fee Scale. Basically, based on the person's income, the session may be as little as \$15, or \$20. So that way, they're still getting something, you know, but I'm still able to pay my bills. Because I think a lot of people think therapists, we just have to give out our time. And I love doing the work that I do. But I also do have responsibilities. So I'm trying to take as many insurances as I can without it being too much of a burden. But then also having the option to do the sliding fee, the sliding scale fee. And then also

the ones that can afford it, you know, they would pay full price. So those are all options that I'm going to give out of the community

End of Audio Portion

_____ * _____

This is a study in loving witness. Which is to say it is not the place for a debate on plausibility or possibility of a dream. Critique of the dreams presented here does not need to be pursued immediately, rather the origin of your own need for critique must be interrogated. I suggest that you interrogate that place in you that demands you debate the plausibility of a dream. I implore you to ask that place in you the critical questions that you must. Where does that demand come from, who taught you? That's a start.

Audio Portion

Taylor Thompson 1:04:37

Yeah, I've been thinking about what you said around this kind of unattainable-ness of, that thing that you're fighting for. And I think a lot about how much I hear people use the unattainable-ness of, of a dream—such as what people labor for in mutual aid—as a way to, like, dismantle its legitimacy. How do you navigate that?

Emmett Tross 1:05:34

So within that, like they—I get it. Like that sound bite would be wonderful to be like, "Oh, yes, so you just said, It's all worthless." But that's not what I said. It is unattainable. I know that I will never, ever, ever be able to create a perfect wave, when it's measured out in hertz whenever I'm singing throughout my entire Aria. I know that for a fact. But it does not stop me from doing everything in my power to strive for that perfection. And thus, I get the closest to my euphoria—my Mecca, my euphoric Mecca—that I can, and that gives me the solace that I need to keep going and to keep striving. Because one day, I will be able to pass that on to my counterpart, or to my successor.

Emmett Tross 1:06:52

Because if you say like, Oh, I should never fight for it, because it's unattainable. Then does that mean that like, because you won't get the perfect harvest, you don't plant your seeds? Does that mean that because you don't walk perfectly, that then you don't. [The] idea of liberation—[the] last front of liberation is perfection, which is unattainable. But it doesn't stop me from pushing forward and pushing closer and closer and closer and closer to it. Because for me, with each step that I take, it gets easier and easier and easier and easier. And I have a better life. I don't want to have a perfect life. Because I know that that's impossible. You see, it's for every single spectrum. To take, which a lot of people would do, to take the face value, to kind of front it off as this kind of resignation to the inevitable, and to equate that to your willingness to persist is absurd. That's how I would answer them, honey. Okay!

End of Audio Portion

Do not listen to these clips just one. The capacity to navigate the guiding questions, your own breath, and the content of the clips is one built from practice. Repetition is key for resonance, to honing a deliberate frequency. And resonance is the way we pass on what must be known; a wave is just a pattern remembered. Breathe. Listen. Practice. Repeat.

It all comes down to vibration, agitational roughness. Everything living and dead, everything animated and immobile, vibrates. Vibration is the internal structuring logic of matter...If everything moves with its own velocity and force, everything sounds out, every object participates in the ceaseless pulse of noisemaking. This embodied refusal to be stilled will have a gift, the gift of flesh, the gift of *otherwise* possibilities for thinking, for producing existing. This refusal of stilling has its discordant and harmonic registers, its choreographic-sonic force.

-Ashon Crawley

I have not asked you here to believe in these worlds as I do, to hear them as testimony and truth. All I ask is that you learn to hold those worlds and love and listen to them with intentional practice. I believe that alone could open radical new avenues for living. But to tell you why I

believe, I will tell you this: our very surviving flesh—the vibrational logic of our matter *refusing capture*, always on the cusp of flight, and constantly *reaching for relation*—is the testimony that there is a way out; the flesh declares victory before we can even see it, *hears what we cannot yet see*. Crawly calls it “embodied refusal”, I call it “embodied knowledge”: that pull in my chest that lets me know that the love we deserve exists, if only else(here). *The only grace you can have is the grace you can imagine*. What I mean is, what we *hear before we can see*, what we are pulled towards, what we *craft*, what we imagine, matters.

And this history project matters because when we collect stories of what people imagine through oral history, we collect stories of the flesh, we listen aurally to vocal cords’ vibrations coming into our bodies, we watch as someone uses their hands or bodies to communicate what the voice may not. My job as a black feminist oral historian becomes about recording the “embodied refusal” and “embodied knowledge” the flesh carries, and knows, and hears, and feels, sometimes long before our conscious minds can catch up. Breathe:

Audio Portion

Taylor Thompson 1:20:03

You can tell me if this is too bizarre or big of a question. Like, what do you imagine it would feel like to, to move through space—any any space you want—and feel safe? Like, can you? Can you imagine?

Lauren 1:24:44

It's frustrating. It produces more anger in me than anything else: having to be afraid. Having to be at the mercy of men and the mercy of a system [that] doesn't give a fuck That doesn't give a fuck about women, femmes, you know? I dream of that. I dream of being alone at night, and just doing what I want to do and not having to look over my shoulder, or be so afraid that I don't even

go out. You know, like, after the van thing happened at my apartment with that girl being kidnapped, I didn't go out alone at night for months. I barely went out alone at all. So, I don't know, that's such a good question. Like, what would it feel like? Everything would feel so open, like, my lungs would be so open. The world would be so open.

End of Audio Portion

I hope to archive what I hear, because although the archive is fraught, and complex, and not always what I want to see, I know that when built deliberately, it can (re)member and (re)cover what it must. *It can pass on.* It can leave breadcrumbs for sustenance, and maps. It can leave gleaming constellations and reverberant echoes. The archive lets you feel a vibration through time. Like the way stars that have died long ago, produce light waves that travel so long and far through space they only now reach our eyes. Those stars are alive and not alive, breathing fire and extinguished all at once—always already waiting for a witness. That's the way the archives work too, in my experience, they have let me feel love through time and space previously thought insurmountable.

I work and live, now, as a feminist, trusting that I will learn to love myself well enough to love you (whoever you are), well enough so that you will love me enough so that we will know, exactly where is the love: that it is here between us, and growing stronger and growing stronger

-June Jordan

So to quote June Jordan, *I work and live, now as a black feminist oral historian, building a practice and an archive, trusting that I will learn to listen well enough to love you (whoever you are), well enough so that you learn to listen to me so that we will know, exactly where is the love: it is here, in the practice, in the vibrational logic of our matter, between us and growing stronger and growing stronger.*

Mixtape Oracle

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized

Audre Lorde, Poetry is Not a Luxury

Call the mixtape oracle and flip the tape. A Side: Flight, B Feeling. I offer to you here a mixtape of stories of possible futures of *how we get free* and how it will feel. The mixtape is a disciplinary intervention. The mixtape is a map. The mixtape is a flight path and a celebration. The mixtape is a jam session of worlds and words. The mixtape tells the truth.

There is repetition, and breath, and belief all up and down this project. It is purposeful, and rhythmic and opaque for a reason: I hope you learn to read between the stars—the stories constellated, connected, and tethered by truth. I hope you find the door.

The mixtape's narrators tell us about the worlds they are trying to produce through their organizing, and in so describing, breath by breath, they bring those worlds ever closer to the flesh. Their words constellated recall the memories of what the future must become. Take their truths as testimony and breathe into the future that you can.

And I know that it is hard. It is hard to see that which has been rendered impossible, *naive*, *optimistic*. But outside of the canonical realms of reason, outside of whatever purported light that the enlightenment provides, we can locate a luscious dark: like earth-soil well tended, it is *good*

ground and will bear what it must. We will study in the dark the flight paths and possibilities that we receive and create. In that fertile dark we will find forms of illumination far more sustainable, and of far greater quality than that which we have left behind. For we can constellate the stories we hold of the future so that they glow like stars in the dark of our study. *After the future, where all black life lives anyway,* the worlds in which we hope to bring into being come into view, they are a gorgeous spectacle of life constellated, revealing gleaming doorways: our way out. Those constellations become a new form of light and warmth and fire *with which to scrutinize our lives, our hopes, our dreams.* And our imaginations will become what they must: flexible and strong, and load bearing, capable of bearing witness with love.

The mixtape is not *naive optimism* but is presented that we might bring *rigor and craft* to the art of listening and dreaming, that we claim our capacities to imagine not only in order to access a potentially pleasurable medium for ideation, but also in order to access and activate that place in each of us which gestates other worlds.

I speak here of imagination work. Where we work to explore those ontological frameworks which impede and atrophy our imaginative capacities and we work to grow beyond those frameworks, to make room for the performances, the practices, the worlds, and possibilities that we must in order to usher in the futures that we deserve.

Imagination work asks the questions: how can we learn to be deliberate and rigorous in the labor of imagining libratory futures? How can we widen our imaginative scope to understand a pluriversal economic universe, where diverse modes of relation and exchange and care are

possible? How can we hone our imaginations such that we are able to recognize and hold one another's worlds and hopes and dreams in the gaze of a loving witness? It is in an effort to advance such questions that I offer to you not only a mixtape of stories but also a method for listening to those stories. If we can learn to listen, we can learn to dream, we can learn to hear the worlds and futures that are calling to us. We engage in libratory study in the dark. We can exercise our imaginations and build the elasticity and stamina necessary to imagine expansively about the spatio-temporal possibilities of our love.

We were never meant to survive, so I recall that our surviving flesh here and our capacities to love each other so, is the miracle against the terror. Our capacities to be present with one another in loving witness becomes the proof we need to testify to what is coming. Breathe. The mixtape recalls the memory of just what the future must be(come). Listen.

Mixtape:

***See Main Audio File For Full Mixtape**

A Side: Flight

A Side Epigraph: I saw things I imagined. I saw things I imagined. I saw things I imagined.
Taking on the light. *Solange, Things I Imagined*

A Side Tracks:

Track 1: Tania Intro (Testimony)

Track 2: Trasonia (What It Means to Be Free)

Track 3: Mars (What it Means to be Free, Reprise)

Track 4: Tania (Joy in Small Moments)

Track 5: Lauren (Fantasy)

Track 6: Djoulie (Health/Care)

Track 7: Tania (Good Food is Not a Luxury)

Track 8: Catie (Good Food is not a Luxury, reprise)

Interlude Quotation:

My old cassette player, which I still have, would flip automatically if you let it. *Chunk, chunk, hiss*—the sound was that of another world revealing itself. Analog always knows that there's a ghost in the machine, and that sometimes that ghost is you. And sometimes when you play a tape too much, you can hear the other side bleeding through. *Kevin Young, Grey Album: On the blackness of Blackness*

B Side: Feeling

B Side Epigraph: I wish I knew how it would feel to be free. I wish I could break all the chains holdin' me. I wish I could say all the things that I could say (when I'm relaxed). Say 'em loud, say 'em clear, for the whole round world to hear. I wish I knew how it would feel to be free...how sweet it would be if I found I could fly. I'd soar to the sun and look down at the sea and I'd know, yes I'd know. Ah yeah I've got news for you, I already know. Free. Free. Free. Free. I'm free and I know it. *Nina Simone, I Wish I knew How It Would Feel To Be Free (Live at Montreux, 1976)*

B Side Tracks:

Track 1: Djoulie (What I Need to See)

Track 2: Trasonia (A Future, Outside)

Track 3: Mars (To Be Present in the Care)

Track 4: Emmett (Perfection)

Track 5: Emmett (Ecstasy)

Track 6: Mars (How it feels to be Free)

Track 7: Lauren (Ocean Dreams)

Works Cited + Referenced

Black Feminist Listening Practice

Find Doorways: Reference to Leanne Simpson constellation doorway theory in *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*

Of the Possible: reference to Saidiya Hartman’s “Choreography of the possible”, in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*

Foreclose others’ [futures and worlds]: Reference to Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang’s *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* and their statement that “The settler colonial imagination in which the Native hands over his claim to land, his very Indian-ness to the settler keeping. This fantasy is invested in a settler futurity and dependent on the foreclosure of an Indian futurity” (14)

Loving witness: reference to “loving witness” as theorized by Almah LaVon Rice in their article “Watchers Within, Watchers Without: My Black OCD Story

How none of us will be free until we all are (loved): Quotation from earlier essay written by Taylor Wilson Thompson *Bending Borders, Looking Elsewhere*

The future is your next breath: Quotation pulled from Alexis Pauline Gumbs article *The Transformative Dark Thing*

I had to try the alchemy and then lend the words: Quotation from Alysia Harris’ *No Poems Inside the Victorian House*

A pluriverse, a world where many worlds are possible: theory and quotation from Arturo Escobar’s *Plurivers Politics: The real and the possible*

How we get free: Reference to Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor’s *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*

No direct translation: reference to translation theory interrogated in Marisol de la Cadena’s *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds*

A world where many worlds can exist: theory and quotation from Arturo Escobar's *Plurivers Politics: The real and the possible*

Refusing capture, reaching for relation: Reference to quotation of Ashon Crawley in *Stayed, Freedom, Hallelujah*

Hear what we cannot yet see: Reference to Alexis Pauline Gumbs quotation from *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*

The only grace you can have is the grace you can imagine: Quotation from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

It can pass on: Reference from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

“(3) Alysia Harris - ‘No Poems Inside the Victorian House’ - YouTube.” Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXsXxbkHpro&t=41s>.

Cadena, Marisol de la. *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds. The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 2011*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Crawley, Ashon. “Stayed, Freedom, Hallelujah.” In *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness. BLACK OUTDOORS: INNOVATIONS IN THE POETICS OF STUDY*. Duke University Press, 2020.

Escobar, Arturo. “Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible.” *E-Duke Books Anthropology Collection 2020, Latin America in translation*, 2020.

Gumbs, Alexis. “That Transformative Dark Thing.” *The New Inquiry (blog)*, May 19, 2015. <https://thenewinquiry.com/that-transformative-dark-thing/>.

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline, and Adrienne M. Brown. *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals. Emergent Strategy Series*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020.

———. *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals. Emergent Strategy Series*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments. 1st ed*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019.

Jordan, June. “Where Is the Love.” *Speech presented at the 4th Annual Conference of Afro-American Writers, Panel: “Black Women Writers and Feminism.”* Howard University, 1978.

<https://blackfeministmind.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/where-is-the-love.pdf>.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 1994.

Rice, Almah LaVon. “Watcher Within, Watchers Without: My Black OCD Story.” *GUTS*, December 3, 2018.

<http://gutsmagazine.ca/watcher-within-watchers-without-my-black-ocd-story/>.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance. Indigenous Americas, 2017.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta, and EBSCOhost, eds. How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017.

Tuck, Eve, and K Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," n.d., 40.

Mixtape Oracle

How we get free: Reference to Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor's *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*

After the future, where all black life lives anyway: Reference and quotation of Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*

Naive, optimistic/rigor and craft: Reference to Alyssia Harris, *No Poems Inside the Victorian House*

Purported light that the enlightenment provides: Reference to Fred Moten theorization in conversation with Saidiyah Hartman at Black Outdoors Conference as well as theorization of J. Kameron Carter and Sarah Jane Cervenak. "Plainly rephrased into a question, we ask: what's at stake in being in the dark together?"

Good ground and will bear what it must: Reference to Parable of the Sower

We were never meant to survive: Quotation from *Litany of Survival*, Audre Lorde

"(3) Alyssia Harris - 'No Poems Inside the Victorian House' - YouTube." Accessed April 25, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXsXxbkHpro&t=41s>.

Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. Updated edition. Open Road Media Sci-Fi & Fantasy, 2012.

Keeling, Kara. *Queer Times, Black Futures*. New York University Press, 2019.
<https://www-degruyter-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/view/title/577764>.

Lorde, Audre. *A Litany for Survival*, 1978.

Mathew 13: 18-23, KJV. "Parable of the Sower: Matthew 13 - New International Version." Bible Gateway. Accessed May 12, 2021.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&version=NIV>.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta, and EBSCOhost, eds. *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017.

Franklin Humanities Institute. "The Black Outdoors: Humanities Futures After Property and Possession." Text. Franklin Humanities Institute, November 17, 2017. World.
<https://humanitiesfutures.org/papers/the-black-outdoors-humanities-futures-after-property-and-possession/>.

