



GLOBAL DANCE MEDITATION

FOR **BLACK
LIBERATION**

A Vocabulary for Black Liberation: Week 3

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 ponder, 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 3

Liberation in Spirituality

Ancestral and Cosmic Wisdom is Available to Me Today and Everyday

Terms: Embodied Knowledge, Oral Traditions, Afrofuturism, Afrosurrealism, Black Radical Imagination, Roots, Ancestry, Liberation, Transmission, Love, Revolution.

Questions: *What remains in the act of transmission? What gets lost? What gets lost consciously and what gets lost unconsciously? What's at stake when transmitting a gesture, a movement, a dance?*

AUGUST 15

Embodied Knowledge and Oral Traditions

Embodied Knowledge is information or wisdom that is carried in the flesh, psyche, and movement informing their activities. Integrated spatial awareness created in the unity between subjects and objects that is the direct result of having a body. **Embodied knowledge** is when the body knows how to act and the process of completing an action does not have to be intellectualized, but rather is enacted wholly by the physical body. How we carry ourselves, our histories, our cultures, and our way of being in the world can comprise part of our **embodied knowledge**.

Oral traditions are lifeways that are transmitted through speech and song. These traditions are often passed from generation to generation. **Oral traditions** are a means of communicating culture, knowledge, and art verbally. Some forms of **oral tradition** may include oral histories, narratives, poetry, drama, folk tales, ballads, or chants.

AUGUST 16

Afrofuturism, Afrosurrealism, and the Black Radical Imagination

Afrofuturism is a critical stance, artistic aesthetic, and cultural practice focused on “imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens.” It offers “a way to encourage experimentation, reimagine identities, and activate liberation” (La Fleur, 2011). **Afrofuturism** is disciplinarily diverse, including – for example – the science fiction of Octavia Butler, the experimental music of composer Sun Ra, and the visual work of Krista Franklin.

D. Scot Miller, author of the “Afro-Surreal Manifesto” (2009), describes **Afrofuturism** as “a diaspora intellectual and artistic movement that turns to science, technology, and science fiction to speculate on black possibilities in the future.” He contrasts this with the related aesthetic field of **Afro-Surrealism**. Miller’s manifesto states: “**Afro-Surrealism** is about the present. There is no need for tomorrow’s-tongue speculation about the future. Concentration camps, bombed-out cities, famines, and enforced sterilization have already happened. To the Afro-Surrealist, the Tasers are here. The Four Horsemen rode through too long ago to recall. What is the future? The future has been around so long it is now the past. Afro-Surrealists expose this from a ‘future-past’ called RIGHT NOW” (Miller, 2009). Historically informed, imaginatively rich, and cognizant of the absurdity of Black peoples’ predicament in the world today, **Afro-Surrealism** transfigures our view of the present. The fiction of Henry Dumas, silhouette art of Kara Walker, and musings of Kool Keith’s Dr. Octagon are all examples of the Afro-Surreal. Ytasha Womack (2013) argues that **Afrofuturism** and **Afro-Surrealism** are “flipsides of the same coin, with shared influences and champions. Today, the two aesthetics are so intertwined that it’s nearly impossible to talk about one without talking about the other.” She offers the following distinction, however: “**Afrofuturism** is more tech-savvy and races between the future and distant past, whereas **Afro-Surrealism** is low-tech and placed squarely in today.”

Robin D.G. Kelley (2002) places **Afrofuturism** and **Afro-Surrealism** within a larger intellectual-artistic tradition of **Black radical imagination**. Building on the work of Cedric Robinson (1983), Kelley views the Black radical tradition as fundamentally concerned with metaphysical transformation, that is, with freedom of mind and enlargement of collective consciousness. In this view, Black cultural-historical knowledge is a powerful force that can be used to re-evaluate life in the

present, envision a better future, build a loving community, and mobilize political action. Like other forms of Black radical imagination, **Afrofuturism** and **Afro-Surrealism** create spaces to collectively imagine freedom – not just *freedom from* exploitation, but also the *freedom to* think, love, play, heal, and transform.

Sources:

Kelley, Robin D.G. Kelley. 2002. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press.

LaFleur, Ingrid. 2011. “Visual Aesthetics of Afrofuturism.” TEDx Fort Greene Salon (25 September). <https://youtu.be/x7bCaSzk9Zc>

Miller, D. Scot. 2009. “The Afro-Surreal Manifesto.” Originally published in San Francisco Bay Guardian. 20 May. <http://dscotmiller.blogspot.com/2009/05/afrosurreal.html>

Womack, Ytasha. 2013. *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.

AUGUST 17

Roots and Ancestry

The acknowledgement of the soil of personal and collective lineage(s). Memories, cultural practices and emotions that you inherit. Intergenerational embodied wisdom, but also intergenerational trauma.

Rootedness connects us to the ground, our reality, while attention to our **ancestry** offers connection to the past but also to the realm of benevolence, protection, and instruction from those **ancestors**.

For more information, see Toni Morrison, “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation,” in *Black Women Writers, 1950-1980*, edited by Mari Evans (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1984): 339-45.

AUGUST 18

Liberation

Liberation is the act of setting free or releasing a person or a society from enslavement, an oppressor, social conventions, or imprisonment.

True **liberation** would lead to “a world in which violence [is] replaced with cosmic love, self-interest with a sense of responsibility for all humanity” (Zamalin

106). While freedom is sometimes focused on the status of the individual, even at the expense of others, **liberation** is focused on the ability for all to have access to what they need to live in fullness: food, water, shelter, creativity, safety, health-care, and love.

As per an abolitionist framework, Abolition of the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is **liberation** ([Abolition as Liberation in the Movement for Black Lives](#)). For decades, abolitionists have argued that ultimately the U.S. - as a racist settler-colonial oppressor nation - is incompatible with Black **liberation**, with Native Peoples' **liberation**, and the **liberation** of the working class.

Thus according to abolitionists, **liberation** can be achieved by defunding the PIC as one form of systemic racial capitalism. **Liberation** is a process of reinvesting in *real safety* of Black, Brown and working class communities through access to affordable housing, healthcare (including mental healthcare), education, transportation, good paying jobs that pay a living wage. **Liberation** centers community self-determination.

Sources:

Alex Zamalin, *Black Utopia: The History of an Idea from Black Nationalism to Afrofuturism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

Abolition as Liberation in the Movement for Black Lives: <https://medium.com/radical-democracy/abolition-as-liberation-in-the-movement-for-black-lives-f3fc98fe0bd1>

AUGUST 19

Transmission

One of the ways people, bodies, and communities share knowledge. Practices of **transmission** open up questions about legacy and heritage; reciprocity, exchange, and equivalence; permission, appropriation, circulation, use, and misuse. **Transmission** can be strict and rigid, thus perpetuating a more stable system of knowledge. **Transmission** can also leave room for creativity, agency, initiative and alter what gets transmitted--in this way **transmission** can be transformative. **Transmission** can also be a tool to recuperate a lost or suspended or stolen practice, and bring it back to communities that can cultivate it--in which case, **transmission** becomes an act of honoring, generosity, presence, affirmation.

AUGUST 20

Love

As bell hooks writes in *all about love*, “echoing the work of Erich Fromm, he defines **love** as ‘the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.’ Explaining further, he continues: ‘**Love** is as **love** does. **Love** is an act of will — namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to **love**. We choose to **love**’” (hooks 4-5). **Love** is an action and a choice built on the “six ingredients: care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust” (Metta Hour with Sharon Salzberg: Real Love Series: bell hooks).

AUGUST 21

Revolution

The last paragraph of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) reads: “The Communists disdain to conceal their view and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist **revolution**. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.” The Marxist theory of revolution formulates that **revolution** led by the working class can change and overthrow the existing social and political system. **Revolution** creates the possibility of creating a new world rooted in racial, class and gender equality.

BREATHE.

You have reached the end of Week 3’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

Vocab Guide Authors

Kenna Camara Cottman

Sharlia Lebreton-Gulley Paz

Catherine Oteng

Maceo Paisley

Bernard Brown

Arushi Singh

Janani Eswaran

Nicole Tiao

Melissa Melpignano

Lindsay Livingston

Eleuthera Lisch

Jesse Ruskin