

# HOW I GOT OVER

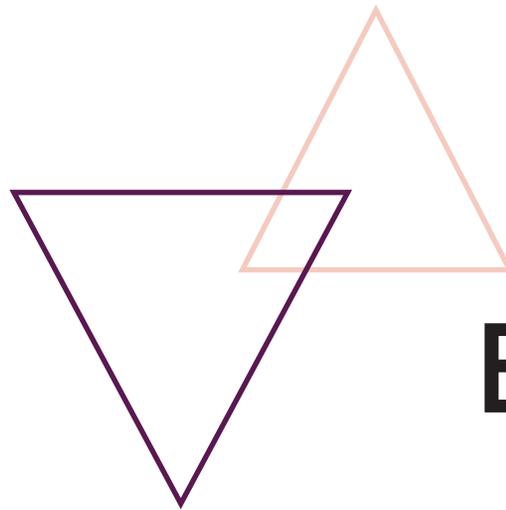
BESIDES GIN & JESUS



**SURVIVAL STRATEGIES  
FOR POLICE TERRORISM**

# THE TOOLKIT

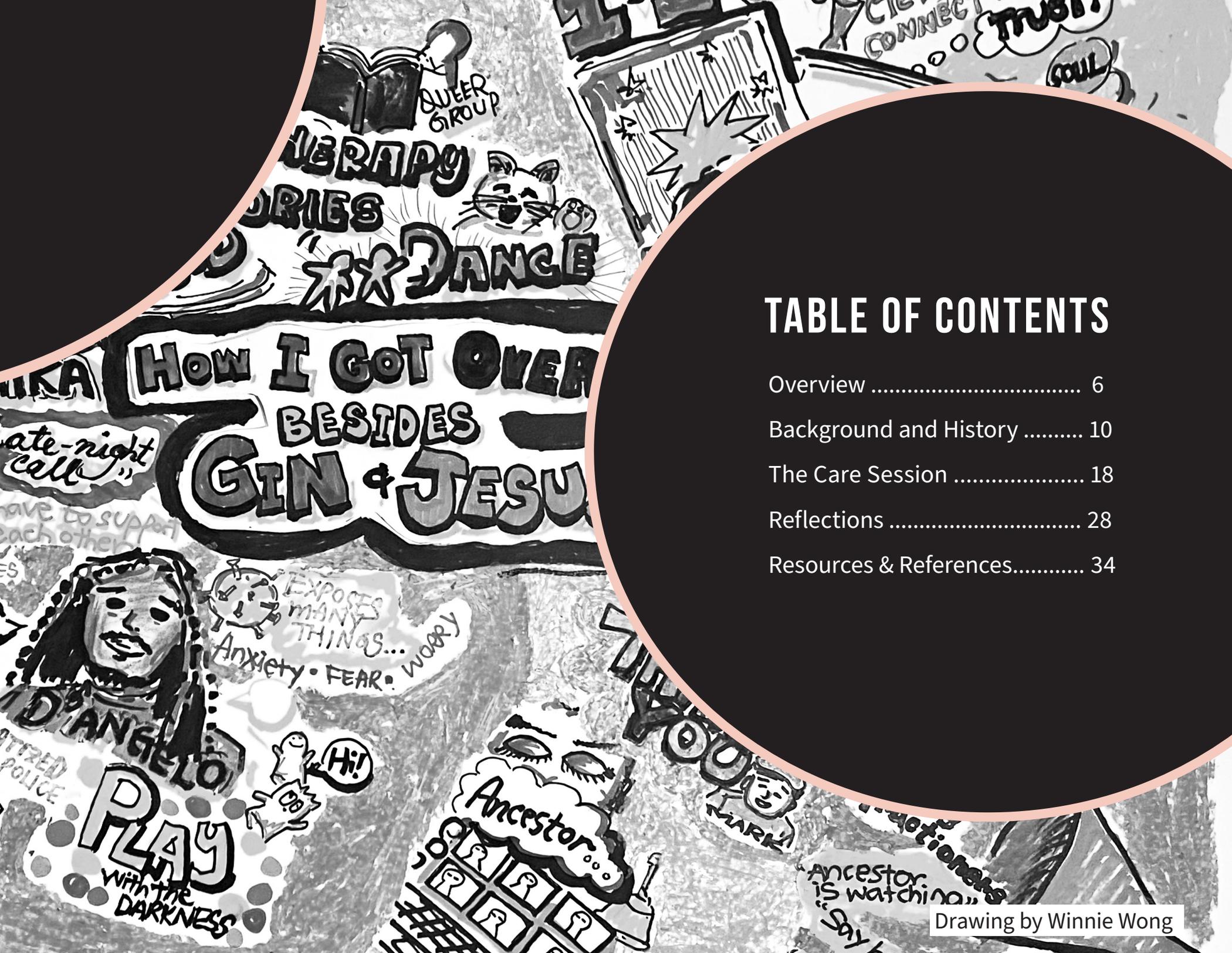
SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO  
AT HOMAN SQUARE



**HOW I GOT OVER  
BESIDES GIN AND JESUS  
THE HOW AND WHY  
OF A CARE SESSION**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
BLACK LIVES MATTER CHICAGO AND  
THE CHICAGO TORTURE JUSTICE CENTER

**COVER ARTWORK  
BY AMIKA BIG TREE TENDAJI**



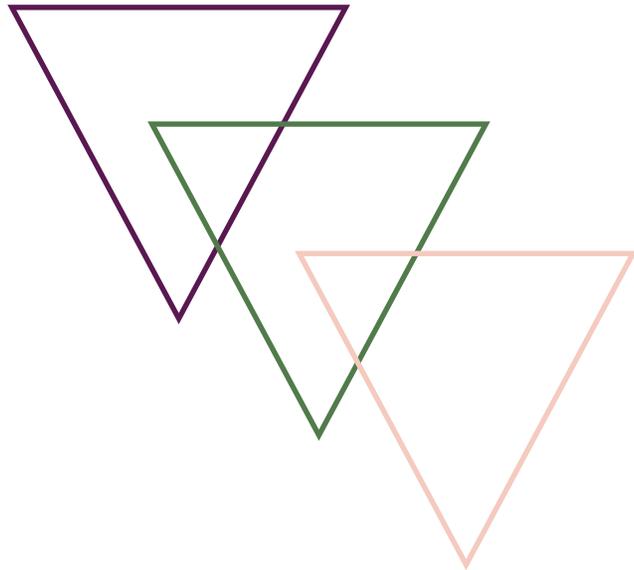
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Drawing by Winnie Wong



# OVERVIEW



The care session “**How I Got Over Besides Gin & Jesus: Survival Strategies for Police Terrorism**” was created to support Chicago-based organizers and activists in the North Lawndale area as they create a sustainable movement by sharing their knowledge around healing rituals. Working from a transformative justice framework, our hope was to create a virtual space where people working in different organizations could come together and share their strategies for healing and self-care.

This care session was requested by members of **Black Lives Matter Chicago** and the **Chicago Torture Justice Center**, who expressed that they saw a need for the sharing of healing practices across organizations. This care session was developed by SAIC students as part of the course Creative Healing Praxis & Blackness and was heavily influenced by Black feminist and transformative justice frameworks. As part of our research and planning process, we also met with two healing practitioners Jade T. Perry, board member of The Mystic Soul Project, and D’Angelo Smith, a chaplain at Advocate Children’s

# OVERVIEW

Hospital. Both of whom shared with us advice based on their experiences facilitating events around healing practices and were invaluable in shaping the final version of this care session.

Jade, D'Angelo, and Chicago-based activist, Amika 'Bigtree' Tendaji participated in the care session by sharing stories they had about healing and also by leading participants through different practices including a group oracle reading and guided meditation.

"How I Got Over Besides Gin & Jesus" was created to be a space for organizers to be in community as they shared their stories, experience, and practices around healing. It's when people are connected with each other in community and in places of shared understanding that the work of healing can take place.

This toolkit will walk you through our process of putting together this event. It will outline the how and why, and what.

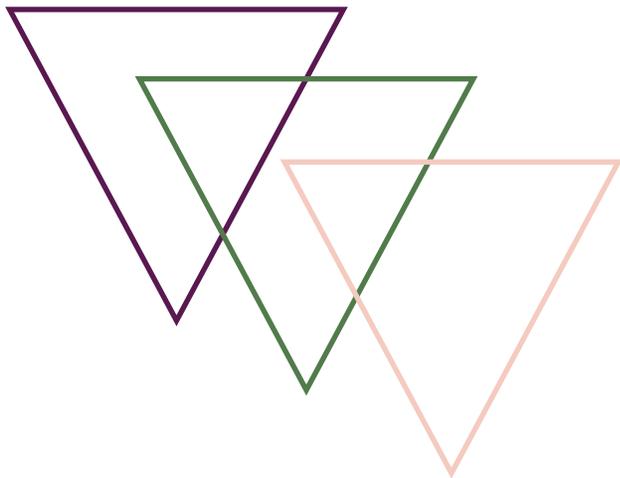


“ I HAVE LEARNED THAT PLAY IS A HEALING PRACTICE. **AND OH MY GOODNESS HOW MUCH I PLAY.** PLAYING WITH THE CHILDREN I HAVE HERE IT HAS TAUGHT ME TO PLAY EVEN MORE AT HOME. IT HAS TAUGHT ME TO PLAY WITH THE DARKNESS IN THE WORLD AND ASK: HOW DO I PLAY WITH THE DARKNESS BUT ALSO BRING IN SOME FORM OF LIGHT? **I DON'T ALWAYS WANT TO GET OUT OF THE DARKNESS.** MOST TIMES IN THE DARKNESS WE LEARN. ”

- D'ANGELO SMITH



# BACKGROUND AND HISTORY



In order to gain knowledge on the kinds of practices that undergirded and inspired our care session our group examined the following research question: What healing cultural practices do families and community organizers implement to manage vicarious and secondary trauma, and chronic traumatic stress? We looked into three main areas of study to find our answers: Community Organizing/Healing Justice, Arts-based approaches and Art Therapy. Of course, through our research, we learned about a wide variety of healing practices: some were done privately others took place in communal spaces; some used Western clinical models, others emerged from African mystic traditions; some happened through activism and the building of collective power, while others were much more personal and introspective. The keyword here is variety. As Jade T. Perry told us during the care session, “Sometimes we think that ‘getting over’ is a one-time thing. Or that one root or one herb will get us there. And it don’t work like that! These things support us. These things are life-changing for us but sometimes we find hope in just those simple moments” (personal communication, 2020).

## **Theme I: Community Organizing and Healing Justice**

Healing justice, an aspect of transformative justice, is focused on providing Black communities with spaces in which they can continue to develop communal ways to heal from historical and ongoing trauma. Andrasik (n.d) points out the ways in which the impact of trauma extends across generations and overwhelmingly affects communities of color. Additionally, art therapist Joseph Cliff (2006) explains this is because communities of color, and particularly Black communities in America, are most affected by racially-based systemic inequality.

# BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Organizations such as Black Lives Matter have been created in response to counteract systems of oppression by empowering local community chapters as they organize for their right to life, safety, and wellbeing (Black Lives Matter, 2020). In the BLM toolkit for healing justice, they acknowledge the need for healing practices as a central part of the organizing work (Black Lives Matter, 2020). BLM advises that healing practices should be used pre- and post-action strategies to help organizers stay grounded and that healing is necessary for building resilience in the movement (Black Lives Matter, 2020). Some practices recommended specifically by BLM include breathwork, body scanning, chanting, check-ins, collective visioning, and alter building (Black Lives Matter, 2020).

Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) is an organization of black youth activists that has also spent time thinking about how healing and restorative justice fits into the organizing work that they do. Members of BYP100's Healing and Safety Committee created the second edition of "Stay Woke, Stay Whole: A Black Activist Healing Manual" in 2018. This manual works to guide members of their movement through various healing practices and rituals. They wrote:

"We provide spaces for sharing resiliency rituals—malleable, fluid, flexible, and adaptable rituals that are continuous and intentional, rooted in Africana, Indigenous, and historical traditions that allow for the release of (some) trauma and the stirring and surfacing of self-love, joy, and accountability (both individual and communal)."

The manual provides historical context, step by step guides for how to conduct healing and restorative justice processes within their movement, including systems that help members work through accountability processes together, so that they movement can continue to thrive.

Other activists involved in the Movement for Black Lives have written about the importance of community and relationships in creating spaces for healing and for sustainability in the movement. In 2019 Tabitha Jamie Mary Chester wrote "Movement for Black Love: The Building of Critical Communities through the Relational Geography of Movement Spaces." In this essay, Dr. Tabitha Chester reflects on the friendships and relationships she has developed in the Movement for Black Lives and in her other work as an educator and activist. She reflects on the survival of Assata Shakur and the death by suicide of the young talented activist MarShawn McCarrel. Her friendships are necessary to her sustained work. The care she receives, provides, and does in collaboration is situational, adaptable and includes both occasional assistance and ritual care practices. Some these include mentoring queer youth, writing letters to prisoners, sharing a creative writing/storytelling exchange project called Boots Tuesday, and receiving care after having an oral surgery from a fellow activist whom she didn't know beforehand. Overall, she asserts that there must be space for love, friendship, and especially vulnerability between activists in M4BL as

they are often in high-stress situations, organizing on the move, and in changing circumstances. This requires a very flexible but strong support system that exists at a national level.

Susan Ruffo (2017) emphasizes the need for healing justice to be an everyday practice for individuals as well as a collective practice in Black organizing communities. In their report "Healing Justice is More Than Just Words on a Page", Ruffo (2017) writes "Healing isn't fully healing if it doesn't in some way connect the individual to the community." This is because the lived experience of trauma is one that isolates people from their communities by creating feelings of disconnection both from the present and from other people (Ruffo, 2017; Andrasik, n.d.).

Somatics is one approach to healing and working through trauma that many activists are beginning to take on. Author and activist adrienne maree brown has written and spoken about various approaches to healing justice. In 2019 she wrote, "Feeling From Within: A Life of Somatics" in her book, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. This piece discussed maree brown's experience with learning somatics, and how the practice has been both healing and fortifying in her experience as an activist working in community. She wrote, "Generative Somatics feels into how, in a collective or group, patterns of pain can indicate the mass, or intergenerational, trauma people are surviving. And how each of us had the power to help each other feel more, heal, and move toward our longings for liberation and justice together" (p. 275).

Adrienne maree brown is a great example of a black activist who talks about healing for a sustainable movement in a multifaceted way. In 2017 she spoke with Kate Werning on the Healing justice podcast about the power of imagination. She explains how the power to imagine and create visions of a healed world is key in the process of moving towards social justice.

"This is a moment of figuring out: inside of this imagination battle what is the skillset that takes our dreams and turns them into reality? That's not about, "I'm producing something that I need to pitch or sell," but rather, "I'm growing something that's going to burst the seams of an outdated imagination that can't hold us."

The use of the imagination as healing brings us to our second theme, which is the exploration of various arts-based approaches to healing.

## Theme II: Arts-Based Healing Approaches

This research unearthed a vast spectrum of healing practices, both personal and communal that employed arts-based methods for working through trauma, creating joy, bringing communities together and more.

Artists-Activist Angela Davis Johnson (2016) wrote "The artist-activist: History and healing through art." In the article she describes how she uses

“  
**WE HAVE TO  
ALWAYS MAKE  
EACH OTHER  
FEEL AS HAPPY  
AS WE ARE TO  
SEE EACH OTHER.**

**- AMIKA BIG TREE TENDAJI**

”

her personal art practice to support movement work and her own healing. She describes how art making allows her to heal from the oppressive messages that she continuously receives from living in a white supremacist society. In her artwork she uses images of black women to reconstruct the narratives around her identity and the identity of other black women. “I am learning that activism is changing the negative and oppressive dynamics of social constructs by building and connecting with community” (30)

Christi Belcourt also uses the visual arts to works through the trauma caused by living under violent white supremacist systems and histories. In 2016 Stephanie Anderson wrote about Belcourt’s work in her essay, “Stitching Through Silence: Walking With Our Sisters, Honoring The Missing And Murdered Aboriginal Women In Canada.” The author celebrates the Walking With Our Sisters, a project coordinated by Christi Belcourt, in which thousands of indigenous women created unfinished moccasins (vamps) to honor and bring attention to indigenous women who were murdered, in essence creating a visual memorial. In her writing Anderson shows the many benefits of a project like this: raising awareness, creating moments of healing and collectivity and knowledge/memory sharing. “Those vamps have a whole lot of energy in them. When all that love gets stitched into something I don’t know if it is something we can comprehend with our minds but it speaks to our soul, it speaks to our spirit” (p.88).

One final arts-based approach to healing that we looked at was explored in Tashel Bordere’s 2009 article: “To Look At Death Another Way: Black Teenage Males’ Perspectives On Second-lines And Regular Funerals In New Orleans.” Bordere discusses the results of a study done on the healing effects that second-line funeral rituals have on adolescent males in New Orleans. Through interviews, Bordere gathered qualitative data on the teenager’s experiences attending the music-based second-line parades following the funerals of their friends and loved ones. The study found that these rituals served as a tool for grieving, celebrating the life of the loved one, creating a feeling of connection to the loved one and creating a sense of community and collectivity.

These articles demonstrated that the wide variety of approaches to creative self expression create a myriad of pathways towards healing from the trauma of living in a society that is in many ways defined by its systemic oppression. Art can bring people together to mourn, help to build personal self-determination, create space for mourning and working through trauma and much more. The field of art therapy has been exploring this idea in clinical and non-clinical settings for years.

### **Theme III: Art Therapy**

In response to the alienating experience of trauma, different models of community mental health care have arisen to try and provide space for healing while also promoting interpersonal connection. Community art therapy practices are one way

## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

of accomplishing this. Some operate from social justice perspectives (Talwar, 2015) that prioritize the experience of people of color and take precautions to recognize how power is distributed in these spaces. However, the draw back to community art practices run by licensed art therapists is that not all practices operate from a social justice or decolonizing framework.

Within the field of art therapy, the majority of practitioners are White women who, regardless of their intentions, may replicate oppressive White cultural dynamics within their own practices if they are not actively engaging in self-reflection and decolonizing approaches (Sue et al, 2007). While community art therapy practices can be valuable they are likely to be run by people outside of BIPOC communities and are also exclusive in that they require the practitioner running the practice to have a Master's degree in order to be licensed.

Another model that addresses the same need for collective healing as part of transformative justice is community care sessions. Care sessions are community-led and executed groups that create space within a specific community for people to come together and share their knowledge, experience, and collectively envision a better future. They are a far more localized model and require no advanced degree program for people wishing to facilitate them. Care sessions grew out of Black feminist practice and are rooted in Black communities. Additionally, they can include a number of healing modalities from spiritual practices to art-making which offers more opportunity for exploring different aspects of healing.

### Conclusion

During our care session, activists and healing practitioners talked about healing through: comedy, friendship, play, tarot, therapy, religion, alcohol, meditation, non-traditional medicine, community, movement, and even sitting back and watching others take action. This research showed us healing through: visual art making, science fiction writing, funeral parades, talk therapy, activism, and more. Our research question was What healing cultural practices do families and community organizers implement to manage vicarious and secondary trauma, and chronic traumatic stress? There is no one answer to this, but we did find that diving into the waters of this question is a deeply enriching and eye opening experience. We were able to see how many possible pathways there are to healing, and to understand that is a journey that need never be completed. I will end with more words from Jade T. Perry.

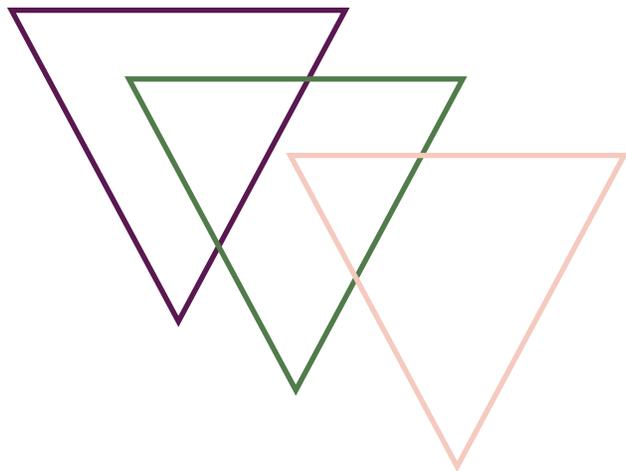
Sometimes when I have enough rest and food and medicine and help from the ancestors I can push pause on the tape [that replays my fears and anxieties]. I can find just enough space to choose another path and hold on to it as long as I am able to, until it is replicated again in this life or the next. (personal communication, 2020)

**“SOMETIMES WE THINK THAT ‘GETTING OVER’ IS A ONE TIME THING. OR THAT ONE ROOT OR ONE HERB WILL GET US THERE. AND IT DON’T WORK LIKE THAT! THESE THINGS SUPPORT US. THESE THINGS ARE LIFE CHANGING FOR US, BUT SOMETIMES WE FIND HOPE IN JUST THOSE SIMPLE MOMENTS.”**

**- JADE T. PERRY**



# THE CARE SESSION



## THEORY

North Lawndale is a community that has a long history of art, activism, disenfranchisement, and rebirth. It is also a community that is experiencing collective trauma at the hands of the police in Black sites at Homan Square (unmarked detention and interrogation centers used by the Chicago Police Department) as well as general racialized violence from the police.

My hope is that this study offers insights into theoretical considerations related to critique, but also demonstrates how the community built and sustained within the classroom is foundational to the generation of new ideas.

The West and South sides of Chicago are heavily policed and communities including North Lawndale are regularly subjected to police aggression. Black people are killed and incarcerated by the Chicago Police Department at high rates sometimes for minor offenses and sometimes for no discernable offense at all. Black people are often killed collaterally by police who claim to be trying to apprehend another person or suspect 'so-and-so' to be involved in gangs or drug dealing. Police will often claim that a person is tangentially involved in organized crime as reasoning for executing a Black citizen without due process.

# THEORY

Because of this, a large amount of the activism and community organizing that takes place in North Lawndale revolves around resisting injustice perpetrated by CPD and seeking justice and support for the victims of police violence. This includes honoring the dead, uplifting grieving families, and providing healing resources for torture survivors. Oftentimes seeking justice means seeking to hold police accountable within the legal system. This is a long and emotionally exhausting process for organizers and grieving families. As one organizer shared in the Care Session, “When somebody loses somebody else to the police, that hurt is compounded, that grief is reignited. Healing is not linear.”

It’s been said that we are our own best healers and that is at the center of Care Sessions. Unlike the typical therapy model of a trained practitioner and a client working together in an intimate setting, Care Sessions are about healing as a community. The community having agency is essential to that healing. We attempted to preserve that agency by being in frequent communication with our community partners throughout the process as well as by inviting practitioners who are part of the larger Westside community to lead those healing practices.

In the first stage of planning our Care Session, we had our initial interview with our community partners Aislinn Pulley and Big Tree Tendaji who represented Black Lives Matter Chicago and Chicago Torture Justice Center respectively. We talked about the place of art in the movement. Big Tree and Aislinn talked about personal rituals such as gardening, which is a form of creation, being a tool for healing in the movement. Other performance type actions like “train takeovers” and banner drops served as tools to meet the movements’ goals for organizing and visibility.

They emphasized that while they were excited about the potential of an art-themed event, they did not want a “craft night”. They suggested that the event could be a way of “building an altar to the movement” by integrating and documenting the different healing strategies that are being employed in local movement spaces. From this interview we formulated our research question: What healing cultural practices do families and community organizers implement to manage vicarious and secondary trauma, and chronic traumatic stress?

It was important to us and our stakeholders that we not only create a

session that discusses healing (and therefore discusses grief), but also includes elements of healing practice to complement the ongoing healing work being done in the community.



# METHOD

To begin designing and implementing an event that would answer our research question while meeting the needs of our stakeholders, we had to first create a framework for how we would relate to each other. This framework was partly built into the course but it grew and developed along with the Care Session. We were introduced by our professors early on to community partners who would represent the community's interests during our planning. Our Professors Williams and Gipson had created this course with their organizations in mind and thus they had an existing rapport with Big Tree and Aislinn who had agreed to join on as community partners. The professors acted as liaisons between us and the community partners, helping to set up contact. They also helped us establish contact with practitioners D'Angelo Smith and Jade Perry.

As part of our course work, we read a tool kit called "An Introduction to Research Justice: a free popular education toolkit for community organizations working towards social justice" and an article called "Ethical community-engaged research: a literature review" (see Resources List). These resources greatly informed how we structured the Care Sessions. The concept of research justice was particularly important to the theme of our Care Session, which was about healing rituals. In many scientific and academic contexts, a community's knowledge may be dismissed if it has not been gathered according to the standards of a given field. The kind of information we were looking to find in our research is what that toolkit refers to as "community & cultural knowledge" (2016 Data Center).

Because the information we were looking for was personal and often anecdotal, it was critical that we maintain an ethical way of relating to the community. According to "Ethical community-engaged research: a literature review" some important aspects of ethically community-based participatory research include "collaboration", "shared leadership", "transparency", and "on-going dialogue and negotiation" (. For this reason, it was important that we receive feedback and accept suggestions from our community partners. Aislinn and Big Tree had the final say on our proposal for the session which they approved.

Once the COVID-19 pandemic caused our course to go remote, it was even more important that we maintain consistent contact with our partners and practitioners. This was difficult at first as adjustments had to be made. We eventually created a group chat with us, the professors, and our community partners close to our Care Session to streamline things. We also had individual interviews with our practitioners Jade and D'Angelo to understand better the work they do. We updated and

re-submitted our proposal for an online format and then once it was approved we asked the practitioners which of their skills would be best suited for an online conference call.

# APPLICATION

It was all hands on deck as we moved on to implementing our proposal. Jade Perry and our professors reminded us that there would be considerations we should take into account for the web format. We attempted to balance our Care Session by making sure there was time for discussion and sharing in between healing practices and storytelling. We created a script for the facilitator, a google form, and invitation graphic. We decided to assign ourselves the following roles:

- Facilitator - Set the tone, introduce practitioners, keep the session moving, make sure everyone is heard
- Safe person - One on one support if needed (used Google Voice), provide care resources
- Visual Note Taker - Provide an alternative way to listen and process the information
- Technology - Take care of details so moderator and practitioners can focus on the group

At our rehearsal, we ironed out technical difficulties and tweaked our script to make the program as engaging as possible. It took some time to become literate in zoom and negotiate how we would create a private space for our safe person to operate in. Our tech person also created slides to display on zoom of the schedule of the session and of prompts for sharing. We decided that one of us would draw detailed visual notes during the Care Session.

Finally we were ready to conduct the Care Sessions. We sent out both the google forms and the zoom links to the community partners, who in turn sent them to potential participants. We had six participants not including the practitioners, and professors. All in all, there were thirteen people present during the session. The facilitator welcomed everyone to the event and explained that it was being recorded and content from the session would be used for this toolkit with consent. The facilitator then invited Big Tree to introduce the prompt for our opening circle: "How I got over was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_"

## APPLICATION

Some of the answers were:

A Black queer poetry reading group and meditation

Lake Michigan and BIPOC theology

Dancing to house music and contacting a spiritual leader

Coffee and others in the movement

“All my wonderful friends..who helped me laugh and process. All my brilliant Homies, some of y’all are on here!”

Big Tree then spoke about the importance of using community, friendship and comedy in the process of healing from trauma caused by police violence. She used a comedic approach to tell us about a confrontation that she had with a police officer, showing us how her sense of humor helped to both diffuse the situation and allow her to remain calm and mentally healthy. Big Tree then introduced Jade T. Perry. Both Jade T. Perry and D’Angelo Smith shared personal stories related to healing and allowed time for responses before introducing their healing practices. These stories were a key part of our event. They created a more personal, honest, vulnerable and therefore connected approach to the material and added a creative aspect as well.

Jade Perry’s story spoke about the complexity of hope and resilience in the face of trauma. She spoke poetically about the various pathways that she has taken towards healing. Jade then led a group Oracle reading, advising us in ways to support our mental health and personal practices. D’Angelo’s story was a personal account of trauma that occurred due to failings of a complex net of systems in his life. That trauma, however, led him to his work in chaplaincy, and so he was able to show us that in darkness, light can be found. He then led the group in a guided meditation in the form of a pre-recorded video.

We included time for a longer reflection in between practices and at the end of the session. The facilitator asked for closing reflections and thanked participants. During the session one of our team, Winnie, spent her time creating a visual representation of our conversation (shown on the page 26 & 27 ). This gave participants an alternative way to absorb the information and follow along. We hoped that it also inspired participants to approach their healing and processing of information in creative ways.

## ASSESSMENT

A few days after the Care Session, we sent a survey to the participants asking questions such as:

- “What motivated you to attend the session?”
- “What would help make our Care Session more effective?”
- “What did you think of Jade/D’Angelo’s practice?”
- “What’s something important you learned/reflected on during the session?”
- “What was the best part of the session for you?”

We sent the survey to the eight people who RSVPed, but what we found upon review was that the eight who RSVPed weren’t actually those who participated. The few participants who weren’t community partners, practitioners, or our professors must have been invited individually by zoom link by the community partners. We didn’t get consistent responses on that survey but we did get reflections at the end of session and feedback throughout. Some responses we received during the Care Session were:

- “I really appreciate being able to be led into various practices by Black practitioners.”
- (in reference to D’Angelo’s practice) “Today felt like a particularly hard day. I had a lot of anxiety and it always helps me regroup when I remember the ancestors.”
- “Sometimes we gotta heal from our healing practices.”
- “All of you are like children compared to my age. I’m a torture survivor...I see so much energy than pours out of what’s to come.”

1.2.3?

GET CURIOUS  
CONNECT WITH  
TRUST!

FAMILY THEOLOGY



AMIKA

MEMORIES  
FOOD  
DANCE

QUEER GROUP



JADE

white supremacy  
police terrorism

# HOW I GOT OVER BESIDES GIN & JESUS

The Long Hard Road

Late-night call

we have to support each other!  
HEALING FOR HEALING PRACTICES

HOPE IS A COMPLICATED THING...  
BREATHING IN ~~~~~ OUT ~~~~

HOPE IS something I need to ask for?  
LET IT GO

ALLOW SPACE FOR YOUR BODY  
DRINK MORE WATER

THANK YOU

Black healing practitioners

ancestors is watching  
Say her name  
Blackmagic



SAIC @ HUMAN SQUARE  
Creative Healing Praxis & Blackness  
Care Session on  
4.30. 2020

ANGIER  
FEEL THE DESPAIR  
PLAY  
With the DARKNESS



DIANGELO

EXPOSES MANY THINGS...  
Anxiety • FEAR • WORRY

TRAMATIZED by the POLICE



Ancestor

Reality

SOUL

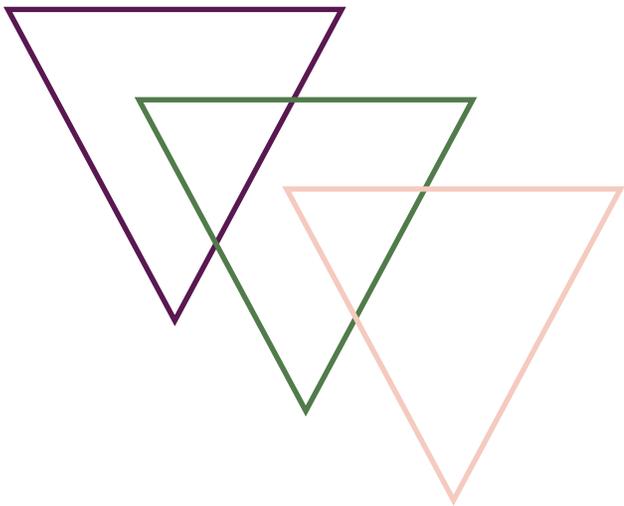


SPACE

MANIFEST



# REFLECTIONS



When we had our initial interview with Amika and Aislinn for the Care Session, we were really looking to create the Care Session they wanted. After a bit of back and forth, they told us that if there was an event that they envisioned and needed then “[they] already would’ve done it”. So the tension that existed throughout the process was creating an event for a community we are not a part of and in that creating something useful and healing that was not simply applying the framework we’ve been trained in for art therapy/arts admin/arts ed etc... to a community that already has healing strategies and a unique healing language.

## **Questions we asked:**

*Do I have the right to ask this question? To introduce this statement? Who can collaborate with us on leading this discussion? How can we create a space? Are people engaging with each other? Are we allowing for flexibility, surprises, and collaboration or are we just ushering people along through a program (I asked myself this as a facilitator)? We are gaining research and experience from this session, what are we hoping our participants gain? Did that happen? What happened that we planned for? What else happened?*

**“ I’M A TORTURE SURVIVOR IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO UNDER JOHN BURGE, UNFORTUNATELY SPENDING 28 YEARS OF MY LIFE INSIDE OF THE PRISON SYSTEM. BEING OUT, AT LEAST FOR THESE 11 YEARS, AND WATCHING AND FIGHTING...I’VE SEEN YOUNG PEOPLE JUST RISE UP. AND I SEE SO MUCH ENERGY THAT POURS OUT OF WHATS TO COME. I ENCOURAGE YOU ALL TO KEEP FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT. ”**

**- ANNONYMOUS**

## REFLECTIONS

### Reflection from our “safe person”

As an art therapy student, what I really appreciated about this care session was that it was a form of community practice I found far more preferable to some of the other forms of community practices we’re exposed to in art therapy. Namely, the transpersonal and relational aesthetic community studio models which often take spiritual practices out of their context and repurpose them as tools for individualistic wellness within a group setting. By disconnecting spiritual practices from historical context these practices no longer connect people with a larger narrative or purpose beyond themselves. Compare this to the transformative justice care session in which the healing practitioners that participated, Jade Perry and D’Angelo Smith, grounded their spiritual practices in Black history, the Black Church, Black folk mysticism, and even in the particular context of the North Lawndale neighborhood. While their practices were meant to be helpful for individual organizers, they made a point to connect them back to larger historical narratives and point out the ways these practices were used to sustain Black communities as they faced various forms of oppression. Additionally, having participants engaging in dialogue together after art was shared was an important part of the care session. Whereas, in the transpersonal and relational aesthetics models of community practice dialogue around art is often neglected or discouraged. While that shuts down the possibility for criticism, which isn’t inherently a bad thing, it also shuts down the possibility for mutual engagement, sharing, and community building. For these reasons, I found care sessions to be a more meaningful way of engaging in community practice than ones present in some art therapy literature.

### Reflection from our facilitator:

When I came to this course, I had more experience with activist spaces than art therapy or arts administration spaces, but I was not meant to be an activist in this course. I was meant to be a student and a space-creator. More than that, as a white student and someone does not hail from Homan Square, I was meant to de-center myself. Facilitating the kind of care session my group did, which was structured

around Black practitioners leading practices, is a bit different from facilitating more general events or sessions. In this context, the facilitator is less involved in setting the tone. The facilitator should be confident and respectful and keep the session flowing, but the words, actions, and feelings introduced by the practitioners and the participants will define the session. The facilitator shows appreciation and encourages sharing.

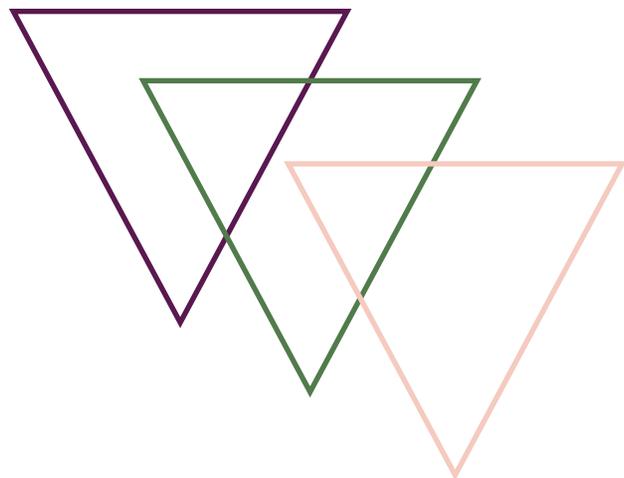
This care session was also unique in that it took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, it would have taken place in the North Lawndale Public Library. Facilitating the session online was in some ways more intimate, with people videoing in from their homes, and in other ways more detached. For example, the nature of a zoom call means that you are not making direct eye contact with a person at a time. It's important to be conscious of your expression and body language not only when you're talking but also during discussions and healing practices. Sometimes when practitioners were sharing, I was fidgeting and checking the time and thinking about what I needed to do. Upon reflection, I think it's better to fully engage with the session whenever you can. It's also very important to trust your practitioners and participants. Because this Care Session was created for organizers and practitioners, a lot of the participants had much more experience leading these kinds of events than I did. There were times when the practitioners felt like people were ready to respond or break for discussion earlier than we had planned and the session was much better for it.

“**YOU ARE  
THE FIRST  
PARTAKER  
OF YOUR  
MAGIC. ,,**

**- JADE T. PERRY**



# REFERENCES AND RESOURCES



## Resources

Black Mental and Emotional Health (BEAM)  
<https://www.beam.community/>

Healing in Our Times Project:  
<https://www.jadetperry.com/resources>

adrienne maree brown's blog  
<http://adriennemareebrown.net/>

The Mystic Soul Project  
<https://www.mysticsoulproject.com/>

Irresistible (FKA The Healing Justice Podcast)  
<https://irresistible.org/>

Healing Justice Project  
<https://healingjusticeproject.org/>

Healing By Choice Detroit  
<https://www.healingbychoicedetroit.com/>

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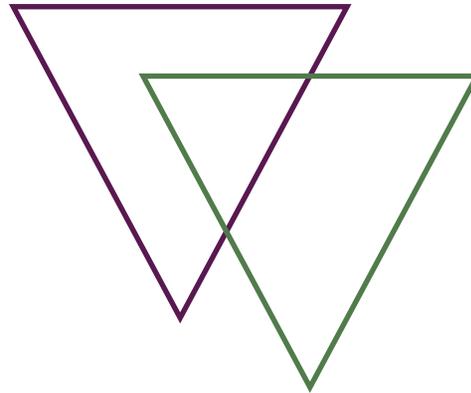
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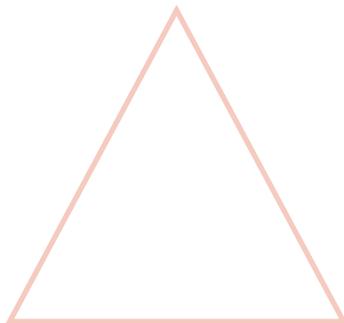
# THANK YOU

To BLM Chicago, CTJC,  
the SAIC @ Homan Square staff,  
The Creative Healing Praxis and Blackness class,  
and  
**Ife Williams and Leah Gipson**  
for all of your support



## OUR TEAM

Hava Reeves Liebowitz  
Megan Curran  
Winnie Wong and  
Nika Gorini





THERAPY

MEMORIES

FOOD

DANCE

QUEER GROUP

HOW I GOT OVER

BESIDES

GIN & JESUS

KA

ate-night call

ve to support ch other

Exposes MANY THINGS...

Anxiety • FEAR • Worry

D'ANGELO

PLAY

With the DARKNESS

Hi!

Ancestor



THANK YOU