

Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory

written by Kordell Keyandre Hammond
narrated by Kordell KeyAndre

This aural thesis is presented to
the Oral History Master of Arts Program from
the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Columbia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Oral History.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
New York, New York

July 2024

Discourse on Doing:
Oral History as Psychohistory

NARRATIVE PRELUDE - *“on and off that marvel stage”*

ABRIDGED VERSION

An Aural Thesis from An Americana Issue Oral History Project

Discourse on Doing:

Oral History as Psychohistory

Narrative Prelude - *“on and off that marvel stage”*

ABRIDGED VERSION

This is a work of narrative nonfiction and is semi-autobiographical. Nonetheless, names, titles, ideas & personal concepts have been changed. Any resulting resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely intentional and, still, coincidental. Thanks for your patience.

All rights reserved. No part of the written script or recorded audio may be reproduced, copied, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval systems—without the prior written permission of KeyAndre And Company LLC, except where permitted by law.

The information contained in the written script or recorded audio is intended to be educational and not for diagnosis, prescription, or treatment of any health disorder whatsoever. This information should not replace consultation with a competent healthcare professional. The content of the written script or recorded audio is intended to be used as an adjunct to a rational and responsible healthcare program prescribed by a healthcare provider. The author and publisher(s) are in no way liable for any misuse of the material herein.

PUBLICATION NOTE: The final version of this aural thesis, submitted for Oral History Master of Arts department approval (May 2023), has since been updated. The abridged version of this aural thesis has been revised and edited for clarity (July 2024).

Text Copyright © 2023 Hammond, Kordell K.
Product Copyright © 2024 A Publishing House, an imprint from KeyAndre And Company LLC

Published in the United States of America by
A Publishing House, an imprint from KeyAndre And Company LLC

All Rights Reserved.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABRIDGED VERSION

Dedicated to:

the future educator of colour,

sand and surf, grass and tree,

from sea to shining sea;

from the river to the sea,

from sea to shining sea.

ABRIDGED VERSION

our table

gratitude 009
quoted page 019
opening credit 020
title page 021

NARRATIVE PRELUDE - *“on and off that marvel stage”*

movement I

1. on writing - prologue: introductions 022
2. on writing history - setting the stage 035
3. on writing as psychohistory - moving through this life 052
4. on writing for the stage - preparing self 069
5. on writing for the stage, pt. 2 - practising self 086

movement II

6. on doing oral history - the act of communion
7. on doing oral history, pt. 2 - the art of discussion
8. on doing psychohistory - the act of communion / GATHER
9. on doing psychohistory, pt. 2 - the art of conversation
10. on doing historical dialogue - the humane act of life and death
11. on doing historical dialogue as psychohistory - narrative nonfiction 103

movement III

12. on writing for the stage, pt. 3 - protecting self 123
13. on doing historical dialogue as psychohistory, pt. 2 - narrative medicine 151
14. on doing historical dialogue, pt. 2 - innovations in trauma research methodology 170
15. on doing oral history, pt. 3 - epilogue: last word 185

about the type
closing credit

works cited & consulted

Resources, Works Cited and Bibliography 224
Acknowledgments & Product Details 229

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABRIDGED VERSION

gratitude

THE AURAL THESIS began for me as a public letter of protest. And with time to pass, it grew into a four-day “*interview process*”—dare we call it to be, a leadership retreat? It remains this unique oral history encounter, which spun more than twenty-four hours of student-led research, ultimately—eventually, morphing it-self into an admissions application for this very graduate program. Finally, here is a moment we give thanks to those who gave. // I am indebted to them.

In late fall of 2017, with the assistance of my then college roommate, Devin Johnson, we assembled a group of 10 undergraduate students with hopes and big dreams to direct and produce an experimental documentary film. This extracurricular activity, turned narrative medicine practice & lifestyle brand, is what encourages me to reimagine what is now A Publishing House, an imprint from the KeyAndre. Today’s NARRATIVE PRELUDE would not be possible without the following people named. Sincere thanks to the inaugural cohort of scholar-practitioners—Fredonia Artists Alliance and *Angela Wheeler*; *Devin Johnson*, Assistant Director; *Jillian Beard*, Assistant Production Manager; *Laurel Becker*, Production Manager; *Corey McCrea*, Director of Cinematography; *Corey Dawley*, Lighting & Sound Designer; *Caroline Schettler*, Hair & Makeup Coordinator; *Rajae Barnes-Wright*, Assistant Director of Cinematography. Your tireless contributions continue to be a peer-review like no other. // for setting the stage, thank you.

Said in the first person, the backbone of the aforementioned experimental project relied on non-fiction short-stories. Nonetheless short-stories, which spoke with the kind of “*kindness*,” “*compassion*,” “*empathy*,” “*patience*,” and frankness necessary when critiquing what is, contemporary North American discourse, with an emphasis toward subjectivity—what I resolve to “*colour, caste, and class*.” Sincere thanks to the following people named, who inform the person-centered frame for the keyword research and analysis methodology—*Leander Andrews*; *Bailey Bass*; *Ralph Blasting*; *Emily Crysel*; *Aaron Fern*; *Kathleen Hatt*; *Virginia Horvath*; *Ayden Karl*; *Evan Krishen*; *Jeanette McVicker*; *Mamiko Nakatsugawa*; *Selena Ragland*; *Mick Ribble*; *Jelissa Samuel*; *Jimmy Scamacca*; *Anissa Scharborough*; *Destiny Smith*; *Ray Stewart*; *Theresa Thordarson*; *Casterline Villar*; *Arthur Wang*. // for what is now the KeyAndre Archives, thank you.

To *Rachael Spall*, Illustrator & Designer, thank you for imagining a multi-dimensional visual persona that spoke to the flow-of-dialogue we hope the forthcoming discussion-based product line—Discussions By Definition: a bridge to a new awakening—can tactfully co-facilitate. And to *Brad Tuller*, Mixing Engineer and Mastering Conisure, thank you for preparing the grounds for what would become the most exquisite soundscape; what is now the title track for the forthcoming podcast series—A View Through Them, the podcast—custom score, respectfully titled “*A Conversation.*” Together, your art-work defends the role of compassionate listening when doing oral history *as* psychohistory. // for new genres of music-making, thank you both.

+++

The work of the following community of creators, artists and scholars, who met me at the helm of my academic studies in the humanities, are invaluable. From Suffolk County Community College: to *Ms. Elaine Preston* and *Dr. Jacqueline Romano*; *Prof. Christopher Holfester* and *Prof. Ralph Kanard Williams*, thank you. Your course-works on English Comp. and English Lit., Communication 101, and Music History, motivate me to keep pushin’ pen toward knowing past, present, and future moments with specificity. // for teaching and learning, thank you.

And here’s to the community of administrators, instructors and academic professors who made Fredonia, New York home for us for three rewarding years. I had the fortune to be cast as the *Pirate King* in Fredonia’s mainstage production of “The Pirates of Penzance” upon my transfer to SUNY Fredonia, the year now 2016. To Fredonia’s Department of Theatre & Dance, from *David Stellhorn*; *Laurel, Jess and Dixon*; *Ms. Helen Myers*; *Ms. Paula Peters*; *Phil Wackerfuss*; *Ms. Angelika Summerton*; to *Dr. James Ivy*; *Dr. Jessica Hillman-McCord*; *Ms. Sam Kenny* and *Dr. Thomas Loughlin*, Department Chair, for trusting the possibilities of re-invention. From the Fredonia School of Music, a heartfelt thank you to *Mr. Ray Stewart*, Fredonia Concert Band Conductor; *Theresa Thorderson*, for piano plays and trips to the farmers-market; and the incomparable *Mrs. Lisa Layman*, for reminding us how vital it is to bring one’s own life narration in-to the song and music-making process. // for improvised choreography, thank you.

To *Dr. Virginia Horvath*, former President of SUNY at Fredonia; *Dr. Terry Brown*, former Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs; and *Dr. Ralph Blasting*, former Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia, thank you for generously supporting what is now a research initiative, A View Through Them (AVTT). From *Dr. Khristian King*, Executive Director of the Department of Student Engagement & Inclusion with the Intercultural Center at SUNY Fredonia; to *Dr. Cedric Howard*, former Vice President for Enrollment & Student Services, thank you for going the extra mile to water our black ambition, respectfully. To *Dr. Jeanette McVicker*, our Theories of Gender professor and Senior Seminar Advisor, thank you for encouraging us, from day one as an English major to graduate school application, now successful program completion. I am thankful for your belief in my commitment to centering social justice in our service work. // for mentorship, thank you.

To *Ms. Kathie Hatt* and the Fredonia Ticket Office; *Rebekah Conti*, former Assistant Director of Pre-College Outreach, *Cory Bezek*, Executive Director of Enrollment Services; *Ms. Ivory Brooks*, Department of Student Wellness and Support; and *Jacquelynn Akins & Bree-Ana Dukes* from Residence Life—Big Blue Thank You, for being a subtle though rather essential voice of reason, when-ever and where-ever the nudge or hug was needed. Thank you, to *Ms. Lisa Newell*, Director of Judicial Affairs at SUNY Fredonia; and to *Ms. Erin Willis*, Assistant Director of the Study Abroad & Exchange Programs at SUNY at Fredonia. In addition, thank you, to *Ms. Anne*, and *Dr. John Marah* of SUNY Brockport, for accompanying our first return to the Motherland, West Africa. Your spirit brought us to this checkpoint, too. // for genuine guidance, thank you.

To our instructors and academic professors from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' Department of English and Department of Psychology at SUNY Fredonia. Thank you, to *Ms. Laurie Detenbeck*; *Dr. Ann Siegle Drege*; *Dr. Natalie Gerber*; *Dr. Christina Jarvis*; *Dr. Scott Johnston*; *Dr. David Kaplin*, academic advisor; *Dr. John Kijinski*; *Dr. Saundra Liggins*; *Dr. Jeanette McVicker*; *Dr. Bruce Simon*, English Department Chair; *Dr. Birger Vanwesenbeeck*; to *Dr. Cathy Creeley*; *Dr. Jack Croxton*, Psychology Department Chair; *Dr. Darrin Rogers*. With every syllabi—designed to be a road map for intellectual navigation—you adapted your approach to teaching and learning. // for literary and psycho-social methods, thank you.

In particular, I would like to thank two individuals whose syllabi, in various ways, were the precursory draft of what is now the KeyAndre narrative medicine private practice, A Private Practice. Prof. Birger Vanwesenbeeck, your ENGL 106: Introduction to Literary Studies course-work was seminal. Your instruction brought our attention to programs and schools of thought like the literary canon, literary history, literary theory, close-reading and close-listening, reader-response theory, representation and form and structure. This class prepares students to become a better writer, close-reader and listener—a more critically thinking human being. This class shows us how language and other systems of coded sign(s) offer frameworks for which we can sustain civilization: How authors can read and write and listen with intention.

Prof. Scott Johnston, similarly, ENGL 357: Literacy, Language, & Learning Theory, helps shift the “critical consciousness” component into place. Our first pass at what I’d come to define as a narrative arc roadmap—Essai #5 titled *‘Discussions By Definition’ Word Selection Pragmatics: Situational, Social, and Cultural Factors Create Our Schemas*, a response to Chapter 1: “Definitions of Reading: They Make a Difference” and Chapter 2: “Schemas and Transactions in the Reading Process by Constance Weaver,”—was handed over to you. You engaged my Essais like they were something worth investing. As someone neither registered nor interested in doing coursework in adolescent education, who stood incandescently with a number of English majors unsure of what we’d make of an English degree following graduation, thank you for riding it out with this entrepreneurial spirit. // for accepting imagination as fundamental key, thank you.

+++

After Fredonia, my intellectual community grew tenfold. Using some form of socio-historical linguistic analysis picked up from our literary days, and mirroring said attentiveness on-to the next page, however painful to share or painstakingly difficult to receive, this is the route traveled when thinking critically about the symbiotic relationship between oral history *and* the social sciences. As a result, I have resolved my scholarly thinking around health and wellness, and care-work more broadly, into doing oral history *as* psychohistory; asking why?

When given my first OHMA fieldwork assignment in the late fall of 2019, I knew who to call. We took a few moments to catch up, then immediately pressed record. Sincere thanks to case study participants and database contributors, An Americana Issue Oral History Project, the pilot project—*Dr. Aaron D. Johnson*, my former High School African-American Studies teacher; and *Dr. Sherill A. Spruill*, my former High School Voice and Diction Coach. You each shared your personal coming-of-age stories with the broader OHMA community and, of more sentimental meaning, with the KeyAndre Archives. The symbolic measure of stepping into community “traditionalist” or “translator” of orature, in particular transcriber of stories from the African and Indigenous or Afro-Indigenous diasporic global network, is a huge responsibility. It is and forever will be an honour, to listen to them—your words and questions—and to carry them onward. Gratefully, the KeyAndre is next level because of you. // for taking knee, thank you.

In an effort to reel-in rather than build-out the KeyAndre Archives, recording and transcribing and—getting goosebumps traveling 3mph while—preserving long-form human discourse between multiple subject matters of concern, I will always classify a studious tradition. To our thesis advisor, *William (bill) McAllister*, who provided unquestioned compassion when my self-inflicted anxiety and slippery bouts of perfectionism took over. Nonetheless, you’ve allowed my reporting on doing oral history as psychohistory the space to breathe. Keeping your faith and editorial eye focused on what it truly means to have research endeavour which is then spoken in the first-person. Thank you very much for your patience, bill. Additionally, thank you to the Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory & Empirics (INCITE) team at Columbia; *Michael Falco*, INCITE Executive Director; *Peter Bearman*, INCITE Director and OHMA Co-founder; *Rebecca McGilveray*, OHMA Administrative Coordinator; the Oral History Association and the Oral History Review; and the Center for Oral History Research at Columbia. To *Dr. Kimberly Springer*, Curator at the Oral History Archives at Columbia’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library, thank you for providing clear instruction about the craft and precision of preserving artefacts of significance—like, the human voice. Finally, to *Nyssa Chow*, thank you for welcoming a novice OHMA scholar-practitioner that brisk autumn day, 2018. Who knew years later we’d smile and bond over the legacy of Carl Rogers? // for the support, thank you.

Likewise, we are grateful to *Ms. Mary Marshall Clark*, our Oral History Method and Theory professor and OHMA Founding Co-Director; and to *Dr. Amy Starecheski*, our Oral History Fieldwork professor and OHMA Associate Director. Together, your perspectives have nourished my comprehension of what the “oral history encounter” would even be. May you continue leading what it means to speak, toward a future of discussion-based teaching and learning, open and ready to receive different world-views. // for examples by scholar-practitioners, thank you.

Initially compelled by global uncertainty to re-consider the usual pop-up event, OHMA decided to share work with increased access and longevity beyond local New York area audiences and beyond the span of two days. GATHER is an integrated, multimedia, virtual platform. To the Oral History Master of Arts 12th cohort at Columbia—*Noor Alzamami; Eleonora “Ele” Anedda; Rattana Bounsouaysana; Lily Doron; Kaoukab Chebaro; Lisa R. Cohen; Lauren Instenes; Elizabeth “Liza” Jefimova; Anahí Naranjo; Aluel Bol Kuanyin; Claire Thu Anh Le; Jennie Morrison; liú méi z.b. chen 劉梅智苑梁; Zack Daniel Schiavetta; Courtney Hazel Scott; Sach Takayasu; Francine D. Spang-Willis*. Like much in the world throughout the dawn of Coronavirus, co-creating with you all, albeit in person at Lewisohn or held virtually via Zoom, was real, and beautiful, every-single-day. And a wholesome thanks to *Carlin Zia*, our 12th cohort teaching assistant, who skillfully assisted with—for the first time in the history of OHMA—designing a fully digital curation of our student fieldwork. // thank you, kindly.

In early summer of 2019, when I first relocated to New York, NY to start coursework with OHMA the following fall semester, I was privileged to join Humanities New York (HNY), the non-profit state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, as a graduate student intern. My transition from rural Fredonia in Western New York to the Upper West Side of Manhattan was nothing short of memorable and cool – with thanks to *Sara Ogger*, Executive Director, and HNY administrative staff and board. To *Adam Capitanio; Nicholas MacDonald; Joseph Murphy; Antonio Pontón-Núñez; Scarlett Rebman; James Taylor; Addie Walker; Michael Washburn*, thank you for saving room, and introducing me to the world of public history. Your mentorship and humanities expertise will forever be a guiding North Star. // for Humanity's sake, thank you.

Furthermore, HNY introduced me to a number of grassroots, NY-based community organizers and non-profit cultural institutions. The following people inspired in shaping my approach to being an open-ended inter-viewer. To *Adrienne Hill*, from the Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project; *Ansely Erickson* and *Karen Taylor*, from the Harlem Education History Project; *Darren St. George* and *Lauren Brincat*, from Preservation Long Island and the Jupiter Hammon Project; *Stephaine E. Goodalle* and *Betsy Sussler*, from BOMB Magazine; *Ken Fox* and *Barbara Tepa Lupack*, from the Finger Lakes Films Trail; and, regarding our keyword research and analysis case study report, *Nicki Pombier*, OHMA alum & faculty and Artist Resident with The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University. // for keeping an open mind, thank you.

To *Dr. Sayantani DasGupta*, Senior Lecturer in the Discipline of Narrative Medicine at Columbia University School of Professional Studies, thank you for welcoming me off the infamous waitlist and into the class-room. To *Dr. Rita Charon*, Founder and Executive Director of the program in Narrative Medicine at Columbia, thank you for gifting me with what turned to be a very important Zoom call. To *Dr. Mohamed Amer Meziane* a.k.a. “Prof.” in the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life, Department of Religion at Columbia, and our thoughtful group of peers, thank you for feeding the best of Hegelian dialectics; who knew “Dialectics: Theology and Philosophy between Europe and Africa” would be the syllabus the KeyAndre narrative medicine practice & lifestyle brand needed next? // for taking chance, thank you.

The three anonymous readers who reviewed a version of manuscript one for the aural thesis; had many useful suggestions, I thank each one of them. Furthermore, completing this aural thesis would not have been possible without friendship. The following people named have in some way or another offered quality conversations that, without, would have been near tough to write and read and record during the past three eventful years of unprecedented loss, anxiety, and uncertainty. From *Rabbi Sam Bulstin* at Ahavath Achim Synagogue of Atlanta, to *Maya Zinkow* who kindly introduced our worlds -- Thank You. To *Gleyce Almeida-Farrell*, Founder and Psychotherapist with Holistic Wellness Practice of Alpharetta, Georgia. To Yoga instructor and now dearest colleague *Ms. Firsosh Qureshi*, for welcoming me back home to Long Island, NY. This second north-in-transition made possible because of you. // for taking chance, thank you.

To *Tirrel Cherry*, thank you for words of affirmation. To *Mrs. Mari Danzi*, who connected me with *Michael, Richard and Drew*, who then trusted me enough to spread-out and spend time with *Ella and Otis*. I had only a few more productive weeks of nourishing my creativity for this aural thesis manuscript than the one I spent working from your gorgeous beach-front property, overlooking the Peconic River. Special thanks to *Danny Golde, Elan Ganeles, Yaffa Amulebomb, Raphi Simonson*, and *Aliza Amsellem*, for a humbling introduction to Judaism and what is forever the Sabbath; to *Lawrence Alexander III, Ellen Hietsch, Kathryn Lige*, for leadership and innovation; to *Tommy Linares*, for Yoga and mindfulness; to *Khadijah Adburahman & Maurice Ivy Dowell*, and *Alex Brunson; Darold Cuba; Mark Campbell II, Alissa Rae Funderburk* and the Black Oral Historian Network. I'd also like to thank the lovely *Courtney H. Scott* and wonderful *Syd Jones*, too; *Imani Hite* and *Isabella Danzi; Tim Kempton-Blair; to Christian Krasnek*, for the likes of *Timothée Chalamet*; to *Deven Hurt*, for being an EdTech fan since day one; to *Aaron Rhee*, for the future of Narrative Medicine; and finally my Ghanaian brother *Jason Nieh*, for being good company, to the moons of West Africa and back. To *Ezra N. Felder*, for the lovely reminder to dance like nobody's watching. I love you. // for kindness and patience, thank you.

To the primary source documents who supported the most endearing phase of this strange, wild, and narrative medicine practice. There are no English speaking words to neither effectively communicate nor adequately describe what being your second born son means. The printed word does little for the gifts you gave and continue to give. To my first teacher and mother, *Ms. Dorraine D. Barrow*, and *Mr. Kenute E. Hammond*, thank you for sharing your testimony in ways we could reach and touch, feel, smell, taste, and hear. // thanks so much, for being here.

To older brother *Kenute Jordan, Myles*, and *Mesha*, thank you for group-chat LOVE. To cousin *Tiffany*, for big-sisterly advice; and *Auntie Pauline & Uncle Roger*, for offering places to go while here in Atlanta, Georgia. To *Auntie Rene, Ms. Deana* and *Uncle Lee Baldwin*, for being and remain-ing prayed up. To cousin *Truest Corde*, for homegrown sweet greens and Black Sage. And to *Auntie Kat & Uncle Will*, thank you for unconditional self-love. The best primary sources were never placed in boxes, archives or left in books on shelves by the stairs but they are, if ever so gently placed, right here all along. // for keeping the score, body-soul-spirit, thank you.

+++

In the wise words of Savannah Sage, “Writing is ancestor work.” Furthermore, we might now also add, writing ... and the discourse which precedes and accompanies, and follows said ancestral work—is the work of discovering more and more about our-selves: past, present, and thereafter. The value inherent in the KeyAndre, is found in writing and reading, and physically moving ourselves through fraught words that are conscious nonetheless. Your *Grandma Cee Cee* is my mom’s mother, and I’d be remiss not to say her name in this moment of thanksgiving. As we’re forever teaching and learning about the historical fallacies and tough legacies of ancestral lands, past, present and thereafter, there is after-all is said and done a core principle and true essence within many Indigenous cultures that remain, where “they”—meaning by “they” the people who are made up of body, brain and spirit, perhaps influenced by memory, culture and tradition—they do all things with an awareness of seven generations in mind. I can only aspire to be so care-free.

THE SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE says, “the thoughts and actions we make today ought to offer a sustainable world” at least “seven generations into the future.” It is to them—the future educator of colour—the ancestors-them, that I am reminded to whom I am here to serve and do for. As they seek refuge in us, I devote myself to them, whoever and wherever they find themselves to be. As I pray for guidance in this realm here on Earth, I pray for their protection. With the deepest gratitude, since the first open beginning on the marvel stage, I wish to thank every-one supporting today’s aural thesis. A time was certainly well had. // for being said village.

Always yours,

Kordell K Hammond

Suffolk County of Long Island, New York - July 2024

ABRIDGED VERSION

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

"Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion."

bell hooks

*"Psychohistory, as a science, will always be problem-centered,
while history will always remain period-centered.
They are simply two separate tasks."*

Lloyd DeMause

*"Compassion has always been the key to whether we understand each other or not. And so goes
the world. Like so many things, this is old medicine, carried in timeless pouches we call stories."*

Mark Nepo

MOVEMENT I

opening credit

Narrator: A Publishing House, an imprint from the KeyAndre, kindly presents: NARRATIVE PRELUDE -
“on and off that marvel stage” — an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.
This audio production is written by Kordell Keyandre Hammond, and narrated for you, by me, Kordell KeyAndre.

Kordell KeyAndre: *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023) has seen many iterations.
This abridged version, for public release, is revised and edited for clarity.

AMERICAN IDIOMS, like “From sea to shining sea,” originally used in the characters of some of the
English colonies in North America, happen to be just and timely, though given today's sign of the times, they do not
suffice. To this end, in solidarity with the Palestinian children, the author extends the dedication section
from the original to include, “From the river to the sea.” This idiom refers geographically to the areas between
the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

No matter the time of day, the definition and terms which constitute war-torn countries and genocide have never
changed. Circumstances may differ, yes. But what is violence remains the same. What is going on is not a war in
the traditional sense of the term, beloved. This is, yet again, another form of “genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,”
and “erasure.”... going on since 1948.

Kordell KeyAndre: As it relates to power and greed, from the river to the sea, from sea to shining sea, may
we all see soon the light of day. This narrative prelude is dedicated to them—the future educator of color; from the
river to the sea, from sea to shining sea.

Discourse on Doing:
Oral History as Psychohistory

Narrative Prelude - *“on and off that marvel stage”*

ABRIDGED VERSION

on writing - prologue: introductions

“Writing is a prestigious profession which puts one right in the center of the world, and to remain on top, one has to work really hard, the aim being a good and original theme, simplicity in expression and the use of the irreplaceable word.”

— Nelson Mandela

From a letter to Zindzi Mandela,
written on Robben Island, September 4, 1977

The narrative prelude is an offering. A little something diligently prepared over the course of three years. It must be said, my friends: the rumination process—that is, working through and processing through something thoroughly, writing for the ear and reading aloud the aural thesis, asking for forgiveness; reading and writing more and more and researching more and more about God only knows—studying all these human-man made horrors, so that they are no longer beyond my comprehension, reading widely—rinsing and repeating, the process—was for me. A restoration of my very character.

Narrator: This internal narrative-based work was deeply impactful. I use the language ‘internal’ here because, well, as it once was, that’s what it is. A private conversation between me and my higher self, a source like no other. A personal thinking journey, if you will. I found it to be very insightful, actually. At a certain age things are not misunderstandings or mistakes anymore, I thought. At a certain age one must be held accountable for their own actions and, likewise, their own well-being. Their own healing, even. At a certain age, they are responsible for their own research, too, their own self-education. “Education.”

Self-education, not meant to be a public endeavor, I thought. One’s education is exactly just that: Who you are ... it’s your character. That is, who you are. How you choose to show up in the world, for your-self and for Others. Choose your character., the choice is yours. Some questions some may ask throughout this narrative-based work: What are the “values” you hold, shaping your practice, informing who you are;

What are the “principles,” guiding how you make all these day to day decisions ... important life decisions. How do you manage to make sense of all these new ideas, stories and definitions; the rising sea levels, for example, the emotions, the changing tides— —and of most importance, I think the choice is entirely up to you. Maybe that’s the fun part? The ability to choose; autonomy.

Being able to step up and out of our individual lives, self-correct, change our minds, become a new and mold our-selves into who you of all people want to be. I’ve been made to believe a diligent practice of reading and writing can help you capture that critical thinking, internal and personal foraging process. To hold it in time; to become a scientist and closely analyze that which is your life and times.

Narrator: At least, I know it has for me.

* * *

“Since the space in which both civic and private life is lived has become so indistinguishable from inner and outer, from inside/outside,” I’ve decided to show my work here today, and make my private terrains, personal details, the interior of my house accessible to you all, close-readers and close-listeners alike. For what it’s worth, if you or someone you know finds amusement, or in some way benefit from its existence, great. Art is meant to be shared, after all. “I am a writer and my faith,” says Toni Morrison, “in the world of art is intense but not irrational or naïve.

Narrator: “Art invites us to take the journey beyond price, beyond costs into bearing witness to the world as it is and as it should be. Art invites us to know beauty and to solicit it from even the most tragic of circumstances. Art reminds us that we belong here. And if we serve, we last.”¹ How’s *that* for a first quote of the day?

Narrator: Perhaps this character-realization thing sets in at age twenty-five, when the “prefrontal cortex,” part of the frontal lobe, said to be fixed or awakened, and you-yourself are now fully capable of comprehending this big bright beautiful and, now, adult world, with all its “glory,” “joy,” depth of one-ness, and “fun.”

¹ Morrison, Toni. “The Source of Self-Regard.” *The Foreigner’s Home: The Price of Wealth, the Cost of Care*. 2019.

This is just one of many life transitions we as humans can go through, be pulled through, this human form. In the name of sound reasoning and decision making: yes, this narrative prelude is my chance to set the record straight. A course correction to the story, if you will. A step by step slog through the drama and trauma, the proverbial mud that is my coming of age. It's a trek, honestly. It's also an opportunity, for both me & you, to rest and reset. To reintroduce our-selves. A returning to the purity of my heart. "My faith," Morrison continues, "in art [...] [...] rivals my admiration for any other discourse. Its conversation with the public and among its various genres[,] is critical to the understanding of what it means to care deeply and to be human completely. I believe."

How can we collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are? Well, I'll tell you: we tell them. We share our truth proudly, consistently and unashamedly. We tell them—our authentic stories—unapologetically, we tell them in the face of adversity, we tell them anyway. We shout it, sing it, dance it, write it.. paint the most authentic you all over the canvas that is your life. We allow them, the authentic stories we tell, to move us. And whoever is left, perhaps applauding your art, is your people. I'm Kordell KeyAndre. The telling of my story, is a story which we are still experiencing. A scenario where some so-called white people—they have taken great advantage of what is called black talent and so-called black people, and have created forums, even, many of them ... where by they—whoever they are, perhaps the so-called white people—they are positioned in a way to benefit from our so-called black talent, in ways like never before seen. I know, this all sounds very wonky, but bear with me. And brace yourself, I wasn't expecting to hear something like this today, either.

Kordell KeyAndre: It's our shared story, after all. It's ours to be shared, and we're here to share ourselves, I thought. The NBA is a prime example, the NFL is an even greater one. Let's start with the NFL ... I mean, the NBA, the National Basketball Association. A forum where the so-called white people have seen, noticed an opportunity to merchandise and to market what is called black talent, what is black excellence, to make billions even trillions of dollars, a profitable venture.

While they—the so-called white people—give us—the so-called black people—scraps. In comparison to them, and all of what they have allocated for themselves over the course of generation; Yes, for the record, it's scraps.

Kyrie Irving recently shared via Twitter the link to the documentary “Hebrews 2 Negros,” which informs us—the public—that the Israelis occupying Palestine are of European origin, and likely aren’t one of the 12 Tribes.

Kyrie Irving is a professional basketball player. A professional player in the NBA, that is. He was chastised, yet again, for moving against the grain of what is popular or mainstream, conventional or normal. In fact ... this fact, which has been hidden it seems, it negates their claims that they are Gd’s chosen people, which begs to question their entitlement to Palestine, the land.

Kordell KeyAndre: The documentary shows who the actual tribes likely are. This showing really pisses a lot of American Ashkenazi’s off, and they tried to cancel Kyrie for merely sharing the link to the documentary on Prime Amazon. I imagine the documentary is still accessible on the platform. Regardless ... I appreciate Kyrie Irving, you know, for being able to do the hard thing which is often the right thing, in the broader context of humanity, despite how unpopular it might be.

What does it look like to do the righteous thing? How can we collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are?

01b

Kordell KeyAndre: I GREW UP SINGING songs in front of large audiences, a strange spotlight of sorts. Starting from a young age, I learned how to memorize song lyrics, and present them in a way for people to enjoy. The Star-Spangled Banner, one of America’s National Anthem, is one of my favorite song to sing for people. When you grow up in the spotlight, singing America’s anthem at that, no matter how wide the lens, precise the architecture or how deep the history of the venue, an eye is an eye and a tooth is a tooth; we can be singing the same song, but really experiencing two entirely different experiential worlds. In America, your body of work becomes theirs for the taking / history making.

That is, if you do not yet know how to manage your-self; to manage your own emotions, to manage your own body, to know your own body, to know yourself; to self-govern, set boundaries and set your own tone. There can be role

models at every street corner, there can be guidance counselors at your service, sometimes if you're lucky and really blessed like I am, intuitive parents, patient family members and some really supportive friends. What are the benefits there, of owning your body of work? If you allow it, the line distinguishing what's mine and what's yours, what is to be considered public and what is considered to be private can still become blurred. You genuinely think sharing your world view is a normal state of being. You don't realize you've been mis-led, mis-informed. That your being in the spotlight all this time, created a false identity ... a false sense of self. You don't realize you're over-sharing at all ... these people don't deserve you ... these people—they haven't earned this, the right, to who you are ... to hear, to witness you sing your song, is a gift What have they done to deserve this side of you, all of you? And for free ... wait, what? Were they pimping me out? You don't realize you're over-sharing at all until you get to graduate school and learn about the linguistic philosophy of Franz Kafka, a German-language novelist and writer from Prague, and then you realize the best of us are only acting a part, playing a role, wearing a mask, the world is in fact not yours for the making;

“Since I am nothing but literature,” the world is already made. Minds, already made up. In an entry from her final published work, *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations* (2019), Toni Morrison says, these two realms—the public and the private—have been compressed into a ubiquitous blur, a rattling of our concept of home. The NARRATIVE PRELUDE - “on and off that marvel stage,” is my chance to set the record straight, and hopefully reclaim my peace, my home-body, what's rightfully mine.

Much of my alone time, as an adolescent coming of age in the suburbs of Long Island, my home state of New York, was spent paying careful attention to what Others cared for, what they cared about, what arouse them; what elicited an applause, what earned the coveted community stripe or the badge, what secured the vote, what booked the gig. When did you learn that you had to perform to receive love? And when did you first feel the fear of if you didn't perform correctly then love may be taken away? My senior year of high school I was named Homecoming King, which doesn't say much, but stay with me. It became second nature, is what I mean to say, my business early on to learn them—the so-called white people, sometimes even before I knew myself, just to keep the peace; to comprehend their worlds, their words, their songs, their language, their heritage—including the digital or ephemeral—their temperaments, too, and what brings them joy and ease. Codependency can be a deep wounded

trauma. For some reason, I thought that was the whole plot, the central point, the main idea—to be dependent on them—to be the life of the party, for them. To sing their songs, for them. To go out of my way, to abandon my natural needs and desires, for them. To sing their songs, for them.

Kordell KeyAndre: For a long time I viewed myself to be a confident, strong black man—whatever that means. I think, I was just trying to fulfill the likeness of a supporting character in someone else's story. I didn't quite know what I was doing then, I just so happened to be doing it. And to be doing it well, I'd say. Whatever the task or assignment, for better or worse, the job got done. What I failed to realize, is that, this is my life.

At a certain age, you are responsible for your-self and where you go; the choice is entirely up to you. Maybe that's the fun part. However it's a big responsibility, not to be taken lightly, I thought. And so, I needed this reckoning with self, a racial awakening we'll call it. I needed to go on this narrative, very personal journey to discover who and what it is that I am. Before I can truthfully sing a song—the Star-Spangled Banner, one of America's National Anthem, one of my favorite song to sing for people—or master anything in this adult world, I ought to first know and master who I am. I needed a stark moment to myself and I'm thankful to have had it; this self-education. To learn who I am. To unlearn who they told me to be. It's an on-going process. You never quite reach the pinnacle of being self-educated, whatever that means ... there is always more to learn, is what I mean, more to do and see and ultimately to become. You live and you learn more and more about your-self, every day. every single day.

Self-education, it's intended to be a private endeavor, I thought.

+ + +

Kordell KeyAndre: When one calls themself “black” and “African-American,” I found out, one makes themself a foreigner in your own country. Can you morally imagine that? What that does. It is a choice, afterall, a sensible one. Even people of color from abroad, that is people of color from the Caribbean, from African or Asia or from Europe, or they who self-identify as black but do not, technically, classify as African-American (on the census) – – they come here, to the Americas, the land of rich milk and sweet honey, to take advantage of the great

opportunity, that is the genocide of the American Indian (indigenous to America) population and their natural resources, the land.

I mean, why else would they come here, if not to make a better life for they-themselves? As refugees on the run, fleeing another worn-torn country in dis-stress, in search of new pastures, a new prideland turned war zone? They do this, seemingly, knowing full well what they are doing ... black white or otherwise, if you are a so-called immigrant, or descendant of an immigrant occupying land in the Americas, you know what is going on here ... I mean, to a certain extent, you have to know what is going on in order to navigate safely and somewhat successfully; the social experiment that is America is a running con. And anyone who participates in it knows, to some extent, the crimes against humanity they are committing. All nations conspired and are, still, actively, conspiring against us.

When you think about it, it's sickening. How they'll smile in your face—the immigrants of all colors, shapes and sizes. Going along with the American saga, the play. They manage to come here, uhh ... to America, and feel as though they-themselves not only have the right, but the obligation to colonize. As if they are entitled to a piece of the American dream, too. I mean, yes, even dark-skinned Africans, they can be colonizers, too. Colonization: it's a thought process, after all, a language processing system, a way of viewing the world. It's not a shade or colour. The misconception, though, that colonization is reserved for so-called white people is indoctrination and mere American propaganda. Sometimes they-themselves are the best kind; to an un-awakening Negro, all black folks are [not] cut from the same cloth. As the refrain goes, "*All skin folks are not kinfolk,*" itself said to be an echo from past, present and future me, somewhere in distant. As the saying goes, "*immigrants, [they] get the job done.*"

"Smile and wave boys." ... To smile and wave.

"This is our house." ... We're quick to raise awareness and fight for liberation in Palestine, respectfully, yet our own house is yet to be in order? No wonder why that is,

the joke really is on us, not them. What about the colonizing action and slow-to-burn genocide happening, taking place right here on your own shores, and to your own people? To yourself? Awakening is realizing everything we are taught by society is a programming. I mean, these layers to identity formation can be deeply personal and nuanced, but we're speaking in the King's English, my friends. C'mon. Let's get with the program.

This is America.

Kordell KeyAndre: This awakening is not a NEW AGE movement. It is ancient wisdom, my friends. There is great wisdom—and the possibility of not only growth but transformation, in this awakening. It is who we are at our deepest core. You are an infinite well of ancient lifetime, mi amor, in mission to elevate consciousness.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: The journey that was the past three years, devoted to building out this An Americana Issue-inspired community oral history launch project, and ultimately the infrastructure to my body of work, the discussion box set series; a prelude to something a little more hopefully straight-and-narrow ... It's hard to believe this all started with my taking a knee on the campus in Western New York at SUNY, the year 2017. More to come about that later. But, in the meantime, please, enjoy Chapter/Episode 1 of NARRATIVE PRELUDE - "on and off that marvel stage," an aural thesis from An Americana Issue Oral History Project.

01c

Kordell KeyAndre: Perhaps had my racial-awakeing began sooner, I'd be worlds away from where I am right now: working through and processing, writing for the ear and reading aloud this thing, writing and reading more and more about God only knows—studying ... reading widely, so that they—these issues, are no longer beyond my comprehension. In other words, doing oral history *as* psychohistory.

Trying to make sense of the issues that be by asking *why*.

Why on Earth would something like this exist?

From “colonialism” to “imperialism” ... “sexism” and “racism” all the way back to “white supremacy” ... Why on Earth would terms and items like these exist; all these terms and conditions, definitions-in the first place?

Kordell KeyAndre: Why would someone go away to school ... pay a cost to attend a school ... to study, these issues? I mean, it doesn't make logical sense. They are not tangible items, per se, something someone can hold in their hands, but they are a thought process, a way of thinking about the world. A language processing system, which begets our behavior and, alas, our destiny.

Why would someone go away to school to study these issues? Unless they genuinely are interested in how this racket of an economic forum works but I mean, really, now where can we go from here?

Although this day is neither ENTERTAINMENT nor PERFORMANCE, it is however a form of ART. This oral history encounter—doing oral history as psychohistory—isn't therapy. This internal narrative-based reading and writing work is neither therapy nor journalism, right? It is, however, meant to be an on-going “dialogue.”

Dialogue. Therapeutic in nature, perhaps, and healing in process, sure.

It is a reminder that regardless of our assigned differences in society—what is GENDER, what is RACE, what is CLASS—and all the identity theory, I am You. Everyone you come to look at is also you. You are the entire universe experiencing itself ... until you know that ... you will always try to become something else. When you see me, you are seeing yet another miraculous version of you, reflecting back a part of your existence. When you on hate me, you hate on a part of your-self, something that is within your experience, here on Planet Earth. You only hate what you do not understand, I thought, or comprehend? So here I am, trying to understand, trying to comprehend. Here I am, trying. “When incompetence and irrationality run roughshod over decency and continue to endanger ‘lesser’ lives, we can anticipate a steep rise in the cost of caring. A cost to be borne if we value civilization.” And in this way, to this end, everything which I experience is, in some way shape or form, an equal or

lesser part of you, one whole. And who I am, already. To minimize, disregard, challenge or erase, degrade or question something that's already within your experience – an emotion or another person—something you've attracted into view, you're only doing that to yourself; that's your view of the world. Likewise, to care about you is to care about the future of civilization. To look after your mind-body temple, your land ... is an act of self-love.

Vast acceptance is what we need now more than ever. Trusting your-self. Accepting who you are already, let it be. Let it go. Try not to hold grudges. Surely, take however much needed time to process your grief. Those who care will understand and extend grace. My loved ones have to accept that about me. The process is not linear and some things do take longer than others to recover from. I really go through things, we all go through things. Perhaps had my racial-awakeing began sooner, I'd be worlds away from where I am right now: doing oral history *as* psychohistory.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: THE AURAL THESIS is a multidisciplinary work, cross-culturally made to outline who and what has influenced the author or writer socially, emotionally, economically or politically, intellectually or aesthetically. Its contents span a variety of topics that cross traditional boundaries of history and psychology.

The chosen narrator has spoken aloud this inaugural aural thesis—inspired by the author or writer's master of arts program application—not necessarily for you, the audience of close-readers and close-listeners; not for your comfort level, either but—to continue the excavation of a healing, for the author or writer's soul. Scientists say the final stage of healing is not giving a fuck; he, the author, has done enough pandering to the comfort of the so-called white man or woman. If you or someone you know finds amusement or in some way benefit from its existence, great, again, great. But it must be said: the initial intent of the AVTT: An Americana Issue project was of the author or artist's own fruition. In fewer words, this work-day is not about you. The years' rumination process—was for me. Listening over the words the author has since written and talking through aloud what may have surprised or unsettled you, for example, or more generally what may have moved you, is a form of narratology—within itself. I think it's ready to be shared.

It's said to build community; it's to communicate, it's to express, it's to understand. "It is also to support the use of imagination, to show others that there is always more to explore, and that in this exploration is where the discovery lies. [In the work, in the doing, in the process: the journey] Writing, creativity, imagination, exploration—these are not things restricted to people who deem themselves 'writers,' to people who write professionally or aim for publication." [...] Writing, creativity, imagination, exploration ... "These are [literary] tools open to all of us. And part of the way that we teach these tools is to demonstrate them ourselves [hence, the act of doing this aural thesis]—to be flexible in our own work, encouraging of explorations as we, too, explore."

Kordell KeyAndre: Shaping and telling a story improves livelihoods. Writing to a prompt is helpful, especially when doing historical dialogue work, when the subject matters of concern are fraught – like the on-going genocide of American Indians, for example. In writing in a person-centered way, one can attend to a prompt in a much more personal way, as writing is an intimate, introspective process: To write and then to reflect and then, eventually, possibly, maybe share their literary experience with a broader audience outside himself, rights; to then have them, said audience—they reflect back what *they* heard, what they heard the author or writer say. Dialectics, the multiplicity in view. It's an on-going dialogue.

They say to better understand yourself, write. right. They also say writing is King. right. To this end, the author or writer's approach to—demonstrate—doing ORAL HISTORY as PSYCHOHISTORY, is loosely based on humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers' client centered therapy. This is a spiritual practice, not intended for entertainment. Art is not mere entertainment or decoration, art has meaning, and it's meant to be shared, and we both want and need to fathom that meaning—not fear, dismiss, or construct superficial responses told to us by authorities. NARRATIVE MEDICINE is a field of medicine and a practice, where through the act and art of writing and reading, you'll never view the same subject matter twice. You'll be renewed by this narrative-based work, as your personal comprehension of any given event or subject matter of concern will naturally change over time.

And when we get bogged down with this whole race-relations-thing, gender and identity theory, we must understand that that was solely a way to eat, , to categorize, to subjugate. To divide to organize and capitalize. It was not a way of life. It was designed to keep us separated from our divine oneness, a way for someone—to pay the bills.

Playing along with the caste is a way to eat, not a way of life. Still, it's all helpful in assisting you in the art of remembering your why. Why me? Why this chance, this opportunity? Despite the changes in culture over time, terms and definitions, laws and what you think you have, we are part of that one-ness, a universal wholeness, experiencing each other. move through this life. walking each other home.

It's a spiritual practice ... To choose kindness is a choice. This is real life.

01f

Kordell KeyAndre: THE AURAL THESIS, is a contemporary oral history encounter—in particular, doing oral history *as* psychohistory. The NARRATIVE PRELUDE – “on and off that marvel stage” – is an offering ... done to demonstrate myriad ways in which we as a collective can not only (1) do historical dialogue, on the record/in and for the public or off the record/in and for private education settings ... the active movement through though and contested subject matters of concern ... historical dialogue ... in constructive manner ... whether done publicly or privately; but (2) how we as a people can benefit from the back-and-forth creative process of growth that is discussion-based learning, psychologically speaking.

Kordell KeyAndre: The psychohistorical oral history projects that are to follow, are about coming to terms with (1) how we as a collective creator ecosystem learn something new, something different, and (2) why it's important to think outside the HISTORICAL, HYPOTHETICAL or LITERAL box given to us ... to grow beyond our preconceived notions of what was originally thought possible, in the first place.

Kordell KeyAndre: If you can genuinely be understanding of the Other's point of view, and see it as it were your own, on any given subject matter of concern for that matter—try to listen to not only the words being spoken but hear and feel the intonation and the diction of how said words are being spoken, delivered, provided, shared. If you can locate the meaning buried beyond the surface, the meaning within—to genuinely understand the animating spirit behind the person speaking, *then that's helpful*. Who is animating this being right now? What is the message they carry? Can I understand them? Then that's helpful.

Kordell KeyAndre: In the end. Your origin story dictates where you go. Know it. Know it well. After all's said and done—after the reading and writing, the researching and studying—after the curtain falls and the actors leave for home, I believe we each are who we are, regardless of what happens in the in between. The point is to make the journey, the process as meaningful as possible. The choice is yours. Remember who you are, your power.

Not who we wanted to be. Not who we were. But who we are, already. Terms and definitions aside, having knowledge of self and trusting said understanding is more than enough. You are more than enough, just as you are. Just remember who you are. No more wallowing in the shame of who you thought you were or who you think you should be, but take me as I am -- accept yourself for exactly who you are.

Believe you me. Who that is is therefore fixed, while what that is is up to you, the author or writer.

Why that is ... now that's a story for another day.

on writing history - setting the stage

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground.” — Frederick Douglass

Narrator: “Speech is an even worse state onstage than in life. In the vast majority of cases actors state their lines decently or tolerably well. But their speech is still crude and conversational. [...] In life they usually speak for some purpose, some goal, some need, to perform some genuine, productive, specific verbal action. And even in those rare cases when they hubble the words without thinking about them, they do it for a reason: to make the time go faster, to distract attention, etc.’ [...] “But on the stage is different.”

“There we speak someone else’s, the author’s, lines. Often they’re not what we need or want to say. And, in life, we speak in response to what we see physically or mentally, to what we genuinely feel and think, and actually sense things which really exist. Onstage we have to talk about what our characters live, see, feel, not what we ourselves see, feel and think.”

“In life we listen properly because we’re interested, or because we have to. Onstage, most times, we only represent being attentive, we make a show of listening. There is no practical necessity for us to get into someone else’s mind or take in another actor’s lines. We have to force ourselves [to do it].”²

* * *

Narrator: THE AURAL THESIS is a multidisciplinary work, cross-culturally made to outline who and what has influenced the author or writer socially, emotionally, economically or politically, intellectually or aesthetically. Its contents span a variety of topics that cross traditional boundaries of history and psychology. The chosen narrator has spoken aloud this inaugural aural thesis—inspired by the author or writer’s master of arts

² Stanislavski, Konstantin. “An Actor’s Work: A Student’s Diary.” Chapter: Voice And Speech.

program application—not necessarily for you, the audience of close-readers and close-listeners; not for your comfort level, either but—to continue the excavation of a healing, for the author or writer’s soul.

Kyrie Irving recently shared via Twitter the link to the documentary “Hebrews 2 Negroes,” which informs us—the public—that the Israelis occupying Palestine are of European origin, and likely aren’t one of the 12 Tribes.

Kyrie Irving is a professional basketball player. A professional player in the NBA, that is. He was chastised, yet again, for moving against the grain of what is popular or mainstream, conventional or normal. In fact ... this fact, which has been hidden it seems, it negates their claims that they are Gd’s chosen people, which begs to question their entitlement to Palestine, the land.

Kordell KeyAndre: The documentary shows who the actual tribes likely are. This showing really pisses a lot of American Ashkenazi’s off, and they tried to cancel Kyrie for merely sharing the link to the documentary on Prime Amazon. I imagine the documentary is still accessible on the platform. Regardless ... I appreciate Kyrie Irving, you know, for being able to do the hard thing which is often the right thing, in the broader context of humanity, despite how unpopular it may be.

What does it look like to do the righteous thing? How can we collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are?

Narrator: *What you allow, continues.* Likewise, what you pay attention to will grow and grow. Science says if you don’t engage with it, it ceases to exist and therefore cannot grow. within your immediate experience, that is. Because it does not exist to you does not mean it does not exist. Speak only what you wish to bring into existence. So, I took a knee not because it felt “right” or because I thought it “just.” I took a knee back in 2017, because it was simply the most logical thing to do at the time, or so I thought. I thought raising awareness was my calling! I didn’t know then about the history of antisemitism. These days, the year is now 2024, ... much has changed in the world. Or at least, my view of the world has changed. I’ve learned a great deal about myself, and my main priority is protecting my peace.

Preserving myself, protecting myself and my home land. I can't truthfully sing a song, or master anything in this material world, before first knowing and having mastered who I am. I needed a moment to myself and I'm thankful to have had it; this self-education. It's an on-going process. You never quite reach the pinnacle of being self-educated, whatever that means ... there is always more to learn, more to do and see and ultimately become. You live and you learn more and more about your-self, every single day. The earlier you get a grip, though, the better off you'll be. "The most basic activism we can have in our lives is to live consciously," says bell hooks, "in a nation living in fantasies." Ego and pride aside, I have to do what's best for me and my mind-body-temple – America, the promised land.

Narrator: At the time, it was the best decision for me. I mean, it motivated me to pursue graduate degree training at Columbia University. I met some amazing people since enrolling in this program. It surely changed the trajectory of my life. To pause, to slow down, take a knee, and self assess. Who am I? What do I stand for? What are my values? How do I want to be remembered? What really is going on in my life, right now, through my life, with me? Writing out a value system, for example, will help you identify what you stand for, and in a way support a daily effort of embodying said values. Values are what make your character and build your sense of self worth. Without values, what do you stand for? With values, you know what you stand for and what is important to you. Knowing this will make it easier to discern who and what is for you, worth your time, who and what is in alignment with you and your chosen values.

I really thought being a social justice warrior was the way forward, like many college campuses profess. Unfortunately, what I have unearthed in the doing of this aural thesis thing, past three years of reading and writing about this American place, has completely debased all enthusiasm to be on the front lines, a social justice warrior, as they say. But Do I Have A Choice, to be on the Front lines? What does it look like to do the righteous thing? What are my values, and do they support a decision to be on the Front lines? If not, how can I contribute to achieving the long-term goals of conflict resolution, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and democracy promotion, in a way that are in alignment with my core values? What is, the basis of PEACEBUILDING, RECONCILIATION, and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE in a post-COVID world?

Narrator: The days of physical warfare on American land ... the dog days, let's call them, are a thing of the past. Or, at least, they ought to be. What is all of this protesting, Race and racism, and political debate even about? "More than ever before in our history, so-called black Americans are succumbing to and internalizing the racist assumption that there can be no meaningful bonds of [intimacy] between so-called blacks and so-called whites. It is fascinating to explore why it is that black people trapped in the worst situation of racial oppression—enslavement—had the foresight to see that it would be disempowering for them to lose sight of the capacity of white people to transform themselves and divest of white supremacy, even as many black folks today who in no way suffer such extreme racist oppression and exploitation are convinced that white people will not repudiate racism."

The war today is strictly psychological and spiritual—of the mind, of the psyche—in the pursuit of controlling one's perception, I thought, one's point of view, it seems ... via deception and organized propaganda, as harsh as that may sound. "Organized white supremacists have always taught that there can never be trust and intimacy between the superior white race and the inferior black race, so-called. When so-called black people internalize these sentiments, no resistance to white supremacy is taking place; rather we become complicit in spreading racist notions. It does not matter that so many so-called black people, says bell hooks, feel white people will never repudiate racism because of being daily assaulted by white denial and refusal of accountability. We must not allow the actions of white folks who blindly endorse racism to determine the direction of our resistance."

Narrator: "These feelings also then obscure the reality of white privilege. As long as white folks are taught to accept racism as 'natural' then they do not have to see themselves as consciously creating a racist society by their actions, by their political choices." [...] "This means as well that they do not have to face the way in which acting in a racist manner ensures the maintenance of white privilege. Indeed, denying their agency allows them to believe white privilege does not exist even as they daily exercise it."

Narrator: What do you need to do, to take care of *your* mind-body temple? That is, yes, diet and the foods you consume play a solid role in proper upkeep, but the main thing is the spirit that dwells in you ... the Kingdom within ... and how clean you are keeping said Kingdom, where spirit dwells. Luckily we have many autobiographies

by so-called white and so-called black folks alike, committed to anti-racist struggle, challenging white supremacy, oppression, abolitionism and providing documentary testimony that many of these individuals repudiated racism when they were children, noting the psychological effort needed in order to overcome tempting pitfalls and the easy way out. Far from passively accepting “it” as inherent, they instinctively felt it was wrong. The path to spirituality, real spirituality, that is, is a lonely one on the other hand.

Coming into spirituality, what I’ve branded a *bridge to a new awakening*, is truly a path for the lone. Oftentimes a healthy body means a strong mind, which means you walk alone. I’m Kordell KeyAndre. This is *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory*; NARRATIVE PRELUDE - “on and off that marvel stage” — an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

Thanks for listening.

* * *

“Heat can be uncomfortable. But every conflict needs heat in order to cook. When something is important to you [...], you need to learn to modulate the heat, not reflexively turn it down.” [...] “Every situation—like every recipe—is unique. There will be times when the best thing to do is let a conflict simmer slowly for a while. At other times, what’s most needed is to bring that conflict to a boil. At still other times, the heat needs to be removed temporarily, so things can cool down.” [...] Much of the rest of this aural thesis explores how to do this,” [...] — and why developing the art of conversation is important for the evolving science of epigenetics: the ways in which our environment, diet, and lifestyle powerfully affect and modulate the expression of our genes.³

THROUGHOUT THE DOING OF THIS work, we’ll learn that historical dialogue and accountability is a growing field of advocacy and scholarship that encompasses the efforts of conflict, post-conflict, and post-dictatorial societies to come to terms with their pasts. Historical dialogue places special emphasis on reaching new generations and considering how the meaning of the past changes with the passage of time. It provides the tools to deconstruct historical narratives, to challenge past myths, and to consider the evolution of narratives about the past and how they continue to influence political, social and cultural structures.

³ Menakem, Resmaa. “Monsters In Love: Why Your Partner Sometimes Drives You Crazy—And What You Can Do About It.” 2023.

Kordell KeyAndre: Historical dialogue is a valuable tool in achieving the long-term goals of conflict resolution, reconciliation, peacebuilding, restorative justice; ultimately, democracy promotion. Historical dialogue makes visible the causes and consequences of disputed histories, acknowledges victims, and involves a wide-range of experts- academics, activists, victims, officials, and affected communities-in an effort to create new paths for moving a society away from conflict.

It is my hope the forth-coming card series will help to stimulate discussion between democrats and republicans, husband and wife, employer and employee, parents and children, doctors and patients, teachers and students—wherever there may be a power indifference to be resolved through intentionally slowing down and leaning in—interviewer and interviewee, documentor and documented, mentor and mentee.

Kordell KeyAndre: Intentional communication, verbal articulation, is a top-tier remedy for relationship conflict. ‘Discussions by Definition’ can assist us on our way. “The story of our relationship to the earth is written more truthfully on the land than on the page,” says Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (2013). [...]

“It lasts there.”

Kordell KeyAndre: She continues, “The land remembers what we said and what we did. Stories are among our most potent tools for restoring the land as well as our relationship to land. We need to unearth the old stories that live in a place and begin to create new ones, for we are storymakers, not just storytellers. All stories are connected, new ones woven from the threads of the old. One of the ancestor stories, that waits for us to listen again with new ears, is the Mayan story of Creation.”⁴

Kordell KeyAndre: We’ll learn about Land Patents, too. Right now you are probably standing on stolen land. No matter where you are hearing this [poem], I promise you, below you, is stolen land.

⁴ Braiding Sweetgrass. Page 331.

“Was Lakota, was Navajo, was Creek,

Was and was, and is and is,

And this fact does not change

Because you do not think about it

Malcom X said it best, “Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of Freedom, Justice, and Equality.” Black Americans are the true American Indians, and if they—came out and told us this fact, about land patents, then they—whoever they are—couldn't continue to steal from you, play in your face and occupy your land.

Kordell KeyAndre: “Indeed, there they were. The war with Spain gave rise to the only moment in U.S. history when cartographers aggressively rejected the logo map. In its place they offered maps of the empire. Publishers, cashing in on empire fever, rushed to put out atlases showcasing the country's new dimensions. ‘It does look a little bit odd to see Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the distant Philippine islands on the United States map,’ reflected one writer. ‘But there they are and printed as carefully and described as carefully as if they had been for a whole generation in their present honored company.’”

“By 1900, such maps were common. They appeared as a matter of course in atlases, on classroom walls, in textbooks, and at the front of the census report. Some showed the North American mainland surrounded by insets. Others showed the North American mainland surrounded by insects. Others showed the united States stretching out over the world map, from the Caribbean to the edge of China. Either way, the message was clear: the country had undergone a metamorphosis. The caterpillar had unfurled its butterfly wings.”⁵

Kordell KeyAndre: “Writers, too, sensed the change and searched for a new name for the transformed country. They offered suggestions in the titles of books: *Imperial America* (1898), *The Greater Republic* (1899), *The Greater United States* (1904), and seven books published in the decade after 1898 whose titles involved the phrase

⁵ Immerwahr, Daniel. “How To Hide An Empire: A History of the Greater United States” Chapter: Empire State of Mind. Picador, 2019.

Greater America. [...] The term 'United States of America' has ceased to be an accurate description of the countries over which the Stars and Stripes float,' the author of one argued. 'Like 'United Kingdom,' it applied merely to the central and dominating body, the seat of empire; and Greater America comprises almost as wide a range of governments as Greater Britain itself.' [...] The term "United States of America" has ceased to be an accurate description. It was a remarkable observation. And it gave rise not only to a transient bout of verbal creativity but to a much more enduring nomenclatural shift."

[cont.] "Although the Country's official name has always been the United States of America, in the nineteenth century it was common to call it the United States, or perhaps refer to it by its political structure: the Republic or the Union. Though inhabitants of the country were often called Americans, it is striking how infrequently America was used. Walt Whitman was fond of the term, as in 'I hear America Singing' (1860) or the Young America movement of which he was a member."

"Nor was the word America included in the patriotic songs that got sung before 1898. You won't find it in the lyrics to "Yankee Doodle," "Hail to the Chief," "My Country 'Tis of Thee," "Dixie," "The Battle Cry of Freedom," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," or "The Stars and Stripes Forever." It isn't even in "The Star-Spangled Banner," the 1814 composition later adopted as the national anthem. The word that does appear in nineteenth-century lyrics is *Columbia*, as in the District of COlumbia, an earlier literary name for the country. Though they have fallen from favor today, "Columbia," "Hail, Columbia," and "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" were among the most sung anthems of the nineteenth century."

"Somewhere around the turn of the century, though, all that changed. One sharp-eared British writer heard the switch. "For some thirty years prior to 1898, while the adjective 'American' has been in general use, the noun 'America' has been extremely rare," he wrote. "One might, up to that *annus mirabilis*, have traveled five thousand miles and read a hundred books and newspapers without ever having once come across it; 'United States' being almost invariably the term employed by the American for his own country." After 1898, though, he noted that "the best speakers and writers," ... feeling that *the United States* no longer captured the nature of their country, switched to America."

“If the ‘best speakers and writers’ could be stretched to include presidents, that was true. Though McKinley, like most of his predecessors, declined to use *America* in his public addresses, the reluctance ended there. His successor, Theodore Roosevelt, spoke of America in his first annual message and never looked back. In one two-week period, Roosevelt used the name more than all his predecessors combined had. Every president since has used *America* freely and frequently.

“The anthems changed, too: no longer ‘Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,’ but ‘America the Beautiful’ and ‘God Bless America.’”⁶

+ + +

Semi-modeled after Democracy and the Informed Citizen initiative, administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and in partnership with the Pulitzer Prizes, A View Through Them initiative seeks to deepen the public’s knowledge and appreciation of the vital connections between democracy, the humanities, journalism as well as oral history and an informed citizenry. As a narrative medicine scholar-practitioner, passionate about protecting the environment, arts and culture, I am encouraged to view everyone I work with—do this work through the lens of historical dialogue facilitation. “We know too well from our past experiences that robust and honest exchange of opinions and criticism is necessary for any society to be truly democratic and for any government to stay on course.” - Nelson Mandela, Luncheon hosted by the Conference of Editors, South Africa, September 6, 1994 [...] “Success in politics demands that you must take your people into confidence about your views and state them very clearly, very politely, very calmly, but nevertheless state them openly.” - Nelson Mandela, from a conversation with Richard Stengel, April 29, 1993 [...] A View Through Them initiative aims to do just that, the careful facilitation of views and stories of those who might be unremembered in the rush of history. This is a view through them.

Kordell KeyAndre: Before we dig into the details of Chapter/Episode 2 of NARRATIVE PRELUDE - “on and off that marvel stage” — an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, and before we set the stage for what’s to come, if you take one thing away from this aural thesis, it’s to always remember

⁶ Immerwahr, Daniel. “How To Hide An Empire: A History of the Greater United States” Chapter: Empire State of Mind. Picador, 2019.

(1) who you are, and (2) that you are always in a state of practice ...and (3) oral history is not journalism. Today is not a dress rehearsal in any sense of the word, this is real life. Yet, still, you are training for something much bigger than you can imagine. So it's made of THREE movements.

Kordell KeyAndre: MOVEMENT 1, starts with some basic facts. I'll introduce my interpretation of what seems to be the problem here, as it relates to power and greed, Race and race relations in these so-called United States. We take a detour into my personal life story, as well as the brain.

MOVEMENT 2, offers a tour of the six main categories that encompass all the practical strategies you need to explore the art of conversation and the act of discussion across differences. Movement 2 ends with a narrative nonfiction program I suggest. This is what I called the methodology section, inspired by AVTT: An Americana Issue. As far as I can remember, there is no easy way to ask someone to share war story or testimony on the most deeply felt human emotions. Bringing historical texts and treatises to life with primal feelings. Thankfully, I found the most powerful research methodology for our needs. That is what I personally call this movement of the aural thesis, MOTIVATION; what motivates me to do historical dialogue facilitation and ultimately narrative *as* medicine.

And finally, MOVEMENT 3, takes a look at the challenges of doing historical dialogue facilitation as oral history, and oral history *as* psychohistory., with a view toward the future. In the end, I want to thank the ancestors and the more than 30 million descendants of American slavery. I never forget who this work-day is for, and to whom I belong. We must always hold our heads up because we come from and are A GREAT PEOPLE.

+++

Kordell KeyAndre: "A dream of complete assimilation turned nightmare of ethnocide and unprotected status. At a time when so-called black people or American "Negroes" were economically ahead of many others in American economic standings. After the assassination of Dr. King, in 1968 the Indian Rights Act was passed shortly after and from then it seemed like pop culture exploited into "black pride" with hints of afrocentricity in multimedia soundtracked by James Brown's "Say It Loud, I'm Black & I'm Proud." It all looked like one big setup from reclassification, christianity, civil with rights rather than human beings, pro-blackness, pan-africanism, Hollywood's depiction of American Indians/American slavery, even, etc. All thoughts lingering ideas stuck in the subconscious

mind in your ear, hold your head, guard your heart, to keep detribalized indigenous families mentally occupied and suppressed. Opposed to being self-oppressed by themselves and appointed religious negro leaders. It's somewhat ritualistic. [...]

“Kill the Indian in him, save the man” was a phrase said by Henry Pratt in an 1892 speech. Turns out to be more like “Kill the Indian in him, save the African American that you fabricated.” – ForbiddenHeritage

Kordell KeyAndre: Indigenous people accepting the in particular Christian and Catholic faiths, for example, via assimilation tactics was, in fact, spiritual warfare on our community. Moreover, their descendants (along with modern American society) watching Disney's Pocahontas, for example, and not seeing their ancestors' original likeness presented in media and news outlets alike was, in fact, psychological warfare. Indigenous people being paid and incentivized to promote the so-called black identity and Jesuit/Masonic corrupted history in entertainment and literature since the reconstruction era, was psychological warfare, too. There were intricate mind games being played I've come to realize and it's not all based on imperial European interests. The reality was, in order for you to sustain yourself in such an abhorrent hyper-capitalist society – run by inadequate personnel, and predicated on a monopolized color, caste, and class system – one had to think and do as though one's only option was to subscribe to the preordained script placed in front of them, or else “incarceration” or worse, social or literal death as penalty to noncompliance. As they say, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. And so we did.

Kordell KeyAndre: Or, at least, some of us did, and are still actively doing.

Let's not forget, being convinced to integrate away from indigenous spaces and into Anglo-American spaces by civil rights and religious personnel, then generations later only to lack a true sense of self and identity theory, fellowship, language and community among your own family networks of business and industry. It was, in fact, and still is surely a form of socioeconomic violence. We do it to ourselves though. The days of physical warfare on American land ... the dog days, are over. Or, at least, they ought to be. The war today is strictly psychological and spiritual, in the pursuit of controlling one's perception, one's point of view via deception and organized propaganda, as harsh as that may sound. Keep the trust as far away from them as possible.

No one has a conversation about *why*, historically speaking, our communities were more affected by this type of indoctrination and mis-education, environmental degradation, but, alas, here we are. “There is a war going on,” says Prince. “The battlefield’s in the mind and the prize is the soul.”

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: The Declaration of Independence justified the independence of the United States, by listing 27 colonial grievances against King George III and by asserting certain natural and legal rights, including a right of revolution. Its original purpose, allegedly, was to announce independence. An announcement, of independence, signed by 56 of America’s so-called Founding Fathers, congressional representatives from environmental settings like New Hampshire; Massachusetts Bay; Rhode Island and Providence Plantations; Connecticut; New York; New Jersey; Pennsylvania; Maryland; Delaware; Virginia; North Carolina; South Carolina; and, our beloved, Georgia. The question now is not what is a revolution but rather, what compelled all these so-called-rich-white men, from all these different states-of-mind and now-American environmental settings, to agree to disagree and co-sign through endorsement such a profound and fundamentally dialectical play on words?

What were their motivations, their incentives? What did they intend to do? Have they succeeded? What are their personal stories, their testimonies? Who decided who lived and who died, who tells *their* story? Why do we, the general public care? What happened in their personal lives that caused them to meet where they did, when they did, and act in the ways in which they acted? Who set the stage for this very mess to take place, in the first place? This is writing history.

These rhetorical questions have more to do with psychohistory than history itself, mind you, and yet, said questions are seldom asked in the historical dialogue context of PEACEBUILDING, RECONCILIATION and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE. This isn't me advocating for asking questions, which goes against my philosophy of asking open-ended questions, but, rather, this is me prompting us to think critically about the task at hand – the task of today’s work day: PEACEBUILDING, RECONCILIATION and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

Kordell KeyAndre: “Citizens inherit, not just the glory of their nation, but its wrongs, too. A truly great

country does not ignore or excuse its sins. It confronts them, and then works to make them right.” [...] “The United States, [anyway,]” says Nikole Hannah Jones, “is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie. Our Declaration of Independence approved on July 4th, 1776, proclaims that ‘all men are created equal’ and ‘endowed by the creator with certain unalienable rights.’ But the white men who drafted those words did not believe them to be true for the hundreds of thousands of Black people in their midst.”

Kordell KeyAndre: In their signing, the founding of what is present day America The Great was made... in their minds, at least, and then later and so-on projected out onto the world stage, creating, evidently, the world stage. A piece of history, now etched for all to be re-membered. Can you morally imagine this? My initial question, of what motivated them—all these men from all these different states-of-mind and now-American environmental settings—to found America in the ways in which they found America, still stands. What cultures were made available to them, these men? What about their wives? And their so-called mistresses? These leading ladies, what roles or role, positions or position, did they play in the lives of America’s founding? What sensations arose in their body-soul-spirit over time, and how did they manage to cope with said unsettling emotions or feelings? This is a form of rhetorical questioning having to do both with psychology and with history: this is a definition of what it means to do psycho-history.

Abraham Lincoln, for example—America’s 16th president—he made the Declaration of Independence the centerpiece of his policies and historical rhetoric, the Gettysburg Address of 1863.

Kordell KeyAndre: “In a speech delivered in 1883, [then titled] ‘The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions,’ Lincoln considered the benefits brought by the American Revolution, in which people had let out much deep-rooted hate and a wish for revenge, channeling these passions into a fight against the British for civil and religious liberty.”

Though scholars of the American Revolution largely abandoned the study of Lincoln’s inner life—*the make-up of his personality*—Lincoln was generally considered to be chronically depressed and mentally ill. Evidence suggests some clear lessons about how Lincoln’s illness narrative, lifetime and personal life story informed his political decisions and policies or politics. “Three elements of Lincoln’s history—the deep, pervasive sadness of his mother,

the strange spells of his father, and the striking presence of mental illness in the family of his uncle and cousins—suggest the likelihood of a biological predisposition toward depression.

‘Predisposition’ means an increased risk of developing an illness,” that is.

“The movement away from discussion of Lincoln’s melancholy took hold in a [larger] culture that was increasingly divided on matters of psychology and human suffering. [...] For some people, psychological health is a birthright. For many others, like Abraham Lincoln, it is the realization of great labor. [...] While his breakdowns dramatically illustrated his emotional trouble, Lincoln faced a more fundamental challenge, one rooted in the [sub] culture he lived in.”⁷

The setting, the environment. Author of *Lincoln’s Melancholy: How Depression Challenged A President and Fueled His Greatness* (2005), Joshua Wolf Shenk says, “Psychology, the study of what happens in our minds, is tightly interwoven with culture, the name we give to our beliefs, practices, and social behaviors.” Psychology is tightly interwoven with culture, yet seldom considered when writing history.

“Pennebaker believes that because our minds are designed to try to understand things that happen to us, translating messy, difficult experiences into language essentially makes them ‘graspable.’ [...] What’s important to note about Pennebaker’s research is the fact that he advocates limited writing, or short spurts. He’s found that writing about emotional upheavals for just fifteen to twenty minutes a day on four consecutive days can decrease anxiety, rumination, and depressive symptoms and boost our immune systems.”⁸

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: “In a general sense perhaps all statements[, then,] are also counter-statements. Even the simplest pronouncements, for example, whether of measurable fact or of a point of view, [...] are also assertions to contradict something that is assumed to be [Otherwise]. Perhaps even the most objective descriptions, definitions, and formulations (as well as being implicit protestations against subjectivity, imprecision, and fantasy) are in effect

7 Shenk, Joshua W. “Lincoln’s Melancholy: How depression challenged a president and fueled his greatness.” 2005.

8 Brown, Brené. *Rising Strong*. 2015.

counter-actions against the void of the undefined [...]. [...] “It may be, then, that such opening remarks as are found in the forewords to books are really answers before the questions; nay, [they are] replies, retorts, and refutations to exceptions that are not only bound to be [written] but in a sense already have been.”⁹

In the wise words of Savannah Shange, “Writing is ancestor work.”¹⁰

Kordell KeyAndre: “For example, at a time when an ever increasing number of writers seems to mistake the jargon of social science for insight into the nature and condition of man, if the name of a brown-skin U.S. Negro student of fiction and Americana reminds a few readers, by whatever chance, of Gilbert Murray, the great English author of *The Rise of the Greek Epic* and *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, and suggests, no matter how remotely, that the study of ritual might be a means of coming to terms with some of the ambiguities of human nature and conduct that may be outside the scope of current survey methodology, such an association might not be far [...] from the intentions of that brown-skin student. [...] “If the juxtaposition further suggests to those who, perhaps unwittingly, have oversubscribed to social science, that interpretations of human behavior in the raw require at least as much respect for the complexity of human motives as the interpretation of a [self or] poem or play or story [or entertainment], well, perhaps one might not even need to bother with saying anything [...] other than one’s name.”¹¹

Kordell KeyAndre: “By the time Officer Chauvin was arrested, on May 29 -- four days after [George] Floyd was killed -- it was too late; the uprisings had already spread, and multiple cities were aflame. Fresh kindling had been laid in the months and years prior. Decades of false political promises, desperate living conditions, simmering racial tensions, mass criminalization in [B]lack communities, and failed efforts at police reform fueled a brief wave of political violence in cities across the country in the days that followed. [...]

“Protesters recognized that white fear of the racial ‘other’ is not limited to the police or even to our criminal injustice system, but is [actually] endemic to our society as a whole, ” says Nicole Hannah-Jones, author of *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story from The New York Times* (2021).¹² And after deliberating for about ten

⁹ Murray, Albert. “The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture.” 1970.

¹⁰ Shange, Savannah. “Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Anti-Blackness, Schooling in San Francisco.” 2019.

¹¹ Murray, Albert. “The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture.” 1970.

¹² Hannah-Jones, Nicole. “The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story.” 2021.

hours over two days, the jury found Derek Chauvin guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for the killing of George Floyd. For all the ones he did wrong, all the complaints he got over the years, karma arrived at this front door.

+ + +

Kordell KeyAndre: My approach to doing oral history, at least here in the context of this NARRATIVE PRELUDE - “on and off that marvel stage” — an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ..., my approach takes into consideration the setting and environment which breeds a person’s historico-racial schema. Furthermore, my oral history acknowledges that all psychological problems or issues, if and when to be defined as such, are a product of the sociohistorical changes in culture.

It is not the person themselves which is a problem or an issue, but rather a culture in which said person exists currently or previously came of age and, still, exists. Science tells us, if we care to fix any issue, we must first understand the environmental setting. My oral history, and its origin story, definition and practice, will inevitably change over time, as my relationship to any given environmental culture continues to evolve and carry on.

Being able to step up and out of our individual lives, self-correct, change our minds, become a new and mold our-selves into who you of all people want to be. I’ve been made to believe a diligent practice of reading and writing can help you capture that critical thinking, internal and personal foraging process. To hold it in time; to become a scientist and closely analyze that which is your life and times.

Narrator: At least, I know it has for me. James Pennebaker, a researcher at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *Writing to Heal* (2004), “has done some of the most important and fascinating research I’ve seen on the power of expressive writing in the healing process. In an interview posted on the University of Texas’s website, Pennebaker explains, ‘Emotional upheavals touch every part of our lives. You don’t just lose a job, you don’t just get divorced. These things affect all aspects of who we are—our financial situation, our relationships with others, our views of ourselves, our issues of life and death. Writing helps us focus and organize the experience.’”

Kordell KeyAndre: My oral history is always changing. If it's not one thing, it's another, always changing, always evolving. It's a process infused with elements of narratology—dealing with the structure and function of narrative and its themes, conventions, and symbols—incorporating new definitions of writing, creativity, imagination and exploration. “The scholar Andrew Delbanco goes so far as to define culture as a collective psychological notion.” [...] ““Human beings need to organize the inchoate sensations amid which we pass our days—pain, desire, pleasure, fear—into a story,” [...]. “Delbanco writes. ‘When that story leads somewhere and thereby helps us navigate through life to its inevitable terminus in death, it gives us hope. And if such a sustaining narrative establishes itself over time in the minds of a substantial number of people, we call it culture.’” It's only right I set the stage this way. To do oral history *as* psychohistory is a “*culture*” ... one I hope to instill in my narrative medicine practice, too. It's more than asking someone questions. It's to wonder, unapologetically, open-endedly, why they are the way they are. It's an act of defiance.

on writing as psychohistory - moving through this life

“To those who do not know that the world is on fire, I have nothing to say.”

— Bertolt Brecht

“If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him.”¹³

— John F. Kennedy

OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY welcomed the year 2020 with megafires in Australia. Hundreds of millions of animals burned and ushered out of their homes—exhausted, they are—can you morally imagine that? Some months later, the Kīlauea (*KEEL-ow-AY-ə*) Shield volcano of the Hawaii Islands erupts. It's the 21st day of December. This new Gregorian year came and then went, that it did, with well over 2 million lives lost at the hands of a widespread virus sweeping the globe. And Covid-19 was just a taste of what's to come for us, we the people of the world. Not to fear monger or anything. But here it comes. Are you ready? [“This is a heavy download.”](#)

Kordell KeyAndre: The volcano erupting, for example. Volcanoes are known to be Nature's furry.

This act of eruption, passion ... at this day in age can tell us only one thing, at least metaphorically speaking: the culmination of the human ego has collectively lost its cotton-picking mind. And as response, we-humanity are quite naturally being rejected. This is precisely the moment the Mothership decided that, well, enough is enough. Nature is very intelligent. Now what is happening, she is turning against them -- all which is not in accordance with natural universal law. Nature, she is separating us. The events we-humanity are experiencing now, taking place all around them-humanity, are a beyond-best-case scenario for the future of warming and all the climate disasters it will bring. [“The ecological dramas we have unleashed through our land use and by burning fossil fuels—slowly for about a century and very rapidly for only a few decades—will play out over many millennia, in fact over a longer span of time than humans have even been around, performed in part by centuries and in environments we do not yet even know, ushered onto the world stage by the force of warming.”](#) [...]

¹³ Kennedy, John F. “President John F. Kennedy: Remarks at Amherst College, October 26, 1963 - Transcript.” John F. Kennedy Library and the U.S. National Archives. 26, October, 1963. www.arts.gov/about/kennedy-transcript

*“In the past, even the recent past, disasters like these arrived with otherworldly force and incomprehensible moral logic. We could see them coming, on radar and by satellite, but could not interpret them—not legibly, [at least] not in ways that really made sense of them in relation to one another. Even atheists and agnostics might find themselves whispering the phrase ‘act of God’ in the aftermath of a hurricane, or wildfire, or tornado, if only to express how inexplicable it felt to endure such suffering with no author behind it, no one to blame for it. Climate change will change this.”*¹⁴

Kordell KeyAndre: And although we-humanity are each individual characters with their own individual responsibilities and timelines, calendars and planners, and social cues, hopes and dreams, playing out a pre-cast role in the Greatest Show on Earth, to quote High School Musical: *“we’re all in this together.”* As a global village, we are made again to witness the reality that capital ‘N’ Nature or capital ‘D’ Death, when left to Her own devices. (Can we say her? Is that the right gender pronoun, woke friends? Guess what, I do not care.) When left to her own devices, she will not discriminate. This is a matter of life or death. And if that means shaking this virus, then, I imagine, that’s what she will do. From *we the people of the world*, the trees and rivers, to the various insects and amphibians: together, we are all quote unquote “out here,” experiencing, in some capacity large or small, another Earthly paradigm shift.¹⁵ The earth is changing, I thought. This time, however, the change is brought on by ourselves, yes, *we the people of the world*. We did this to ourselves. We caused this. This one is greater than any of the previous.

It’s hard to explain *why* that is. I mean, don’t just attach yourself to someone because they look good – surface level – you have to get to know them at their core for true success. And you will only know someone as deep as you’ve gotten to know yourself. In this world ... in our human-man made world at least, there seems to be unbalance, perhaps a lack of “*symmetry*” or “*stability*.” For so many years the masculine energy has over-powered almost all things in its path, wrecking shock and wreaking havoc on Planet Earth, both the mind and the bodies. Now, studies

¹⁴ Wallace-Wells, David. “The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming.” Tim Duggan Books Trade Paperback Edition, Penguin Random House New York City, Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper. 2020. page 91.

¹⁵ Haque, Umair. “2020 Will Be Remembered As the Beginning of the Great Dying: If You Were Nature, Wouldn’t You Want to Kill Us Off, Too?” Medium: Eudaimonia & Co., December 2020.

have proven ... that it's natural: these energies, masculine and feminine, biologically exist within each and every single one of us. On a cellular level. It's a part of the human condition, yadda yadda yadda; the animal condition. Love is hard, love is painful. As it was, the good stuff takes place underneath the surface. The unseen, beyond the four walls of this house. Always has, always will.

* * *

According to the Laws of the Universe, the 12th Law of Gender manifests in all things as having masculine (yang) and feminine (yin) principles. "It is this law that governs what we know as creation. The law of gender manifests in the animal kingdom as sex. This law decrees everything in nature is both male *and* female, and *both* are required for life to exist."¹⁶ [Italics ours] Furthermore, each individual should balance between or learn to self-govern their own masculine and feminine energies, to become a Master of them-selves, and by extension the world around them. And by the way, feminine or fem does not mean female, and masculine or masc does not mean male. They are not genders, they are energies ... They are not people, they are thought processes, vibes & actions, an entire doing. I imagine we all have both, masculine and feminine energy. The point of this Chapter/Episode 3, is to learn how to master yourself, your own energetic frequency.

Kordell KeyAndre: As we continue to do oral history *as* psychohistory, it's necessary to keep in mind the following fact-of-the-matter: Everything that moves, which is animated, at its foremost center and deepest core, is feminine. You and me... *we, the people*, are feminine. Feminine energy, which is within each and every single one of us ... those who choose to see themselves with-in or with-out the social construct that is a male-female binary ... however you choose to identify, whoever you are and where-ever-you-flipping-come from, ok. feminine energy is within you, is the basis of your being here, too. Within feminine, there are themes like: "*love*," "*flow like water*," "*patience*" and "*gentleness*." Without love, flow like water, patience and gentleness, the universe simply would not be. Can you morally imagine that? Within masculine, there are themes like: "*heated energy*" or "*fire*," "*order*," "*logic*" and "*intellect*." Without feminine—without love, flow like water, patience and gentleness—masculine would veer to act without restraint. And without masculine—without heated energy, order, logic and intellect—there would be failure to do, well, pretty much anything. To do it well, at least.

¹⁶ "12 Universal Laws." First Media Design School. <https://firstmedia.edu.sg/12-universal-laws/>

Kordell KeyAndre: “The masculine is the external leader and the feminine is the internal leader. She is the highest vision, the oracle, and he is the warrior,” they say, “who faces the world and turns the vision into a living reality. She is the being, he is the doing. Both lead in their own way. Both need one another. His weakness is her strength, her weakness is his strength. In sacred union they become a powerful force of nature that cannot be reckoned with.” There must be a balance between both masculine and feminine for there to exist abundant harmony within (1) ourselves, (2) each other, and (3) the world around us—or, within us, if you choose to see it as so, inside/outside. Both feminine and masculine are scientifically speaking codependents, meaning they need each other in order to be great. We need each other... to be in a balanced relationship, healthy communication, with each Other. We need each Other, masculine and feminine energy, in order to be great.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: Did you know, the feminine or fem is tasked with mastering her mouth, speech, vibration, frequency and moving through this life. The masculine or masc is tasked with mastering his environment, the body, land and solid ground. Together, the pattern reveals balance and harmony, a marvelous creation, a paradise. “The pattern reveals, you always see men who have mastered their environment matched with women who have mastered their mouth, meaning the words they speak.”

“And you always see women with reckless words and a loose mouth matched with unsuccessful men who are servants and/or bums in their environment. [...] If you do see a foul mouth woman matched with a seemingly successful man who has mastered his environment, he usually lives separately from her or spends most of his time outside their shared environment to avoid the curse of her mouth. As if they are in the same environment for too long everything in his world will energetically downsize and decrease to the capacity of what her mouth will allow and her capacity to hold.” [...]

“The most desirable men compete for women with the most mastered mouth, and the most desirable women compete for men who have demonstrated a mastery over his environment. A man cannot succeed beyond the frequency of the feminine of his world’s mouth, and the feminine cannot not properly flourish if the masculine of her world hasn’t mastered his environment.

“This is a heavy download.”

“The feminine has the spiritual power to curse or bless an environment with her mouth alone,” they say, “that the masculine doesn’t have. The masculine has the natural power to master an environment that isn’t afforded to the feminine in the same way.” Again, I must reiterate, we need each Other, masculine and feminine energy, in order to be great, to complement each others’ divinity. “You don’t see truly mastered and successful men in environments with women who can’t control their mouth, and you don’t see radiant women of embodied high class around men who haven’t mastered their environment. They tend to only co-create in spaces of the Masters.”

ANIMATED ROOTS

Kordell KeyAndre: We mention this portrait or words in the context of feminine and masculine energy, because what has gone on, what is going on and what is to come, all relate to each other in a very intricate and calculated and divine mathematical science. Almost a dance. If you can see it that way, it reads as chaotic to some people, causing panic and mischief. A dance, nonetheless. Ignorance and lack of knowing tends to do that, I thought. But in all actuality, you guessed it, it is all in divine order; a creation story like no other. Scientists and biologists have been tracing its steps and its seeming progress for centuries. And so, “this idea of nurturing and that gentleness, that loving kindness that we all have within us [at our center, first and foremost our first nature], is so important,” now more than ever before.¹⁷

Note to self: It’s called feminine energy and energy transfers. It’s important to keep yourself around people who are electric and winning, high vibrations. Energy rubs off on you, so as we move throughout this work-day, it’s imperative you keep your environment, inside as well as outside, clean and clear, pure and authentic. Tell your truth, yes. But also trust your intuition, it’s been placed for a reason. You are loved, you are protected.

And that’s the central idea of this whole human experiment, I thought: How can we find balance and healing in the divine feminine and sacred masculine, in ourselves, and to restore universal wholeness within our life

¹⁷ Keys, Alicia. “21-Day Meditation Experience w/ Alicia Keys and Deepak Chopra: The Divine Feminine.” May 12, 2021
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pv3FNLTVhw>

and times. To master our-selves. Little did we know, or at least not care to believe, as we speak or not about a heating planet and rising sea levels, all is *still* in divine order. Together, we are all exactly where we were meant to be. What does it look like to do the righteous thing? How can we collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are?

Out here. What many of the world's "*global citizens*" and animals and plants are witnessing, and what we are experiencing today must be exactly what *we the people of the world* asked for. Letting go is quite a challenge, because it means accepting "*death,*" "*detachment,*" "*letting go,*" fighting the force tempting us to feed into our own worst drama. This quite literally must be our great demise -- capital "E" Ego death or death of Ego. It's a tough lesson to be honest, to learn how to be still and accept the silence ... one that simply doesn't get easier to hear over time ... But will we listen?

Are you listening?

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: In other words, the Western or American-individualistic way to think about this unbalance or unnatural and the larger climate crisis at hand, is to center *our-human-selves* in the war story. But the brutal reality we all need to face and quickly is this: *we, the people of the world, are the problem and the very solution.* Nature is throwing pandemics and megafloods and megafires and megatyphoons and all the other "*mega*" stuff associated with Climate Catastrophe, because She, I imagine, is trying to get rid of us, *we the people of the world.* Or, in a more kind and less finite sense, cleanse us from the things that have been eroding our sense of self and robbing us of the things that matter: purity of heart. A restoration of sorts. Saving room for a new earth.

She's been trying to "wash that man right out of her hair" since the moment we the people started acting up. And what we've since failed to do is harbor a respect, cultivate a love, a real love, an appreciation, even, for the war story that is our birth, life and times ... the imperative feminine energy of chaos. The very thing she's been yelling at the top of her lungs... "*Nature is a savage mistress, too [...] she knows that it's better to have a planet in balance than a species as predatory and violent and stupid and brutal as us on it. [...] No other species comes close to us [the human race / the homo sapiens] in those respects. The animals, even the predators, eat what they need. The viruses, even the deadliest ones, don't cause mass extinctions like we [the people of the world] have. We are the most*

dangerous force planet earth has ever given birth to. And so now, in a terrible, Oedipal twist, our creator is trying to kill us. Do we deserve it?, is a great question. Shall we accept our sentence. shall we surrender—or rebel even now, and say ‘we are capable of being better, things which deserve to live?’ ... mmm, we don’t know. “All those are the tricky, strange, new, and desperate questions before us. [...] Nature is now going to try to kill us. That is what the age of the Great Dying is. It isn’t about us killing off the animals, really, or only in a small way. It is about us having triggered the mechanisms of our own ruin, by having consumed too much, dealt too much death, and now nature, like a wronged lover, is coming for us. And death gleams brilliantly in her eyes.”¹⁸

Kordell KeyAndre: The magic trick now (if we have one more left to make) is learning and, then, knowing: how to re-member that state of mind we once knew. Will we remember? We the people of the world are going to have to redeem ourselves, the human race, in the eyes of nature, of history, of futurity, and of our-selves... How do we live in harmony with the Other sentient beings (*plants and animals; fire water, ground and sky*) around us, and, in the name and nature of the human race, the most important question (s) of them all:

How do we live in harmony with our-selves?

How do we apply these learnings constructively?

How do we re-member our true nature, how do we get back to the lessons of our roots ... How do we channel that feminine energy into balance again? Is it something we need to intellectually think through or do we just let it happen, let it be? And not just (let it be) into physical balance but, also, how do we let (it be) our feminine energy into emotional and mental balance.¹⁹ It’s the essence of feminine energy that we must now more than anything else take our time to know, and intimately. And quickly. That, my friends, is how great our challenge is. Or, we can continue to carelessly pour gasoline-like-sob-stories onto the already accelerating fire of self-destruction. The choice is yours for the making.

¹⁸ Haque, Umair. “2020 Will Be Remembered As the Beginning of the Great Dying: If You Were Nature, Wouldn’t You Want to Kill Us Off, Too?” Medium: Eudaimonia & Co., December 2020. <https://eand.co/2020-will-be-remembered-as-the-beginning-of-the-great-dying-e76413b3a61f>

¹⁹ Basheer (@basheermusic) on Instagram. December 21, 2020.

Kordell KeyAndre: “The Universe always gives you what you truly embody, you can desire all you want but unless you become a vibrational match by committing to your growth it won’t show up. Focus more on working on your own vibe, cultivate self love and stop comparing yourself to others. Always keep evolving and attract everything you desire by embodying your highest self.”...

I’ve heard it said that, the printed and written history is fossilized, and therefore far more removed from the thoughts, emotions, and people & environment(s) in which they originated. In translation: historical literature—the printed and written word—cannot be the pinnacle or best of a “civilized society.” certainly not when many people within said colonizing societies were sub-communities of pre-literate people. Or, in other words, people who predated the advent of writing and reading, i.e., prehistoric times. Also meaning: there is so much more to be discovered in, embodied by the spoken word, the animated voice.

Kordell KeyAndre: If we’re so fascinated with discovering more and more about our-selves ... past, present, and thereafter—the thoughts, emotions, people & environment(s) in which they-themselves originated ...

... then *Why on Planet-Mother-Earth* are we sitting here still reading and still writing, and *so much*? Why—that is, working through and processing through something thoroughly, writing for the ear and reading aloud the aural thesis; asking for forgiveness, reading and writing more and more and researching more and more about God only knows—studying all these human-man made horrors.

Why do we care about the act of “preservation” so much, what is the significance of memory-making or forgetting altogether? Why are we not devoting more and more of a concerted effort to actively being present in this present moment, living in the now, with the now, minding our embodied emotions, our-selves, through practises of Yoga, breathwork and meditation, for example; active activities of being which asks us to pay careful-close attention to the present moment of what they-our bodies are telling us? And specifically listening to them -- the thoughts, emotions, and people & environment(s) in which they originated -- without condition? No, I thought, my love must have conditions. The conditions are what keep me on top! I don’t know, just wondering ... asking for a friend.

Certainly they-themselves—the people from African and all Indigenous societies—were not fixated in the dormant ways of, say, writing a canon of a great (white) man's his-story. nah. Rather, they, as a black indigenous people of color, probably relied on oral story telling-story telling

to survive.

to find the reason // to smile.

to be the reason // to get on

with-out remorse, through the dis-comfort. It's about that time we ditch the high-brow historicized pen and pad and take a knee ... and return to those original floorboards // the original instructions ... What are: them animated roots?

Kordell KeyAndre: Why was I doubting myself in the first place?

* * *

A NATION CAN RISE NO HIGHER than its woman, I thought. Specifically the so-called black woman. She's the womb of all nations, the mother of humanity, the creator of our human race, I thought. The so-called black woman has the Eve gene. Adam = Atoms. The allegorical story of Adam and Eve is just that, an allegorical story. Every single thing around you, including you-yourself, are made of atoms. They say, atoms are the building blocks of a cell. So Eve, a specific gene, originally came from Atoms because your genes come from your cells which in turn came from Atoms. The so-called black woman therefore is the key, and if your mother is a so-called black woman, then you yourself are her, too. More about this later ... the man coming first is a lie, unfortunately. I hate to break it to you, but the female had to have come first. "XX AND XY CHROMOSOME." You can see right there that the woman, XX, comes before the man, XY. Just through chromosomes alone. And even that was a lie. They say the woman is XX and the male is XY but that is false. The woman is XY and male is just the Y chromosome because he doesn't produce anything. The woman does. Which must mean due to parthenogenesis (the ability for the black woman to reproduce without sex, she is asexual, yes) ... she gave birth to the male through genetics aka chromosomes. Which is why she is really the NY and the male is just the Y. That's how the so-called black race got here, in the first place. **Via parthenogenesis.** No forms of life would exist without her. The so-called black woman came and is to come before the so-called black man. In this way, she is a direct reflection of Source of Self-regard.

She gave 2.8 % of her X chromosome to create the Y chromosome.

“The mind, coming in part from the activities of the brain, has different modes of processing. At a basic level we have different perceptual systems, such as sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. On another level we have the various forms of ‘intelligence,’ including linguistic, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, mathematical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The mind is complex and reveals itself in a myriad of wondrous and distinct ways of perceiving and interacting with the world. How we perceive differently influences how we behave. As organisms with input and output pathways, we have brains that are designed to take in data from the world, process them internally, and then create a specific response. [...] This is the most basic way of describing the role of the brain and overall nervous system.”²⁰ To this end, not historically but scientifically speaking, men and women are *not* equal. Sorry not sorry. If there were any superiority going on here, it wouldn't be between or amongst color codes but rather, certainly, the biological makeup of the sexes, what is male and female.

Kordell KeyAndre: And still, in spite of our collective differences—different definitions of sexes and colors—we need each other to exist, in order to be great. The universe makes no mistakes, so if it's here, it's here for a real reason beyond your personal feelings or opinions. “What is needed, rather than running away or controlling or suppressing or any other resistance, is understanding fear; that means, watch it, learn about it, come directly into contact with it. We are to learn about fear, not how to escape from it.” Face it, deal with it. Learn from it. For example, you cannot kill me unless I give you permission to kill me, I thought. How do I make sure I don't unconsciously give you permission to physically or psychologically kill me ... ? It's called CRISPR-Cas9. To possess knowledge of self, that which is to be protected. I must first know who I am. When it comes to gene splicing: You can only cut into genes or animals that don't possess a protective coating on their DNA. Elephants have a protective coating on their DNA. Lions have a protective coating on their DNA. Ants have a protective coating on their DNA. Honey-bees have a protective coating on their DNA. Wasps have a protective coating on their DNA. That's why it's hard for them—the inorganic species—to wipe them—the organic species—out of here. Because they are divinely protected. We, organic people of the sun, have a protective coating on their DNA, which is neuro-melanin. Divinely protected. You need ultraviolet light, which is the strongest light, in order to splice and cut into the gene in order to take out genes and put genes in. With them, the sun — ultraviolet light which cuts into their

²⁰ Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Hartzell, Mary M.Ed. “Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive.” Penguin Random House 2003, 2014.

genes – causes cancer in them. With us, the sunlight hits us, our melanin “*absorbs*” the sunlight, pushes the sunlight intentionally into our cells, converting said sunlight into energy for us to use, to see, to move and be animated, really.

That’s how unique and beautiful and powerful we are.

Today, I learned that my natural body is a reflection of my soul. If you do not have neuromelanin in your body, if your body does not have carbon ... carbon, allowing it to absorb all magnetic frequency ... if your soul does not produce the body that does that process automatically, then unfortunately you do not have a soul from the solar system. You are considered energy, and have the ability to do cool things yourself, but you’re not a soul from the solar system. Because if that were the case, then your natural body would match your soul, respectfully.

Our neuromelanin programs our genetics. The universe doesn't make mistakes. All is in divine order, despite your dis-comfort or inability to accept your origin story. You’re going through this season, this storm for a reason.

IN CONCLUSION

Kordell KeyAndre: According to the Laws of the Universe, the 12th Law of Gender manifests in all things as having masculine (yang) and feminine (yin) principles. “It is this law that governs what we know as creation. The law of gender manifests in the animal kingdom as sex. This law decrees everything in nature is both male and female, and both are required for life to exist.”²¹ [Italics ours] Furthermore, each individual should balance between their masculine and feminine energies to become a Master of them-selves, and the larger world around them. And by the way, feminine does not mean female, and masculine does not mean male. They are not genders, they are energies, and we all have both. The point is to learn how to master yourself, your own energy.

As we continue to do oral history *as* psychohistory, it’s necessary to keep in mind the following fact-of-the-matter: everything that moves, which is animated, at its foremost center and deepest core, is feminine. Feminine.

²¹ “12 Universal Laws.” First Media Design School. <https://firstmedia.edu.sg/12-universal-laws/>

Kordell KeyAndre: This internal narrative-based work was deeply impactful. A personal thinking journey, if you will. At a certain age things are not misunderstandings or mistakes anymore, I thought. At a certain age one must be responsible for their own research, their own self-education. Why would someone be sexually attracted to the opposite sex, or someone outside their Race—woman, man; black and white? Is it the illusion of power and status, rank and hierarchy, and the proximity to said power which I long for? And not literally them, their body, but really what their body stands for, symbolically, in the broader social context of patriarchy?

This may be a hard pill to swallow but hear me out. Every embryo started off as a female in the womb, not historically but scientifically speaking. They—scientists and biologists—have already proven that males are mutated versions of the female. The man is just a genetic mutation of a woman. Men, we have nipples, but my question: Who were you breastfeeding? Our nipples are mutated versions of boobs or her breasts. Reproductive tools, not to be hyper-sexualized. Similarly, our penis or more professionally called phallus, an erect penis, is an elongated or an extended version of the clitoris—Her clitoris. Our testicles, a mutated version of their ovaries. [“I find this reduction of sexual orientation to genitalia—what’s more, genitalia from birth—puzzling. Is anyone innately attracted to penises or vaginas? Or are we first attracted to ways of being in the world, including bodily ways, which we later learn to associate with certain specific parts of the body?”²²](#)

This may be another hard pill to swallow but hear me out. Likewise, they—scientists and biologists—have already proven that if you were not birthed by a so-called black wombman ... then you share 98% of your DNA with a so-called chimpanzee, an animal. Let alone all the other inorganic organisms. In this way, if you were birthed by a so-called black wombman, you yourself are by nature black. The Western or American-individualistic media has programmed society into thinking however if you have a black dad and a white mom, then you are black. This logic is false, flawed, misleading and flat out incorrect, not historically but scientifically speaking. You are either One or the Other; no we cannot meet in the middle on this one, no we cannot be both, neither half nor mixed. If yo mamma white, you white. If yo mamma Hispanic, then you Hispanic and so on.

²² Srinivasan, Amia. “The Right To Sex: Feminism In The Twenty-First Century.” The Politics of Desire. Picador, 2021.

Even people of color from abroad, that is people of color from the Caribbean, from Africa or Asia or from Europe, or they who self-identify as black but do not, technically, classify as African-American (on the census) – they come here, to the Americas, the land of rich milk and sweet honey, to take advantage of the great opportunity, that is the genocide of the American Indian (indigenous to America) population and their natural resources, the land. They do this, seemingly, knowing full well what they are doing ... black white or otherwise, if you are a so-called immigrant, or descendant of an immigrant, you know what is going on ... I mean, to a certain extent, you have to know what is going on in order to navigate safely and somewhat successfully; the social experiment that is America is a running con. And anyone who participates in it knows, to some extent, the crimes against humanity they are committing. All nations conspired and are, still, actively, conspiring against us.

If your mother is not an American Indian, Indigenous to America, then, not historically but scientifically speaking, you are not so-called black. Again, if you are birthed by a so-called black wombman, an American Indian, you yourself are by nature black, not historically but scientifically, an American Indian. Now if your pops is Jamaican or Haitian, from the Caribbean, it don't matter all too much... Because he is the core essence of his mother, whoever she is. The mother's genes rule, no matter what your sexual preference (sexuality) or where on this planet earth (nationality) you were born. We are each our mother, regardless of your *genitalia from birth or place of origin*. We know already that all melanated people are natural to this Planet Earth, yes, but the original, or copper-colored RACES of the Americas, who maintain tribal affiliation with community attachment, *who are they?*

By definition, black or African American: sf 181: “A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.” And still, none of the 54 African Countries Recognize any so-called black as a race, group or nation. Therefore, this definition still makes no sense. Therefore, so-called colonialism and American cultural racism specifically commits and is an act of genocide, by enforcing this arbitrary color code by way of media and publications, the education and medical industries, so they—the so-called white people—don't have to feel bad or pay for their crimes, i.e., selling us food (genetically motified or all natural) and taxing us, stealing our very land out from our under our very noses, destroying the land, corrupting the waters and skies, promoting this massive lie in the U.S., that all so-called brown people from from 1 place in Africa. Meaning all ‘black’ people not in Africa are foreigners on their own land.

Kordell KeyAndre: So back to your question. Who are they? Well, I'll tell you. They are the true American Indian. They are Amer'ican. They certainly are not Native American, as categorized and defined by a recent census, which was a misconception I myself made awhile back smh. I really thought I was a native american and made the mistake of publicly declaring myself as such. I apologize for doing that. I know now, not historically but scientifically, there is a biological difference between American Indians & Native Americans. Natives are not indigenous people, no way no how, most are Immigrants from Siberia or Hispanic passing. I mean, just look at their hair, how it falls ... flat ... There is no way you, scientifically speaking, can be Indigenous to the land with hair that falls flat. This is science. This is beyond complexion. For all my visual learners, it's a dead give away, and we must do away with this myth of race. Colonialism tries to develop all kinds of elaborate classification terms for all different kinds of people, on the basis of diversity equity and inclusion, but really, if you ask me, it's all a distraction ... taking you away from doing the real work, your self-education ... it's all misleading and a distraction: the English language. The answer to this question can be found in the language processing system itself, and if you don't speak a language other than English, you won't be able to see it—the answer—as clearly, I imagine, since English is all you know. Now who gave you this language?

Beyond complexion, it's a political status. It's all about politics, which brings us straight back to the evil erasure of America's first people and the theft of land. Beyond complexion, it's a political status. [“Success in politics demands that you must take your people into confidence about your views and state them very clearly, very politely, very calmly, but nevertheless state them openly.”](#) - Nelson Mandela, from a conversation with Richard Stengel, April 29, 1993 [...] People of color from abroad, that is people of color from the Caribbean, from Africa or Asia or from Europe, or they who self-identify as black but do not, technically, classify as African-American (on the census) – they come here, to the Americas, the land of rich milk and sweet honey, to take advantage of the great opportunity, that is the genocide of the American Indian (indigenous to America) population and their natural resources, the land.

They do this, seemingly, knowing full well what they are doing ... black white or otherwise, if you are a so-called immigrant, or descendant of an immigrant, you know what is going on here ... I mean, to a certain extent, you have to know what is going on in order to navigate safely and somewhat successfully; the social experiment that is

America is a running con. And anyone who participates in it knows, to some extent, the crimes against humanity they are committing. All nations conspired and are, still, actively, conspiring against us.

When you think about it, this could all be so simple! “Black” is a word associated with the descendants of slaves, not Africans or just anyone with brown skin not of Hispanic descent. If your mother is black, then you are black. This is America. This is your house. Rise up, remember who you are, act like it and reclaim what is rightfully yours. You are an American Indian.

Kordell KeyAndre: It’s important we stop confusing blood, biological and genetic facts with personal feelings, the English language ponzi scheme and the code that is color, caste, and class. Many get stuck on skin color and think no further because it’s safe and easy, convenient and quick. That is until you dig a little deeper, reach beneath the surface, beyond semantics and innerstand science and genetics, and get to the animating factor of it all: the oldest of the blood types, Type O, traces as far back as the human race itself. With primal origins based in the survival and expansion of humans, and their ascent to the top of the food chain, it’s no wonder Blood Type O genetic traits include exceptional strength and a lean physique [...]. In particular of the genetic traits which determine one’s phenotype: the HAIR pattern, the shape of NOSE and LIPS, even the natural SMELL of the organism ... All people did not originate from Africa. The oldest blood is Type O, and the highest concentration of Type O blood type is in, you guessed it, the Americas.

Yes, every organism has a vibration and the specific frequency gives off a distinct scent that comes off of each other. Everybody on the planet gives off an odor. Nature is very intelligent, in this way. It’s there for a reason. And she is separating us, the organic from the inorganic—the genetically modified organism (GMO). There is only one species on this planet that is organic, perhaps they have the oldest of the blood types, while the other species is inorganic, GMO. Neuromelanin tells the difference. The difference is beneath the surface.

So I ask you this: How can all so-called black people, and any natural life for that matter, come from Africa, when Africa—the continent—doesn’t even have the oldest blood, the oldest blood is in The Americas!/? Couple this with the oldest crust formation, the oldest trees, the oldest forests, the oldest freshwater, the oldest rivers,

the oldest Y chromosome, the oldest human skeleton, the oldest animal fossils, the oldest mummies, the oldest pyramids, most biodiverse, most fresh water deposits, most native crops consumed in the world. There is no rebuttal once you dig a little deeper, reach beneath the surface, beyond semantics and innerstand science and genetics, and get to the animating factor of it all. The American Indians, an organic species, were here well before Columbus. The Americas, the landmass itself, has the oldest blood, the best soil, the land with the richest of milk and sweetest of honey. The American aboriginal is the American Indian. The American Indian is the American negro. The American Negro is the American blacks. We were here in the first place, and then and only then abused by a group of species that was literally genetically modified and put together in a lab, I mean, you can't make this stuff up. If this is true, no cap, this would make them -- the so-called white people -- not organic to the land.

This is an Americana issue.

Kordell KeyAndre: No so-called black woman naturally has curly or straight hair, for example. The hair, lips and nose is how you can tell if a female/male is black or not. And another thing ... not historically but scientifically, there is no way a woman came from a man's rib, as lovely as that story reads on the page, ... as though man were here on Planet Earth first? So-called black woman, you were here first, before the so-called black man. You gave birth to us, her SUNS (black men) via parthenogenesis. Step into that power and do what you must. Man, we are her son. Men, it's our duty to respect Her and this natural hierarchy at all costs, by any means necessary, for we owe her our balance and harmony. Outside of the written documented history, these rhetorical questions have more to do with psychohistory than history itself, mind you, and yet, said questions are seldom asked in the historical dialogue context of PEACEBUILDING, RECONCILIATION and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

As lovely as that story reads on the page, I'm so sorry, I just cannot get behind it ... the reality is, they—the women—hold the key to all this. We're gonna be in for the shock of our lives to know who really holds the power and the key to our life.

Kordell KeyAndre: Women, I imagine; they are fed up. The return on investment of this American dream just isn't there like it used to be, if it ever were. Regardless, I think the point and overall objective remains, to heal

your DNA so your lineage can eventually tell a new war story. Rather than further perpetuating a misaligned society shaped, informed and maintained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchal bias, and causing more harm to us all. How do we explain this foundational, elemental truth to our children? The scientific difference between the sexes, what is male and female? From “cis-gender” to “transgender” ... “non-binary” and “gender-neutral” all the way back to “white supremacy” ... Why on Earth would terms and items like these exist, the miseducation, the misleading, the mis-informtaion ... these terms and and conditions, definitions-in the first place? Talking about race, gender and identity theory is not for the weak or faint of heart. The conversation calls for us to dig a little deeper, beyond the surface of skin color, and understand anatomy and genetics. To tell the truth. To be honest with ourselves, about ourselves and our place of origin. When one becomes conscious of their creations, they regain their power and design the life of their dreams.

Kordell KeyAndre: The year is now 2024. The seas are doing what they do, and Russia declared the United States (US) as its enemy for the first time in history. Plus, the sun is getting hotter and hotter each day, either breaking down or upgrading people's genetics—the roots are, in fact, animated. They're activated and back online. Those whose it's breaking down will not be able to walk underneath the sun. Planet earth is a carbon based planet, after all, and the truth is more disturbing than the lie. In the end, when all is said is done, the best art you make will be the art you make to heal your own soul and, in return, strengthen your own bloodline. It's all cute and lovely in the beginning, fun and games, until memory comes back ... Passport bros, it's over for you. With a view toward the future, the mere thought of doing or making artwork as care-work, should make your blood rush ... The doing of the work, with a view 12 generations into the future, should set your soul on fire. This is where we are. This present moment. This is why we're here. This is the house we've made, the garden we'll keep and continue to grow.

on writing for the stage, pt. 1

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”²³

— Frederick Douglass

“Our very being exposes us to the address of another. We suffer from the condition of being addressable. Our emotional openness is carried by our addressability. Language navigates this.”²⁴

— Judith Butler

Kordell KeyAndre: I AM A MAN who happens to find good reason in wearing multiple hats, sometimes all at once. My research interests explore a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to: how the experience of sexual abuse in young boys influences the formation of Masculine Identity; Sexuality, Gender and Identity Theory; Black Queer Diaspora Studies; Interactional socio-historical linguistics and contemporary North-American discourse analysis, African-America Vernacular English (AAVE); 20th century US history, specifically the Long Civil Rights Movement and the organizations, figures, and ideas that came out of that period; History of Immigrant Literature and The Great Migration; Artificial Intelligence and its role in servicing devices; Human Rights, Environmental Health and Clean Water Usage.

As you might see, my interests differ in genre and complexity—I’m a curious being—but, I assure you these multitudes of findings are each inter-related. To this end—because I am a man, volunteering his history and lived experiences thus far, and the potential *why* behind the *how* he came to find said topics to be of interest, as centerpiece to launch this now public research initiative, A View Through Them—I veer away from clinical and more therapeutic, jargon-y language when writing and reading. Though I do not self identify as an oral historian, oral historians do not set out to be therapeutic. The task they set themselves is to counter impersonal social science with personal narratives. Specifically, in my case, the subject matter of concern that is American cultural racism:

What is “*colour, caste, and class.*”

²³ Rowland, Andrew. “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men” (Frederick Douglass, 1817-1895) Dr. Andrew Rowland: Churchill Fellow of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. 25, April, 2014

²⁴ Rankie, Claudia. “The Condition of Black Life is One of Mourning.” *The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race*. Edited by Jesmyn Ward. New York: Scribner, 2016, pp 146-156. Print.

I am neither a board certified social worker nor trained clinician or medical provider, and therefore I am less prepared to have hyper specific, productive discussions regarding the aforementioned subject matters of concern at this point in time, the year 2023. My research interests—they are broad enough, though. And I wrote this thesis across broad topics in generalities intentionally, on purpose; and with discursive, creative language, which is connected here by theme and chapters, movements, headers, titles and subtitles. My environmental justice frame of reference re-defines environmentalism, sustainability, and resilience while challenging institutional structures like race and racism, and the dominant environmental protection paradigm, which is always all encompassing and in conversation with each other, too. Speaking on all of them in generalities and through an autobiographical lens, then, is helpful, as it concerns doing narrative as medicine. Our social circumstances and our environmental circumstances are more interconnected than meets the eye, and the betterment of one inevitably helps the betterment of the Other. “I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states ... Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” once wrote Martin Luther King, Jr.²⁵

Kordell KeyAndre: All this just to say, I pursue oral history projects on narratives of Race and colonialism, rhetorics of sociomedical sciences and medicine. The process of reshaping my psychology, anyway, began with educating myself first in critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness. You cannot get to so-called black queerness in America without first becoming aware of your own sexual preferences; who are you and where have you been? Do you know what turns you on, and can you name it? And why do you think that is? Where does this arousal stem from? What is the origin story of your own sexuality? The list of people who have influenced my educational, political and psychological perspectives, and my highly focused life purpose include American psychologist Abraham Maslow, with his humanistic approach to psychotherapy and self-actualization. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs taught me this: One of the stronger motivations that drives a human is their lust to belong, to feel as if we are connected in meaningful ways. Brené Brown defines this as spirituality: Spirituality “is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to one another by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and belonging.”

²⁵ King, Martin Luther, Jr. Letter from a Birmingham Jail [King, Jr.]. African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, Ali-Dinar, Ali B. Ali-Dinar, Ph.D. www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

You see, I view my mom to be a black American woman. An indigenous woman of Native-Cherokee and Afro-American or Negro descent. A chocolate-skin person of darker complexion, I thought. Nuanced, right? as one is to be. Recently I asked her if she viewed herself to be African-American, to which she replied,

“I’m black.”

Kordell KeyAndre: Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud. Born to a so-called black woman – *her words, not mine* – and a first-generation American immigrant from Jamaica, I can recall experiencing a better half of my childhood on the highway, safely tucked away in the back seats of cars traveling from mom’s house in Suffolk County of Long Island and dad’s place in Brooklyn, NY. *“In the car, we’d listen to the radio—oldies—and I’d wait for my mother to ask the same question she asked every trip. ‘How you know these words? You weren’t even born when this came out,’ she’d say. Or, ‘Boy, what you know about the Temptations?’ Or Marvin Gaye. Or Aretha Franklin. As if she hadn’t been playing this music each day of my life.”*

I mean, my father wasn't there as much as one might hope their father would be. He wasn't there for my birth, for example, the year then 1997. Growing up – my father is an amazing man, don't get me wrong – but he wasn't physically present and when he would show up it would be under conditions. Otherwise, he was busy hustling. Who was looking out for me, who was raising me when Mom was occupied? Well, immediately I'd say it was my older brother. I'd then go on to say the village. *“No matter where you start, how you finish is on you,”* says Gary Vaynerchuck. *“You can’t control a lot in the beginning — where you’re born, to whom, [what happens to you, etc] ... But let there be no confusion ... you’re wildly in control of outcomes, there are always outside forces but you are capable and I believe in you.”* What you do with those memories ... the mess, if you can define it as such ... be gentle with the re-telling of your story... be kind to yourself and Others ... What it is that you do, is now up to you.

The choice is entirely up to you.

MAN OF THE HOUSE

Kordell KeyAndre: Since the dawn of classical studies in Ancient Greece, almost certainly between 550 and 220 BCE, this community effort, of the performing and dramatic arts—has been a genuine tool for educating and sustaining civilizations. There is no world class community that does not have a highly evolved and supported arts and culture community. And the tradition itself, it stretches even before then: So the story goes, the Greeks, with their renowned amphitheaters and flamboyant yet rather stoic in its measure coliseums had borrowed and in a way appropriated massive philosophical traditions from Israel and the Phoenicians.²⁶ Now, I say *in a way appropriate* because, well, depending on *why* and on *how* you choose to see it, one can get away with almost anything. What I know for sure, it sure does take a village to raise a child. Likewise, the sins of a child are never his alone. Heterosexual culture heavily depends on many things, one being a notion of the future: As the 1977 Whitney Huston song goes, “the children are our future.”

For me, I remember, it was Broadway’s stage adaptation of the classic Disney film *The Lion King* (1994) which introduced, and for the first time, the creative world of dramatic storytelling, role-immersion pedagogy and performative writing, if you will.

I was in the 5th grade, say nine or twelve years of age. The fantasy-like representation of copper-skinned people in a dreamscape of jungle puppets is what actually caught my eye; the African influenced musical score and vibrant, colorful articulations are what moved me to tears; and the story itself—using animal allegories to tell tales of the human condition—now *that* is the oral tradition that withstands the test of time. Heterosexual culture heavily depends on many things, one being a notion of the future: It’s the circle of life

Kordell KeyAndre: Public school began introducing items of Jewish heritage to us in the sixth-grade. For example, tangibles like a prayer shawl, a revered traditional garment. Being cast as ‘Bottle Dancer #2’ (mazel tov!) in the musical *Fiddler On The Roof* (1964) was, clearly, a dream come true. I was performing in a story-crafted

²⁶ Morrison, Toni. “The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations.” Penguin Random House, New York, 2019.

from Yiddish literature of Sholem Aleichem—of family legacy and Judaic values, set in Imperial Russia, the year 1905. Similar to the everyday audience member though not one in the same, my mother would sit back and she would make meaning of the moving parts:

“Little black-jewish-boy,” she might say.

“What on Earth would you be doing out and about in Eastern Europe this time of day?”

“But this is the theater, Mom,” I would think out loud, “Let’s use our imagination.” ... Let us dream a dream, and dare to imagine a world outside the very one we call our own. Can we do that, even if for just an hour or two?

In the sixth-grade, while I was not quite ready to define antisemitism, or have hold of the cultural awareness or social acumen to adequately define racism, I think I understood how it felt to be treated “differently.” What does it mean to be different? How does being different even feel? Are there emotions attached or associated with what it means to feel different?

Kordell KeyAndre: Succeeding my makeshift experience of embodying Jewish life, written cleverly for the stage, I was introduced to first person narratives from diarist Anne Frank and the testimonies from Holocaust survivor Eli Wiesel. These stories came to me in the tenth grade, via Global Studies, the year 2013. However, elements of Jewish heritage were still only a preface—a prelude to a much larger, long overdue discourse centering racial bias and the politics of difference.

Following only years after my futuristic debut as the “black-jew,” disheartening details of the Holocaust and its generational reverberations, for example, would be brought to my attention, this time now in a graduate school classroom. I want to return to this idea of *latent capacity to comprehend complex issues or subject matters of concern as a child*. Is there a “best practice” in explaining this crime against humanity, to our children?

Many adults, they still deny and/or struggle to accept some wars, especially those fought abroad or some distance away from their homes; but how can we present our youth of all ages with such demoralizing images of our human existence and in the same breath ask them to remain calm? Perhaps there is a way to capitalize or intentionally use the theater arts to introduce people of all ages to larger societal issues that encompasses, you know, the efforts of conflict, post-conflict, and post-dictatorial societies. A way to open the discussion, to loosen us up some and ease us into a place where a necessary conversation about how to identify signs of abuse and totalitarianism, for example, authoritative behaviors. Witnessing as an audience member or playing a part in a production like *Fiddler On The Roof* could, for starters, be an opportunistic point of entry.

Kordell KeyAndre: But then, after the curtain falls and the actors leave for home, who continues the contextualizing, the brave undertaking of educating? Should the emotional toll, song and dance of “re-telling” fall upon a drama club director, a school history teacher, or a parent? Is it the individual’s responsibility to read and do their own research on global catastrophes and why they take place in the first place? After all, it is just show biz. Is it “best practice” to assume that *they (who lives, who dies, who tells your story)* have the “right” story to tell? Is there ever a “wrong” story to tell, or is that, too, left to subjective opinion?

For what it’s worth, historical dialogue is a valuable tool in achieving the long-term goals of conflict resolution, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and democracy promotion. Beyond the stage performance—which takes years of “training in the studio, all the choreographer’s planning, the rehearsals, the coordination of designers, composers, and technicians, the raising of money and the gathering together of an audience—all these are only a preparation for an event that disappears in the very act of materializing. No other art is so hard to catch[...].” To capture. To teach and learn on... Beyond the stage, it is my guess that all performances must come to an end, including what brought them all to gather in the ways in which they did. “Even New York clubs eventually close for the night; most close the next afternoon, but they do close. The performances come to an end. Club kids stumble into taxis in broad daylight, and [...] other performers pack up their outfits and makeup and go home for a restorative nap. Is this performance’s end? That moment when the venue closes? Has the vanishing point been reached?” Again, I must ask, after the curtain falls and the actors—they leave for home, beyond the stage, who continues the contextualizing, the brave undertaking of educating?

Kordell KeyAndre: Since being introduced to *The Lion King* on Broadway, I've cultivated a pallet for interactional sociolinguistics through conscious-raising social commentary. What does that mean exactly; What does that look like, I'm not sure, but it sounds interesting. It sounds cool. (Which is not to say *The Lion King* or *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, or even *Shrek the Musical* don't have hard hitting social truths embedded throughout. Because they do.) *Parade* (1998), *Fences* (1985), *The Piano Lesson* (1997), *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (2006) for example; *Ragtime* (1996), *RENT* (1994); *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1991); *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1973), *Les Miserables* (1862), and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964) ... all social commentary – or, socio-historical commentary rooted in the discipline of psycho-history.

Kordell KeyAndre: Can you believe it?

At least on the character building side of the production, psychohistory: How does the person playing these characters get into the character they are playing? Why are the so-called villains considered villains? Are they—the so-called villains—not just ordinary people, like the rest of us, making sensible choices, doing the best they know how? In the process of observing the mannerisms and choices of self-and-others, what story do you create? What is their background, their backstory, and how does said background and said backstory inform *why* they do the things they do? In fewer words, what motivates them?

This string of “Why” and “How” questioning, lays the groundwork for really great communication, on and off the stage; and is also fundamental in character development and empathy building. Why is their intention what it is? When the “Where” and “What” have definitive answers already, the “Why” and “How” can be up for creative interpretation of, by and for the players them-selves. Listening to what a person needs from you, and connecting to their emotional life, goes beyond yourself and where your emotional life is at present. Someone's meaning goes beyond the words – the message is in the way their eyes grow, or in the way they pursue their lips ... the tone and musicality of their body language. When you see the people you're playing as whole and realized people, you get to know them better. This holistic approach to character development is the foundation to first-person storytelling and person-centered care.

Embodying fictional or nonfictional characters strengthened my sense of self, expanded my moral imagination, exposed the ailments and heartaches of this world, what it means to be a man or a woman, and made me a more open minded person.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: I was raised—heavily by our mother, a black woman—to navigate the challenges of living on Long Island, a highly segregated region of New York state and America in general, as a confident, well-groomed black man. Slipping up was not an option. We remember feeling pressure from mom to be “articulate” in “proper” English, to not be “lazy” when explaining ourselves. Being lazy in the context of explaining ourselves could cost us our lives. In other words, it could cost her: life.

Kordell KeyAndre: We felt an emphasized importance of staying out of trouble or, as she, our black mother, would say, “*on the straight and narrow*.” Shirts, usually just mine, were tucked all the way in. She has always been really opinionated and to this day is a major advocate for “closed mouths don’t get fed” sentiments.

A lesson we picked up on, while living in her house, is as followed:

To “be a man” might as well mean to dominate and win. You’re not soft or weak. Boy’s shouldn’t cry, or make a fuss over little things. Don’t reveal emotional truths, never enable vulnerability, confess neither shame nor failure. And if you dare do any of the aforementioned you’re bound to be awarded the label of “sissy,” or “fag” or, a more lavish equivalent of the two: “gay.”

In her house, you didn’t want to be called *those* words. They never carried positive connotations, and though the meaning of said words can change with time, we don’t think the meaning underneath said words will ever, might ever disappear. They will always be there. The energy in which said words were manufactured and, then, deployed ... they will always linger. Here The history and etymology of said words, are alive and well. What it meant, or means to be “gay” in this (white) man’s world we would someday come to define for ourselves, on our own terms, and in our own ways. But for now, what it means to be “gay” is, for lack of a better term, not good.

Kordell KeyAndre: We struggled a great deal with this one, because no matter how we came to understand these tensions or emotions within the house, they would usually take new shape once outside or at school. The constant shifting of ideas, everyone's own definition of how we should behave as a male identified person who they perceived to be "black" metaphorically colliding with my own beliefs, as a person (first) who was (then) experiencing "boyhood" and "blackness" and "queerness" in a segregated suburb on Long Island.

As Dr. Perry reminds us, "[n]ot only is 'What happened to you?' the key questions if you want to understand someone, it is the key question if you want to understand the brain. In other words, your personal history—the people and places in your life—influences your brain's development. The result is that each of our brains is unique. Our life experiences shape the way key systems in our brain organize and function. So each of us sees and understands the world in a unique way. [...] Starting in the womb, the developing brain begins to store parts of our life experience. Fetal brain development can be influenced by a host of factors influencing mother's stress; drug, alcohol, and nicotine intake; diet; and patterns of activity. During the first nine months, development is explosive, at times reaching a rate of twenty thousand new neurons 'born' each second. (In comparison, an adult may, on a good day, create seven hundred new neurons.) By birth, the newborn had 86 billion neurons; these will continue to grow and connect to create complex networks that allow the newborn to begin making sense of their world. This is all extremely complex and not fully understood by researchers, but there are a few basic principles that will be helpful throughout our conversations about how this relates to trauma."

Kordell KeyAndre: She—a phenomenal woman!—played a consequential role in shaping our psychology. She, too, is simply a product of her earlier environs. Here is where she still stands. And it is in this context that we correlate the formation and, even, the understanding of our identity, with the ways in which we were nurtured, cared for or kept, in those formative years.

I felt a necessity to put on "masc" or "masculinity" to gain respect. Throughout the culture of our childhood home and the associated spaces, being what was perceived to be "weak" or "affectionate" or "passionate" or kind, even, did not earn us a seat at the table, a number on the board. It didn't earn us power. For me, our definition of

masculinity was gaining the lead role in the school musical. For you it may have been different: Becoming class president or valedictorian, prom king, or captain of the football team ... scoring the hot girl that one summer. But for me, being cast in the school musical, for example, was an opportunity like no other, to prove something, to our parents at least, who eventually would stop ragging about my personal choice to leave sports alone. Our masculinity was defined by getting that solo in choir, and singing our face off, “nailing” that run, leaving an impression worth remembering on the Others. Our masculinity was wearing the coolest clothes, having the strongest and slickest comebacks when put on the spot. This performative masculinity, in a decorative way, was my saving grace.

Kordell KeyAndre: The wavering impressions of our masculinity, what we thought and then later expressed as what it might mean to “be a man” would be observed and ridiculed, often by both home and school practitioners alike. Among the many authoritative variables glaring from our childhood, our big brother played a leading role. This black American woman and little brother couldn't stand a chance against the big brother's relationship with and definitions of manhood. Consistent, that he was, in reinforcing a hegemonic or ruling, masculine philosophy in this home setting.

Without dad in the house, and if we're still honoring the old model of patriarchy, the next in line—the older brother would be next in command, to carry out the responsibilities and expectations of being the man of the house. Like the supremacy of whiteness or white supremacy, patriarchy shows itself its insidious ways. For example, “patriarchy,” a system or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is traced through the male line, is designed to censor men's emotional expression. It tells us to react to our emotions, rather than feel them, our emotions. It tells us to react to said emotion, perhaps “annoyance” or “frustration” or “discomfort” or “disease,” rather than observing said emotion, gathering something worth holding on to. Learn something from it. Listen to it, and feel through it. Grow through it, perhaps? Get through it. Just get through it.

Instead, patriarchy is designed for us men to react, to be in control and be the first and last to speak, labeling the responsible expression of said emotions as weak or feminine. When in all actuality, those very emotions are essential; they're sent to us from a guide from beyond, perhaps our higher self or perhaps God, whomever we believe in. Said emotions have been sent as a sign. A reminder. A remembrance. Something we ought to listen to,

honor, and respect. How can we actively become more aware of the internalized system of patriarchy, and embody our sacred masculinity as well as divine femininity? Bringing the two into one harmonious balance, following the lead, first, of the divine feminine. And if we listen closely to what those said emotions have to say, and if we react to those emotions ... and honor those emotions, that's who we have allegiance to. And that's who has jurisdiction over us. Woman does not emerge from man's ribs, not ever, it's he who emerges from her womb – hence why we're here, to protect her. One of the greatest lies of patriarchy is framing the father as the life giver.

Kordell KeyAndre: If we can read in between the lines, we can better hear what our next step might be. Like many of our African and Indigenous ancestors, we, too, believe that such censorship of said emotional navigation, coupled with the miseducation or ignorance or lack of best practice in the department of self-education, has depleted our collective access as men to live a fuller, more expressive life. A life that is more in alignment with our sacred masculine and the divine feminine.

My big brother, older by just three years, seemed to have followed and steadily practiced a routine perhaps picked up from outside extracurriculars, and then tracked those, I'd say, abrasive footprints into our supposedly safe space, our house and my intermittent refuge. I'd later come to realize, his reactions were very much warranted.

There he was, another living, breathing model of what it might mean to be a person-first, experiencing their "boyhood" and "blackness" in a segregated suburb on Long Island. The closest thing to me I'd ever known. There he was, there stands his ground. After all, he too was and still is a product of his environments, his cultural context. Define. Epigenetics: the ways in which our environment, diet, and lifestyle powerfully affect and modulate the expression of our genes.

As I'm coming to realize, in this day and age my older brother and I would both be irresponsible to point a finger of condemnation, rather than take full accountability for who we are. Our collective youthful aggression and learned violent behavior cannot be blamed on 'female-headed households' or the lack of fatherly figure i.e. *responsible male presence*. He, my big brother, would later bring himself to apologize for the ill-informed

projections he brought onto me and my world view. I would accept and forgive him and those choices. After all, and all things considered, we're neither pure nor wise nor good, we're all just doing the best we know.

Kordell KeyAndre: The steady day-in and day-out “berating” and “chastisement,” overt or subliminal, of undermining influences, like a parent’s scathing criticisms for example, personified the psychological remnants of that first faultless introduction to sex. As one can imagine, the systemic interplay of homophobia and heteronormativity happening in school settings as well in our home language environment, couldn't have been helpful for our personal development. A constantly criticized child can miss out on opportunities of character building. But maybe that was the point, all along; the added social pressure juxtaposed against our unorthodox truth, is what brings us to where we are today ... and thankful, that we are, for where we are to-day.

My wavering impressions of masculinity, however, what I thought it meant to “be a man” here in our American culture, would be observed and constantly questioned by home and school practitioners alike. I would listen to them, and act accordingly. Among the many misleading social variables, my biological brother, older by three years, was a key player in said miseducation, I thought, habitually reinforcing this hegemonic masculine philosophy. I would assemble characters and stories, fantasies even, around this false notion of what masculinity meant at home, what it meant in the streets and on the ball field, on and off the stage, as it were. The line between what was to be said in private, in the safe confines of our house, over time blurred and made to be uneasy by the presumed role were to play for the public. “On oil dance floors, sites of public sex, various theatrical stages, music festivals, and arenas both subterranean and aboveground, queers live,” says José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2019). They “labor, and [they] enact queer worlds in the present. But must the future and the present exist in this rigid binary? Can the future stop being a fantasy of heterosexual reproduction? [...] [Following] C.L.R. James, [can the future be something of] a future in the present.” Has it always been?

Kordell KeyAndre: Oddly enough, the male gaze is something I have always felt. Not to say I've looked for it near and far, but I've certainly locked eyes with a people, for better or for worse. The male gaze, pressuring me to fit into the molded atmosphere or disagree all the while still in character; to follow the script of impression and dominion. “For black queers [in particular], survival has always been about finding ways to connect some of what is

disconnected, to embody and re-member. This is the social erotics of love at work. The intersubjectivity evidenced by black queer love is ‘that conjure medicine that helps heal the psychic wounds of enslavement.’”²⁷

Kordell KeyAndre: And because memory works in fickle ways, when I look back at it, all those years having unprotected sex in the back seat of cars and all the promiscuity you can think, I realize much of my reaction to their feedback was exaggerated—dramatic maybe even a trauma response—although still a crucial necessary next step in the protection and preservation of this person—first experiencing his blackness in America—this black boy's joy. I'm surprised I made it this far, unscathed ... I'm surprised I made it this far, yes, unscathed.

* * *

Playwrights who craft conscious-raising social commentary and or historical dramas are my salve.

Kordell KeyAndre: Like the three-act play written by YALE School of Drama graduate Jeremy O. Harris titled: *SLAVE PLAY* (2019), for example. To see this show on Broadway, the pinnacle of commercial theater, and twice before closing, was a privilege. *SLAVE PLAY* (2020), the most Tony-nominated Play in history, gave its final performance January 23, 2022. A three-act play by Jeremy O. Harris about race, sex, power relations, trauma, and interracial relationships. It follows three interracial couples undergoing “Antebellum Sexual Performance Therapy” because the black partners no longer feel sexual attraction to their white partners.

SLAVE PLAY won the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award and the Rosa Parks Playwriting Award at the 2018 American College Theater Festival, to then later receive 12 Tony Award nominations, “breaking the record previously set by the 2018 revival of *Angels in America* for most nominations for a non-musical play. [...] A profile in the New York Times said that Harris’s ‘ability to render subconscious trauma into provocative theatrical expression, as potentially unsettling as entertaining, has earned him a lot of attention [...]’”²⁸

Stories like these introduced me to personalities, histories, and belief systems which—if read in isolation or performed or viewed in a small group today—can still transcend national, political, cultural and socio-historical

²⁷ Allen, Jafari K. “Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 211-247. From read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/18/2-3/211/414697/GLQ182-3_01Allen_Fpp.pdf

²⁸ Kumar, Naveen. (November 28, 2018) “A Playwright Who Won’t Let Anybody Off The Hook.” *The New York Times*. ISSN 0362-4331. Retrieved March 21, 2019.

barriers. This is writing for the stage, on or off. Today I believe each of the aforementioned historical dramas, from *SLAVE PLAY* to *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, if you can brand them as such, provide the average audience a good reason, as well as a valuable insight, to think honestly and critically about the broader social construct(s) and historical caste system(s) in which they-themselves live.

“Writers,” says Toni Morrison, “are among the most sensitive, most intellectually anarchic, most representative, most probing of artists. The writer’s ability to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange, and to mystify the familiar—all this is the test of her or his power. The languages she or he uses (imagistic, structural, narrative) and the social and historical context in which these languages signify are indirect and direct revelations of that power and its limitations. So it is to them, the creators of American literature, that I look for some classification about the invention and effect of Africanism in the United States.”²⁹

Kordell KeyAndre: Take Broadway’s *The Color Purple* (2004), for example, an adaptation of Alice Walker’s historical novel (1982), which won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction, is a musical which chronicles some, at the time, unexplored stories of what a human-people (first) who were (then) experiencing “*womanhood*” and “*blackness*” in southern Georgia, USA during the early 1900s.

Spawned from a novel crafted exclusively from first-person diary entries, *The Color Purple* makes a dutiful decision to challenge patriarchal practises through the lens of, none other than, “*black women*.” What was the time period? What class line did she occupy? The ingénue, who just so happened to be who the story is centered around ... the main idea or main character, herself being a black woman named Celie Johnson. It was this narrative, coupled with the artistic elements of production and the day and age in which it was said, which awakened our comprehension of “*womanism*” as a movement-based social theory.

Kordell KeyAndre: Presented to the world as a novel, first; then a film (1985), directed by Steven Spielberg—a “white” person and a “man” at that—and receiving twelve Oscar nominations; it wasn’t until the second run of the stage musical when *The Color Purple* stepped into our lives, shattering my level of education for critical

²⁹ Morrison, Toni. “The Source of Self Regard.” 2019.

consciousness. We were maybe seventeen, or sixteen years of age, when we first experienced the show's revival on Broadway the year 2016, directed by John Doyle—another “white” person exercising their “man-ness”—with our mother, a “*black woman*,” her words not mine. And ever since experiencing this new production we still ask ourselves,

What is African-American, anyway?

What is the literal definition or difference between an

African-American and an Americanized-African?

Kordell KeyAndre: The recording and preservation and acting out of *The Color Purple*, one of the more classical of the American literatures in the great American canon, speaks volumes to the human-person who experiences what is “woman-hood” and what is “black-ness,” in America—yesterday, today and, yes, even into tomorrow. The energy will live on until the end of time. What a task to carry the weight of that responsibility. This was quite a lesson to hear spoken aloud, realized soon thereafter, one that started well before it was thought of, first, written down in script form later, to finally be realized and and actualized, read aloud for all of us “Other” people to experience, together, in one dark room which we’ve grown to call a “theatre,” “theater” or, more meta, the “black box.” The promises of Source are all over my life ... that’s what the colorful rainbow stands for, I thought. Vibration, energy, magnetic frequency.

+++

Kordell KeyAndre: “The power to make distinctions is a primary operation of intelligence. We distinguish between white and black, beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, gain and loss, good and evil, right and wrong. [...] The fate of mankind depends upon the realization that the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, is superior to all other distinctions. ... To teach humanity the primacy of that distinction is of the essence to the Biblical message. [...] After the Lord had created the universe, He took a look at His creation. What was the word that conveyed His impression? If an artist were to find a word describing how the universe looked to Gd at the dawn of its existence, the word would be sublime or beautiful. But the word that the Bible has is *good*. Indeed, when we

look through a telescope into the stellar space, the word that comes to our mind is grandeur, mystery, splendor. But the Gd of Israel is not impressed with splendor; He is impressed with goodness.

[...] Good and evil are not values among other values. Good is life, and evil is death. ‘See I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil ... choose life’ (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19).”³⁰

Kordell KeyAndre: Today, tomorrow, and every day thereafter, I ought to choose life. In this elemental context, I am a man. The seventh generation principle says, “The thoughts and actions we make today ought to offer a sustainable world,” at least “seven generations into the future.” At a certain age things are not misunderstandings or mistakes anymore, I thought. At a certain age one must be held responsible for their own research, their own self-education. “Education.”

What does it look like to do the righteous thing?

Kordell KeyAndre: Since graduating high school and moving on from the drama club, I have become all too aware of the nuanced variables that could potentially guide one’s harboring of homosexual behavior(s). It’s nuanced. There’s not much more space I care to devote to this topic here, but as far as my own self-education and self-acceptance are concerned: “To be a man is, precisely, to be responsible. It is to feel shame at the sight of what seems to be unmerited misery. It is to take pride in a victory won by one’s comrades. It is to feel, when setting one’s stone, that one is contributing to the building of the world.” It’s never just *one* thing which causes *one* thing.

The environment of the drama club for sure introduced me to an interesting definition of queer-ness, which would eventually become interpersonal and cool to the touch. I wish I knew sooner, the marvel that is my body, the precious-ness of my-self. And how valuable I truly am, at my core. I wish I was taught to see and know my magic, how to step into my greatness. How to honor and respect my natural worth, how to protect that which is my harvest. I gave away my power at a discounted damn near free rate just for simple, in some cases un-natural, validation? It does not belong to those who intended to reap where they have not sown. I wouldn't have been so quick to give it

³⁰ Joshua Heschel, Abraham. “I asked for wonder: a spiritual anthology” Chapter: Man. The Crossroad Publishing Company: 2012.

away, I thought. We as an American society, anyway, are not yet cognisant of the limitless reverberations of sexual abuse on one's self-image, self-esteem, self-identity, self-searching, self-perception, and on the organization of one's sexuality and sexual orientation.

ABRIDGED VERSION

on writing for the stage, pt. 2

“The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious, one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” — James Baldwin

“The past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, & thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past.” — Virginia Woolf

Narrator: “Often, we need to study several discourses and compare them in order to understand which is the true teaching of the Buddha. It is like stringing precious jewels together to make a necklace. If we see each sutra in light of the overall body of teachings, we will not be attached to any one teaching. With comparative study and looking deeply into the meaning of the texts, we can surmise what is a solid teaching that will help our practice ...”

Echoing Jean-Jacques Rousseau's first *DISCOURSE ON THE SCIENCES AND THE ARTS* (1750), second *DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN OF INEQUALITY* (1754), and third and least well known *DISCOURSE ON POLITICAL ECONOMY* (1755), whose thoughtful philosophy influenced the progress of the Enlightenment throughout Europe, and setting the stage for any and all of the following political discourse(s) ... I believe the effective process of narrating one's *first-person* testimony, from one's *first-person* point of view, is of critical importance, generally speaking but even more so when it comes to healing the blight of racism in our country. Politics is going to do you whether you decide to actively participate in it or not. Why not make your democratic participation a form of art?

On the other hand, similarly, “the *Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma* is filled with joy and hope. It teaches us to recognize suffering as suffering and to transform our suffering into mindfulness, compassion, peace, and liberation.”³¹ In this way, this aural thesis, *Discourse On Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023), written for the ear over the course of three years to later be recorded and spoken aloud for close-readers and close-listeners,

³¹ Hanh, Thich Nhat. *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation: the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path, and other basic Buddhist teachings*. Printed in the United States of America, Harmony Books - Penguin Random House LLC. 1998 / 2015.

it takes gentle care of the author of words—the sharing—themselves, as well as the consumer or, more kindly put, the recipient or beneficiary of said words. Saying anything beyond the substantive content of this aural thesis would be uberly less important, however, than what we hope to convey by virtue of literally having written it and read it in the first place. Spoken aloud in the second place. Some might say, I found it revelatory to speak my mind in this way. I would agree with them: within these pages, here is where I am straight up honest about what I felt, what was affecting me then, what was affecting us at the time, and actively exploring if ever so freely those feelings. Openly writing and reading and narrating, rinsing and repeating about what it is or what it was I experienced through my own mind and body—and said experiences affect me first and foremost and, then, how it may show up in the larger world—is valuable. My reactions and expressions are all warranted and valid because they come from me, who it is that I am. This process of acting out and then trying to understand what all happened, helps all who seek care and all who seek to give care, teach and learn, too. This is a process we call doing oral history *as* psychohistory. What happens when we ask *why* is this happening to me?

Narrator: Psychologically speaking, *why* did I even put myself through this arduous process of reading and writing about American history, the politics of Race and American cultural racism? Why did I feel the need to go on this narrative journey? Why did I feel it purposeful to share this narratology process with the American public? *How* did I go about the business of structuring this long-form discourse on doing, written with the end goal of and with an intent to one day be, read aloud?

Narrator: I'm Kordell KeyAndre. I've heard it said that, the printed and written history is fossilized, and therefore far more removed from the thoughts, emotions, and people & environment(s) in which they originated. Once it's written down, it's here forever. Anyone who is interested enough can walk up on it one day and be reminded of a past self. In translation: historical literature—the printed and written word—cannot be the pinnacle or best of a quote unquote “*civilized society*.” certainly not when many people within said colonizing societies were sub-communities of pre-literate people. In the English language, that is. Or, in other words, people who predated the advent of writing and reading in the English language, i.e., prehistoric times. Also meaning: there is so much more to be discovered and embodied by the spoken word, the animated voice, than meets the eye.

So when I ask you, why did I put myself through this ... to read and write and, eventually read and speak aloud this aural thesis thing ... I truly wonder, why is hidden or lost in the written word, and what is then found again in the tone and measure of the animated voice?

Kordell KeyAndre: To be clear, these Americana issues we're warming up now to address today has less to do with *what* is being written or *what* the history is saying ... and more to do with *who* is doing the saying—person-first; and *why* they have thought themselves to speak about said issue and in this way—place-conscious. This is our version of doing oral history as psychohistory.

A NORTH IN TRANSITION

My transition from *high school setting* to *undergraduate lifestyle* was one of a kind. Despite the stereotypical odds—though real and, even, very systemic inevitabilities—facing a first-generation, low-income student with two working-class parents, the semester following my high school graduation I was fortunate to attend a community college just a few towns over, the year now 2015.

Kordell KeyAndre: I always wanted to go to college. I think, I believed in higher education back then. I remember my senior year like it was yesterday; being president of Thespian Troupe 2963, being rejected from some of my quote unquote reach schools: Ithaca College, Hartford University in Connecticut, and New York University in Manhattan. I wrote in a playbill somewhere that I wanted to be a music therapist, a lucrative though yet innovative way to combine my love and passion for live music and desire to see people through their most challenging of times. Years later while handling a crisis response situation I would realize that I'm a healer naturally, not so much a protector; an empath, not so much a provider. Much to my surprise, while balancing the fun of senior year, I'd prepare and deliver on audition after audition, only to be turned away or, rather, in this case just not accepted to join their school. As a young adult, I've since gotten to know rejection. To be on the receiving end of a decision from someone you hold in high esteem however, as an adolescent teenager, the reality stings differently. To

be of service to the Creator and not the creation was always considered risky or a bold move, but as a kid who grew up in and out of various social settings which prioritized the pursuit of higher education, that college was the great equalizer, and to attend university is your only way of having a shot at the American Dream ... to only then not be recipient of acceptance letters while those peers around me were seemingly well on their way; I guess it was a blow to my self-esteem, my confidence. So much of who I was depended on outside decision makers, external factors.

Kordell KeyAndre: Nonetheless, I found a way forward. Keeping consistent with the throughline of my life being different and unusual, unorthodox or non-conventional, I didn't apply to Fredonia when I was in high school. I thought it was just too far away from home. And after a year at community college, the thought of getting away appealed to me. Now gaining an understanding of the power of writing, wishful thinking and dreaming big, this decision, to stay home and work out a game plan of sorts, I'd love to take credit for but, in reality, it wasn't up to me. At the time, I lacked the "social-emotional," "critical thinking" and "reasoning skills," and basic "problem-solving" abilities that I can tap into today, that critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness tool belt required to excel in any high stakes environment. One's ability to emotionally regulate is crucial in any relationship.

Looking back, with the lens I've since developed, I did not grow up next to someone with a salaried career to model my road map after, in this sense there exemplifying day after day what a calm cool and collected calendared operation ought to look; how to play strategically with my words and actions; how to build and tend to million dollar budgets; like, what even is a fiscal year? To plan a proper move or relocation assignment, run smoothly an executive board meeting, or execute after hour networking, say at a bar or social event, with a view toward the future of course. Or maybe I did grow up next to them, and I just wasn't listening out for that, my ear not attuned to that specific language. I was living in my own world and not in reality. Aloof, not knowing what to listen out for. At best, I was winging it. Sight singing or playing by ear. Some would say I was on my way to Broadway, or Hollywood ... how talented, a natural, gifted performer ... a showman and class act, I'd hear often. Moreover, on the other hand, I had no clue how corporate America or industry *actually* works. It all takes a certain ear, a specific

eye. We can scream all day and night about capitalism, but do we comprehend how it actually functions? Why was it put in place in the first place?

Kordell KeyAndre: In terms of pay equity and job placement, putting myself on a trajectory for successful retirement, who knew the first thing. I didn't come from that type of family or wealth. I am where I am by pure luck of the draw, one after another taking a chance on me. The decision—to stay home and work out a game plan of sorts would prove itself invaluable only later, as I, like many teenagers, truly couldn't possibly know what to do with our so-called “career” at the ripe age of 18, the year now 2015. When you're going through the motions of high school, it can become easy to assume a swath of friends yet still assume whatever you are doing after hours you'll be doing forever, for me: Singing and dancing and entertaining large crowds of people, just for fun. I would say now, I was popular, though not well known. I barely knew myself. One year of community college, working as an after-school counselor at the local YMCA, and a wholesome introduction to Community Theatre on Long Island, afforded a much needed buffer to dig into the detail of who it was that I am, to better understand who it was I wanted to become, if anything at all.

To be introduced to life after high school and the world of, in this case, being a freshman. By the second semester of my studies at Suffolk County Community College I would make yet another important decision to transfer and relocate entirely, the year now 2016.

Kordell KeyAndre: In pursuit of a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree in musical theater at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia, I transitioned from a small town, suburban Long Island culture to the rust belt, a rural village eight hours North. While here, in collaboration with the College of Visual and Performing Arts and the School of Music, I was cast in the operetta *Pirates of Penzance* as The Pirate King. My research for this educational opportunity further introduced me to the disparities people of color may face when participating in a classical performance discipline.

Kordell KeyAndre: Where were the so-called black narrators and stories, the black voices and black pronunciations and black vocal folds and black articulations, the black points of view for me to model my character (The Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance*) after? I'm of the Travon Generation, where the effect of the race-based violence that we as a society got to experience and, with the technological revolution in toe, up close and personal, traumatizing digital images now viewable on our phones. Viewership of black-death became even more routine and somewhat iconic.

For historico-racial context, my entire adolescent education and years of my teen-hood experience was governed by a so-called black man. While serving as U.S. Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama completed his second book, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, published in October 2006. On November 4, 2008, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois defeats Senator John McCain of Arizona to become the 44th U.S. president, and the first African American to be elected to the White House. After winning re-election by defeating Republican opponent Mitt Romney, Obama was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2013.

In 2015, I graduated highschool. Back then, "Barack Obama was president of the United States; Hong Kong was a bastion of freedom and stability; Kim and Kanye were newlyweds; Jamie Foxx and Katie Holmes were a happy, recently-engaged couple; few people outside of Indiana knew who Oete Buttigieg and Chasten Gleznab were; abortion was legal in all fifty US states; and marriage equality had just been made the law of the land."

Kordell KeyAndre: Everybody thought, "What a marvelous time for America." How was I to responsibly prepare this dramatic undertaking, when in real life my life is under siege? If I could not see myself reflected in plays other than August Wilson or Lorraine Hansberry, I thought, then most of my life's existence is not reflected in the history of dramatic history. And I know that cannot be the case. My history in the American lexicon, whether be literature or theater, has to be more than two people.

How can I rectify this feeling of not being seen or heard in the Americana canons? How can I challenge myself to dig a little deeper, in search of those black points of view that would inspire me to model character, on or off any

stage. I needed something to emulate. I needed something to show me that yes, it is possible because it was done before and, even , is being done now. Otherwise, without my history, a vision, I am dust to the wind.

For those not familiar with the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, the show is set by Victorian-era theatrical partnership of the dramatist W.S. Gilbert and the composer Arthur Sullivan. The theatrical world-building they found themselves in were complete with lots of white/European/Anglo-Saxon Old-English language speaking stuff, seeped in more of their own white/European/Anglo-Saxon Old-English language speaking point of view, life and times.

Kordell KeyAndre: As for historic or traditional black narrators and black stories, black pronunciations and black vocal folds, black articulations and black points of view to model my character? I was discouraged by what I found. It would be the year 2023, when I finally came across Jermy O. Harris' Black Work Broadway website, dedicated to codifying the evolving and comprehensive record of all the plays, musicals, musical revues, and other performances presented in Broadway houses, that were either written or created by [b]lack artists.³² Back in 2018, however, I remember scheduling a meeting with the director of *Pirates*, to talk specifically about the challenges I would face when working on character development. For example, my being a dark skinned person in this area of the world in this time period, yet leading a bevy of so-called mostly white pirates.

It didn't make sense to me. The historical fallacy of the casting was getting my way, of my imagination. Where on Earth would you find a dark skinned person, like me, in charge of a bevy of so-called mostly white people!?? Unfortunately, I am not white, I would not be here alongside you all, and certainly not receiving your trust to steer a ship home. I was trying to squeeze myself into this character, coming up short, having to deal with the reality of it being both an opera and a comedy: *have fun, don't take yourself too seriously*. The absolute shameful objective of this training was clear—take every aspect of your [b]lackness and make it disappear. Or make a joke out of it, after all it is a comedy. How the hell do I do that, I thought, and where can I find a way?

The secrets are certainly not buried in the canons, I came to realize, and if they were I would only locate one by chance in 2023, years after my debut as *The Pirate King*. This meeting with the director nudged me to consider how

³² <https://blackworkbroadway.com>

the canons of classical music, Western literature and the performing arts in particular rarely involve truthful, extensive narratives for and by people of color. I wondered why that would be the case. Here I was, in a classical opera, in a musical theater program in Western New York, geared toward molding and shaping me into a perfect white actor. Here I was accepted into a B.F.A. program marketed to teach me how to commercialize my [b]lack art. No wonder I wasn't getting it, it wasn't intended for me to get in the first place.

It's damn near impossible, actually. I felt so very lost, and had to still move forward with the performance, with the show *and* the drama. Although I felt and believed there was no way to unleash passion when I was asked to perform material that not only didn't touch my [b]lack heart in meaningful ways but wasn't written to support someone like me in mind, and that I could not complete this BFA program in good faith, I knew the least I could do was get through this production and academic year.

And I needed to do it with grace, style and a standard of professionalism. I am learning every day what it means for me to be 100% professional in this American context ...

Kordell KeyAndre: Half way through my first year being a transfer student at SUNY Fredonia, I had begun thinking in earnest about my career path. What did I want to do long term? How would I like to contribute to society, and America's evolving democracy, if at all? How might classical training in the performing arts really best prepare someone like me for the upcoming millennium? I had no clue about half of what I now know—regarding rising sea levels, for example, or the systematic yet cleverly slow erasure of our so-called black and brown and red and yellow communities of color, a population who have historically been victimized, only the bright making and finding a way through. I had not really read literature until I switched my major to study English and psychology, to be completely honest, and I certainly haven't picked up a legitimate history book until graduate school. What was I thinking? As a BFA musical theater major, who fled home in search of his freedom, looking back, it seems I was really just following along, living-my-best-life. I was underwhelmingly underprepared for a career conversation, as they might brand them today. It seemed going away to college to study Musical Theatre was to be more fun and less serious, a brief vacation from real-world responsibilities. It all felt so freeing, this new chapter of more of the same.

From Bay Shore drama club, practising and performing a medley of Jersey Boys songs, or Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," or Toto's "Africa" in a chorus of mostly so-called white peers for an audience of mostly so-called white people; all the way to Mason Hall, trying my best to sing songs in French, and Italian, and German languages; and Negro Spirituals like "Ol' Man River" and "Go Down Moses" arranged by H.T. Burleigh, to be performed for, scored and graded by a panel of arranged School of Music faculty. It was an intense environment to keep up with. Composed by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, and written by Robert Louis Stevenson, a Scottish novelist and travel writer, one of my absolute favorite songs to research and sing was "The Roadside Fire" (1904). Also composed by Williams and written by Stevenson, "The Vagabond" (1904), another classic I am grateful to have been introduced. Every now and again, I'd look up from my sheet music and marvel at everyone's mastery of their instruments, the artist—them, at work. I maintained my weekend rituals to the best of my ability, running around campus and through the dotted hiking trails, one of my more reliable past-times. I mean, ... the general stamina required to maintain such a high aptitude of grace and kindness vocally and the specificity; a decent grade across all your acting and voice and movement classes, in addition to the athleticism; our creativity censured, the theatrics of just being alive; on top of my personal and private ideas needing to be "marketplaced" ready to go, our rights sold, our intelligence sloganized, our strength downsized, our privacy auctioned; when the theatricality clashes with the entertainment value, the marketing of my joy is complete.

To fashion a successful career in the performing arts, I was learning, one had to be a person-second with commercial capabilities first, that is. That's at least how I was being trained, I thought. It all became so overwhelming, in the Americana context of wanting to just be a college kid, I thought.

Kordell KeyAndre: Though I had talent and wells of potential, I thought, the marketplace I was being groomed for, saturated with and sustained by the study of American history i.g, economics, sociology and capitalism, the politics of Race and American cultural racism, was not going to age well for me. I'm not gonna lie, I just don't think it's conducive to a healthy lifestyle. Being a career musician was just not going to be for me, and I picked up on that truth through the *Pirates* experience. I like stability, I like consistency. We are creatures of habits, we need stability. And I just couldn't deal with the ups and downs of it. If you want to have the best body in the world, and be a top performer in your class, you have to have a certain sleep schedule, a certain eating routine, in constant rotation from

character prep to character development to character presentation. I was afraid of being pigeon holed into a niche of opportunities made available to me, based on many circumstances outside of my control; I had a feeling I would not be able to sustain the lifestyle of the artist, on or off the stage. I mean, from the college parties on the weekends to missing out on certain invites, to early morning classes, to late night rehearsals and studying. I knew of musical theater as craft and performance as a hobby, an extracurricular activity, if anything. I thought I could make it to Broadway. It was not going to be my full-time career, I thought, which many people do and successfully do. No shade to any of my colleagues and former classmates and peers, who are out here grinding, pushing the pavement as countless musicians and artists and entertainers do, in the traditional sense of the term. At the time however, what once was a sensible outlet for me to let-loose, to have fun and be creative while developing some much desired traits like close-reading and close-listening, before I knew that's what I was doing—it slowly became a miserable dog and pony show. As if we as a people are not at war already, to pretend and act as if the world were not on fire. I had to confess, the BFA in Musical Theatre degree route was not for me.

Kordell KeyAndre: Inspired by that meeting with the director of *Pirates*, I carried on and spoke with trusted advisors back home on Long Island as well as here on-campus, experienced mentors in the field of arts and culture alike, and by the end of spring semester of my sophomore year I faced yet another transition: I followed that inner voice straight to the registrar and switched my track of study. I felt it necessary to extend this awareness across my undergraduate curriculum. I would officially be considered an English major. I remember expressing to the Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts in a meeting, I wanted to work behind the scenes more, to understand how the show goes on. You could be in meetings, but you didn't have to be the focal point. I no longer wanted to be front and center, is what I realized ... and changing my major was the materialization of this wishful thinking. A leap of faith, if you will. Who knew, years later, this change would be the perfect foundation for a career in the health and medical humanities field.

This transition forced me to learn how to work differently. It forced me to help others answer questions, rather than answering all the questions for myself. In a way symbolic from boyhood to manhood, it sent me into a world of language theory and linguistics, literature and textual studies, African-American and black diaspora studies, and theoretical and rhetorical approaches to the social sciences. With each transition, from high school setting to

undergraduate lifestyle, from musical theater BFA to English major, and eventually from *undergraduate lifestyle* to *graduate school experience*, came another measurement of a self-education in what it means to be a man.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: Here, academically, the chief concern of my undergraduate studies focused more on pre-postcolonial components of gender, class, and race structures. Because these courses focused on the lived experience and lives of individuals, and how they individually socialized within institutions, rather than focusing on the the institutions themselves, our language and psychology classes — — from “Theories of Gender,” “Texts and Contexts,” “Literature, Language, and Learning Theory,” “American Identities,” “American Film Directors,” and “Contemporary African-American Literature,” all the way to “Psychology in Science Fiction,” “Introduction to Counseling,” “Health Psychology,” “Psychopharmacology” and “Positive Psychology” — — the instructors of these classes and the accompanying coursework and class discussion, guided me to see the innate intellectual and spiritual powers of the arts and humanities.

This coursework was the beginning of my thinking critically about race and racism in America; as one of my mentors calls it, because it is a unique breed of racism: American cultural racism. For many white people, a single required multicultural education course taken in college, or required “cultural competency training” in their workplace, is the only time they may encounter a direct and sustained challenge to their racial understandings. But even in this arena, says Robin Diangelo, author of the article “White Fragility” turned book *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018), not all multicultural courses or training programs talk directly about racism, much less address white privilege in the real honest and authentic way in which it needs to be addressed.³³ I am grateful for this coursework, as it began to green my mind. The exercise of viewing terms like symbolism and metaphor as philosophical concepts I grew fond of finally in my senior year, when I took a World Poetry course as a World Literature requirement.

Kordell KeyAndre: I think we all can agree, *racism sucks*. As I struggled to create self and identity in a society shaped, informed and maintained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchal bias, while living on a predominantly white institution at the time, I relied heavily on writers and intellectuals like James Baldwin,

³³ Diangelo, Robin. “White Fragility.” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 2011.

Amiri Baraka, Paul Beatty and America's Storyteller, Colson Whitehead; Judith Butler, Octavia Butler, Ta-Nehisi Coates and Toni Morrison; Claudia Rankine, Jesmyn Ward and even, yes, Virginia Woolf for worthy stimulation, to speak to me. Although feminist, and social activist bell hooks suggests there is no amount of literature one can read to recover from the psychological trauma of slavery and its aftermath:

No matter how many million Americans, of all all races, fall in love with the novels of Alice Walker or Toni Morrison and identify with the psychological havoc wreaked in the lives of the characters, there is still a collective cultural refusal to assume any accountability for the psychological wounding of black people that continues into the present day.³⁴

³⁴ hooks, bell. "Killing Rage: Ending Racism, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 1995, New York, NY United States.

on doing oral history - the act of communion

*“Neither our understanding of who we are nor our very existence in a cultural world can be separated from the stories that we and others tell about ourselves.” — Jens Brockmeier, **Beyond the Archive***

“Here I am the barbarian because they do not understand me.” — Ovid

PUBLICATION NOTE: Chapter/Episode 6 source material has been withheld or disassembled for the abridged version of this aural thesis. The KeyAndre Keyword Research And Analysis Methodology –

Patent Pending.

on doing oral history, pt. 2 - the art of discussion

“I’m terrified at the moral apathy—the death of the heart which is happening in my country. These people have deluded themselves for so long, that they really don’t think I’m human. I base this on their conduct, not on what they say.” [...] “The power of the white world is threatened whenever a black man refuses to accept the white world’s definitions.” — James Baldwin

*“And the curriculum be tricking them, them dollars I spend
Got us learning about the heroes with the whitest of skin
One thing about the men that’s controlling the pen
That write history, they always seem to white-out they sins.”
— J. Cole, “BRACKETS”*

PUBLICATION NOTE: Chapter/Episode 7 source material has been withheld or disassembled for the

abridged version of this aural thesis. The KeyAndre Keyword Research And Analysis Methodology –

Patent Pending.

on doing psychohistory - the act of communion / GATHER

“Compassion has always been the key to whether we understand each other or not. And so goes the world. Like so many things, this is old medicine, carried in timeless pouches we call stories.”

— **Mark Nepo**

“The future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens.” — **Rainer Maria Rilke**

PUBLICATION NOTE: Chapter/Episode 8 source material has been withheld or disassembled for the abridged version of this aural thesis. The KeyAndre Keyword Research And Analysis Methodology –

Patent Pending.

on doing psychohistory, pt 2. - the art of conversation

“I hope you take the time to reflect upon your own views and progress towards a healthy understanding of difference and equality. And if you don’t and you’re still mad, all I have to say is: stay mad, baby.”

— **Esmāa Mohamoud**

“Speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have.”

— **Oprah Winfrey**

PUBLICATION NOTE: Chapter/Episode 9 source material has been withheld or disassembled for the abridged version of this aural thesis. The KeyAndre Keyword Research And Analysis Methodology –

Patent Pending.

on doing historical dialogue - the human act of life & death

*“We slaughter one another in our words and attitudes.
We slaughter one another in the stereotypes and mistrust that linger
in our heads, and the words of hate we spew from our lips.” — Nelson Mandela*

*“A man must defend himself, if only to demonstrate his fitness to defend anything else.” — Frederick Douglass
(1891)*

**PUBLICATION NOTE: Chapter/Episode 10 source material has been withheld or disassembled for the
abridged version of this aural thesis. The KeyAndre Keyword Research And Analysis Methodology –**

Patent Pending.

ABRIDGED VERSION

on doing historical dialogue as psychohistory - narrative nonfiction

"All our silences in the face of racist assault are acts of complicity ... If aware black folks gladly trade in their critical political consciousness for opportunistic personal advancement then there is no place for rage and no hope that we can ever live to see the end of white supremacy." — bell hooks

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

— Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom*

Narrator: POLICE OFFICERS HAVE REMAINED on the job after shooting innocent people, falsifying police reports, lying under oath, and committing Other sorts of misconduct.

Discussion about the status of police reform, prison reform, or all together abolition, is still ongoing. Likewise, discussion about the nature of police misconduct and state-sanctioned violence is ongoing, too, alive and well. It's hard for me, someone who doesn't self-identify as a Black male living in America but, regardless of my personal beliefs, very much is made to be one, to say reform and not abolition is the answer. As a human rights advocate and narrative medicine scholar-practitioner, however, I know quite well the value and importance of rules and regulations, as they relate to having and sustaining a thriving, healthy and safe democratic society—one of many options for civil living or civility: civilization. Also, at the same time, if you understand the origins of these arbitrary terms—"police" and "slave patrol"—you would know full well, their purpose was never really about service and protection. That is, the very nature of these relatively recent concepts, concepts for keeping law and order, were not put in place for we the people, by we the people. It's important we continue to interrogate and openly discuss the Police Reform Movement, in particular from 2020 until now; what reforms/legislation have we asked for in the past, and what ought we ask for, if for anything moving forward; what have we received, historically speaking; as well as what are we are still advocating for.

These fraught conversations will be unsuccessful if people do not know what is at stake. So ... why is it important to vote, you ask? That's a good question. Here, I'll tell you.

Generally speaking, Our elected officials can propose and vote themselves on laws that affect the local police department, for example. Local, as opposed to county or municipality, state or national, and then of course federal operations. As a body, they—the local or county legislature, for example—oversee the police department and can confirm or reject the county executive's choice for police commissioner, for example. The legislature can also hold hearings and subpoena documents and witnesses. They hold a lot of decision-making power.

Narrator: Successful self-government, on the other hand, comes down to knowledge of self. What does it mean to self-govern? Your knowledge of self would not change how to treat people, if done correctly: who you know yourself to be, is the same quality of person privately, publicly, and personally. Circumstances may change over time, and that's okay, that's natural ... But the rules and regulations, principals and values which you've designed to fit your lifestyle and vision for the world, is up to you, and would for the most part remain un-scattered by the rising sea levels, for example. Staying solid as a rock while you weather any storm is a choice, I thought. How you treat people is a reflection of who you know yourself to be, and who you are remains the same. It's like saying the role of the male and female would change overtime. Ideally, the expression of the role may change over time, as it would change from person to person, each having their own unique personality to add to the definition. But regardless of the time period, a human man-made historical system, Male and female biology is still the same. At the end of the day, it should not matter what time it is ... if your code is in order, if your terms and definitions are clear and we stick to their following to the best of our ability, when we know how to successfully self-govern, we can be anywhere in the world right now ... and still move accordingly.

If you know who you are, and you're following the Golden Rule—treat people the way you wish to be treated—then I don't see why we'd ever have a problem or an issue of concern; then you are smooth sailing, treating everything with the utmost respect. Here's a Universal law: how you choose to die is how you choose to live; what you put out into the Ether will always return to you. Keep this in mind as you navigate your relations on this Planet Earth.

Narrator: Back to the question at large, for this final episode of MOVEMENT II, Chapter/Episode 11. What does it mean to self-govern? To deepen and continue our work of challenging white supremacy in our oral history work and in our field of historical dialogue facilitation. I have been thinking deeply about the relationships between white supremacy and settler colonialism. The dispossession and genocide of Indigenous people in the Americas and globally are based in white supremacy and structural racism. They, the language processing system—white supremacy and structural racism—in insidious ways, continue to impact Native American and First Nations people; they continue to be a public health crisis, that is, What is the public, and what does it look like to have a healthy public?, I thought. Likewise, this issue of “*police misconduct*” and “*state sanctioned violence*” is not just about civil liberties, civil rights but a matter of human rights and the survival of humanity itself.

Nelson Mandela once said the following, “If there is a country that has committed unspeakable atrocities in the world, it is the United States of America.” He said this, speaking at a conference of the International Women’s Forum, Tokyo, Japan, the year 2003. As oral historians, our work is to listen. I’ve been listening, and I am actively listening... and what I am hearing is not pleasant. But still, beyond the cries ... we act as if the United States of America does not need to answer for its wrong doings. As I continue to confront the manifestations of white supremacy and take a decolonial stance towards my work, and as we seek to dismantle white supremacy and settler colonialism all together, it is imperative that we listen to and learn from the Indigenous people who were on this land first, who know how to live here, and who have been directly affected by racialized oppression in North America for more than 500 years. It is not enough to decolonize—we must also engage in and support the work resurgence.

Although I am personally up for challenging all forms of structural oppression, I wouldn't say this An Americana Issue community oral history project in particular challenges white supremacy, or whiteness in general. For resources on antiracist, feminist, decolonial, and broadly anti-oppression oral history methodologies however, I believe this project can lend a helping hand. That's obviously a huge category with a lot written about it, much of which is only touched on in *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023) – NARRATIVE PRELUDE - “on and off that marvel stage”— an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

White supremacy, anyway, is designed to center whiteness and that's not the objective of today's work. White supremacy is convincing millions of so-called black people, and more generally people of color, that their savior is a white man. It works differently on so-called black people, though. As religion, christianity in this

Americana context was a linguistic tool of slavery, used to further enslave through fear based imagery. And this is not a knock at Christ Consciousness. I'm speaking about photographic memory, now.

White supremacy is creating the symbolic image of a so-called white God as Jesus, which subliminally engrains the myth of white superiority into one's subconscious minds, the minds of so-called black people, and more generally people of color. This makes you, in return, more compliant with so-called white dominance over our so-called black life, lives and times. And by centering my work on white supremacy, or whiteness, I am inherently centering whiteness and this idea of white people ... that of which is not my intention for doing this Americana project.

In *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (2011) activist, editor, and educator Leanne Simpson asserts: "reconciliation must be grounded in political resurgence and must support the regeneration of Indigenous languages, oral cultures, and traditions of governance." This idea, more fittingly, aligns with the intention for this Americana project.

Narrator: The point of public and applied humanities, is to translate the personal enrichment of humanities study into public enrichment and the direct and tangible improvement of the human condition. Through research-driven, collaborative, and publicly facing projects built to explore and enhance life in the community and beyond, our students and scholars convert understanding into action for the measurable betterment of society. I am fundamentally experimental, entrepreneurial, and transdisciplinary, and focus on both public and private opportunities that straddle rather than fall between purviews, or are confident by them. If you think having uneasy conversations is hard, wait until you see the results of not having them—the uneasy conversations. *Ever wonder what it might sound like to be an educator of color in America?* Well, perhaps it just might be your lucky day.

Baldwin would argue that history is within us—that we are all walking exemplars of it. We breathe it, live it, wear it, toil with it—Baldwin himself noted that history is not something that is only read, but something that is living and in the present wake. Non-fiction (or nonfiction) is any document or media content that attempts, in good faith, to convey information only about the real world, rather than being grounded in imagination. Non-fiction typically aims to present topics objectively based on historical, scientific, and empirical information.

* * *

Narrator: On August 28th, the year 2017, I agreed to sing the national anthem with the Fredonia Concert Band. At this time, American activist and former NFL football quarterback Colin Kaepernick commits to his “Take A Knee” silent protest, with many of his peers kneeling alongside in solidarity. His reason for doing, to my understanding, is to combat brutality by state-sanctioned police and racial inequalities against Africa’s so-called descendants in these United States. This act fueled a national debate about privilege, pride and patriotism, exciting even President Trump: “It’s about time that Roger Goodell of the NFL is finally demanding that all players STAND for our great National Anthem — RESPECT OUR COUNTRY.”³⁵

After committing conscious thought to what this song should mean to me versus what it does mean to me, what this song should represent to America versus what it means to many American citizens, and how exactly The Star Spangled Banner and this contemporary social movement could be so politically divisive, I made up my mind. I wrote a gingerly worded letter stating my inability to provide a truthful performance of the text at this time, and published it publicly to my campus community. This public statement, titled ‘Take A Knee,’ went on to receive praise and recognition as one of the 29th Annual Rosa Parks Scholarship Competition winners.

My decision to not sing the song confused many individuals in my college campus community. Why would he be taking a knee? At the time however what angered some was my seemingly natural ability to capitalize on a fruit that bore from tainted soil and national controversy — iconoclastic.

Not only does our nation’s current national anthem fail to represent the entirety of its American citizens, I thought, I believed then that the poem in which song is derived, in all its entirety (four rhetorical verses), does not truthfully align with our constitutional mission. “We the People of the United States of America, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity ...”

Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2011), further stresses my highlight of this point: “About 3,500 years after Hammurabi’s death, the inhabitants of thirteen British colonies in North America felt

³⁵ @realDonaldTrump. “It is about time that Roger Goodell of the NFL is finally demanding that all players STAND for our great National Anthem — RESPECT OUR COUNTRY.” Twitter, 11 Oct. 2017, 3:34 a.m., twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/918065431939829760?lang=en

that the king of England was treating them unjustly ... The American Declaration of Independence asserts that: *'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'* Like Hammurabi's Code, the American founding document promises that if humans act according to its sacred principles, millions of them would be able to cooperate effectively, living safely and peacefully in a just and prosperous society."

"Since the death of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man who was killed in police custody in May, the year now 2020, many athletes and sports leagues have been throwing their support behind the protest movement calling for change." [...] "The NFL was the latest league to make a statement, starting its 2020 season with messages in the end zones that said 'End Racism' and 'It Takes All of Us.' In each Week 1 contest, there was also a pregame playing of the hymn 'Lift Every Voice and Sing,' which is known as the Black National Anthem." [...]

Narrator: Members of the Orlando Magic and Brooklyn Nets kneel during the National Anthem before the start of an NBA game on July 31, 2020. Members of the San Antonio Spurs huddle before a game against Sacramento on July 31, 2020. Rugby Players from Bath and Northampton show their support before a game in Northampton, England. The Washington Nationals observed a moment of silence before Major League Baseball's opening game on July 23. Their opponents, The New York Yankees, also took a knee, and the initials BLM were on the pitcher's mound for the game. Tennis players Dan Evans and Kyle Edmund join match umpire James Keothavaong in taking a knee in London on June 28, 2020. Beach volleyball player April Ross wears a temporary Black Lives Matter tattoo during a match in Long Beach, California, on July 19, 2020.

NBA superstar LeBron James has been one of the most outspoken athletes. "Having two boys of my own and me being African American in America and to see what continues to happen with the police brutality towards my kind, continue to see what goes on with just the (unjust), it's very troubling. It's very troubling," James told Turner Sports' Jared Greenberg. "My prayers go to (the Blake) family, and hopefully we can have some change."

Doc Rivers, head coach of the NBA's Los Angeles Clippers, became emotional while talking about the Black shooting and the Republican National Convention. "All you hear is Donald Trump and all of them talking about

fear,” Rivers said. “We’re the ones getting killed. We’re the ones getting shot. We’re the ones who were denied to live in certain communities. We’ve been hung. We’ve been shot.”³⁶

Narrator: MOST ARE ALREADY PAINFULLY AWARE of the Americana issue that prompts Kaepernick and many others to kneel—so-called white cops shooting and killing unarmed so-called black men without retribution or acceptable penalty. Even further, most are aware of the narrative that Black America is, generally speaking, disproportionately treated unfairly. More of us are unemployed, undereducated, lack equal housing, lack health care and suffer from mental illnesses more than any other group.³⁷ We see, understand now and comprehend that our outdated system against the majority of our so-called “minority” citizens living in said great nation is deplorable and is due for amending.

Narrator: It is seen in the 2.2 million Americans locked up behind iron bars in our country’s prisons. It is seen in the militarized borders and families pleading for freedom—the hope of that American dream, a glimpse if not a taste of the land of rich milk and sweet honey. For a later generation, it is Sonya Massey calling the police to her home for help and shortly after being killed by them—the police, who she called, for help. It is, also, seen in the bloodshed and displacement of indigenous communities by the hands of a colonized America.

‘Take A Knee’ position of protest is not intended to communicate one’s disloyalty to America, nor disrespect the American flag. Or our courageous veterans, to my understanding, as I still to this day Support Our Troops. It was never about that or them—patriotism or American troops. However, some individuals—many from European ancestry—experience a difficult time seeing from our point of view. Public opinion polls consistently “show that Blacks and Whites interpret racial events differently, view the definition of racial progress differently, and judge race related topics from a different perspective.”³⁸ Their stern opposition and failure to empathize with ‘the Other’ has always troubled me deeply—given the immense bloodshed of my so-called black and so-called brown brothers and sisters - - of color - - left unclaimed by these United States for generations, and counting—yet, still motivates me to address the ‘why’ at face value. The best, more straightforward explanation I can conclude:

³⁶ CNN World News. “In photos: The sports world has been taking a stand.” October 1, 2020.

³⁷ Cones, James H., III. and White, Joseph L. “Black Man Emerging: Facing the Past and Seizing a Future in America.” W. H. Freeman and Company, 1999. New York, NY United States.

³⁸ Cones, James H., III. and White, Joseph L.

Black and White simply are raised, grow up, and then live in different experiential/psychological worlds, which ultimately lead to different perceptions and interpretations of race-related events.³⁹

The conversations we have about said cultural events are not the same discussions, then: two different weeds stemming from the same bed. Seemingly the same subject or theme, yet entirely different conversations to be had. How do we deepen our understanding not only of ourselves and our perspectives, but Others and the world we all live in? How can two groups watching the same program—*singing the same American song*—more efficiently arrive at mutual group conclusions?

How can we collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are? Well, I'll tell you: we tell them. We share our truth proudly, consistently and unashamedly. We tell them—our authentic stories—unapologetically, we tell them in the face of adversity, we tell them anyway. We shout it, sing it, dance it, write it.. paint the most authentic you all over the canvas that is your life. We allow them, the authentic stories we tell, to move us. And whoever is left, perhaps applauding your art, is your people.

That fall semester, my second fall season spent in the Western New York region on the SUNY Fredonia campus—a beautiful time to be in the area mind-you—the year now 2017, when I made up my mind, deciding to not sing the song—the Star-Spangled Banner, one of America's National Anthems—was a tough decision to make. Nonetheless, I thought it was the right decision for me at that particular point in time.

Narrator: The feedback received from the Fredonia campus community, anyway, was the stimulus which drove me to design an experimental methodology; organize and lead a social survey turned documentary film; analyze the data, and draft preliminary conclusions. Define the problem and organize to solve it as best and as logically as possible. This is doing historical dialogue as psychohistory, an opportunity to have a harder conversation, in a public setting, about systemic issues in policing. To all people wanting to make the world better, this broader Americana issue—the hard conversation about race and racism in America—is a great place to start. At the end of the day, humanity and human rights has to come first, in every discussion.

³⁹ Cones, James H., III. and White, Joseph L.

Shout out to all my board certified social workers, trained clinicians and medical providers, who are touching on these fraught and grim topics and difficult subject matters of concern, and almost every day. We see you, we champion you, we thank you.

+ + +

Narrator: Allegedly, there are 176,476 words in the English language, the year now 2017. Of these 176,476 words, which ones are most at risk for causing the social pathology that is American cultural racism? “If you can use your thinking to begin to understand what’s happening—and then, yes, develop a language for understanding that—that’s our greatest tool as human beings.”⁴⁰ The point of this literary, discussion-based exercise is not merely to define the words that you are really trying to convey, but, rather, to define what they mean in your heart. “To develop a language for understanding that—that’s our greatest tool as human beings,” says Jay-Z. The meaning is our quest, where the true answers if ever there were lies. To this end, I invite you to open your heart and move beyond any attachment to the words themselves used, remembering they—the words, terms and items—are but symbols, which, at the end of the day, have no more or less meaning than what we individually choose to assign them. Call it what you like, I say it’s *all* good! Thank you, Dennis Merritt Jones, for this idea.

Narrator: “One of the most disturbing barriers to changing lives is the connection between early trauma, attachment issues, and brain development. Allan Schore finds that ‘the early social environment, mediated by the primary caregiver, directly influences the final wiring of the circuits in the infant brain that are responsible for the future social and emotional coping capabilities of the individual,’ concluding that brain development is tied to early interactive experiences with both the mother and the father.”⁴¹

Daniel Siegel, Author of *Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive* (2003) concurs, noting “communication within attachment relationships is the primary experience that regulates and organizes the development of those circuits in the brain that mediate self-regulation and social relatedness. A sense of self emerges directly from self-other interactions.”

⁴⁰ Todd, Carolyn L. “Jay-Z Says the Mental Health Stigma in the Black Community is ‘Ridiculous’.” SELF Web Magazine 30 January, 2018, self.com/story/jay-z-mental-health-stigma-in-the-black-community

⁴¹ Scheriber, Evelyn J. “Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison.” Louisiana State University Press, USA, 2010.

AVTT: AN AMERICANA ISSUE

A View Through Them Initiative may look like expanding the circle of human concern, co-creating a new definition of human ecology that is inclusive of all our-selves. Cleansing from all the negative vibrations in the human mass consciousness. This research project, AVTT: An Americana Issue, having begun on the stage of Marvel Theater, is obviously about history, yes, and it also carries a lot of history with it. The Marvel Theater is one of the more coveted rooms on the SUNY campus. Named after Mr. Robert W. Marvel, former music professor, composer and Dean of Fine and Performing Arts, this 369-seat, handicap-accessible proscenium theater is said to be one of the best-designed and best-equipped small theaters in upstate, Western New York. It was and remains an honor to have secured permission to set the beginnings of the AVTT research project on that stage, what is now a research initiative, A View Through Them (AVTT).

Narrator: The initiative is really about togetherness, forgiveness, healing, growth, and relationship education. Clearing and purifying one's heart. Let this be your devotion to self. To repair the damage that all the waves have done to our aura, so to speak. A new definition of perspective taking and history marking -- One that is actively healing the schisms with our Mother Earth. Cheers to re-writing new narratives for new Growth. Make yourself the goal. Feet touching, each face touching sunlight, the sound of flowing water ... this, too, is cleansing you, who are everything ... you experience everything through you ... so relax you, meditate on you, and know that you are everything. I, too, sing America. Do it for yourself. Do it for them, too ... the future educators of color: the trees that have been waiting for your realization to return ... and the birds who have been wondering when you'd come back to your-self. And the forests and the fauna, and the rivers. And the children. Of course, we cannot forget the very people who will inherit this Earth when our time, yours and mine, comes to pass the baton to them. To ensure the Earth they inherit is left better than when we found it.

It's also about the health, social-emotional development of black youth in particular. A child's social and emotional development ought to be made a priority, beyond academics and building informed citizens and the written documented history. Self-education, a private endeavor, is about nurturing well-rounded individuals ready for the world ahead. How do we do this? Well, I wish I had the answer. I imagine we start by facing ourselves, and telling

each other the truth about our lives. As adults, so-called, we must be courageous ... more courageous than ever before, to get this correct. And when the children-them get bogged down with this whole race-relations-thing, gender and identity theory, for example, we must explain to them—to ourselves, that *that* was solely a way to eat, to categorize, to subjugate. To divide to organize and capitalize. Racialized capitalism. It is not a way of life. We must remind ourselves over and over again, that separation and division is not a way of life. As far as how we think and navigate through this life, no one is out to get you. It's all a part of you ... what you pay attention to will expand. It was designed to keep us separated from our divine oneness. Our interconnectedness, our divine one-ness. And, then again, some may argue that's simply a matter of subjectivity and perspective. Change your mind if what you're thinking about is no longer working for you, focus or zoom out your view. Again, as always, the choice is yours.

But as far as the health, social-emotional development of black youth is concerned—it's important to remember who we are, who they are. What do they need to be learning about right now, to prepare them for the upcoming melinia? Regardless of your answer, whiteness never surprises me.

Narrator: Throughout the doing of this oral history as psychohistory, I've realized, when you try to do what might be considered “pro-black” in an environment that is predicated on the demise of black-ness, held up and supported by anti-blackness, you are caught in a quagmire. When the very environment in which you find yourself exists solely because of the destruction of your own self-image, you can very well easily fall into the trap of self-hate. The success of anything in this American context, is predicated on being Anti-black. Cut your hair, have lighter or brighter skin, do this, do that, don't do this, don't wear that ... Misogyny, murder & disrespect of the fellow so-called black people. That is, if you were not prepared and armed with knowledge of self. If you did not do that work before you got here, to know how to navigate through the terrain of bullshit we find ourselves. If this is the case, for you, I beg of you to challenge that thought.

So-called black people have the oldest and the greatest history. So how did we get here? Don't let slavery be the only chapter you know. Some people are incapable of leaving this old world history behind, and that's ok. There is a natural separation happening, an old era is coming to an end and a new era is on the horizon. Those who can see this, and acknowledge this view, will go within and naturally adapt to the change. A natural separation will

take place. This is world wide happening. They will move on to another cycle, a new awakening is occurring., a shift in consciousness. Don't let slavery be the only chapter you know. So-called black people have the oldest and the greatest history. Whiteness itself refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color and that, itself, is ludacris.

To everyone who decides to take a knee, too, in protest of racial injustice and police brutality—Colin Kaepernick, known most notably kneeling during the national anthem before football games, thank you for continuing the legacy of Mr. Nelson Mandela and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Muhammad Ali, that of a champion of the people: society, people, plants over profits. You changed my life for good. “What is needed, rather than running away or controlling or suppressing or any other resistance, is understanding fear; that means, watch it, learn about it, come directly into contact with it. We are to learn about fear, not how to escape from it.” Face it, deal with it. Accept it. This is a spiritual practice.

The next generation must continue to face the issue of Race and racism, systemic oppression more generally as a doctor would face a disease. First, you identify what the problem is. Next, you call it out and search for resources to handle said problem. Finally, you design a game plan and you treat it. And then, of course, you defeat it. Take care of your psychology, your mind set. No matter how Western media and mainstream outlets try to spin it, the narrative of this place, both internally and externally to the public, what we are seeing here is nothing short of ethnic cleansing and genocide. The murder and theft of land. It is what it is, and trust they won't stop until there is no remembrance of us in sight.

There is real danger in the world, hence my desire to no longer be a figure of the public and go private. And that is precisely why a course correction is in order—new curricula “containing some meaningful visionary thinking about the life of the moral mind and a free and flourishing spirit can operate in a context increasingly dangerous to its health. But if scientific language is about longer individual life in exchange for an ethical one; if political agenda is the xenophobic protection of a few of our families against the catastrophic others; if secular language bridles in fear of the sacred; if the future of knowledge is not wisdom but ‘upgrade,’ where might we look” [...] where might we look for humanity's own future?

Narrator: “Isn’t it reasonable to assume that projecting earthly human life into the future may not be the disaster movie we are constantly invited to enjoy, but a reconfiguration of what we are here for? To lessen suffering, to know the truth and tell it, to raise the bar of humane expectation. Perhaps we should stand one remove from timeliness and join the artist who encourages reflection, stokes the imagination, mindful of the long haul and putting her/his own life on the line (in Haiti or North Africa) to do the work of a world worthy of life.”⁴²

This is how colonization works, I thought; this is how oppression on a large scale works; this is how racialized capitalism works. This is America at its core, this is American cultural racism at its finest. They won’t stop until there is no remembrance of us in sight. With this in mind, how can we center the multifaceted work of Indigenous, women of color, and feminist when doing oral history *as* psychohistory? What is possible when we shift our focus from reproducing a singular standard of principles to acknowledging the multiple ways of practicing that already ground the labor of oral historians committed to decolonizing forms of (un)learning? Doing oral history as an “open” and “discoverable” product, the oral history archive as repository, then, is itself a decolonizing praxis.

The A View Through Them Initiative is a project devoted to analysis and construction of an archive that chronicles the changes in meaning-making over time. The significance of this research in particular, An Americana Issue Oral History Project, lies in its contribution to developing a repository of relevant first-person accounts of American cultural racism, using oral history theory and methodology to democratize the process of source material and curricula development. The research questions guiding this inquiry are designed to explore socio-historical linguistics and contemporary North-American discourse analysis. In order to understand the complexities of the effects of media messages on attitudes of public health, public opinion, public memory and public school education, it is crucial to examine the first-person point of view of educators of color—themselves—and close-listen to their personal as well as professional interpretation of the issues that be, by asking why, and probable solutions. After all, it is these people—they, who are scientifically speaking closest to the Source of Self-Regard as well as most likely to be unremembered in the rush of history.

+ + +

⁴² Morrison, Toni. “The Source of Self Regard.” *The Foreigner’s Home: The Habit of Art*. 2019.

Narrator: THE AURAL THESIS is a multidisciplinary work, cross-culturally made to outline who and what has influenced the author or writer socially, emotionally, economically or politically, intellectually or aesthetically. Its contents span a variety of topics that cross traditional boundaries of history and psychology. The chosen narrator has spoken aloud this inaugural aural thesis—inspired by the author or writer’s master of arts program application—not necessarily for you, the audience of close-readers and close-listeners; not for your comfort level either but—to continue the excavation of a healing, for the author or writer’s soul. If you or someone you know finds amusement or in some way benefit from its existence, great, again, great. But it must be said, my friends: the initial intent of the AVTT: AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT was of the artist’s own fruition. In fewer words, this work-day is not about you. The years’ rumination process—was for me. Listening over the words the author has since written and talking through aloud what may have surprised or unsettled you, for example, or more generally what may have moved you, is a form of NARRATOLOGY—within itself.

This aural thesis, *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023) – NARRATIVE PRELUDE - “on and off that marvel stage”—an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. This aural thesis is a prelude to the podcast. I look forward to incorporating my budding interest and passion for socio-historical commentary rooted in the discipline of psycho-history, into the forthcoming discussion-based product line Discussions By Definition: a bridge to a new awakening. This discussion-based tool is to build bridges between police and the communities, for example, giving we the people a voice in our policies and shaping trust. Likewise, my health & wellness podcast, A View Through Them, the podcast, will be a place for socio-historical commentary rooted in the discipline of psycho-history as well as a practical place for this product line to live. Yes, for marketing purposes. But for practicality, too. The active change in how we see each other and the larger world around us, especially for those that need it most, is not going to happen in the podcast making process—an oral history encounter. Podcasts are very important—spreading via modern media streams has definitely helped wellness take off—but health & wellness is inherently participatory. The real work of doing oral history as psychohistory will happen in community. AVTT, the podcast is not just to talk about politics and controversial issues of relevance through a lens of psychohistory, to document war-stories or sell discussion-based products. It is to create a vast public health system change. Thank you Joe Holder for this innovative idea. Joe Holder has been instrumental in my thinking creatively around this public program: we need to foster increased community moments to connect people

while engaged in wellness, not just talk about it. The whole COVID debacle opened my eyes to the apparent need for a public initiative flexible enough that centers the medical and health humanities education field, as well as transparency and service, for the people by the people. AVTT, the podcast is about making that effort more uniform and accessible to the public.

As my OHMA fieldwork and exhibit, *A View Through Them: An Americana Issue* (2020) spoke with educators of color who interrogated questions of media messages on attitudes of public health, public opinion, public memory and public school education, this aural thesis draws from that work and builds upon its archival research base: engaging with stories from authors and writers mentioned, those interviewed, those read about and those who I've had the privilege to professionally work with. In this literary way, the preparation and production of the document itself, acts as autobiographical prose to be used as a psychoanalytic medium of self-study and self-education. This approach and technique of doing oral history *as* psychohistory is loosely based on humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers' client centered therapy.

* * *

As oral historians, our work is to listen. As someone who does not self-identify as being an ORAL HISTORIAN in the traditional sense of the term, though I have formal training in the discipline, I am very privileged to hold space for people in this PSYCHO-HISTORICAL way, and creatively support them-navigate the telling of their-own life story. I do this, through a lens of psychology, by way of oral history theory and methodology.

Narrator: I aspire to work with a lot of different people. Different from myself, that is. To talk to them-people from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences. I am very privileged to hold space for them, where I get to walk with them—side by side—through this life, and to hear them narrate and critique, and evaluate their own interpretive stories. And to sit with them in their, sometimes, pain and, sometimes, joy. I get to witness them. In all their glory, move through the narratology process.

The Narratology Process. On or off the record, that is something that I do not take lightly. It comes naturally to me, actually. I know it's something I've done in many lifetimes before -- perhaps bringing me to this very graduate

program in oral history. Although this day is neither ENTERTAINMENT nor PERFORMANCE, it is however a form of ART. It must be stated: this oral history encounter—doing oral history as psychohistory—isn't therapy. This internal narrative-based reading and writing work is not therapy. It is neither journalism, right? It is, however, meant to be an on-going dialogue. Therapeutic in nature, perhaps, and healing in process, sure. It is a reminder that regardless of our assigned differences in society—what is GENDER, what is RACE, what is CLASS—and all the identity theory,

I am You.

It's said to build community; it's to communicate, it's to express, it's to understand. "It is also to support the use of imagination, to show others that there is always more to explore, and that in this exploration is where the discovery lies. Writing, creativity, imagination, exploration—these are not things restricted to people who deem themselves 'writers,' to people who write professionally or aim for publication." [...] "These are [literary] tools open to all of us. And part of the way that we teach these tools is to demonstrate them ourselves [hence, the act of doing this aural thesis]—to be flexible in our own work, encouraging of explorations as we, too, explore."

Narrator: We the people of the world are as much a part of them—who-ever and whom-ever they are to you—"all our relatives."—as they are a part of us, we the people. Though I say with hesitancy that I am making an early career pivot, I will always be passionate about American history, identity theory and social studies education—an education that promotes compassionate living, peace-making, social justice, equity, financial freedom and respect for nature—and all living beings. As someone born here in the so-called Americas, I am always ready to marvel at just how much I have done, and with so little time.

Throughout the duration of the AVTT: An Americana Issue case study report, I noticed one commonality between those authors and writers mentioned, those interviewed, those read about and those who I've had the privilege to professionally work with—black, white and otherwise: we are each seeking connection; to feel like we belong in our own skin. Beloved, no matter what emotion you're feeling right now, you very much belong here. You're more than enough. And you very much so belong here. You are more than enough

By investigating the effects of media messages on attitudes of public health, public opinion, public memory and public school education, this thesis seeks to address the gap in knowledge-making: how can we improve the climate of race relations, as well as the general conversation concerning color, caste, and class in America. This study unfolds against the backdrop of a growing interest in understanding why so-called black people, and so-called white people, struggle to live, work, and play in integrated societies—that is, why American cultural racism exists in the first place.

Narrator: The overarching purpose of this research, An Americana Issue Oral History Project, is to shed light on the factors influencing how one’s historico-racial schema influences their perception and, in return, how they bring themselves to interact with people and the larger world around them. To reimagine effective police reform, for example. To reimagine how we handle police and prisons in this country. Define “protect”, Define: “serve”. Define “justice”, Define: “human decency”.

With everything that is has and will continue to take place within this Americana Context, I must say this and with love: my inner light is not too bright, whatever that means, you’re just use to dimming yours in order to fit in or be accepted through the world; I am not intimidating, you are just intimidated and taken aback by your reflection, there is a difference—learn to vastly accept what yourself; I do not take up too much space, you’re just use to playing small, again to fit in or be accepted through the world; I am neither mean nor aggressive, I am honest and assertive in my self-expression and authentic with my performance and that makes you uncomfortable, uneasy, what-have-you; and I do not make you uncomfortable, my presence simply challenges your comfort and fragility, pushing you to be better, which you then interpret as a treat or something to ward off or defend against; I will not be less in order for you to feel better about yourself. My definition of “black liberation,” and “abolition,” is not radical, it’s simply my definition, based on my personal coming of age story, my schema and point of view, making it valid, paid for, in full, already. To anyone who tries to challenge your definition, or make you feel as though you are wrong for thinking the way you do for moving the way you move ... let them be.

At a certain age, you and you alone know what's best for you. What I've come to understand is, how I am treated has nothing to do with age and everything to do with the mind-frame and language processing system of the individual—psychologically speaking, you have to have the right mind, not just if you want to get by but if you want to thrive ... in this American context, or otherwise. What does it mean to be a decent human being? Well, it starts with understanding the English language.

* * *

"I haven't lost faith in the future," said Martin Luther King Jr., "but I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism or racial inequality." In our country, so-called black people are more than 5 times as likely than so-called whites to be arrested for the mere suspicion of a crime. The police are nearly 4 times as likely to use [FORCE] when confronting a so-called black suspect. And so-called black men are two and a half times more likely to be killed by a police officer. The fact is, our criminal justice system so often victimizes people of color because it is built on a foundation of racism that was laid while the civil war was still being fought. In January 1865, Congress passed a joint resolution proposing a 13th amendment to the United States constitution to outlaw slavery. But while the 13th amendment abolished slavery, it replaced it with a new system of racial control, that allowed so-called black people to be arrested on minor offenses, and put to work as unpaid laborers as punishment. We are still living with the legacy of that decision today.

The imprisonment rate for so-called black people is more than five times the rate higher than so-called white people. The prison industrial complex has devastated generations of so-called black men and women through Jim Crow, the War on Drugs, and the continued harassment, intimidation, and killing of so-called black men, women and children today. This is, in a way, a long line of modern day lynching that call out for justice.

This bill makes it easier to hold bad cops accountable for their actions. It removes barriers to prosecution and recovering damages from officers who violate a persons civil rights. The doctrine of qualified immunity has created a system where it is virtually impossible to get justice for victims of police misconduct and racism bias. [...] Never again should an officer feel empowered to choke the life out of an unarmed, so-called black man, whose crime was selling loose cigarettes. Never again should an officer shoot and kill an unarmed so-called black man in the back as he runs away. We need to end the era of police officers behaving and looking like troops in a combat

zone. The [George Floyd Justice in Policing Act] takes steps in demilitarizing police departments. Without trust, police cannot do their jobs. [...] To that end, this bill increases transparency, while encouraging departments to meet a gold standard in training, hiring, and de-escalation strategies. It establishes a first ever national database of civilian police encounters, including the use of force in traffic stops and requires the collection, analysis, and release of such data. It also requires a collection of data on police misconduct to track and prevent bad cops from moving from one department to another to avoid accountability. [...] Taking these steps will help save lives, ensure accountability and to improve public safety. The example of what it means to be a decent human, to be a champion of humanity, that is, is found in Kaepernick's protest.

Narrator: Kaepernick's protests ignited a national movement throughout sports leagues and he has not played professionally since the 2016 NFL season. Kaepernick has filed a grievance against the league alleging collusion by team owners as the reason he remains unsigned, the year now 2024. On the other hand, while there is no single policy prescription that will erase the decades of systemic racism and excessive policing, The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is a bold, transformative proposal to create structural change with meaningful reforms.

THE GEORGE FLOYD JUSTICE in Policing Act of 2021 was a policing reform bill drafted by Democrats in the United States Congress. The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is a bold, comprehensive approach to hold police accountable, change the culture of law enforcement, empower our communities, and build trust between law enforcement and our communities by addressing systemic racism and bias to help save lives. This legislation makes it easier for the federal government to successfully prosecute police misconduct cases, ends racial and religious profiling and eliminates qualified immunity for law enforcement. The legislation bans the use of chokeholds and no-knock warrants—which took the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Eric Garner—at the federal level and encourages states to do the same. This package will finally allow meaningful accountability in cases of police brutality. The legislation was introduced in the United States House of Representatives on February 24, 2021.

It has passed the House of Representatives, but it never got through U.S. Senate, a federal body that makes decisions that cover everybody. Number of Co-Sponsors: 199. A little about the senate: the real power is in the senate. It's the most powerful, deliberative body in politics in the world. One hundred people make the decision

about two crucial things in this country – – 1: Confirming lifetime appointments of federal judges; and 2: Deciding how your money gets spent. The president doesn't control the money, the real power is in the senate.

An Americana Issue Oral History Project

The issue of American cultural racism, slavery and state sponsored violence - a profitable venture. How language culture plays a major role in how we as a collective white/black society discuss race, class and gender relations in these United States. These are our stories: narratives from a promised land.

ABRIDGED VERSION

MOVEMENT III

on writing for the stage, pt. 3 - protecting self

"I am not at all surprised when some of those for whom

I have lived and labored lift their heels against me. Since the days of Moses such has been the fate of all men earnestly endeavoring to serve the oppressed and unfortunate.”

— Frederick Douglass

May, 1883

“I can't remember losing my sense of control; after all, in that situation you can only survive if you keep calm and cool.”

— Nelson Mandela

At home, Soweto, South Africa, February 14, 1990

WE ARE THE ONLY SPECIES on Planet Earth this type of abuse was done to. And yet, still, we are here. Still, we are here. The most precious, complex and divine part of us, mind you—their brain, is in the hands of the so-called white man, still. The brain, that is, the most precious organ of them all. We hand it to them, freely. The same bloodline that fed them—us, we the people—to crocodiles. Do you remember? Can you morally imagine that? The same bloodline that drowned them, that beat them, that built their own medical and economic system off the backs of them—us, we the people. That is, America's economy, built, from ... off ... by ... the genocide of our so-called black children. Look at what was done to us. What is being done to us, still? Can you see it, I mean really? It's money, it's greed. It's power. It's ego untamed. It's fear, it's lack of trust. It has to be. All of those things, all at once. It's for their safety and security. It's all for them, and them alone. It is love and it is freedom (and justice) for some one day ... it's evil and it is corrupt for Others the next. And still, one cannot complain about the nonsense if one is actively participating in the system, still ... reaping rewards, the so-called benefits ... while at the same time protesting the nonsense system, make it make sense, save it for the next guy. It literally makes no-sense if you'll get up and go to work to collect a check one day, and then complain about the nonsense the next day. Please, it's one or the other. You're either in the world ... or you're not. You're working to end the abuse, or you're capitulating.

Narrator: I had to learn, quite frankly, we are not the same species. There is no way in hell we are the same. They are in fact, not like us, and we are not like them. A younger, more naive, less aware version of myself might say no one is better or worse than the Other, we're all just different. No one is superior or inferior, simply different.

But honestly, when you look at the science and think critically about the history of this place, America ... so-called black people are genetically superior to so-called white people. This is clear to me, as we live on a carbon based planet. I don't know how else to put it, quite frankly. How could I have missed this?

For those who are not yet familiar with the scientific terminology, the "eukaryotic" organisms represent everyone outside the solar system called so-called black people. The "prokaryotic" organisms are the black race. You can easily prove this through reading books and basic research, you can also google it. So, where do we go from here? With this new found, ground breaking information. Think back to Movement I, where we first learned, we all take the dominant gene from our mother, i.e. you are your mother, I am my mother, regardless of your choice of sexuality or sexual orientation and regardless of the presentation of your genitals. The male, in this way, is a mutated expression of the female. If your mother is white, then you your-self are considered the eukaryotic organism. Similarly, though not one in the same, if your mother is black, then you your-self are considered the prokaryotic organism. This is the fundamental, ground breaking breakdown.

The prokaryotic cells represent the black race and the eukaryotic cells are everyone outside the black race. How did we get here, in this mind frame, where they—the complex cell organisms—hold instrumental power over us—the so-called black race, the Mother of Humanity and her suns? This is *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023) – NARRATIVE PRELUDE - "on and off that marvel stage" — an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: The Western or American-individualistic media ... has programmed its society into thinking, however, if you have a black dad and a white mom, then you are black. This logic is false, flawed, misleading and flat out incorrect at best, not historically ... I guess historically it's pretty hip, new age ... but scientifically speaking, You are either One or the Other; no we cannot meet in the middle on this one, that's not how this works. Likewise, no we cannot be both, neither half nor mixed.

If yo mamma white, you white. If yo mamma Hispanic, then you are Hispanic and so on. This is science, this is fact.

Narrator: Still, we live in a world where justice simultaneously equals vengeance. Where ignorance is bliss and money trumps all. "Where private profit drives public policy, where the body of civil liberties, won cell by cell, bone by bone, by the brave and the dead, withers in the searing heat of all war all the time, and where respect for an even passionate interest in great art can dwindle, can shrink to a price list. It is possible to wonder if we have professed psychologically, intellectually, emotionally no further than 1492, when Spain cleaned itself of Jews, to 2004, when Sudan blocks food and medicine and remains content to watch the slow starvation of its people. No further than 1572, when France saw ten thousand slaughtered on Saint Bartholomew's Day, to 2001, when thousands were blown into filament in New York City.

Narrator: "No further than 1692, when Salem burned its own daughters and wives and mothers, to 2007, when whole cities are chock-full of sex tourists feeding off the bodies of young boys and girls." Although we here in America and are enduring another phase of late state colonialism, the year now 2023, when a centuries-old history is lurching toward its end, the seeming decline and fall of another western civilization, after 2000 years of reign. Is it finally happening? Are the columns buckling, or is this just another illusion? Is Babylon falling?

I'm concerned, these questions, they scare me. Still, with all these feelings and emotions, we must think logically about how to proceed. *We must be courageous in our acts of discussing the issues that be, the resolutions that await us, by asking why. We must be kind to ourselves and others so we do not continue perpetuating cycles of harm and violence.* Though we live within the confines of an illegitimate state embedded on stolen land in which systems that fucks-us-up are supported and prevail, by policy and a judicial system I am still learning to navigate, it's within our best interests to listen to the Other with loving awareness, attention, and find meaning through being attentive to, not so much *what* they are saying, but, rather, *how* and *why* they may be saying it. It's not what you say but how you say it. Confronting the epistemic violence of colonialism. Race and racism is a central ingredient of the An Americana Issue Oral History Project and its accompanying Discussions By Definition: a bridge to a new awakening product.

"Photographs, of course," says Virginia Woolf, "are not arguments addressed to the reason; they are mostly statements of fact addressed to the eye. But in that very simplicity there may be some help. Let us see then whether when we look at the same photographs we feel the same things. Here then on the table before us are photographs." In the context of the KeyAndre narrative medicine private practice and lifestyle brand, we'll refer to these

photographs or words as “items.” Some are not pleasant words to look upon, or speak on, nonetheless we must be courageous in our acts of discussing the issues that be. We must face them—the issues that be, by asking why..

Narrator: The “why” explanation of said event taking place-consciousness in the first place, and where do we go from here. I thought, would be clever to explore as an oral history encounter. If this were the 1950s, Dr. Carl Rogers PhD might allow the person at the center of any given creative-intellectual activity, to think openly yet still critically about “why” they said something the way they did, or “how” something was uttered or authored and the way it was uttered or authored. Encouraging them to write or speak and then review what it was that they wrote, did or said.

+ + +

Narrator: In this Chapter/Episode 12, I argue how not Race but racism—American cultural racism, in this particular context—systemic racism, is a thought process, it is a word, that is passed on from generation to generation in insidious ways, subtle ways, in-kind ways ... in sophisticated ways. I argue how it is in fact economic violence. It’s an art. Folks get away with murder everyday. It’s a point of view which one must carry out to inflict inconvenience on another. It’s an ongoing attempt to keep Others, out and away. It is a way of seeing the world. It’s in their head. ... I imagine if you grew up in the public school system here in America, like I did, it’s in your head, too. It’s how they-we interact, it becomes what they-we do. That is, if you allow it to overcome you. It shapes how they-we do business, how they-we cook and clean. Who they allow entry and who we gate keep from. No right or wrong, just a way of thinking and then doing this thing called life.

American cultural racism, it’s a way of life.

Narrator: I wouldn’t say this An Americana Issue community oral history project challenges whiteness or white supremacy. I cringe at that statement, actually. I’ll tell you why that is. White supremacy is designed to center whiteness and that’s not the objective truth of today’s work. But indulge me for a minute or two. White supremacy is convincing millions of so-called black people, and more generally people of color around the world, that their Jesus Christ Superstar savior is a white man. It works differently on so-called black people, though. As religion,

christianity in this Americana context was a linguistic tool of slavery, used to further enslave through fear based imagery. And this is not a knock at Christ Consciousness. I'm speaking about photographic memory, now.

White supremacy is creating the symbolic image of a so-called white God as Jesus, which subliminally engrains the myth of white superiority into one's subconscious minds, the minds of so-called black people, and more generally people of color. This makes you, in return, more compliant with so-called white dominance over our so-called black life, lives and times. And by centering my work on white supremacy, or whiteness, I am inherently centering whiteness and this idea of white people. Which is not my intention.

Narrator: (“The philanthropic sector, by its very nature and definition, purports to serve ‘disadvantaged communities,’ and over the years has presented itself as a more people-centered, equity-driven alternative to the cold corporate world. Due to historical racism and systemic inequalities, the majority of ‘disadvantaged communities’ are predominantly lower-income [B]lack and brown citizens, who have little social capital and little financial security. The nonprofit industry rakes in billions of dollars annually off the creation of programs and services designed with this demographic in mind. Then, white supremacy in a basic definition, means white people having the most access to and control over money, resources and people. If we sift through the centuries from slavery through segregation and ask whether there has been any distinct transference of wealth and power to [B]lack and brown people, the answer would be a resounding no.”).⁴³

I know I've said a lot in the past, publicly that is, about the issue of Race and racism in this country, but this oral history project is to streamline that discussion between educators and their students. I guess I had to go away to college and return to square one again just to learn the most important lesson of all: “The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction,” says Toni Morrison. “It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and your spend twenty years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn't shaped properly, so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says you have no art, so you drudge that up. Somebody says you have no kingdoms, so you dredge that up. None of this is necessary.” You have work to do, mi amor, art to make ... don't let these people's existence and perception of you, deter you from accomplishing all your heart desires in this lifetime and if you're lucky, the

⁴³ Anastasia Reesa Tompkin, *How White People Conquered the Nonprofit Industry*. May 26, 2020.

next. Life itself is the gift. Your life is the gift. You are paid for, in full, already – you already won! You are enough, as you are. And I am sorry you ever felt otherwise. The work of unlearning all the social programming starts and ends with you, too. You and you alone know what is good for your heart.

Narrator: If you know yourself, you would know, what is yours has already been bought and paid for. Now it is all a matter of balancing comprehension, alignment, execution, and appreciation. You would know already, that, this race relations shit is a joke. None of this matters, really. You would know better than to give your power away to these so-called white folk. All you have to do is know, put in the work, be still, trust and act accordingly. My aspirations have always been to earn a PhD, Perhaps in sociology or economics, and said interest—to explore how societies or civilizations come to be what they are—still remains. Maybe one day. But my interests now remain steeped in the human condition, studying consciousness raising social commentary, whether through a psychohistorical lens or a socio-economic one. I've decided not to become a music therapist or a psychologist, it's just too far a stretch for me, the year now 2024. The humanities, though ... they seem to be a decent way to sum up these disciplines anyway.

Narrator: “If you really care about these issues and want to make a difference, you must *not* use race as a proxy for poverty or poverty as a proxy for race,” said Harold Freeman, MD, the director of surgery at Harlem Hospital. “They intersect and overlap, but to really understand the health of this country, you have to be more sophisticated than assuming that only poor [b]lacks are affected by the crisis. Look deeper, think differently.”

It is racism—a psychological sickness of the mind—not race, which drives racial wealth gaps as well as racial health disparities, which are, too, linked and interconnected. Toni Morrison calls it similarly an intellectual flaw. “The source is a deplorable inability to project, to become the ‘other,’ to imagine her or him. It is an intellectual flaw, a shortening of the imagination, and reveals an ignorance of gothic proportions as well as a truly laughable lack of curiosity.” [...] “One of the major signs of intelligence, after all, is the ability to make distinctions, small distinctions. We judge an intellect by the ease with which it can tell the difference between one molecule and another, one cell and another, between a 1975 Bordeaux and a 1968, between mauve and orchid, between the words ‘wrest’ and ‘pry,’ between clabber and buttermilk, between Chanel No. 5 and Chanel No. 19. It would seem, then, that to continue to see any race of people as one single personality is an ignorance so vast, a perception so blunted,

an imagination so bleak that no nuance, no subtlety, no difference among them can penetrate. Except [for] the large differences: who shall flourish and who shall wither, who deserves state assistance and who does not.”⁴⁴

This psychological sickness of the mind lives underneath the skin, beyond the blood-brain barrier, folded into the thought process of all different kinds of people, from many different walks of life, men and women and children from all classes and education levels, no matter their skin colour. No matter what color you paint it out to be, it's still a part of you. You live and you learn ... I am thankful for the lessons.

+ + +

NEW YORK CITY WOULDN'T EXIST without that original theft from Native and Indigenous peoples. What took place was traumatic beyond compare, and the legacies still endure. Recognizing both of these legacies is absolutely essential for realising restorative justice and peace and reconciliation. Looking for a way out of your relationship to such legacies is pretty senseless. Violence against Indigenous peoples or so-called black people is active, happening right now, in weird and insidious ways.

Narrator: I sometimes feared my early education at suburban public schools on Long Island and a relatively small state school in Western New York was not adequate preparation for admittance into one of the top private research institutions in the country. Yet, the Harlem institution shared with me a sense of belongingness and security I have sought since boyhood. OHMA was the balanced prediction of what I needed then, and I'm glad to have made the decision to attend. This program's objectives provided the level of social context in which higher thinking discourse occurs: a community of knowledgeable peers. It was and forever will be an honor to join this community of oral historians, as part of Columbia's 2019-2020 OHMA cohort. I could only hope that my ideas and personal life history would find promise in your program. I hope it did.

As oral historians, our work is to listen. As someone who does not self-identify as being an ORAL HISTORIAN in the traditional sense of the term, though I have formal training in the discipline, I am very privileged to hold space for people in this PSYCHO-HISTORICAL way; meet people where they are, look them in the eye, and creatively

⁴⁴ Morrison, Toni. "The Source Of Self-Regard." 2019.

support them—navigate the telling of their-own life story. I do this, through a lens of psychology, by way of oral history theory and methodology.

Narrator: I aspire to work with a lot of different people. Different from myself, that is. To talk to them—people from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences. I am very privileged to hold space for them, where I get to walk with them—side by side—through this life, and to hear them narrate and critique, and evaluate their own interpretive stories. And to sit with them in their, sometimes, pain and, sometimes, joy. I get to witness them. In all their glory, move through the narratology process.

The Narratology Process. On or off the record, that is something that I do not take lightly. It comes naturally to me, actually. I know it's something I've done in many lifetimes before—perhaps bringing me to this very graduate program in oral history. Although this day is neither ENTERTAINMENT nor PERFORMANCE, it is however a form of ART. It must be stated: this oral history encounter—doing oral history *as* psychohistory— isn't therapy. This internal narrative-based reading and writing work is not therapy. It is neither journalism, right? It is, however, meant to be an on-going dialogue. Therapeutic in nature, perhaps, and healing in process, sure. It is a reminder that regardless of our assigned differences in society—what is GENDER, what is RACE, what is CLASS—and all the identity theory,

I am You.

When you see me, see you. And who are you? You are God, Source energy in a physical body, a human body. You are Spirit in the flesh. You are Eternal Life expressing Itself as You. You are a cosmic being. The universe, all the colours. All the colors. You are all powerful. You are all knowing, all wisdom.

The most intuitive & intelligent teacher, anyway, is your body, you-yourself. Your body will always tell you the truth. You don't need to be a doctor, nurse or have a degree and accolades to listen and understand your body. The fun part about this miraculous body of yours, you know it the most intimately. Your breath alone is enough to move mountains. Trust them, for they will never lie to you. Moreover, when you're listening to someone, working with

some, trust what they say—the content, that is—but really make yourself open to *how* it is they are saying it the way they are saying it, and *why* they are saying what it is they are saying, in the first place. It's all connected. All there is is this present moment.

WORKING WITH THEM

Narrator: THERE'S A DEEP SEATED BELIEF that, the more a person of color endures workplace racism, the more polished and experienced they are to become. Unfortunately, our Race and racial crisis has made me realize that white racism in America is no aberration, but an essential, non-negotiable “*ingredient*” in which the culture—sub- or counter-culture, or Otherwise—relies on. The very organism that is America does not function and certainly not move an inch forward without the demise of the so-called black person, too, the black-woman in particular, the economics of sexuality. Our American culture specifically cannot be understood fully without the concept of racialized capitalism. The hyper-sexualization of the so-called black person, too, the black-woman in particular, is the economic engine of our economics.

How much value can they bring us, can we extract from them. Before I get into my personal understanding and comprehension of enduring racism while at my first agency, a corporate partner of a federal institution, it must be said, my friends, I think this specific situation had the potential to damage my career in ways I may still not be aware of, had it not been for the kind folks who stepped in and continue to step in, guiding my steps. Honestly, three years later, I can confidently say my finances and personal confidence really took a hit.

Money truly does make the world go a-round ...

There is, at the same time, an art to working with them. That is, if you want to, you better know what you're getting into and preferably before introductions on day one. When you get to a certain level, I imagine you have to ... *how do you say this, without fulfilling a few feathers* ... ruffle a few feathers? I guess, depending on how you look at it, one can do this through language—verbal, non-verbal, written, body ... but nonetheless language. And you and you alone can do this. No one can do this for you. You must study, on your own time, the craft of doing

things—this, without getting hurt. It's acting, it's a practice. It's a skill developed. "Once a person gets an understanding of the game, and what the levels and the rules of the game are, then the world isn't a trick anymore. The world is a game to be played." Play or be played, says Tupac. Love Tupac.

Narrator: The better your ACT, the higher or farther .. depending how you look at it, you can go, the more money you would be paid, for the value you bring. Let me get one thing straight though: I'm not for sale, as much as the price of wealth and the history of this place may like to argue. The subject of money is a fraught one to have, I've come to learn, always has been always will be. And the world is a safer place because of it, I thought. I had to learn the hard way, that there is in fact an art and craft to checking these so-called white people, especially in the workplace, and letting them know what's up. That you are not to be played with. I'd say upfront, never get emotional and don't take things personal, because it—whatever *it* is—is not about your emotions nor your perception of the world i.e. global economics and the bottom line don't care about your personal feelings. As it were today, there are families to feed, daughters to raise, grounds to be prepared. You are not wrong for the way you feel.

You are not wrong for the way you feel.

I don't want people to think that you are wrong for feeling the way that you feel. That anger ... that rage , although there is no room for its natural expression ... for you to feel upset about the world that was forced on you through abuse and passed down to you through generational curses, you have every fucking right to feel the way you feel. If you are not out here harming little children, causing harm to the other species, if you are not out here harming children, even poisoning yourself ... you're out here really trying to do right by people. I imagine, THESE BASTARDS – THESE PEOPLE HATE YOU BECAUSE THEY HATE THEMSELVES, these people who did some of the most horrific things to us. Here we are now, in their face, asking them for money.

Narrator: We are not the same, we are not measured by the same ruler, therefore you cannot do what they do and get away with it, like they do ... In the workplace, you have to remain calm cool and collected. The subject of money is a fraught one to have, I've come to learn, but if you're willingly participating in this game, you have to abide by the rules. Their rules. It is what it is ... They purposefully are doing this to us, and we are capitulating to it.

This whole shit was built thorough / off / on the genocide of the American Indian, of us. Why are we capitulating to it? Yet I'm the one to be dismissed, as if I did something quote unquote wrong? Y'all got me fucked up.

Narrator: If you see something wrong, call it the fuck out. We gotta call it out, my friends. That's the problem right there, again, we're keeping our mouth shut—afraid to hurt somebody's feelings—their white fragility. No one likes to hear the truth, that's all it is. The bottom line is still the bottom line, regardless of how you personally feel about it—whatever it is. Here we are still, in their face, asking them for money, still. In fewer words: a job is a job. You cannot be emotional in a crisis, that shit will get you dropped. Never get emotional in the place of work, is what I mean, it will only slow you down and fuck up the bag. Is it warranted? Probably. At a certain age, though, you have the ability to choose for yourself. At a certain age, you are sure of who you are, and the potential consequences of your actions. At a certain age, the choice is no longer your parents but is yours for the making. At a certain age, you have to be prepared to have an intellectual conversation, without getting personal feelings involved over truth.

I had to learn how to stand on the foundation of game, facts and data, not emotion and falsified history. These days, now more than ever, it's critical we stay grounded and focused, and move with logical intention. In war: throw out your emotions, honestly. It's important, now more than ever, to be still. To watch your-self, to observe your surroundings. As above, so below. Emotional people don't survive the first wave. At a certain age things are not misunderstandings or mistakes anymore, I thought. At a certain age one must be responsible for their own research, their own self-education.

Really, at a certain age, people cannot be picked based solely on talent or potential. Who they are in this present moment is exactly that, who they are. And when someone shows you who they are, believe them, the first time. The name of the game is performance, not potential. In this Americana context, everyone has potential, but rarely do they live up to it. Who you are right now, is who you want to be. What you're doing right now, is what you want to do. This is autonomy, this is choice, and you show us every single time who you are by what you choose to do: What you choose to say, what you choose to eat, how you choose to walk and move. It's all informed by how you think and what you know to be true about yourself.

Your situation i.e. performance is a testament to your decision making, and said decisions are made on the basis of your character – all connecting back to your origin story and how you learned to think about who you are and the larger world around you. The adage that still stands the test of time and is applicable here: “Watch your thoughts, for they become words; watch your words, for they become actions; watch your actions, for they become habits; watch your habits, for they become your character; and watch your character, for it becomes your destiny. [...] What we think we become.” Anytime you’re feeling stressed or flustered at work, I’ma need you to pray, meditate, and journal your mistakes ... observe your-self. and how you felt or feel. But stop letting these people play in your face. Master the elements, know who you are, and trust your intuition. Ask yourself, why did you do what you did? Why do you feel the way you do? Literally, self assesses on the spot, on the clock or off the clock,, in real time, whatever it takes ... and make the proper adjustments. But do not lose your cool or let them see you sweat. Anyway, fuck these white women.

* * *

James Pennebaker, a researcher at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *Writing to Heal* (2004), “has done some of the most important and fascinating research I’ve seen on the power of expressive writing in the healing process. In an interview posted on the University of Texas’s website, Pennebaker explains, ‘Emotional upheavals touch every part of our lives. You don’t just lose a job, you don’t just get divorced. These things affect all aspects of who we are—our financial situation, our relationships with others, our views of ourselves, our issues of life and death. Writing helps us focus and organize the experience.’”

Narrator: You can write in your journal and answer specific narrative prompts with a coach or therapist, too, all day long, sure. To get yourself ready. But truthfully speaking the real, honest special sauce rests in the space in the in between, you and them, your self-proclaimed Other ... It’s about having the courage, the audacity, the tools to discuss things with people whom you have conflict with, in a nonjudgmental way, and hearing the Other person’s point of view without judgment. In community. “By itself, it is worthless. Putting in context and finding the meaning of particular information with all other pieces of information that constitute overall existence can be achieved only in the human, and it only happens through human development in this world, through all of their life experiences and dramas as material and spiritual culture and civilization.” [...] “It happens through the drama process every

human life goes through. Connecting the dots of information is a phenomenon that reveals meaning. Those events in which the human participates by way of their destiny is what surpasses the world of minerals, plants, and animals; it is what brings the divine consciousness one step closer to the meaning of its existence.”⁴⁵

“It’s unsurprising how confrontational it feels to accept that your triggers are your responsibility. But this is an empowering key to emotional freedom.

There’s no real way to measure how “spiritual” one is, and attempting to do so is also a trap of the ego. Yet, life presents plenty of opportunities to exercise emotional resilience, patience, self-love, and discipline born of spirit. We can paint and feed an image of who we are spiritually by highlighting deep thoughts and profound reads. However, the outcome of spiritual practice can be witnessed by how we respond to the turbulence of life and intense emotions, not by spiritual accessories, preaching, and decorations.

Humans are like oranges. Whenever squeezed, what’s inside will come out. And triggers are like emotional juicers. This doesn’t account for complex nuances of trauma, PTSD, or other mental health symptoms. Beyond that, triggers are involuntary emotional responses we all face, and they help us recognize inner conflicts to be addressed.

Triggers and intense emotions, though uncomfortable, serve as valuable teachers. Strong feelings are often managed in three ways: the ego defends, the intellectual mind suppresses, and the spirit seeks to understand and release. Shifting what you do with these emotions requires practicing your perspective.

In sports, you can practice for months, but what matters most is how you show up on the field. Practice and rehearse your emotional responses. Pause before responding in less charged scenarios. Spend more time exploring the gap between impulsive reactions of your mind and body by taking deeper breaths, slowing your thoughts, and creating more awareness. Regularly expand your patience, pause, and peace in other areas until it becomes your default reaction to everything.

⁴⁵ Antic, Ivan. “The Physics of Consciousness: In the Quantum Field, Minerals, Plants, Animals and Human Souls. Samkhya Publishing LTD 2021.

So when the time comes, resist any urge to be judgemental toward the older version of yourself who may pay a visit. They spent a lifetime trying to protect you. With conscious awareness, you can experience emotions from the view of the higher self and see the opportunity that heavy emotions present.”

* * *

Narrator: Three years ago, my life was very different than it is today. I worked in corporate America in the financial district in New York City, at the state level, helping to distribute grants to cultural organizations across the state of New York. A year after I was dismissed on January 6, 2023, I fell into a depression of sorts. I’m sure the Board and the Executive Director chose this date to dismiss me, because of the symbolism, the insurrection took place on this day just one year prior, 2022. Applying, interviewing, only to be rejected again ... I kept chasing an old memory of myself, an older younger version of me. I didn't know who I was anymore and fell into the trap. Losing my health insurance, my dental insurance, my 401k investments, all my benefits were one thing, ... Signing up for unemployment, was another. Not being able to pay for groceries, gas for the car. It was literally one thing after another, a slow grinding away, my spirit, placed through a shredder; a true test of character.

Every other week would be a new discovery of my mind. Was I was hiding behind this job, the money, the accolades, all these years? Once the fun was taken away from me, I began to embark on an identity crisis... who am I really? Why am I here, why me? The worst thing you can do is base your whole identity on one of your life phases or eras, if not four years of academic success. As for me, I got stuck in a period of my life that no longer exists.

Moreover, when you ain't got no bread, as a man, it can be frustrating and degrading. It can damage your confidence if you let it. I had succeeded at school my entire childhood and adolescence, but this chapter of my life ... I took my first proverbial “punch to the face” and it rocked my world. I needed this time to figure out who it was that I am, who I needed to be. If you know who you are, and you are who you say you are ... meaning your actions align with your words ... true knowledge of self, people can't prick and pry and take it all away from you; what remains is truly yours, what was given to you already. I needed that L, though, I got a little too comfortable.

Narrator: Anything that can be stripped away from you was never really yours to begin with, I thought. Perhaps I earned it, but again if it were truly mine, it wouldn't have gone missing. And so, my confidence finally let

out. This dismissal, on top of the pandemic charades, false promises, drained my confidence, sapped me of energy, and convinced me that I might not belong here after all. One heartbreak after another felt like a crushing blow, sending me on an emotional wave that led to an increased likelihood of more failures. Today, as I pull myself up by my bootstraps, I respect any man that's striving to change his financial status for the better, because America's racialized capitalism is truly something else. I didn't realize the headstart I had had, with education and being placed where I was ... I took it for granted. The narrative prelude is my chance to set the record straight, perhaps set the conditions for my future success.

Alas, the subtitle for this Chapter/Episode is called Working With Them – a personal attempt to clear my cotton-picking name, salvage the bones, if you will ... if at all for myself, and for those struggling to find their voice in the landscape that is backward America, a dystopian nightmare. James Baldwin once said, "I had to make peace with a great many things, not the least of which was my intelligence. You don't realize that you're intelligent until it gets you into trouble." This is my attempt to, in the spirit of my private narrative medicine practice, make peace with my past. If you tell your own story, from your own view, as if you are the first-person to place it on record, history says you're better off.

I'm Kordell KeyAndre. I deserve peace. I am deserving of true love, joy, and happiness, too.

Kordell KeyAndre: No matter where you are on the social hierarchy, what your resources look like, what opportunities you've been made to have or perhaps which you've made for yourself, sometimes telling the truth is just not worth it. I know, unpopular opinions. But sometimes it's within the best interest of the collective group to look the other way, keep the peace for the sake of keeping the peace, if you know what I mean. What we gain when we do that is momentary solace meanwhile, however, our integrity and sense of self begins to chip away.

We at our core inherently know what is the quote un quote "right" thing to do. When you go against that pull, you—yourself begin to limp, all the while further perpetuating and growing whatever insidious, colonialist, erasist, imperialist, white supremacist ideology and basically just another problematic thought process that causes tension and harm. Before I get into it, this specific situation revealed to me once again our racial dilemma as the #1

product of the historical unfolding of Western culture. The irrational power racism holds over us, is seen as part of the larger unreason in which we live. To this end, one cannot be a freethinker without hindering one's own livelihood. There is a certain kind of way people of color, in particular black people have to think, have to act, and there are certain things they have to say, and a certain way they have to say it, in order to keep the peace in America—in order to maintain their livelihood. First, it's an insidious request, to ask a black person to be anti-black in order to build something worthwhile out here. You're not allowed to be a freethinker in this country, beloved, and certainly not in the place of work, you got to toe the line, in other words, a line that is defined and informed and sustained by so-called white people, an in-organic species with an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex ... it is what it is ... they who are psychologically incapable of ruling over the proverbial Others.

Kordell KeyAndre: "All our silences," says bell hooks, "in the face of racist assault are acts of complicity ... If aware black folks gladly trade in their critical political consciousness for opportunistic personal advancement then there is no place for rage and no hope that we can ever live to see the end of white supremacy." Meanwhile, however, it is *our* integrity and sense of self begins to chip away. This is white supremacy at its finest, beloved. When you don't follow the script of what it means to be how the white power structure needs you to be, to comply, to cooperate, then you become one with the enemy. And this is where the multiplicity in view comes into play.

Are they disrespectful, or did they set a boundary that goes against your tactics to hold dominion and rulership? There is a difference. Are they snappy, or are they tired of your mess? There is a difference. Are they mean, or direct and firm with you? And you just don't like it? There is a difference. Were you cursed out, or were you set straight after violating someone's agency? It's comedic how white people play victim when it is convenient for them, as if they aren't already operating in a dystopia rigged for their comfort and appeasement. There is a difference. Are they rude and combative, or is your insecurity now intimidated by their confidence and their ability to see through the systematic racism stacked against them? There is a difference. What some people see as rude or disrespectful is their inability to have their way. What some people see as rude or disrespectful is a person disagreeing with them. What some people see as rude or disrespectful is a person saying something they don't want to hear. What some people see as rude or disrespectful is a person presenting a different view point. That's all. "When people say hard things," says Nedra Tawwab, "people can become more offended when things are stated kindly or without the intention to harm. Rudeness is often used to describe being offended instead of the presenter

being impolite. Learn to distinguish the difference between rudeness and being offended.” Are they unprofessional? Is their personal conduct really unacceptable? Do you really want to play that name-calling game, after the god forsaken history of this place, what is America?

Kordell KeyAndre: The historic dynamic remains firmly in place—when we choose to look the other way—in terms of who calls the shots, who holds the purse strings, and who has the power to control the inner workings of an organization that affects black and brown lives, whether staff or clientele. Still, stand your ground, take your knee, speak your truth—it’s a lot bigger than you and getting money. Know that you are not a slave but a prisoner of war. You are a servant of your-self first, something made possible through the most high.

There is a difference.

Your value is not determined by someone else’s inability to see your worth. You and you alone define your worth, you do this by knowing who you are. From this place, you can speak your mind and stand your ground, or in this case take a knee, with confidence. This self-assuredness may scare them, or come across as a threat, but that is simply you knowing your power. Do it anyway. They cannot attack the real you, which is the most perfect of illusions – that you are under attack and you are to surrender, or bend over for them, those who are insecure. They can only shadowbox with their own projections. Remain calm, remain in light. And never give over your power, that which you’ve worked tirelessly to attain. Who am I to complain though, about the cultural standards of this place, that is America? It doesn't make sense to complain when we, the so-called black people, are doing it to ourselves, subjecting ourselves to this type of madness. It’s a contradiction; It’s a paradox ... It’s a paradox to complain and still in the same breath want to reap the benefits of a high credit score. Like, enough with all of this performative social justice warrior nonsense. If you’re about liberation, you’re not collecting a paycheck. Period.

In order to have a high credit score you have to be a part of their system – Once you’re apart of their system, that means you accept everything that comes along with them, so they will fuck you up if you don’t comply, as they have situated themselves in positions of authority and power within system by way of racial capitalism – What is “*colour, caste, and class.*” When we are participating in the very system in which they are hiding behind, you literally cannot complain, it literally doesn't make sense to complain. When you accept your abuser, anything from them, you cannot get mad at how they treat you or your children. There is an organism on this planet who

appears to be human and comes to you with smiles and candy, but in reality they – the so-called white people – are slowly killing, slaughtering, and controlling you (psychologically) and your bloodline – and we cannot get mad at them, because we are allowing them to educate our children, medically and psychologically evaluate our children. We cannot get mad at them for the abuse they are doing to us, when we continue to put ourselves in the line of fire. We—the so-called black people—can only control ourselves. So what are we going to do?

This is An Americana Issue ...

Kordell KeyAndre: One of the more sophisticated voices I have read on the link between workplace norms and racism is Leah Goodridge, the managing attorney for housing policy at Mobilization for Justice, which provides civil legal services. She’s also the author of a UCLA Law Review article on the subject, titled Professionalism as a Racial Construct.⁴⁶ Goodridge spoke with a veteran journalist S. Mitra Kalita in 2023 with Time Magazine about Professionalism as a Racial Construct. How do you protect yourself? With knowledge of self, first and foremost, as well as knowledge of the law. That is, in this Americana issue context, the English language. You have to know how to speak, make a case, and argue with sophistication, style and sometimes sex appeal.

+++

“In 1995 racism may wear a new dress, buy a new pair of boots, but neither it nor its suc-cubus twin fascism is new or make anything new. It can only reproduce the environment that supports its own health: fear, denial, and an atmosphere in which its have lost the will to fight.” “Conservative, moderate, liberal; right, left, hard left, far right; religious, secular, socialist—we must not be blindsided by these Pepsi-Cola, Coca-Cola labels because the genius of fascism is that any political structure can host the virus and virtually any developed country can become a suitable home.”⁴⁷ — Toni Morrison

Kordell KeyAndre: Keeping with the throughline of fascist dictatorships, the leader of this non-profit organization must be the only source of the truth, and everybody else must be lying, I thought. The irony, the contradictions. Anything the leader does is justified, no questions asked ... no matter how harmful it may be to the broader community or to a singular individual, I thought. Criticism of the leader, him or her ... *her*, even worse but,

⁴⁶ Goodridge, Leah. “Professionalism as a Racial Construct.” March 29, 2022.

⁴⁷ Morrison, Toni. “The Source of Self-Regard.” 2019.

that's neither here nor there ... or questioning the leader, him or her, is considered persecution, I thought. And, lastly, the leader is always right. No matter the facts or data, history or science, your personal feelings or outlook. He or she is right. No matter their gender, sexual orientation, color code or nationality, political affiliation or what have you ... the ladder is always right. They were put there for a reason, keep that in mind. These were some thoughts surfacing racing through my mind over the course of my final days with that agency. Needless to say, leadership is difficult. You're put there for a reason, a job to do. You're tasked to balance many views, employees, stakeholders, board members; oftentimes they-themselves are carrying conflicting or paradoxical views. I thought I was baited into unprofessional behavior at work. I mean, what more am I to believe? I thought I was being set up, literally, psychological warfare. I was paranoid, to say the least. I control myself, my reactions, yes, however ... how I view what all is happening is my subjective truth.

Outside of doing my literal work, what I am paid to do, my work, I thought, I was not getting that COVID-19 vaccine, for example, no matter how much pay you offered me. I was already being underpaid, for my credentials and my level of expertise on the patter: conversation across difference. I missed out on numerous company-wide events—one being the National Humanities Conference 2022—*Energy of Motion: Experiencing Change in Kinetic California*. California Humanities was proud to host the National Humanities Conference in Los Angeles from November 10 to November 13, the year 2022. To attend this gathering would have been a dream come true for me. Alas, here we are. Barred from participation. Publicly shamed for a decision, I thought, was mine alone.

Another example being a publicly held event at the Ford Foundation in New York, New York. On October 18th, the year still 2022, Humanities New York hosted its fourth annual “History and the American Imagination” event with poet and prison reform advocate Reginald Dwayne Betts and Nicole R. Fleetwood, Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University. Participants or staff, in the case of me, would not be able to attend without providing proof of vaccination upon entry. I spoke candidly about this issue and my current stance on the matter with the then Executive Director of Humanities New York, to which no interest to support my case was made. I mean, what is empathy? What is sympathy? It's as if the group didn't want Kordell Keyandre to attend, anyway. I mean, that's how I felt. Inspiration for this year's public conversation came from HNY's Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership (PIHP), which supports organizations in New York State that serve

individuals who have previously been incarcerated and their families. I remember staying back at my mom's house in Suffolk County of Long Island, watching the live-streamed event from my childhood bedroom. My mom, a so-called black woman, joined me to support the speakers and the, arguably, very important cause. The irony.

The juxtaposition.

Kordell KeyAndre: An evolved, conscious being is "*incapable*" of lying, of deceiving or keeping secrets in a relationship, as true spirituality goes hand in hand with integrity. I think that was the trouble with this era of lockdown and public misinformation, the year now 2022. After a while I genuinely felt like I was being misled: me against them, the organization, the board, the entire mission statement of the organization. I guess the saying "*Hear no evil, See no evil, Speak no evil,*" and the idiom "*Ignorance is bliss*" knows no bounds in the place of work. You really do have to have a resilient, fortified mind to make it in this world, America nonetheless. If you can make it in New York, though, cannot you make it anywhere?

Naturally, nothing is possible without my internal belief, first, my quality of my mental health. Everything that shows itself to be negative and destructive is an expression of the lack of consciousness of existence, something that always leads to primitivism and disrespecting life. When consciousness is not in perfect balance and unity with existence, it is always destructive in some way, it is a fall into unconsciousness and the illusion of suffering, or what is known as the ordinary life to most people. My lack of gratitude and appreciation, stemming plainly from my lack of knowing, my lack of understanding self ... i.e., ignorance, yet again ... created a reality like no other. I set the stage for this. American cultural racism is real.

You can argue with me on this fact of the matter until the chickens come home to roost. My eyes are my eyes. I've worked diligently to prepare a sound place of reference, for me to make reasonable decisions. It was a different kind of racism I experienced here; different from Long Island and different from Western New York. This was something a little more scathing, witheringly scornful, sophisticated, severely critical. I mean, some so-called white people will really dislike you just because *you* like you. Because you have the audacity to wear your natural hair out in this

war-zone. Because you choose to wear your natural hair, for example, as you are. And that's a harsh truth I am still learning to accept.

How can we collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are? Well, I'll tell you: We tell them. We share our truth proudly, consistently and unashamedly. We tell them—our authentic stories—unapologetically, we tell them in the face of adversity, we tell them anyway. We shout it, sing it, dance it, write it.. paint the most authentic you all over the canvas that is your life. We allow them, the authentic stories we tell, to move us. And whoever is left, perhaps applauding your art, is your people. Love yourself anyway. Know your worth, and trust and believe, if they wanted to like you—if they wanted you to attend that event, to join that happy hour, to attend that dinner—they would, enthusiastically. If they wanted to get along with you, they would get along with you, no questions asked.

This could be all so simple, if only they knew. You are not hard to love, beloved ... For the one who has the grace equipped for your journey, true, real, authentic love will be done with clarity and ease.

This degree of rejection was something an Ivy League education could not protect me from, answer or solve for. Where you went to college, or that you went to college at all, evidently, clearly, doesn't protect you against the onslaught of the human condition and implicit bias. The solution is purposely in knowledge of self. Had I known who I am, and in return knew who they are, I could have navigated these fascist, racist, imperialist terrains with a higher intelligence. Perhaps keeping my job, my character and my pay in check. I didn't know how fortunate I was; to be granted such an opportunity. Some might say so I took it all for granted. To Intern and eventually work in downtown Manhattan, New York, the Financial District of all places on Planet Earth ... It was truly my first look. How the other half lives. Some would give anything to have the opportunity, I thought. And here I was, finally, working on Broadway. I worked to gain access to that room. For some reason I allowed a narrative of fear, doubt and imposter syndrome, to rob me of my own greatness. I earned my placement in that room. Looking back, the voice of that organization's mission statement still will ring forever true: Using dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking, Humanities New York applies the humanities to strengthen democratic society. Or, in another format, we apply the humanities to strengthen the bounds of civil society and community.

Kordell KeyAndre: To think they wanted to see me win would be a joke at best. Looking back, I was just doing the best I knew how. A younger, more naive, less aware self might say no one is better or worse, we're just different. No one is superior or inferior, simply different. But honestly, when you look at the science and think critically about the history ... so-called black people are genetically superior than so-called white people. This is a clear fact, as we live on a carbon based planet. I don't know how else to put it. How could I have missed this? And still: we are all the same. Everything is love. Note to self: Never go into the war zone without backup, protective gear, or at least a map!

* * *

The days of unheroic conduct are changing, as the lines between public and private conduct continue to be blurred. Each and every body I encounter is, too, experiencing their own time-line, moving at their own chosen pace. It's imperative I save myself first and foremost, and continue to protect myself, over and over again, by being the light. Naturally, your body rejects the people, places, and things that aren't for you. When you know yourself, and you know how to properly listen to yourself, this becomes simple communication. Listen to your body. Know yourself, know your body. Take care of yourself, take care of your body. Find shelter in your body. Honor and respect your body. Protect your body, by any means necessary.

If you don't spend time getting to know yourself, you'll end up absorbing everyone else's random and conflicting ideas about you and who they think you are, or who they want or need you to be. Hence the importance of self-education. Knowing who you are on a very deep and intimate level is the best way to protect yourself from internalizing disempowering opinions from others.

Kordell KeyAndre: So, continue to cultivate your light, mi amor, and view yourself as a source of power in the darkness. Afterall, the choice is yours. And if the choice is mine, *Why not choose peace and reconciliation?* "Reconciliation means working together to correct the legacy of past injustice," says the late Nelson Mandela, speaking at the National Reconciliation Day event in South Africa, the date December 16, the year 1995.

When you study... I mean really self study ... when you read and write, you begin to realize: this is all just a game, none of it is real. Other than the science, which is very real. Which is why I laugh, now, at so-called white people labeling me, a so-called black man, "combative" ... the irony. The idea that people can come to this land, steal it at sword point // gun point ... enslave people, build a society in their image, and then turn around and regulate us, and somehow become the people charged with rehabilitating us... it makes no sense. They are using their system of judgment to further capitalize on people. And yet, I am the one who is combative? Beloved, you haven't seen combative. It only wouldn't make sense if they were in a position of so-called authority or power ... but because the game is set up in this way, anything they say goes. This is authoritarianism, this is facism. Just because they couldn't run their game on me, all of a sudden, when they can't get what they want, now I'm the issue. Whatever they need you to be so that their internal narrative can make sense, they will turn you into. Don't internalize it because it's not true ... it's simply their point of view, after all. Don't take it personal. Observe and move accordingly. I never wanted to be right or thought they were wrong; I simply wanted to be understood from my point of view, I thought.

For me as a so-called black man, to have finally realized, I built this entire world to be so cotton-picking comfortable for you and your race—to live, to laugh, to love – to only turn around and be called combative, to be told that you do need me anymore. Shout out to so-called black men, for constantly doing the heavy lifting. The biggest threat to masculine energy is not a gun or a tank but, rather, knowledge of self. You would make masculine energy small just like that. Who has the most abundance of knowledge? The woman, who we as men are said to protect. She uses 100% of her knowledge-set. We need her well. We need her to be healthy. My friends, it's time to fight back intellectually. And the objective is not to win the fight ... the objective, as far as I'm concerned: freedom, peace of mind. It's not to fight back violently, because once you start to fight back intellectually you'll start to recognize, there is no violence. We're not violent people. I'm afraid these so-called white people cannot think for themselves, yet, they see something threatening in you that you are yet to see in yourself, which is why they are breaking their necks to stop you and keep you down trodden. The true violence these days takes place economically... They knew they could not touch me. But we can remove you from this room and strip you from any present and future resources, access to the conversations, that may help you to live, take care, thrive and procreate into the future. The true violence was dismissing me and placing me on the do not call list. Don't get so caught up

in the hate and reactionary discourse that you lose sight of what is taking place in the first place. It's unfortunate that my lack of critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness, and general knowledge of self cause me to fumble this opportunity. Yet at the same time, how else were I to learn about the reality of my circumstance. The bottom line is this: "You write in order to change the world, knowing perfectly well that you probably can't, but also knowing that literature is indispensable to the world. In some way, your aspirations and concern for a single man in fact do begin to change the world. The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way a person looks or people look at reality, then you can change it."⁴⁸

I needed to go on this narrative, very personal journey to discover who and what it is that I am. Being dismissed from this organization was the impetus I needed to start letting go of all that I was holding on to, and inheriting still attracting, and in return holding me away from my why. I needed to reclaim my focus, and intentionally setting space for self-discovery and growth through writing and reading was something worth doing. Every moment spent nurturing myself brings me closer to the person I am meant to be. In these moments of solitude, "you'll find clarity and direction. You'll remember what truly matters and what fuels your passion. This process isn't about permanently cutting yourself off from the world but giving yourself the space to breathe, reflect, and grow."

Remember, no matter what *they* say about you, *you* and you alone are in charge of your own happiness. This might mean stepping away from the noise to look within and truly listen to your inner voice. Take however much time you need. Meditate to find peace in the quiet moments, stretch to feel your body's strength, and journal to make sense of your thoughts and feelings. Take however much time you need. Obedience to your mind-body-temple is a lot more important than their opinion of you. You ought not let anything outside of your-self control you and who you know yourself to be. You should continue to vibrate on a high frequency and remove from those of low self, respectfully. And if you don't yet have the clear path forward, "Sometimes," says Elaine Welteroth, "just being yourself is the radical act." I love that. She says, "When you occupy space in systems that weren't built for you, your authenticity is your activism." You are creating a life that is blissful on the inside which will convert into experiences that are blissful on the outside. It starts with you, and your actions, which derive from your thoughts ... It starts with the one—you. The ultimate source of self-regard. How you feel and what you know to be true about yourself matters

⁴⁸ James Baldwin, interviewed by John Romano for the New York Times, September 1997.

before all and anyone else. Trust and believe in your power. Do not give them permission to undermine your natural, God-given authority, a birthright ... to take your power.

Be self-assured. Know who you are.

At a certain age, you have to realize: The only reason why you're in the situation you are in, is because of you. Yes, external factors play a role. But your power lies in how you allow others to make you feel; how much to appreciate what you already have; your boundaries, your benefits; how you react and how you speak to others; the way to approach conflict; whom you engage with; how to respond to stress and challenges; how you speak to yourself; where you spend your energy; how you prioritize your mental health; what you choose to learn from success and what you choose to learn from failures; and how honest you are with yourself. "When we *feel hurt* or *feel offended*," says Maxwell Maltz, M.D., author of *Psycho-cybernetics* (2015), "the feeling is entirely a matter of our own [subjective opinion or viewpoint]. In fact the feeling is our response. [...] Scientific experiments have shown that it is absolutely impossible to feel fear, anger, anxiety, or negative emotions of any kind while the muscles of the body are kept perfectly relaxed. We have to 'do something' to feel fear, anger, anxiety. 'No man is hurt but by himself,' said Diogenes." [...]

"'Nothing can work me damage except myself,' said St. Bernard. 'The harm that I sustain I carry about with me, and am never a real sufferer but by my own fault.'"⁴⁹

At a certain age, you have to take accountability for the good as well as the not so good, as you've brought it all on yourself. You alone are responsible for your reactions and responses, and ultimately your world view. You do not have to respond at all. You can remain relaxed and free from injury. The longer you continue to pass the blame instead of looking in the mirror and taking complete ownership of your life, the longer you will remain in the same miserable situation, I thought.

⁴⁹ Psycho-Cyber

Kordell KeyAndre: When I tell you working with them was a true test of character—who I know myself to be, and my integrity—outside of the physical and hypothetical walls of my childhood home or the familiarity of academic institutions, to ask for more money when I knew I was being underpaid, to know my worth value and to stand up for what I believe to be true ... to stand 10 toes down when I could have easily folded—I mean it was a true test of who I am, who I aspire to be. Please, always remember, nothing that's for you, will require you to act out of your character to get it. Remain humble, calm and trust your process. Though I sometimes feel ashamed of my past behavior—and have learned to do better since—sometimes, you just have to trust that in that movement, I did the best I knew how, and that it happened as it was supposed to happen. Maybe I was being a little overly emotional, but logically speaking, if I knew better, I would have done better. I wouldn't have fumbled that bag had I known who I am, to lift my head higher and walk a little taller. Do not be intimidated by them. How you remember the past ... it may change with the passing and going of time, new information, new insight would alter anyone's views, I thought ... but some things should never change: like, for example, the definition of discrimination in the workplace.

The lessons of “self-education” and “self-acceptance” still carry on. It's an ongoing process of “self-discovery” and “self-love,” but what I know for sure, as a so-called black, openly queer man, now knowing what I know about the abhorrent history of America, I will be compensated justly for my contributions and efforts in this world, no questions about it. And I won't be gaslit into believing I am wrong or the one who doesn't know what is going on here. This is *my* shit, you're in my house; now pay me my money. Here I am, doubting myself, while all along they are the ones intimidated by my potential. So yes, I am pissed off. Mad, at my own ignorance.

Kordell KeyAndre: And for the people who did not take it, for whatever reason, that COVID-19 vaccine: really pat yourself on the back. I don't know how you did it. “Being a person with a strong mind and a strong will in an unrighteous world, it's tough, it's training. To increase your willpower, to redirect those weak thoughts to become strong thoughts, and constantly overthrow them [the weak thoughts]. And during that time they were running campaigns of fear, anxiety, [unnecessary anxiety] and stress. Trying to weaken you and weaken you and weaken you, until they could control your will.” That was one of the global tests on the Planet Earth. That's not easy. “Naturally our brain tells us to assimilate, to do the thing that's going to give us the rewards in society, to be a part of

so we can get these social rewards, and be in these circles. So when you are able to maintain that steadfast-ness about yourself, and that discipline and that self-control,”

and not submit to the lure of money, “that’s a liberated mind.”⁵⁰

Kordell KeyAndre: Never look in the past but for reference, a point of view, for learning opportunities to grow from and transform. A learning opportunity. What are the lessons learned from that story told? Don’t think about the future, I thought. The past neither exists as we know it. What you’re to do is focus on now, this present moment. Find some small thing to be thankful and grateful for. How are you feeling? Where do you find yourself? Realize how blessed you are, and the life you’ve been able to create for yourself, thanks to the help of Others, and the community which you also created. Be thankful everyday. For this present moment. Really, there is no us and them, I thought. There is one whole. One universal consciousness. There is you. And any attempt to take away from that which you are already is another tactic to divide the camp and create division in your world view. Every move I made, from this point moving forward, everything that is done, it is tactical.

If I’m doing it, it’s for a much larger purpose. In closing, the future of voice and audio in education settings is the future of narrative medicine globally. It’s not what you did or what you didn’t do, likewise, it’s not what you said or what you did not say ... It’s forever and always *why* I did it, and how I did it ... maybe even who I did it for. If you get it, you get it. If you don’t, it wasn’t meant for you anyway. Be impeccable with your word and do everything you said you were going to do. It’s already done. I am whole, I am complete, I am healed, as I am.

And to all your weak ass bitches who BLOCKED me on social media—from the organizational Humanities NY account to those personal handles—you can suck my dick, you scared ass pansies. That is @ Joseph Murphy and @ Alyson Casey, and whoever else is scared of facing yourself, seeing yourself, and bringing truth to light. Bitch as niggas. Whoever tried to destroy me, played with the wrong person. Not because of who I am but because of who Gd says I am. This has been paid for, in full, already. My mistake for thinking otherwise or less than of myself. Matter fact, I don’t even want your ugly asses on my dick, weak ass bitches. You cannot play with God’s

⁵⁰ 19_keys.

children and think there won't be repercussions. The only thing standing in the way between vengeance and your enemies is timing. Y'all take care of yours.

ABRIDGED VERSION

on doing historical dialogue as psychohistory, pt. 2 - narrative
medicine

“And has the reader never asked himself what kind of a mental fact is his intention of saying a thing before he has said it? ... How much of it consists of definite sensorial images, either of words or of things? Hardly anything! Linger, and the words and things come to mind. ... The intention welcomes them.”

— William James, 1890

“That the best physician is also a philosopher.”

— Galen of Pergamon, A.D. 129-199

“Other dangers globalism poses are the distortion of the public and the destruction of the private. We glean what is public primarily, but not exclusively, from media. We are asked to abandon much of what was once private to the data-collecting requirements of governmental, political, market, and now security needs. Part of the anxiety about the porous divide between public and private domains certainly stems from reckless applications of the terms. There is the privatization of prisons, which is the private corporate control of a public facility. There is the privatization of public schools. There is also private life—claims to which can be given up freely on talk shows, or negotiated in the courts by celebrities, ‘public’ figures, and privacy rights cases. There is private space (atriums, gardens, etc.) open to the public. And public space (parks, playgrounds, and beaches in certain neighborhoods) limited to private use. There is the looking-glass phenomenon of the ‘play’ of the public in our private, interior lives. Interiors of our houses look like store displays.”

+ + +

NEW YORK CITY WOULDN'T EXIST without the original theft from Native and Indigenous peoples. What took place then would be traumatic beyond comparison ... The legacies we still endure. Recognizing both of these legacies is absolutely essential for realising restorative justice, peace and reconciliation. Looking for a way out of your relationship to such legacies is pretty senseless to me. Violence against Indigenous peoples and so-called black people is an active movement, not passive, happening right now, everyday, in weird and insidious ways.

Aside from the education received in the performing arts and the humanities, my move North to Western New York was nothing short of insightful, consistent in offering opportunities for personal development. I'm grateful for my 3 years at SUNY Fredonia. I had the privilege of being selected as recipient of the SUNY Diversity Abroad Honors Scholarship, sponsoring a three week intersession program with the University of Ghana: Institute of African Studies at Legon. My time traveling to the proverbial Motherland, the Cradle of Civilization, was a highlight of my undergraduate career. This traveling taught me this: one of the more effective ways to heal oneself from the blight of

ignorance of Other nations or cultural groups, and to learn from them, is to completely immerse yourself in their culture. It's not enough to read about them. Go there, see what's up, for yourself. To meet them where they are. I was able to discredit some of the preconceived notions Western society germinates regarding Africa's culture, history, and politics. In this way, I had to learn for myself. How else can we as integrated societies, gain each other's trust, to the extent where we can cross culturally collaborate on transnational ideas, and justly shape our shared future? From New York City to Ghana Africa, the work remains one in the same.

In this vein, Humanities in Place supports a fuller, more complex telling of American histories and lived experiences, by deepening the range of how and where our stories are told and by bringing a wider variety of voices into the public dialogue. Working with media, heritage and public spaces, history museums and other institutions, and conveners of shared experiences—including the digital or ephemeral—we strive to expand the public expression of the histories that have made us and the values we hold. This grant program works across and within diverse communities, encouraging bold, innovative rethinking of past practice, as well as visionary new approaches for how to collectively understand, uplift, and celebrate more complete stories about who we are.

Kordell KeyAndre: I sometimes feared my early education at suburban public schools on Long Island and a relatively small state school in Western New York, was not adequate preparation for admittance into one of the top private research institutions in the country. Yet, the Harlem institution shared with me a sense of belongingness and security I have sought since boyhood. Oral History Master of Arts, or as we like to call it, OHMA was the balanced prediction of what I needed then, and I'm glad to have made the decision to attend. This program's objectives provided the level of social context in which higher thinking discourse occurs: a community of knowledgeable peers. It was and forever will be an honor to join this community of scholar-practitioners, as part of Columbia's 2019-2020 cohort.

I could only hope that my ideas and personal life history would find promise in your program. I hope it did. As oral historians, our work is to listen. Deeply, closely. To the Other, to ourselves. As someone who does not self-identify as being an ORAL HISTORIAN in the traditional sense of the term, though I have formal training in the discipline, I am very privileged to hold space for people in this PSYCHO-HISTORICAL way, and creatively support them-navigate the telling of their-own life story. The telling and the documenting, that is. I do this, through a lens of psychology, by way of oral history theory and methodology.

Kordell KeyAndre: I aspire to work with a lot of different people. Different from myself, that is. To talk to them—people from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences. I am very privileged to hold space for them, where I get to walk with them—side by side—through this life, and to hear them narrate and critique, and evaluate their own interpretive stories. And to sit with them in their, sometimes, pain and, sometimes, joy. I get to witness them. In all their glory, move through the narratology process.

The Narratology Process. On or off the record, that is something that I do not take lightly. It comes naturally to me, actually. I know it's something I've done in many lifetimes before—perhaps bringing me to this very graduate program in oral history. Although this day is neither ENTERTAINMENT nor PERFORMANCE, it is however a form of ART. It must be stated: this oral history encounter—doing oral history *as* psychohistory—isn't therapy. This internal narrative-based reading and writing work is not therapy. It is neither journalism, right? It is, however, meant to be an on-going dialogue. Therapeutic in nature, perhaps, and healing in process, sure. It is a reminder that regardless of our assigned differences in society—what is GENDER, what is RACE, what is CLASS—and all the identity theory,

I am You.

When you see me, see you. And who are you? You are God, Source energy in a physical body, a human body. You are Spirit in the flesh. This is your body temple. You are Eternal Life expressing Itself as You.

You are a cosmic being. The universe, all the colours. All the colors, of the wind. You are all powerful. You are all knowing, all wisdom.

The most intuitive & intelligent teacher, anyway, is your body, you-yourself.

Your body will always tell you the truth. You don't need to be a doctor, nurse or have a degree and accolades to listen and understand your body. The fun part about this miraculous body of yours, you know it the most intimately. Your breath alone is enough to move mountains. Trust them, for they will never lie to you. Moreover, when you're

listening to someone, working with someone, trust what they say—the content, that is – but really make yourself open to *how* it is they are saying it the way they are saying it, and *why* they are saying what it is they are saying, in the first place. It's all connected.

All there is is this present moment.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: NEW YORK CITY WAS THE BEST place for me to continue my work in language critique, gender and identity theory. I am grateful to have continued my studies at Fredonia now at Columbia. This Master of Arts aural thesis, *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023), written in the first person and with an emphasis on Rogerian rhetoric, skillfully models a practice of reading and writing autobiographical social commentary as a psychoanalytic medium of self-study and interdisciplinary self-education. I mean, there truly is no place on Earth like New York. The culture, the diversity, the inclusion. The proximity of the Upper West Side of Manhattan actually factored into my consideration to pursue a degree housed in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. To have had the chance to live some time here, and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which would come to change the world—from New York City to Ghana, Africa—and how we interact forever, even if it were only for a short while.

The summer before my program officially began, I worked full-time as a Resident Assistant for an International Study Abroad program, Summerfuel, while working two to three days a week as a Graduate Student Intern with Humanities New York in the Financial District. This was my introduction to Manhattan. In August 2019, I met with my would be second college roommate and moved into our dorm room nestled in Morningside Heights, a lovely view overlooking The Cahotatea-Hudson River., an Ancient Indian Mound.

Then all of a sudden I had to leave: It was so abrupt, the packing up of my belongings, the haphazard goodbyes, the uncertainty of what would be next; the cancellation of plans, of classes, of exhibits and of events. Not to mention the mere misunderstanding of what this virus would even do to one's immune system. It's almost as if the public was kept at a distance from those who knew. That March 2020, my biological brother, older by three years, picked up me and my belongings, and though I would visit the Manhattan campus every now and again, there truly was no looking back. Little did I know at the time, that chapter was done. That was it. That was my graduate school experience.

"Sometimes we're put in places where we can be an agent of change, and what will we do when that movement happens. How do you pivot? How do you adapt?"

Kordell KeyAndre: The end of 2020 was a quiet time in our nation and in our world, the calm before the storm – there was no pandemic, there were no global shutdowns, there was no social unrest. The era of lockdown and its initial aftershocks are over, the year now 2023, but I cannot help but think how this brief time in my life, was just a small taste of what my life in the digital world would look like. A small moment in time which carries much evolutionary weight. The public just, well, isn't the same public.

Is it the public that has changed though, or we the people of the world, who ultimately make up the public who have evolved and been made anew? Perhaps our view of things has evolved? In graduate school, I explored the endless possibilities of my psychohistorical methodology practice, 'Discussions by Definition,' and advanced the means in which we approach mental health distress and restorative treatment through discussion-based learning. Without a doubt, the changing definitions of self during in particular the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic warrants phenomenological analysis. He, my roommate, Ryan, was away on spring break when Columbia's administration delivered the evacuation message via email. I decided to spend my spring break in the city. I recall having the Carlton Arms 10th floor suite all to myself.

THE FUTURE OF NARRATIVE MEDICINE

Read, study, travel, know the law, have a plan, keep private about your plan, be a pleasure to work with, get along and respect everybody, and you'll be fine. "A spiritual certification, a license, a workshop, a practice mean nothing if at the core one does not embody the essence of those teachings. It's easy to put on a mask and say, "this is what I am," It's much harder to walk that walk, to me a living embodiment of that which you say you are. It's much harder to take this mark off and say, "this is what I am." Ones IAMness being is simply reverberation of ones true self. A truth that is a direct reflection of who one really is. When one really knows, there is no need to show. It reverberates and permeates organically. Nature flows, it doesn't force. True change does not start on the outside and work its way in. It starts on the inside and works its way out. And the only way to master the inner-state, is to DO THE WORK. Practice not preach. Embody not emulate. The masters we know of are just students of the masters we

know nothing about at all. True power is self fulfilling. It doesn't need to say anything nor need any external validation, because it is not contingent on the material. At its core it just is... and the is. is IT," says Branden Collinsworth. This is where your character work, the hours of self-education – honing your values, morals, principles, self-respect and dignity—come into play.

Kordell KeyAndre: I once wanted to cure the world of all its ailments. I thought I could, actually.

Some called me the “Save The World Child,” amongst other affectionate titles. “Mr. Hollywood,” still gets me choked up till this day. Really, I thought in my heart of hearts, being a social justice warrior was the answer to resolving the world's most pressing issues. I mean, it brought me to my first professional place of work, Humanities New York, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I mean these people are doing some pretty important work, I thought. I guess I was on the right track, then, the year 2019. It's just, there was way more for me to learn about global politics and world affairs, and how power and propaganda works in real time.

Way more to the story than what my naivete led me to believe, I guess. What I've come to realize is, over the course of this reading and writing, we are each sent here on mission, to achieve, to accomplish. We did not come here to Planet Earth to chase money, obsess over looks, indulge in meaningless pleasure or destroy your body with poisonous junk I believe we come here to remember our true self as spirit incarnate, and to make a difference on this Planet Earth. I know this to be true. It's truly a very personal and ideally private endeavor, that ongoing conversation between you and Source to fulfill your why. And the more I read about the horrors of this place, the more I become sick. Why am I willingly subjecting myself to the abhorrent stories of this English language, when my being itself is a temple? It's like ... I'm self-inflicting these wounds through doing all this reading and writing, all in hopes of one day saving Others, saving the world. The truth is you can only save yourself. No one is coming to save you. I thought I was helping the cause but really, in all actually, as above so below. As within, so without. I am what I eat. By constantly rehearsing the history of this place, I'm only making matters worse. Through this process of reading and writing, doing oral history as psychohistory, it's been affirmed: The story of humanity and human conflict is a fictional tale, made to keep the public busy and focused on frivolous things; the only way through that jarring truth is to keep the mind and heart pure and body-temple clean and in good shape, and the body is a

self-healing organism and is capable of great things. To do the best I know how to clear things out of the way so the body can heal itself; to treat all people with kindness and respect, this is the best medicine. That which is within my control, the best way to save the world is to save yourself. Yesterday, I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today, I am wise, so I am changing myself. Man in the mirror, type energy. You and you alone know how to do that, so don't let anyone try to convince you otherwise, like they have the answer to your pressing question of why. Trying to make sense of the issues that be by asking why.

Saying anything beyond the substantive content of your testimony would be uberly less important. Developmental psychology research shows how deeping our self-understanding through autobiographical narratives—both the things that have happened to us and the internal experiences that create the rich texture of each individual's unique, subjective sense of life—help us to grow and evolve as individuals as well as societies. “Telling your children the story of an experience can help them integrate both the events and the emotional content of that experience. Such an interaction with you can greatly help them make sense out of what happened to them and gives them the experiential tools to become reflective, insightful people.”⁵¹

However you wish to share your story is up to you. “Verbalization helps combat trauma, for it is only ‘by telling stories, narratives that inevitably appropriate the past and help the community learn to live into their future’ that people work through trauma.” ... “Testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal ‘thou,’ and thus the possibility of a witness or listener inside himself.’ This act of testimony needs to occur ‘in a dialogic context and with an authentic listener, which allows for a reconciliation with the broken promise, and which makes the resumption of life, in spite of the failed promise, at all possible.’ Verbalizing trauma allows one ‘to know one’s buried truth in order to live one’s life.’ ... Yet like slavery’s unspeakable essence, trauma carried ‘the impossibility of telling’ and thus leads to silence. ‘Only when the survivor knows he is being heard, will he stop to hear - and listen to - himself.’ Thus, working through trauma results from being able to talk about traumatic events. Such a verbalization can lead to a ‘mourning [...] and a proper burial,’ which would restore to ‘victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers.’ However, on a psychological

⁵¹ Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Hartzell, Mary M.Ed. “Parenting from th eInside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive.” Penguin Random House 2003, 2014.

level, letting go of trauma sometimes may feel like a 'betray[al] of lost loved ones.' Thus, the assistance of a witness is crucial."

Kordell KeyAndre: We as a collective have to first start questioning what's really going on when we actively close to close to listen to one another. I am human, just like you – I'm just like you. When you understand that, that will help you out. There is no enemy. There is just the One. "When I understand my enemy well enough to defeat him, then in that moment, I also love him." — A.E. Wiggin.

I hope you enjoy my product design "discussions by definition: a bridge to a new awakening." This tool is created to do just that: encourage individuals and groups alike, to have these thought provoking conversations. Discussions By Definition™ allows for participants to explore provocative, pressing issues of concern with open-ended ease. Initiate conversations with these premeditated prompts in mind, as part and whole of your civic duty. May it stimulate debate about cultural issues you and others may disagree on. May it encourage you, also, to further stimulate your own self-educational journey. Join groups working for social and legislative changes that fit with your political persuasion. Policy makes a big big difference believe it or not. Having constructive dialogue about the issues that be and matter to you and yours, is helpful.

Kordell KeyAndre: I began coursework for Columbia's Oral History Master of Arts (OHMA) program with little to no training in qualitative research and evaluation methods of inquiry, a bachelors of arts in English and a number of psychology classes in our pocket, and zero years of social science fieldwork experience. Because of this feeling—a well known feeling of lack and unpreparedness, and to authentically tell this kind of multidisciplinary romance, today, I'll have to call on many experts who specialize in many different areas of verbal and non-verbal communication. The honor and privilege it is, to study at this world class institution that has birthed so many great scholars is inconceivable.

I am deeply indebted to William McAllister, my thesis advisor and OHMA course instructor of *Social Science and Other Approaches to Studying Life History & Narrative Information*, for introducing "Reflections on the biographical turn in social science" by Michael Rustin. This academic paper, paired with guest-lecture and

presentation “Harnessing The Power of Story: A Model for Mining Oral History Interviews” by Dr. Linda F. Burghardt, offered a wealth of modern day insight and perspective, that would only months later come to inform the scientific groundwork for my definition of doing narrative as medicine, an approach to doing oral history as psychohistory. These teachings and authors facilitated by McAllister ushered back a stream of ideas from our literary days as an English major back at Fredonia, studying now oral history and social studies education; literacy, language, & learning theory; historical consciousness; historical thinking; memory and gender studies; settler colonialism and the processing of difficult histories.

It was the physical going through of this *Social Science* course—listening to fellow classmates, commenting on their contributions; recording and later processing through transcription after transcription my own conducted recording sessions—how I cultivated a deeper respect for qualitative research, grounded theory research, to be specific, which later paved and affirmed the path for our keyword research and analysis methodology.

By sharing what I’ve found in my own research, I hope I’ll be able to show you that there’s something even just a little something for you, too, to grab hold of ... in doing oral history as psychohistory. On doing narrative story as medicine. To say I was surprised by much of what I unearthed through this research endeavor, would be an understatement. I am shocked, mainly by how much damage I’ve done out of ignorance—simply not knowing better. The rumination process, anyway—that is, working through and processing through something thoroughly, writing for the ear and reading aloud the aural thesis, asking for forgiveness; reading and writing more and more and researching more and more about God only knows—studying all these human-man made horrors, so that they are no longer beyond my comprehension, reading widely—rinsing and repeating, the process—was for me. A restoration of my very character.

Today, I wholeheartedly believe healthy relationships include difficult conversations. At the end of the day, the core tenant of this product is language. How can we improve upon the current conversation? It’s a tool to hone the art of conversation, to streamline the act of talking about topics of concern that are sometimes pressing, oftentimes provocative and so too exist in a gray area. While studying at OHMA, I found that this literary tool enhances not only the educational endeavor but has potential to speak to the clinical endeavor, too, ultimately

inspiring my own private narrative medicine practice. This discussion box series would be instrumental in your teaching across different and creative writing exercises, helping to improve the forever work-day that is dialogue across difference and fine-tune the art of conversation.

Kordell KeyAndre: OHMA is the first and only program of its kind in the United States, a one-year interdisciplinary degree training students to record and amplify first-person stories using a range of technological, creative, and analytical tools. We teach oral history as a practice of co-creating dialogic, critical conversations about the past, in the present, which are oriented towards the future.

Oral history as an academic research practice has deep roots at Columbia, stretching back to the founding of the Oral History Research Office in 1948 by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and journalist Allan Nevins. Created in 2008, OHMA brings that deep history of thought and research to bear in a world where storytelling has become a buzzword and every brand has a narrative. We are building on our tradition of producing oral histories as primary source documents for the historian's archive, while also centering creative production, social science inquiry, the oral history practices of indigenous people, and the many traditions of collective critical life history analysis such as popular education, consciousness raising, and testimonio.

Our innovative curriculum combines professional and academic education. Academics learn to communicate with the public and produce knowledge of broad relevance; other professionals benefit from research experience and grounding in the history of our field.

Our graduates work in museums, historical societies, advocacy organizations, media, the arts, education, human rights and development. As independent contractors, they manage oral history projects, teach interview workshops, and offer project consultations to leading institutions and community organizations. They earn doctorates in fields like anthropology, sociology, history, journalism, and American studies or professional degrees in law, education, or social work.

Kordell KeyAndre: Jointly run by the Columbia Center for Oral History Research, one of the preeminent oral history centers in the world, and Incite, a lively hub for transdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences,

OHMA connects students with both the intellectual resources of a major research university, and the intimate society of a small cohort of talented students.

At the cutting edge of the field, our faculty works across disciplines in training students to conduct ethical, rigorous, nuanced, historically situated research. We support them in experimenting and finding new ways to use the methods and theoretical perspectives of oral history into the twenty-first century.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: From confronting climate grief to September 11, all the way to The Black Plague and the Holocaust, there are countless ways to access your inner world of feelings, and express your illness narrative, says Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D., in chapter titled “Language: Miracle and Tyranny” in the book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (2015). Dialogue is important, yes, though “my patients often bring in fragments of writing and drawings about memories that they may not yet be ready to discuss. Reading the content out loud would probably overwhelm them, but they want me to be aware of what they are wrestling with. [...] These tentative communications guide my treatment plan.”

Kordell KeyAndre: “When students themselves were asked to assess the study, they focused on how it had increased their self-understanding: ‘It helped me think about what I felt during those times. I never realized how it affected me before.’ ‘I had to think and resolve past experiences. One result of the experiment was peace of mind. To have to write about emotions and feelings helped me understand how I felt and why.’ [...] Writing experiments from around the world, with grade school students, nursing home residents, medical students, maximum-security prisoners, arthritis sufferers, new mothers, and rape victims, consistently show that writing about upsetting events improves physical and mental health.”

“The term bibliotherapy refers to the use of literature as a therapeutic process (Vernon & Clemente, 2005). It is an interactive process designed to help individuals gain control over their lives as they solve problems, learn new skills, practice new behaviors (Jackson, 2001), and better understand themselves through their response to literature or media (Doll & Doll, 1997). Jackson (2001) noted that literature has been used to establish relationships with clients as well as to promote their insight. According to Pardeck (1998), the goals of bibliotherapy include (1)

providing information and insight about problems, (2) communicating new values and attitudes, (3) creating an awareness of how others have dealt with similar problems, (4) stimulating discussion about problems, and (5) providing solutions.”⁵²

Kordell KeyAndre: “Personal experience, one hastens to concede, is a fundamental element in all writing. It is indispensable. But so are several other elements,” Albert Murray makes the point. He continues, “Personal experience is a very fine thing to have indeed, the richer the better, but what one is able to make of it in a book is something else gain. This is likely to be determined by one’s sensibility, one’s imagination, one’s perspective, the depth and keenness of one’s insights, one’s linguistic precision and eloquence. The would-be writer’s complexion, his street address, and police record can never really make up for absence of any of these.”⁵³

“The first systematic test of the power of language to relieve trauma was done in 1986, when James Pennebaker at the University of Texas in Austin turned his introductory psychology class into an experimental laboratory. Pennebaker started off with a healthy respect for the importance of inhibition, of keeping things to yourself, which he viewed as the glue of civilization. But he also assumed that people pay a price for trying to suppress being aware of the elephant in the room. [...] He began by asking each student to identify a deeply personal experience that they’d found very stressful or traumatic. He then divided the class into three groups: One would write about what was currently going on in their lives; the second would write about the details of the traumatic or stressful event; and the third would recount the facts of the experience, their feelings and emotions about it, and what impact they thought this event had had on their lives. All of the students wrote continuously for fifteen minutes on four consecutive days while sitting alone in a small cubicle in the psychology building.”

“The students took the study very seriously; many revealed secrets that they had never told anyone. they often cried as they wrote, and many confided in the course assistants that they’d become preoccupied with these experiences. [...] Although the death of a family member was the most frequent topic, 22 percent of the women and 10 percent of the men reported sexual trauma prior to the age of seventeen. [...]

⁵² Capuzzi, David. Gross, Douglas R. “Introduction to the Counseling Profession, Sixth Edition.” 2013.

⁵³ Murray, Albert. “The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture.” 1970.

“The researchers asked the students about their health and were surprised how often the students spontaneously reported histories of major and minor health problems: cancer, high blood pressure, ulcers, flu, headaches, and earaches. Those who reported a traumatic sexual experience in childhood had been hospitalised an average of 1.7 days in the previous year—almost twice the rate of the others.”⁵⁴

Kordell KeyAndre: THE AURAL THESIS, is a contemporary oral history encounter—in particular, doing oral history *as* psychohistory—is not therapy, at least not in the “historical” or “traditional” sense of a clinical intervention: definition - the attempted remediation of a health problem, usually following a medical diagnosis. This is a new age version of doing historical dialogue: Reading, writing and listening to my own autobiographical prose *as* a psychoanalytic medium of self-study. This is Self-education. Not therapy but rather an open-ended approach to covering difficult topics of concern; about myself and the larger world around me. “As functioning members of society, we’re supposed to be ‘cool’ in our day-to-day interactions and subordinate our feelings to the task at hand. When we talk with someone with whom we don’t feel completely safe, our social editor jumps in on full alert and our guard is up. Writing is different.”

“In his three volumes of 1967, Derrida gives rigorous attention to the paradox that the Western tradition (the “Great Books”) is filled with *writings* that privilege *speech*.

“By closely analyzing those writings, Derrida attempts to uncover the ways in which the Great Books rebel against their own stated intention to say that speech is better than writing. What his analyses reveal is that even when a text tries to privilege speech as immediacy, it cannot completely eliminate the fact that speech, like writing, is based on a *différance* (a Derridean neologism meaning both ‘deferment’ and ‘difference’) between signifier and signified inherent in the sign. Speakers do not beam meanings directly from one mind to another. Immediacy is an illusion. Properties normally associated with writing inevitably creep into a discussion designed to privilege speech. Thus, for example, although Saussure wishes to treat speech as primary and writing as secondary for an understanding of language, he describes language as a ‘dictionary in the head’ or as ‘linear’ —a spatial term more applicable to writing than to speech.” [...]

⁵⁴ Murray, Albert. “The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture.” 1970.

“Or, to take another example, when Socrates tells Phaedrus that proper teaching must take place orally rather than in writing, he nevertheless ends up describing the truths such teaching is supposed to reach as being ‘inscribed in the soul.’ Because a gap of heterogeneity and distance is fundamental to the structure of language, Derrida sees ‘speech’ as being ultimately structured like ‘writing.’ This emphasis on writing as the more ordinary category is designed to counter the history of logocentrism and to track the functioning of *différance* in structures of signification.”⁵⁵

It has been said, the printed and written word is fossilized and therefore removed from the people and places they originated; meaning, literature is not the pinnacle of a quote unquote “civilized society,” certainly not when many people within said colonizing societies were sub-communities of preliterate people. With this in mind, historically, as a black indigenous people, I imagine we were not always able to formally document our stories in the many ways in which Jack and Jill may have. Or perhaps we did, it just has been kept away from us. We, as a black indigenous people, more often than not relied on oral storytelling: intimately being one with one another and sharing pieces of our-selves through, well, you guessed it: the spoken word ... spoken song, and to the extent of music creation or movement-based dance. Spoken word societies placed great emphasis on and found deep value in verbalized communicative transmission, the rhythm and cadence of vibrations, how someone articulated what it was they were going through, not so much (emphasis) on the dormant walls of writing. For many people from Indigenous and African diasporic societies around the world, it could not have been the sole work of word-smithing that led them // to more profound iterations of them-selves. Rather, it just might have been the dedicated practice of communicative transmission through oral intonation and aural comprehension.

Kordell KeyAndre: We know that talking about painful events does not necessarily establish community. And sometimes, talking and talking only brings about more of the same – the power of the tongue is stronger than the pen, our vocal box and body-soul-spirit is powerful. For native peoples, who relied on each person’s individual commitment to the precision and craft of guttural expression, oral history and oral traditions or other non-text-based, non-written means of being alive and well, were “inextricably connected to [their] identity.” As we alluded to a few moments ago, however, there was not much reason to or purpose found in sitting down to shift through with ink

⁵⁵ Johnson, Barbara. Chapter: Writing. “”

their most precious words; or engage in any other form of extended long-form print or text-based contemplation, for that matter. In their time, almost as it were today, there were families to feed, daughters to raise, grounds to be prepared. We did not have the time of day to become so attached to ossified structures and self-identify with form—physical forms, thought forms, emotional forms—so as to be self-informed later on. This division of self results in an unawareness of connectedness with the Whole, one’s intrinsic oneness with every “Other” as well as with source of self-regard. Today, it is rare to see a black indigenous perspective in handbooks and readers, scholarly or academic journals or mainstream publications that dominate the field of oral history, in particular, medical scholars more specifically and, to the objective of this aural thesis: social theorists and health and medical humanities scholars of the academic academy.

To that end, what was and perhaps still is “*the oral history encounter*” and “*oral storytelling*” to them, is precisely where our workday begins, too. We know that talking about painful events does not necessarily establish community. If you ask your editor or your therapist to leave you alone for a while though, things will come out of you that you had no idea were there. Sometimes it’s the time passed that counts, that makes the difference. There, too, is power in intentional isolation, individuality, uninterrupted focus over time. You are free to go into a sort of a trance state in which your pen (or keyboard, depending on what time-zone and/or decade you find yourself) seems to channel whatever bubbles up from the inside. You can connect those self-observing and narrative parts of your brain, without worrying about the reception you’ll get—at this point, at this stage, the audience don’t matter.

+ + +

Kordell KeyAndre: The panicked screams; the scattered calls for help; now the blaring sounds of sirens closing in on us from the outside. I remember that initial moment, him laying lifeless in the middle of the busiest intersection and thinking, “Is he dead?” It all happened so fast. There I was, all worn out and strung out, now watching myself play-back over and over: my best friend was just struck by a pickup truck. I mean, this collision was powerful enough to snatch this poor boy right up out of them-there tennis shoes, throwing him up through-the-air and into the day’s bright blue sky and, then, of course, finally back down to Earth. I remember him landing on his side, now shoe-less, perhaps four feet from the crosswalk he was moments ago running not walking him-self through. And in that moment—another fine-tooth way to define the “*oral history encounter*,” I remember

watching crimson-red coloured blood slowly outline his sun-kissed, pale “white” coloured skin. And from that-there moment, I could feel the heavy rain clouds taking their places and setting the Sun on what is to be remembered as a previously light-hearted day.

Then his eyelids fluttered open. James was going to be OK.

Kordell KeyAndre: There is a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving, the year now 2023. Words cannot describe the eventful journey I have taken part with you, James, and I am still completely distraught with how it ended, and so sudden. We all have moments where something significant happens, changing how we approach our day-to-day agenda and ultimately having strong influence on our life path. Positive or negative, short- or long-term, however you wish to word it ... we each come face-to-face with an event or perhaps a person, that changes us for good. James, you have been one of those life-changing moments that has strongly influenced my life. I am thankful for those significant, life changing moments. They give the rest of the mundane some beautiful meaning.

Standing next to you, James, as you got hit by a truck and slammed into the pavement was one of those events for me. The images from that traumatic event still, to this day, linger through my thoughts. You recovered from those injuries, but were soon to be diagnosed with stage 3 esophageal cancer. If it's not one thing, it's another. It seemed as if someone so extraordinary and full of life could not catch a break. Just a few months after being diagnosed, unfortunately the cancer took hold. You were at the peak age of 18.

Kordell KeyAndre: Since then, the thought of life being so fragile is imprinted on my conscience. I try to approach each day happy, with a positive and carefree attitude. Some days are easier than others. I have learned the importance of not just maintaining relationships with the people I love but to find intentional ways to appreciate those relationships, too. I try a little harder to cherish special moments with special people, to listen closely and contribute my best self where I can, for that chance may not be here tomorrow. James, the life you left behind encourages me to enjoy the life I lead because you just never know what might happen. James, you were that something significant that happened to me, influencing me in more ways than you can imagine.

A lot has changed in the world. Twitter has since been re-branded 'X.' Your bio still reads "Just enjoy life." I do not think that was a coincidence, the re-brand or the bio. Taking note of your short yet eventful life, you lived by that apothegm. Tomorrow is another day, Carpe diem. Always the adventurous one to take lead when it came to trying new things, you recognized a challenge as an opportunity rather than an obstacle; an opportunity for growing, learning, to become better. Maybe not better or worse, but just different. Do you remember having to be hooked up to a feeding tube, and somehow still finding the energy to embark through a dangerously exciting haunted house one brisk October evening, the year 2014? Your medical circumstances did not stop you from enjoying life. Similarly, you did not hesitate to hop on a train and parade through Manhattan in the rain just to experience the magic of one last Broadway play. James, you are an inspiration to many. James, you taught me a key ingredient on how to enjoy life - Accept and pursue as many opportunities that cross your winding path before you just can't anymore. Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Kordell KeyAndre: When I was younger I always wanted to be an engineer. I wanted to be someone who invented and created. Maybe this came from my love of legos and the freedom of expression that I felt when I was building with them. Now, today, my ambitions have changed slightly. I have two degrees; a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Arts, from frigging Columbia – who would have thunk it? I'll spend the rest of my life paying for it but that's a topic for another day. Today, I'm in pursuit to master the art of conversation.

James, you taught me the importance to look past the initial discomfort of a challenge, not identify it as a challenge but an opportunity, and to just go for it. James, the life you lived has immensely influenced me and how I navigate through this adult world. I wish you got to see some more of this place, you'd be completely Gobsmailed at its potential. Nonetheless, your memory has impacted how I approach my daily agenda as well as altered the way I view this fragile thing we call life. Thanks to this encounter with you, James, I am determined to live every day like it is my first and greet every moment like an unexpected visitor.

I thank you for that. I thank you for being my legitimate older brother from another mother; one that I could look up to and aspire to be like one day. Although we both know it wasn't always rainbows and sunshine with you, I still wish I can one day embody all of your wonderful traits. With the fights, hugs, tears, smiles, late nights, early

mornings, lows and *highs, our relationship was one like no other. And I thank you for that. For that gift of friendship. I thank you for being the inspiration to be the best at anything. I thank you for being such a strong individual and a beautiful role model.

Thank you for allowing me to sit front row, James. Although the production didn't run very long, I'm glad I got to experience as much as I did. You're truly a good guy. It is something that will forever be imprinted on my mind and heart. Of the many things you've taught me through the years, the thing I take with confidence and pride, is to live life. Just live life. This life, it is so fragile, and it shouldn't be taken for granted. Take every opportunity given because you never know what lesson or experience or friendship might come from it. You'll never know when you'll lose complete control. Just enjoy life.

It's too short to watch from the sidelines and that's one thing you refused to do.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: I wouldn't be the person I am today without James' friendship. Losing him suddenly, on November 21, the year 2014, was a terrible blow. As I said then, "the world and our community lost a rockstar." But alongside intense feelings of pain and loss, sadness and grief, I'm also struck by a deep sense of gratitude. James was a polite pimp (whatever that means), a talented beast, and the ultimate homeboy, and he would want you to smile today despite whatever challenges you face.

What an incredible gift to be on this rock in space at the same time - to walk this path together, even just for a little while. For those who knew him, always remember his impact. // The past three years have been filled with heartbreak for many people, from sea to shining sea. If your heart is just now breaking, you haven't been paying attention. This, too, is a choice. An act of self-preservation. For eons, the world has been engulfed in pain ... I'm dedicating my work in the space of narrative medicine and restorative justice to James' memory. Heartbreak is a universal language, I'm sure, echoing everywhere, beyond politics, religion, and skin colour. No matter where in the world you are, if you are feeling like your heart is breaking with the state of things, good—it means you are awakening. It means you are human, and an open heart isn't passive; it compels you to act, to do something.

ABRIDGED VERSION

on doing historical dialogue, pt. 2 - innovations in trauma research methodology

“I might regard man’s body as a kind of mechanism that is outfitted with and composed of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin in such a way that, even if no mind existed in it, the man’s body would still exhibit all the same motions that are in it now except for those motions that proceed either from a command of the will or, consequently, from the mind.”

— René Descartes, *Sixth Meditation*

“This is Descartes’ error: the abyssal separation between body and mind, between the sizable, dimensioned, mechanically operated, infinitely divisible body stuff, on the one hand, and the unseeable, undimensioned, un-pushpullable, nondivisible mind stuff; the suggestion that reasoning, and moral judgment, and the suffering that comes from physical pain or emotional upheaval might exist separately from the body. Specifically, the separation of the most refined operations of mind from the structure and operations of a biological organism.”

— Antonio Damasio,

From Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain (1994)

YOU WERE DISTRACTED BY YOUR credit score. You were distracted by your fancy IVY League education, too. You were distracted by that fancy house on the river, Long Island real estate is big business, with the three car garage ... your fancy cars with the automatic doors and the sun-roof. You know, that panoramic view. You were distracted by it all. You were distracted by the newest and finest stainless steel appliances. You were distracted by it; the smooth talking liquor, the red dry wine. You were distracted by it; the clubs with the prepaid bottles, sections, filled with beautiful human-man made bodies, man... You were distracted by it—by they, themselves. You were distracted by it; the fancy vacations, the cruises, too. All these so-called finer things had you in a proverbial choke hold—they, had you. They got you good. You were distracted-mesmerized by it; what some great white men thought up and, eventually, had the audacity to act upon. as part of a percentage of national growth, or expansion, or manifest destiny, or colonization of a new world. Historically speaking, you were distracted by the technological revolution. The making of what is, now, America The Great.

Are you happy? Are you proud of your creation? In return or, rather, in exchange, you mercilessly forgot about the "torture," the "abuse," the "murder," the disrespect of your ancestors, women children and men ... the blatant disrespect. Our children are literally being educated, medically and psychologically by a people -- How can you ever begin to fathom to accept a group of species or bloodline, that had absolutely no problem or issue murdering millions of your own children and women and men. The rape, the torture, the murder and abuse, the stealing, the cheating, the doing damage, the pillaging, the lying, the rinsing and repeating.

Enslavers sexually assaulted and abused enslaved individuals, demanded reproduction from them to enhance their own bottom lines, and otherwise used the bodies of the enslaved for monetary gain, pleasure, and punishment. Raping, in particular, was raping was the most important because it splits the consciousness ... Not historically but scientifically, it is said to split the soul away from the splits the soul and the consciousness. The gut—the stomach, another brain, that is. You forgot about them, they who gave you life ... your golden ticket ... your attention to detail was focused, fixed on something else, something—seemingly—more important, pressing, than life & death itself.

Narrator: You were distracted by it. Admit. Just admit it. Psychological slavery is real. They get away with murder every single day ... Only because you allow it. It has real consequences, psychological slavery. If I were in the right mind, I'd go on to dare say: you were made to be distracted. By design, it's set up to leave you winded. And that it does. You fell prey at every corner, almost, they played you good. So, we find ourselves here, doing the dirty bidding. Harming ourselves even further, risking our children—our future children. One by one, they keep us, we the people, distracted with the fancy, the most recent, glittering, various little things. While they silently move into position; the stage is set, take your places. Yes, let us stay distracted by their system, I thought. By their language processing system. The genocide of American Indians persists. Can you see it yet? The gold mine that is your home? And you freely give it away ... What are you doing, my love?

You're throwing it all away, for every two week-or once a week-paycheck, just to go to Amazon.com and shop. To go to the mall up the block and buy the newest iPhone, sneakers, slides, car parts and oil. To get more clothes. The latest. You do all this to fit into their world of consumption, a spectacle; to be validated and accepted by their standards of dreaming. You threw that all away for vacations, to party, to hit the clubs. For a perfect credit score. I mean, I imagine some fought to hold on to memory. Some still resist. Resist the temptation. Planet earth is

meant to be a school, I thought. What did you learn when you shut out the universe, and Gd welcomed you with open arms? What is universal law?

What did you learn today?

Narrator: We use their system to cut deeper and deeper than the whip itself, than the chain itself, than the scalpel itself, than the various little things they said to us, verbally ... the various little things they would use on us, to dig in-side of you, your mind-body-temple. Deeper than the scalpel that they used to dig in-side of your vagina, the utensils that they used to remove the skull off the babies ... so that they could get to the brain ... while the baby was still alive. The baby was still alive. Can you morally imagine that? I mean, it's real trauma. This is real life. And revisiting and revisiting and revisiting only re-traumatizes us, not them. So what are we made to do? Forget it? It seems to me you forgot about this. About us. About black love. It seems to me, you already forgot about the barbecue. You forgot about the niggah-soup that they—the so-called white man, the so-called arab man, the so-called asian man—they made (food) out of you. Funny how things come and go, history repeats itself. You threw all that precious, precious information-your data away for basketball, for football, for baseball, for entertainment; for the love of God why on earth would we do that? You were distracted by it. Admit. Just admit it. We freely give our magic, our energy, our cotton-picking religion, our planet away. Why on earth would we do that?

They—whoever they are, cannot force anything on you, everything is a choice. Just like you didn't have to take that COVID-19 Vaccine. The thought of you losing your line on payroll though, devastating thought. You didn't want to give up the lifestyle. The American dream you worked tirelessly-tirelessly for. That's the truth. It was a choice. And, yet, still, here we are. Outside of the written documented history, the only "genocide" I'm addressing at this moment is the one directly affecting American Indians ... or, the so-called, infamously, black people.

+++

"Take A Knee" position of protest started first as a way to resist this, the distractions. Moreover, "Take A Knee" position of protest started first as a peaceful resistance to injustice anywhere, which is a threat to justice everywhere.

In this historical dialogue context, I used to think communication across differences was the key. Sit with someone you disagree with and have a conversation. Simple as that. The difficult work of opposing without hatred

or, more simply put, without judgment. I thought this way until I realized, it's "comprehension" which is the key. Do you *comprehend* what has taken place though? Comprehension is way more complex a philosophical phenomenon, way more worthwhile than what is communication, for what is communication without basic comprehension anyway? If you cannot understand what was said through said conversation, then you really have no stake in the broader discourse at all, which is why reading comprehension skills are so important. Indeed, it's all connected ... but if we're moving with 12 generations in mind, beloved, and peace in our hearts, we cannot be without basic comprehension. Of ourselves, that is. You can communicate all you want, be here and there all day and night ... but if you do not comprehend who you are, where you are, why you are — what's even the point? There is no growth, then, no creativity. We can talk all day and all through the night. But what magic is lost when nothing is found and kept, retained and learned from? On the other hand, what benefits are gained when one cannot remember any-thing at all? Why do words like "erasure" and "genocide" exist? If they—the close-listener or close-reader—don't understand you, or through honest effort seek to comprehend what it is you're experiencing, what you claim your world view to be, it's silent chaos.

Narrator: A lot less challenging, nonetheless, still, a choice. They say, understanding is deeper than the content or information itself. They also say reading is fundamental. There are many people that know you but there are few who understand you. It takes more effort to understand, I'd say. Today, I think listening and understanding the self and *why* you do the things you do, is the key. That's what I'd say. The key is self-education. Who are *you*, first and foremost. Once we get a solid grasp of that, we can move forward in more meaningful and productive ways. Without you, and comprehension of who you are, there just becomes nothing else to reasonably connect to. I don't know, maybe I'm still working through this idea. Especially in this one strange place, the space of historical dialogue facilitation, where the sole objective is peacebuilding and reconciliation. How can one forgive such crimes against humanity? There is nothing worse than silent chaos, I thought. It is also important and critical, that we find-out ways to carefully make (it make) sense, for example: Why settlers who have inherited the power positions left by previous colonizers, felt it meaningful to place descriptive, racialized language based on color-coded phrases, like: brown black white red yellow, and so on. What is the serviceability of this race-based language? I'm afraid it's money. It's greed. Which is in fact fear, a sense of lack ... as if you are already not enough.

"It was only in the late seventeenth century that white Americans began in earnest to formalize a culture of white-body supremacy in order to soothe the dissonance that existed between more powerful and less powerful white bodies; to blow centuries of white-on-white trauma through millions of [black] and [copper-skinned] bodies; and to attempt to colonize the minds of people of all colors. [...] The phantasm of race was conjured to help white people manage their fear and hatred of other white people."

Narrator: I'm Kordell KeyAndre. Thanks for listening. Sure, whenever I'm feeling down I just remind myself that a trillion dollars of propadana didn't work on me. But, I guess that depends on how you look at here. Because here I am, talking about it, bringing more attention to the matter. Consciously or unconsciously, here I am, talking about it. I wonder why that is.

* * *

Sure, "we've come a long way from the ancient days of Aristotle, who thought the heart was the seat of intelligence and the brain was a kind of refrigerator that cooled off the fiery heart and hot blood, but there are still more questions about the brain than answers. We now know how actions are created and how thoughts are formed, and [,thankfully,] we can even identify the hippocampus, the two tiny seahorse-shaped structures in the brain essential for memory function."⁵⁶ [...] "Exploring the experience of slavery and its aftermath, Toni Morrison's work [for example] traces the lives of black Americans from childhood through old age, in a range of class and geographical situations, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She follows the struggle of blacks to create subjectivity without a positive gaze for them in the master narrative, and so my discussion begins with an investigation of how the abusive experience of slavery and its legacy of cultural rejection create trauma, low self-esteem, and anxiety for the black community on individual, familial, and group levels."⁵⁷

Kordell KeyAndre: Psychiatrist, counselor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959), Viktor Frankl once said: "It is we ourselves who must answer the questions that life asks of us, and to these questions we can respond only by being responsible for our existence." It is this belief that is the cornerstone of the An Americana Issue Oral History Project, similarly as for the forthcoming discussion-based product line Discussions By Definition: a bridge to a new awakening.

⁵⁶ Sanjay Gupta, "Keep Sharp." 2021.

⁵⁷ Scheriber, Evelyn J. "Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison." Louisiana State University Press, USA, 2010.

Like Frankl, I intend to offer the people—students-scholars and scholar-practitioners alike—the means by which they could supersede their own perception of reality by locating a new way to lighten the load that is this American living experience, even in the face of definitions like adversity, depression or mental illness. This means we must provide the critical and criticism-stimulating method that facilitates one’s own intervention in the historical dialogue process. I believe it is language and how we view said language that can remedy our individual and, then, remedy our collective suffering.

As logotherapy teaches, “the quest for [meaning] is the key to mental health and human flourishing.”

Kordell KeyAndre: “Contracting information into [meaning] reaches its peak in modern times, and uplifts the whole process to a higher level. With the appearance of the Internet and mobile communication, the objective obstacles of space and time — in the sense of reaching information — do not exist anymore. Only the subjective ones remain. This makes self-knowledge more important than ever; the truth is that the whole history of human development was nothing but a prelude to self-knowledge waiting to happen, or which is already happening. The development of civilization has researched a critical point: for the first time, it depends more on the human race than on anything else in the outer world.”⁵⁸ There is no way one can be objective any longer. Doing oral history as psychohistory restores our capacity to skillfully receive the accounts persons give of them-selves, all through the very act-tivity of writing and reading first and, then, story-telling their own narrative nonfiction(s) later. As far as psychohistory goes, and as far as the psychohistorian is concerned, the application of psychoanalytic theory to the study of public personalities, historical figures, events, and movements—an act or activity also called historical psychoanalysis—which I am in fact my own personality and historical figure, one ought to psychoanalyze oneself.

HUMANITIES IN PLACE

Kordell KeyAndre: Humanities New York supports democratic society by mobilizing public engagement in the humanities. Founded in 1975, HNY is the sole state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and

⁵⁸ Antic, Ivan. “The Physics of Consciousness: In the Quantum Field, Minerals, Plants, Animals and Human Souls. Samkha Publishing LTD 2021.

is a private 501(c)(3) that may accept federal, city, and private funds. My professional niche is that I help create a safe place for us to sit with and process our trauma, our thoughts, and the gray areas. I do this through conversation. Much of my work while studying at Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, focused on the theoretical politics and everyday reality of American cultural racism. Today, I'm interested in supporting those who are facilitating the navigation of fraught subject matters of concern. In this way, I broadly situate my work in the spaces of historical dialogue and narrative medicine.

Approximately 2.3 million Americans are currently incarcerated, which, according to the Center for Court Innovation's Greg Berman and Jilian Adler, represents a 500 percent increase in incarceration over a period of 40 years. This means, according to research issued by Cornell and reported in December 2018 by The Washington Post, that nearly 1 in 2 adults in the United States has experienced the incarceration of a family member. As of this writing, about 6.5 million Americans have an immediate family member who is currently incarcerated. The Prison Policy Initiative puts at 92,000 the number of New Yorkers behind bars today, with an impact that ripples through their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Kordell KeyAndre: Before the pandemic, Humanities New York, the New York State humanities council and partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, respectfully requested \$1.2M from the Mellon Foundation's Presidential Initiatives to support the Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership (PIHP). This partnership supports cultural organizations, mostly small to mid-sized, that directly assists individuals who are undergoing the process of societal re-entry after a period of incarceration, and their families. The PIHP program provides financial support, intensive HNY staff and administrative support for grantees, and well as membership to an annual learning cohort. With support from the Mellon Foundation, HNY was able to more than double the scope of PIHP: rather than supporting five organizations a year, this recent support would allow HNY to grow the PIHP cohort to approximately 15 organizations a year and add a full-time HNY staff position to help administer the PIHP program and partnerships.

That the United States has far too many citizens involved in its socially harmful carceral system is not news. We merely draw attention to these numbers to show how, if we are to promote and sustain civil society and the

great promises of American democracy, we need to be better equipped to assist the people who are negatively impacted by the American way of justice.

"They police the same way. They put their club up-side your head. And then turn around and accuse you of attacking them. Every case of police brutality," says Malcom X, "against the negro follows the same pattern. They attack you, bust you all upside your mouth. And then take you to [...] They attack the victim. And then the criminal who attacked the victim accuses the victim of attacking him. This is American justice. This is American democracy. [...] In America, democracy is hypocrisy."

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: The power of the memory bank as well as the imagination, knows no bounds. According to *Recollecting the Past in the Present: Memory in the Dialogue Between Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Science* (2016) by Marianne Leuzinger-Bohleber and Rolf Pfeifer ... "Memory is a combination of historical fact and the current emotional reworking of past events into present circumstances. 'Memory, then, is a theoretical construct that connects the state of the individual in the past and the influence the event had on the individual to the behavior in the current situation.' Past experiences, triggered by sensory stimulation, are recategorized as related to current activity. It is important to consider memory 'as a complex, dynamic, recategorizing and interactive process, which is always 'embodied,' in other words based on the actual sensory-motor experiences, and manifests itself in the behavior of the organism.' That is, memory's bodily, sensory-motor component involves a recategorization or reactivation of past experiences. Prior sensory-motor experiences are reactivated and acted out in response that constitutes memory. Memory reenacts a crucial bodily element."⁵⁹ Fact and emotion, working seamlessly together.

This note, which speaks to transgenerational trauma, reminds me of a quote by Virginia Woolf: "*The past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later. & thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past.*" This quote is an important facet of the An Americana Issue Oral History Project and likewise the broader AVTT research study. A project devoted to analysis and construction of an archive that chronicles the changes in meaning-making over time. For some scholars, like Elizabeth Tokin observes, "the past is not only a resource to deploy, to support a case or assert a social claim, it also enters memory in different ways and

⁵⁹ Leuzinger-Bohleber, M., Pfeifer, R. (2006). *Recollecting the Past in the Present: Memory in the Dialogue Between Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Science*. In: Mancia, M. (eds) *Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience*. Springer, Milano. https://doi.org/10.1007/88-470-0550-7_3

helps to structure it. Literate or illiterate, we are our memories.”⁶⁰

Humanities New York (HNY) is an organization that promotes democratic society, civic engagement, and intellectual and emotional self-direction. HNY, an organization that says, “the humanities foster a sense of personal and community empowerment” by creating spaces for “trust and exchange.”

Kordell KeyAndre: “Studying the humanities ... [helps us], says Frank Huyler. It helps us “become more aware, more insightful, more reflective, and—ultimately—more influential in shaping the trajectory of healthcare. It’s about encouraging the facility, willingness and ability to enter into the larger public debate in these cacophonous times, when collective silence will not serve... . And, finally, it is about providing an outlet for both emotional engagement and self-reflection in a culture that typically denies both, looks outward rather than inward, and too often ignores not only the personal costs but the personal rewards of medical work.”

James Baldwin once wrote: “No one, after all, can be liked whose human weight and complexity cannot be, or has not been, admitted to.” Alas, the social stigma of incarceration extends beyond time served, and goes beyond the imprisoned individual. Incarceration impacts the entirety of an incarcerated person’s life and deeply transforms the experiences of families and communities, both within families and communities and in their relationship to outsiders. How can we find ways to convey the complexity of these individuals and their stories, along with those of their families, so that their sole attribute and defining life narrative is not their incarceration? Likewise, how can we appreciate the full impact of the harms that incarcerating institutions inflict on families and communities without hearing the deep narratives of how consequences can play out over years, decades, and across many people’s lives (not only those of the incarcerated). It is important to remember that people are always in relation to others and what is done to one person will impact all those who care for and depend on them. This is central to the human condition. It is these human realities that HNY seeks to create space for and explore through the “Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership Grant” program.

* * *

⁶⁰ Muika, Népia. “Rethinking Oral History & Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective.” Oxford University Press, New York NY, 2019. page 144.

Kordell KeyAndre: HNY is proud to announce the continuation of the Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership, thanks to the generous support of the Mellon Foundation. This grant is designed for organizations that want to learn and collaborate with others who are addressing the needs of previously incarcerated individuals and their communities. Any project funded by the Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership (PIHP) must incorporate humanities methodologies and be in alignment with HNY's mission of dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking.

Kordell KeyAndre: The United States has an incarcerated population of approximately 2.3 million people, which, according to the Center for Court Innovation's Greg Berman and Julian Adler, is a 500 percent increase in the incarceration rate of 40 years ago. Research issued by Cornell University indicates that such a percentage increase means that nearly one in two adults in the United States has experienced the incarceration of a family member. Today, about 6.5 million people have an immediate family member who is in prison. On a local level, the Prison Policy Initiative states 49,000 New Yorkers are currently behind bars—the impact of which ripples through the lives of their families and communities. These numbers illustrate how better assistance for all people who are impacted by our justice system is required if we are to sustain civil society and the great promise of democracy in the United States.

Democratic society requires participation grounded in civic trust. While it may be complicated to establish trust with someone whose life experience differs from your own, this is where HNY believes the humanities can help. The humanities foster a sense of both personal and community empowerment by creating spaces for exchange where trust can grow.

Kordell KeyAndre: While dynamic education programs exist for individuals in prison, what about programming for the formerly incarcerated who are striving to rebuild their relationships within society beyond the prison walls? The social stigma of incarceration extends beyond the individual who has served time. Incarceration impacts not only this person's life story but also deeply transforms lived experience within their communities. Indeed both those communities that have personal knowledge of incarceration and those who know of it from a distance are affected. As James Baldwin wrote: "No one, after all, can be liked whose human weight and complexity cannot be, or has not been, admitted to." What if the humanities were employed to support these

individuals and transmit their stories, along with those of their families, so that their defining life attribute is not their incarceration?

The mission of Humanities New York is to strengthen civil society and the bonds of community, using the humanities to foster engaged inquiry and dialogue around social and cultural concerns. HNY uses the tools of the humanities to foster engaged inquiry around social and cultural concerns, that is. The most essential of these tools is open, frank, and substantive dialogue about the hopes, anxieties, and obstacles that unite or divide us. Engaged inquiry is a pillar of informal democracy that strengthens society. This type of conversation—structured and informed yet nimble enough to respond to the opinions and experiences of participants—is a hallmark of the public humanities. There is an urgent need to move from distrust into trust. Otherwise, democracy will not flourish.

Kordell KeyAndre: Historically and generally, HNY supports projects that activate, frame, or deepen our understanding of what it means to be human. We encourage and support innovative approaches in the design and delivery of public-facing programming.

For this opportunity we encourage applications from organizations that serve individuals and families who are undergoing the process of reentry and reintegration into society following a period of incarceration. Successful projects will integrate HNY’s public humanities work—particularly, facilitated dialogue and conversation programming—into their final product. Applicants may request support for any necessary costs for the proposed scope of work, including participant honoraria, staff time, consultants, travel, marketing, evaluation, and photography/videography. Costs of travel on non-U.S. (international) air carriers and costs of alcohol may not be included in the request.

“What does it mean to live in the context in which society places us?” HNY’s programming consistently strives to answer this query, and the Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership seeks partner organizations that are interested in applying this form of inquiry—and the questions and reflections that stem from it—to the context of post-incarceration. PIHP funds organizations that are authentically aware of both the human cost of time spent in the prison system and how prison experiences can hobble the natural human flourishing of the mind and spirit that should be accessible to all.

Beyond proposing projects that meet the criteria of the grant guidelines, HNY seeks organizations that are ready to actively participate in this second iteration of this annual program. Organizations chosen for the 2024 PIHP cohort will articulate together their concrete aims for the year and make use of both HNY program materials as well as their own, shared knowledge and resources to successfully accomplish these goals. HNY will be a collaborative partner in the funded projects, sharing its staff expertise and program materials and design in order to work side by side with our grantee organizations. Applicants should examine HNY's Community Conversations and Reading & Discussion programs as examples of the tools and the type of experience we bring to a collaboration.

Kordell KeyAndre: At its heart, HNY's work is about creating and holding space for dialogue and the discussion of experiences, both shared and alien, of the people who are participating in the group. HNY is distinguished by its adherence to a public humanities ethos: we use texts as prompts and grounding points for the exploration of and dialogue about the program participants' lives. It is this conjunction—facilitating a dialogue—that we see as our contribution, however informal, to the development and expansion of American democracy. HNY also believes these informal humanities-based dialogues are needed in the post-incarceration community. HNY knows stories are the best way to dismantle walls and destroy prejudices—stories told across a table or in a shared room that builds community around the frustrations, beauty, and hopes that animate all of our lives.

Put succinctly: we seek proposals that explain how Humanities New York can assist, through our funding and our expertise in facilitating dialogue, in revealing and overcoming the obstacles those served by our applicants are confronting. HNY staff will support partner organizations, and will host convening for cross-fertilization and discussion among the grant cohort of 16 to 18 organizations.

+ + +

Kordell KeyAndre: So I wound up being on Broadway afterall! A dream come true. Those High School yearbook superlatives are usually spot on, I thought. Then again. It's never too late. What I've learned from my time working with them, Humanities New York: it's important to meet people where they are. To treat people with dignity and grace, no matter their sexual orientation, their race or gender, religion color or creed. Their vaccination status, their ability or disability ... All that is identity theory and the formation of self. Red pill or blue pill, republican or democrat, you must treat people how you want to be treated. No matter where they are, they are

you, this is one big loop of an experience ... We are all connected in some way somehow, and what you place into the universe, what you give, will return back to you, in some way shape or form. The golden rule. This is something you'd think one my age would know already, by now. Needless to say, I needed to revisit this storied lesson. A fall from grace, if you will. Sometimes, I guess, we need a reminder. Because sometimes we do, in fact, forget who we are. This is a spiritual practice. We are each living and learning, growing as we go. Humanities NY's mission of dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking will remain a staple in my life. The organization itself, the office based in the Financial District of Manhattan New York ... and what this all symbolizes for me, will be a guiding North star, always. I hope my former colleagues know how thankful I am for our having met, despite the challenges and disagreements.

“Webster’s dictionary defines an obstacle as ‘as obstruction that prevents a forward movement or course of action.’ Do you ever feel restricted by an obstacle—something that keeps you from moving forward with your life, something that stands between you and what you define as a complete and whole life? Do you see the pathway of your life leading to a point at which you will one day arrive, where all obstacles will disappear? If you do, you are in for one long pathway. [...]

“I don’t know of anyone who doesn’t have obstacles of one kind or another in their life. As a matter of fact, my observation is that often those who appear to have the great challenges in life, with apparent obstacles far larger than my own, seem to see their own challenges not as obstacles at all but rather as growth opportunities for forward movement. [...]

“Thomas Carlyle wrote: ‘The block of granite, which is an obstacle in the way of the weak, becomes a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong.’ In other words, obstacles are all a matter of perspective. Do you see the challenges in your life as obstacles or opportunities? Do you see them through the eyes of a victim or a victor? Either way, let’s free ourselves from any illusions: we shall always have challenges. How we see them is our choice.”⁶¹

Likewise, It is not what happens to us in this life that shapes us; it is how we choose to respond to what happens to us. Victim or victor, the choice is ours. Thank you for joining me on this narrative journey, my definition of doing

⁶¹ Jones, Dennis Merritt. “The Art of Being: 101 Ways to Practice Purpose in Your Life.”

narrative as medicine, *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023). It's been my pleasure being your guide. I hope you found something useful out of this.

Kordell KeyAndre: My approach to doing oral history, at least here in the context of this NARRATIVE PRELUDE - "on and off that marvel stage" — an aural thesis from, AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ... my approach takes into consideration the setting and environment which breeds a person's historico-racial schema. Furthermore, my oral history acknowledges that all psychological problems or issues, if and when to be defined as such, are a product of the sociohistorical changes in culture.

It is not the person themselves which is a problem or an issue, but rather a culture in which said person exists currently or previously came of age and, still, exists. Science tells us, if we care to fix any issue, we must first understand the environmental setting. My oral history, and its origin story, definition and practice, will inevitably change over time, as my relationship to any given environmental culture continues to evolve and carry on.

Being able to step up and out of our individual lives, self-correct, change our minds, become a new and mold our-selves into who you of all people want to be. I've been made to believe a diligent practice of reading and writing can help you capture that critical thinking, internal and personal foraging process. To hold it in time; to become a scientist and closely analyze that which is your life and times.

Kordell KeyAndre: At least, I know it has for me. James Pennebaker, a researcher at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *Writing to Heal* (2004), "has done some of the most important and fascinating research I've seen on the power of expressive writing in the healing process. In an interview posted on the University of Texas's website, Pennebaker explains, 'Emotional upheavals touch every part of our lives. You don't just lose a job, you don't just get divorced. These things affect all aspects of who we are—our financial situation, our relationships with others, our views of ourselves, our issues of life and death. Writing helps us focus and organize the experience.'

Kordell KeyAndre: My oral history is always changing. If it's not one thing, it's another, always changing, always evolving. And still, it's one in the same. I'm quite bothered by the number of people commenting—I mean, literally commenting on my behavior, my personal conduct—as if it's their job or role to do. I am who I am, what

you see is what you get: I am the same man privately, publicly, and personally. Your opinion on how I am doing, if your business. Unless I ask, please keep your opinions on my act, to your damn self, respectfully. I'm doing the best I know how. And still, in this way, I am a reflection of you. Self study is a sacred act, I thought. Everything I thought I knew keeps changing; as above so below, be the change that you want to see. This is what it is. Usually, I'm giving out what you deserve, something you've already asked for. You see, it's already written in the stars, beloved. I am a reflection of you. So my oral history, though its definition changes over time, the core of who and what and perhaps why it is, must remain the same on and off the stage. It's a process infused with elements of narratology—dealing with the structure and function of narrative and its themes, conventions, and symbols—incorporating new definitions of writing, creativity, imagination and exploration. “The scholar Andrew Delbanco goes so far as to define culture as a collective psychological notion.” [...] “Human beings need to organize the inchoate sensations amid which we pass our days—pain, desire, pleasure, fear—into a story,” [...]. “Delbanco writes. ‘When that story leads somewhere and thereby helps us navigate through life to its inevitable terminus in death, it gives us hope. And if such a sustaining narrative establishes itself over time in the minds of a substantial number of people, we call it culture.’” It's only right I set the stage this way. To do oral history as psychohistory, to do narrative as medicine ... is a “culture” ... one I hope to instill in my narrative medicine practice, the KeyAndre & Company. It's more than asking someone questions. In hope to find an answer. It's to wonder, unapologetically, open-endedly, why they are the way they are.

The KeyAndre's very existence is an act of defiance. Its very existence is an act of love, that is. This self-education champions self-awareness, self-discipline and self-care; it's about self-study, self-examination, and self-perseverance. “Attention is a tangible measure of love. Whatever receives our time and attention becomes the center of gravity, the focus of our life. This is what we do with what we love: We allow it to become our center. What is at the center of your life? Carefully examine where you spend your attention, your time. Look at your appointment book, your daily schedule... this is what receives your care and attention—and by definition, your love.”—Wayne Muller. As a narrative medicine scholar-practitioner, who centered his work in the spaces of narrative medicine, I believe informal humanities-based dialogues are needed now more than ever.

on doing oral history, pt.3 - epilogue: last word

“It comes at a great shock, around the age of five-six-or-seven, to discover the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes at a great shock to discover, that [...] home Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, when you were rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians were you. It comes as a great shock to discover, that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity, has not in its whole system of reality evolved any place for you.”

— James Baldwin

“The body which is moved from without is soulless; but that which is moved from within has a soul, for such is the nature of the soul ... of the nature of the soul, let me speak briefly and in a figure.”

— Plato, *Phaedrus*

Narrator: Plato once said, “Those who are able to see beyond the shadows and lies of their culture will never be understood, let alone believed, by the masses.” Let that sink in. No, you’re not crazy. You’re not depressed or suicidal. You’re just living in backward America, a dystopian nightmare, where anything goes. Take a deep breath. You’re doing just fine. Sometimes who you once were or who you once knew yourself to be, won’t align with what you are experiencing. And that’s OK. You’ll feel the difference, it’s there for a reason. Listen closely, and be open to receiving whatever message is sent your way. Walk away if you need some space and time to ask questions later, and perhaps just don’t engage. But more than anything, don’t give up the keys to your house. This is what you’ve worked for. This present moment right here. This is your body-temple, your house, your promised land, paid for in full already. Do not give them permission to take away your power. Your seat. Your table. Your seed. *Why would you do that?* Be self-assured. Know who you are. You know way too much about the source of self-regard, Kordell Keyandre, mi amor—a truth that exists independently of all diverse, human perspectives and points of view— —you know way too much, for you to do half of the the things you’ve done; to say half of the things you say; to think the way you do. I understand the burden, the toll, I understand the pain, I understand even the confusion. But it’s time to come back home, to yourself. I’ll subtitle this last and final Chapter/Episode 15, “Relationship Over Religion.” What is your relationship with self?

One is not to be judged by cars, clothes and money, your salary, job title or career, but rather by one's heart, soul and mind. The choices you make, the chances you take. The way you think, the way you move. The energy you leave behind.

Narrator: Your spirit—your spiritual hygiene, your personality, your character, even: How you treat Others. How, you show up. Which is a direct reflection, extension of how you feel about your-self. What you know to be true. Who you are. Remember, as above so below, as within so without. How you treat Others says a lot more about you and who you are, about your relationship with your-self, than it does them—whoever they are. That is, your understanding of who you are lays the foundation for everything that is to be brought back into your life. It starts and ends with you. So, get to know yourself, and intimately, because who you are— —who you know yourself to be— —and your knowledge of that which is, matters tremendously. You matter tremendously. Trust your intuition, it's placed there for a reason. Be self-assured. And protect your house— —your mind-body temple. You didn't know then, and that's OK, and now you know better. You can do better. They've done enough damage; raping, stealing, pillaging, breaking in, lynching, lying, cheating, abusing of power. They know not what they do, I guess ... One of these days, they'll awaken to the source of Self-Regard. Perhaps they'll be met with the same or similar "shame" and "guilt." To push the plot forward. All in the name of love, character development. Still, with or without them, you rise and Black art transcends time. You're not crazy. You're just here. Living in backward America, a dystopian nightmare, where everything and anything goes.

Narrator: Take a deep breath. You're doing just fine. And then again, maybe you're not, *maybe you are crazy.* "Only the strong go crazy. The weak [they] just go along." — Assata Shakur.

+++

"Whose house is this? ... It's not mine. I dreamed another, sweeter, brighter; ... This house is strange. Its shadows lie. Say, tell me, why does its lock fit my key?"

— **Toni Morrison**
From *Home* (2012)

THE BIBLE IS NOT an end but an open beginning. A precedent, not a story. Its being embedded, in particular historic situations, has not deterred it from being everlasting. It, too, is a creative world of dramatic storytelling, role-immersion pedagogy and performative writing.

Similarly, the word of God never comes to an end. No word is God's last word. For example, I didn't have to go anywhere—to Fredonia, let alone Ghana, Africa; to Columbia, and Atlanta, Georgia—to realize this. The truth, and the certainty of the hereness of Source, was right here all along. One could stay in the same place, and be loved the same, I thought. All you needed was to learn to accept the present moment. Vast acceptance of what is, already. “Things don’t change, we do. With that in mind, always remember, wherever you go, there you are!” Asking why is this making me feel this way, for example, what is this here to teach me? Now that’s a prompt eliciting an adventure. You realize that all along, anyway, Source was orchestrating things in your favor. One does not have to go anywhere. All that is required of you is that you surrender to the unknown and trust the process, in real time, them—whoever they are—the mysterious place that is your life. Source lives and works in a spiritual realm, that is. In this dimension, there are human-man made wars—interpersonal and international—and processes beyond our human comprehension. You can choose to engage, or you can choose to be an observer. The choice is yours. What you pay attention to, you will find yourself paying for. I’ve learned, sometimes, asking why can get you into trouble. Sometimes, it’s best to just leave it; your questions—rhetorical or otherwise—up to chance.

Narrator: What I’ve learned throughout the doing of this NARRATIVE PRELUDE: there is a lot of power in remaining still. In remaining silent. Source lives and works in mysterious ways, often in darkness. Source spoke before it wrote, thought before it breathed life. Source first works in the spiritual before speaking in the material. We can see this process in the creation of the universe, a fact that will never change, no matter how much time passes. All Source asks, be still and attentive to the mysterious place-consciousness that is your life. [Psalm 46:10].

Narrator: Although those travels made all the difference, the traveling, the physical movement, doesn't take away from another sound truth: Scientifically speaking, hands to heaven is a vibration, not a tangible location. Though optics are everything, I thought, your environment, location, where you live or find yourself to be ... the true

heaven in which we all seek, connection, a sense of meaningful belonging, resides in your personal vibration. “Whatever your definition of happiness may be, you will experience happiness only as you experience more life.” Peace of mind, too, becomes your responsibility to cultivate and look after, no one else's. Not a physical location, a place, a land mass ... but a state of mind. A vibration, I said, a frequency.

The promises of Source are all over my life ... that's what the colorful rainbow stands for, right? Vibration, energy, magnetic frequency. No matter where I physically bring this body, to the mountains, to the valleys, the desert or the forests ... my view and how I see you, clearly, remains my responsibility and ultimate assignment. A responsible, mature adult takes care of their world view. At a certain age, one must realize, how consequential it really is, the golden rule: to treat all people with dignity, kindness and respect, and honor ... and if they were you. No matter where they are financially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, even, treat all with dignity, kindness and respect, and honor, *as if they were you*. How would you want to be treated, were you in their position?

IF YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE, at your very core, you would understand the concept of multiplicity. That there is multiplicity in truth. “When we build our lives on the solid foundation of this truth, our lives are unshakable and stable, able to withstand the gale-force storms of life. Shifting sand is a metaphor for an undisciplined mind, a mind that is focused on egoic needs (which change daily), a mind that thinks in terms of duality and the instant gratification that the material world promises, which is temporal at best.”⁶² And I mean, not just surface level appearance stuff. Know who you are, be rock solid, build upon the rock that is your innermost core message, not the sandy beach. Eventually it became second nature to me: to know what to do with this idea, this truth, that though we may look at the same object or subject matter of concern, or that we may look the same on the surface, our view of said object or subject will differ depending on who we know ourselves to be. It's inevitable. This is the human condition, as long as we dwell in these garments of flesh and bone, we will be subject to the human condition. This is multiplicity. Everywhere you look, there you are. But can you see yourself? Do you see yourself? Or are you still afraid, being led by fear of the unknown? Or are you distracted by the color, caste, and class of it all? Yes, our genetic make-up will differ; that is, what is beneath the surface is unique to each and every single one of us. Our job, now, is to cease judging “ourselves as well as others as less than whole. Wholeness

⁶² Jones, Dennis Merritt. “The Art of Being.”

is a natural part of the sacred continuum—that journey of spirit navigating Its way through the human experience as you and me. Know how blessed you are in this and every holy instant. It's all perfect in the eyes of God." [...]

“Spiritual perfection is an inherent part of each of us; it is never diminished by conditions. With an awareness of this truth comes the wholeness of spirit that enables us to accept the movement at hand as perfect, just the way it is, knowing that nothing is ever missing in God’s presence.”

Our job, now—at once, is to cease judging by appearances and start knowing the truth. For those who are not yet familiar with the scientific terminology, the “*eukaryotic*” organisms represent everyone outside the solar system called so-called black people. The “*prokaryotic*” organisms are the black race. Learning about this rocked my world. You can easily prove this information true through reading books and basic research, you can also google it. Remember Movement I, where we learned, we all take the dominant gene from our mother, i.e. you are your mother, regardless of your choice of sexual orientation and regardless of the presentation of your genitals. If your mother is white, then you your-self are considered the eukaryotic organism. Similarly though not the same, if your mother is black, then you your-self are considered the prokaryotic organism. This is the fundamental breakdown.

Narrator: It became second nature, to let this truth be, and flow, with it ... allowing them, whoever they are, to do what they know how to do best, whatever it is that they do. I feel so much shame, having let inorganic people come inside my most sacred of places. What was that all about, Kordell Keyandre? Who were those people, and why did you let them in? Them wanting you for a sexual fetish is not the same as loving you. Becky doesn't respect or care about you or your people; they do not care about you! Because if they did, if they truly loved themselves, this would not have taken place in the first place. Likewise, if you truly love yourself, you would not be in this predicament. This is science, this is logic. All due to my lack of knowledge, mis-education, and my ignorance. It's a damn shame, too, when you fail to know who you are, you send a universal message of self-hate. You cannot get that time back, those precious years. So-called black women—black men & black women, for that matter, but chiefly a message for the mother of humanity—please be mindful of what you're doing with your time, with your body, when you're having sex with these so-called white men, the asian man and the arab man included. They need you to survive, you don't need them. Keep this in mind, when you're flirting, thirsty for attention, and false affection. They're banking on your ignorance, my brothers and sisters, every single time. And still, everything

is love. I feel so much rage, having allowed the eukaryotic organism bust all inside me: pig seamen, fruit fly seamen, wolf dog monkey seamen all in your vaginal area. It is one thing to work with them—hence the need and making, the culture of the word professional—but a whole nother thing to grant them access to the most sacred parts of you. What did they do to deserve this, to earn this, the land of milk and honey? Your body is the temple of God; Don't let anything defile it for it is holy! —It's blasphemy. It's ignorance. Forgive them, father, for they know not what they do.

After coming into my awareness, a knowing of what these inorganic races of people did to our bloodline ... the rape, the torture, the murder and abuse, the stealing, the cheating, the doing damage, the pillaging, the lying, the rinsing and repeating, banking on our being ignorant ... and how they still benefit from us, we the people ... they are rapists, they are terrorists, and we live amongst them. Why? We are expected to play nice with them, to ask them for our sovereignty. Why?... It's demoralizing, to know this and still carry on as if nothing really matters. When in fact, this is my life! To lay with them, in this very intimate way, is an act of self-hate. It's not organic. It's not natural for us, to participate in that type of intercourse. Respectfully, we would have the best sex of our life if only we held out for the right person we want to make love to. & not just fuck. This last guy taught me the power of this. Or, I should say, I learned this from him—from them. This last guy—they changed my entire view, and for that, for him—for them, whoever they are ... I am thankful.

I feel full. To me, it was more than sex, more that fucking. They know who they are, I thought, at their very core. I imagined that once we got there, we synchronized breath patterns while we slowly stroked, to the rhythm and blues that is our life and times. To the silence. We use each other as vessels to pray to God, the Source of Self, to pray to Source *through* one another while we penetrate. & nourish from the nectar of their portals until full. I am full. Your love runs through me like lava, and I found that it's a spiritual practice, indeed. Love is hard, love is painful. It was great fucking sex, I thought. And, still, at the same time, a sacred act not to be a public endeavor. It's your life's work to discern who that person—whoever they are—is meant to be in flight, in mission with you, to that place-consciousness. Again, people are portals, each their own universe. At a certain age you have to acknowledge, there is great power in having the ability to choose who to give your innermost being. To choose who you allow to lead you to your hearts core and higher dimensions of love. Had I known my power sooner, I'd be worlds away from

where I am now. Regardless what we thought we were doing at the time, I believe in my heart of hearts it was more than just sex, more than just fucking. For that, I am thankful. This, too, is a spiritual practice.

Narrator: To choose kindness, even when you don't want to, is a choice. This is my life. This is real life. My advice now remains the same. Choose wisely. Be selective. Have standards. Be with people who view you this way, who see you as a soul in transition, always changing shape and definition over time, and who are willing to stick it out and change with you, over time. This awareness requires "grace" and unwavering "compassion," and "patience." Be mindful and hyper vigilant of what you allow into your body, too, and more generally your orbital aura. This, too, is an act of radical self-care. Energy transfer is real. Make your home and its surroundings paradise; govern it well, this house. It took years for me to learn the value of this wondrous place, my body temple. The lessons of "self-education" and "self-acceptance" still carry on. It's an ongoing process of "self-discovery" and "self-love." As we move forward, and conclude this aural thesis thing, I encourage you to remain solid. Likewise, your tribe doesn't have to be big. It has to be solid. Isolation is necessary for your health. Community is necessary for your wealth. Remember, the world is at war ... always has been., always will be. Do not think for one moment these people will not turn on you if they need to ... They may seem calm and content one day, and then next it is a whole different story. I know this now—there is real danger in the world. We've been at war the whole time ... our babies, our children—they are brushing their cotton-picking teeth with fluoride, drinking pepsi ... eating cheese, meat and potatoes, voluntarily by choice; it's honestly ... I mean, showering with all the worst chemicals, right now, in your house ... a slow burn genocide. How can you not see this? My eyes are my eyes. You must know and understand this fact, and build a better community on with fundamental difference in mind.

Your ability to be supported through any situation speaks to your ability to effectively communicate, solve conflict, and hold space for others. Community, in this way, is the greatest gift we can give ourselves when we grow spiritually. Real, authentic, truthful, raw, solid community. It is poor spiritual hygiene to give everyone access to us. Healthy, intentional relationships, if done right, are the key to abundance. I know this to be true.

* * *

Narrator: As we move forward, and conclude this aural thesis thing, my focus remains: to encourage us all to lead with gratitude, to lead with respect, to choose wisely; to practice kindness even in private; honoring and

looking after the land and caring for the seas, too. It is my intention that this *Discourse on Doing: Oral History as Psychohistory* (2023) idea, empowers us to think more critically, to feel as well as study more deeply, and to be as intentional with our impact on the Planet Earth—ie. your first land mass, your literal body-temple—as possible. Can you do that? Take care of your physical vessel like your life depends on it, because it does. Walk by faith, not by sight. Starve the flesh, feed the spirit. You're doing just fine.

We the people of the earth are just as much a part of them, whoever they are, as they are a part of us. We the people of the world, are one with universal consciousness. Know this. The universe has its own divine timing, for making sure things go according to plan, I thought. When we look after our Mother Earth, our first body—when we heal ourselves from the inside out—we look after each Other and the world around us. This is a form of self-respect. In this way, we are in fact the problem and the very solution. Know this, too. It starts and ends with you, every day. You are your own planet, existing in a universal solar system. Some people will vibe with what you have going on, some people will not. Last time I checked, this is America.

And in America, you cannot go against the establishment, the laws of the land, and expect not to be fined or penalized. I mean, until you know a guy. Until you know a guy. When you know said guy, don't take him for granted. I've grown to realize, it is me. That I am experiencing myself, through and through: No one is out to get me, there is no Us against Them, really. It's me against me. Me versus me. It's just me ... just us, abiding by the rules and regulations, experiencing more of myself, always has and always will be. No 'them' but, simply, one whole, universal experience, experiencing itself, through and through, over and over. As above, so below. And still, in a society like this, America, you have to pick a side. The entire ecosystem is made and functions off the demise of so-called black people ... it's a racialized, capitalized system. It is what it is. I say, you have to intentionally try to make this thing here not about yourself, and take nothing and everything personally. When you can, choose wisely ... choose your-self. It's tricky, I know ...

Narrator: You see, my friends, “human beings are meant to evolve into conscious beings,” it's in our nature, “and those who don't will suffer the consequences of their unconsciousness. They are [not] out of alignment with the evolutionary impulse of the universe. [...] [It] is not possible to be out of alignment with the evolution of the

universe, and even human unconsciousness and the suffering it generates is part of that evolution. When [one] can't stand the endless cycle of suffering anymore, [one] begins to awaken.”⁶³

Narrator: That what you put out comes back tenfold. That despite how you are treated and perceived by Others, you and you alone are responsible for your view of reality, your experience here on Earth and beyond. When you understand and comprehend this concept, this idea, a universal law of sorts, you know every moment is sacred. Every movement is sent here, to teach you something. Every moment is sacred, then, a teacher of sorts. You scream less, you curse less, you raise your voice less. You breathe in and have “reverence” for every single particle, seen and unseen. You say to yourself: “I am completely satisfied in this moment.” You say to yourself: “Every encounter is special.” To truly know that all of everything is a blessing. This life is a gift. The source of self-regard is love. To be humble in every moment, enough to greet each (emotion) at the door and accept all of everything it brings. & with open arms. To trust, even, yourself to be worthy of every good thing that presents itself, as you are attracting it in real time, through your very thoughts and reactions, replies, retorts, and refutations. This all lives within your perspective, your view. How you see your-self. This, too, is love.

I'm Kordell KeyAndre.

Through this reading and writing process, I've learned a great deal about myself. And how valuable I truly am, at my very core. I'm learning every day, being humbled every day. I wish I was taught to see and believe and know my magic, sooner. How to honor and respect my natural body-beauty, how to protect that which is my natural-harvest. Perhaps this was something I knew already and just forgot about? Was made to forget, the distractions, just one too many. Who knows? Who cares, really. What matters is this present moment. How are you doing right now? How are your thoughts? You have to cultivate the soil your-self. It's an activity, it's a thought process. It's a doing, it's a daily grind. It's an offering like no other. At some point, yes, it's on you. You have to understand to innerstand to overstand what you're up against and, just like that, act accordingly. That's your business. The more you heal, the higher you raise the bar or how you raise the bar or ought to raise the bar on who or what has access to you. Races of people, food and habits. What you eat, where you eat, even. Not out of

⁶³ Tolle, Eckhart. “A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose.” Viking, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. 2005. page 163 - 164

arrogance, but self-respect. My reckless boy-ish behaviors could have cost me my life ... my bloodline ... what my ancestors fought so tirelessly to see through. I don't know. I guess, we do this now for preservation of the land itself, seven generations in mind. You and you alone can draw the line. At a certain age, you have to realize, it's not about me and what it is I want to do. My feelings and instant gratification. At a certain age, the 7th generation principle has to kick in. It informs every step, even movement, every thought. There is a bigger picture here, there has to be. I want to have kids. Make my own art, to be a creator. To be creative. Creation, an ongoing process, a story of not history alone—it is prophecy. Having kids would put all this psycho-babble into perfect perspective, actually. Our future kids place all this stuff into perfect perspective. Why we are here in the first place? I am my ancestors' wildest dreams. First and foremost, ego and pride aside, I owe it to myself to look after and protect my land, my life ... my bloodline ... my body of work. What my ancestors fought so tirelessly to see through.

“What is bewildering is that an appetite for sex and thrills,” would so overpower a supremely rational man if only he alone allowed it. If only I had the cure, a salve to resolve for this need for physical affection. Being very calculated with how much of my sexual energy I release, and picky about who I give it too. It's a gift, truly. Giving it to all these random people that I never really cared about, respectfully, due to my lack of self-understanding ... the trauma and drama, I'll call it. The abandonment issues. I was addicted to sex. It made me feel good, powerful, loved, and desirable. It filled a void. I know this now. Today, I want to be able to heal, to extend my shelf-life, to restore myself to have a lot left in the tank to give someone who is worthy of my love. After doing damage in my early and late twenties, receiving damage in return ... I'm now on the verge of my 30s, realizing I want something real. I want to maintain something substantial with a person. I want something truthful. I want something where my prowess will line up with my evolution as a man. I have to have a lot left in the tank to give them—whoever they are—the best of me. Just as there is much value in remaining silent, of being a good audience member, there is great value in remaining celibate and selective. There is power there, too. Selective in who and where and when you choose to give your body—information or power, time and attention. It's more than just sex, I thought, it's more than just fucking somebody ... it's an entire energy exchange, body to body, land mass to land mass, a cerebral experience. People are portals. Entire universes. Objects and subjects, all at once.

And your private part itself? I mean, it's an ultimate privilege, to be let in and in this very intimate way.

At a certain age, you realize how important privacy is. “Most people don’t recognize a blessing if ain’t money involved,” is a whole word. Your privacy is priceless, and it’s a blessing, one not to be taken for granted. One to be taken seriously. It’s up to you to safe-guard. It’s up to you to know what to do with it, too. It’s a practice, a spiritual practice. No one can take it away from you ... you and you alone can give them the keys to what is rightfully yours. Remember your power, and in this way, remember who you are. Not everyone needs to know what goes on with you. Your business, your personal affairs, your plans, your life, what occupies your time. That is for you and the special people who have earned the right to such sensitive, personal details. A private life is key, I thought. What they don’t know, they cannot ruin. It took me a while to grasp this concept, coming from a performing background, where anything and everything seemingly is up for grabs. This is trust, courage and freedom. So, I took the simple things for granted, forgetting the first first word was the greatest one of all. Where I was planted in the first place, that origin story—this body, it’s the land—now that matters. This body, this land ... it matters, deeply. Protect it, by any means necessary.

I think in many ways., I wish my name, talents and gifts had been kept private—out of the spotlight. Selfishly speaking, I wish my parents were more intune with the then climate of America—the world at large, perhaps making them more adamant about protecting me, their future, their legacy; drawing a line in more places, so where much of my adolescent years—those coveted developmental years—didn’t belong so much so to the public. I’m not for sale, after all. I mean, you’ll probably say one ought not have regrets. And I would agree. To regret a thing, would mean to not fully be present, appreciating that which you are living. There is real danger in the world however. And things need to change ... If people just want power and money, then we have nothing to work for. If you’re not for sale, you can actually chart an authentic path that represents the people; the people over politics, the people over party, the people over profits. How do you get the people to understand that they, themselves, *still* have the power? You involve them in the conversation, no matter the topic of concern. You involve them. You encourage them to participate, to vote. You-yourself run for office, to actually help people, but we’re filled with a congress filled with representatives that are more interested in power maintenance than they are in helping people. That’s what we as people have to realize, and we have to start electing candidates that actually want to help people and are not interested in just power maintenance.

I know this now—there is real danger in the world. We’ve been at war the whole time. And, at the same time, there are solutions to the problems that be. We know something is not in alignment, we just can’t seem to figure out what that is.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: There is something special about being private: Unlinkable, untouchable, unforgettable, un-textable, unreachable, and unavailable ... A large reason why I’m making this next transition, from *public personality* to *private practice*, is to protect my peace of mind. “I’m not too sure the American public likes the spouse to be too front and center,” anyway, says Barbara Bush. A spouse has a fine row to hoe. I’m not for sale, as much as the price of wealth and the history of this place may like to argue. The subject of money is a fraught one to have, I’ve come to learn. Always has been always will be. And the world is a safer place because of it, I thought. This racial awakening, a spiritual awakening of sorts, for me is an open beginning, a fresh start. At the time of this writing, there is a lot happening in the world. This is another cause for my need to be private. I feel I’m becoming the steward of yet another transition period. Sometimes fresh starts are necessary. Likewise, healthy relationships include uncomfortable conversations. I’m not sure what comes next, life after this final Chapter/Episode 15. I’m staying open to wherever the wind takes me. Most realize late in their lives, that what has been creating such emotions and thought patterns of confusion was coming from their pursuit of purpose, from they-themselves. We never lack purpose, is the truth, we have only lacked self-understanding, comprehension, which comes with stillness, silence—the diligent craft of close-reading and close-listening. Self-education. Purpose is life it-self. Your children, the future educator of color, are our purpose.

Likewise, privacy is power, what people don’t know they cannot ruin. Friend or foe, outside energy can really throw off the mojo-jojo. I mean, perhaps this stemmed from people-pleasing, lack of self-understanding. Especially if you don’t know what you’re doing just yet, where you’ve been or where you are going. You have to know who you are. Where you come from, dictates where you are going. Self-education, intended to be a private endeavor. One’s self-education is exactly just that: Who you are... it’s your character. How you show up. How you manage to make sense of all these new ideas and definitions, emotions and stories—how you will become a more beautiful human being in the world; and more importantly, I think the choice is entirely up to you. The ability to choose; autonomy.

Kordell KeyAndre: I'll continue to work with archives, presses, and a range of university, public, and other local, national, and global libraries and museums and other cultural institutions that are foundational to knowledge production and distribution in arts, culture and the humanities. But as far as my personal life is concerned, how I choose to live out my days is for me to decide.

From *high school setting to undergraduate lifestyle*, and eventually from *undergraduate lifestyle to graduate school experience*, came another measurement of a self-education in what it means to be a man. Loyalty over love. Respect, obedience, with love on top. When you know who you are, you move differently ... you have to choose different... You have no other choice but to choose wisely, to choose your-self. You don't allow certain company around you anymore. So, I am offline and off-limits, and I am better for it, I thought. Maybe not better or worse, but just different. I am more myself. All I do now is make money & find my way home. Protect my peace, stay out the way and manifest in my lane.

Kordell KeyAndre: Here. Let's try something new. Let's speak only of our dreams. Speak only of your dreams. You see, the power of words and your ability to speak is a great one. A big responsibility. Imagine yourself to be a pursuer of peace through the use of your words. To only use the power of your words to make peace, to create realities, to build peace, to encourage peace. To use our words for good. To use our words to bless each other, to bring peace between each other. To speak only what it is you wish to exist, that is peace and harmony. To speak only of your dreams, what it is you wish to be true, what you know to be true already. Don't give power to the nightmares & the fears by confessing them outloud any longer. We are in a world where we are being cursed, we need to fight militarily, and we're also needed to fight with our words. I encourage us to use our words for good, still. To use our words to bless each other, and to bring peace between each other. As we do this, as we shift the narrative from less than to more than enough, to protection, to safety, peace and harmony, to compassion and gratitude, over time that becomes your view of the world. You will begin to realize that you are not the same person you used to be. Not ten years ago, not ten seconds ago. As you change your speech of your life, lift itself begins to change. Although they—those past selves and memories—live on, you are renewed in this present moment. The things you used to tolerate have become intolerable, in other words. Where you once remained quiet, you are now

speaking truth. Where you once battled and argued, you are now choosing to remain silent. With every breath a new awakening is born. You are beginning to innerstand the value of your voice, the power of your instrument, this vessel ... and there are some situations that don't deserve your time, energy, and focus any longer. What's done is done, sure. And, there's no time like the present. So many people have fought to see your existence come to pass ... know how sacred you are. Know this above all.

So, you want a happy life? Speak what you seek until you see what you've said! Knowing you are the living word. Own your sacred sexuality, your creativity. Treat your body like the temple it is. Be guided by your intuition. Be humble and honest with yourself, emotionally regulated and self aware. Stand in your truth and honor the boundaries of Others. Be receptive and creative, respectfully. And always remember, you are your ancestors' wildest dreams. First and foremost, ego and pride aside, you owe it to yourself to look after and protect your land, your body. Your act of choosing yourself will inspire some and trigger others. Both are medicine. To care for and look after your-self, by any means necessary. To look after your mind-body temple, your land ... is an act of self-love.

Kordell KeyAndre: I think this is why you must give Source the value and respect it deserves. To let it be, and flow. Trust the process. You may become frustrated at times. Rest assured, it's not personal ... it's not about you ... It's all a test to deepen your relationship with God, with Source. I pray you conquer your mistrust of things, and embrace the sweetness of silence. "All our silences," says bell hooks, "in the face of racist assault are acts of complicity [...]"

The point is to comply. Oh how wonderful it feels to be compliant, to obey. Accept yourself for exactly who you are.

Believe you me. Who that is is therefore fixed, while what that is is up to you, the author or writer.

Why that is ... now that's a story for another day.

+ + +

Kordell KeyAndre: I grew up singing songs in front of large audiences. Lo and behold, the largest most invaluable audience would be the audience that is my soul. Today, I learned that my natural body is a reflection of my soul. I think I have a beautiful soul. I think in many ways., I wish my name, talents and gifts had been kept private—out of the spotlight. Selfishly speaking, I wish my parents were more intune with the then climate of America—the world at large, perhaps making them more adamant about protecting me, their future, their legacy; drawing a line in more places, so where much of my adolescent years—those coveted developmental years—didn't belong so much so to the public. I'm not for sale, after all. I mean, you'll probably say one ought not have regrets. And I would agree. To regret a thing, would mean to not fully be present, appreciating that which you are living. There is real danger in the world however. As it was back then, I imagine, there were still families to feed, daughters to raise, grounds to be prepared. To this end, what I'm trying to say, there is an art and craft to raising kids., raising human beings. One day they'll grow into themselves, up and out of the home, off the reservation. They'll become fully conscious of it all. They'll be expected to hold their own, stand on their own two feet, and they'll be made to be accountable for their actions. Today, I value my privacy more than ever, for this very reason. I value my peace of mind. What's kept private cannot be ruined. So I raise my price, I see my worth, and I really am exhausted by the state of things. I guess, there was always danger in the world ... just now I see differently, clearly.

My love and affection is rare, the year now 2024. I know this story now, it's all coming back to me. I'm awakening to the true essence of who I am, who I have always been. It's been a long and arduous process, of rinsing and repeating, three years of developing and making sense of the issues that be by asking *why*. Why on earth would something like this exist?

Kordell KeyAndre: If we knew our history, I thought—we'd be worlds away from where we are now; perhaps, at least, we would do a better job of telling the right story, more mindful of how we ought to engage with one another as well as each Other; Her, God consciousness; as well as the land itself. It's the land. ["The story of our relationship to the earth is written more truthfully on the land than on the page,"](#) says Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (2013). [...]

["It lasts there."](#)

Kordell KeyAndre: She continues, “The land remembers what we said and what we did. Stories are among our most potent tools for restoring the land as well as our relationship to land. We need to unearth the old stories that live in a place and begin to create new ones, for we are storymakers, not just storytellers. All stories are connected, new ones woven from the threads of the old. One of the ancestor stories, that waits for us to listen again with new ears, is the Mayan story of Creation.”⁶⁴

Malcom X said it best, “Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of Freedom, Justice, and Equality.” Black Americans are the true American Indians, and if they—came out and told us this fact, about land patents, then they—whoever they are—couldn't continue to steal from you, play in your face and occupy your land.

Kordell KeyAndre: If we knew our history—we'd be more intentional with where we lay our head, how we dress our homes. What we allow to consume us, as well as what we ourselves consume. Who we allow to touch us, even, when and where we allow them to touch us. We are descendants of free people made to be prisoners of war within our own home-land. Why would they, whoever they are, teach us about ourselves? They wouldn't freely give us crucial data like that. Education, not meant to be a public endeavor, I thought. We are descendants of a civilization rich in history and mystery, science and beauty, knowledge and eternal wisdom. We are part of that, and so much more. African Americans ain't African, too. We are indigenous to the Americas. And though the term African American carries much with it—the term, the item—it is a misnomer., still. A misnomer is in law, ‘an error in a name, mistaken identification.’

Kordell KeyAndre: Today, I realized, American Indians were no longer Indians once they registered with the colony, and from that moment on, the rest would be history. Today, I realized, they came, they saw, they conquered, and they wrote, so the story goes. Regardless who's house you think it is or is not, what we don't know and that we are currently awakening to, is that we are the so-called People. And that the so-called people were here well before Columbus, we were here in the first place, and then and only then abused by a group of species that was literally

⁶⁴ Braiding Sweetgrass. Page 331.

genetically modified and put together in a lab, I mean, you can't make this stuff up. If this is true, no cap, this would make them—the so-called white people—not organic to the land. In my humble opinion, that's the whole issue right there! We are being led to believe by a people, who are not organic to the land. How can we constructively talk through this one? I mean, how did we get here, to this mind frame? I think the many stories / lives lost warrants a conversation. Our children are literally being educated, medically and psychologically by a people—How can you ever begin to fathom to accept a group of species or bloodline, that had absolutely no problem or issue murdering millions of your own children and women and men.

And, yet, still, here we are. Outside of the written documented history, the only “genocide” I’m addressing at this moment is the one directly affecting American Indians ... or, the so-called, infamously, black people.

Kordell KeyAndre: Yes, words and terms like “colonialism” and “imperialism” and the race-to-erase, systemically, evidently, the original people of this earth is real. It's real love, beloved. And, at the same time, I won't spend another dollar of my time debating whether this “democide” is true or false. Or that my life matters, right? My eyes are my eyes, my teeth are my teeth—a lot of people don't know that the poem / song ‘Strange Fruit’ was inspired by a photo of a lynching in Marion, Indiana. If only we could remember how marvelous we really are, before the storm, our crown could be worn, seen and felt by many. English words and terms like those mentioned above wouldn't have a place in our vocabulary. But, alas, anyway, here we are.

Let us never forget from whence we came, my friends. And *why* we began to fight one another in the first place — God's chosen people. This, too, is identity theory.

I encourage you to encourage open, and substantive dialogue about the hopes, anxieties, and obstacles which unite us and or divide us. This type of engaged inquiry -- conversations, structured yet free of charge, allows us to grow fuller and become more ourselves.

Following only years after my futuristic debut as the “black-jew,” disheartening details of the Holocaust and its generational reverberations, for example, would be brought to my attention, this time now in a graduate school

classroom. As we continue onward, we will learn our history. We will remember and know who we were—that which we are, already. We'll see, the dismantling of the so-called Jew will be the genesis of a long journey. Perhaps it already started. And the beauty of it all, it will be done in the context of Song, Music, and a restoration of the Earth / Body environment. It's the land. The answer to all of your questions are within you. They are who you are at your deepest core. To the future educator of color, the sooner you go and find yourself, remember who you are -- who it is that you were called here to be you are, and comprehend what it is you are doing here on Planet Earth, the better off we'll all be. Universal wholeness. Can you morally imagine that?

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: As someone who does not self-identify as being an ORAL HISTORIAN in the traditional sense of the term, though I have formal training in the discipline, I am very privileged to hold space for people in this PSYCHO-HISTORICAL way, and creatively support them-navigate the telling of their-own life story, including what we are encouraged NOT to speak about. I do this, through a lens of psychology, by way of oral history theory and methodology.

Kordell KeyAndre: I aspire to work with a lot of different people. Different from myself, that is. To talk to them-people from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences. I am very privileged to hold space for them, where I get to walk with them—side by side—through this life, and to hear them narrate and critique, and evaluate their own interpretive stories. And to sit with them in their, sometimes, pain and, sometimes, joy. I get to witness them. In all their glory, move through the narratology process.

The Narratology Process. On or off the record, that is something that I do not take lightly. It comes naturally to me, actually. I know it's something I've done in many lifetimes before—perhaps bringing me to this very graduate program in oral history. Although this day is neither ENTERTAINMENT nor PERFORMANCE, it is however a form of ART. It must be stated: this oral history encounter—doing oral history *as* psychohistory—isn't therapy. This internal narrative-based reading and writing work is not therapy. The work we do on ourselves becomes our gift to everyone else. It is neither journalism, right? It is, however, meant to be an on-going dialogue. Therapeutic in nature, perhaps, and healing in process, sure. It is a reminder that regardless of our assigned differences in society—what is GENDER, what is RACE, what is CLASS—and all the identity theory,

I am You.

Though our genetic make may differ, and what's beneath the surface of your life is your business is mine is mine, we are still experiencing one Planet Earth, this universal wholeness, together. When you see me, see you. And who are you? You are God, Source energy in a physical body, a human body. You are Spirit in the flesh. You are Eternal Life expressing Itself as You. You are a cosmic being. The universe, all the colours. All the colors. You are all powerful. You are all knowing, all wisdom.

The most intuitive & intelligent teacher, anyway, is your body, you-yourself. Your body will always tell you the truth. You don't need to be a doctor, nurse or have a degree and accolades to listen and understand your body. The fun part about this miraculous body of yours, you know it the most intimately. Your breath alone is enough to move mountains. Trust them, for they will never lie to you. Moreover, when you're listening to someone, working with some, trust what they say—the content, that is—but really make yourself open to *how* it is they are saying it the way they are saying it, and why they are saying what it is they are saying, in the first place. It's all connected. All there is is this present moment.

Kordell KeyAndre: Often, the initial intensity of the connection can unearth deep-seated wounds, words, terms and definitions—symbols you'd rather stay away from, that both individuals need to heal. I encourage you to reflect on this discomfort, lean into the dis-ease, the dissonance, if you will. Allow yourself to learn from the pain, the tension therein, and grow beyond the initial stages of uncertainty, which is only a temporary sign and too shall pass. View the challenge as a test from Source, to see if you're really about what you say you're about, and view yourself as fully capable of accomplishing whatever it is before you. Again, question yourself: Why is it dis-comforting in the first place? What is this here to teach me? Trying to make sense of the issues that be by asking *why*.

“Symbols are not just symbols,” says author and audiobook narrator Clint Smith, “they are reflective. And names are not just names. And iconography is not just iconography. And holidays aren't just holidays. They are reflective of

the stories that people tell, and those stories embed themselves into the narratives that societies carry. And those narratives shape public policy, and public policy shapes the material conditions of people's lives. And that's not to say that taking down a statue of Robert E. Lee or making Juneteenth a holiday, it's going to erase the racial wealth gap. Of course not. [...] "But it is a recognition that these things are all part of the same ecosystem of stories and ideas that shape how we collectively understand what has happened to certain communities, and what must be done for certain communities moving forward as a result of what has happened to them."⁶⁵ *How The Word Is Passed: A Reckoning With the History of Slavery Across America* (2021) was a #1 New York Times Bestseller, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction, and named one of the New York Times 10 Best Books of 2021.

This new earth is not radical, but an act of self-care made only possible through a struggle/love battle to turn data into information into knowledge of self and, we hope, into wisdom. It is ancient wisdom. You know, the universe will only allow you to connect with a handful of genuine souls during your time here, so when you cross paths with a real one, treat them well. Trust them and believe, souls don't meet one another by chance ... Everything is in fact divine, even if it's contrary to popular opinion. At the same time, sometimes, asking *why is this happening* can get you into trouble. Sometimes, it's best to just leave it, your who what where when and why questions, up to chance. Surrender, accept, let it be and flow. Trust them, whoever they are, and believe.

This lesson is something I needed to gain discipline over. Growing up on stage had me turned all the way up. What I came to realize, through doing oral history as psychohistory, is that the magic is all in your actions and through your activity ... Time heals all wounds, yes, and, at the same time ... there is something that you have to *do* to prepare for what is coming. We've seen how these last four years have been moving, how they have been progressing, and if we are not putting ourselves in position ... to win ... we have another thing coming.

Kordell KeyAndre: A lot of times, we think things are just going to get better, automatically. It's what you do with that time though; it's how to spend that time that will make things better or worse. Or, perhaps just different. Better or worse alone is a matter of subjective opinion. Still, now matter how you spin it, there is something that you yourself have to do, in order to prepare for what is on the horizon, your destiny. It's all in your actions, my friend.

⁶⁵ Smith, Clint. "How The Word Is Passed: A Reckoning With the History of Slavery Across America" Little, Brown 2021.

Your actions drive from your thoughts, how you are taught to think about yourself and the world around you. Therefore, do nothing without intention. In this context, of knowing thy self and self-protection, self-preservation is the righteous thing to do, and you get there by way of cultivating your own private practice. To know who you are, at your very core, comes through constant meditation, prayer and diligent self-introspection. The results are in and they are invaluable. May the words of your mouth from here moving forward and the meditation of your heart from here on out, be pleasing to the Source of Self-Regard. To embody this sentiment in everything you do, brings forward the new earth ... I'm awake now, ... I'm here.

And I am my ancestors' wildest dreams. I have to understand this at once. That this life is but a dream. Speak what you seek until you see what you've said. Knowing you are the living word, a living embodiment of what was once a thought, a prayer, a whisper said in darkness, in silence. Remember who you are. You're doing just fine. I beg of you, keep pushing forward, standing and walking tall, head to the sky. Be still. Listen, to your body. Listen to and learn from the natural world. Learn and know your body, your first teacher. Know who you are. And don't give the foreigner permission to enter your mind-body-temple—your land, your first home, this is *your* shit. Paid for, in full, already.

There need be a clear code of conduct as it relates to this idea. Have some standards, and move accordingly.

I asked earlier how we got into this mind frame, in the first place. This awakening is not a NEW AGE movement. It is ancient wisdom. It is who we are at our deepest core. It's now a matter of re-membering. You are an infinite well of ancient lifetimes in mission to elevate consciousness.

A VIEW THROUGH THEM INITIATIVE

“One of the biggest promises we have to our democracy is the degree in which we don't share a common baseline of facts ... We are operating in completely different information universes.”

— President Barack Obama

From a 2018 Interview with David Letterman

Kordell KeyAndre: “Back in the West Wing, much of my team’s energy in the weeks before Christmas went toward pushing through the two most controversial bills left on my docket: “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) and the DREAM Act. Alongside abortion, guns, and just about anything to do with race, the issues of LGBTQ rights and immigration had occupied center stage in America’s culture wars for decades, in part because they raised the most basic question in our democracy—namely, who do we consider a true member of the American family, deserving of the same rights, respect, and concern that we expect for ourselves? I believed in defining that family broadly—it included gay people as well as straight, and it included immigrant families that had put down roots and raised kids here, even if they hadn’t come through the front door. [...]

That’s not to say that I dismissed those with different views on LGBTQ and immigration rights as heartless bigots. For one thing, “I had enough self-awareness—or at least a good enough memory—to know that my own attitudes toward gays, lesbians, and transgender people hadn’t always been particularly enlightened.

“I grew up in the 1970s, a time when LGBTQ life was far less visible to those outside the community [...].” As for immigration, during my youth I’d given the issue little thought beyond the vague mythology of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty transmitted through popular culture. The progression of my thinking came later, “when my organizing work in Chicago introduced me to the predominantly Mexican communities of Pilsen and Little Village—neighborhoods where the usual categories of native-born Americans, naturalized citizens, green-card holders, and undocumented immigrants all but dissolved, since many, if not most, families included all four. Over time, people shared with me what it was like to have to hide your background, always afraid that the life you’d worked so hard to build might be upended in an instant.”⁶⁶

Kordell KeyAndre: “A real leader uses every issue, no matter how serious and sensitive, to ensure that at the end of the debate we should emerge stronger and more united than ever before,” says the late Nelson Mandela, via a personal notebook, January 16, the year 2000.

+ + +

⁶⁶ Obama, Barack. “A Promised Land.” 2020.

Kordell KeyAndre: THE AURAL THESIS began for me as a public letter of protest. And with time to pass, it grew into a four-day “*interview process*”—dare I call it a leadership retreat? It will remain an experimental project on the difference of words, and how the meaning of said words changes over time, from person to person, land mass to land mass, time after time. The challenge about this work: history will always remain period-centered, which is not our objective. Our objective, as a science, is to solve for X ... a problem, issue, or subject matter of concern. Hence, the work of doing oral history as psychohistory. “Psychohistory, as a science, will always be problem-centered, while history will always remain period-centered. They are simply two separate tasks,” says Lloyd DeMause, an American psychoanalyst and social historian known for pioneering work in the field of psychohistory

“Success in politics demands that you must take your people into confidence about your views and state them very clearly, very politely, very calmly, but nevertheless state them openly,” says the late Nelson Mandela, via a conversation with Richard Stengel, April 29, the year 1993. This experimental project remains a unique oral history encounter, which spun more than twenty-four hours of student-led research, ultimately—eventually, morphing it-self into an admissions application for this very graduate program in oral history. Semi-modeled after Democracy and the Informed Citizen initiative, administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and in partnership with the Pulitzer Prizes, A View Through Them initiative seeks to deepen the public’s knowledge and appreciation of the vital connections between democracy, the humanities, journalism as well as oral history, historical dialogue and an informed citizenry. As a narrative medicine scholar-practitioner, passionate about protecting the environment, arts and culture, I am encouraged to view everyone I work with—to do this work through the lens of historical dialogue facilitation. [...]

EVERY THOUGHT, EVERY ACTION CREATES vibrations through this infinite field of consciousness. It’s important that we are each mindful of our thoughts and emotions, for their effects are far more potent than you at present may realize. Self-discipline, then, begins with the mastery of your thoughts. If you don’t control what you think, you can’t control what you do. Cleansing from all the so-called negative vibrations in the human mass consciousness is a narratology process within itself, a central message of the AVTT initiative. And still, it’s all a

matter of subjective opinion, what is low and what is high. It's all relative, you see. What's critically important though, across the board, no matter what color you are, is your awareness of self. A View Through Them initiative aims to do just that, the careful facilitation of views and stories of those who might be unremembered in the rush of history. A View Through Them initiative may look like expanding the circle of human concern, co-creating a new definition of human ecology that is inclusive of all our-selves. Now, at this point in the aural thesis, you might be thinking, "what in the world is a view through them?" Well, I'll tell you. 'A View Through Them' is a perspective that you generally wouldn't get. Some scholar-practitioners may call them "war stories"... for me, it's stories from people who might be unremembered in the rush of history. The unfiltered voices you didn't think you needed to hear. This is their story, how they see it. *This is a view through them.*

Kordell KeyAndre: Half way through my first year being a transfer student at SUNY Fredonia, I had begun thinking in earnest about my career path, and I am glad I did. What did I want to do long term? How would I like to contribute to society, and America's evolving democracy, if at all? How might classical training in the performing arts really best prepare someone like me for the upcoming millennium? In late fall of 2017, with the assistance of my then college roommate, Devin Johnson, I assembled a group of 10 undergraduate students with hopes and big dreams to direct and produce an experimental documentary film. This extracurricular activity, turned narrative medicine practice & lifestyle brand, is what encourages me to reimagine what is now A Publishing House, an imprint from the KeyAndre. After turning down an opportunity to perform the Star-Spangled Banner with the Fredonia Concert Band, I began questioning the effects of media messages on attitudes of national opinion, public memory and public policy altogether, and I am glad I did.

The summer of my graduation from Fredonia, I began my graduate student internship with Humanities New York, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and embarked on yet another transition. Who knew, years later, this change of major would send me down a path to build a perfect foundation for a career in the health and medical humanities field. Specifically, facilitating difficult conversations around conflict resolution and crisis management, supporting Others hone the art of conversation. "We know too well from our past experiences that robust and honest exchange of opinions and criticism is necessary for any society to be truly

democratic and for any government to stay on course,” says the late Nelson Mandela, via a Luncheon hosted by the Conference of Editors, South Africa, September 6, the year 1994.

My OHMA fieldwork and exhibit, *A View Through Them: An Americana Issue* (2020), spoke with educators of color who interrogated questions of media messages on attitudes of public health, public opinion, public memory and public school education. Today, I am still a man with an array of interests exploring a wide variety of topics: the dramatic formation of Masculine Identity; Sexuality, Gender and Identity Theory; Artificial Intelligence and its role in servicing devices; Human Rights, Public Health, Environmental Health and Clean Water Usage, among others. The subject matters of concern that impact us most are on the ballot across the country, in some way shape or form, the election year 2024—from equal pay and racial justice to women’s reproductive freedom and black maternal health; from women’s reproductive freedom and reproductive healthcare to climate change, funding for education and funding for health care. All these different things that have to get done. No knock warrants, having a national database for police misconduct. This stuff is a matter of life or death, it is not hyperbole, it’s not exaggeration. I look forward to incorporating my budding interest and passion for socio-historical commentary rooted in the discipline of psycho-history, into the forthcoming discussion-based product line *Discussions By Definition: a bridge to a new awakening*. From a national perspective, I invite you to join me on this journey. Likewise, my health & wellness podcast, *A View Through Them*, the podcast, will be a primary place for this product line.

Yes, for marketing. But for practicality, too. The active change, especially for those that need it most, is not going to happen in the podcast—the oral history encounter. Podcasts are very important—spreading via modern media streams has definitely helped wellness take off—but health & wellness is inherently participatory. The real work will happen in community. The initiative is not just to talk about politics and controversial issues of relevance, to document war-stories or sell products. It is to create a vast public health system change. Joe Holder has been instrumental in my thinking around this program: we need to foster increased community moments to connect people while engaged in wellness, not just talk about it. The whole COVID debacle opened my eyes to the apparent need for an initiative that centers the humanities, transparency and service, for the people by the people, and AVTT, the podcast is about making that effort more uniform and accessible to the public.

Kordell KeyAndre: “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn,” says Alvin Toffler. “Studying the humanities ... [helps us], says Frank Huyler. It helps us “become more aware, more insightful, more reflective, and—ultimately—more influential in shaping the trajectory of healthcare. It’s about encouraging the facility, willingness and ability to enter into the larger public debate in these cacophonous times, when collective silence will not serve. And, finally, it is about providing an outlet for both emotional engagement and self-reflection in a culture that typically denies both, looks outward rather than inward, and too often ignores not only the personal costs but the personal rewards of medical work.” I’m excited to help us usher in this new dawn, an awakening where our sun and Sirius ASCEND, and humanities CONSCIOUSNESS rises, too. Humanities level of consciousness and awareness is increasing before my eyes, as it is exposed to more powerful electromagnetic rays, as the ancestors inspire and guide us from an unseen dimension. Being on a spiritual path does not prevent you from facing the darkness, but it teaches you how to use the darkness as a tool to grow.

Coupled with my MA in oral history, ethnographic theory and methodology, I hope to apply current standards for conducting ethical research with human subjects and one day design frameworks for in-depth interviews to take place with health professionals, legal professionals, policy makers and representatives from international health NGOs and philanthropic agencies. One of the things I’ve learned throughout the past two years studying the heritage and etymology of oral history theory and methodology in the United States, is that it requires a level of vulnerability and self-awareness on behalf of all parties involved. This can include but is in no way confined to: Noticing the interior motivations of an author, and closely examining the musical world building being done with the words they so choose to call into play. More central to the KeyAndre narrative medicine practice than our production of recordings, transcripts, collections, audio-articles, and monographs, is the fact that we facilitate dialogues grounded in personal experience and interpretive reflections on the past, present, and thereafter. Our approach to oral history is very much a grounded theory that draws from a bottom up mechanic—starting first and foremost with thinking critically about our-selves, *we the people of the world*.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Kerr, Dan R. “Allan Nevins Is Not My Grandfather: The Roots of Radical Oral History Practice in the United States.” *Oral History Review*. Oxford University Press. Volume 43, Issue 2, Summer/Fall 2016. pp. 367-391

The interviews or recording sessions, I imagine, would result in first-person source material to potentially be used in medical and a health humanities education context, advancing knowledge in public health and public memory, as well as both drawing on and contributing to theory and methods of my social and behavioral science disciplinary concentration: narrative medicine. More to come about doing narrative *as* medicine later.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: The past three years have been some of the most challenging moments of my life to date, and that's not to say there haven't been some uplifting ups with the downs. I mean, I'll spare you the minute details but ... I mean, hooking up with countless men, having unprotected sex: just disastrous and uncanny behavior, un-safe ... carelessly destroying myself, my self-image, looking for love in all the wrong places, giving myself to random people, not knowing my worth, my value; the gossiping, talking about people behind their back ..., carelessly; the reckless eating of meat and genetically modified foods; the reckless driving ... the speeding tickets, the car crash and totaling of my car ... I was hospitalized and saw a psychiatrist for a mental breakdown ... I mean, this was my awakening, a scary time to navigate adulthood, right on the heels of a global pandemic. To act as if this was not real life would be doing myself a disservice. To pretend as if I am crazy, or delusional, would be a slap in the face to my education attainment. I know who I am, I know where I've been. I am in fact of the right mind, and this shit American living is bonkers! The self-discipline one so-called black person must have, to navigate the straight and narrow—while being kind, poised and respectful and decent human beings—is a true test of character.

To all the people who dismissed me, who wrote me off, who gave up on me before I even knew what it meant to give up on myself ... Thank you. I believe you were the cause sending me down this spiral path of destruction. I said no more to the performance and pandering. You knew exactly what I needed before I knew myself. I needed to study, I needed to read, and of most importance I needed to learn and remember how to be who I am meant to be: I needed to destroy that past version of who I once was, who I once knew myself to be, in order to get myself to this next Chapter/Episode. In this way, the challenge., it is good for us, I thought. I am better for the hang ups, the ups and downs. I am a better human being because of the trials and tribulations of the past three years. The challenge., it showed me what I need to improve upon. All this time, fighting and going back and forth, with myself, really. I am more myself because of it, because of you, your choices, your decisions. I'm thankful to have maintained a steadfast-ness about life throughout this process, and made it through, unscathed. My physical health is

still intact, that is. The psychological warfare though, as far as I'm concerned ... Looking back, the year now 2024, how I safely navigated *that* situation, as professionally as I knew how at the time, that COVID-19 vaccine simply did not fit my lifestyle and I needed to stand by that. And every instance of push back I received, from my former employer, from friends to family, it insulted my intelligence. It undermined my ability to think critically, to think for myself, autonomy. To make decisions about my life—about my body. This is the basis of any thriving democracy, the ability to choose for your-self. I was 25 years old when my first agency—they dismissed me. This is a war story. This is American history at its finest.

The way most people treated me—peers, colleagues, friends, family—on the basis of what was supposed to be public health and safety, I think apologies are in order. The shadow banning, the cancellations, the targeting and repeated attempts to slander peoples names and reputations. It's a shame really. Some people really think they're doing right, by encouraging other people-them to defile their body—the temple, residence, where Source and the Spirit of God resides—meanwhile, the whole time, it is the speech of ignorance, it is fear. But, don't do it for them. Don't apologize for them. Today, I now comprehend, how I am treated is rarely ever about me, personally, who I am at my core, but a reflection of one's level of consciousness—their courage—at the time. A mirror, reflecting back to me a version of myself. How I am treated is their karma, how I treat them is mine. Listen, be still, watch and observe. Do not engage with what you do not agree with. Save yourself the pain and heartache. I get that now., But in the moment, the level of rejection broke my heart.

Kordell KeyAndre: I fought to be seen, I fought to be heard, I fought to be understood... I wanted to feel as though I belonged. And the whole time, I was only hurting myself by giving into the nonsense. The pushing of a transnational agenda to deploy a militarized medical takeover of the bodies on this Planet Earth; I wanted to be seen, I wanted to be heard, I wanted to be understood. Now I know, I now comprehend. All I want is my peace of mind. Your body is the temple of God; Don't let anything defile it for it is holy! Where I thought I did something terribly wrong, choosing myself in the madness that is American cultural racism is always going to be the best thing to do. Choosing yourself, mi amor, is always the best thing for you to do.

Kordell KeyAndre:

Why was I doubting myself in the first place? Why would I be paranoid in the first place?

What a silly question, mi amor. There is no such thing as a silly question, really. Some questions are just meant to be rhetorical, by nature. Regardless, like the rent prices, still I rise. I write in this way, with a view toward the future, and read aloud for the record ... and I document this moment, this vaccination-war story ... in particular here in the AURAL THESIS, in this last Chapter/Episode, I do this to let it be a part of my narrative. I imagine this whole COVID-19 global pandemic public catastrophic event debacle thing will be recorded by history, in their words not mine; the media-them, the journalists, they'll all have something patriotic to say ... but where the individually disrupted lives are concerned, obscured by the enormity of facts and figures, *this is my testimony*. This, too, is American history.

If you or someone you know finds amusement, or in some way benefit from this An Americana Issue Oral History Project, great. It must be said, my friends: the rumination process was for me. Selfishly speaking: A restoration of my very character.

Kordell KeyAndre:

No one can give you the truth. Not your teacher, not your mother or your father. The truth

is already in you. "If you let the words enter you," says Thich Nhat Hanh, "the soil and the seeds will do the rest of the work." One commonality between those mentioned, those interviewed, those read about and those who I've had the privilege to professionally work with—so-called black, so-called white and Otherwise: We are each seeking connection; to feel like we belong. And still, in spite of our collective differences—different definitions of what it means to be black and brown and of color in the 21st century, all of it—we need each other to exist in totality. The universe makes no mistakes, so if it's here, it's meant to be here, for a reason, paid for, in full, all ready, beyond your personal feelings or opinions. "What is needed, rather than running away or controlling or suppressing or any other resistance, is understanding fear; that means, watch it, learn about it, come directly into contact with it. We are to learn about fear, not how to escape from it." Face it, deal with it. Accept it. This is a spiritual practice. The point of spirituality isn't to just act like everything is pretty & positive all of the time and like everything will always just work out. It's meant to be hard, a challenge, by design. The point is not to run, or hide, or sweep the uncomfortable shit under the rug, this avoiding defeats the cotton-picking purpose. The point, now, is to give you the tools to turn complex situations into opportunities, tough lemons into lemonade, and empower you to work through the heavy

emotions you face in your daily life in a healthy, productive way. “‘Discussions by Definition’ can assist us on our way.” We need to be able to responsibly move through our pain points, stressors, the discomfort and agony, all our differences and in a constructive manner, my friends, like our lives depend on it. Because they do. Our life depends on it. We need to do this, in order to make real progress on the grounds of conflict resolution, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and democracy promotion and see the next next sunrise; the basis of PEACEBUILDING, RECONCILIATION, and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

+ + +

Kordell KeyAndre: THE AURAL THESIS is a multidisciplinary work, cross-culturally made to outline who and what has influenced the author or writer socially, emotionally, economically or politically, intellectually or aesthetically. Its contents span a variety of topics that cross traditional boundaries of history and psychology. The chosen narrator has spoken aloud this inaugural aural thesis—inspired by the author or writer’s master of arts program application—not necessarily for you, the audience of close-readers and close-listeners; not for your comfort level either but—to continue the excavation of a healing, for the author or writer’s soul. If you or someone you know finds amusement or in some way benefit from its existence, great, again, great. But it must be said, my friends: the initial intent of the AVTT: AN AMERICANA ISSUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT was of the artist’s own fruition. In fewer words, this work-day is not about you. The years’ rumination process—was for me. Listening over the words the author has since written and talking through aloud what may have surprised or unsettled you, for example, or more generally what may have moved you, is a form of NARRATOLOGY—within itself.

It’s said to build community; it’s to communicate, it’s to express, it’s to understand. “It is also to support the use of imagination, to show others that there is always more to explore, and that in this exploration is where the discovery lies. Writing, creativity, imagination, exploration—these are not things restricted to people who deem themselves ‘writers,’ to people who write professionally or aim for publication.” [...] “These are [literary] tools open to all of us. And part of the way that we teach these tools is to demonstrate them ourselves [hence, the act of doing this aural thesis]—to be flexible in our own work, encouraging of explorations as we, too, explore.”

Kordell KeyAndre: We the people of the world are as much a part of them—who-ever and whom-ever they are to you—“all our relatives.”—as they are a part of us, we the people. Though I say with hesitancy that I am

making an early career pivot, I will always be passionate about American history, identity theory and social studies education—an education that promotes compassionate living, peace-making, social justice, equity, financial freedom and respect for nature—and all living beings. As someone born here in the so-called Americas, I am always ready to marvel at just how much I have done, and with so little time.

Throughout the duration of the AVTT: An Americana Issue case study report, I notice one commonality between those mentioned, those interviewed, those read about and those who I've had the privilege to professionally work with—black, white and otherwise: we are each seeking connection; to feel like we belong in our own skin. Beloved, no matter what emotion you're feeling right now, you very much belong here. You're more than enough. And you very much so belong, here.

With everything that is has and will continue to take place within this Americana Context, I must say this and with love: my inner light is not too bright, whatever that means, you're just use to dimming yours in order to fit in or be accepted through the world; I am not intimidating, you are just intimidated and taken aback by your reflection, there is a difference – learn to vastly accept what yourself; I do not take up too much space, you're just use to playing small, again to fit in or be accepted through the world; I am neither mean nor aggressive, I am honest and assertive in my self-expression and authentic with my PERFORMANCE and that makes you uncomfortable, uneasy, what-have-you; and I do not make you uncomfortable, my presence simply challenges your comfort and fragility, pushing you to be better, which you then interpret as a treat or something to ward off or defend against; I will not be less in order for you to feel better about yourself. It has nothing to do with age and everything to do with the mind of the individual – psychologically speaking, you have to have the right mind if you want to get by.

Kordell KeyAndre: In the conclusion to *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952 and 1976) Franz Fanon makes a certain reference to history, which he contrasts to that of invention and that of self-creation: “My life must not be devoted to making an assessment of black values,” (from the outside looking inward, i.e., the white man’s perspective.) “There is no white world; there is no white ethic—any more than there is a white intelligence. There are from one end of the world to the other men who are searching. I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction,” I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction, in the

white or black or color coded direction. (I must look for my destiny in my own direction, on my own terms and conditions). "I must constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life. In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself." [...] (229). "I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further. And we see that through a specific problem there emerges one of action."

Kordell KeyAndre: "Are you gonna be part of the problem or part of the solution?" "I'm gonna be the whole problem," I thought. Yes, you, beloved, are the author of the very unresolved issues that be, as well as the maker of the best of medicines. The power resides within you. Always has, always will be. You just have to be open enough to the chance, the possibilities, and look close enough to see the situation differently. To change your view. Over time, in this way, you are a vessel; and source consciousness is flowing through you and using you as a vessel to speak enlightenment, and light & love. And truth to power. Choose to be the light, a righteous example.

What you see today as an issue, may in fact be carrying the very solution, if you look a little closer, or perhaps zoom out some. They can be you, they can be your mother. In the end, your origin story dictates where you go. After all's said and done—after the reading and writing, the researching and studying—after the curtain falls and the actors leave for home, I believe we each are who we are, regardless of what happens in the in between. The point is to make the journey, the process as meaningful as possible. The choice is yours. Remember who you are, your power.

Not who we wanted to be. Not who we were. But who we are, already. Terms and definitions aside, having knowledge of self and trusting said understanding is more than enough. You are more than enough, just as you are. Just remember who you are. No more wallowing in the shame of who you thought you were, who they think you are and failed to be, or who you think you should be, but take me as I am -- accept yourself for exactly who you are.

They can also at the very same time be the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea, and the tall trees you see all around you—who all, at the very same time of my writing and reading at least might seem to be inconsequential but in all actual reality, they -- the children, them, of the most high -- are just as much a part of you—your past present and thereafter—your mind-body temple. What happens when you create distance between yourself and them—the Other, as if they are not part of your existence? It's all connected, it's happening all around you. It's all a part of you. They live within you. Everything is love. God is love. It is all a part of you, mi amor. A

marvelous projection of sorts. They are whoever you need them to be. They are forever us—individuals ready for the world, regardless of the time of day, the brand, label or title, the definition—whether you find yourself on that stage or off, on air or not, you are the creator, you are creating, all the time, and you are being watched after and cared for, protected, guided, inspired, always and in all ways. Trust them, whoever they are, as they know what they are doing, with or without your knowing it. You are actively moving into being. All of nature and creation sees you. Future education of colour, remember

how loved you are.

Kordell KeyAndre: Truth is, there is no them, there is only one whole. The English language, the King's English is a trip, within itself. Remember how loved you are. The narrative prelude remains an offering. It's my contribution to changing society, a democracy in peril. Or, a democracy in transition. A little something diligently prepared over the course of three years. If you or someone you know finds amusement, or in some way benefit from its existence, great. But, it must be said, my friends: the rumination process—that is, working through and processing something thoroughly, writing for the ear and reading aloud this thing, asking for forgiveness, reading and writing and researching more and more about God only knows—studying all these man made horrors, so that they are no longer beyond my comprehension—rinsing and repeating the process—was for me.

Selfishly speaking: A restoration of my very character.

This internal narrative-based work was deeply impactful. A personal thinking journey, if you will. At a certain age things are not misunderstandings or mistakes anymore, I thought. At a certain age one must be responsible for their own research, their own self-education.

Education. Education not meant to be a public endeavor, I thought. One's self-education is exactly just that: Who you are... it's your character. How you show up.

How you manage to make sense of all of these new ideas and definitions, emotions and stories — — how you will become a more beautiful human being in the world; and more importantly, I think the choice is entirely up

to you. The ability to choose; autonomy. Being able to step up and out of our lives, self-correct, change our minds, become a new and mold ourselves into who you of all people want to be. “The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.” [...] They, “have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.” There is work required. In this way, your beauty is created, your beauty is earned. Like a badge or a vote. You have to work for this.

I believe writing can help you capture that critical thinking, to secure that seat, to get to that promised land, an internal and personal foraging process.

At least, I know it has for me.

* * *

Kordell KeyAndre: The mission of Humanities New York (HNY) is to strengthen civil society and the bonds of community, using the humanities to foster engaged inquiry and dialogue around social and cultural concerns. HNY uses the tools of the humanities to foster engaged inquiry around social and cultural concerns, that is. The most essential of these tools is “open,” “honest,” and “substantive” dialogue about the “hopes,” “anxieties,” and “obstacles” that unite or divide us. The art of conversation. Engaged inquiry, to be curious and open-minded about the hopes, anxieties, and obstacles that unite or divide us—it is a pillar of informal democracy that strengthens society. This type of conversation—structured and informed yet nimble enough to respond to the opinions and experiences of participants—is a hallmark of the public humanities. There is an urgent need to move from distrust into trust. Otherwise, democracy will not flourish.

Kordell KeyAndre: On the other hand, at the same time, one cannot dismiss the very nature and founding of this country. The whole history of America is the history of rich white men, telling not so rich or lesser rich white people, that their so-called enemies are so-called black and so-called brown; it starts in the colonies of what would become the U.S. It’s all propaganda ... they bank on your not being able to see through the smoke screen. Kaepernick’s protests ignited a national movement throughout sports leagues and he has not played professionally

since the 2016 NFL season. Kaepernick has filed a grievance against the league alleging collusion by team owners as the reason he remains unsigned, the year now 2024.

I think we all can agree, *racism sucks*. We are all, like, dynamic humans and creatures, and we haven't evolved past race, still. Talking and writing about racism, and the trauma and drama it has the potential to foster, doesn't make it all go away. It's dense with subject matters and all these other things and more things and even more things. But if you do the math, and figure out a way to see through it all ... you'll see it was always about money, greed, power. It was never about RACE, it was always about MONEY. It'll take time for us to work our way through the issue itself, by asking why. Understanding many of the fundamental processes that underlie traumatic stress, the underbelly if you will—however, opens the door to an array of interventions that can bring the brain areas related to self-regulation, self-perception, and attention back online—a resolution. We as a society know full well not only how to treat trauma but also, increasingly, how to prevent it, the year now 2024. "Discussions of PTSD," says Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. and author of *The Body Keeps The Score: Brain, Mind, And Body In The Healing of Trauma* (2015), "tend to focus on recently returned soldiers, victims of terrorist bombing, or survivors of terrible accidents [still]. But trauma remains a much larger public health issue, arguably the greatest threat to our national well-being."

Kordell KeyAndre: What I've learned throughout this difficult reading and writing process, in particular the writing and less so the reading: difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations; nothing is lost in the end. Salvage the bones, use everything to your advantage. If you operate in your definition of excellence, with pure intentions, you can never go wrong. Others might see it differently, but really this war-story was never about them. Wrong or right, that is, difficult or with ease, Red pill or to go blue, republican or democrat, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It's all a matter of perspective. How you make sense of this crazy little thing called love is up to *you*. I guess that's the fun part. Your perspective on the matter, whatever it is, is key; it will either become your prison or your passport. The choice is yours. The ability to choose; autonomy.

The ability to choose what path to take, what to prove and how to make sense of the road ahead. Circumstances may change, and still, we say, down with colonialism and imperialism, whatever that means. Everything is love. "Shakespeare was writing at a time of transition, when the world was moving from primarily

oral to written communication—when most people were still signing their name with an X.” X marks the spot for sure, and in this way, your name (last, middle or first) is your legacy, a sign-off of sorts, your signature, another non-fiction short-story of what you leave behind. Something to be remembered for and by ... the author.

How do you want to be remembered?

Kordell KeyAndre: I believe there is an art to talking about race and "identity sensitive topics," just like there is an art to designing inclusive curricula material. Let's continue to bring members from your faculty and staff into a productive, responsible dialogue around things that matter to them, the parents and, chiefly, the students. "We are on the verge of becoming a trauma-conscious society. Almost every day one of my colleagues publishes another report on how trauma disrupts the workings of mind, brain, and body. The ACE study showed how early abuse devastates health and social functioning, while James Heckman won a Nobel Prize for demonstrating the vast savings produced by early intervention in the lives of children from poor and troubled families: more high school graduations, less criminality, increased employment, and decreased family and community violence." Historical dialogue and accountability is a growing field of advocacy and scholarship that encompasses the efforts of conflict, post-conflict, and post-dictatorial societies to come to terms with their pasts. Historical dialogue places special emphasis on reaching new generations and considering how the meaning of the past changes with the passage of time. Historical dialogue provides the tools to deconstruct historical narratives, to challenge past myths, and to consider the evolution of narratives about the past and how they continue to influence political, social and cultural structures.

Moreover, historical dialogue is a valuable tool in achieving the long-term goals of conflict resolution, reconciliation, peacebuilding, restorative justice, ultimately, democracy promotion. Historical dialogue makes visible the causes and consequences of disputed histories, acknowledges victims, and involves a wide-range of experts- academics, activists, victims, officials, and affected communities-in an effort to create new paths for moving a society away from conflict. "What is needed, rather than running away or controlling or suppressing or any other resistance, is understanding fear; that means, watch it, learn about it, come directly into contact with it. We are to learn about fear, not how to escape from it," Face it, deal with it, no matter how scary it may be. The challenge before you is here for a reason. It is my hope this card series—"Discussions by Definition"—will help to stimulate

discussion between democrats and republicans, parents and children, doctors and patients, teachers and students, alike—wherever there may be a power indifference to be resolved, reconciled, answered for, or simply made sense of, through intentionally slowing down and hyper focussing on the definition in hand—interviewer and interviewee, documentor and documented, mentor and mentee. “All over the world I meet people.” [...] “who work tirelessly to develop and apply more effective interventions, whether devoted teachers, social workers, doctors, therapists, nurses, philanthropists, theater directors, prison guards, police officers, or meditation coaches.” So, I ask again, how do you want to be remembered? What does it look like to do the righteous thing?

“Most great instigators of social change have intimate personal knowledge of trauma. Oprah Winfrey comes to mind, as do Maya Angelou, Nelson Mandela, and Elie Wiesel. Read the life history of any visionary, and you will find insights and passions that came from having dealt with devastation. [...] The same is true of societies. Many of our most profound advances grew out of experiencing trauma: the abolition of slavery from the Civil War, Social Security in response to the Great Depression, and the GI Bill, which produced our once vast and prosperous middle class, from World War II. Trauma is now our most urgent public health issue, and we have the knowledge necessary to respond effectively. The choice is ours to act on what we know.”

Kordell KeyAndre: Stay focused and remain humble, my friends. The road ahead is a challenging one. But it's not for naught. Had I known then what I know now, I think I'd be worlds away from where I am: working through and processing, writing for the ear and reading aloud this thing, WRITING and READING more and more about God only knows—studying, reading widely, so they—these issues, are no longer beyond my comprehension. In other words, doing oral history *as* psychohistory. It's a culture. It's a lifestyle. Then again, had I known then what I know now, I wouldn't be where I am. I guess it all needed to happen, for a reason. A reason beyond me and my asking why on earth would something like this exist? Where I am right now—for that wisdom, I am thankful. I am content. I am full. Now I know better ... And I forgive myself, for my ignorant state ... because self-shame is just another form of self-sabotage, only leading to more self-judgment, self-abuse and regret. Remember, real progress on the grounds of conflict resolution, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and democracy promotion; the basis of PEACEBUILDING, RECONCILIATION, and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ... starts with us. It cannot start with a species—a virus—who is killing us; their sole purpose and objective for being here: to chignon energy off of us.

Assata Shakur once said, "Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them." It's true. It starts with you, and your actions, which derive from your thoughts. ... Reclaim your mind, your peace, what is rightfully yours. ... It starts with the one—you, the author or writer. The ultimate source of self-regard. How you feel and what you know to be true about yourself matters before all and anyone else. Trust and believe in your power. Do not give them permission to undermine your natural, Gd given authority, a birthright.

The moral of the story: be self-assured. Know who you are.

Blessed we are to dance on this ground. May we walk in beauty and remember your song ... remember why you came here, in the first place. Remember, all that you say, think, and do—whatever it is you are doing—is a sacred act and a spiritual experience. This tool—discussions by definition—is dedicated to assisting you in awakening to that presence within; that knows already its purpose and is simply seeking now to be the divine expression of the Source of self-regard. Cheers, to memory-making memories throughout life for a lifetime. It's time to think outside the box. That's what the art of conversation is all about. Be gentle and kind to one another. I love you, mi amor. For more information on the KeyAndre keyword research and analysis methodology, and recruitment for A View Through Them community oral history projects, please visit Kordell Keyandre Hammond on LinkedIn.

ABRIDGED VERSION

Resources, Works Cited and Bibliography

History, Critical Race Theory, Race and Racism

- THE BLACK JACOBIANS. **C.L.R. JAMES**
- "THE OMNI-AMERICANS: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON BLACK EXPERIENCE AND AMERICAN CULTURE." **ALBERT MURRAY**, OUTERBRIDGE & DIENSTFREY NEW YORK, 1970.
- "THE NUTMEG'S CURSE: PARABLES FOR A PLANET IN CRISIS." **AMITAV GHOSH**, THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2021.
- "POLICING THE BLACK MAN: ARREST, PROSECUTION, AND IMPRISONMENT." **ANGELA J. DAVIS**, VINTAGE BOOKS, 2017.
- "KILLING RAGE: ENDING RACISM." **BELL HOOKS**, HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY, 1995.
- "HOW THE WORD IS PASSED: A RECKONING WITH THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY ACROSS AMERICA." **CLINT SMITH**, LITTLE, BROWN, 2021.
- "RACE, TRAUMA, AND HOME IN THE NOVELS OF TONI MORRISON." **EVELYN J. SCHREIBER**, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010.
- "BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS." **FRANZ FANON**, GROVE PRESS, 1952/2008.
- "STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING: THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF RACIST IDEAS IN AMERICA." **IBRAM X. KENDI**, 2016.
- "CASTE: THE ORIGINS OF OUR DISCONTENTS." **ISABEL WILKERSON**, 2020.
- "BLACK/QUEER/DIASPORA AT THE CURRENT CONJUNCTURE." **JAFARI K. ALLEN**, GLQ: A JOURNAL OF LESBIAN AND GAY STUDIES, DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2012, PP. 211-247. FROM READ.DUKEUPRESS.EDU/GLQ/ARTICLE-PDF/18/2-3/211/414697/GLQ182-3_01ALLEN_FPP.PDF
- "UNDER THE SKIN: THE HIDDEN TOLL OF RACISM ON AMERICAN LIVES AND ON THE HEALTH OF OUR NATION." **LINDA VILLAROSA**, DOUBLEDAY, 2022.
- "TALKING TO STRANGERS: WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE PEOPLE WE DON'T KNOW." **MALCOLM GLADWELL**, LITTLE BROWN AND COMPANY, 2019.
- "THE 1619 PROJECT: A NEW ORIGIN STORY." **NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES**, NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY, 2021.
- "THE COLOR OF LAW: A FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF HOW OUR GOVERNMENT SEGREGATED AMERICA." **RICHARD ROTHSTEIN**, W.W. NORTON AND COMPANY, 2017.

- "WHITE FRAGILITY." **ROBIN DIANGELO**, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, 2011.
- "PROGRESSIVE DYSTOPIA: ABOLITION, ANTI-BLACKNESS, SCHOOLING IN SAN FRANCISCO." **SAVANNAH SHANGE**, DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019.
- "WE WERE EIGHT YEARS IN POWER: AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY." **TA-NEHISI COATES**, RANDOM HOUSE, 2017.
- "A BLACK GAZE: ARTISTS CHANGING HOW WE SEE." **TINA M. CAMPT**, THE MIT PRESS, 2021.

Public Memory, Trauma, Counseling Psychology and Psychoanalysis

- "THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE: BRAIN, MIND, AND BODY IN THE HEALING OF TRAUMA." **BESSEL VAN DER KOLK**, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, 2014.
- "JAY-Z SAYS THE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY IS 'RIDICULOUS'." **CAROLYN L. TODD**, SELF WEB MAGAZINE, 30 JANUARY, 2018, SELF.COM/STORY/JAY-Z-MENTAL-HEALTH-STIGMA-IN-THE-BLACK-COMMUNITY
- "CLIENT-CENTERED THERAPY: ITS CURRENT PRACTICE, IMPLICATIONS AND THEORY." **CARL R. ROGERS**, ROBINSON, 1951.
- "CARL ROGERS: DIALOGUES." **CARL R. ROGERS**, HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY, 1989.
- "ON BECOMING A PERSON: A THERAPIST'S VIEW OF PSYCHOTHERAPY." **CARL R. ROGERS**, MARINER BOOKS, 1961.
- "COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY: NEWER CONCEPTS IN PRACTICE." **CARL R. ROGERS**, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY, 1942.
- "CARL ROGERS ON PERSONAL POWER: INNER STRENGTH AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY IMPACT." **CARL R. ROGERS**, ROBINSON, 2016 (reprint).
- "INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNSELING PROFESSION, SIXTH EDITION." **DAVID CAPUZZI** AND DOUGLAS R. GROSS, ROUTLEDGE TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP, 2013.
- "LINCOLN'S MELANCHOLY: HOW DEPRESSION CHALLENGED A PRESIDENT AND FUELED HIS GREATNESS." **JOSHUA WOLF SHENK**, MARINER BOOKS, 2005.
- "POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME: AMERICA'S LEGACY OF ENDURING INJURY & HEALING." **JOY DEGRUY**. 2017.
- "THE DEEPEST WELL: HEALING THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY." **NADINE BURKE HARRIS**, MARINER BOOKS, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT, 2018.
- "WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?: CONVERSATIONS ON TRAUMA, RESILIENCE, AND HEALING." **OPRAH WINFREY**, BRUCE D. PERRY, FLATIRON BOOKS, 2021.

- "WHITE PRIVILEGE: ESSENTIAL READINGS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF RACISM." **PAULA S. ROTHENBERG**. WORTH PUBLISHERS, 2002.
- "MY GRANDMOTHER'S HANDS: RACIALIZED TRAUMA AND THE PATHWAY TO MENDING OUR HEARTS AND BODIES." **RESMAA MENAKEM**, CENTRAL RECOVERY PRESS, 2017.
- "QUAKING OF AMERICA: AN EMBODIED GUIDE TO NAVIGATING OUR NATION'S UPHEAVAL AND RACIAL RECKONING." **RESMAA MENAKEM**, THE CENTRAL RECOVERY PRESS, 2022.
- "RACE AND EPISTEMOLOGIES OF IGNORANCE." **SHANNON SULLIVAN** AND **NANCY TUANA**, EDS., 2007.
- "THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE." **SIGMUND FREUD**, W. W. NORTON, 1901.
- "AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDY." **SIGMUND FREUD**, W.W. NORTON, 1925.
- "AN OUTLINE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS." **SIGMUND FREUD**, 1940.
- "ON THE HISTORY OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC MOVEMENT." **SIGMUND FREUD**, 1914.
- "CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS." **SIGMUND FREUD**, INTERNATIONALER PSYCHOANALYTISCHER VERLAG WIEN, 1930.

Philosophy and Dialectics

- "I ASKED FOR WONDER: A SPIRITUAL ANTHOLOGY." **ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL**, THE CROSSROAD COMPANY, NEW YORK, 1983.
- "TEACHING COMMUNITY: A PEDAGOGY OF HOPE." **BELL HOOKS**, ROUTLEDGE, 2003/2019.
- "THE YAMAS & NIYAMAS: EXPLORING YOGA'S ETHICAL PRACTICE." **DEBORAH ADELE**, ON-WORD BOUND BOOKS, LLC, DULUTH, MINNESOTA, 2009.
- "HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT." **GEORGE WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL**, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1977.
- "THE PHYSICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: IN THE QUANTUM FIELD, MINERALS, PLANTS, ANIMALS AND HUMAN SOULS." **IVAN ANTIC**, SAMKHYA PUBLISHING LTD, LONDON, 2021.
- "HOW PROPAGANDA WORKS." **JASON STANLEY**, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015.
- "THE EAR OF THE OTHER: AUTOBIOGRAPHY, TRANSFERENCE, TRANSLATION." **JACQUES DERRIDA**, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS, 1985.

- "THE BASIC POLITICAL WRITINGS: THE BASIC POLITICAL WRITINGS." **JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU**, HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INDIANAPOLIS/CAMBRIDGE, 1987.
- "WHITE RACISM: A PSYCHOHISTORY." **JOEL KOVEL**, RANDOM HOUSE, 1971.
- "DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT: PHILOSOPHICAL FRAGMENTS." **MAX HORKHEIMER**, THEODOR W. ADORNO, STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1987/2002.
- "DISCIPLINE & PUNISHMENT: THE BIRTH OF THE PRISON." **MICHAEL FOUCAULT**, VINTAGE BOOKS, 1995.
- "EDUCATION FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS." **PAULO FREIRE**, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC, 2021.
- "MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING." **VIKTOR E. FRANKL**, BEACON PRESS, BOSTON, 2006.

Social Studies, Oral History Theory and Methodology

- "A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES." **HOWARD ZINN**, HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS, 1980/2003.
- "THE HEARTBEAT OF WOUNDED KNEE: NATIVE AMERICA FROM 1890 TO THE PRESENT." **DAVID TREUER**, RIVERHEAD BOOKS, 2019.
- "HOW TO HIDE AN EMPIRE: A HISTORY OF THE GREATER UNITED STATES." **DANIEL IMMERWAHR**, PICADOR, 2019.
- "BEYOND WOMEN'S WORDS: FEMINISM AND THE PRACTICE OF ORAL HISTORY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY." **KATRINA SRIGLEY**, STACEY ZEMBRZYCKI AND FRANCA IACOVETTA, ROUTLEDGE TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP, 2018.
- "COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND THE 'CONVERSATION OF MANKIND.'" **KENNETH BRUFFEE**, COLLEGE ENGLISH, VOL. 46, NO. 7, 1985, PP. 87-98.
- "ORAL HISTORY OFF THE RECORD: TOWARD AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF PRACTICE." PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2013.
- "LISTENING ON THE EDGE: ORAL HISTORY IN THE AFTERMATH OF CRISIS." **MARK CAVE AND STEPHEN M. SLOAN**, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014.
- "THE ORAL HISTORY READER." THIRD EDITION. **ROBERT PERKS AND ALISTAIR THOMSON**, ROUTLEDGE TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP, 2016.
- "HISTORY OF ORAL HISTORY: FOUNDATIONS AND METHODOLOGY." **THOMAS L. CHARLTON**, LOIS E. MYERS, AND REBECCA SHARPLESS, ALTAMIRA PRESS, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY, 2007.

- **"THE BLACK SHOALS: OFFSHORE FORMATIONS OF BLACK AND NATIVE STUDIES." TIFFANY LETHABO KING, DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019.**
- **"RETHINKING ORAL HISTORY & TRADITION." NÉPIA MAHUIKA, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019.**
- "THE NEW PSYCHOHISTORY." **LLOYD DEMAUSE**, THE PSYCHOHISTORY PRESS, 1975.
- "RISING STRONG." **BRENÉ BROWN**, RANDOM HOUSE, 2015.
- "CHROMOPHOBIA." **DAVID BATCHELOR**, REAKTION BOOKS, 2000.
- "WAYWARD LIVES, BEAUTIFUL EXPERIMENTS: INTIMATE HISTORIES OF RIOTOUS BLACK GIRLS, TROUBLESOME WOMEN, AND QUEER RADICALS." **SAIDIYA HARTMAN**, W.W. NORTON & COMPANY, 2020.

Public Health, Medicine, Literature, Criticism and Literary Studies

- "REMEMBERED RAPTURE: THE WRITER AT WORK." **BELL HOOKS**, HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY, 1999.
- "THE GREENING OF AMERICA." **CHARLES A. REICH**, RANDOM HOUSE, 1970.
- "LIFE LESSONS: TWO EXPERTS ON DEATH & DYING TEACH US ABOUT THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE & LIVING." **ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS** AND DAVID KESSLER, SCRIBNER, 2000/2014.
- "THE NATURE OF SUFFERING AND THE GOALS OF MEDICINE." **ERIC J. CASSELL**, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1991/2004.
- **"CRITICAL TERMS FOR LITERARY STUDY." FRANK LENTRICCHIA AND THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 1989.**
- "ETHICAL LONELINESS: THE INJUSTICE OF NOT BEING HEARD." **JILL STAUGGER**, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015.
- **"THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF NARRATIVE MEDICINE." RITA CHARON, SAYANTANI DASGUPTA, NELLIE HERMAN, CRAIG IRVINE, ERIC R. MARCUS, EDGAR RIVERSA COLÓN, DANIELLE SPENCER, MAURA SPIEGEL, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016.**
- "PLAYING IN THE DARK: WHITENESS AND THE LITERARY IMAGINATION." **TONI MORRISON**, 1992.
- **"THE SOURCE OF SELF-REGARD: SELECTED ESSAYS, SPEECHES, AND MEDITATIONS." TONI MORRISON, ALFRED A. KNOPF, 2019.**
- **"LITERATE THOUGHT: UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSION AND LITERACY." JONES & BARTLETT LEARNING, 2011.**

Nonfiction, Social Commentary, Memoir and Autobiography

- “JUST AS I AM: A MEMOIR.” **CICELY TYSON**, HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS, 2021.
- “LIVING FOR CHANGE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.” **GRACE LEE BOGGS**, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 1998/2016.
- “BECOMING.” **MICHELLE OBAMA**, CROWN, 2018.
- THE LIGHT WE CARRY: OVERCOMING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES.” **MICHELLE OBAMA**, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, 2022.
- “LONG WALK TO FREEDOM: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF NELSON MANDELA.” **NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA**, LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY, 1994.
- “YOUR ARE YOUR BEST THING: VULNERABILITY, SHAME RESILIENCE, AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE.” **TARANA BURKE** AND **BRENÉ BROWN**, RANDOM HOUSE, 2021.
- “FINDING ME.” **VIOLA DAVIS**. HARPERONE, 2022.
- “THREE GUINEAS.” **VIRGINIA WOOLF**, HARVEST BOOK, 1938.

Acknowledgments & Product Details

Written By: Kordell Keyandre Hammond

Narrated by: Kordell KeyAndre

Language: English

Publisher: A Publishing House, an imprint from KeyAndre And Company LLC

Categories: Young Adult Audiobooks, Literature & Prose, Autobiography, Biographies & Memoirs.

Subject: race, colonialism, and sexual and gender identity; educational psychology.

Genre: Creative Nonfiction | Psychology | Psycho-history | Medicine | Philosophy | Health Care | Medical | Health | Science | Sociology | Social Justice | African American | Human Rights | Memoir | Race | Nonfiction

Original Text Publication Date: May 2023

Abridged Text Publication Date: July 2024

Audio Recorded: July 2024—November 2024

Recording Studio: Bayshore - Suffolk County of Long Island, New York

Product Release Date: November 2023

Abridged Product Release Date: November 2024

Length: 2:28:09