

Presented by YouthROC,
an affiliate partner with University of Minnesota's Robert J. Jones
Urban Research Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC)
and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (CEHD)

A YPAR Project Magazine about Centering BIPOC Youth

What does it take to
develop accessible,
sustainable youth
space?



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To contact for commissions, find her on Instagram: [queenv_arts131](https://www.instagram.com/queenv_arts131)

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Who are we?

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Welcome to YoUthROC's First Magazine.

This publication answers these questions:

How do we center BIPOC youth in community and school spaces? What does it take to develop accessible, sustainable youth space?

This magazine is for young researchers and educators. Young people are ready to take up space. It is also for adults who are looking to radically change space and redistribute power to young people. We go beyond a search for "youth voice" to creating the conditions for youth voice to fill the room. It is organized by the main findings from YoUthROC research: the need to increase opportunities for Kinship and Shared Purpose, Youth Assets and Knowledge, and Examining Issues.

We have also included information about our Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) process as an example of what these projects can look like.

This magazine is a compilation of our findings, stories, and recommendations for youth and the spaces we all deserve.

This publication went through open peer review processes.

THE YOUTHROC RESEARCH TEAM

YoUthROC is a community and University-connected youth research team that supports the growth of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and is committed to youth, kinship, and racial justice in education. The team centers Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth and other marginalized communities. YoUthROC is an affiliate program to the University of Minnesota's Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) in North Minneapolis and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (CEHD).



THE TEAM AIMS TO:

- Provide support and training for anti-racist, justice-oriented youth research;
- Conduct YPAR projects that center and showcase the power of BIPOC youth through accessible and culturally relevant research methods;
- Model kinship, nourish connections, and sustain reciprocal community partnerships; and
- Reclaim Northside spaces and return them to spaces that serve the community's BIPOC youth.

Our emerging goal is to support youth-centered, socially-conscious, participatory research.

THE FOUNDING OF YOUTHROC

CEHD faculty member Abby Rombalski brought together young people from north Minneapolis, including from local partner Appetite for Change, to envision how UROC might become a more youth-friendly space. Through conversations and kinship, YoUthROC was born (Feb. 22, 2019 is our name day), with the intent to be a sustainable team rather than a short, grant funded experience. Co-founders include Shaunasse Johnson, Amina Smaller, Savannah McCullough, and Abby.



Land Acknowledgment

The University of Minnesota Twin Cities is built within the traditional homelands of the Dakota and Anishinaabe nations. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus is located on unceded Dakota lands included in the 1805, 1837, and 1851 treaties. Where we live, work, study, and play is occupied Dakota homeland and Anishinaabe territory. For YoUthROC, it is important to acknowledge the peoples on whose land we live, learn, and fight for social justice. We seek to improve our relations with local tribal nations and youth. We also acknowledge that words are not enough. We will intentionally connect our research and social actions within the context of Dakota and Anishinaabe people's resistance and lived experience in Mni Sota Makoce. For instance, we will work to use Dakota and Ojibwe language in our research and practice; we will learn and support local Indigenous histories and contemporary movements for justice; we will continue to build interpersonal relationships with Indigenous people/youth to learn from, work with, and to repair generations of harm. For more local information, please read from Megan RedShirt Shaw, COIN (link below), or a podcast with Dr. Waziyatawin on Money.Power.Land.Solidarity about the Upper Harbor Terminal in north Minneapolis.



UMN student resource: <https://mcae.umn.edu/about-us/circle-indigenous-nations>
Miigwech to Autumn Person, Ojibwe, White Earth Nation, who supported the team's writing.

How to use this magazine

We wrote it for you!

Audience: For young people (and adult co-conspirators) who want to dig into their worlds through research.

DO YOUR OWN
THING!
READ, DISCUSS,
SPRINGBOARD,
WRITE, COPY, CREDIT,
AND CONNECT WITH
US on IG
[@youthroc.umn](https://www.instagram.com/youthroc.umn)

OUR HOPES

SHOWCASE YOUR
POWER AND
CREATIVITY. CREATE
NEW RESEARCH
METHODS. BUST OPEN
DOORS.

This magazine also shares the Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) process from YoUthROC.

"I will be satisfied if this book sparks conversations, new practices, and projects where people keep noticing, observing, and learning about emergence and liberation"

— adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy

PURPOSE

Why is it necessary to center BIPOC youth?

When we began our research, we all fit into the middle-grey demographic of young, in/out of high school, in or not in college, working in our community. Near North's population of individuals under the age 24 was 45.2%, near half the full population (MN Compass, 2019), yet we felt our demographic was not visibly expressed in our community. Nation-wide, more than half of all Americans are millennials, Gen Z, or younger, and increasingly diverse. In our current COVID-context, many of those 18-24 became disconnected from work or school (New America, 2021), including 50% of whom lost their already-low-wage jobs during the pandemic. We use the acronym BIPOC because our research was done in community with participants who were Black (a predominant demographic); Latinx and Indigenous, across varied Asian ethnicities, and interracial groups at schools.

It is important to center BIPOC youth in community spaces because BIPOC youth don't have many spaces to be themselves. We don't have any spaces where we aren't excluded or attacked. BIPOC youth need to feel like their ideas and opinions are heard and respected.

- Yasmin Smaller,
High School Student and YoUthROC researcher

We need a space to liberate ourselves. These school systems are not designed for us to succeed. Schools actively strip away the most important parts of our identities. Having spaces for BIPOC youth gives us a space for enlightenment and empowerment.

- Savannah McCullough,
YoUthROC co-founder and researcher



Centering BIPOC Youth: Research Breakdown

Research Question: What does it take to develop accessible, sustainable youth space?

We gathered data from over **200 primarily Black and BIPOC youth** and **40 adults** in our 2019 research on youth in community space.

Emerging themes included: Kinship, Issues, Shared Purpose, Social Action, Youth centeredness

Initial reflection

We conducted this study 2019 - 2020. BIPOC youth had a lot to say about wanting space where they could enter and "already feel like I belong." Most white-bodied youth with whom we met felt they already belonged; sometimes they didn't even understand the relevance of the question. As we started sharing our findings in 2020 - 2021, we learned it continues to resonate with BIPOC youth, virtually and in person.

What's next in this magazine

This magazine reveals each of our three main findings using important concepts, stories, and tools that helped us create our framework for Centering BIPOC Youth. Community spaces - - including schools - - must be accessible and sustainable to BIPOC youth. After our findings, we apply our newly developed frame with our partners. Then, we write about our YPAR and youth-centered approach to theory, research methods, and more.

Creating Kinship and Shared Purpose

Kinship is a feeling around people who make you feel connected. Kinship can include birth or chosen family, friends, peers, and colleagues. Kinship needs to be actively, informally, and intentionally nourished. With strong kinship connections, you are free to call out and hold each other accountable, to feel supported and unafraid to express yourself and your thoughts. Kinship is a goal. Creating and developing a shared purpose is a main step in kinship building. It makes youth spaces sustainable because positive relationships keep young people invested in their space.

In this section:

- p. 11 Finding on Kinship and Shared Purpose
- p. 12 Mychi's **Feature article**, a counter-narrative (Solórzano y Yosso, 2001) about a Viet language youth group
- p. 16 Recommendations

CREATING KINSHIP AND SHARED PURPOSE

Kinship and shared purpose are key components to creating space that centers BIPOC youth. We spent a lot of time thinking about how kinship has made us move and connect. Personally, we enjoyed mapping out our many overlapping connections before forming this research team and as more members joined.

We learned that many youth cite their familial and non-familial members in their community as assets. Family ties pull youth into organizations, but when treated as equals, the relationships built between youth and adults can mold a positive kinship bond.

YoUthROC team members each had meaningful experiences in varied youth and POC-led programs that made us want to find or continue similar spaces later in our lives. Some of these experiences led to us taking different forms of social action with programs, others did not. We concluded that kinship was a driving force in our home lives and in youth organizations, and it enabled us to find shared purposes. At times, those connections led us to participate in social movements. Being part of social action sustained groups in important ways, which is why it was important to our findings.



**FINDING 1:
WORKING WITH A
SHARED PURPOSE
CONNECTS YOUTH TO
EACH OTHER AND TO
THE COMMUNITY,
WHICH CULTIVATES
KINSHIP AND SOCIAL
ACTION**

THE IMPORTANCE OF KINSHIP

BY MYCHI NGUYEN AND YOUTHROC

Sometime in fifth or sixth grade, my parents forced me to attend a Vietnamese language Saturday school with a youth group called Chùà (a pseudonym) at a local temple. I hated going there every Saturday, and I always tried to think of ways to get out of going. It took months until I found something that made me want to actively participate in the group. What motivated me weren't the skills we were learning or the projects we were working on. It was the relationships I built with my peers and the adults in the group. Although it's easy to say that these relationships just happened naturally, that's not the case. In order to develop strong relationships between youth and adults, both parties have to see each other as equals. Chùà valued youth by collaborating with us, giving us leadership roles, and creating opportunities for kinship. Through reflection and the writing of this piece, I learned that we valued kinship but we did not take up social action as much as we could have.



Collaboration and Leadership

No matter what we were doing, youth and the adults were always collaborating with one another. An important aspect of the youth group was learning about and participating in Vietnamese culture. One way that we did that was by learning traditional dances. Even though the adults were in charge of teaching us the dances, **we always had a say** in the elements that we wanted to incorporate into the choreography. For instance, around the time when *High School Musical* was popular, we thought it would be fun to add the roller coaster dance move to our choreography, so we did. It fit in well with the rest of our dance and created a moment that everyone looked forward to. **This resulted in a product that reflected the traditional ideas of the adults as well as modern twists from the youth.** Being able to incorporate traditional and modern ideas into our choreography made the dance something that was representative of us.



Anything we contributed was taken seriously, and we independently ran various events during the actual camp.

Our strong bonds with one another came from youth and adults sharing the power of responsibilities, decision-making, and leadership. Facilitator adrienne maree brown says, "If you don't trust the community, the community will never be trustworthy." In Chùà, there was trust. It wasn't an environment where adults led and youth followed. Youth were empowered to lead as well. As a result of both parties viewing each other as equals, youth and adults in Chùà were able to develop a sense of kinship. This made us feel valued and gave us a strong sense of purpose and authority in a group that was made for youth. Collaboration and leadership between adults and youth was key to developing kinship, which YoUthROC defines as close relationships and bonds between people.

In addition... to learning about Vietnamese culture through dance, Chùà also focused on leadership. During the summer, we hosted camps and other bonding events that showed what we learned throughout the year. **While the adults could have easily taken the responsibility of planning these camps, leaving the youth to just participate, they didn't.** Youth were invited to camp meetings where decisions were made regarding themes, events, games, and activities. In one meeting, we were brainstorming various activities to go into a *The Amazing Race* themed game. I suggested that before moving onto the next level, participants should take a bite into a caramel apple, but there was a small chance they would bite into a caramel onion. If they bit the onion, they would have to repeat the game again before they could move on. As a team, we all voted on the idea and decided to incorporate it into the game. Not only were youth invited to these planning meetings, but we were actively encouraged to contribute our thoughts and ideas.



Kinship and Shared Purpose

As I continued to participate in the group, I began to see members of the youth group as my second family. Our bond with one another kept us motivated in our organization. I truly believe that if we were not able to develop strong relationships with each other, we would not have been as successful in our work: learning Vietnamese language and culture and sharing this knowledge with other Vietnamese youth and the broader community. **The kinship that Chùà developed did not happen by chance. It required planning in order to cultivate strong connections between members.** My youth group prioritized kinship by scheduling time for relationship building. In addition to structured time where youth worked together towards a goal, such as planning a camp, there was also time set aside for us to freely interact and banter with one another. During our weekly meetings, we were given breaks within our schedule to hang out. We also made an effort to plan bonding events outside of our meetings to get to know one another in a different setting. In the summer, we would go to Como Zoo for an outdoor lunch. We planned barbecues, get-togethers at each others' houses, and we volunteered together. **Setting aside opportunities for genuine interactions built and sustained our kinship.**



It's so important for youth-serving organizations to foster real, personal relationships within their members. Having these relationships made Chùà a positive and safe space for my peers and I. **Our bond with each other and the adults in the organization motivated us and gave us the support we needed to grow as leaders.** If I had not had the chance to build strong bonds with members of the youth group, it's likely that I would have quit soon after joining. Because I stayed, I was able to learn the skills used to read and write Vietnamese. Skills that I would not have learned otherwise. In addition, I also developed leadership skills that I now use every day.



Having those bonds and connections with both youth and adults made me want to be at Chùà and actively participate in the group. Kinship not only fosters a community, it also motivates and adds meaning to the work that is being done.

What About Social Action?

Chùa provided a space for young members of the Vietnamese community to come together to learn about themselves and grow as collaborative leaders. Unfortunately, we didn't take the additional steps to do collective social action. **While this group empowered its members, there wasn't a drive to spread this empowerment outside of Chùa.** I think part of why we didn't get to social action was because we didn't discuss a shared purpose that could have framed that type of work. We were focused on how to exchange information with each other rather than with the larger community. **In order for a group to take the steps towards collective social action, they must develop a shared purpose.** This purpose should be one that uses assets of the group to bring information, knowledge, and change to those inside or outside of the group.



Closing.

YoUthROC: Our first finding was that "working with a shared purpose connects youth to each other and to the community, which cultivates kinship and social action." From Mychi's story, we saw that social action was not central to Chùa, but their unique connections could have jump-started meaningful social action about Viet language and culture within the broader community. Like Chùa's care in forming kinship, social action also takes intentionality.

Mychi: From my experience in Chùa, I learned that adult-youth collaboration, youth leadership, and kinship are necessary in order for meaningful work to happen. In the future, I hope that all youth groups will truly be spaces that youth can claim as their own with authority, decision-making, and a youth vibe.

YoUthROC: In our research, many groups valued the voices of adults instead of honoring the assets and ideas of their youth. Once groups are able to embrace young people and encourage them to be collaborative leaders and decision-makers, youth will be able to create spaces to foster kinship and social action.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KINSHIP AND SHARED PURPOSE

The purpose is to have fun. If you're not signed up for anything, like a dance team, you can have fun hanging out.

-Black male youth interview

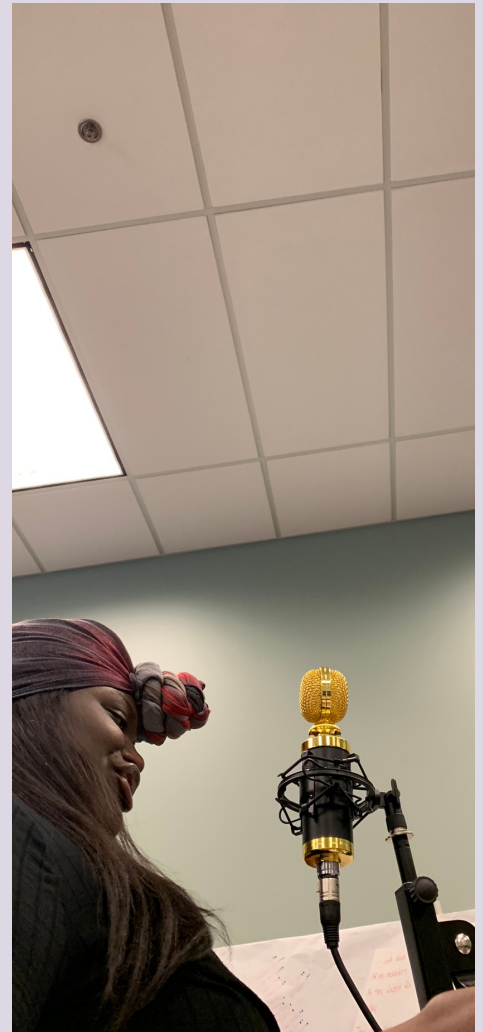
March 30, 2019

Our collective recommendation for all youth-serving organizations is to intentionally cultivate kinship, connectedness, and shared purpose in partnership with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and other marginalized youth.

We believe that real, personal relationships are fundamental in creating positive, safe space for both youth and adults. Community is core to BIPOC communities and it should be at the center of youth-serving organizations.

"Focus on critical connections more than critical mass—build the resilience by building the relationships."

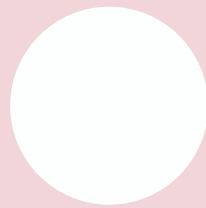
- adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy



NOURISHING YOUTH ASSETS AND AGENCY

Nourishing youth assets and agency was the second major finding in centering BIPOC youth in community and school spaces.

Assets are the gifts, knowledge, histories, passions, resources, skills, and talents in a community. Identifying and nourishing youth assets builds stronger relationships. Utilizing youth assets connects people to spaces and to communities. Everyone's purpose is different and that difference must be honored and actively nourished. Additionally, developing and amplifying youth assets (individually and collectively) empowers young people to exercise their agency. Agency is a sense of individual or collective power. Agency is active. Young people already have power and don't need to be *given* agency, but adults can share power, leave intentional space, and coach to increase youth agency and decision-making.



In this section:

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- p. 21 **Interview** between Savannah and the Caldwells
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NOURISHING YOUTH ASSETS AND AGENCY

In conversations across focus groups, young people brought up topics related to collective and racial/ethnic identities. Youth wanted to explore their individual goals for learning, arts, and activities, along with hidden histories. They expressed a need to access Ethnic Studies and histories that empower BIPOC youth and challenge all youth to consider power and extraordinary worlds of change. They thrived when they were involved as decision-makers, but youth agency was too rare.



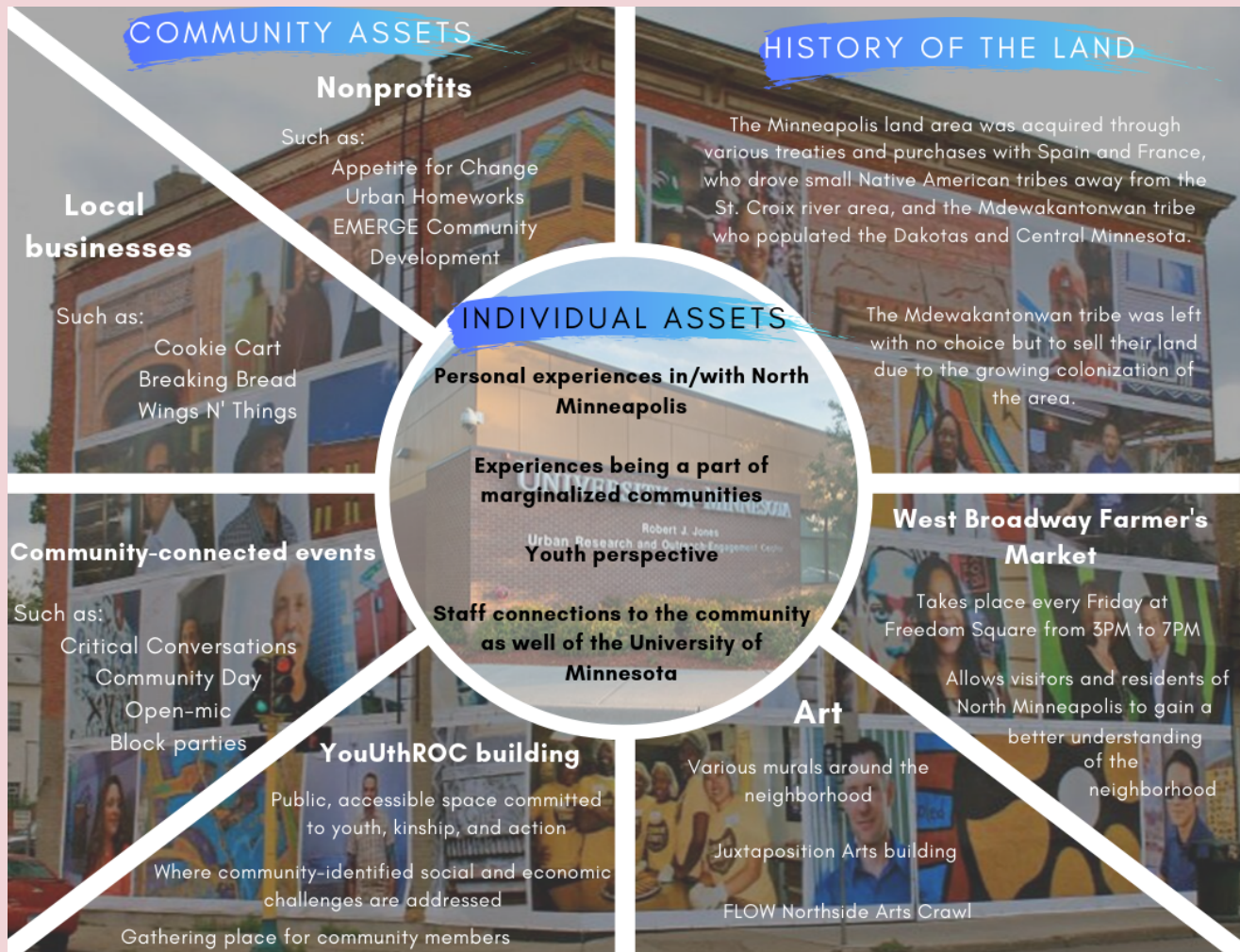
The personal assets and agency of youth are too often ignored at the hands of youth-serving organizations that focus on single issues (as important as those issues may be). Adversely, a food justice organization can connect more deeply to its participants when their talents for poetry and media production are supported. Organizations can grow the personal and collective assets and agency of youth.

Youth are multifaceted, talented individuals. Nourishing their many assets and their agency makes youth-serving organizations and the spaces youth take up more revolutionary.

FINDING #2: NOURISHING YOUTH ASSETS AND AGENCY REDEFINES BOTH SPACE AND RELATIONSHIPS. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND POWERFUL. THEY WANT MORE ACCESS TO ETHNIC STUDIES AND TO LEARNING ABOUT THEMSELVES AND OTHERS SO THAT THEY CAN THRIVE AND FEEL WHOLE.

North Minneapolis Asset Map

MADE BY MYCHI NGUYEN



Assets maps can be created by individuals or as participatory maps. They can include gifts, knowledges, histories, passions, resources, skills, and talents in a community. Here the maps include community assets and individual assets alongside critical history.

YoUthROC and Community Asset Map

MADE BY NATASHIA OTISO

HISTORY OF THE LAND

- North Minneapolis has a history of economic disinvestment on a basis of class and race
- Discriminatory deeds kept Black people out of many neighborhoods in Minneapolis causing them to be pushed over North. The results of redlining can still be seen today
- Has had a major Black presence since the 1900s.

What's YouthROC's magic?

- Youth perspective
- Individually, we've defined ourselves as empathetic, nurturing, efficient, protective, social, defiant, and familial
- We were all practically strangers prior to joining but we work well together and we balance each other out
- Most of our members live in North Minneapolis
- Creates a connection between the community and the University
- Most of our members are women of color, specifically Black women

COMMUNITY ASSETS

- Black! Owned! Businesses!
- Appetite for Change
- Cookie Cart
- Murals done by community members
- Community connected events like open mics and block parties
- West Broadway Farmer's Market

Can you hear me now

WELCOME TO NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

BY SAVANNAH MCCULLOUGH AND YOUTHROC

For young men and women, seeing Black art in our community gives us comfort and confidence. Black art is our culture. It shows that our history is beautiful, our music is beautiful, and our people are strong and beautiful pillars. The art being displayed around the north side makes a difference. And just by looking at it, it begins to tell our story.



"Can you hear me now" was painted in 2013 by Charles Caldwell. "It has the famous songstress Billie Holiday in it, and other musicians. The mural is about music, and music is a universal communication, and this explains the art and talent, and shows the harmony and beauty in our community. This mural is my gift to the community, and the mural lets us know that this is ours, and that all are welcome." - Charles Caldwell

The YoUthROC team agreed that the Caldwell family's art gives us comfort. When we first started meeting, The Caldwells: Black History and Beyond was on display in the UROC gallery. Every member of the team commented on how much it made the building feel alive. This contributed to our finding of how important art is to space, including the assets of youth-contributed art.

I interviewed Kesha after Caldwell's art was displayed and when she took a job working with our community partner, Appetite for Change. I love everything about Kesha's painting on the right. Portraying the natural black woman being comfortable in her own home around nature, watering her plants, gives me solace in my heart. Showing that black women are naturally beautiful and that we don't need designer clothes and heels to do the job.

"Art gives character to every establishment and building. It sets the tone of the facility. It definitely welcomes people of color, Black people, and it shares our history, our struggle, and our findings in the earth. It shows a sense of pride and unity, knowing the good works that have been accomplished, and that our art is accepted and loved by the community." - Kesha Caldwell



YoUthROC:

We hope that the important history in murals and art from young people can breathe life and comfort into the building of UROC as well as the indoor galleries and outside walls that are community assets of North Minneapolis.



After weeks of learning and growing with each other, we set off on our trip in a big commercial bus. On the bus, we watched movies like the Matrix and learned to look at films as a cultural critique of institutional racism. We learned more about the historical sites we were visiting. We heard the history of Bloody Sunday in Alabama before meeting Mrs. Joanne Bland, a child protestor who still lives there. After each visit, we broke out into discussion groups; adults facilitated our conversations on the bus. I experienced my first time in an affinity group. An affinity group is essentially a group of individuals that share a common identity. In this case, we got into affinity groups based on race and gender. We did not use the affinity groups all the time. For instance, after every site visit, we got into our "school" groups. Since only three people came from my school, we merged with another group of students from different schools.

Where's Our Film?

ETHNIC STUDIES AND STRIVING FOR YOUTH AGENCY

BY SHAUNASSEY JOHNSON AND YOUTHROC

I was supposed to be in a movie.

Okay, more like a documentary, but still I remember the single cameraman who I wanted to be best friends with because he said he liked my locs (he also had locs to die for). He filmed us over the course of a weeklong cultural and ethnic studies-based experience. Together, there were over 14 young Black students who were in ways like me, students from the midwest who all went to schools with zero to no classes on African American culture or history. We all had a passion to find our own ways to learn our history. We spent four Saturdays learning from a Critical Race Theory framework from in-depth history and concepts of African American studies, like code-switching and African beats or drumming as a form of communication and resistance. We learned how to depend on each other and started to build friendships with one another. We made a group chat.





There were a handful of Black girls on the trip; the boys and male adults made up the majority. There were only three women on the bus. Two of them were white, and one was Black. Her name was Clare (a pseudonym). I cannot remember what school she came with, but all the women were on a chaperone role basis and the Black men were there as facilitators. One time, in affinity groups, Clare led us in a discussion to debrief the *"Matrix"*. I remember that conversation was tense because we were still on the bus. It came right after one of the male facilitators went on a homophobic rant that none of the adults challenged. I felt uncomfortable and I voiced that to the group. But nothing was done to address this tension.

That was my first realization **that Black spaces have to intentionally be queer to be radical.** It is very easy to be blinded by colonial or patriarchal ideology and believe that Black liberation and education can be homophobic. In addition to that, Black women must be visible. Even though there was one Black woman, it was obvious she was not there to facilitate. **The other girls and I all felt the lack of Black women's thought and visibility in the collective space. Our lived knowledge was an asset, but it was disregarded because the official "teachers" were Black men. They did not check themselves and they did not invite us as knowledge-holders either.**



Over the course of a week, groups of us video-recorded, audiotaped, and wrote about our experiences and what we saw. **I specifically remember filming the landscape of the Gullah Heritage Trail and speaking to the ancestral queen of the Gullah people.** As the tour was ending, the facilitators really pushed for us to think of action steps we could take in our own schools and how to use the new knowledge for social change. I think what my team and the other students were most excited about was the documentary detailing our experiences. For me, I hoped the documentary would be a catalyst for more social justice action in my school. I wanted to excite students. But the documentary never came. We waited months. Spring and summer rolled by and we did not have our documentary. Once, weeks after our trip, everyone (every adult) seemingly forgetting about our time down there, weeks after school wrapped up, my phone buzzed. Someone from the trip group chat sent a message: "Where's the movie, Brian?" The message was simple but it conjured a lot of feelings for me. I felt at a loss because I was the youngest out of my school group to go on the trip and my two other companions were juniors; school hierarchy dictated we were not friends.

I had gone on such an eye-opening experience, and I had no one to share my hopes with for the future of my school and connect with. I lacked a shared purpose with my peers and the opportunity to act on it. The group of students I spent a month training with, and then an additional week-long bus trip, all wanted to be part of this experience. We wanted a chance to learn about African American history from reliable and trustworthy places, which we did. Sadly, that had to come from outside the school environment, but we were fortunate enough to not only learn about our history but actually to see it with our own eyes.



What would have made the experience much more impactful would have been the film. We wanted a film made with our own tools and guidance from the videographer. adrienne maree brown says, "What you pay attention to grows." Without a doubt, this tour paid attention to our shared histories, to young people, and to knowledge. We wanted to pay more attention to the film and our role and action that could come from it. We wanted to use our own agency in the full process. The potential of the film connected us. When the hope for the film vanished, we were left waiting.

The memory is a tricky thing. As I wrote this story, I felt that my lack of detailed memory of this trip was a bad thing. I cannot remember a single thing I said on this trip, but I remember the feelings and the faces of people I met and worked with. As I write I worry that I have remembered things wrong, that I am dramatizing my feelings and my experiences. I also worry that because I remember my negative feelings, I am portraying this experience as a bad one. It was not. **Even though my individual assets were not nourished and my team's collective agency was denied via the film distribution, I was given a chance to experience My history in a new, hands-on, way.** I believe that a few of the facilitators and chaperones on this experience had my best interests in heart. I thank my close relationship with them as a reason I was chosen to go on this trip, and it is the reason why I still hold a fondness in my heart for this trip and one adult facilitator in particular.

YoUthROC: The memory that Shaunassey shared was not novel to the team. There had been recurring incidents when young people were part of a group that had "promised" a final product but had not delivered. It was particularly hard to challenge groups and adults with whom students had a racial/ethnic affinity because young people were also thankful for an ethnic-studies lens and shared experience. However, if the time and trust would have been built in to use youth assets and agency, especially with the Black mentorship on the trip, the film would have been brilliant.

Finding your Assets using Community Cultural Capital

Answer the questions and keep track of how many of each letter you get.

This quiz is based on a Tara Yosso's 2005 article, *Whose Culture Has Capital*.

Note: Do this with a team to learn more about your assets and goals!

1. What capital do you resonate with the most?

Why?

- A) Aspirational because I believe I, we, can succeed at anything. I have so many goals.
- B) I think linguistic is closest to me, I talk a lot and love to process that way.
- C) The capital I resonate with the most now would be familial because I try to be intentional about maintaining relationships and connections.
- D) Social capital because I'm really good at reading people and the environment around me and using links to boost my own potential.
- E) Navigational because I have grown up learning to code-switch, it is like a second language
- F) .Resistant capital because I stay mad.

2. What capital do you struggle with the most, or wish you had more.

- A) Aspirational Capital
- B) Linguistic Capital
- C) Familial Capital
- D) Social Capital
- E) Navigational Capital
- F) Resistant Capital

3. Who do you go to for help?

- A) People who share a common goal and are determined to achieve it
- B) People who share my language, songs that speak to me, or my own writing/journaling.
- C) People who I share deep or instant connections with or have known for a long time
- D) People in my network
- E) People who are persistent
- F) People who question authority

4. Who do you feel most comfortable with?

- A) My team.
- B) People who I understand best.
- C) The fam
- D) People in my network
- E) People who switch it up and flow into different groups easily.
- F) People who understand systemic oppression and work against it.

5. Which word(s) best describe(s) you?

- A) Goal-oriented or determined
- B) Good with language, love words
- C) Communal
- D) Connected
- E) Persistent
- F) Bold

You're all done! Now count up the numbers of A's, B's, and C's, D's, E's or F's and write them below.

A

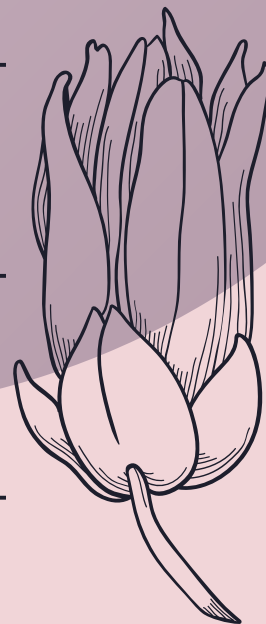
B

C

D

E

F



M o s t l y A ' s **Aspirational Capital**

Yosso describes this capital as the ability to imagine and actualize a life outside of structural and institutional barriers. People with aspirational capital are resilient and goal-oriented.

M o s t l y B ' s

Linguistic Capital

Yosso defines linguistic capital as, "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style." People with linguistic capital have a gift of communication and comprehension.

M o s t l y C ' s **Familial Capital**

Familial capital reflects a commitment to community well-being and kinship. They value the extension of a family unit that is defined by shared experiences in addition to blood relation. People with familial capital are skill and building and maintaining strong connections.

M o s t l y D ' s

Social Capital

Social capital is strong engagement and membership in different social networks. People with social capital have a strong ability to read people and environments. They are also very social and know when to be outgoing.

M o s t l y E ' s **Navigational Capital**

Navigational capital is the ability of marginalized or underrepresented youth to maneuver around, between, or within spaces that were not made for them and the ability to maintain high achievement despite ongoing discrimination or hostility. People with navigational capital are resilient and skilled in code-switching and adapting.

M o s t l y F ' s

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. People with resistant capital value bubble-bursting and use meaningful defiance as a vehicle for equity and change.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOURISHING YOUTH ASSETS AND AGENCY

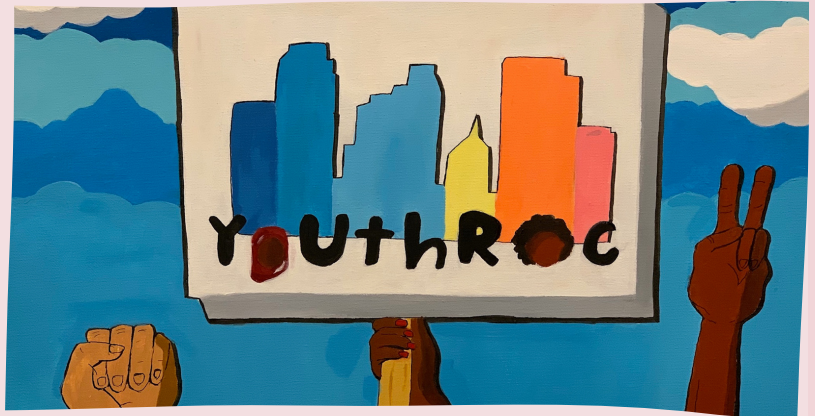
I would like to see where youth are being respected. If it's our space, and if adults want to act a certain way, I don't think that should be fair, because it's a youth space, and we are a youth organization.. Just like they say this is grown folks' business, this is youth business.

-Black young woman interview
March 30, 2019

Nourish and sustain
youth assets, knowledge,
and power (which includes
activating agency).



Youth are powerful and deserve
to be acknowledged and prioritized
for the assets and experiences
they bring!



"What you pay attention to
grows"

"If you don't trust the community,
the community will never be
trustworthy"

- adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy



ADDRESSING ISSUES AND TAKING ACTION

Youth are not immune to issues of today, as we have seen in the past years and current days with Black Lives Matter protests, anti-gun violence activists, and Minneapolis's Isra Hirsi, co-founder of the U.S. Climate Strike. Young people are very aware of the issues they and others face. Kinship and youth agency creates an environment that is conducive to conversations about social action. In our research, we found that adults don't often acknowledge the issues that youth notice. Not only do issues need to be addressed, but there needs to be space that is intentionally created to hear and to address issues in youth spaces.

In this section:

- p. 30 Findings on Addressing Issues and Taking Action
- p. 31 **Feature article** by Amina and her work experience
- p. 35 Recommendations

ADDRESSING ISSUES AND TAKING ACTION

Youth-serving organizations need to recognize they do not live within a vacuum. Issues outside of a program or facility are very real and very present when youth enter and leave the space. In addition, issues come up within any organization. Youth and adults in youth-serving organizations need to give space for young people to raise up issues, questions, and discussions in order to create change.

In the next **feature story**, Amina analyzes her experience working in a newly developed community space, intended to bring outdoor experiences and economic opportunities to youth and others in an urban community. In her racialized experience, it was difficult to raise up the issues that she could see unraveling in front of her daily, taking advantage of young people of color and impacting a community she cares about and wants to sustain.



**FINDING #3: ISSUES
THAT YOUTH DEAL WITH
NEED TO BE
ADDRESSED, INCLUDING
BUT NOT LIMITED TO:
RACIALIZATION;
COMFORT AND ACCESS;
YOUTH
DISENFRANCHISEMENT
AND ADULT CONTROL;
VIOLENCE AND SAFETY;
FUNDING, RESOURCES,
AND SUSTAINABILITY.**

Youth Exploitation in the Work Place

Listening and Taking Action

by Amina Smaller and YoUthROC

In November 2018, I received an email about a new building opening on the Parkway, less than a half-mile from my house, called The Path (names are anonymized). It was a building for outdoor activities, run by an organization called Discovery. The email was advertising a job fair for The Path's newly opened restaurant, Southern Kitchen, a Black-owned Cajun restaurant looking to hire new servers. I walked down to The Path to see a beautiful big new building. I was so excited about the new addition to the community and the different ways that we (BIPOC Youth) would be able to use it.

When I walked in, I was greeted by a table of Black women, which was immediately comforting, even though they appeared to feel out of place. Around them I saw tucked-away offices, with only white staff and white patrons. This didn't bother me much because I was focused on why I was there. I received an interview and call back on the same day and was beyond excited. I was going to get to work close to home and in the community that I respect and love.



My first few weeks working in The Path had several hard moments. The Discovery staff accused me of stealing, twice. I was constantly questioned about my reason for being there, even a month after being hired, and I had to deal with entitled patrons and racial microaggressions every day. On three separate occasions, white Path members and Discovery staff stole snacks from Southern Kitchen when employees weren't looking. They also frequently complained about Southern Kitchen's "unhealthy" food, and how we didn't do a good enough job working to serve the Discovery staff needs. Although my co-workers were Northsiders, the members of The Path were not. This was unsettling because there was little or no representation directly from the Northside community, unless we were working and severing the Path's members. People would come from the furthest suburbs, but there was little or no representation from the Northside community.

The Path is run by the Discovery Foundation. As a local organization, its guiding values are adventure, excellence, stewardship, integrity, and inclusiveness. The Discovery Foundation would also be considered a youth-serving organization. Their mission is to create a shared passion for year-round outdoor adventure in the Minneapolis area, focusing on "under-served youth and families." **According to mncompass.org, 38% of the Near North Area is under 17 years old.** This means that according to YoUthROC, who considers someone to be a youth until the age of 25, North Minneapolis is majority a youth of color neighborhood.

While the Discovery Foundation's mission and values sounded great, it seemed like a front for corralling wealthy members to their space. While they gave the impression of an engaged youth-serving space, they acted as an organization that serves wealthy families and their lifestyles. Their brochures, for example, were filled with smiling brown faces participating in outdoor activities and camps, but events hosted by the Discovery Foundation felt very exclusive and oriented towards white wealthy members.



People of color who regularly came into The Path were Southern Kitchen's customers. They often commented on how uncomfortable they were in the space. Customers would say things like, "I love the food but it is too white in here," or "how did Southern Kitchen end up in this building?" While The Path is technically a Parks and Rec building, we often heard informal complaints that it felt more like a country club or similar exclusive institutions. The Path often used racial capitalism to maintain an image of diversity and social action, using that false image to leverage financial resources they wouldn't have access to otherwise.

Racial capitalism is the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person and is a long-standing, common, and deeply problematic practice (Leong, 2013).

For example, when organizations like the Discovery Foundation recycle the same images of Black and Brown youth for their websites and brochures but don't truly serve or develop reciprocal relationships with them, it is a form of racial capitalism. Racial capitalism is especially damaging for not only communities of color, but youth of color specifically because it creates a false sense of accessibility. The Path is gaining resources from exploiting the Northside community that are not funneled back into the community; the spaces remain predominantly white and inaccessible to many local BIPOC families. There were a few occasions where I would see youth of color enjoying the amenities of The Path (tubing, skiing, biking), but it was rare.

Twice a month, at most, youth organizations from North Minneapolis, serving youth of color, would come to have fun and enjoy the space. The majority of the patrons accessing the space, however, were Discovery members and wealthy families from surrounding suburbs and affluent parts of Minneapolis. I would even see customers regularly coming from as far as Woodbury to ski or bike, but rarely would I see youth from the Northside community coming to go tubing. Every summer, the Discovery Foundation hosts a day camp where they have scholarship programs for "under-served youth." During this camp, I saw a few more brown faces, but still not many.

Another way The Path created a false impression of accessibility for youth of color was through youth employment. By hiring youth of color, they exploited our energy and bodies in order to continue the facade of a "community partnership" they claimed to practice. There was a pattern of young Black and Brown workers being mistreated, underpaid, and overworked by adults at The Path. Youth of color working at the Path and Southern Kitchen became really close friends because we were all dealing with similar issues. We created a safe and fun space for each other within The Path and Southern Kitchen's spaces. We created a sense of kinship, looking out for one another. We would often share stories about how frustrating and exploitative our bosses were.



By employing the few youth of color who went through their programs and making them the face of The Path, it made the space seem more welcoming than it was. They could claim to be helping Northside youth with jobs, when in reality these young employees of color were treated and paid differently than the white youth with whom they worked. Although I wasn't directly employed by The Path, I was working everyday at Southern Kitchen and witnessed these issues. I was told stories about the Executive Director of the Discovery Foundation who yelled at two black boys (youth employees) in front of other staff and The Path's customers. I also had been a part of different events and programs put on by the Discovery Foundation during my childhood where I experienced these issues directly.



Aside from maintaining a false pretense that The Path is accessible for youth of color, Southern Kitchen employed youth for other reasons, more related to the exploitation of our energy, bodies, and ideas. Both The Path and Southern Kitchen employed Northside youth as a way to gain social capital, without doing real community outreach and service. The Path is advertised as being located in Golden Valley, but its proximity to the Northside establishes it as a Northside space. In order for it to be a true community space, we have to make it one. We cannot allow spaces to identify themselves as community spaces without the direct input of the community.

In order for a place to identify as a community space, it needs to be actively and authentically serving youth of color--always.

Youth are the reasons that organizations like the Discovery Foundation are able to stay around. Whether they are truly serving youth or not, simply claiming to serve youth brings in donations and other funding opportunities. We have to show up, take up space, and use the resources that are available but hidden. We need to ask "Why are our pictures being taken?" and "What is the use for them?" or to say "No thank you" if we don't want our images used. We must hold spaces and organizations accountable, including those like The Path and the Discovery Foundation, as well as schools and other community spaces. Spaces must be accessible to BIPOC families and youth and do the community-building work that they claim.

YoUthROC: Throughout our research, it was essential that young people had platforms to address issues from their personal lives, communities, schools, and organizations. It was as important that they were able to take action to address these issues. As COVID has impacted our global and local communities, one idea that has continued to arise was the creation of a youth employment advocacy program, one that could host young people and mentors from across jobs to build collective agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES AND TAKING ACTION

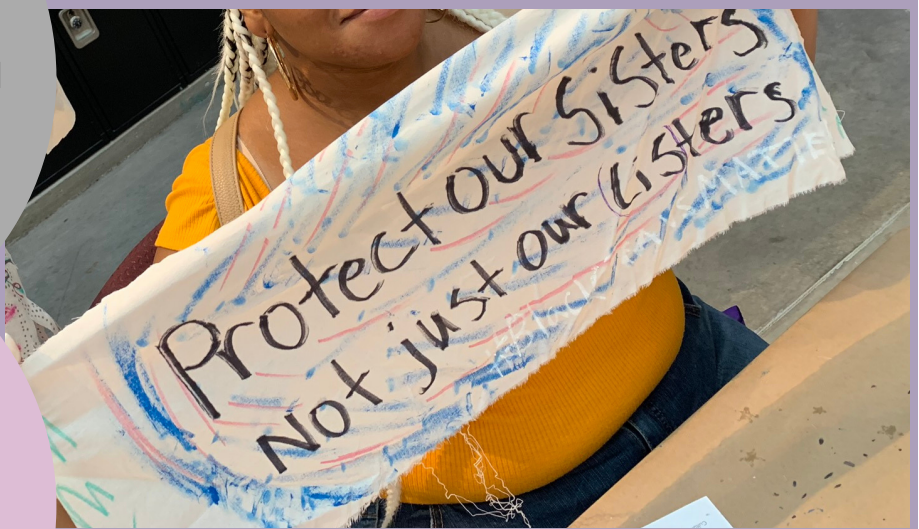
I think it's very important for youth to have places to put their opinion: if it's a wall, if it's a board, if it's a box. A platform for that.

And food, you know, food.

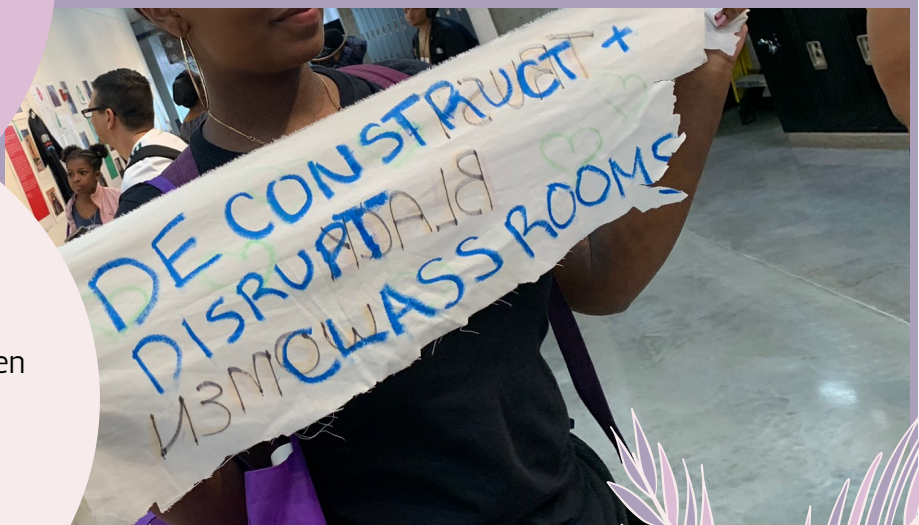
- Black youth leader interview
March 30, 2019



Reflect on issues collectively and take action within communities, organizations and systems of power. Youth must be considered stakeholders, not as problems but as problem solvers.



Youth do not exist in a vacuum. They witness and experience issues and want to talk about them and to change them.



"I think it is healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it."

- adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy

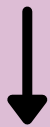


CENTERING BIPOC YOUTH

YoUthROC's 2019 project initially asked, "What does it take to develop accessible and sustainable spaces for youth?" Based on interactive and reciprocal research, the team's findings reaffirmed the need to center BIPOC youth in community and school spaces. These recommendations have become YoUthROC's YPAR framework and curricular guide to create space to center--rather than marginalize--BIPOC youth.

**WE ASKED OVER 200 MOSTLY BIPOC YOUTH AND 40 ADULTS:
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DEVELOP ACCESSIBLE, SUSTAINABLE YOUTH
SPACE? HOW DO WE CENTER BIPOC YOUTH?**

SURVEYS | FINSTA RESEARCH | FOCUS GROUPS | POLL EVERYWHERE



YoUthROC Research Findings

- Working with a shared purpose connects youth to each other and to the community, which cultivates kinship and social action.
- Nourishing youth assets and agency redefines both space and relationships. Young people are knowledgeable and powerful. They want more access to ethnic studies and to learning about themselves and others so that they can thrive and to feel whole.
- Issues that youth deal with need to be addressed, including but not limited to: racialization; comfort and access; youth disenfranchisement and adult control; violence and safety; funding, resources, and sustainability.

YOUTHROC RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTERING BIPOC YOUTH IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



CREATE KINSHIP AND SHARED PURPOSE

Intentionally cultivate kinship, connectedness, and shared purpose in partnership with Black, Indigenous and People of Color youth and other marginalized youth.



How will you support kinship-building time? How will you find your shared purpose?

NOURISH YOUTH ASSETS AND AGENCY

Nourish and sustain youth assets, knowledge, and power (which includes activating agency).



How are young people part of authentic decision-making processes?

ADDRESS ISSUES AND TAKE ACTION

Reflect on issues collectively and take action within communities, organizations, and systems of power. Youth must be considered stakeholders, not as problems but as problem-solvers.



What internal and external issues have yet to be discussed? How does power play a role? What changes need to be made to problem-solve together?

Taking Action: Knowing Community Spaces in order to Center Youth and Community Wholeness

by Amina Smaller, Abby Rombalski, and
YoUthROC



"I believe that we can restore our hope in a world that transcends race by building communities where self esteem comes not from feeling superior to any group but from one's relationship to the land, to the people, or to the place wherever that may be."

- bell hooks, *belonging: a culture of place* (p.183, 2009)

After investigating issues about youth space and collecting stories from our local community, we had another step to take within youth-led participatory action research. In YPAR we use the knowledge we gain for education, understanding, strategic action, and/or community change (Berkeley YPAR Hub, 2015).

How would we take what we learned and apply it to real-world situations?

Background

We live and/or work in North Minneapolis. Most of our team members are long-time northside residents. One notable community asset of North Minneapolis is that it is home to many different youth-serving organizations. They are located in churches and masjids, schools, and community centers. Some spaces have been designed for and by youth. The energy and aesthetic of these spaces is a reflection of how stakeholders feel about the space. Usually only adults are recognized as stakeholders given that they maintain or own the space. However, youth are the primary users of many spaces and therefore are important stakeholders too.

Developing, building, and sustaining our spaces is crucial in building community. When people in power share or give spaces to youth, the beauty and quality of the physical space is a reflection of how people in power feel about those inhabiting the spaces. Young people are often given--or have to take--leftover spaces that are rundown, inaccessible, and unattractive. Our communities are strong enough without physically appealing spaces. However, this adds labor on our communities that we don't need to expend. Even though we can transform the energy of these spaces by building kinship, we deserve spaces that are accessible, safe, and reflective of everything we are.





Applying Our Research

Since the beginning of YoUthROC's formation as a YPAR (Youth Participatory Action Research) team, one of our early goals was to be part of designing a public, accessible, and aesthetically appealing research studio that centers BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) youth. This does not mean that an action research studio would need to be youth-only. In fact, one YoUthROC Advisory Vision Board member said, "Youth spaces create a different vibe for a whole building, whether people know it or not." Youth bring a vibrancy in art, music, fashion, digital media, and kinship that can spark life into research and engagement centers. We are interested in forwarding UROC's (University of Minnesota Urban Research Outreach and Engagement Center) mission to foster "public partnerships with urban communities to advance learning, improve quality of life, and discover breakthrough solutions to critical problems." Communities are not whole without youth and our contributions. This means that we cannot be left out of community spaces or seen as an afterthought because then the whole community is not being served.

When we began our work at UROC, it was clear that there was no space dedicated to youth or the work we were doing. We often described the space as sterile, professional, and not a space that is truly open. Many guests we've invited into the space have agreed. We were often told to "keep it down," or some would come and shut our doors to drown out our voices without permission or acknowledgement. The clothes we wore was also monitored, either verbally or by glances. UROC's dedication to maintaining the physical space, and the image of a "professional" university space, pushed youth and other community members that don't "fit" within that image to the margins. While community building and kinship are some of the driving forces of youth-serving organizations, in our research we have learned that first and foremost, we as BIPOC youth need somewhere to go that is willing to center us and our whole selves.

Now, YoUthROC has its own office space in UROC. We give tours of the building to new members, introducing them to UROC staff, which helps to create connections. We want UROC to continue to make creative use of indoor and outdoor spaces with more opportunities for public scholarship and centering youth. May they be beautiful and artful spaces (with music and more murals!) to gather community, including young people, to participate in action research for our own futures.

Kinship Stories and a Reclamation of Space

We have learned a lot from Tara Yosso's 2005 community wealth article; community knowledge exchange and partnership are at the center of understanding community wealth. "Various forms of capital nurtured through cultural wealth include aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. These forms of capital draw on the knowledge Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom." (2005, p.2) However, something that YoUthROC pointed out was the need to center youth knowledge and agency within each cultural capital (or community assets) that make up the community wealth model. Youth need to be seen and heard as active community members, not only as a sub-group. When youth begin curating youth space or contributing to community space, it centers youth and creates opportunities for kinship, partnerships, and inclusive spaces that are open to all.

One way to build kinship and community partnership is through storytelling and the reclamation of space. Physical spaces hold their own stories and histories that create paths for kinship. During our data gathering, participatory asset mapping was one of many ways we built kinship over familiar space. There are so many spaces that hold deep meaning to youth over North, and once we share our stories, we find points of connection and kinship (with both young people and adults). For instance, the UROC building on Plymouth Ave. used to be Sno Foods. Kids, including some of those in YoUthROC, shared memories of playing in the parking lot when parents were at the Urban League across the street. Many young people, who have remained involved in the community, grew up surrounded by parents, aunties, and elders who were community organizers.

In North Minneapolis, many spaces have changed because of gentrification and "community safety" or development that does not serve the Northside community (and is not usually owned by the community). Young adults have reminisced about parks, rec centers, restaurants, and other community buildings from childhood. Places where children played on the northside are loved by the community and open to all. Take North Commons for example; some people disparage it, yet it represents one of the spaces that we all share and deeply value. Other places are sites of trauma and healing. When Jamar Clark was murdered by the MPD down the street from UROC in 2015, a community held space together for weeks that cold November. Stories and memories of "The Way" rose up, a youth and community center formed after the 1966 Plymouth [Ave] uprising. In its place now stands "Fort Precinct," the 4th Precinct MPD Headquarters. After George Floyd was murdered by the MPD in 2020, a Black Lives Matter street mural was painted in front of UROC. The photo below shows its brilliance, but by fall 2021 it was completely faded.

Places affected by gentrification, racial capitalism, abandonment, and police presence make certain spaces seem inaccessible or unappealing. However, local communities still have historical ownership over those spaces, and generations of people can flex shared stories to reclaim pride of place and new possibilities.



YoUthROC's first recommendation to center BIPOC youth in community (and school) spaces is to build kinship and shared purpose. These things can happen at the same time. When young people build kinship and share joy, they can develop a shared purpose towards shifting and reclaiming community spaces. Building kinship is a grounding step in taking back spaces and reconstructing them to serve the whole community. Telling stories (including through art) and learning local and critical histories is a necessary part of working towards a shared purpose. In the beginning stages of building a youth-centric (or youth-serving) space, the values of a space and its people need to be determined and prioritized. This will differ from community to community, but the next two recommendations, nourishing youth assets and addressing issues, contribute to valuing young people as well.



YoUthROC's second recommendation is to nourish youth assets and agency, including youth knowledge, power, and decision-making. Youth need to be involved in decision-making processes, including how space is designed and functions. Youth art, music, literature, voices, talents, and ideas need to flood through space. Young people want spaces where they can bring their whole selves, where "I can go into a place and feel like I already belong." These spaces will always be radical and unconventional, because the alternatives are spaces that prioritize institutions, whiteness, "professionalism", and power imbalances.

The spaces youth design for themselves are spaces that reflect the knowledge and power that youth hold. When youth have power and agency over physical space, they hold a place for peers to build their assets and share knowledge across communities. This could look like developing art studios, project spaces, writing spaces, meeting spaces, and different kinds of physical rooms and layouts that support the nourishment of youth and community assets. Everything from picking out paint and furniture to assigning values and norms of the space should center youth consensus of those who use the space. Adult co-conspirators should assign ownership (or co-ownership) over the space to youth because it is what grounds and sustains communities. It creates beautiful and comfortable spaces where community building happens.



YoUthROC's third recommendation is address issues and take action. When youth spaces are being developed, the greatest stakeholders involved are the youth, not adults who may hold power over the space. When building a space for themselves, youth become more prepared to address the issues they face. Community spaces that are not home to youth organizations still need to operate from a place that serves youth and acknowledges the issues young people face. To clarify, every space does not need to be a youth-serving space. However, in order to identify as a "community organization" or "community-serving space," youth need environments to exist in their wholeness and to feel nourished. In order to address community needs as a whole, young people need to have opportunities to address the issues they face. Increasing physical representation and agency of young people in community spaces helps to create the conditions for addressing issues and taking action.

Make It Happen

As mentioned earlier, YoUthROC was looking to create a public, accessible, youth-centered space in the UROC building on Plymouth and Penn in North Minneapolis. We wanted to create a space where youth of color are represented by adults and youth leaders in the building and in the community. In this space, youth will gain advocacy, facilitation, and research skills that build on the field of youth participatory action research. We hope to bridge the generational gap that exists within our beautifully multi-generational community. We learned that this need is wide-spread. Young people, especially those who are 14-24 years old, need our communities. They need resources and access to information through their peers and older community members. In the same way, our communities need our young people in order to exchange information effectively. Community knowledge is not whole without the contributions of youth. When organizations develop spaces with youth that truly serve their needs, the larger community will also benefit. Centering young people guarantees that every community thrives.

SPACES THAT SERVE YOUTH MUST INCLUDE YOUTH AGENCY TOWARDS:

- COMMUNITY NORMS DESIGNED BY YOUTH
- STIMULATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR TECHNOLOGY
- SAFE SPACES FOR SOCIALIZING THAT AREN'T OVER-PLANNED OR OVER-SURVEILLED
- ATTRACTIVE MULTI-MODAL SPACE THAT INCLUDES ART THAT IS A REFLECTION OF WHO WE ARE (INCLUDING ART BY YOUTH)
- NOURISHING FOOD AND WATER
- ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT HELP US BUILD CRITICAL AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES, OUR HISTORIES, OUR COMMUNITIES, AND OUR FUTURES



Youth-centered, Youth-led, Youth-serving

When young people in our research created word associations for "youth" sometimes it was asset-based, including music, art, media, truth-telling, and other activities.

Sometimes young people wrote that they weren't valued or taken seriously.

How do young people want to see themselves?

Organizations and tasks differ. Some may be youth-centered, youth-led, youth-driven, or youth-serving. Consider what type of organization or space yours is and how you can create conditions and opportunities to shift power and to increase youth agency. This can be intimidating to adults who are uncomfortable giving up control or who are worried about perception more than authentic youth agency.

Young people are always ready to create change in schools and other community spaces.

Defining YOUTH and YOUTH SPACE

Youth space is everywhere.

Youth-serving organizations, including schools, must center BIPOC youth in their spaces.

Youth space is physical and virtual.

If a space is a "community space," it must include young people.

How youth-centered is your space?

Answer the questions and keep track of how many of each letter you get in order to consider where your school, group, or organization falls based on YoUthROC recommendations.

1. What is the shared purpose of your group?

- A) We all agree on what it is
- B) We all have different ideas of what it is
- C) I'm not sure

2. To what extent do you feel a sense of kinship with others in your space?

- A) I feel a strong sense of kinship with most of my peers in the space
- B) I feel some kinship with a few people
- C) I don't feel a sense of kinship with the other people in my group

3. Why do you come?

- A) Youth in this space get a chance to connect informally with one another
- B) I'm getting paid/something out of it.
- C) I have nowhere else to go in my free time.

4. Which describes your team best?

- A) My team has planned a social action
- B) Activism is a priority in our planning
- C) Social action has been in the background

5. In my group I get to develop personal goals and assets....

(ex: I love spoken word and my org hosts a spoken word night)

- A) Most of the time
- B) Sometimes
- C) Rarely

6. Who decides what happens in your group?

- A) Youth are decision-makers
- B) Adults ask us but they don't consider our input in decisions
- C) Youth are not included in decision-making whatsoever

7. Does your org compensate you for work that you do?

- A) Yes
- B) Only after you've reached a certain age
- C) No :(

8. Do you feel good about the knowledge you produce?

- A) I don't second guess my knowledge or ideas when speaking in my group.
- B) I'm able to unpack some ideas but I spend most of my time receiving information.
- C) I don't feel like I have a voice or like my knowledge is accepted

9. Do you learn about your identity and power in society?

- A) Yes, we are very social justice, ethnic studies, and liberation focused
- B) It is not our main focus, but we discuss it sometimes
- C) Conversations about social justice, power, and resistance don't happen in our org

10. How is information presented to you?

- A) We present it to each other and it possible for everyone to understand in their own way
- B) Both adults and youth present information, but we only dive deep into information that adults present
- C) Adults in our org present us with irrelevant and non-accessible information

11. Which describes your team best?

- A) I love that my org will be around for a long time
- B) My org has been around for a long time but, I don't know what the future holds
- C) Sometimes I am scared that my org/team won't be around very long

12. How easy is it to get to your org?

- A) I can walk
- B) A bus or two
- C) It takes over 20 minutes to get there

13. Can you voice your frustrations with the adults in your org?

- A) Yes, they are always open to listen and take action
- B) Yes, they listen but our frustrations fall on deaf ears
- C) No, we can't talk to them and if we do, they don't listen.

You're all done! Now count up the numbers of A's,B's, and C's and write them below.

A **B** **C**

M o s t l y A ' s



YOU ARE RIGHT ON TRACK- It sounds like your school or org is serving you and the other youth really well. It sounds like the space that has been cultivated is one where you can be nourished, build strong connections, and do great work. We love to see it! Continue to do great groundbreaking things in your org. And remember that YoUthROC is always somewhere you can reach out to for advocacy, questions, and community!

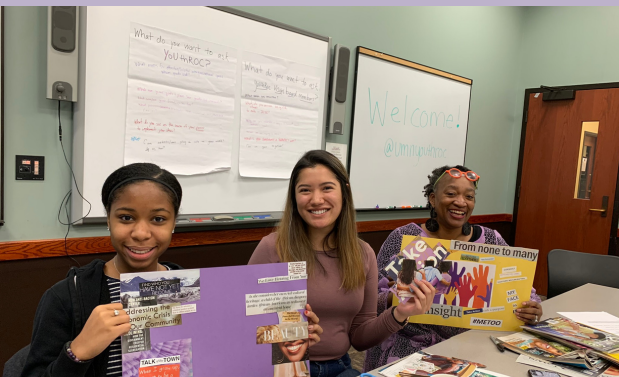
M o s t l y B ' s

YOUR ORG MIGHT NEED SOME HELP- It sounds like you might need to do some team-building activities. You seem like you have a solid foundation, but you need to freshen/change things up. Those kinds of changes come at the hands of youth. Don't be afraid to collectivize and make changes to our org. If you ever need backup, send YoUthROC a DM or email. We would be more than happy to share tips and info about how to refresh your org!



M o s t l y C ' s

PLEASE REACH OUT- From the answers you chose, it sounds like your school or org needs some serious TLC. An org can not reach its full potential if it is not serving the youth it is supposed to. It might seem hard to reach out to/stand up to the adults in your space, but you can do it! If you need people to strategize with, reach out to the YoUthROC team so that we can help find the resources you need to refocus your program.



FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE APPETITE FOR CHANGE (AFC) AND YOUTHROC: A COMMUNITY PARTNER REFLECTION

Authentic and reciprocal community partnerships is essential to YoUthROC. One of YoUthROC's initial community partners was Appetite for Change (AFC), our youth-serving food justice neighbors nearby. Savannah, Esha, and Grace from AFC worked in reciprocity with the YoUthROC research team at the University of Minnesota's RJJ Urban Research Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) to learn about youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) and to add valuable knowledge to the team. They attended meetings and co-led research and training activities. YoUthROC attended and presented at AFC's Community Cooks event, where youth come together to cook healthy meals together. The entire AFC youth team attended YoUthROC's YPAR training day on January 17, 2020, ending with tubing together at Theo Wirth Park.

At first, we AFC members joined YoUthROC because we too wanted to create accessible space for young people. As we began the research design, we started to figure out the problems everyone had in common, like not feeling youth had a safe space without adults hovering. We learned how to go to different organizations, even not on the Northside, to do activities with them and to compare the feedback. Then, we analyzed the data to find the outcome. Now, AFC can take the findings to have conversations back in our organization. The YoUthROC/AFC members Savannah, Esha, and Grace discussed with Abby how the following recommendations applied to their organization and how physical space, programming, curriculum, and relationships were important to AFC's mission and goals. We shared this reflection with AFC leaders in fall 2020.



AFC MISSION

WE USE FOOD AS A TOOL TO BUILD HEALTH, WEALTH, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NORTH MINNEAPOLIS. WE BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO LEARN, COOK, EAT, AND GROW FOOD, CREATING CHANGE THAT LASTS.

Our YoUthROC 2019 research project asked, "What does it take to develop an accessible, sustainable youth space?" AFC team members took YoUthROC recommendations from that research and put them in conversation with their hopes for their own organization. Following is that group conversation.



CREATE KINSHIP AND SHARED PURPOSE

YOUTHROC RECOMMENDATION #1

AFC responds to this recommendation in a reflection about their own practices:

Currently, we do a good job cultivating kinship with many different youth. We go out to different schools advocating for AFC to find young people interested in growing food, cooking, and social or food-based justice. We need more work to engage youth outside of African American youth. We used to engage kids of all races (white, American Indian, Asian). Now, we have a lot more African American youth who engage with us, but I'd like to see us engage with other cultures a lot more.

AFC is directly connected to social movements through our flagship program Community Cooks, asking youth about the change they want to see ("What change are you hungry for?"). We run this program six times a month, where young people and community members come in, prepare a meal, and enjoy a dialogue with someone in the community. Everything is free. All that we ask is that you bring yourself, a friend, and help prepare the meal. We provide the meal, a beverage, and a good time. We also work with the Northside Fresh program. We have been involved in the urban agriculture bill, the sugary beverage bill, and the transportation bill, which proposed that buses come less often to north Minneapolis and more to the outer suburbs. We have taken our young people to sit in and listen to those conversations, to teach them that these bills do affect them in some kind of way.

These policies do have something to do with you..
Then we ask them, now, how can we create change?



NOURISH YOUTH ASSETS AND AGENCY

YOUTHROC RECOMMENDATION #2

Youth assets: At AFC, we nourish youth in one form or another. For instance, we provide outside sources based on their career paths. We outsource and find ways to engage youth outside our program to gain more knowledge and experience in the career they want.

Youth power and decision-making: Youth have power in areas that apply to them. Adult staff will ask, "What do ya'll think?" or "What do you want to do?" Youth have more input in the decision-making about outside sources. If there's no interest from the youth, we don't do it.

Nourishing knowledge: Youth have control over what they learn. They all have different interests, and we try to appeal to everyone's interest, not just one person's. If they have more control over what they learn, it'd be really beneficial for them to have control over their own knowledge. Maybe they'll become more interested in why we do what we do. The youth get a lot of knowledge on food and social justice, like learning about why corner stores look different on the north end of Minneapolis compared to the grocery stores in the suburbs. They learn why a liquor store is seen on every corner, but not everywhere in MN, and why there are so many fast food restaurants here, but more sit-down restaurants in other neighborhoods. We do more than just worry about food, however. We do empowerment training about self, self-love, and work agency, like how to properly deal with conflict.

Physical space: Youth don't have a space. There's no space where they can be themselves and be comfortable and communicate with each other effectively. Youth should have a working space. When they're clocked in, they can come into the office and start working, but they don't have a space where they can socialize and be as loud and as good as they want to be. It's not fair to say that we're a youth-led organization and not have a youth-led space for our young people.





ADDRESS ISSUES AND TAKE ACTION

YOUTHROC RECOMMENDATION #3

AFC: We want the leadership team at Appetite for Change to be mindful of the culture and environment they are creating for the young people they employ. We want them to be open and considerate of the youth staff, their voices, and their engagement with the program. The leadership team and other adult staff who are not engaged with the youth program don't have a relationship with or understanding of these young people. As a result, miscommunication and disengagement happens... Developing these relationships would make the program more well-rounded and help the youth to build health, wealth, and social change for themselves, without solely relying on adults to do that work.



WHAT IS THE CHANGE YOU'RE HUNGRY FOR?

WHAT HAVE YOUTH ALREADY IDENTIFIED?

HOW DO YOU ENVISION YPAR HELPING TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS?

AFC: We want an atmosphere where young people can engage with people who are involved in different aspects of the community: business owners, other farmers, politicians, and police officers. Everyone needs to learn what youth-led really means and how to create a safe youth space. In the past year, we learned how to look at youth leadership differently, to identify what it looks like in other organizations as well as our own. Organizations need to know what youth-led means. They need to know what different ways are possible to participate with different people, and how they can be present with each other. We know the social action part (a lot of other places don't). Some people don't know how to do research, so learning about research methods is part of it too. Going forward, we want to partner with other organizations and work together to find our commonalities, build kinship, and create and share youth spaces. And we hope to encourage other organizations to do the same, and keep the cycle going.






The following steps are our own recommendations for AFC and Youth-led Participatory Action Research:

- PARTICIPATE IN A LEARNING SESSION ON YPAR (MAY CONTRACT WITH YOUTHROC FOR THIS EVENT).
- HOST A COMMUNITY COOKS YPAR NIGHT WITH YOUTHROC (WHEN IT'S SAFE DUE TO COVID).
- ENGAGE IN RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE, WHERE AFC RESPONDS TO CURRENT YOUTHROC RESEARCH AND YOUTHROC RESPONDS TO AN AFC RESEARCH PROPOSAL.
- CREATE TWIN CITIES OR NORTHSIDE YOUTH SAFE-DISTANCE GATHERINGS TO CONTINUE KINSHIP AND TO SHARE OUR RESEARCH PROJECTS.




For more information about Appetite for Change visit, <https://appetiteforchangemn.org/>




Y

YOUTH




P

PARTICIPATORY




A

ACTION




R

RESEARCH




Y

Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a community-engaged research framework that supports the leadership and knowledge of youth to develop solutions for social, cultural, and political transformation. Young people directly affected by an issue work together to study it and to create change. YPAR creates a space for youth, as collaborative researchers, to see the power in the work, experience, and learning that they are already doing.



P


Young people are engaged in YPAR in ways that amplify youth literacies, transform pedagogy, and collectivize knowledge and action. YPAR is based on social justice and it creates energy, hope, and change.



A

The YPAR process involves building community alongside:

- Defining an issue, writing a question, and creating a plan to address that issue
- Investigate: Collect data and critically analyze together to create findings
- Taking action (telling the story, publishing recommendations, and social action)



R

Our Process

KINSHIP, THEORY,
ISSUES, CONVOS,
AND QUESTIONS

YOUTH-DRIVEN
RESEARCH
METHODS

DATA ANALYSIS,
FINDINGS, AND
SOCIAL ACTION

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THEORY

In this project, we used theory by Tara Yosso (2005) and others. Bettina Love describes theory as "more than just academic words that folx with degrees throw around at coffee shops and poetry slams; they work to explain to us how the world works, who the world denies, and how structures uphold oppression" (2019, p. 146). At YoUthROC we describe theory as bodies of knowledge that we can use to support, challenge, or extend our research and ideas. We used picture books, novels, poems, research articles, and even songs to theorize our work. We used concepts from *emergent strategy* (brown, 2017) in the beginning of our research project to learn more about our common goals and ideas. We used theory after we developed our findings as a part of the analysis process. Theorizing is an important part of research because it can strengthen our work, develop our projects and knowledge, and because we can change theories with our knowledge as well.

Theory educates us about the world and oppressive systems around us.

Theory can ground, guide, and challenge our work!

Theory provides us with new language, perspectives, and ideas that we can use and put in conversation with our work.

Theory can be used to connect people and build community.

Historically, theory has been used as a tool of oppression, but we must use it to liberate.



There are theories about literally everything. There are cartoon theories, conspiracy theories, science theories, even art theories.

We can use theory to challenge our own thinking and bring in new perspectives

Theory can often seem inaccessible. When you break it down into pieces or even read it with a group it is much easier to understand.

Theories are truthful and malleable. We can challenge theories and build on them.

More examples of theory include: Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory, Critical Theory, and Post-Colonial Theory.



RESEARCH METHODS



finsta research

Finsta research was a youth-centered method we created as a team. We asked youth to use social media to take pictures of a space where they felt nourished or invisible and reflect on why. They posted their thoughts using the hashtag #YPOCSPACE and we recorded their reflections in order to understand what should and should not be present in youth space. Some young people who didn't want to post sent images to a google phone number. After, we debriefed together.



#YPOCSPACE



poll everywhere

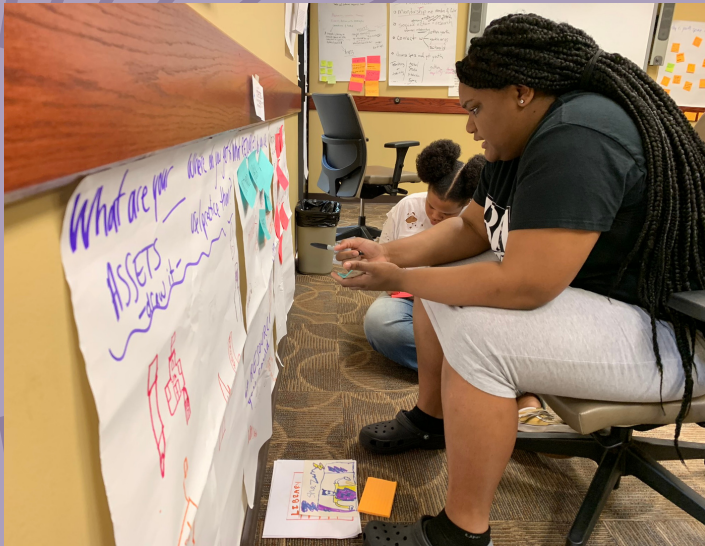
We used Poll Everywhere to get quick answers from youth using their cell phones or typing in responses together. We watched the screen change as they texted responses, and then we looked over them and asked questions to go deeper.

RESEARCH METHODS



big sticky note surveys

We wrote questions on huge sticky notes and let everyone answer freely with markers or small post-it notes. Questions included: "Why is youth space needed? What are some issues in spaces youth don't feel welcome?" If both youth and adults were present, we asked youth to write with colored markers and adults to write with black markers.



focus groups and interviews

Focus groups were group interviews with youth; some were with adults and youth. They were audio-recorded with participant consent. Focus groups were great for storytelling and knowledge building. We also did some short interviews at group events.



asset mapping

For asset mapping and drawing, we had youth illustrate their assets and skills. This was a great activity for understanding the needs and desires that youth have as individuals. We also collaborated to create community assets maps to identify community resources, places of shared memories, and hot spots.



Developing Reciprocal Methods

One of the most rewarding parts of doing YPAR was having the agency to create our own ethical research methods and practices. Our first step before data collection was educating ourselves about YPAR (Youth-led Participatory Action Research). As a group, we spent our first few weeks doing different activities to build kinship and to learn about projects grounded in knowledge about YPAR and community. After working to develop our research question, we began designing how we were going to collect information. We wanted our data collection to be interactive, thoughtful, and easy to do. We piloted everything out with our own group before bringing it to others. We created our own youth-focused methods while incorporating traditional qualitative research methods.

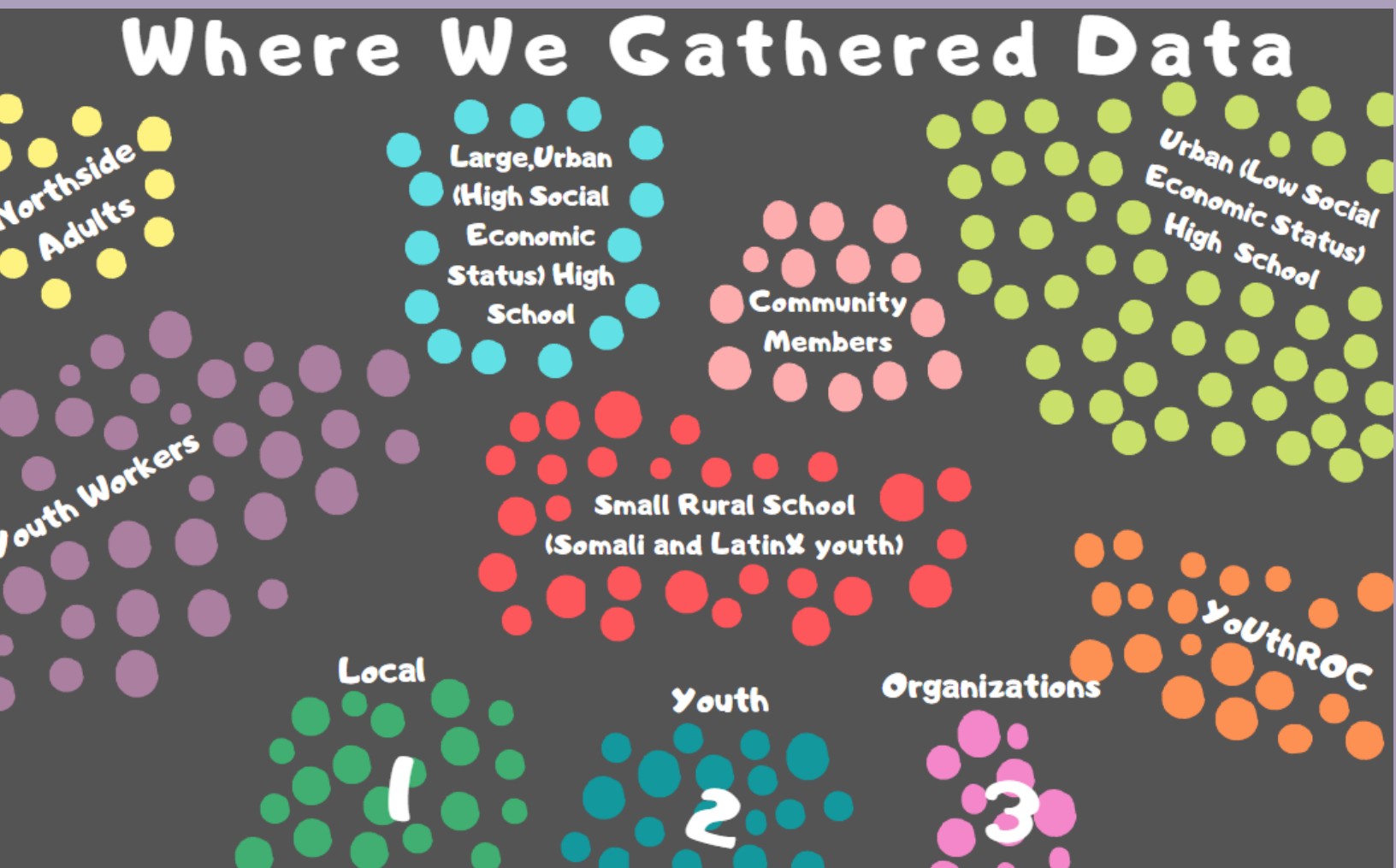
A very important piece of gathering information with youth communities was bi-directional knowledge exchange. We wanted to be an active model of reciprocity, not entering communities to get information and leave them with nothing. Our data gathering was transparently woven into workshops about YPAR. Through our methods, we aimed to build community, kinship, and the capacity for YPAR within other organizations or groups. We continue our work with these communities.



Data and Demographic Representation

During data gathering, we used reciprocal exchanges to interact with many groups and individuals. We collected data from over 200 youth and around 40 adults locally (mostly in north Minneapolis) and in the greater Minnesota area. We tracked the numbers in each group (represented in the colorful dots below). When we met with three local, predominantly Black, Northside youth organizations, we added those numbers to the bottom of the visual representation below. We interacted mostly with Black youth and other BIPOC young people. The adults with whom we interacted were over half BIPOC and under half white. Only one school group included a predominant group of white students (the light blue one).

What kind of visual would you want to create to represent your data?



data analysis

CODING

Once most of our data collection was finished, we had a ton of information. We had drawings, big paper surveys, interviews, and Instagram posts all needing to be analyzed. We had so many different pieces of data and we had to figure out how to organize it all. We constructed ideas of themes iteratively as we gathered data, but when we first looked over these data sets collectively, we used open-coding to see what was present in the data.



CLUSTER

Once we combed through our data, it needed to be sorted. We looked at our different pieces of data and clumped them together based on commonalities and the research question. There were two general foci: issues in youth space and assets in youth space. We clustered together our codes based on three initial themes: the desires youth have for their spaces, why youth space is necessary, and what are the issues in youth space. All of our data fit into these subsections.



CLAIMS

After synthesizing our data we made claims about what our data was telling us about youth space.



CLAIM # 1

Initial Claim #1: Youth want to see other youth in a positive way, to get involved in a safe space mentally and physically, and to be active or change something in correlation with being youth-led.



CLAIM # 2

Initial Claim #2: Youth said that they get their assets mostly from their school, home, and church or religious organization. They identified self-assets like knowledge, their art, and sports talents. Many youth felt at home in their organizations, extended family's homes, or outside.



CLAIM # 3

Initial Claim #3: Youth want spaces that are active, where they feel respected and safe with everyone around them, where video and electronic games are available in a physically inviting space (like with youth art) where they feel their power being respected and are well-fed, physically, mentally, and culturally.

CLAIM # 4

Initial Claim #4: There are no spaces that serve youth of color. Spaces aren't physically comfortable or accessible; it's difficult to find your place. Youth are not trusted with power and our accomplishments and experiences are trivialized. There's not enough investment and promotion of our spaces. Emotional and physical safety are not prioritized. And lastly, adults, don't know their place, PERIODT.

REVISION

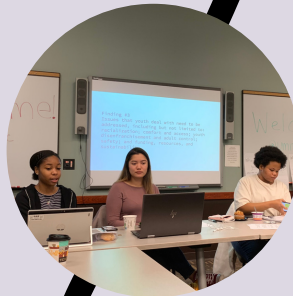
After we developed these claims, we asked our research question again. What is important in developing an accessible, sustainable space for youth within a community space? Using our claims we answered the question with three findings and supportive research from the data and our own counter-narratives.

THEORY

After theorizing (especially about community cultural wealth and youth assets and racial capitalism), we looked at our findings again and reconstructed them with our new ideas in mind. We didn't create a whole new set of findings, but we updated our already existing findings.

REWRITING

Once we formed our findings we needed to revise them. We began the revision process by reading Yosso's 2005 article about community cultural wealth. We used those ideas about cultural wealth to put them into conversation with our findings. We used it to go deeper into our ideas and to figure out what kinds of ideas we were missing. We read poems from the Breakbeat Poets vol 1, as well as *Big Box* by Toni and Slade Morrison. With new ideas and perspective, we took another look at our findings.



Findings

AFTER REVISING OUR FINDINGS WITH THEORY, RE-EXAMINING THE DATA, AND CONTINUED CONVERSATIONS, WE FINE-TUNED MAJOR THEMES INTO FINDINGS. YOU WILL SEE THE FINDINGS ON THIS PAGE HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE REVISED IN THIS MAGAZINE.



ANALYSIS

Our analysis process was collaborative, open-coded, inductive, and iterative (ongoing). We coded one data set all together, then a few team members would examine a data set, bring back themes to the whole team, and get feedback. Through our collective analysis, we came to our findings and recommendations.



FINDING 1

Working with a shared purpose connects youth to each other and to the community, which cultivates kinship and social action.

FINDING 2

Nourishing youth assets and agency redefines both space and relationships. Young people are knowledgeable and powerful. They want more access to ethnic studies and to learning about themselves and others so that they can thrive and to feel whole.



FINDING 3

Issues that youth deal with need to be addressed, including but not limited to: racialization; comfort and access; youth disenfranchisement and adult control; violence and safety; funding, resources, and sustainability

The truth to learning about research and social action

A positive experience I've had with YoUthROC and YPAR is the connections we've made in the community and with other youth organizations. It is always exciting to learn from others doing the same work and to sustain relationships via kinship.

One thing that was hard was continuing our work during the pandemic. It was difficult to navigate YPAR in a virtual world and we definitely made a few mistakes that we can learn about in the future.

-Jessica

Taking action can be a challenge if young people don't feel supported by adults within that institution. There are times when YPAR teams do the research and then it just sits and exists without action around it. What can we do to collectivize, to work across networks, to bolster support for recommended actions? At what point do recommendations evolve into demands? We will not have a thriving community until we actually follow through to honor what youth need. How can leadership and communities be held accountable for honoring youth and their knowledge? As a team, we continue to learn about social action in order to be accountable to ourselves, our communities, and our research.

- Abby

I think COVID-19 showed us the hardest thing about research and social actions is resilience. We all struggled with getting comfortable with the digital realm. - Shaunassey

"When learning about social action & research, the hardships in this process for me personally had a lot to do with my engagement. I'm never satisfied with what I do, I always feel like I can do more...and of course this past year it has been a struggle getting AFC youth involved with YoUthROC. I am always proud and impressed with our YoUthROC team. I think our hardships as a team would be dealing with COVID protocols; we are used to working in person and being connected with the community in person as well.

- Savannah

The hardest piece of social action and research has been finding ways to spread awareness about the work and following up with action that young people have demanded around the research. Young people will create and build brilliant theories that sit and sit. Finding ways to amplify the work that comes out of YPAR has been a challenge. However, I think with continued collective brain power it can be changed.

-Amina

WHO ARE WE?

Our team is community and University-connected. We were brought together through our activism and dedication to building a strong community. We are poets, visual artists, resisters, comedians, care-takers, healers, and educators. Every aspect of our work is informed by our gifts and assets, our capacities and kinship, and our commitment to young people and justice in our communities. The following pages include YoUthROC members who were most central to the creation of this research project about centering BIPOC youth.



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Curriculum and Instruction

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SHAUNASSEY JOHNSON

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested?

I don't know, I have this vision where youth who participate in social action are more seen and more in control of their agency in this work. As I've grown up, I've seen so many kids be involved in Black Lives Matter, and watched how hard it was for them to get recognized as leaders and as organizers because the adults took up so much space. It was really hard for them to be seen as front runners in that work but they were. I want to see young people doing that work in the planning committee and are being honored for the services they provide.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? I think what's hard is that people think these different systems are not reachable. Like if kids are in school, it's like "oh we can't change anything because it's a school." And then, there's hierarchical systems in these organizations that dictate whose voice counts and whose voice matters. That and other things make it hard for youth to see that they are leaders, and they are leading organizational movements. So I think it's a lot about breaking down those barriers and having adults step back.



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

calendar

lip stick

wallet

chapstick

notebook

water

books

laptop

headphones

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work?

I don't think you can come in as someone who knows so much. You have to go into those spaces on a reciprocal level. Like, "I'm getting things from you, and I'm giving you something tangible and needed." You can't come in with a superiority complex where it's like "I'm a knowledge holder." If you are an official researcher in the community or an academic space, you can't come with that idea of superiority. You are also a learner.

What are 3 things that you love?

I love talking shit about white women, I love going out into our community and learning from the young, I love working with women of color, and I love how much effort I put into this work.

About me... I am a YoUthROC research co-founding team member, FAIR Nation graduate, long term Northside resident, YoUthroc is important to me because it is my first time directly working for and in a community that my family and I have always been a part of. This research is important to me because it connects me back to my community and infers the many forms of social action I and my team can take.

Member 2019 - present

EVA GARCÍA

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested?

Being able to make change for the youth that come after me.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism?

Not always being able to make the change you want to make. But being able to learn from the challenges.

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work?

Don't give up. Give yourself a break when you need it but don't give up on the important work that you are doing.

What are 3 things that you love?

My family, nature, food!



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

Water bottle note books wallet

chapstick

lotion

pens

keys

laptop

granola bars

About me...

I am a Mexican-American youth researcher at YoUthROC. I started YPAR research my senior year of high school. I am studying Political Science with minors in Spanish and Chicano Latino Studies at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. I am interested in immigration law and hope to become an immigration lawyer. I love spending time with my family and friends. I love cooking and eating new foods!

Member 2020-2021

AMINA SMALLER

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested? I think what guides me is knowing how slept on my community is. Changing the narrative and reclaiming Black youth spaces in North Minneapolis will always motivate me to do this work. Another thing that guides me is that when I was younger, I didn't have adult allies or advocates that truly knew how to stand beside me. Although I still consider myself a youth, I want to grow into the kind of adult I needed when I was younger.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? The hardest thing for me is getting people (mostly adults) to understand that YPAR is legitimate and powerful critical research. It's like when you tell someone "I do research at UROC," they are always like "oh you must be super smart." But, when you tell them you're doing Youth Participatory Action Research, they hear the word youth and it's "bless your heart, the youth are the future." And it feels really dismissive and condescending.

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? I would probably say to trust yourself. It gets really easy to start second guessing your thoughts and ideas when you are producing knowledge. "Not sounding smart" stops a lot of people from sharing their true thoughts and ideas. You never know when your idea could be the missing piece your team needed for a breakthrough.



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

tennis shoes hoops
water glasses vaseline
notebook shea butter
an amethyst gum

What are 3 things that you love? I love my family, I love going to the gym, and I love North Minneapolis. Oh, and I love birthday cake ice cream from Grand Ole Creamery.

About me... I am a co-founding member of YoUthROC and life long Northsider. Our team is grounded in North Minneapolis which always reminds me of my responsibility to my community. I am 20 years old and still in that weird middle ground of being a youth and an adult. I want to transition into the kind of adult that understands how to nourish youth's knowledge, assets, and ideas. YoUthROC gives me the space to keep learning and growing in that way. And there is no better feeling than working and building with young people and seeing that spark that leads them towards social action. I want to become a social studies educator in the future, and YoUthROC is important in helping me grow into the kind of educator that I want to be.

Member 2019-present

MYCHI NGUYEN

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested? I feel like what keeps me here is the fact that I've grown up in North Minneapolis my entire life, and I've never really participated in the community. So it's really nice to come here and be able to do work that will benefit the community, and I like being able to share those experiences with other people.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? I think something that is hard is that people don't take it seriously. Like, I'll talk about my job and people are like "that's not really a job" or "you're not really doing anything." Even though we are doing real work that's gonna go towards something.



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

laptop

lotion

chapstick

flashlight

oil blotting sheet

menstrual cup

planner

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? I would say find something that grounds you in it, and keeps you doing it. Especially for when people say, "oh that's not real work" or when it gets hard. Finding something that ties you to the work will keep you going.

What are 3 things that you love? I love browsing the internet, I love the Sims, and I love really strong, genuine relationships.

About me... I joined YoUthROC in October of 2019. Prior to YoUthROC, the only experience I had with social action was learning about it through school and social media. I was always intimidated by the idea of participating in social action because it seemed so overwhelming. Since then, I have become more comfortable with finding my space in social action and what it means to me. I just had to take it one step at a time. This work is important to me because as a future educator, I want to be able to guide my students to engage in social action. To be able to do that, I must be doing the work myself.
2020 member

SAVANNAH MCCULLOUGH

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested?

Everything really. The fact that my peers are coming together to create a change that will benefit us all keeps me rooted and invested in our work. Everyone's ideas, opinions, and thoughts that we bring to the table guide me. We build connections with the youth in our community, creating and building long-term relationships; working towards change to better ourselves our future community.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? Something that can be hard about YPAR activism is trying to get other youth involved. Specifically, youth that have never done youth work or researching before, and youth who may not be interested at all in youth community based work. It can be hard to get them to share out their opinions, thoughts and ideas as well.



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

baby wipes computer lip stuff
gloves & hat notebook water
coconut oil hand sanitizer
brush & comb gym clothes
school work panty liners
pens

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? My first piece of advice is to do their research beforehand, starting with different groups of youth because we are the future, and doing that will show what the youth want and what are their needs.

What are 3 things that you love? I love my work, I love optimistic, open minded and positive people, and I love ice cream!

About me... I am 20 years old, I joined YPAR in November 2018, and I take pride in being a part of the first group of YPAR youth. I was connected to YPAR through Appetite For Change (where I still currently work today). I have been doing social action & youth work since I was 14 years old, so this is definitely something I love! I was born and raised in North Minneapolis so it means everything to also be working in My community. I am also a full-time student at Metropolitan State University.

Member 2019 - present

GRACE COLEMAN

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested?

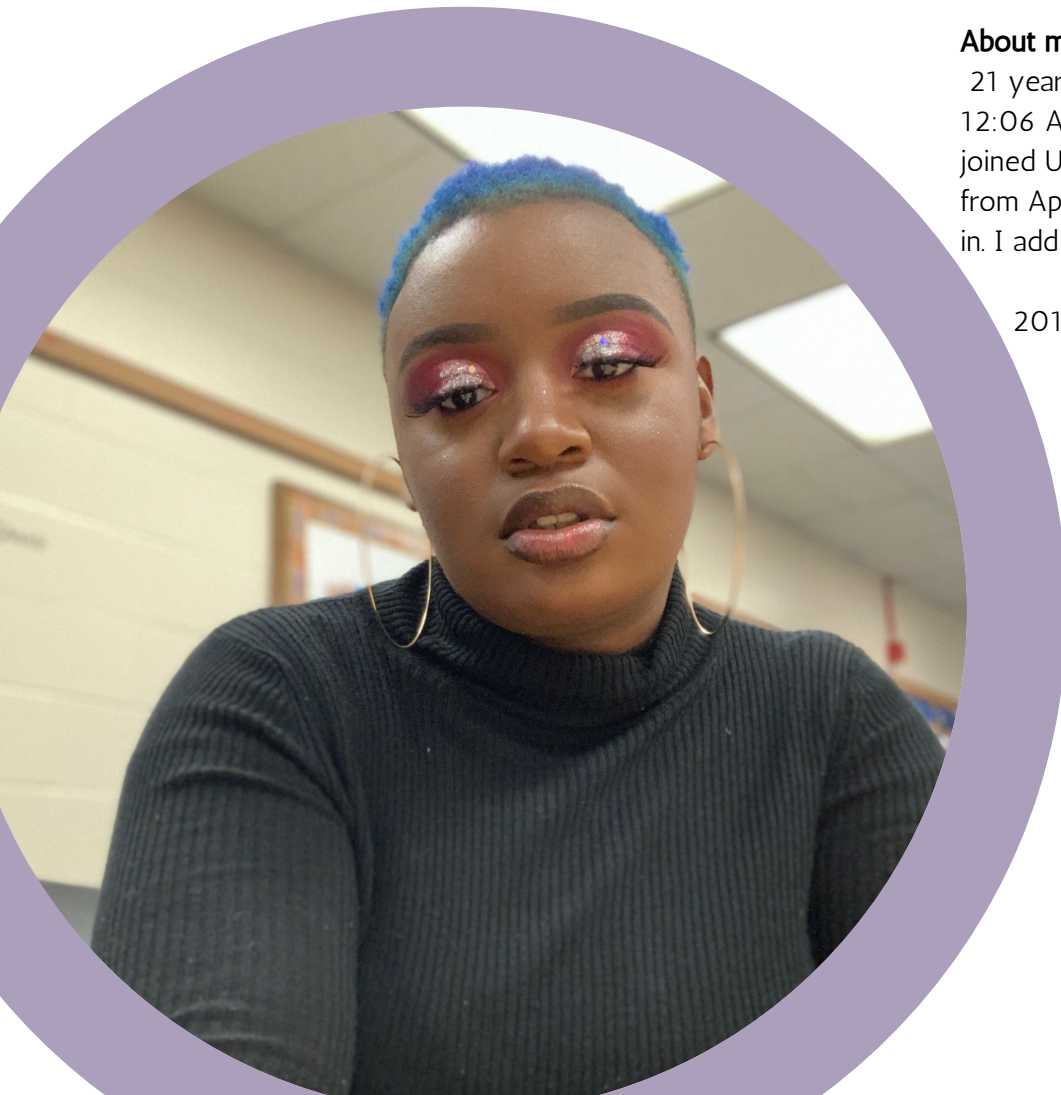
My Family and my art.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism?

I think the hardest part about YPAR is the constant no. when YoUthROC right started, we had zero to no support from the staff or anyone really. Even though we answered all of their questions with amazing answers, and followed all guidelines, they still had push back. It's like when we are almost at the finish line they moved it further away. Like we're not worthy of this positive change in our community.

What are 3 things that you love?

I love my family, singing, and hot wings



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

chapstick

hand sanitizer

pens & pencils

laptop

earrings

folder

mittens

mirror

pads

folder

notebook

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? I would say don't get into this type of activism if you don't have the heart for it and/or if you're not patient. You HAVE to be invested in this for it to have a positive outcome. You have to be passionate about change. And Rome wasn't built overnight. Trust the process. If you're persistent, you will see change

About me

21 years old. On Monday, January 25th, 1999 at 12:06 AM, it was a cold, snowy winter's morning. I joined UROC in January of 2019! I was coming from Appetite for Change with Esha, and I fit right in. I add something unique to this group, humor.

2019 member

NATASHIA OTISO

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested?

Getting paid to do work I would do otherwise keeps me invested.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? Not getting treated like real researchers. We get paid on the same payroll but adults in the building treat us like children or visitors.

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? Have fun. None of us really knew each other prior to joining yoUthROC and being able to connect with the people you work with on grounds that are deeper than the work you do is really important. We all get along really well and I think we're really lucky in that respect.

WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

chapstick

pens & pencils

mints

laptop

earrings

water

mittens

mirror

pads

oil blotting sheets

hand sanitizer

What are 3 things that you love? Potatoes in any form, my mom, and movies

About me

I'm a first-year student at the U of M. I met Abby when I was in high school and she introduced me to YoUthROC last summer. YoUthROC has allowed the work I do in the community to feel tangible. Often times work of this nature feels fruitless but the social action step of YPAR ensures that other people benefit from our research. The ability to share our findings with other youth in the community is rewarding. It is one of the only spaces on campus where I find myself surrounded by Black women and I don't take that for granted.

2020 member



IESHIA DABBS

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested? The fact that I am able to come together with a group of my peers plays a huge part in the work we do. Being able to address a need for change, plan it, and make it happen, is all a part of waking up in the morning. And of course, seeing youth with a fire for change keeps me invested as well.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? The hardest part is not being seen as change makers but as kids with ideas. I feel like people who have done what we are doing can be blinded by their own experiences, they are not as receptive to hearing us because of their "been there, done that" mindset. SO it's hard to show /persuade them to see that things have not changed, or haven't gotten better.

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? Failing is okay! Never be afraid to mess up, your biggest life lessons come from the mistakes you make in life. You never fail 99 you just find 99 ways to do it differently.



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

- Carmax
- toothpaste
- headphones
- mint tea
- deodorant
- Toothbrush
- laptop
- earrings
- lip gloss
- comb
- charger

What are 3 things that you love?
I love writing, trying new things and traveling, I love different cuisine.

About me
I am a YoUthROC research co-founding team member and Board member. I joined YoUthROC because I need to see more accessible youth space for the young people in my community. I am also a youth training and opportunity program facilitator for Appetite For Change. Because of my work with Appetite for Change and YoUthROC, I am able to connect with youth better and understand their needs and wants for a space of their own. I'm excited to continue being a voice for youth who need to be heard.

2019 member

ABBY ROMBALSKI

What about this work guides you and keeps you invested? Doing Youth Participatory Action Research guides me because it is youth-led. In YoUthROC that means keeping Black Indigenous and People of Color youth at the center. Young people are engaged in YPAR in ways that amplify youth literacies, transform pedagogy, and collectivize knowledge and action. Our communities and schools need that energy and the hope and change that it creates.

What is hard about YPAR/Activism? Activism is hard because people can think we are on "the same page" as others, when the reality is that we make a lot of assumptions. We need to story with each other, to listen, to figure out our flexible solidarities (Hill Collins) and how we can build together. YPAR can be hard because it takes deeply trusting young people, learning participatory methods for engagement, experiencing social movements and activism, and practicing research. That's a lot. It can also be emotionally draining because, as Baldwin says, once we become conscious we find ourselves at war with society.



WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

chapstick
notebook
pens & dry erase marker
receipts
laptop
earrings
headphones
water bottle
pads
calendar
hand sanitizer

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone doing this work? For all, find your people. For adults and young people, find ways to analyze power and commit to moving over, moving up, or moving out. For white people in this work, we must be constantly flexible about our place, especially as capacities and contexts shift (and we have plenty of work to do with our cousins). Invite discomfort and embrace not knowing, but don't stay there. Especially for young people, believe yourself. You have knowledge and the universe needs your words and your power, collectively, if you choose to gift it.

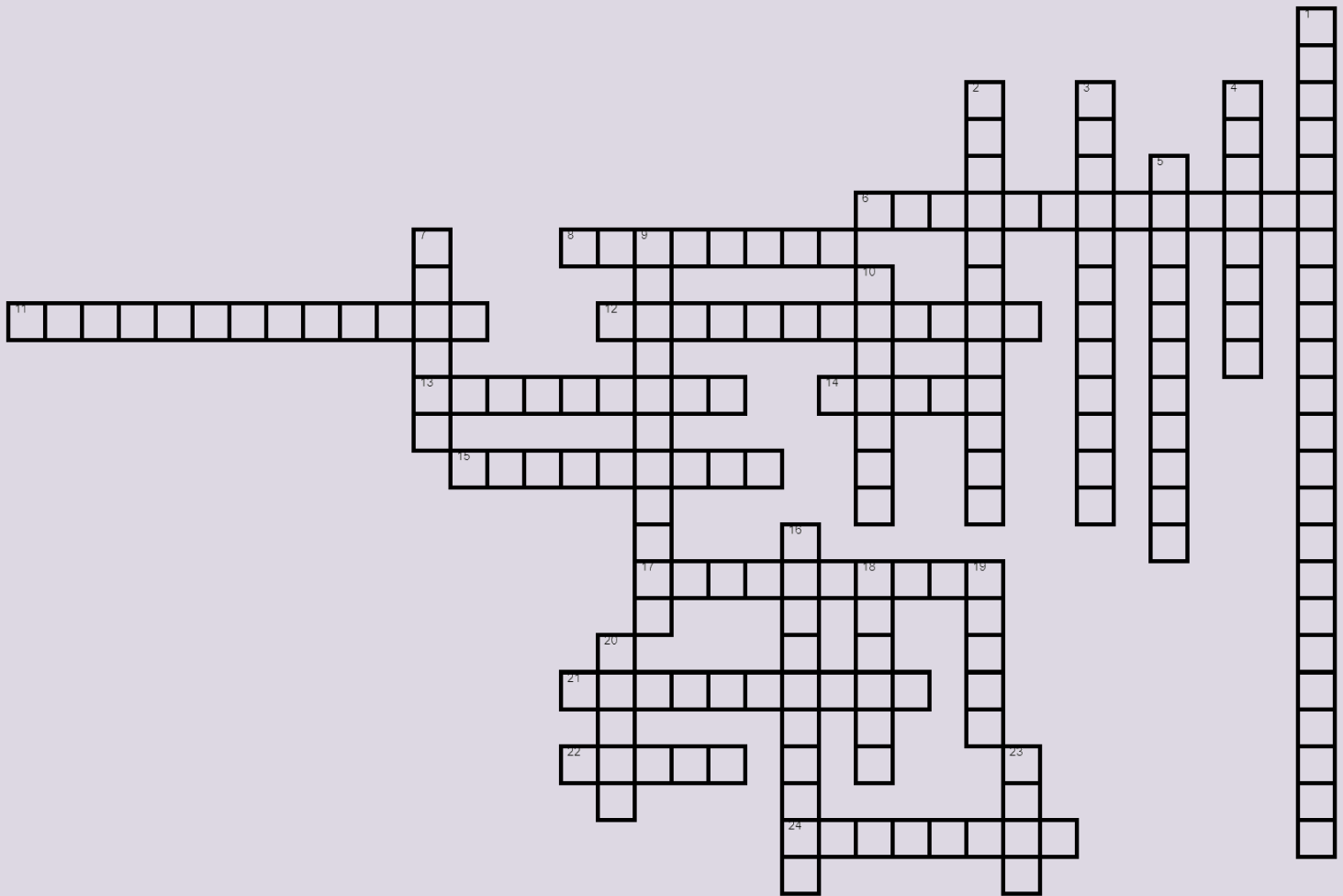
What are 3 things that you love?

I love being in a room with laughter, I love a group of people working together towards a shared purpose, and I love being surrounded by music, nature, or young people.

About me

My journey in racial justice stretches to when I was in middle school in the 80s, in a family who talked about anything (unusual, I learned, for a white Christian family in Wisconsin). Now, I have been a teacher for over twenty years, mostly in Minneapolis. I am a parent of two kids, an organizer with Education for Liberation--MN, and a faculty member in the College of Education and Human Development at UMN. I was a Josie R. Johnson engaged research dissertation fellow at UROC before co-founding YoUthROC. For years I've been blessed to organize and do research with brilliant young people who are deeply committed to social justice education in our communities. As a BIPOC youth-led group, YoUthROC is taking issues from research to social action and I am here for it.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ABOUT YPAR AND CENTERING BIPOC YOUTH IN COMMUNITY SPACE



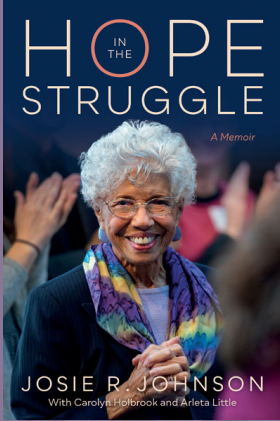
ACROSS

- 6 The process of ascribing ethnic or racial identities to a relationship, social practice, or group that did not identify itself as such.
- 8 Investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions
- 11 The study of race, ethnicity, nation, sexuality, gender, and power.
- 12 The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers
- 13 Knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality
- 14 A useful or valuable thing, person, or quality
- 15 A group of people that care about each other, feel they belong together, and care about the same goal
- 17 The art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal
- 21 The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style; multiple language and communication skills
- 22 Someone aged 1 to 25
- 24 One's accumulated assets and resources

DOWN

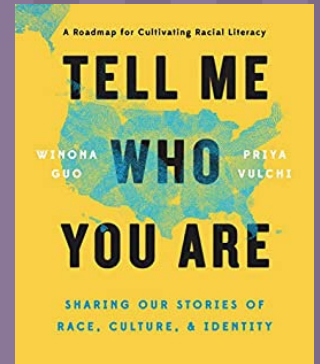
- 1 The dynamic processes between various forms of capitals that build on one another as part of this
- 2 Organized action toward social reform
- 3 Skills of maneuvering through social institutions (not created with Communities of Color in mind)
- 4 Engages a commitment to community well being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship
- 5 An association of two or more people who work together
- 7 Linked ideas intended to explain something; Provides a framework for explaining observations
- 9 Able to be maintained and and continued over time
- 10 Close relationships and bonds between people
- 16 Refusing to accept something and pushing back against it
- 18 The networks of people and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions
- 19 The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events
- 20 Black Indigenous and People of Color
- 23 Youth participatory action research

What We Have Read



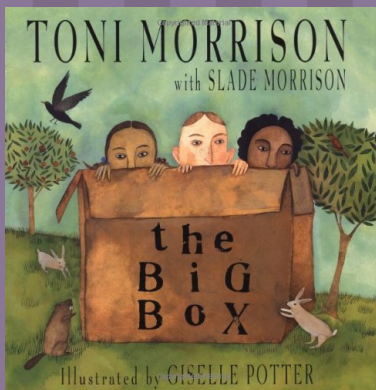
Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir

by Josie R. Johnson with Arleta Little and Carolyn Holbrook



Tell Me Who You Are: Sharing Our Stories of Race, Culture, & Identity

by Priya Vulchi and Winona Guo



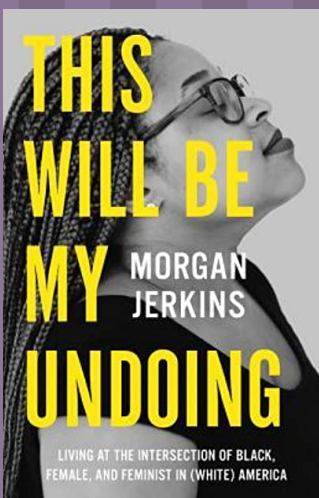
the big box

by Toni Morrison with Slade Morrison



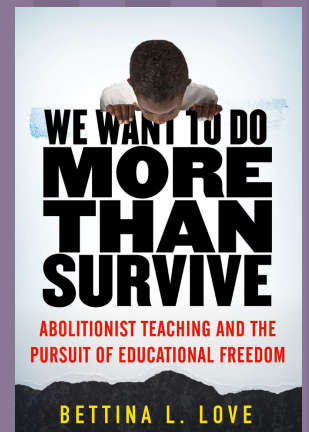
Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds

by adrienne maree brown



This Will Be My Undoing: Living at the Intersection of Black, Female, and Feminist in (White) America

by Morgan Jerkins

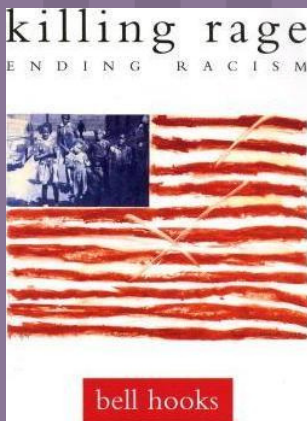
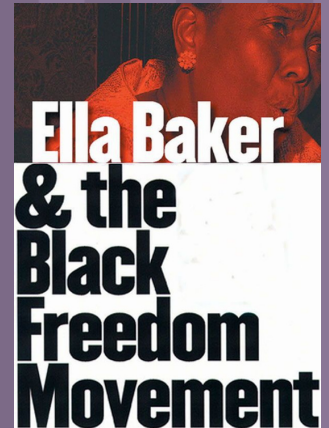


We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom

by Bettina L. Love

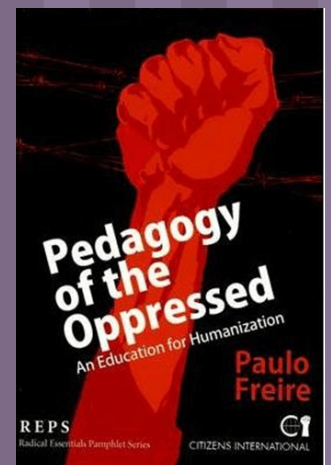
What We Want to Read

Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement
by Barbara Ransby

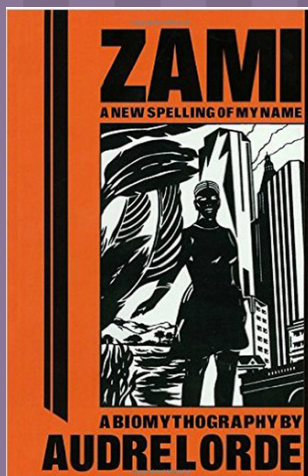


Killing Rage: Ending Racism
by bell hooks

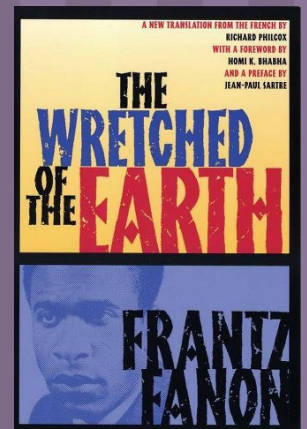
Pedagogy of the Oppressed
by Paulo Freire



Zami: A New Spelling of My Name
by Audre Lorde



The Wretched of the Earth
by Frantz Fanon



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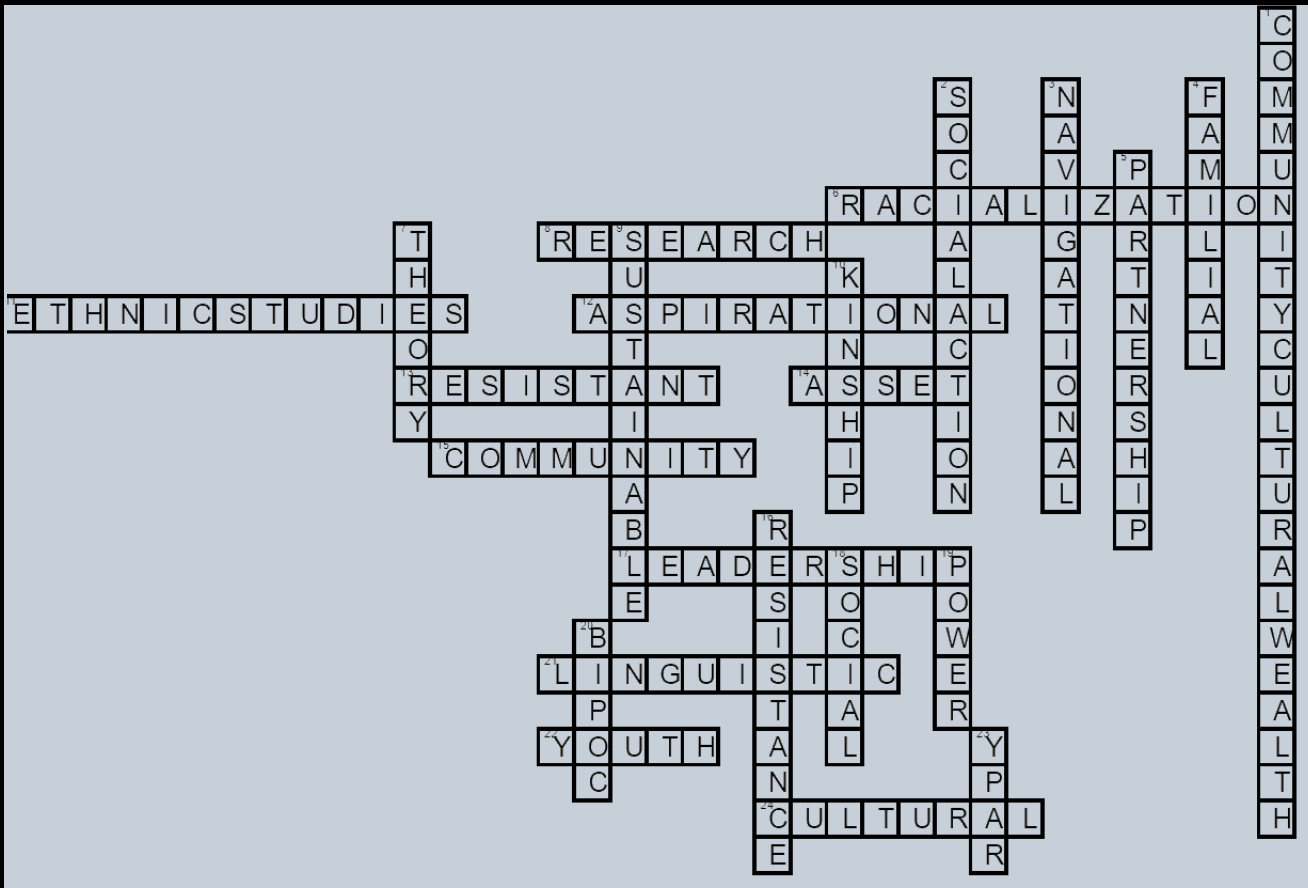
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<https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/minneapolis/near-north?near-north-community-population-by-age-group>

<http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/>

CROSSWORD PUZZLE KEY





Thank You

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