



GLOBAL DANCE MEDITATION
**FOR BLACK
LIBERATION**

A Vocabulary Guide for Black Liberation

Global: around the world, world wide

Dance: expressing yourself in a physical format

Meditation: centering yourself on a topic or feeling

Black: as in the unified culture

Liberation: to be freed from something or someone

-definitions by E and S, ages 13

This guide consists of numerous carefully selected and defined vocabulary terms, each aligned closely with the Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation. In conjunction with the meditation, these words provide daily insight on movement, race theory, healing, and more. The Vocabulary Team collectively gathered and researched the meanings and thoughts, co-authored, and co-edited the document. Team members are listed at the end of this document.

“Words are stand-ins for ideas, words have meaning, we know this...when we are talking about issues of oppression we have to examine every word we use, we have to interrogate the ideas that underlie those words” - Jarrett Lucas on the FANTI podcast. “Okay, Allies, Now Let’s Get in Formation!”

As a part of your Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation, the Vocab team invites you to engage mentally with the terms we have listed here; read our definitions, examine their meaning, ponder your relationship to the ideas these words evoke. Each week is accompanied by a series of questions that you could reflect on, discuss with others, dance about, write/journal about, or otherwise interact with. Through deeply reflecting on these terms, we hope you gain context and clarity critical to embodying liberation in these 28 days and beyond.

WEEK 1

Liberation in the Inner Sanctum: Self/Body/Movement

Terms: Embodiment, Somatics, Breathe, Decolonization/Unsettling, White Supremacy, Mental health, Self Care, Ableism, Dysmorphia, Toxic positivity, Unpacking, Equity, Abolition

Questions: *What is my relationship to my breath? My physical body? How connected is my sense of self to the land that I live on? Who were the original stewards of this land? How have things gotten so twisted? How can I see my own self more clearly? How will identifying my biases help me? What work will I do to excavate my shadow self? What do I believe I need to live safely? What do my neighbors need to live safely? What do the people who live cross town need? What is the relationship between my safety and my breath?*

AUGUST 1

Embodiment, Somatics, Breathe

Embodiment

The practice and process of carrying ideas and emotions in the flesh, psyche, and movement. **Embodied knowledge** is information or wisdom that is carried in the flesh, psyche, and movement and informs one's activities. **Disembodiment** is disconnection from one's body, often experienced by Black people who face disproportionate physical violence.

Somatics

A field within bodywork and movement studies which emphasizes internal physical perception and experience (Wikipedia). Within **somatics**, first-person perception is emphasized (as opposed to viewing others' bodies from the outside).

Somatic practice is applied in both therapeutic and artistic environments and involves listening deeply and responding to one's body both internally and in relation to the space in which the body moves. **Somatic practice** is used often in dance and choreography and encourages the dancer to focus on their body, other dancers, the ground, and the air. These body-focused practices can lead to greater self-awareness and self-healing.

To **breathe**:

A combination of air and water: a necessary activity for life survival. Bodily activity, emotional activity, spiritual activity... Denying breathing is denying livability and life. "listen: i need my oxygen," writes poet Evie Shockley ("acrobatic," in *Semiautomatic*).

Breathing as a sound that requires listening; a life-pace; an unstable, alterable, sometimes manageable, sometimes uncontrollable rhythm; a signal, sometimes an interrupted signal. Breathing for talking, singing, shouting, laughing, whispering, moaning, etc. **Breathing** while sighing while remembering.

"... in an altered time my **breath** catches yours my question to myself what poem would I have written if what has already happened hadn't already happened what song would my throat have sung in between the notes moving with the **breath** of **breath** ... what dance have danced me ..." (M. NourbeSe Philip, from "[Conditions of Expanse. Algebraic Equations of Death](#)").

AUGUST 2

Decolonization/Unsettling, White Supremacy, Racial Triangulation

Decolonization

A process that brings about Indigenous sovereignty and repatriations, nothing less.

“**Decolonization** is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools.” So, who is the process of “**decolonizing**” for and who needs to do the work of “**unsettling**”? In the context of the United States, the process of **decolonizing** is for Black, Native, Indigenous, and People of Color, who are afflicted by internal and external forms of colonization perpetrated by the American Empire. In other words, **decolonizing** also belongs to dispossessed people who are brought onto seized Native and Indigenous land through other colonial relations. **Decolonizing** involves the removal/rejection/decentering of White Supremacist ideologies in favor of ancestral ways of knowing and being.

“**Unsettling**” is work for the global minority (whites), and includes physical displacement, redistribution of land and resources, dismantling/deconstructing settler beliefs/histories, not taking up space, and uncentering their whiteness.

Further Investigation: ["Decolonization is not a metaphor" by Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang](#) and ["Un-settling Settler Desires" by Scott Morgensen](#)

White supremacy

The socio-political system that gives economic, cultural, legal, educational, and other benefits to people designated white. That designation is entirely constructed and flexible; who is deemed white changes over time, but is always established in relation to Blackness and Indigeneity. **White supremacy** is the larger structure that explains the rigid racial hierarchy within the United States that entrenches power and capital in the hands of white people and ensures that

Black, Native and Indigenous people, as well as People of Color have an increased “vulnerability to premature death” (Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California).

Racial Triangulation

The reinforcement of **white supremacy** through the positioning of Asian-Americans in between blacks and whites in the racial hierarchy. This occurs through two processes:

Relative Valorization: Stereotyping Asian-Americans as model minorities who are racially and culturally superior to Black people.

Civic Ostracism: Maintaining the belief that Asian Americans are inherently inferior, foreign, and less American in relation to white Americans.

AUGUST 3

Mental health, Self Care, Ableism

Ableism

Discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities or who are perceived to have disabilities. [Ableism](#) characterizes persons as defined by their disabilities and as inferior to the non-disabled (Simi Linton, from Claiming Disability Knowledge).

Further Investigation: "[Avoiding Ableist Language](#)"

Mental health

The process of regulating, and sense-making emotional and intellectual experiences to the greatest extent of individual capability.

In health care, **self-care** is any necessary human regulatory function which is under individual control, deliberate and self-initiated. Some place **self-care** on a continuum with health care providers at the opposite end to self-care while others

see a more complex relationship (Wikipedia). **Self-care** is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health ([psychcentral.com](https://www.psychcentral.com)). Although **self-care** is individualized, it is also political, as Audre Lorde argues: “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light and Other Essays*).

AUGUST 4

Dysmorphia, Toxic positivity, Unpacking

Dysmorphia

A preoccupation with perceived flaws in your body. **Body dysmorphic disorder** “is a mental health disorder in which you can't stop thinking about one or more perceived defects or flaws in your appearance — a flaw that appears minor or can't be seen by others. But you may feel so embarrassed, ashamed and anxious that you may avoid many social situations” (from the [Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org)). Within a white supremacist, patriarchal society, **dysmorphia** can manifest in **racialized** or **gendered body dysmorphia**, in which the perceived flaws are tied to one's racial or gender presentation.

Toxic Positivity

An excessive fixation on positivity and optimism, resulting in the invalidation of human struggle.

This is often used to draw attention away from discussions of race. By painting Black people who share their lived experiences as “divisive” or “negative”, **toxic positivity** works to gaslight and silence people of color.

In the context of race, **toxic positivity** is closely associated with **colorblindness**. **Colorblindness**, the ignoring of racial identity and its role in society, often manifests itself in statements such as, “I don't see color”. However,

by entirely disregarding race, one overlooks issues of systemic racism in our society, such as the disproportionate impact of police brutality on black communities.

Unpacking

The act of examining our own thoughts and feelings, taking time to sit with emotions that come up, and questioning the source and the story behind our reactions and attitudes. Cognitive practices, meditation and dance are all tools used to unpack and process difficult emotions and experiences.

AUGUST 5

Equity

Equity

People getting what they need to both survive and thrive, including access to opportunities, networks, education, and resources. **Equitable** access to these things would mean that some receive more than others because their need is greater. **Equity** is different from equality in that equality would assign the exact same amount of resources to everyone, while **equity** acknowledges that different needs require different resources. Using the example of school funding, advocating for equality would mean making sure that all schools had the same amount of resources per student v/s advocating for **equity** would mean acknowledging that some schools - like those serving students in low-income communities of color - will actually need more resources if we are going to make any significant change in the educational disparities sustained by different systems of oppression - racism, sexism, colonialism (from [Cultural Organizing](#)).

As Karl Marx admonished, **equity** means “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!” (1875)

AUGUST 6

Abolition

Abolition calls for the dismantling and destruction of the systems of oppression that ravage Black communities, and replacing these structures with those based on love, community care, and joy. Calls for the **abolition** of slavery, the prison industrial complex and policing are the most current iterations of this political demand. “For a decade, Critical Resistance has organized to **abolish** the reliance on imprisonment, policing, and surveillance, seeing the prison industrial complex not as a broken system to be “fixed,” but a well-oiled machine that must be eliminated entirely” (from [Abolition Now! Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex](#)).

AUGUST 7

Breathe

Respiration and aspiration. Repeat.

Inhalation and exhalation. Repeat.

Intake, then expire. Repeat.

Fill, then empty. Repeat.

The process by which the respiratory organs of the body collaborate to bring oxygen(healing) to the blood(the life of the body) and remove CO2 from the body.

“A process in living organisms involving the production of energy, typically with the intake of oxygen and the release of carbon dioxide from the oxidation of complex organic substances.” - google

BREATHE.

You have reached the end of this week's Vocabulary for Liberation.

Post content related to your journey on your social media, and consider using and searching these hashtags to connect and build online global community

#28forLiberation #embodyliberation #streetdanceactivism

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