

LIBERATION IS INEVITABLE

INEVITABLE

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LIBERATION

THE REBIRTH REPORT

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VOW

LIBERATION IS INEVITABLE



9 OUT OF 10
BLACK
CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE RACISM
WHILE IN
SCHOOLS

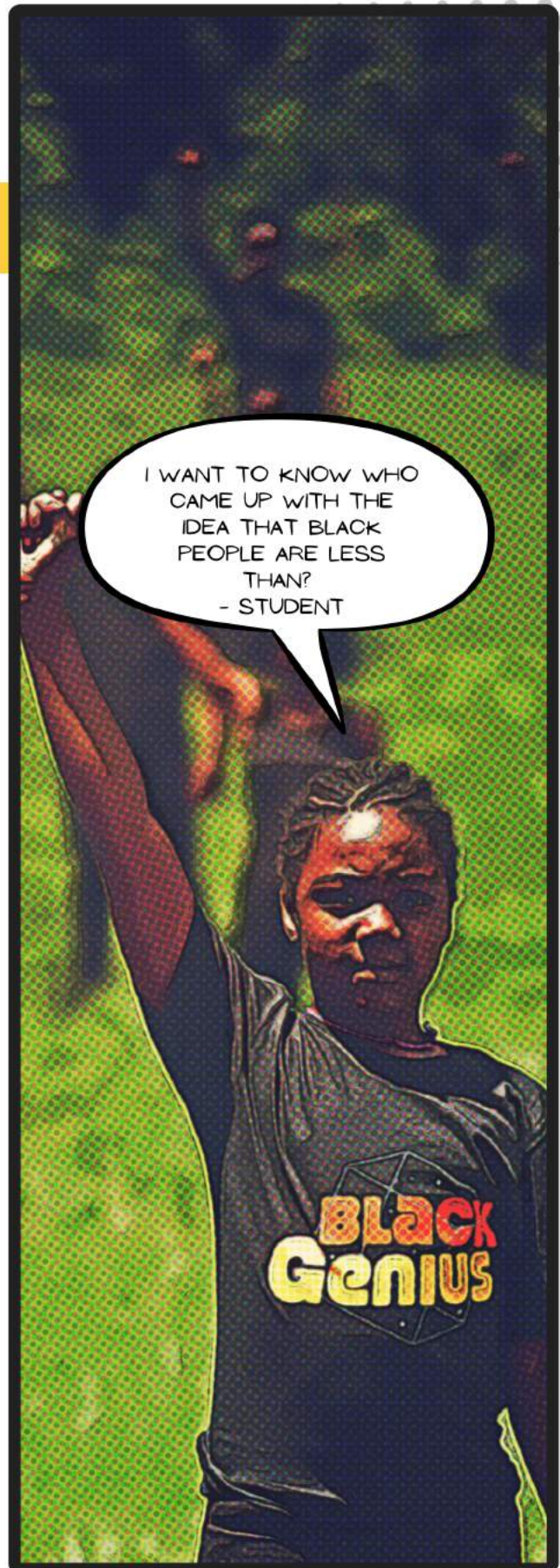
BLACK CHILDREN **DESERVE** TO THRIVE

This world ignores the dreams of Black families and asks Black children to learn while navigating the negative impacts of racism. However, we believe there is another way...

WE'RE CREATING **THE WORLD** OF OUR DREAMS

Village of Wisdom's mission is to liberate and protect the intellectual curiosity and positive racial identity of Black children (Black Genius®). We do this by amplifying the cultural strengths of Black families and creating the conditions for Black parents to co-design culturally affirming and liberatory environments in and outside the classroom.

WE WORK WITH
BLACK PARENTS TO
TO CREATE
A WORLD THAT
NURTURES AND
AFFIRMS THE GENIUS
AND HUMANITY OF
BLACK
CHILDREN



VILLAGE OF WISDOM:

2014 - Village of Wisdom was Born



Village Genius: Family Learning Villages (FLV)

Village of Wisdom was founded on one question: what do Black parents need to better help their children navigate racism in school?

The FLV emerged as a workshop designed to encourage Black parents to have racially affirming conversations with their children.

A Lesson in Liberation: The FLV taught us that Black parents and caregivers need space to commune, heal, and be in community with one another.

2016 - The Black Genius Framework Was Developed

Village Genius: The Black Genius Framework

Black parents in the FLVs had much to tell us about the conditions for Black children to thrive. Amber Majors Ladipo translated their wisdom into the **Black Genius Framework**.

Moving forward, the Black Genius Framework became the intellectual foundation of VOW's work.

A Lesson in Liberation: We learned that Black parents need tools and resources to protect Black Genius (intellectual curiosity and positive racial identity) and help their children navigate and transcend racism in school.

2019 - Adopting a Systems Perspective



"WE CHANGED
THE GAME"
- PARENT
LEADER

Village Genius: Institutional Levers of Power

We began to challenge school leaders to partner with Black parents to embed Black parent wisdom into the institutional decisions that impacted learning for Black students. We also demanded accountability on how funding decisions were made.

A Lesson in Liberation: Giving Black parents tools to protect Black Genius wasn't enough if schools remained toxic. For Black children to thrive, the learning ecosystem had to be transformed. Using the Black Genius Framework, we developed tools for parents, teachers, and school leaders to protect Black Genius.

A HISTORY IN LIBERATION

2020 - Three Black Women Changed Everything

Aya Shabu, Amber Majors Ladipo, Taylor Mary Webber-Fields, and VOW Executive Director William Jackson are the founding Village of Wisdom team. Amid the uncertainty of the pandemic, they realized that VOW must shift from preparing Black parents to confront racism to positioning Black parents as cultural experts and leaders who are building culturally affirming and liberatory systems of their design.



AYA SHABU
CULTURAL
MOVEMENT-BUILDER



AMBER MAJORS LADIPO, PHD
KNOWLEDGE
MOVEMENT-BUILDER



TAYLOR MARY WEBBER-FIELDS
COMMUNITY
MOVEMENT-BUILDER

Village Genius: [The Dream Assessment](#)

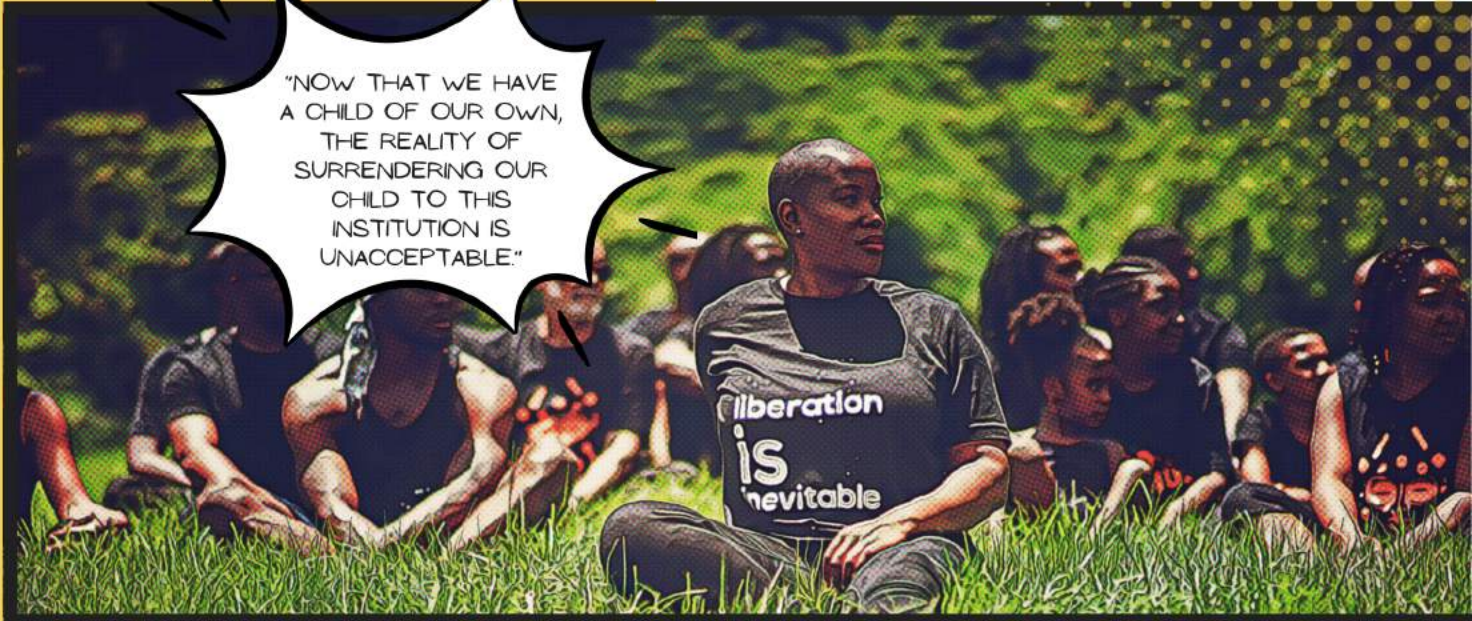
Aya, Amber, and Taylor Mary asked parents what they needed. They needed a means to cultivate their dreams for their children. VOW began conducting Dream Assessments *with* Black parents instead of needs assessments on Black parents. With a better understanding of parents' needs and dreams, Aya, Amber, and Taylor Mary re-organized VOW's programming to train Black parents as the leaders and creators of their liberation:

- **Liberation through Knowledge** - develop the standards for culturally affirming learning;
- **Liberation through Culture** - curate lodestars of artistic and cultural liberation;
- **Liberation through Learning** - design culturally affirming learning with educators; and
- **Liberation through Community** - facilitate healing and interrogate oppressive systems.

A Lesson in Liberation: VOW recognized that to create a world where Black children thrive, Black parents must become the creators and influencers of the policies, practices, and culture that impact Black children. Black parents must be recognized as the visionaries, change-makers, and systems-builders they've always been. An opportunity emerged . . .

The opportunity: nurture a community, build a movement, change the world.

"NOW THAT WE HAVE
A CHILD OF OUR OWN,
THE REALITY OF
SURRENDERING OUR
CHILD TO THIS
INSTITUTION IS
UNACCEPTABLE."



VILLAGE OF WISDOM IS BUILDING A BLACK PARENT COALITION TO LIBERATE & PROTECT BLACK GENIUS

Through this movement, Village of Wisdom, working alongside Black parents, will:

- ❖ **Reframe the Dominant Narrative** of who is considered an 'expert' and shift resources to community-defined standards of success.
- ❖ **Amplify Black Parent Power** by creating a diasporic force of liberatory-minded leaders who influence the policy, practice, and cultural decisions that lead to more culturally affirming and liberatory environments.
- ❖ **Close the Research-To-Practice Gap** by leveraging technology and art to promote the wide-scale use of culturally affirming and liberatory learning strategies.

VILLAGE OF WISDOM



A MOVEMENT OF
BLACK PARENTS
PROTECTING
BLACK GENIUS

BY 2027, VILLAGE OF WISDOM WILL

TRAIN

160+ BLACK PARENTS AS




**INFLUENCERS
AND
CREATORS**



OF POLICY, PRACTICE, & CULTURE,
DIRECTLY IMPACTING

12,100 BLACK LEARNERS



Ultimately, the impact we are working towards is liberation. We see liberation as the ability of Black families and communities to choose their futures and how they live and thrive without restraint.

OUR IMPACT IS LIBERATION

We are moving Black families and communities towards liberation in four ways:

CULTURE

We Train Black Parents to
Create Culture

KNOWLEDGE

We Train Black Parents to
Create Knowledge

COMMUNITY

We Train Black Parents to
Create Community

LEARNING

We Train Black Parents to
Create Learning

We Train Black Parents to Be The Creators of Liberation.

BLACK PARENTS ARE CREATORS OF CULTURE



AYA SHABU

CULTURAL MOVEMENT-BUILDER

Aya trains Black parents as cultural curators of heritage events, wearable affirmations, and visual celebrations of Black culture, love, and liberation.

Aya, our Associate Director of Arts and Culture, worked with parents to create the Black Genius Breathe Video, a short film affirming Black children as they went back to school. The film has more than 5,000 views across our social media channels.

Aya also organized the Juneteenth Festival and Black Genius Showcase, large-scale cultural events celebrating Black culture. The Juneteenth Celebration attracted over 1,200 attendees. The Black Genius Showcase, the first of its kind, was a youth-led performance that celebrated the West End community in Durham and hosted more than 1,000 attendees.

Aya works with parents to create culturally affirming learning environments outside of schools that allow young people to explore Black Genius in place-centered ways and experience neighborhoods and historical figures that exemplify Black Genius.

"...LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS SPACE EVERY WEEK WAS NECESSARY."





AMBER MAJORS LADIPO,
PHD, MSW

KNOWLEDGE MOVEMENT-BUILDER

Amber trains Black parents as researchers of the issues that impact them directly.

BLACK PARENTS ARE CREATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

Amber, our Associate Director of Research and Evaluation, has led Black parent researchers to develop and present recommendations to school board members and cabinet-level leaders in three different school districts. Their leadership has impacted more than 50,000 students.

Black parent researchers designed the first **Keep Dreaming Toolkit**. The Toolkit contains Black parent-validated culturally affirming learning strategies that parents and educators can implement at home or school. The Toolkit has been shared 13,000+ times across ten states.

Black parent leaders have led a community-driven research process to expand the Culturally Affirming Climate Survey to elementary school students.

"OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM WAS NEVER DEVELOPED TO DELIVER OUR LIBERATION"
- BLACK PARENT



BLACK PARENTS ARE CREATORS OF COMMUNITY

Taylor Mary, our Associate Director of Parent Leadership and Evolution, developed our Culture of Care framework, the process framework for our programming with parents. She has led the creation of culturally affirming networks across multiple platforms for Black parents to heal from their experiences with racism and build community with one another. Parents report that these spaces “allow .. them to recharge as (a) Black parent(s).”

Through her leadership, Black parent leaders have co-facilitated 12 sessions in 2022 with over 100 attendees (Wisdom Wednesdays) in their communities.

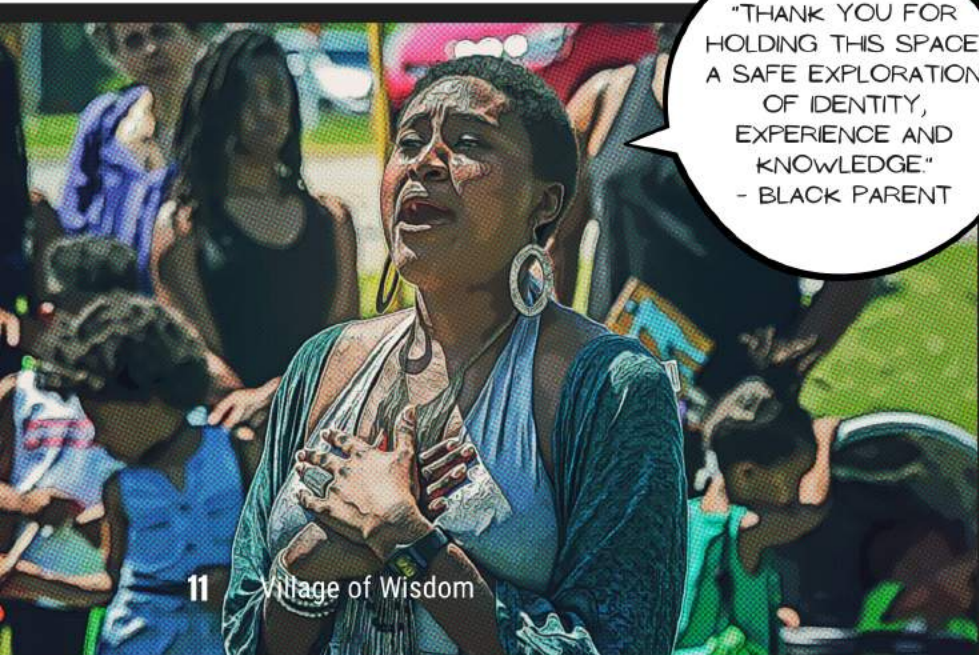


TAYLOR MARY WEBBER-FIELDS

COMMUNITY MOVEMENT-BUILDER

Taylor Mary trains Black parents as community-builders who hold space for other parents to heal and interrogate systems of oppression.

“THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS SPACE. A SAFE EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY, EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE.”
- BLACK PARENT





BLACK PARENTS ARE CREATORS OF LEARNING

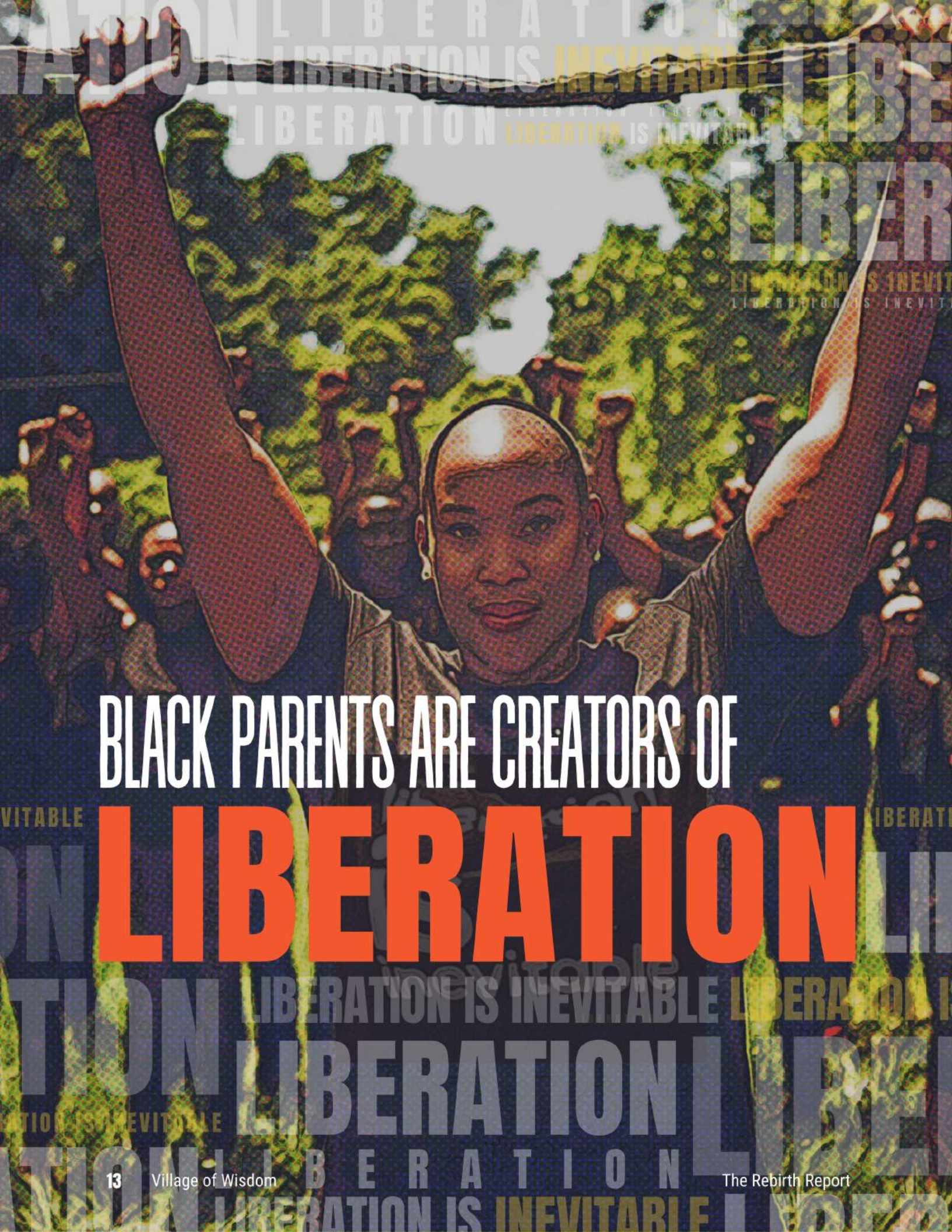
Village of Wisdom trains Black parents as designers and experts in culturally affirming learning. As a result,

- Four (4) parents were trained in ethical research methods;
- Two (2) parents serve on education advisory boards; and
- Five (5) parents have co-authored a paper for *Community Psychology* on community-driven participatory research.

VOW Black Parent reflective partners have worked with educators to encourage culturally affirming learning environments for 2,250 students.

Since 2020, Village of Wisdom has led five schools through a Black Genius institutional transformation process.

Dawn Henderson, Director of Participatory Research, Power Building, and Arssante Malone, Associate Director of Instructional Liberation, lead this work.




BLACK PARENTS ARE CREATORS OF

LIBERATION

A CULTURE OF CARE

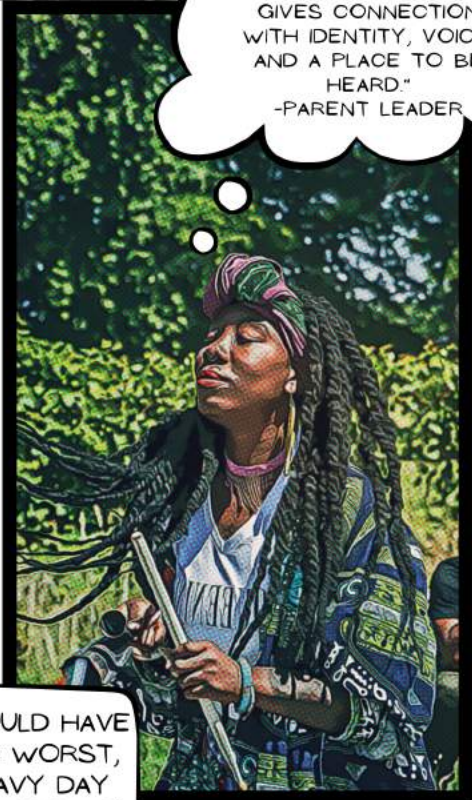
Village of Wisdom recognizes that dreaming and building new worlds for Black children and families requires a culture that affirms the humanity of Black parents. Taylor Mary, our Associate Director of Parent Leadership and Evolution, created The Culture of Care, our process framework that allows parents to access their genius and have authentic conversations without racism as an external or internal stressor.



"VOW IS VERY EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTIVE IN HOW THEY SHOW UP. SELFLESS AND MINDFUL (PARENT) WISDOM IS AMPLIFIED AND IT GIVES US A SENSE OF BELONGING"
- BLACK PARENT

BUT LET OUR PEOPLE TELL IT!!

"VILLAGE OF WISDOM GIVES CONNECTION WITH IDENTITY, VOICE, AND A PLACE TO BE HEARD."
-PARENT LEADER



VOW CREATES "A CULTURE THAT WELCOMES QUESTIONS AND HONEST ANSWERS - BLACK PARENT

"I COULD HAVE THE WORST, HEAVY DAY AND GET MY HEALING. I COULD FILL MY CUP AND BE WHOLE."
- PARENT

BLACK GENIUS



"[BLACK GENIUS] HELPED ME FOCUS ON MORE MEANINGFUL WAYS TO GET TO KNOW STUDENTS AND TO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH PARENTS."- TEACHER

Ninety percent of VOW programming participants report feeling better equipped to help their children navigate racial inequities. Participants also say that VOW creates a safe space to dream and heal.



ARSSANTE MALONE
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF
INSTRUCTIONAL LIBERATION

VOW Parent Leader
Joined Staff Sept. 2022

"VOW came on my radar as an organization that not only creates safe spaces for Black families, but facilitates revolutionary experiences and events that charge the community and revitalize the spirit. Black Joy is contagious and VOW cultivates Black Joy. It was only right that I joined the village."

ROXANN DIXON
MANAGER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Reflective Practice Partner
Joined Staff Dec. 2022

"Village of Wisdom...VOW... an acronym which speaks volumes. As an organization their mission is to uplift parents and protect children. For me it is a commitment, a vow to make sure our children are standing on a firm foundation that will help them set and attain their goals. We start in a learning space that encourages their comfort, voice, vision and individuality then watch them blossom."



NADIAH PORTER
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PARENT
ENGAGEMENT AND TALENT

VOW Parent Leader
Joined Staff Mar. 2022

"In most systems and settings, Black parents are hardly acknowledged for their expertise or capacity to impact let alone lead. Village of Wisdom always has been, and is increasingly setting the tone for how Black parents should be invited, cared for, consulted, paid, respected, and believed. I have always felt right at home in this village of thinkers and dreamers. So for me, it has always been VOW!"

VOW PARENTS ARE **LEADING** THE COALITION



FROM THE WISDOM OF OUR PARENTS, WE DISCOVERED A NEW WAY TO PUT PARENTS IN THE LEAD.

INTRODUCING THE **DREAMSHIP**



THE
DREAMSHIP
IS A TWO-YEAR FELLOWSHIP
FOR BLACK PARENTS TO
**BUILD THE WORLD
OF THEIR DREAMS.**

In Fall 2023, Village of Wisdom is hosting the inaugural **DREAMSHIP**, a two-year experiential leadership fellowship for Black parents. The Dreamship will train parents at the intersection of education, art, research, and mental health to translate their cultural wisdom into higher-quality learning experiences for all learners. Parent fellows will receive 10 hours of leadership training, community-building, and deliberate rest per week, along with a stipend.

In my eight years leading Village of Wisdom (VOW), I've realized that community or "the village" is essential to our evolution because no one person has all the answers. But I have to be honest with you. Whenever VOW gets an award that highlights me above the village, I remember we live in a society that actively attempts to neutralize our collective power. Indeed, this type of individualistic recognition erases the work of the village. In VOW's rebirth, the village has taught me two important lessons about being involved in the work of creating an organization that endures. An organization that is able to make good on its vow.

I learned that preparing people to navigate racism is not the same as preparing people to create new systems that erase racism. I started VOW at a period in my life when I was working with a Black women-led group of activists and organizers. Those experiences greatly advanced my notions of radical love, justice, and liberation. Yet, as I initially conceived it, VOW was an organization designed to help Black families cope with racial discrimination.

Thankfully Dr. Donna-Marie Winn was part of my village. She asked me, "Are you attempting to fix fish at VOW, or are you trying to clean the water?" The question from that point forward would live rent-free in my mind. And, while I knew VOW hadn't taken a deficit-based approach of needing to fix families. Neither had we taken the systems approach of changing toxic learning environments with families.

In 2018, I began pivoting VOW towards developing tools and frameworks with two purposes: (1) to show parents how to use racial affirmation to prepare their children for discrimination and (2) to support families in advocating for more culturally affirming learning environments for their children. Ultimately, I recognized that once I changed our focus to cleaning the water of education systems, it forced me to consider how my leadership was polluting VOW's water.

I learned that until you have systems for decentering power, it will remain centralized. The 2018 pivot was necessary, but I dictated and imposed it upon my team without their input. This left my team reeling to find purpose in the organization. Even though I was committed to decentralized leadership, I struggled to live into that vision. Without the anchors of institutional practices and policies that distribute power, ideas from my staff failed to take root and grow. And, as a result, VOW struggled internally as an organization.

Thankfully, in 2019, after some clutch consulting by Margret Brunson, my founding team—Taylor Mary, Aya, and Amber—developed a proposal process for new VOW initiatives. The trio quickly presented proposals that integrated Black parents in the execution and direction of VOW's work. Inspired by their work, I had the idea to leverage community-based participatory research to conduct assessments to understand what Black students, parents, and teachers of Black students dreamt about culturally affirming learning. We created a plan to deliver Dream Assessments, Wisdom Wednesdays (Taylor Mary's proposal), the Black Parent Validated Resource Library (Amber's Proposal), and the Black Genius Breathe Video (Aya's proposal). And in the span of one calendar year, from summer 2020 to summer 2021, my co-founding team and I recreated VOW into an organization that we all love.

To the credit of many, VOW has become an organization where parents have an essential role in creating the knowledge, tools, and spaces necessary for Black children to experience culturally affirming learning. When an organization goes through such a rebirth, those charged with its leadership undergo an analogous experience. VOW has grown and evolved with me, and I have evolved from the wisdom of the village. I am grateful to all of you reading for your role in VOW's transformation. I am emboldened by the realization that VOW's impact is bigger than mine alone. Indeed the village built VOW, and through the village, as our parent leader 'Ready' Roxann Dixon likes to say, Village of Wisdom will endure as a promise to the people.

-WILLIAM P. JACKSON



WILLIAM P. JACKSON, PHD

CHIEF DREAMER

Founder, Village of Wisdom

FINANCES

FOR FY21 AND FY22

	FY'21	FY'22*	YOY Change
Foundation Revenue	\$2,458,351.65	\$3,842,747.81	56%
Individual Donor Revenue	6,762.26	12,651.92	87%
Earned Revenue	29,450.78	10,310.09	-65%
Total Revenue	2,494,564.69	\$3,865,901.09	55%

*Numbers calculated reported prior to Audit and End of Year reconciliation processes thus are subject to some adjustment





THANK YOU FOR **SUPPORTING** OUR DREAMS

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Gil-Scott Heron prophesied that the revolution would not be televised. We agree! Instead, it will be manifested by the visionaries, change-makers, and systems-builders that won't settle for anything less than Black children and families thriving.

SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT TO LIBERATE BLACK GENIUS

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