

*Article*

# Archiving Black Movements: Shifting Power and Exploring a Community- Centered Approach

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## ABSTRACT

With the move towards both critical information literacy and community-centered archives, cultural heritage and information professionals have been called to further interrogate our role as collectors and catalogers of materials. We know that the preservation and description of objects, records, and ephemera ascribe historical meaning, are culturally bound, and impact understanding beyond our lifetime. In this heightened time of social injustice, Black librarians, archivists, and curators are collaborating with community and organizing groups to select and preserve materials related to uprisings in real-time. However, there is a disconnect from the records and items selected for the archives and materials valued by the organizers themselves. There is also a lack of published texts centering the approaches and materials of Black people organizing for their own communities as a part of the archival record with few exceptions. Knowing there is power in the archives, there must be careful consideration to the prioritization and representation of Black communities in their own words.

In the following conversations, we thought critically about the provenance and authority of records found on the internet and how archivists should consider materials created by organizers and those created by the community at large. We facilitated three interviews with activists and organizers whose work focuses on the liberation of Black lives globally to both frame and interrogate current archival practices. These interviews

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explored our archival approach, specifically centering the narratives of the people on the ground. Through these conversations, we discussed the state of organizing and creating digital content as well as how cultural heritage professionals should prioritize the histories of various movements for Black life globally. The interviewees included activists and organizers from the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (1968-1970s), Black Nashville Assembly, and formerly of Black Lives Matter (2013-present), and End SARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) movement (2020-present) in Nigeria.

In shaping this conversation, we considered these key questions: What objects speak to your “work”? What content do you think will help future generations understand past and present movements around Black life? How can cultural heritage professionals determine what is created by BLM, BPP, etc. versus what is contributed by the community-at-large? What does Black liberation look like to you?

This article outlines and reimagines archival work as community-based, highly collaborative, and iterative for professionals outside of Black social and political movements. With a focus on intentionality around the communities impacted, individuals involved, and the movements at large, we framed what archival materials are important to Black organizers of our time. With their insight, cultural heritage and archival professionals can create deliberate processes to get direct feedback from the creators themselves for the archives. Overall, this article aims to introduce ways of thinking to decentralize power in archival collections and provide agency to organizers through their own historical record.

## INTRODUCTION

With the move towards both critical information literacy and community-based archives, cultural heritage and information professionals are further interrogating their role as collectors and catalogers of materials. We know that the preservation and description of objects, records, and ephemera ascribe historical meaning, are culturally bound, and impact understanding beyond our lifetimes.<sup>1</sup> In this heightened time of social injustice, Black librarians, archivists, and curators are collaborating with community and organizing groups to select and preserve materials related to uprisings in real-time.<sup>2</sup> However, there is a disconnect between the records and items selected for the archives and the value given to materials by the organizers themselves. As Black memory workers, our intention is to bridge this gap by informing ourselves of these differences as members of a shared culture but also to lend strategies to our non-Black colleagues doing cultural heritage work. There is also a lack of published texts centering the approaches and materials of Black people organizing for their own communities as a part of the archival record.<sup>3</sup> Knowing there is power in the archives, there must be careful consideration to prioritizing and representing Black communities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stacie M. Williams and Jarrett Drake, "Power to the People: Documenting Police Violence in Cleveland," in *Critical Archival Studies*, eds. Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, T-Kay Sangwand, special issue, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.33>; Terry Cook, "'We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are': Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32, no. 2 (2011): 173-189, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379816.2011.619688>; Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3 (2002): 171-185, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435620>.

<sup>2</sup> Zakiya Collier, "Call to Action: Archiving State-Sanctioned Violence Against Black People," *Sustainable Futures*, June 6, 2020, <https://medium.com/community-archives/call-to-action-archiving-state-sanctioned-violence-against-black-people-d629c956689a>.

<sup>3</sup> The few texts that speak to Black collecting include Adalaine Holton, "Decolonizing History: Arthur Schomburg's Afrodiasporic Archive," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007): 218-238; Jacqueline Stewart, "Discovering Black Film History: Tracing the Tyler, Texas Black Film Collection," *Film History* 23, no. 2 (2011): 147-173; Ellie Armon Azoulay, "The Practice of Refusal in Willis Laurence James Song Collection," *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal* 18, no. 3 (2021): 1-25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775700.2021.2003136>.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Caswell, Alda Allina Migoni, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor, "'To Be Able to Imagine Otherwise': Community Archives and the Importance of Representation," *Archives and Records* 38, no. 1 (2017): 5-26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2016.1260445>.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity and ethnicity are critical to helping cultural heritage professionals ascribe meaning and understand provenance and authority of cultural records. In “Ethnicity As Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles For Documenting The Immigrant Experience,” Joel Wurl posits that provenance, a principle of archival practice, must include ethnicity as a social construct, shared sense of history, origin, and destiny, and as an ever-changing, unique, and developed sense of solidarity.<sup>5</sup> It is imperative, Wurl states, that archivists move beyond traditional forms of archiving towards examining and integrating how ethnic communities convey information and transact in their lives.<sup>6</sup> Considering how Wurl approaches the identity of communities and record creators as integral to provenance and archiving, in “This [Black] Woman’s Work: Exploring Archival Projects that Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker,” Powell, Smith, Murrain and Hearn examine their own identity as both Black women and archivists. They leverage their identity and positions within traditional archives to preserve, advocate, and collaborate with Black communities without removing community members’ power to tell their own narratives. Moreover, the authors urge archivists to build authentic and collaborative relationships with community members. They also remind archivists that “we play an active role in shaping history and memory through our actions and choices of what to document and what we choose to overlook.”<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, archivists and memory workers have also thought more critically about the work to archive protests and social movements. Scholars and archivists Kyna Herzinger and Rebecca Pattillo consider the larger implications for archivists and cultural memory workers to actively document the COVID-19 pandemic amid racial uprisings and protests during the summer of 2020. They argue that a new framework, informed by three important methods: critical reflection, institutional affirmation, and ethics of care,

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<sup>5</sup> Joel Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience,” *Archival Issues* 29, no. 1 (2005): 68. Provenance, according to the Society of American Archivists’ Dictionary of Archives Terminology SAA glossary, is described as the origin of something and in archival practice and refers to the “individual, family or organization that created or received the items in a collection.” See *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*, s.v. “Provenance,” accessed June 14, 2022, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/provenance.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Wurl, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shantee’ Murrain, and Skyla Hearn, “This [Black] Woman’s Work: Exploring Archival Projects That Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker,” *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies* 2 no.1 (2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.5334/kula.25>.

must be used to rethink traditional documenting and collection methods in the archives.<sup>8</sup> Herzinger and Pattillo offer practitioners valuable feedback and reflections to consider before making the decision to create a protest collection at their institution. However, their work stops short of how best to proceed with creating a new or supporting an existing collection. While there has been a swift movement to document social protest movements in the United States, there is a great need for scholarship and guiding principles in the area of collaborative protest archives and archiving.

In *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work*, Michelle Caswell stresses that community archives in the United States have two major qualities that distinguish them from traditional government and institutional archives: they “represent and serve under-represented, marginalized, and/or oppressed communities and community members have autonomy over archival practices.”<sup>9</sup> In “Summoning the Ghosts: Records as Agent in Community Archives,” Tai, Zavala, Gabiola, Brilmyer, and Caswell, utilize focus groups to understand how record users ascribe meaning and assign agency to records at several community archives in Southern California. The research data revealed that individuals from marginalized groups represented in community archives believe records were agents that contain voices of the past and have the ability to act in service of the users. The record users also saw the records as haunted objects that serve to resist silences created by traditional archives. Therefore, community archives serve a critical need for its users in not only addressing silences but also in assigning meaning to the records.<sup>10</sup> Scholars and archivists have moved beyond merely defining community archives; they have begun to utilize various collecting strategies to understand the importance of the records and its users.

In addition to strategies for collaborative material selection in the archives, it is critical to apply specific frameworks and theories of care to better inform archival work and imbue humanity in the archival record. In “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives,” Caswell and Cifor provide an ethics of care framework for archival work. They define radical empathy as “a willingness to be affected, to be shaped by another’s experience, without blurring the lines between the self and the other.” Caswell and Cifor propose that archivists are caregivers whose responsibilities are not primarily bound to records but are illustrated through four affective relationships, which

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<sup>8</sup> Kyna Herzinger and Rebecca Pattillo, “Reflections on Active Collecting During Difficult Times,” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, September 15, 2021, <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2021/active-collecting/>.

<sup>9</sup> Michelle Caswell, *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work* (London, UK: Routledge, 2021), 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Jessica Tai, Jimmy Zavala, Joyce Gabiola, Gracen Brilmyer, and Michelle Caswell, “Summoning the Ghosts: Records as Agents in Community Archives,” *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 6 (2019), <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol6/iss1/18>.

includes records creators, subjects, users, and communities.<sup>11</sup> Along with radical empathy, ethics of care are the things we must do to help others meet their basic needs, develop or sustain their basic capabilities, and alleviate or avoid pain or suffering. It also asks caregivers to do this in a way that is attentive, responsive, and respectful to those in need of care.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, as archivists, we are bound to activists who are the record creators. Informed through radical empathy and ethics of care, we must engage with activists to redistribute power and make decisions in their best interest in the archives.

Given this development of care and empathy in the archives, our research and interviews stand at the intersection of both protest culture and community engagement. Through this work, we hope to build upon the existing frameworks for archivists and memory workers that centers the lives, livelihood, and people directly engaged in activism and advocacy for Black lives. From a practical standpoint, we are following the lead of The Blackivists, a collective of trained Black archivists, who practice a people-centered approach to archiving and the work of Project STAND (Student Activism Now Documented), an organization created to document student activism on campuses across the United States.<sup>13</sup> This research distinguishes itself from traditional archival practices and attempts to disrupt traditional models of collecting, ascribing meaning and value, and other exclusionary practices that reinforce power dynamics and silences in the archives. As archivists, we have neglected to ask activists, organizers, and anyone involved in movement-related work what materials they consider important to their movement. Their insight is an essential element in helping archivists decipher what to acquire and preserve to provide a more accurate and complex narrative of history related to the liberation of Black lives.

### Archiving Collections on Black Organizing

The work of archivists is guided by standards and best practices outlined by professional associations such as the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and Rare Book and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). According to the Core Values of SAA, archivists have a social responsibility to preserve “individual and community memory for their specific constituencies and, in so doing, help

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<sup>11</sup> Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives,” *Archivaria* 81, no. 1 (2016): 31.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Engster, “Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care,” *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3811114>.

<sup>13</sup> “Team,” The Blackivists, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www.theblackivists.com/team>; “Mission,” Project STAND, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://standarchives.com/mission/>.

increase the overall social awareness and understanding of past events.”<sup>14</sup> It is through this lens that archival repositories have increased their interests in collecting objects, ephemera, and records related to Black activism and organizing in the United States. While the present-day collecting initiatives build upon and speak to other Black movement-related collections that have been acquired by and donated to public and academic research centers, institutions often disregard the tenet of *selection*, which emphasizes “that the power wielded to select materials does not diminish or usurp the *authority* held by the creators or sources of these materials.”<sup>15</sup> Time and time again materials documenting marginalized communities are collected from them but their expertise and experiences as record creators are removed and dismissed by archival repositories as standard practice. Centering the narratives of those involved in activism and movement work is necessary to understanding both the *historical and contextual significance* of analog and digital materials. Within the last decade we have witnessed a greater push towards a model that prioritizes materials and their creators, thanks to the work of Documenting Ferguson at Washington University in St. Louis, Preserve the Baltimore Uprising, A People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland, Project STAND, the Chicago Police Torture Archive, and the recent acquisition of the papers of activist Mariame Kaba at the Chicago Public Library.

Additionally, previous efforts to document Black activism involved acquiring materials only after movement-related events had occurred. In this current moment, institutions and repositories are actively collecting material—both analog and born-digital—in real time. Black social justice movements have also decentralized organizing practices compared to those of the past. Decentralization allows for more inclusive documentation of the experiences of activists, organizers, and anyone protesting. This is in stark contrast to the organizational records of past civil rights groups and the personal papers of leaders who were considered the authoritative voices and notable figures in the

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<sup>14</sup> “SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,” Society of American Archivists, last modified August 2020, <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>.

<sup>15</sup> At the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, materials of the Black Left from 1950s and 1960s are found in the papers of notable literary figures, playwrights, and actors such as James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Julian Mayfield, Alice Childress, Ossie Davis, and Ruby Dee. Donated in 1964, the archive of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. at Boston University’s Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center contains files related to the movement work of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Other initiatives such as the Colored Conventions Project at the University of Delaware excavated and made accessible digitally primary source materials of nineteenth-century Black organizing; “SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,” Society of American Archivists, last modified August 2020, <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>.

collective movement. Archives are a microcosm of society with patriarchal structures overwhelmingly impacting and controlling how we acquire, describe, and provide access to collections. In order to reframe and reform collecting strategies, archivists must dismantle harmful structures that do not inform, collaborate, and educate alongside our communities. When done well, collecting on the ground allows a more holistic view of the movements and those who participated at every level.

## METHODOLOGY

In the following conversations, we thought critically about the provenance and authority of analog and digital records and how archivists should consider materials created by organizers and those created by the community at large. We facilitated three interviews with activists and organizers whose work focuses on the liberation of Black lives globally to both frame and interrogate current archival practices. After an initial discussion about how Black activism operates and may shape archival community work, we wanted to select interviewees that represented different localities (local organizing to international), differing leadership structures, and who had clear visions for Black liberation across the diaspora. We submitted an IRB application to Reed College for permission to conduct the study. Using personal, professional, and social media networks for contact information, the confirmed interviewees included activists and organizers from the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (1968-1970), Black Nashville Assembly, and formerly of Black Lives Matter (2013-present), and #EndSARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) movement (2020-present) in Nigeria.<sup>16</sup> Founded in 1992, SARS operated as a violent crime unit in Lagos, one of Nigeria's largest urban centers. After expanding to other parts of Nigeria in 2002, SARS has been implicated in human rights violations including body searches, violent arrests, prolonged detention, and executions.<sup>17</sup> After years of abuses,

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Delli Carpini, "Black Panther Party: 1966-1982," in *The Encyclopedia of Third Parties in America*, eds. Immanuel Ness and James Ciment, 190-197 (Armonke, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2000); Ruth Maclean, "Nigeria Goes on Offensive Against Youth Protesting Police Brutality," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/13/world/africa/Nigeria-EndSARS-protests.html>; Azeizat Olaoluwa, "End Sars Protests: The Nigerian Women Leading the Fight for Change," *BBC News*, December 1, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55104025>; "About," Black Lives Matter, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

<sup>17</sup> Allwell Uwazuruiki, "#EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* (blog), November 12, 2020, <https://harvardhrj.com/2020/11/endsars-the-movement-against-police-brutality-in-nigeria/>.

disappearances, and shootings by SARS, Nigerians started #EndSARS in 2020 to document the violence perpetrated by officers.<sup>18</sup>

Interviewees agreed to a recorded, video interview using Zoom for at least one hour in length with a monetary incentive via signed consent forms. Knowing that the interviewees would speak from personal experience within their particular organization, it was essential that each organizer consent to the use of their names and affiliations in the interview and publication. We also indicated that they would be given a copy of the final manuscript. No interviewees expressed any concerns about either the interview or the publication. Each of us led one interview using agreed upon questions as prompts. At least one author also served as an interview “partner” for the other to create a more conversational tone. The partner asked follow-up questions, took more general thematic notes to support transcription later, and helped with any Zoom support. Through these conversations, we discussed the state of organizing and creating digital content as well as how cultural heritage professionals should prioritize the histories of various movements for Black life globally. To conduct each interview and offer some consistency throughout each conversation, we asked the following questions:

- What objects speak to your “work”?
- What content do you think will help future generations understand past and present movements around Black life?
- How can cultural heritage professionals determine what is created by BLM, BPP, etc. versus what is contributed by the community-at-large?
- What does Black liberation look like to you?

Using the Zoom-generated transcripts and recordings, we transcribed each interview and employed thematic coding to find related concepts. Using the question prompts and themes from the transcripts, this article outlines and reimagines archival work as community-based, highly collaborative, and iterative for particularly non-Black professionals who are outside of Black social and political movements. With a focus on intentionality around the communities impacted, individuals involved, and the movements at large, we inquired about what archival materials are important to Black organizers of our time. With their insight, cultural heritage and archival professionals can create deliberate processes to get direct feedback from the creators themselves for the archives. Overall, this article aims to introduce ways of thinking to decentralize the power in archival collections and provide agency to organizers through their own historical record.

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<sup>18</sup> “#EndSARS Movement: From Twitter to Nigerian Streets,” Amnesty International, February 8, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/>.

## Organizing for Black Lives

Rinu Oduala is an activist, student, entrepreneur, and self-proclaimed jack-of-all-trades. Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, she witnessed and experienced abuses of power, injustices, and oppression in her community. “Survival” and Nigerian women such as her grandmother led Rinu to activism work, where she eventually became a frontliner and notable figure of the #EndSARS movement. She has also been part of the Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry and Restitution, which investigated cases for victims of SARS-related abuses, including the incidents at the Lekki Toll Gate in October 2020.<sup>19</sup> Organizing for #EndSARS differs from other movements profiled here as it occurs in a majority Black country with a Black police presence. However, as seen in many countries after British colonial rule, some police in Africa derive power from and continue to be influenced by paramilitary rule with one edict: to impose civil order regardless of shared culture.<sup>20</sup> More recent campaigns for policing involve U.S. and other western forces deploying resources to Africa aiming for “stability,” resilience as a country, and preventative measures for armed conflict.<sup>21</sup> In Nigeria, the responsibilities and actions of police are diverse and sporadic; official forces interact with community-approved models of self-policing, community policing, and vigilantism depending on the region.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Stephanie Busari et al., “How a Bloody Night of Bullets Quashed a Young Protest Movement,” CNN, accessed October 16, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/18/africa/lagos-nigeria-lekki-toll-gate-feature-intl/index.html>; Ifeoluwa Adediran, “#EndSARS: Sanwo-Olu Confirms Two Deaths from Lekki Shooting,” *Premium Times*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/422446-endsars-sanwo-olu-confirms-two-deaths-from-lekki-shooting.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Alice Hills, “Towards a Critique of Policing and National Development in Africa,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 2 (1996): 279-282. See also Hills’ models of policing in Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, etc. noting foreign aid and influence in training, militias, and for Eritrea, general safety, depending on the country and its history in Alice Hills, “Policing Africa: Internal Security and the Limits of Liberalization,” *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* 25, no. 1-2 (2011): 69-77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2011.594659>.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Bachmann, “Policing Africa: The US Military and Visions of Crafting ‘Good Order,’” *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 2 (2014): 119-136, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010614521267>.

<sup>22</sup> Adewumi I. Badiora, “Shaping Community Support for Vigilantism: A Nigerian Case Study,” *Policing* 42, no. 2 (2019): 240-254, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-08-2017-0101>; Alice Hills, “Policing a Plurality of Worlds: The Nigeria Police in Metropolitan,” *African Affairs* 111, no. 442 (2012): 49-51; Alice Hills, “Lost in Translation: Why Nigeria’s Police Don’t Implement Democratic Reforms,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 88, no. 4 (2012): 739-755; Gilbert Enyidah-Okey Ordu and Macpherson U. Nnam, “Community Policing in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of Current Developments,” *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences* 12, no. 1 (2017): 83-97, <https://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.345716>.

Erica Perry, Esq. is a community organizer, movement lawyer, and prison and capitalist abolitionist based in Nashville, Tennessee. Erica states that she was “radicalized” in 2011, after studying the Black Panthers and revolutions of South and Latin America to understand and acknowledge suffering and, through the AME Church, by engaging with social and political causes in Africa and worldwide.<sup>23</sup> Since 2015, Erica has organized with the official Black Lives Matter Memphis Chapter, Law for Black Lives, Networkers Dignity, and as of 2021, Black Nashville Assembly.

Wanda Ross is a community activist based in Chicago, Illinois and former member of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (ILBPP). Ross grew up in Chicago. While attending the University of Illinois at Chicago, she heard Fred Hampton give a speech on campus. Inspired by his words, she joined the party shortly thereafter. Wanda was the principal organizer of the Free Breakfast for Children program in Chicago, which according to her, at its height had four locations and fed 300-400 individuals a week. Wanda was also responsible for formally incorporating the program in the state of Illinois. Since leaving the ILBPP, she has remained an advocate for incarcerated individuals in Illinois prisons.

## SHAPING UNDERSTANDING FOR COLLECTIONS

### Intrinsic and Associational Value

When asked what objects speak to her work, Erica Perry immediately points to her Black National Assembly (BNA) t-shirt, which is worn during the interview, and a pair of boots she wears to most BNA organizing events. The BNA T-shirt is all black with stark white lettering and the word “Black” is only an outline, allowing the dark backdrop to fill its internal spaces. “Nashville” and “Assembly” are both bolded and filled with white, a visual reminder to the viewer that BNA is both a Tennessee organization and one of collective power. On its back is a simple but clear message: “Spread the Word, We Got Freedom.”

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<sup>23</sup> From our work in this article and in personal circles, we noted that many social movement organizers use “radicalization” to explain the process of their social, political, and spiritual education and identities in relation to society. While many studies on radical social movements connect this term to deviant or terrorist behaviors without the context of the subjects’ social movements, further organizing theory has inspired a more empathic understanding of “radicals” as non-conformists seeking liberation from different structures. Studies that examine radicals and their organizing in social movements: Remy Cross and David Snow, “Radicalism within the Context of Social Movements: Processes and Types,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011), <https://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.5>; Kathleen J. Fitzgerald and Diane M. Rodgers, “Radical Social Movement Organizations: A Theoretical Model,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2000): 573-592, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4121119>; Thelma Herman McCormack, “The Motivation of Radicals,” *American Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 1 (1950): 17-24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2772413>.

The T-shirt itself is a physical manifestation of the BNA community agreement and how BNA organizers are committed to moving with intention. By wearing the shirt, its wearer is promising to create a political agenda, realize a vision for its people, and obtain power to support Black liberation. As an organizer, Erica's boots are the most connected to the core of her person. These boots "embody the masculine and feminine and what exists outside of that," providing a feeling of home while Erica talks with people in the streets. They stabilize her in the movement and ground her in Black queer feminist theory and practice.

BNA does retain some functional, organizational records of their work. For example, they conducted surveys door-to-door to create a people's budget. Common among urban areas with well-funded and highly active police, people's budgets and participatory budgeting asks local community members how some of the public budget should be spent and how much should be allotted for other areas.<sup>24</sup> For Black communities with records of police violence, participatory budgeting (such as the people's budget) empowers those under surveillance to decide what should be taken back from the police and where those resources should go. Additional records include DJ sets in collaboration with artists that speak to the power of the BNA's organizing. However, these setlists do not seem to be recorded but moments are captured as still frame Instagram posts.

There are also intangible objects in the work of the Black Nashville Assembly, those ideas that capture the continuous need to navigate unjust and dehumanizing systems while dismantling those same systems. For example, court motions, in paper format and on the court transcript, made by the Assembly and representatives included a request for the prosecution to use the defendant's name and pronouns. The Assembly and the defendant know dead-naming is a tactic in court, a way to intimidate and emasculate folks into plea deals due to their otherness.<sup>25</sup> It is these forms of legal documents and conversations that affirm love and intention in Black liberatory work.

As a former member of the Black Panther Party, Wanda has also identified both material and immaterial objects as crucial to helping us understand her work. She notes that there are items like the black leather jackets worn by members of the party that serve as physical symbols of the movement. Early in the ILBPP's founding, members of the

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<sup>24</sup> "What Is PB?" Participatory Budgeting Project, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/what-is-pb/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Dead-naming", or the deliberate use of someone's previous name and/or pronouns after their transition, has been seen to cause stress to the individual dead-named as well as incite additional harassment and intimidation. Trans activists and health blogs have addressed this issue: KC Clements, "Deadnaming: What Is It and Why Is It Harmful?," *Healthline*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/deadnaming>; Allyson Chiu, "Laverne Cox Lambastes 'Deadnaming.' What Is It and Why Is It a Problem?" *Washington Post*, August 14, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/08/14/laverne-cox-lambastes-deadnaming-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-a-problem/>.

Illinois Chapter could most notably be seen wearing leather jackets, army fatigue jackets, tams and combat boots. However, due in large part to state surveillance and police harassment, this dress code was eliminated. Ross also explains that there are immaterial objects that also help us to contextualize the movement including the raised fists which means, “we will resist” and “the consciousness of liberation that must be passed down between generations.” According to Ross, the message of resistance and revolt is essential to attain Black liberation.

One such way for archivists and information workers to capture the Black Panther Party political ideology and consciousness would be the preservation of the Black Panther Party newspaper. Emphasizing the importance of the party newspaper, Aaron Dixon, Panther Captain of the Seattle Chapter noted that the *Black Panther* was the “most important and immediate mechanism the party had for educating people about what the party stood for and what was going on in the United States and the world.”<sup>26</sup> The paper was also significant because it helped to recruit new members and served as a source of revenue to fund the Panthers survival programs and other activities.

According to Rinu Oduala and #EndSARS, smartphones are both symbolic objects of a movement for liberation and a tool in the oppression of those same protesters seeking freedom in Nigeria. SARS officers falsely considered the possession of an iPhone to be an indication of wealth or criminality and would regularly target and harass youth for their mobile phones. These same devices were used against police officers to bring widespread attention to the country. Prior to October 2020, activists and organizers raised awareness about the state-sanctioned violence by trending hashtags such as #EndSARS on social media. Frustrated by the ongoing police harassment, brutality, and killings, and consequent lack of accountability from the judicial system, they began holding mass demonstrations throughout the country, which sparked gatherings in London, Paris, and New York City. Those who organized and participated relied primarily on mobile phones to communicate and disseminate information about the protests, and to record and share what happened during the protests.

Throughout the demonstrations, images and videos circulated on social media often depicted protestors holding blood-stained Nigerian flags. For Rinu and other organizers, these flags are representative of the #EndSARS movement as they “symbolized the killing of protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate on the 20th of October.” Designed by Michael Taiwo Akinkunmi a year before Nigeria’s independence, the flag is made up of three vertical stripes of equal size that are colored green, white, green and are representative of wealth, peace, and unity.<sup>27</sup> Another visual Rinu distinctly recalls is

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<sup>26</sup> Aaron Dixon, *My People are Rising: Memoir of A Black Panther Party Captain* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2012), 111.

<sup>27</sup> A. Igoni Barrett, “I remember the day ... I designed the Nigerian flag,” Aljazeera, September 3rd, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/my-nigeria/2015/9/3/i-remember-the-day-i-designed-the-nigerian>.

the Feminist Coalition logo created by Ire Aderinokun. The composition of the logo includes a raised clenched fist in the middle of white circle with a cross underneath in black, layered on a muted yellow background. The design elements are a combination of two iconic symbols used by the 1970s Women's Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party.

To best understand the past and present movements around Black life, Erica Perry notes the importance of graphics in organizing and inviting young people to the space using BNA's striking Instagram and Facebook accounts. Strategically placed, communicable, and often produced using Canva, digital graphics welcome people to the meeting spaces and the work for Black liberation itself. In collaboration with various artists, graphics are created with great attention paid to the language used, fonts, colors, message and the feeling invoked. Graphics are often reused for different events, especially during virtual events, "to add color and complexity". She does not note any difference between these digital images and any other web documents BNA uses to explain Black queer feminism as a lens for the work or summaries on participatory democracy. For Erica, to ascribe meaning to these objects is to highlight purpose only; this content is informational and acts as an invitation for community and power building. In BNA's organizing spaces there are other common creations of a social, political, and civil rights movement that will shed light on their purpose and operations. To promote and support their youth assembly every spring, a short video was made with joyful, Black dancers against a backdrop of a broken-down police car. Popular songs are used at youth assembly to promote unity including Da Baby and Roddy Ricch spitting that we got a "brand new Lamborghini, fuck a cop car" in their song Rockstar. The BNA message rings clear from these administrative and creative works: defund the police, grab the power, and enjoy the freedom as Black people.

Rather than focus on content, Rinu stresses the need to remember the hundreds of young, innocent people who died during the struggle. They were victims of a failed system, bad governance, police brutality, and unfortunately lost their lives, "before the protests, during the protests, and after the protests." Memorializing them and their contributions to the fight is of greater importance to her. She also points out that #EndSARS was about survival and the need to end death and exhortations. Those who participated and protested stood in solidarity regardless of their cultural divisions to send a message worldwide that the deaths at the hands of Nigerian state agents, as a result of bad government, must cease.

### Authority and Provenance

In terms of determining what is created by organizations and what is contributed from the community-at-large, all of the interviewees saw no separation as creators or members with authority. In the BNA, much of the message comes from the Black experience of not only the organizers, but their community members. While the content takes various

forms, the vision of the BNA comes from conversations in the home and youth assembly. Messages also come from the legal work Erica did, hearing about the daily treatment of incarcerated Black folks. The only exception to this unity of message and objects from the Black collective worth noting is that of creative works. In a society where Black content creators have been robbed of their aesthetics, vision, and agency far too often, giving Black artists their due is a necessary and just step forward, and even more so in organizing circles.<sup>28</sup>

As a movement lawyer and scholar, Erica grapples with the idea of authority and creation in the record: who do we cite when we organize? She considers BNA's community survey as indistinguishable from the organizers themselves. To create good policy, one must do good organizing. From this organizing, BNA develops a base that includes community members that are known and can be called upon and are politically educated. It is this community that calls for a new budget for the city and it is that same community of 5,000 that suggests new funding for services needed in their neighborhoods. However, she acknowledges that even knocking on doors and going to liquor stores carries its own risks and rewards. The possibility of white supremacists disrupting the data collection could have occurred. She knows that some of the folks they talked to in North Nashville were gentrifiers, greatly altering their idea of policing as an issue of public safety. In many American urban centers, long-time residents recognize gentrification coinciding with newer residents appearing during waves of "renewal" with little to no understanding of the neighborhood as it was previously. Without awareness and engagement with the current state of the neighborhood, some gentrifiers treat police as partners in maintaining civil disorder, calling officers to arrest and formally warn Black and Brown neighbors for slights, noise, and minor offenses.<sup>29</sup> Both Erica's policymaking and law practice exist in the community specifically to avoid traditional methods of policing that lead to the oppressive systems we have today. The larger reward, in addition to liberation, is being able to have those critical conversations with the "right" people, namely the Black folks who have lived and survived Nashville and the city government's intent to always send somebody to jail.

Like the BNA, Wanda notes that members of the Illinois Black Panther Party (ILBPP) are members of the community and "we come from it," so there is no clear

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<sup>28</sup> Marisa Balanda, "Bodies without the Burden: White Appropriation and Exploitation of Black Appearance and Culture," *Student Publications* 857 (April 1, 2020): 3-11.

<sup>29</sup> For more on linkages between policing and gentrification, see Brenden Beck, "The Role of Police in Gentrification," *The Appeal*, August 4, 2020, <https://theappeal.org/the-role-of-police-igentrification-breonna-taylor/>; Abdallah Fayyad, "The Criminalization of Gentrifying Neighborhoods," *The Atlantic*, December 20, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/12/the-criminalization-of-gentrifying-neighborhoods/548837/>; Margaret M Ramirez, "City as Borderland: Gentrification and the Policing of Black and Latinx Geographies in Oakland," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 152-162, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775819843924>.

distinction between the images and artwork created by community members and what is created by the ILBPP. She goes on to explain the purpose of the images created by Panther members such as Emory Douglas. According to Wanda, the images at times were comical, profound, and political but they were created to show Black people winning at a time when most images depicted Black people losing. The Douglas images first illustrate what white people were doing by subjugating people and secondly, what Black people are able to do when they take over their own destiny. Wanda further explains that the police and military are the first line of defense for capitalism. This was relayed in imagery as well. For the Panther newspaper, Emory Douglas created an illustration of pigs uniformed as local police, the National Guard, and Marines in three side-by-side panels. All of the pigs held identical rifles, clubs, gas, mace and were covered with flies.<sup>30</sup> For the Panthers, this illustration indicated there was no real distinction between these state-sanctioned forces when all were armed to oppress the people through violence at every turn.

Unlike BNA and ILBPP, the #EndSARS movement has little to no leadership and organizational structure. Because of this, protesters are inherently leaders and members of the community. The decentralization of their work extended from the people protesting to the graphics created. Those involved had been either directly or indirectly affected and impacted by police brutality and were compelled to lend their talents, whether organizing or artistic, to help the cause. If an archives or museum were to acquire objects and ephemera from an #EndSARS protest, information regarding the origins of the materials may not exist unless they were created and used by a protestor who later donated them.

Although there were no official titles and positions, Rinu acknowledges that some individuals were entrusted with certain duties. This was the case for the flag bearer who contributed to the movement by carrying the flag during the protests and climbing tall structures and buildings just to wave it. Unlike other participants, this person was known throughout the movement, as well as Ire Aderinokun who identified herself as the creator of the Feminist Coalition logo.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Emory Douglas, *It's All the Same, 1972*, AIGA, uploaded May 20, 2015, photograph, Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/aiga/17902128352/>.

<sup>31</sup> Ire Aderinokun (@ireaderinokun), "On another note, it was honestly so heartwarming to see how this logo I designed in less than 30 minutes and under so much pressure became such a powerful symbol in the movement Yellow heart + it was hilarious that misogynists thought the female symbol in it was 'hidden,'" Twitter post, October 23rd, 2020, 12:56 am, <https://twitter.com/ireaderinokun/status/1319548115318378497>.

## Applying Context for the Future

For Wanda of the ILBPP, Black Liberation is not merely achieving parity with white folks, but having access to resources that allow us to take care of our families, access to education and safety from unlawful, unethical, and illegal prosecution, and police repression. Wanda believes that the entire struggle for Black liberation is about the allocation of resources to thrive. She notes that as a community, we are surviving and not thriving. Wanda equates thriving with the ability of Black people to push our children ten steps ahead of the previous generation and she notes that racism prevents Black people from moving forward.

As a Nigerian, Rinu's desires extend beyond her country and are inclusive of the entire African continent and all Black people, similar to Wanda of the ILBPP. Regardless of their age, liberation means everyone knows their rights and has access to more than just basic amenities like education and good welfare. This ideal also includes a functioning democratic system with leaders who prioritize people, particularly Black youth, so they are prepared to take on the challenges of tomorrow. Liberation for Rinu is a unified continent where Africans can reside and live irrespective of tribe, culture, language, religion, gender, and nationality, and be proud.

Like Wanda and Rinu, Erica draws her understanding of Black liberation from Black people, her family and local community, but also literary sources, specifically Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Beginning in 2016, Erica read Alice Walker's work as suggested by an elder and, in a quest for healing of her own, sought out *The Color Purple* as advised by a friend. Her disdain for the movie version kept her from reading the novel until finally she read and realized how the characters became whole by the end. Addressing topics of God and spirituality, relationships, and trauma, *The Color Purple* gave Erica a pathway to healing she never thought possible for Black people. With this novel, she now defines Black liberation as twofold: in terms of healing and transformation. To be liberatory is to have the space to transform and be whole regardless of the violence, historical oppression, and trauma one has experienced or perpetrated against others. Collectively, we can then make the conditions to support the love and empathy we all desperately need as Black people.

## MEDITATIONS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE PROFESSIONALS

As Black cultural heritage professionals, we acknowledge the importance of having conversations with organizers not only about their materials, but about their understanding of archiving and its impact on history. Even more so, we highlight the voices of Black women leading Black movements to create space for their histories in the

male-centric historical record thus far.<sup>32</sup> We feel a sense of specific responsibility as Black people to collaborate with, support, and act responsibly within our communities. We do this out of love for Black people. We, too, want liberation. Our role in liberation includes starting and sustaining conversations about memory, authority, and power with organizers. From these conversations, we now know how to prioritize and reassess the importance of materials from Black liberation movements in the archives, integrate radical empathy and specific contexts when selecting objects in collaboration with organizers, redefine provenance and authority without professional jargon, and integrate an ethics of care while ascribing meaning to materials as informed by the organizers. In combination, these theories and practical strategies enable all cultural heritage professionals to shift power and work towards creating liberatory archives.<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, we are aware of potential barriers organizers may have about donating their materials, such as past trauma and distrust of institutions. Archivists, therefore, must first acknowledge the trauma and history of broken promises inflicted on historically excluded communities and organizations by collecting institutions. Informed through radical empathy, archivists can help address previously harmful experiences with institutions and clarify the archival process.

Archivists must also actively conduct research to understand the various contexts of history, culture, and politics that impact movements, organizers, and their communities. This means moving beyond the text to analyze and communicate the social dynamism of movement organizers, including viewing archival footage featuring organizers, following them on social media, or attending movement-related events in-person or virtually. As part of this process and to inform preliminary conversations with

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<sup>32</sup> For more on Black female leadership and their invisible labor in social movements, see Bernice McNair Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class," *Gender & Society* 7, no. 2 (1993): 162-182, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124393007002002>; Belinda Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (1996): 1664-1687, <https://doi.org/10.1086/230870>; M. Bahati Kuumba, "'You've Struck a Rock': Comparing Gender, Social Movements, and Transformation in the United States and South Africa," *Gender & Society* 16, no. 4 (2002): 504-523, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243202016004006>; Samantha de Vera, "'We the Ladies ... Have Been Deprived of a Voice': Uncovering Black Women's Lives through the Colored Conventions Archive," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 27 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.835>.

<sup>33</sup> Caswell, "Urgent Archives," 20; Drake further unpacks liberatory archives in Jarrett M. Drake, "Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing (Part 1)," *On Archivy*, October 22, 2016, <https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-1-d26aaeb0edd1> and Jarrett M. Drake, "Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing (Part 2)," *On Archivy*, October 22, 2016, <https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-2-6f56c754eb17>.

the community, archivists must understand that for Black organizers, much of the “past” dictates and molds the present. As stated by Wurl, movements are not disengaged from the present and must be considered more of a “living past.”<sup>34</sup> This also resonates with the Black communal understanding of *Sankofa*, a word from the Akan tribe in Ghana which means, “it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind.” Its symbol, the *Sankofa* bird, is a mythical bird that has its feet planted forward and its head facing backwards meaning that the past is connected to the future.<sup>35</sup> Using these understandings, and once a connection is made and conversations around acquiring material begins, archivists should be prepared to discuss the assumptions that inform the organizers’ perception of the archives and their place in the historical record.

When selecting objects for the collection in collaboration with organizers, archivists must incorporate radical empathy to understand the specific contexts and roles objects have in the movement. Before the interviews, we assumed that organizers would have specific ideas about what objects belonged in the archive to fully capture their movements. Based on the chosen objects from organizers, we further assumed that most of the challenges for the archivists would be managing the digital content and determining its creator. However, we were surprised to find that not only did the organizers generally not consider the materials, both digital and analog, themselves as important to the record, but that they paid little thought to their importance at all. The materials were merely products they used to promote awareness, empower organizers, and unite the “base” to support the work. To address this, archivists must move from questions such as “what do you have?” to “what objects speak to your work?” as a way for the organizers to assign value and meaning to the materials that are important to them in the context of the movement. This example of rephrasing questions informs the archival acquisition process and helps archivists determine what objects should be preserved from the organizers’ perspective.

Given the tumultuous histories between the state, informants, and Black organizers, we assumed that identifying and assigning creators to materials would be essential to keeping records for the movement.<sup>36</sup> We thought the organizers would want

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<sup>34</sup> Wurl, 70.

<sup>35</sup> Christel N. Tempel, “The Emergence of Sankofa Practice in the United States: A Modern History,” *Journal of Black Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 127-150, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25704098>.

<sup>36</sup> The state, that is local and federal government agencies, have a well-documented history of infiltrating Black movements, disrupting protests, and threatening and imprisoning movement leaders. This has happened to both armed militant and non-violent Black movements for liberation, both in the U.S. and abroad. See Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2009); the FBI Vault Records of Martin Luther King, Jr. Part 1 of 2, accessed June 14, 2022, <https://vault.fbi.gov/Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr./Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr.%20Part%201%20of%202/view>; and George Joseph and Murtaza Hussain, “FBI

cultural heritage professionals to be as clear as possible when defining and assigning authority for their records. We also assumed that the organizers would be worried about infiltrators or disinformation in their movements. During the interviews, we did not use the terms “provenance and authority,” but reworked these terms to simplify meaning for the organizers’ contexts. We developed our guiding question (“How can cultural heritage professionals determine what is created by BLM, BPP, etc. versus what is contributed by the community-at-large?”) to relay our definition of “creator” to them. In the interviews, organizers were cognizant that without clearly defined creators for each object, disruptors could damage and sow distrust in the community. However, they recognized that disruptors always exist and instead focused on messaging and the purpose of their objects. The only exception to identifying creators of objects by name was in the case of some creative works. The organizers of all the movements, ILBPP, Black Nashville Assembly, and #EndSARS, all collaborated with artists to produce materials, both digital and physical, for their work. Knowing that art is an intensive process and personal to their creators, the organizers credit creatives and artists at every opportunity.

While we grapple with *provenance and the authority* of records according to our own professional standards, the organizers we spoke with were less concerned with such definitions. They are aware of *provenance*, albeit in different terms, and acknowledge the importance of identifying creators to inform the archives. However, for them, being both part of and representative of the community meant that items contributed were for *everyone* and were solely tools of communication and survival. Again, there are exceptions for naming creators in regard to creative works. Based upon the interviews conducted and archival practices, we sought to define provenance in relation to Black identity. Informed by Wurl, Powell, Smith, Murrain and Hearn, we propose the term “Black diasporic provenance” to best articulate our findings. Black diasporic provenance assumes that because of shared identity and ethnicity as Black people globally, there exists an inherent, collective understanding and value of provenance and authority within the archival record. Black diasporic provenance is related to the memory, history, expressiveness, and culture of Black people and represents a deepened understanding of community through global customs, language, oppression, and survival.<sup>37</sup> Applying this term, archivists can continue the practice of assigning authority to a specific movement unless it is a clearly defined creative work. From our interviews, this practice aligns with

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Tracked An Activist Involved With Black Lives Matter As They Traveled Across The U.S., Documents Show,” *The Intercept*, March 19, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/19/black-lives-matter-fbi-surveillance/>.

<sup>37</sup> For reflections and definitions of both Blackness and/or Black culture in the African diaspora, see Michelle Stephens, “What Is This Black in Black Diaspora?” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 13, no. 2 (July 1, 2009): 26-38, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-3697238>; Femi Ojo-Ade, “Reflections on Pan-Africanism, Black Aesthetics and the Black Condition,” in *Being Black, Being Human: More Essays on Black Culture* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 1-23.

the organizers' understanding of "authority" and creators in the context of the movement; attribution can be given to the movement at large unless otherwise identified.

Prior to the interviews, we had preconceived notions about how organizers ascribe meaning to objects in their work. We assumed organizers would see value in their objects but hoped mostly to gain insights about meaning from the activists themselves. However, during our conversations, we were surprised to find that organizers thought little of the materiality or format of the objects they created; they saw them as tools of the movement above anything else. The organizers were primarily focused on the intention behind and purpose of objects in the movement, often making sense of these objects based on the need to educate, inform, or call to action. As cultural heritage professionals, these conversations informed us that we must employ a people-centered approach to ascribing meaning, including trusting in the organizers to be honest, to have expertise, and to have the ability to assign value and meaning to the objects in the context of their movement. Archivists must ask questions to clarify and integrate the organizers' understandings into the collection and in descriptions of the collections.

Author Kiese Laymon in his recent article, "What We Owe and Are Owed: Kiese Laymon on Black Revision, Repayment and Renewal," reminds us that "we must repair what we helped break...restore what responsibly loved you...And revise, revise, revise with your family and friends. Collective freedom is impossible without interpersonal repair."<sup>38</sup> We owe Black organizers and activists our respect, attention, and patience as we collaborate on a complex science. This means not only changing our methods and assumptions about their work but reminding them of the importance of these objects to our shared histories.<sup>39</sup> Changing the way we discuss archival work with the community further moves us from custodians and stewards, or the keepers of memory, to a new phase of co-creators and collaborators backed with intention.<sup>40</sup> Having these conversations also holds us together and combats the harmful narrative of Black individuals and communities as stagnant. They also dispel myths that Black people lack both culture and history. As cultural heritage professionals, we must reframe and redistribute power related to memory work and the authority of records by re-imagining archiving as a collaborative process, one that seeks input from organizers in every stage early and often.

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<sup>38</sup> Kiese Laymon, "What We Owe and Are Owed," *New York Magazine*, May 10, 2021, <https://nymag.com/article/2021/05/what-we-owe-and-are-owed.html>.

<sup>39</sup> We call on the ethics of care here, specifically the virtues of attentiveness, responsiveness, and respect as seen in Daniel Engster, "Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care," *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 50-74, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3811114>.

<sup>40</sup> Wurl, 72.

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