

**In the Wake of The Quiet Hours: A Community
Ritual on Grief, Dying, Passages, Leaving, Displacement, Perseverance,
Preservation, Learning and Loving**

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Paying homage to black funerary practices; artist and professor Angela Hennessy and The Oakland Peace Center's Artist-In-Residence Marvin K. White, hosts free community grieving and performance rituals.

A black boy is not a broken bottle.
A black boy is not a unlucky cat.
A black boy is not a bus stop.
A black boy is not an ant colony.

In the midst of displacement and gentrification, historically black funeral homes rarely close. In fact, large funeral conglomerates are buying up historically black-owned funeral homes. Black people have always sat with the dead, have always meditated on death as we mourned the loss of loved ones and community folk. And now it's a get-rich-quick scheme.

A black boy is a powder keg.
A black boy is a revolution.
A black boy is a sister city.
A black boy is not a puddle.

In the Wake of The Quiet Hours... is a monthly, site-specific community container and grief ritual. It is now more important than ever to hold space for our collective grief, disbelief and fear. "The last one", the last shooting of an unarmed black person, the last killing of a black or brown trans woman, the last young woman forced into sex trafficking, was not "the last one".

A black boy is not a snapped tree.
A black boy is not a flash flood.
A black boy is not a run over skunk.
A black boy is not a Newport.

The "Quiet Hours" are facilitator-led meditations, conversations, and rituals that collect the grief that the people in Oakland carry, gives space for it to be spoken, whispered, cried, broken and learn from it. We offer those in attendance, a "Quiet Hour" (silent meditation centering on the attendees historic and contemporary, past and present, deaths, passages, and losses. We then move into the "Wake", where those gathered read the names of their dead that they are carrying with them and introduce them to the other people's dead that they carry with them. Mothers, fathers, friends, victims 400 miles away and 400 years ago have all been brought in. The evening concludes with the "Visitation", where storytelling about the names entered into record become transformed into lessons and strategies of survival, resilience and love.

*A black boy is not spearmint gum.
A black boy is not a briquette.
A black boy is not a double yellow line.
A black boy is not a dropped grocery bag.*

With the proliferation of images, videos and livestreamed killings of black people, and the ways that marginalized people have been forced to witness the killings, our communities have always had to have meditation practices to move the fear, anger, rage, grief, tears and distrust, through our bodies. We have always known how to meditate because there has always been the killing of black people.

*A black boy is not folk art.
A black boy is not a cast shadow.
A black boy is not motor oil.
A black boy is not a "Candy Gold" Camaro's donuts.*

In the Wake of The Quiet Hours... is where we gather, where we sit sangha with death, where we embrace the living, and where we leave a little more aligned and reconciled in our bodies, after having lived with and under various oppressions. We know that in front of grief, as well as going through grief, and ultimately coming out of grief, that there is joy. If the community becomes a "wake", then it speaks to itself a vigilance that we have always needed and called upon. We sit with the dead but we listen for joy. We sit to hear what lessons were on their lips as the living became the bullet's dead.

*A black boy is not hopscotch.
A black boy is not a Coors can.
A black boy is not sunflower seeds.*

A black boy is not a telephone pole.

This, first of its kind community grief ritual, is a “community mind renewal” practice, and it, through the meditations that are created, allow for the din of violence that is anti-black, anti-woman, anti-lgbt, anti-immigrant, anti-homeless, and anti-religious, to be blocked out, for several hours, so that we remember that we are here, alive, breathing, surviving, possible, and thriving.

A black boy is not a fire hydrant.

A black boy is not a manhole.

A black boy is not an altar call.

A black boy is not a god.

In the Wake of The Quiet Hours are held monthly at the Oakland Peace Center. They could be as easily held in the busy historic black funeral homes of East and North Oakland. While there is no body, we are mourning the loss of our lives and livelihoods by displacement, state violence, poverty, racism, white supremacy, ageism, homophobia and misogyny, our feelings of belonging here. And depending on the wisdom in the room we will also provide to each other resources for how people can engage in resurrection practices: engaging in renters’ rights campaigns, collaborating with organizations and community spiritual, social justice & creative activators addressing HIV/AIDS in the Black community, joy in the black community, senior housing access work, organizing, dignity, access, and equity.

Marvin K. White, MDiv, is a graduate of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. He is currently the Artist in Residence at the Oakland Peace Center. He was the Public Theologian in Residence ('17-'18) at First Church Berkeley and a recent Yerba Buena Center for the Arts “Equity” Fellow ('16-'17). He is the author of four collections of poetry: *Our Name Be Witness*; *Status*; and the two Lammy-nominated collections *last rights* and *nothin’ ugly fly*. He is a highly sought-after preacher, poet and performer. He is articulating a vision of social, prophetic and creative justice through his work as a poet, artist, teacher, collaborator, preacher, cake baker, and Facebook Statistician.

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