Healing Justice: A Framework for Collective Healing and Well-Being from Systemic Traumas

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ABSTRACT

The 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States demanded police reform and legislative action. Data-driven policing is just one technological intervention designed with the hope to tackle police brutality. However, these design interventions are often rooted in the continued racial profiling of poor and socially marginalized communities. Designers and researchers need a Healing Justice framework to circumvent this harm. Healing Justice addresses generational trauma and violence in marginalized communities and is not just a framework for policing but can address maternal mortality rates, COVID-19, medical malpractice, and other trauma issues. In this paper, we apply a Healing Justice framework to co-design activities focused on police brutality. We bridge Healing Justice and design by using an Afrofuturist Feminism framework, arguing that Healing Justice and Afrofuturist feminism frameworks lead to collective, grassroots, and pragmatic designs.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing → User centered design**.

KEYWORDS

Healing Justice, Black Feminism, Afrofuturism, Co-design, Police Brutality

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1 INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2020, thousands of individuals protested across the United States and globally for Black Lives Matter legislation and equitable COVID-19 practices. These practices were a reminder of the generational trauma and violence that have plagued Black communities. 18-year-old Darnella Frazier best expressed these emotions during her testimony in the trial of police officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Frazier stated, "It's been nights I stayed up apologizing and apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more and not physically interacting and not saving his life" [57]. Many Black people like Frazier are left with trauma and guilt, from physical police interactions to constantly being privy to these stories through the media. Policing requires community-driven design solutions. Sociologist Alex Vitale argues policing needs reform; and accountability for racists and ableist practices. Vitale states, "the culture of the police must be changed, so it is no longer obsessed with the use of threats and violence to control the poor and socially marginal" [61]. We need new approaches to community safety designed by Black and Brown communities that are not rooted in systemic racism. Harrington et. al. note that centering equitable experiences and outcomes leads to reconstructing collaborative design as more collective, grassroots, and pragmatic in fostering equity-driven approaches [37]. Equitable approaches to community safety require interventions not driven by a white supremacist lens.

Race and Technology scholars Ruha Benjamin, Simone Browne, and Sasha Costanza-Chock attest that these traumas occur within technology design, too, since algorithmic systems are racialized and operate from a white supremacist lens [8, 14, 20]. They argue that methodologies grounded in humanities and activism like Healing Justice, Black Feminism, and Afrofuturism are critical in addressing equitable technology design. Healing Justice is a framework conceived by healers and organizers across the southeastern United States who formed the Kindred Healing Justice Collective [44]. The framework addresses collective harm and trauma through meditation, altar-building, ritual, facilitation, art creation, and other non-western healing practices to create community well-being and safety [44]. Healing Justice is the design intervention needed to tackle policing. The framework maps the cultural memory and collective trauma within systemic problems like policing in order to design alternative practices. Healing Justice is not just for organizers but for everyone impacted by systemic racism.

Imagining a world through a Healing Justice framework means mental health experts de-escalating harmful situations instead of relying on police intervention. Healing Justice means utilizing a non-racialized neighborhood app or a website promoting mutual aid instead of waiting on legislative action. Healing Justice also requires medical practices that center the experiences and needs of Black women and LGBTQ+ individuals. When Healing Justice is integrated into the design process, we argue that it tackles white

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supremacy and heteropatriarchal systems impacting policies and technology design among Black and Brown communities. Three critical research questions guided our study:

(1) What are the attributes and features of tools that help Black communities heal from police brutality?
(2) How can Black joy become a tool for healing?
(3) Could methods of Healing Justice and Afrofuturist Feminism offer guidance for designing tools that center joy and healing?

To answer these questions, ten participants who identified as Black or African American living across the southeast United States completed three self-guided design activities and participated in a workshop on police brutality.

Historical precedence suggests that a Healing Justice framework leads to collective, grassroots, and pragmatic designs. Kindred's Healing Justice Collective states, "we sought to map and elevate how our movements and communities build collective care, safety, and protection for each other in the South" [44]. The collective calls out four ways healing occurs: from labor (work), body (physical or mental), land (space we occupy), and spirit (our ways of knowing). Considering the Healing Justice framework within the design process: 1- helps researchers consider the impact that solutions can have on Black communities, especially regarding carceral systems; 2- builds a holistic design that focuses on community, healing, joy, and rest; and 3- prompts individuals to apply an intersectional lens when designing a critical problem. Designing through a Healing Justice lens recognizes that technology design will continue to perpetuate white supremacy unless it addresses the collective trauma impacting Black and Brown communities. We use Healing Justice as an extension of Afrofuturist and Black Feminist scholarship within HCI to allow participants to reimagine community safety.

Afrofuturism and Black Feminism allow marginalized communities to think critically about the past, present, and future in designing for wicked problems like policing. Mark Dery coined *'Afrofuturism'* to describe Black Science Fiction writers developing futures that centered around Blackness [25]. Scholars and practitioners have pushed the term beyond Dery's original conception to envision not just livable but radical existences among Black and Brown communities in present and future[15]. This term is an epistemology and aesthetic implemented in literature, arts, digital media, and, more recently, a framework engaged by HCI scholars. HCI scholars such as Winchester, Harrington, Bray, O'Leary, Dando, and others use Afrofuturism as a lens to help envision systems and tools where all Black people are free from harm [10, 23, 36, 60, 63]. Scholars argue that not only is Afrofuturism a valuable design lens that may lead to more empathetic and inclusive engagements around technology [62, 63], but that theoretical frameworks such as Black feminism, and even ***'Afrofuturist feminism'*** should be critical underpinnings of the ways we implement Afrofuturism in design [39]. HCI scholars such as Rankin, Irish, Thomas, and Erete have used Black feminism to design critical tools that center Black women in the design and consideration of technology and research practices [28, 29, 52, 53]. Thus pushing forward inclusive design frameworks for marginalized communities that consider new existences of justice, healing and joy must also contend with tenets of Afrofuturism, Black feminism, and Afrofuturist feminism.

Humanities scholar Susana M. Morris first introduced 'Afrofuturist Feminism' to describe the intersections of Black Feminism and Afrofuturism in combating white supremacy, violence, survival, oppression, family structures, and other elements [49, 50]. Methods of Afrofuturist Feminism consist of creating parallel feminist universes, remixing dominant future discourse, and are not utopias but shaped by feminist principles and actions [49]. Afrofuturist Feminism 'is' Black livability. When applied to design, a Healing Justice framework extends Afrofuturist Feminism by tackling systemic racism, generational traumas, violence, and other inequities. To explore this framework and its potential for design, we conducted a series of design workshops with 10 Black Americans across the United States. Our workshops found that methods of Afrofuturist Feminism in a Healing Justice framework fueled participants to envision community safety outside of racist and ableist policing practices, and instead grounded in healing for the present. Our research makes the following contributions: 1- design workshops that apply Healing Justice to design interventions focused on policing in the United States, and 2- an application of considering Black joy in design, amplifying previous HCI literature [38, 51]. Healing Justice provides design interventions in technology design that have the potential to combat systemic oppression like policing. Throughout this paper, we argue for more design-based research that centers on practices of joy and healing in creating futures that are not trauma or violence stricken.

2 RELATED WORK

In answering our three critical questions around Healing Justice and Afrofuturist Feminism, we looked to prior HCI literature that centers around marginalized communities creating tools that offer joy and healing. The literature is pulled from three relevant areas: *Designing for Civic Engagement*, *Afrofuturism in HCI*, and *Healing Justice and Tenets of Joy*.

2.1 Designing for Civic Engagement

Designing for civic engagement has explored various aspects of citizen and community participation to empower people to take part in shaping their societal conditions and environments. Literature in HCI includes designing for people's relationship between government and public tools to designing technology for local citizens [16, 35, 37, 40]. Harding et. al. define *civic engagement* as "an individual or collective action designed to identify or address a particular public concern such as urban maintenance that includes activities from refuse collection, upkeep of social housing, flood risk management through to highway repair" [35]. Traditional approaches to designing for civic engagement draw from principles of community design and participatory or action-based research structures [2–4]. However, research studies have found that these processes can also be tools of inequities and limit access to marginalized groups in the relationship between designer and community. Harrington, Erete, and Piper provide a series of case studies on Black and Hispanic communities where these practices have been a form of exclusion [37], stating "certain methods, such as the design workshop, or approaches to design thinking (e.g., 'blue sky' ideation) have an ethos that can be exclusionary to communities

that have historically faced systemic discrimination" [37]. Nontraditional approaches to civic engagement push for inclusion in the research process. *Design Justice* and *Creative Reaction Lab* are a few groups that view research participants as the experts [37]. Similarly, Le Dantec and Fox argue that the core of civic engagement is the work done prior to the beginning of the research which requires relationship building [32, 46]. Through relationship building, the community and designers work on tailoring the research plan to the community's needs creating trust in the process.

Prefigurative design, as used by Asad, is a critical approach that looks to decolonizing participatory research methods that uses principles like anarchism and social activism as methods that offer insight on ways to critically engage with communities [3]. Asad defines prefigurative design as "design work oriented in service of progressive political goals to both represent these goals as design objects, and also structure design processes to try to actualize these goals...prefigurative design prompts practitioners and researchers to both imagine alternative futures and to structure design processes to manifest them in the present" [3]. Nontraditional and decolonized approaches to designing for civic engagement focus on the community in determining interventions, steps away from traditional action-based and participatory research terminology and look to practices and ideology that focus on community. Similarly, 'social justice-oriented interaction design' as defined by Dombrowski et al. suggests a way to engage with "thorny political issues" in ethical and morally responsible ways [27]. It identifies strategies such as designing for enablement which affords individuals to fulfill their potential and to develop their own capacity while creating possibilities for change. There is a common theme among these approaches to designing for civic engagement that call for participation that is not only steeped in equity but also in restorative practices, especially for historically and racially marginalized groups in the United States.

2.2 Afrofuturism in HCI

Case studies of groups engaging with complex political issues may also be seen in the emergence of Afrofuturism in HCI and interaction design methodology [62]. Various scholars contend that frameworks like Afrofuturism allow for a more empathetic engagement with race and political issues in design [36, 62, 63], and thus may have promise for areas of civic engagement. Our understanding of Afrofuturism as a methodological approach comes from cultural theorist Eshun. Eshun states, "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken" [30]. Eshun views Afrofuturism as an intervention that can be molded into a framework, toolkit, principle, grounded in uncovering and reframing Black histories to build equitable futures. HCI practitioner Winchester uses Afrofuturism as a lens for design thinking [62, 63], noting, *"Afrofuturism equips the designer to engage with notions of difference"* [62]. He applies the lens to Black women's wearable health technology by considering the discriminatory practices in the medical field compared to other women. Accounting for those differences, practitioners become mindful of exclusion in technology design [62] but may also be applied to areas of community design. Harrington and Dillahunt build on Winchester's work by exploring the societal inequities faced by Black and LatinX youth in Chicago using Afrofuturism-inspired co-design workshops to examine both participation and constructs of power and inclusion in design work [36]. They discuss that a speculative design approach grounded in Afrofuturism promotes dealing with societal and politically-minded issues.

The use of Afrofuturist concepts also occurs in educational workshops, Dando et. al. used Afrofuturist principles to work with students around STEAM-based learning [23]. The maker space allowed researchers to integrate Afrofuturist principles in the design activities through music, readings, and even classroom set up that encouraged imagination. Similarly, Harrington and Dillahunt apply an Afrofuturist lens to working with students from Chicago in envisioning Black futures [36]. By engaging with Afrofuturist concepts, students could reimagine futures centering Blackness and their community. These studies highlight Afrofuturism's role in inclusive design and speculative futures work. Leaning into Afrofuturist methodologies means approaches and solutions that are community-centered. HCI practitioners have engaged with Afrofuturist literature to gain further insight into these approaches.

Ferri and Gloerich reimagine design fiction through the works of Octavia E. Butler [31]. Butler offers a praxis that pushes against privileged points of view, but as the authors argue, provides a plural viewpoint that would be valuable in HCI and humanities literature. Similarly, Kristen Reynolds calls the literary work of Octavia E. Butler and N.K. Jemisin essential in offering examples of technologically driven futures grounded in Blackness [54]. Reynolds, Ferri, Gloerich, and other HCI practitioners [31, 54, 56] focus on how Afrofuturist literature offers critical components that combat anti-Blackness in design strategies, an alternative to current speculative design that is often rooted in whiteness. Similar to Bardzell's call for a community of practice around feminist thoughts and ideas [6, 7], Morris defines Afrofuturist Feminism as situating transgressive, feminist practices as key to a progressive future. In *Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's "Fledgling"* Morris highlights that Afrofuturism is "an epistomology that both examines the current problems faced by Black and people of color more generally and critiques interpretations of the past and future" [49]. Other scholars suggest that Afrofuturist feminism is about imagining beyond the systems of oppression of which they are currently bound [45]. Tapping into Afrofuturist Feminism is anchored in Black lived experiences that push for resiliency against white supremacy.

Afrofuturist Feminism works at the intersection of Black Feminism and Afrofuturism in tackling systems of white supremacy in technology design [49, 50]. The tenets of Afrofuturist Feminism are: 1- systems of power centering around the most marginalized, 2- pulls from rest, liberation, pleasure, and joy to envision equitable technology, 3- becomes integral in part of the design process by challenging the designer and researcher to re frame questions about the impact of output on community. Afrofuturism becomes more than a cultural production but a praxis for designing equitable futures centered around joy and healing.

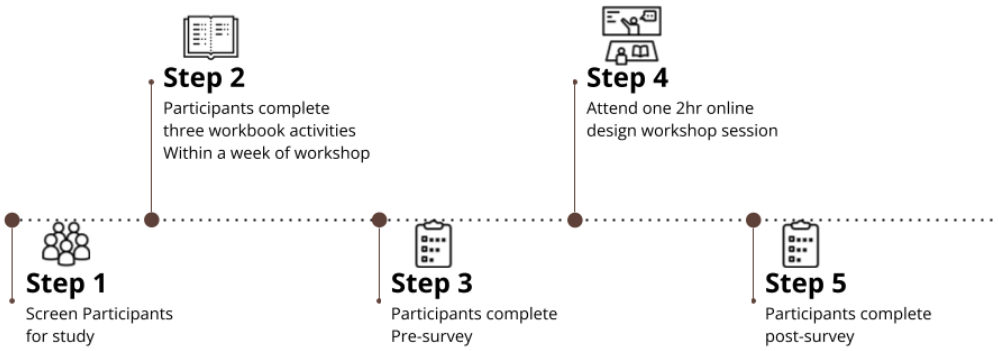

Figure 1: Our study procedure

2.3 Healing Justice and Tenets of Joy

Black and Brown communities experience trauma and violence from practices like policing. The Healing Justice framework addresses the root of trauma and violence through techniques like tenets of joy that counter these experiences. Healing Justice and tenets of joy is a current untapped research area in HCI. Recent HCI research looks at self-healing and self-preparedness in computerized systems [9]. When scholars like Goldenberg or Hillman address joy, it centers around computer science education or technology design. Goldenberg et. al. offer a study on a computer science education curriculum centered around joy in design principles [33]. They state, "beauty and joy: helping students recognize, respect, grow, and enjoy their logic and creativity in CS. The aesthetic of programming is not just in its products; programs, themselves, can have intellectual beauty" [33]. Through this example, the tenet of joy is shown through tapping into creativity and other areas of untapped potential [9, 42]. The term is often used to describe creating a sense of pleasure on a technological device or experience. Joy also shows up in how researchers study the interface experience. From understanding how eCommerce users find and navigate joy online to intensifying moments of pleasure on digital interfaces [33, 42]. However, Healing Justice is often found across social movements (i.e., disability justice, movement for Black Lives, gay rights, etc.).

The recent article from Harrington and colleagues titled "Designing for the Black Experience" argues that HCI research needs to engage with Black communities outside of areas of trauma-stricken ideals but centering joy, happiness, and love [38]. Two tenets of joy are identified through scholarship around Black and African American identity in the United States. First is pleasure grounded in Black Feminist scholarship from writers such as Audre Lorde, adrienne maree brown, L.H. Stallings, and Joan Morgan [12, 47, 48, 59]. They collectively argue that pleasure is reclaiming our satisfiable selves against oppression or supremacy; it goes beyond sexual desire. In "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," Black lesbian writer Audre Lorde states, "As we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society" [47]. Lorde describes that once an individual truly recognizes pleasure for themselves, they no longer fill the need to conform to a life that does not bring or offer joy. Pleasure becomes a form of Healing Justice because you do what feels good, not what society expects.

The second tenet of joy is collective memory as a tool to reimagine futures. Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective writes about the importance of collective memory in creating joyful moments for our future. They state, "everything we want to change in the world around us also exists right here in our bodies. We carry the histories of our people's trauma and our struggles. They are here, both strengthening us with what they have taught us and also holding us back as our fears, anxieties and survival strategies keep us away from the things that could most support our liberation" [44]. Memories are often passed down to generations through oral or written histories. They become ingrained in how we move about the world. Kindred acknowledges within that statement the multilayered impact that these systems have on communities and individuals. HCI needs more research grounded in a praxis of Healing Justice and joy beyond technological devices but centers around communities.

Designing for Civic Engagement, *Afrofuturism in HCI*, and *Healing Justice and Tenets of Joy* introduce decolonized research approaches among HCI literature. Civic engagement offers a framework on how to center community interventions and activism. Afrofuturism considers past and present differences in designing for change. The core of civic engagement and Afrofuturism is the desire to live in a

community that provides joy and not trauma-stricken experiences. The literature from the related works was foundational in building a study that focused on healing from generational trauma and violence. The solutions fostered healing and joy by anchoring the study in community-driven approaches.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Overview and Participants

Our study sought to understand the main attributes and features of tools tackling trauma (like policing) and how Healing Justice as an extension of Afrofuturist Feminism can guide interventions that center healing and Black joy. The study occurred virtually due to COVID-19 from February to April 2021. The virtual format allowed us to gain insight into Healing Justice as a design intervention and build a research environment that fostered creativity through workbook activities, workshops, and surveys (See Figure 1).

The format was meant to follow the structure transformative justice organizers use when developing community-based strategies around safety [26]. To identify participants for this study, we deployed a screening survey among social media, friends, family, and grassroots organizations focused on voting rights and Black Lives Matter initiatives. The screener allowed us to gauge time commitment, comfortability discussing police brutality, and willingness to share personal experiences. From those initial screenings, 10 participants completed the study and received a compensation of 50 dollars. Work by Ambe et al. [1] suggests that there is value in gathering rich qualitative data from a smaller sample size, specifically when this group is typically harder to recruit in academic research. Participant demographic information was collected during the workshop and survey (see Table 1). All participants reported as Black or African American. Participants' age was not collected; however, to complete the study individuals had to be 18 years or older. There was a range of professions represented, with many of our participants identifying as a being a student. In the following sections we provide an overview and details of the workshop components.

3.2 Design Workbook and Activities

To answer the questions around designing tools for healing from policing, we developed a design workbook that participants were given a week before the design workshop that consisted of reading materials and three activities (See Figure 2).

The workbook consisted of three design activities, definitions (on 'Blackness', 'Queerness', 'Black Lives Matter', 'Disabilities', 'Design Process', and 'Healing Justice'), and reading excerpts (from Octavia E. Butler's *Parable Series*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Nikki Giovanni's 'Legacies', Tricia Hersey's *The Nap Ministry*, Victoria Dugger 'Out of Body', and Leiomy Maldonado's poem 'Be True'). The definitions and readings introduced participants to key ideas and terms used throughout the study. More importantly, with the addition of the activities, the workbook's design sought to help participants generate ideas and solutions to address policing and community safety.

In the spirit of Afrofuturist Feminism, the design activities focused on the past, present, and future. Figure 4 provides examples of three participants' engagement with the activities. The first activity

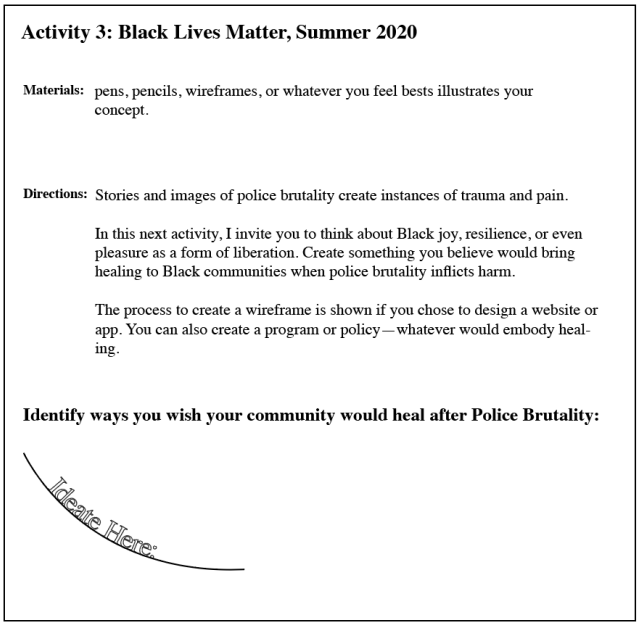

Figure 2: The final page of the design workbook featured a mediation page on the left and the third activity on designing a tool or program that centers joy and healing after a traumatic experience like policing.

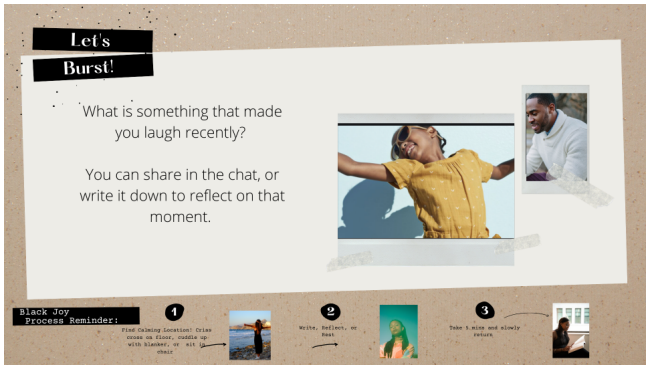

Figure 3: Reflection slide from the workshop called 'Black joy bursts' moments, participants stopped discussing policing and centered on healing through relaxation.

grounded in the past had participants design a storyboard retelling their experience with the Black Lives Matter protest of summer 2020. The present prompt invited individuals to create a program or digital tool that could bring healing or joy to a community in response to traumatic experiences. Last, we asked participants to consider how the pandemic and policing would impact the near future (or year 2025) through creating a collage.

Participant ID	Gender	Age Range	Location	Profession
P1	Female	18–24	Atlanta, GA	Student
P2	Female	25–34	Richmond,VA	Researcher
P3	Female	25–34	Atlanta, GA	Designer
P4	Female	25–34	Atlanta, GA	Content Creator
P5	Male	18–24	Atlanta, GA	Student
P6	Female	18–24	Baltimore, MD	Law Student
P7	Male	18–24	Atlanta, GA	Student
P8	Female	25–34	Tampa,FL	Student
P9	Female	18–24	Atlanta, GA	Student
P10	Female	25–34	Tampa, FL	Paralegal

Table 1: Key demographics of participants.

3.3 Workshops

The ten participants were split into an average of three groups across three two-hour design workshops. We incorporated Healing Justice in the workshop through reflections, meditations, and moments of rest that allowed participants to express joy, grief, and rage. The practice of Healing Justice gave participants a safe space to discuss the impact of traumas like policing and the ways healing could be integrated in their daily life. Workshop activities incorporated a Healing Justice approach and integrated breaks and group reflections. We started the workshop with an ice breaker where individuals shared names, pronouns, and Emoji or GIF representing their current mood. Figure 3 is an example of these workshop reflections. After introductions, for the first half of the workshops participants reflected and shared what they had created during the self-guided design workbook. The second half of the workshops, individuals were split into groups where they redid the last design workbook activity. By redoing the activity collaboratively, participants were able to apply Healing Justice to design solutions that tackled policing by centering joy.

Given the weight of topics like policing and systematic racism, it was crucial that we build in breaks between activities. We curated moments called *'Black joy bursts'* where we invited participants to get in a comfortable chair or space to share thoughts aloud or in the chat. Prompts were given related to recent moments that made individuals laugh or feel good. At the end of the workshop, each participant was given a guided mediation around Healing Justice and Afrofuturist Feminism.

3.4 Pre and Post Survey

Participants also completed a pre- and post-survey after the self-guided design activities and workshop sessions. The pre-survey goal was to gauge how individuals incorporated Black joy and healing elements from lived experiences into the solutions. The survey asked five questions to gain those insights, which included: the process of using the workbook, the solutions created for policing, the impact of solutions on Black communities, Black joy in their answer, and how their experiences of policing influenced or impacted the guide. After participants completed the workshop and group design activities, they met a post-workshop survey. The purpose of the post-survey was to see how the group conversations during the design workshop impacted or changed the solution and to see if the introduction of the framework Afrofuturist Feminism offered as a critical approach to the users. The main difference in the surveys was we reworked three questions to focus on the effectiveness of Afrofuturist Feminism principles and Healing Justice, using those principles for issues on policing and applying these principles to problems like gentrification.

3.5 Data Analysis

The workshops were held on Microsoft Teams which allowed the research team to use the recording and transcription features of the app. We collected survey data, audio recordings of workshop, and participant design activities. Recordings were transcribed manually by one of the authors for clarity and annotated to identify critical thoughts among the research team. The initial research team (author 1 and 3) analyzed the surveys, design activities, workshop conversations, and group activities. Authors 1 and 3 were able to reflect on the data from their own personal experiences as Black women living in the southeastern United States and familiar with the policing structures and experiences of many participants in the workshops. These experiences allowed a multi-layered reflection on the participants' personal experience. We used an inductive process that identified essential terms and methods mentioned across these tools, as defined by Irving Seidman and John W. Creswell [21, 55]. The terms were selected if an average number of participants (four or more) mentioned the terms to help limit our own bias or projections. The remainder of our research team (Authors 2 and 4) then analyzed the themes that emerged. The entire research team discussed the findings and revisited notes from the workshop to help address confirmation bias as well.

We identified the following terms: defunding, abolishment, mutual aids, self-care, Black joy, lived experiences, legislation, Black community, memories, social media, news outlets, corporations, boundaries, trauma, racism, COVID-19, mandates, grief, policing, education, Black Lives Matter, riots, protests, and hopelessness. The order of the terms is not significant, but in the findings section we focus on four of these subsets because they afforded the greatest insight.

4 FINDINGS

Our analysis incorporates pre/post surveys, workbook activities, and workshop materials. This analysis identified four themes: 1-

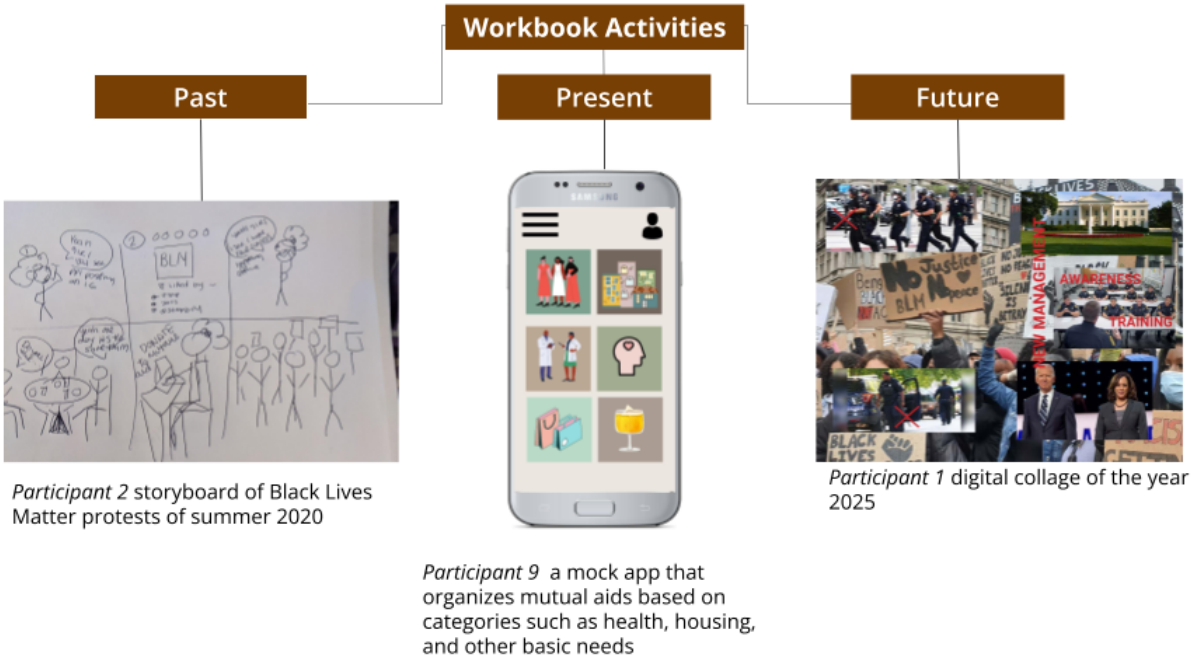

Figure 4: A visual representation of the three design workbook activities a few participants completed.

Defunding and Abolishment of Police; 2- *Boundaries as an Act of Self Care*, 3- *Creating Black Joy after Trauma*; and 4- *Lived Experiences Impacted Designs*. The themes correlate to the critical questions we sought to answer at the beginning of the study. Defunding, abolishment, and lived experiences mapped onto the attributes and features of tools that help Black communities heal after trauma. The section on Black joy and boundaries correlate to our second research question centered on Black joy as a tool for healing. Each of these sections touch on methods of Healing Justice and Afrofuturist Feminism across the study.

The workshop sessions led participants to create a 'Healing Justice block party' inspired by Beyoncé's[1] performance at the Coachella music festival, designing a neighborhood app for Black and Brown parents, rethinking community policing, and offering both legal and grief services to families who experienced police brutality. The study and findings illustrate the difficulties of creating tools for healing when harm has been caused by a dominant system or institution such as policing in the United States.

4.1 Defunding and Abolishment of Police

Defunding and abolishment of the police was a Healing Justice solution for some participants. Four of the ten participants were vocal about the complete abolishment of the police. The remaining participants believed a form of defunding police should occur. Because of this, our first workbook activity on envisioning the year 2025 through a collage was challenging for participants; a few shared the following:

> *"Some challenges I found were thinking about a world without police brutality and envisioning its form. That is what we as Black people fight for every day, but it seems like sometimes it's such a far-fetched idea, and thinking about it is harder than I thought it would be."* -Participant 6

Individuals like Participant 6 felt that inaction from the government on policing made thinking about change in the United States difficult. In figure 5 Participant 1 and Participant 2 created collages on the year 2025 that show legislation and grassroots approaches central in tackling policing. Participant 2 expanded by sharing,

> *"I am not sure I could come up with solutions. I think by 2025, there will be legislation that gets us closer to our goal of no police brutality but I think about protests, mutual aid, and being able to have these conversations with family members and activism online as being critical too."* -Participant 2

These participant quotes describe the challenges that occurred when imagining a present and future society with no policing. However, they also called out how mutual aid, community conversations, and activism online were critical in addressing systemic racism. For some participants, defunding the police and community-based safety practices were the start to creating a world with no

[1]Black American Singer, Song-Writer, Actor, and Dancer

Figure 5: Collage activities from Participant 1 and Participant 2 that shows their perceptions of the year 2025

police. During the group activity of the workshop session, Participants 6 and 7 proposed community policing and self-sufficiency in Black and Brown communities. Participant 7 suggested a solution where officers were required to live in the neighborhood to build community relationships. Although, there was some push back from the other member on the effectiveness of community policing they came to a consensus.

> *"By returning to community policing, you have officers who are less likely to use force against the people they know in the community."* -Participant 6

The participants felt that police living in communities would help build relationships with folks causing more connections and less chance for misuse of power. Participants also believed that programming that created self-sufficiency among Black and Brown communities was needed in addition to community policing. Participants 6 and 7 define self-sufficiency as providing communities with community-based resources that support veterans, food, mental health, job, and educational services that rely on methods outside of the government. The group looked to the Black Panthers free breakfast program, which ran from 1969 to 1980, as community programming [19, 58]. The technology component would be an app that would provide a list of mutual aid and community resources to address specific problems. 'Defunding' for the group meant refocusing on community care and redirecting it to creating community programming that limits harm by offering resources. A majority of the participants felt that to truly address policing it means tackling the institutional structure.

> *"We also need to attack the root and slowly make our way to eradicating the system that creates and allows the problems to exist."* -Participant 1

Like Participant 1, Participant 6 felt that addressing the root of the problem started with centering the needs of socially marginal individuals: *"All I could really think of is defunding of the police and more mental health resources."* -Participant 6. The practice of 'defunding' and 'abolishment' were steps that participants believed would eradicate these systems.

4.2 Boundaries as an Act of Self-Care

The second finding was that boundaries were not only a form of Healing Justice but an act of self-care in individuals' daily lives. All participants were unfamiliar with the term 'Healing Justice'; many assumed the word was whitewashed and had no grounding in protests movements like Black Lives Matter. Once we described the word in the workshop, participants then provided examples of creating boundaries among coworkers, friends, family, and others. In the storyboard workbook activity, Participant 3 reflected on a conversation she had around the Black Lives Matter protests in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that led to riots in the community after the death of George Floyd:

> *"The night of the riots, I had an associate post that she doesn't understand why they are rioting. She proceeded to call the rioters stupid amongst other names. As someone who has not shown this ignorance before, I was shocked and proceeded to explain to her the death that just happened and why the Black community was tired. I also showed in history dating back to the French revolution as to how riots were the start of a new system. This back and forth happened for some hours, when I realized that she didn't want to understand and had made up her mind that a random Target was far more valuable than the lives and voices of Black people."* - Participant 3

Participant 3 highlighted the difficult conversations that Black people experienced in 2020 and how rage was a valid emotional response to police brutality. In the workshop, Participant 3 elaborated further by sharing that she eventually blocked the person due to their unwillingness and desire to hear the truth which led to a form of self-healing. The majority of the participants resonated with Participant 3 giving a variety of ways they set boundaries. Some examples of setting boundaries were muting negative conversations toward protesters and rioters, unfollowing certain news outlets, and taking breaks from social media. This boundary setting also caused a form of guilt among a few participants, in a candid conversation between Participant 6 and Participant 7 during the workshop they shared the following exchange:

> *"Personally, I don't think there's a select method, I just give myself a break period from seeing it cause it's so much to see, especially when like the protest and Floyd and then the young man that happened here in Atlanta, Georgia like seeing it day after day and repeat after repeat. I definitely put my phone down or turn off the TV for a while just to...You know, breath basically."* - Participant 7

Participant 6 also expressed a similar sentiment:

> *"Yeah, I think that's so important too, like setting boundaries with the media. At the start of summer 2020, I was involved 100 percent, I was posting, posting, and posting. I even went to a protest like I was just really heavily involved. It definitely got overwhelming and it was draining so I had to take a step back from social media and just. Focus on myself, but I don't know. I felt guilty doing it."* -Participant 6

For Participants 6 and 7, social media and the twenty-four-hour news cycle made reports on police brutality overwhelming. Stepping away from these media outlets brought a temporary feeling of peace. Although some individuals expressed a form of guilt, everyone felt that self-care and healing was extremely important when tackling systemic racism. During the last group study session, three of the ten participants discussed the difficulties of incorporating self-care when doing emotionally exhausting labor. Participant 10 shared that self-care was important and that they had to define it for themselves outside of how capitalism or generational trauma had influenced the process. In response Participant 8 shared the desire to not only create a form of Healing Justice that was personal self-care but collective care against burnout and other forms of guilt. They also reiterated that in forming boundaries it was also important to remove forms of guilt and define self-care individually.

Setting boundaries toward relationships and the media also meant for some participants not to rely on technology that negatively impacts Black communities. One of the groups applied the concept of boundaries to the Nextdoor app, a social media platform for neighborhoods. The app is known to racially profile Black and Brown people by allowing racially insensitive posts to community moderators, silencing posts of Black people [5, 43]. Even though Nextdoor had well-meaning intentions, forms of racism have been ingrained. The group's project was a neighborhood app catered toward Black and Brown parents and families funded through mutual aids. The app would address bias and surveillance by using a hybrid of algorithms and human moderators to filter out inappropriate conversations. Although they did not create a mock app, they did discuss the interface as having similar features to Twitter from organizing content chronologically, being mobile-friendly, and limiting the number of characters on posted content. The focus of the project was to counter the surveillance of Black and Brown children by developing an app focused on their well-being and safety. Boundaries in the solution occurred through filtering conversations that do not perpetuate bias and rejecting stereotypes fueled by these platforms. Through the project and discussions, it was a consistent theme that boundaries provided an act of self-care and Healing Justice that tackled systemic racism by saying 'no'.

4.3 Creating Black Joy after Trauma

Participants suggested that when designing for Black joy, it should not be linked to traumatic experiences. Participants defined Black joy as healing, community, liberation, freedom without the fear of being threatened or abused, listening to Anita Baker[2], or watching television shows. As described by the Black Youth Project, Black joy is Black people centering joy and healing in their physical and digital lives [22]. The last workbook activity focused on participants developing a solution (i.e., program, app, policy, tool) that brings healing to Black communities after police brutality occurs by incorporating Black joy. Participants found it challenging to visualize joy after painful experiences and shared the following:

> *"I don't have Black joy in my solution because while we can choose to smile through the pain, I think we need to take precise actions to target the problem and find a way to solve it. Then once the issue is gone, we can genuinely have Black joy without being scared for the next victim."* -Participant 1

Participant 4 expressed similar thoughts,

> *"I had a hard time with the last activity in the workbook. It was a confusing question. I didn't understand how to show Black joy after a tragedy. I have seen many communities of color pick themselves up after incidents of police brutality. However, I know that sometimes it is hard."* -Participant 4

Participant 3 discussed the difficulty in designing for Black joy and ways it occurs in digital spaces:

> *"I couldn't come up with a solution, because from my understanding, the act of Black joy on an app or a platform for healing. Black people always make culture wherever we go and have found ways to cope and survive certain situations on any platform we touch. I think it is going to be hard to put all of that on one app."* -Participant 3

Participants 1, 3, and 4 did not believe Black joy could be a response to traumas from police brutality, but instead was liberation or something that arose authentically. For many of the participants, when tragedies like policing occurred, it meant picking oneself up to challenging policing practices; it did not center on healing or joy. Participant 3 noted that the activities fueled pessimism during the workshop, making it challenging to incorporate Black joy as a solution. Participant 9 expressed the limitations of Black joy as a solution in trauma driven experiences.

> *"Black joy looks and feels like a community. I think that Black Twitter was an example that I was building on because of the ways that it offers those a space to share and connect with individuals they might not know. Additionally, I think Black joy is freedom without fear of being threatened or abused I do not think that it specifically targets police brutality as the main goal of the solution."* -Participant 9

For her Black joy was not a solution to these systemic and structural problems but tied directly to creating spaces of freedom and liberation. Participant 10 shared that the journey to cultivate Black joy was difficult, and instead they found themselves reliving moments of trauma. They expounded on these thoughts in the storyboard activity,

> *"I myself struggle with finding joy. I routinely work with local organizers to combat the forces that continue to oppress impoverished communities, often black. I get overwhelmed and I start to shut down. I try to avoid updates on the Derek Chauvin trial but have been devastated by recent police shootings of Daunte Wright and Adam Toledo. I had a stress dream yesterday where I heard the 'not guilty' verdict for Derek Chauvin and broke down and cried. The psychological trauma stays with me even when I try to disengage."* -Participant 10

Participant 10's quote is a reminder that for many Black people it is difficult to find joy when you become inundated with oppressive systems daily. Participant 9 quote also calls out the mental traumas that occur from constantly witnessing systemic racism online. One group set out to design a block party that would cultivate Black

[2]A Black American Singer and Song-Writer

joy and healing. The group was inspired by the 2018 Coachella performance from Beyoncé and the accompanying Netflix special titled *Homecoming* that provided details on the performance. Figure 6 provides a visualization of how the group envisioned meditation experiences, motivational speakers, food, and dancing to center Black joy outside of trauma. For this group in order to cultivate these experiences outside of trauma was through activating moments of Black joy. For all participants Black joy was liberation and not tied to instances of policing or trauma.

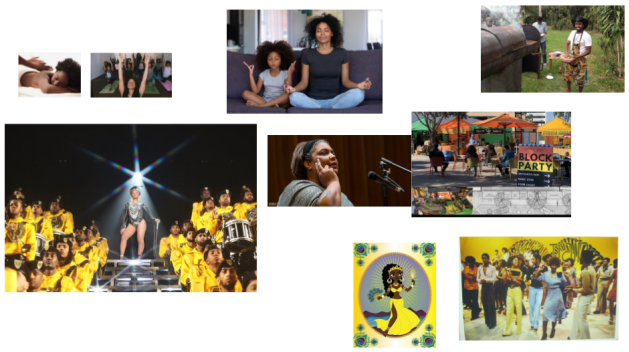

Figure 6: Ideation board created during group activity on a Healing Justice inspired block party

4.4 Lived Experiences Impacted Designs

The fourth finding was that participants' lived experiences as Black or African American impacted the design activities. From daily experiences with systemic racism to countless news stories around discriminatory practices and behaviors permeated many individuals' thoughts around the possibility of solutions. Participants expressed frustrations when colleagues or friends asked them to share their experiences as being Black in America as a tool to educate and create change. During the first workshop, participants expressed this not just as burdensome. They reflected that white people are rarely forced to confront racism or develop solutions to the problems, but it is often left up to Black and Brown communities. A few participants reflected on how being Black impacted their interaction with the study when taking the post-survey: *"recent events have been heavily influential on the way I interacted with this activity and my beliefs."* -Participant 9

The 2020 responses to Black Lives Matter, from lack of government action to company commitments, were a fresh memory to many participants. Participant 2 spoke heavily of relying on grassroots initiatives like a neighborhood safety plan or investing in mutual aid instead of organizations. Their experiences have shaped how they approach movements like Black Lives Matter.

> *"neighborhood demographic changing shifts how to protect and make the community safe without calling the police, relying on neighbors for help especially if everyone has lived there a long time."* -Participant 2

Participant 2, like so many others, looked to community and grassroots organizing as ways to tackle these problems immediately. Participant 5, during the workbook activity, looked to their encounters with police as a Black male in motivating the solution. They stated,

> *"my main plan was for citizen review of police encounters through city/county/state built apps (preferably through a web page so you don't end up with people downloading what could be used as spyware on their phones) that logged date and time, the individuals involved, how they felt about the interaction and the outcome."* -Participant 5

Participant 5 felt that documenting police could help push for legislation to actionable change in policing in the United States. Throughout these workshops many participants pulled on their lived experiences to make for change they wanted in their communities. One group proposed a nonprofit organization to support families that have experienced police brutality. The organization would provide a lawyer and private investigators in response to the incidents. The organization would have three distinct features:

(1) Offer free resources, such as mentors, therapists, lawyers, to help guide the victim's family on how to process and go to court.
(2) Catalog the experiences and recommendations of the families of past victims in articles and media streams
(3) Keep Black and Brown communities informed on the policy changes or non-policy changes at the state and federal level across the United States.

In both solutions, participants looked to their lived experiences as Black in America in building solutions that would work around government and other nonprofit organizations. Our findings not only demonstrate the intricacies of Healing Justice, but the complexities of designing for systemic problems like policing.

5 DISCUSSION

The participant quotes reflect the importance for healing centered design interventions, and the difficulties of grappling with trauma-based problems like policing. Now more than ever we need solutions that seek to tackle the generational trauma and violence that Black and Brown communities are constantly experiencing. In this section we map critical leanings from the project across the three research questions: from the attributes and features that help Black communities heal, to how Black joy can become a tool to heal, and how methods like Healing Justice and Afrofuturist Feminism offer guidance for designing tools that center joy and healing.

5.1 Healing Justice as a Design Intervention

Interactive systems like HunchLab, a predictive policing tool, Ring doorbell cameras, Nextdoor, a social networking site for neighborhoods, and countless other tools are ingrained with algorithmic bias that preys on Black and Brown communities [5, 43, 61]. Researchers argue that although these tools promise safe communities and preventative measures, they enforce racial profiling [43]. Benjamin and Costanza-Chock note that because so much of our algorithms are rooted in the white supremacist and carceral lens, it becomes ingrained in much of our technology design [8, 20]. Data-driven policing is dangerous, especially when innocent Black folks have died from racial bias like Kathryn Johnston in Atlanta, Georgia;

Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky; or Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio. Transforming and designing for community safety starts with a Healing Justice Framework, not racial bias. Black Queer Feminist Charlene Carruthers looks to a Healing Justice framework as a preventative step in addressing trauma and violence [17].

Carruthers notes, "Healing Justice movement works to reclaim the ways our oppressed, surviving communities have always healed, from before colonization to now. Healing Justice is preventive and responsive. It asks us to bring collective practices for healing and transformation into our work" [17]. From our workshops we found that Healing Justice focused on designing interactive systems has several outcomes: 1- developing accountability towards system-perpetuated trauma; 2- centering the lived experiences of Black and Brown communities; 3- building designs that focus on community, healing, joy, and rest; and 4- rejecting carceral design-based solutions or practices.

Healing Justice is not just a framework for policing but can reimagine maternal mortality rates, COVID-19, medical malpractice, housing inequity, and many other design challenges. Healing Justice is a design intervention with many possibilities to transform how design practitioners have built solutions for intricate problem spaces. *Black Womxn Flourish*, a design collective based in Baltimore, Maryland, uses a Healing Justice framework to create tools for the well-being of Black Womxn [13]. Through a community-led design process, the group embodies health practice by centering celebration, trust, collaboration, pleasure, and joy [13]. They have re-imagined the well-being of Black Womxn through meditation, sound healing, breath-work, and other non-western practices as just a few tools [13]. Colonialism and white supremacy are ingrained in policing and thus there is a need to disassociate from these systemic legislation and policies. Healing Justice decolonizes design and creates room for joy and pleasure in the process.

Afrofuturism is a cultural movement that constructs liberatory and equitable futures for all marginalized individuals, and has emerged as a valuable theoretical engagement in HCI and design [36, 62]. Building futures for all requires addressing systemic racism, generational traumas, violence, and other inequities. Thus, engaging with a Healing Justice framework provides practitioners, creators, and others using Afrofuturism to critically consider how to incorporate holistic wellness and community-based safety approaches to enforce accountability among all people.

5.2 Critiques of Afrofuturism

Afrofuturism is not always perfect. Scholar André Brock critiques Afrofuturism for cultural productions that are too utopian and not taking into account how Black people enact joy in technology [11]. Instead, Brock offers a counter to this perspective of *Black technoculture* that centers on how Black life and joy are enacted across technology [11]. We agree with this criticism that the practice of Afrofuturism should be centered on current Black technological production.

By applying an Afrofuturist Feminism approach, we accounted for these criticisms. Afrofuturist Feminism draws from the intersections of Afrofuturism and Black Feminism. Rankin and Irish note that Black Feminist Thought in HCI, especially in game design [53], "disrupts design approaches because it centers Black women as the focal point while pushing against Whiteness and White supremacy" given the intersection of race and gender that shape Black women's lives. Afrofuturist Feminism similar to the application of Black Feminist Thought, Feminism and social justice in HCI explicitly call out intersecting systems of power, more explicitly those that deter marginalized populations from participating in technology design and its ownership [6, 27, 53]. Afrofuturist Feminism pulls from identity politics, lived experiences, power, and Black futures scholarship [49, 50]. As seen in our findings, although participants experienced challenges with imagining near futures due to historical experiences with traumas or violence from police, tenets of Afrofuturist Feminism allowed for a creative reimagining of what it means to center joy in imagining beyond current societal circumstances.

5.3 Afrofuturist Feminism Design Activities

As we described earlier, the participant workbooks included a range of materials and resources from definitions to readings, examples, and even design activities. Throughout the post-survey and sessions, individuals expressed difficulty parsing through complex materials. Five of the 10 participants chose to draw or use other forms of communication outside of writing, which correlated to an individual's time. Materials should be concise and offer more room for reflection and abolitionist visioning. Author Marc Lamont Hill defines an abolitionist vision in *We Still Here: Pandemic, Policing, Protest, and Possibility*. Hill states, "an abolitionist vision is about more than dismantling the prison. It is about building a world where we work together to meet each other's needs, a world in which every living being has access to safety, self-determination, freedom, and dignity" [41]. Hill's statement provides an example of how projects around policing and protests should be grounded in collectivism.

Conducting research projects around topics like policing requires studies that offer collective research spaces. Conciseness is essential when introducing new terms or ideas and describing concepts like Afrofuturist Feminism and Healing Justice in workshops. For future studies, the information will need to be more easily accessible to allow participants to think expansively about such concepts as they relate to Black Futures and safety. When developing content for workshops, it is essential to ensure that content is concise and will enable individuals to be their whole creative selves without many restrictions. This desire to create materials that will allow individuals to be their true abolitionist selves also requires more HCI research grounded in joy and building equitable futures.

5.4 Black Joy as a Design Practice

There is also a critical need to disconnect trauma from our research practice and perhaps steer towards joy and pleasure when contextualizing experiences of historically marginalized groups [38]. Harrington and Dillahunt's paper, "Eliciting Tech Futures Among Black Young Adults: A Case Study of Remote Speculative Co-Design", noticed that participants' design futures rarely incorporated themes of Black joy and instead hinged on trauma, inequities, and disparities [36]. This study established that youth derived speculative futures from their current experiences of being Black and Hispanic in a city that has historically experienced oppression and had a historically tumultuous relationship with law enforcement. Although

utopian in form, these futures and the technologies that accompanied them still incorporated dystopian elements. Participants of these workshops discusses many of the multi-layered problems of policing in their environment, but discussed wanting to exist and imagine futures where these were not constant. Similarly, from our design workshops we found that the community Block party that was inspired by Beyoncé's 2018 Coachella performance acted as a tool of joy and healing. The group visualized a community party with meditations and relaxation areas, motivational speakers like Roxanne Gay, barbecue, and dancing. Their solutions illustrate that *tools* for Healing Justice do not have to be reliant on technology. In the block party example, healing was apparent in the act of having a community celebration that would create moments of joy, relaxation, motivation, and self- care. Workshop attendees demonstrated that Healing Justice could be imagined through programming and centering joy around the neighborhood. Black joy visualized in design was community put into practice. During the workshop, we had periods of reflection where it was time to counter discussions with joy. We started the sessions with prompts like "what brings you laughter?". Participants felt comfortable sharing videos, images, and even personal stories that felt joyful and were critical about the ways we build and design joy.

After completion of our study participants were not just compensated financially, but everyone received a specialized ten-minute guided meditation on Black joy recorded by *Black Joy Yoga* founded by Ciera Lewis, a group that centers on rest and healing. These practices were our way of centering Black joy throughout the practice, in more in-person workshops we would have worked at ingraining these moments within the study. If more studies are seeking to design around joy there needs to be less focus on traumatic experiences and more ways to fuel periods of joy including the format and actual questions of the study.

The literature on Civic Engagement, Afrofuturism, and Healing Justice was foundational in building a study that tackled these racially systemic issues. As more researchers engage with Healing Justice and joy centered on Black communities, producing workshop materials that allow participants' fluidity and expression is critical. Findings from the co-design workshops and workbooks were critical in addressing our research questions and gaps in previous literature in the field. First, although concepts like Healing Justice or Afrofuturist Feminism were unfamiliar and needed to be concise, participants were already engaging in these concepts throughout their lives. Second, Black joy should not be linked directly to experiences of trauma but give participants room to apply these concepts organically. Last, tenets of joy are untapped areas in HCI literature; therefore, work around self-advocacy provides a start to the field.

5.5 Self-Advocacy as a Tenet of Joy

Although there is little research around Healing Justice and the tenets of joy, work on self-advocacy offers a practical starting point to building out this literature. Defined as representing a person's views or interests [24], it can also act as a form of pleasure or joy. Two pieces of HCI literature offer foundational insight on self-advocacy as a tenet of joy. First is the term *Celebratory Technology* introduced by Andrea Grimes Parker in describing new research directions around food [34]. The term can be extrapolated to not just focus on food, but creativity and pleasure are essential components in the forming of technology.

Similarly, Le Dantec and Asad explore self-advocacy among cyclists around the city of Atlanta [4]. They found that the cyclists were not only describing bicycling as a form of joy and well-being, but advocacy also meant they were able to offer suggestions and insights on the city's infrastructure in terms of biking [4]. The process of self-advocacy can be seen as making way for new possibilities and shaping change. Throughout, the study individuals shared how self-advocacy for Black Lives took place in classrooms, work, online and other environments. Black Feminists Charlene Carruthers and adrienne maree brown describe these actions as not only creating room for possibilities but making way among systems and places that countless ignore you due to perceptions and beliefs [12, 17]. By collectively advocating for a community or oneself, joy is formed by envisioning a future where you see yourself liberated.

It is also of importance to note that our analysis did not consider the socioeconomic status of participants. The decision not to collect or analyze this data was made due to the authors considering how experiences with racial bias among Black Americans and police does not hinge on income or class as seen with the deaths of Botham Jean in Dallas, Texas and Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio. Healing Justice is a framework rooted in economic justice which suggests that people should have have access to a creative and productive life beyond their economics [18], thus we did not choose to identify or define workshop participants by their economic status in order to acknowledge their humanity and the need for this work beyond a damage-centered lens.

6 CONCLUSION

The study set out to understand the attributes and features of tools that help Black communities heal from police brutality. The design workshops and workbooks incorporated methods of Healing Justice as an extension of Afrofuturist Feminism to help facilitate these conversations. The study revealed that research around joy and healing are areas of potential within the field of HCI. We found that design solutions for traumatic situations rarely incorporate joy as a theme and that lived experiences play a critical part in what individuals deem as possible. Four themes were consistent among the participants 1- Defunding and abolishing police as a design solution; 2- Boundaries as an act of self-care; 3- Black joy outside of trauma; and 4- Lived experiences impacted designs. We argue that Healing Justice and Afrofuturist Feminism are essential methods in creating workshops and workbooks tackling systemic and institutional structures and Black joy should not be tied directly to traumatic experiences, but instead given room to form organically. As designers seek to create interventions to complex problems like policing, we need more approaches that work through a Healing Justice framework.

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