

MY YEAR AT CAMDENTOWN



by Emily Fulcher



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ABOUT PRESENTATION MEDIUM: WHATS A ZINE?

I was intentional in curating all of this into Zine format because Zines are grounded in hyperlocal subcultural grassroots community communication networks. Zines (pronounced ZEEN) have been around since the early 20th Century and have been an integral part of underground and non-commercial publications. This was and still is an easy and accessible mode of creative/information exchange that is not bound to the guardrails of popular media and had/has allowed Queer, POC, and any other group pushed to the fringes a mode of communion and expression. This is not to say my experience lies in the fringes but that there is a hyperlocal context of engagement and exchange to the amorphous subject of my reflections: CamdenTown.

Zines have a crafty, “DIY” Quality in physical and digital format that reflects the alternative media landscape that comes from less monetization. There are Zine fests, libraries collect them, and bookstores sell them. Zines are pieces of subversion because anyone can make one. I would like to point you fellow reader to check out the POC Zine Project that was created in 2015 which archives Zines written by people of color. Also please do check out the Queer Zine Archive Project as well which was established in 2003.

DEAR VIEWER,

This Zine came together through collecting and curating my ruminations on my year at CamdenTown Mpls through multiple forms: art, written ramblings, quotes, interviews, etc. I explore Camdentowns organizational values, mission, future structure, and its interaction with my presence in the organization. I also highlight fun events and memories throughout my year of service.

I hope to bring humor, honesty, and understanding to community builders who are placed in projects with the aim to collaborate and co-create with people across lines of difference. We all hold different identities and those don't leave once we step into our roles as community engagement workers. We are not voids that connect and facilitate others. Who we are sets the tone whether we like it or not and it's important that we interrogate it.

Warm Regards,
Emily Fulcher



SERVICE SITE: CAMDENTOWN MPLS

MISSION:

TRANSFORM THE CAMDENTOWN AREA INTO "A PLACE WHERE BLACK JOY, BLACK CULTURE, BLACK EXCELLENCE, AND BLACK OWNERSHIP COME TOGETHER TO CREATE VIBRANT BLACK FUTURES" (CAMDENTOWN MINNEAPOLIS, N.D).



HOW-->>> PEOPLE BASED PLACEMAKING STRATEGY:

PLACEMAKING "INSPIRES PEOPLE TO COLLECTIVELY REIMAGINE AND REINVENT PUBLIC SPACES" AND "CAPITALIZES ON A LOCAL COMMUNITY'S ASSETS, INSPIRATION, AND POTENTIAL, AND IT RESULTS IN THE CREATION OF QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PEOPLE'S HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND WELL-BEING" (PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES, 2007, PARA. 1-2).

MAIN TEAM:

HOUSTON WHITE



FOUNDER OF CAMDENTOWN. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR, WITH THE VISION FOR CAMDENTOWN GROUNDED INTO HIS BRANDS AND BUSINESS ENDEAVORS (FRESH, HWMR, THE GET DOWN COFFEE CO ETC.)

APRIL RIORDAN



A NONPROFIT LEADER IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. SHE SUPPORTS STRATEGY, OPERATIONS, AND GENERAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CAMDENTOWN MINNEAPOLIS. FELLOW SUPPORT STAFF.

MAIN PARTNERS:

MOVE FOR AMERICA, NORTH MARKET PILLSBURY UNITED COMMUNITIES, MINNEAPOLIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, U.S. BANK, CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ETC.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Houston White defies the notion that he must abandon his community in search of the cultural experiences and amenities he desires in a home. His wife, Denise, becoming increasingly fatigued with the cultural landscape of Minnesota. Being a successful Black woman in the corporate world, she believed that cities like New York, D.C., and Atlanta offered the ideal blend of professional achievement and personal satisfaction. Rather than hastily relocating, Houston proposed a different approach—to construct the very essence of what they yearned for, an aspiration shared by many Black professionals in Minneapolis.



mosaic of Denise at The Get Down Coffee Shop on Camdentown Center



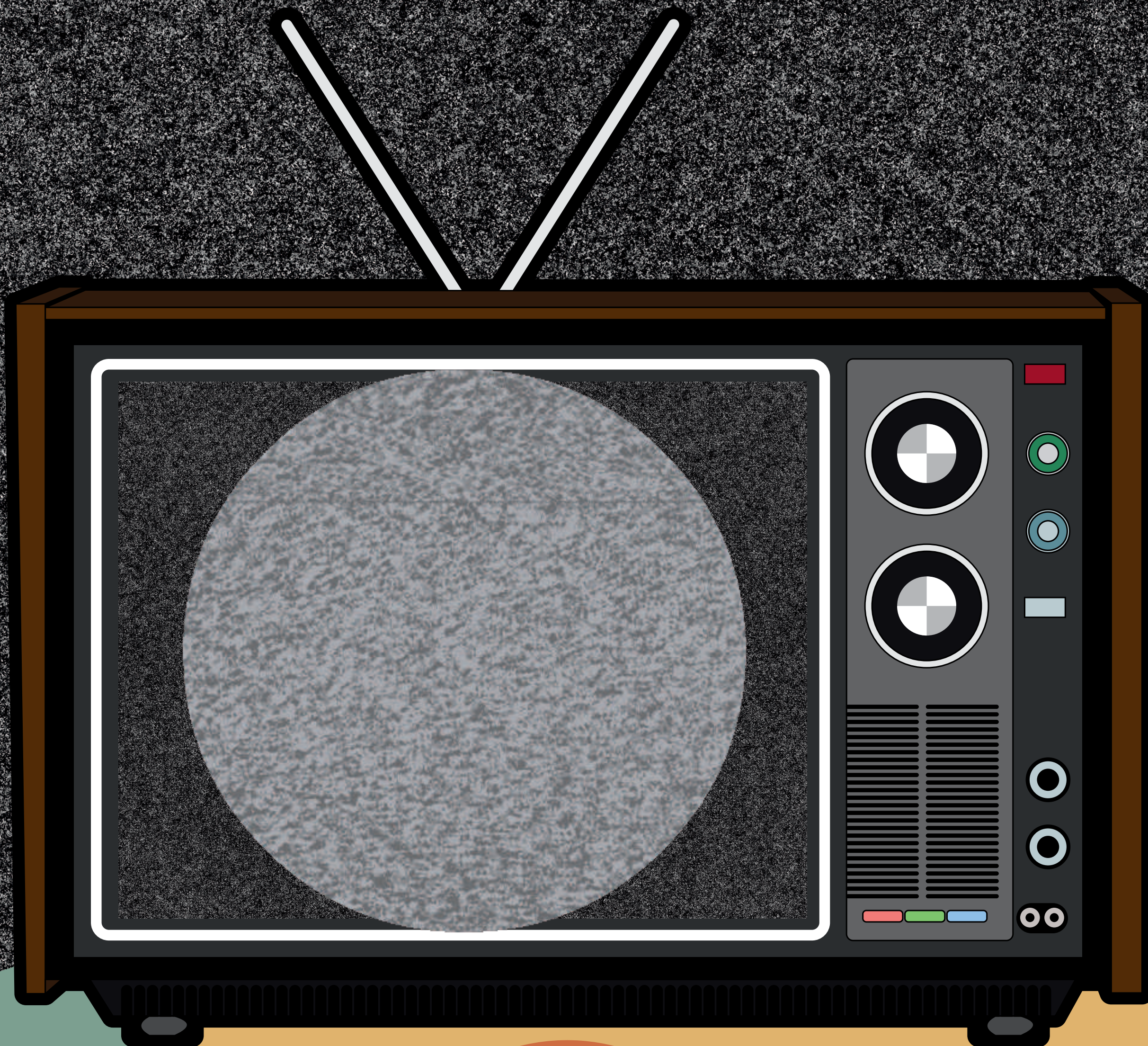
Houston White and wife Denise White North Minneapolis Mural by Peyton Scott Russel



NORTH MINNEAPOLIS
ENTREPRENEUR ENVISIONING A
BLACK CULTURAL HUB IN
'CAMDENTOWN'

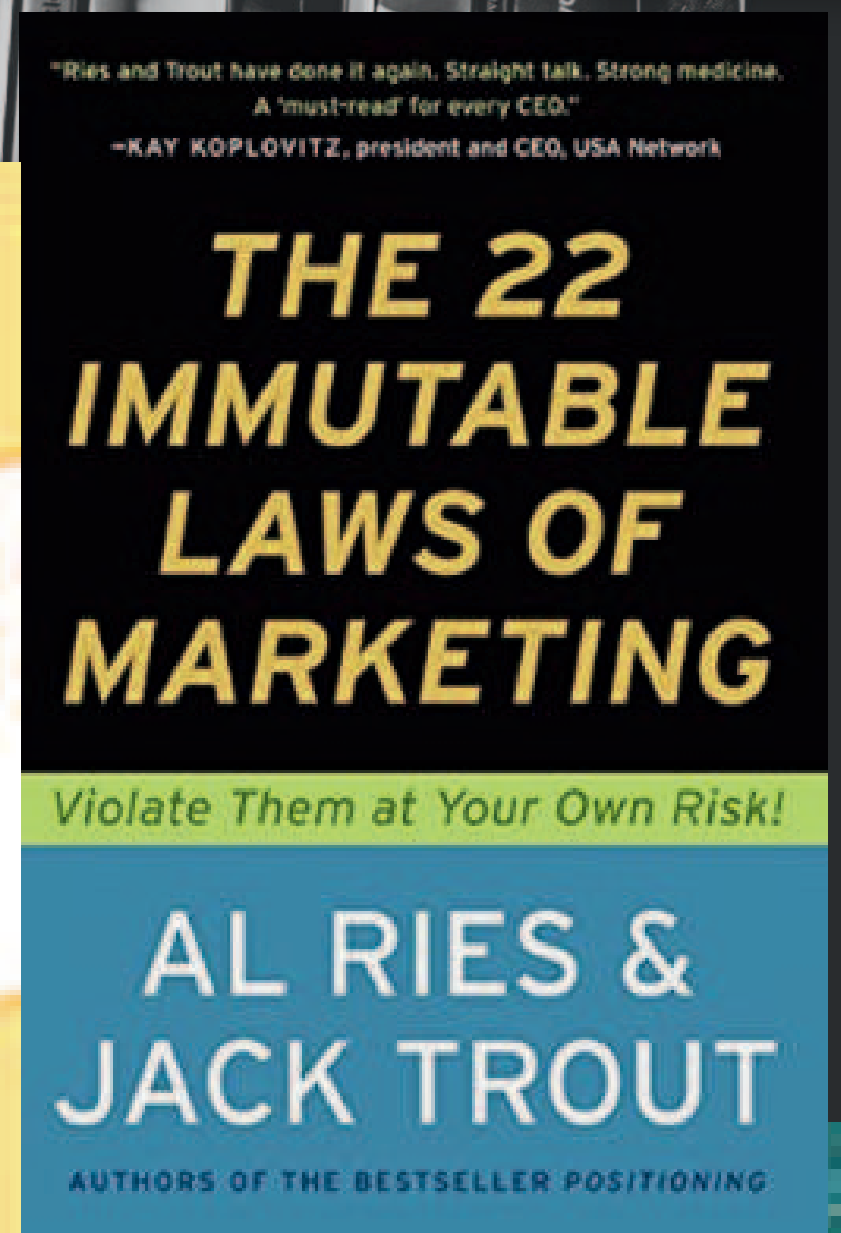
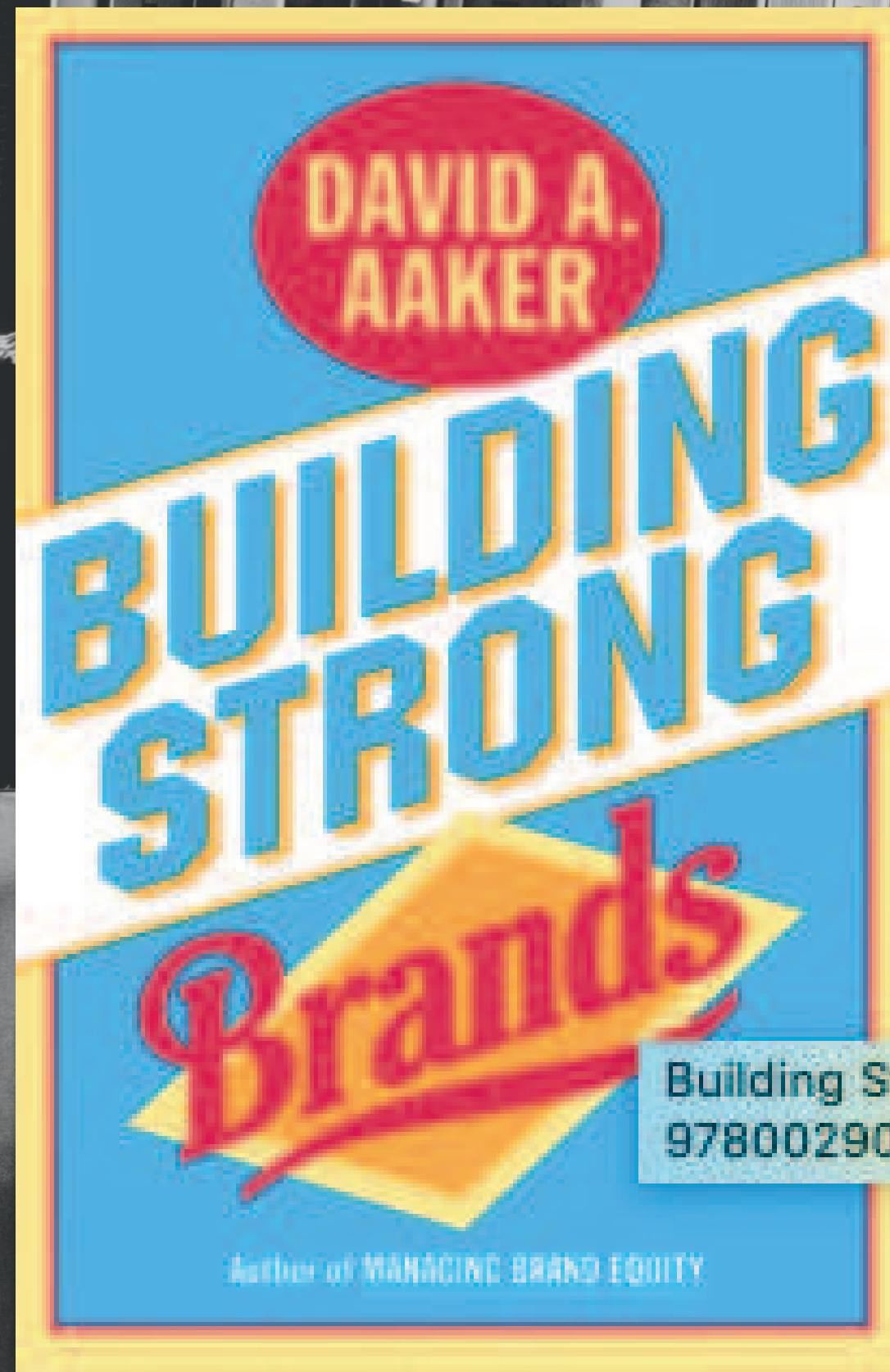


NORTH MINNEAPOLIS BARBER
IS A CATALYST ON HIS CORNER
(2020)



MY GUIDING BOOKS

The books
Houston passed
to me



The books April
passed to me



MY FIRST DAY

"Progression not perfection" This was the poignant closing line Houston White uttered with a bright smile at the end of my first meeting at Camdentown. This line made me feel uneasy as someone that has always been riddled with decision paralysis, over-calculation, and an insidious fear of misstepping. But for the three months that I've been immersed in the vision and community that is Camdentown I have felt this initial anxiety around Houston's sentiment chip away.

My introduction to Camdentown was nothing short of stimulating. Walking through the doors of The Get Down, I was met with a buzz of vibrant colors, art, records, the smell of freshly ground coffee, and the hum of lively conversation intermeshed with the instrumentals of Superfly by Curtis Mayfield.


As I sat down waiting for Houston White, the founder and visionary behind Camdentown, I drank in the organic bits of interaction within the intimate space of the coffee shop. There were long-time friends absorbed in conversation, new acquaintances warmly greeting each other, a group of kids grabbing water before leaving to play outside, and remote workers tapping away at their keyboards in a deep flow.

I would come to understand that the space I had walked into for the first time on June 9th facilitated an "emergence." As Adrienne Marie Brown puts it in her book emergent strategy, "Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions." The complexity of community building was emerging through the daily interactions I had witnessed in The Get Down that day.

Camdentown refuses to be inhibited by deficit framing and dares to imagine as well as model a community building framework that facilitates emergence by embracing tension and change through responding with co-creation, nimbleness, non-linear insight, and accountability. But most importantly, Camdentown is an unapologetic Afrofuturist organization that harnesses the Black cultural lens and imagination to manifest Black joy and vibrant Black futures.

"What role do you see yourself playing?" Houston asked me during our Zoom interview. I am still unraveling what my presence as a white woman who just moved to Minneapolis, let alone Minnesota, within a Black centered urban community building project means. I don't think I will ever stop interrogating what my role means and how to contribute capacity to Camdentown in a way that is celebratory rather than co-optive. I can not ignore the tension my embodiment brings to the project, but Camdentown has welcomed it and pushes me to lean into it, tease it out.

"Trust the people, and they become trustworthy," Houston White said. Houston had chosen to trust me from the jump, which scared me because I honestly didn't know if I could trust myself. I realized his faith in me was not blind but rather futuristic. I think there are a lot of perfectionist tendencies among white capacity builders that fester our action, and thus allyship, in social justice projects. This is something I have been trying to confront and work on among your everyday post-undergrad imposter syndrome. Camdentown is not only facilitating an emergence within the walls of The Get Down but in the people it calls in.



**"HUMAN
CONNECTION
IS THE MOST
POWERFUL
FORCE IN
NATURE"**

*THIS PHRASE WAS
SPRINKLED ALL
OVER THE
BARBERSHOP IN
CAMDENTOWN, LIKE
A MANTRA*

*A DECLARATION
A MANIFESTATION*

CAMDENTOWN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Accountability

By us, for us; internal effectiveness valued over external clarity; judged by those affected;

Autonomy

Power centered in Black stakeholders & community with freedom to take risks and fail; time, space to experiment without being micromanaged; operate outside system but recognize systems as allies

Discomfort

Embrace tension

Complex

Multipurpose, non-linear

Horizontal

Build partnerships not sponsorships; create narrative that the right thing for advantaged, resourced white leaders to do is to contribute to an effort in which they have no decision-making power and their only stake in it is solidarity.

Purpose

Be an incubator & accelerator; vibrant Black futures is the goal; sustainable organization is not the goal.

Afro-Futurism

Vibrant Black futures; stop loving the problems

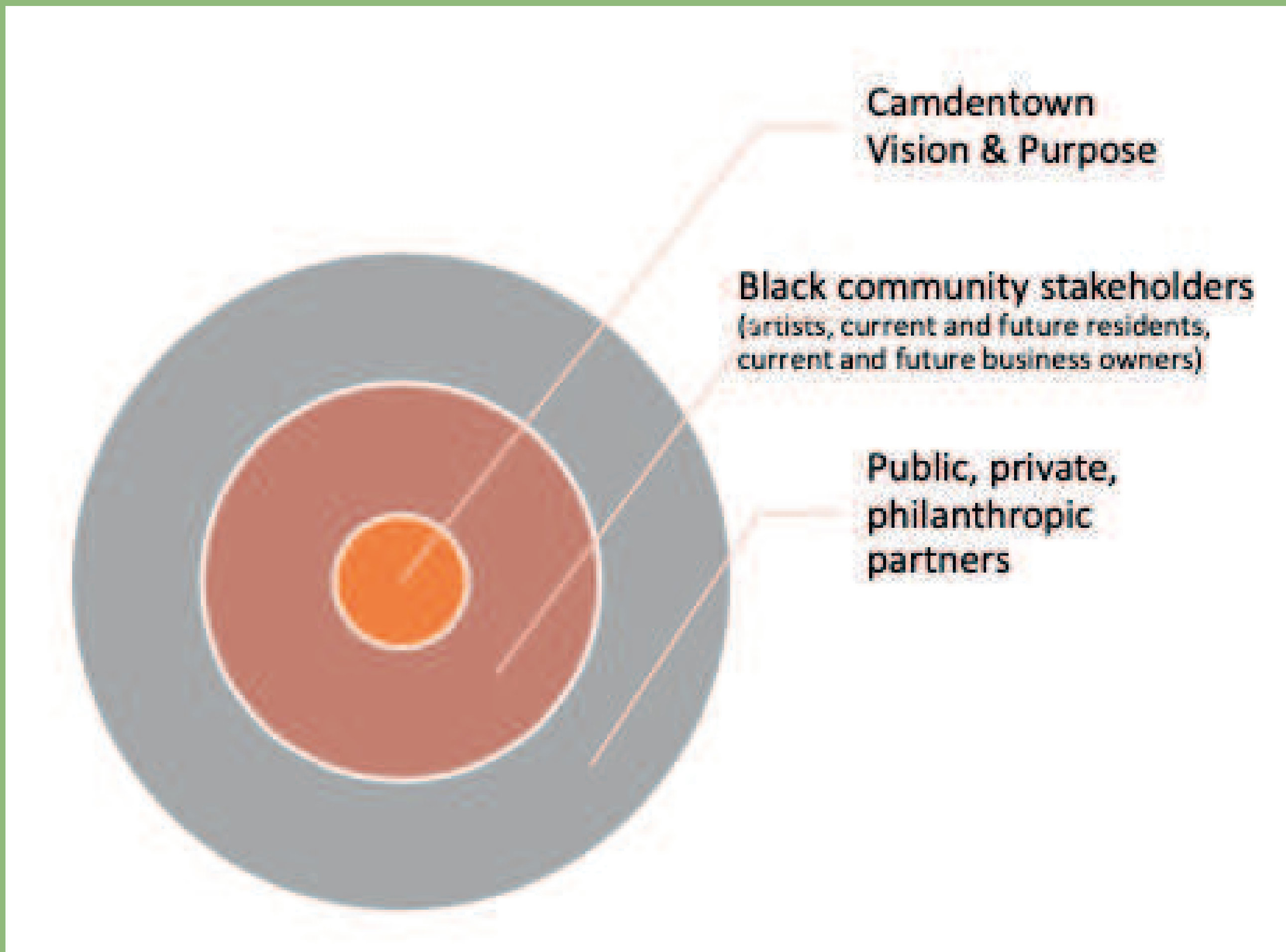
Transparency

Will face questions accusations of illegality or impropriety; prepare for race-based sabotage and violence.

Nimble

Adaptable, emergent

RESISTING CO-OPTION



"In the center is the organization's purpose. Each concentric circle surrounding it represents a different stakeholder group, with its proximity to the structure's center denoting the stakeholder group's importance in the system and level of involvement in governance decision-making"

-Riordan – ORLD 7983 - Systems Change Individual Paper

As a white woman and M4A Fellow I'm apart of the outermost circle. Becoming part of the Camdentown team I understood that this meant lending my time, skills, and capital (white privilege) towards uplifting Camdentown and its mission. I have found that as white capacity builders we tend to be paralyzed by a fear of getting things wrong. We hinder our allyship and the communities we are serving by not allowing ourselves to lean into discomfort, tease it out, and be okay with messing up. Houston trusted me to do the work and Camdentown welcomed tension and embraced it allowing, me to do so as well.

So you're a white woman in community building and are not centered?!?

Heres how to deal:



accept that the world does not revolve around you and your white womanhood. (I know I know big step)

realize your white saviorism is not the vibe and constantly interigate your ingrained colonizer :)



just help out without co-opting control and like pipe down and listen

CULTURE + CAPACITY GOVERNANCE

"NON-BLACK LEADERS WILL LEAN INTO THIS MOMENT AND SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A PART OF CREATING A LEGACY BY ACCELERATING ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND CAPACITY BUILDING. CAMDENTOWN IS CREATING AN INNOVATIVE, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE THAT PROVIDES ACCOUNTABILITY, INSPIRES WIDESPREAD ACTION AND INVESTMENT, **YET ALSO PRESERVES AND CENTERS POWER AND DECISION-MAKING WITH THE BLACK COMMUNITY CAMDENTOWN EXISTS TO CELEBRATE."**

CAMDENTOWN BELIEVES THAT 'TRUST THE PEOPLE AND THEY BECOME TRUSTWORTHY' GOES BOTH WAYS, THAT NON-BLACK LEADERS WILL LEAN INTO THIS MOMENT AND SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A PART OF CREATING A LEGACY BY ACCELERATING ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND CAPACITY."

-APRIL RIORDAN (CAMDENTOWN CAPACITY TEAM MEMBER)



(U.S. Bank DEI Team visits Camdentown- 8/25/22)

"I NEVER IMAGINED MINNESOTA WOULD BE THE EPICENTER FOR ANY KIND OF GREAT RACIAL AWAKENING OR AWARENESS. IT'S A GREAT OPPORTUNITY. MY HOPE IS THERE IS A REAL EFFORT TO SHARE. YOU CAN'T UNDO HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF DISENFRANCHISEMENT OVERNIGHT. BUT ORGANIZATIONS CAN HELP JUMP START IT. LIKE TARGET, THEY'VE NEVER DONE WHAT THEY DID AS QUICKLY BEFORE. IT WASN'T JUST PANDERING, IT'S GOOD BUSINESS. I'LL ALWAYS SAY, 'I DON'T WANT SPONSORS, I WANT PARTNERS.'"

-HOUSTON WHITE (CAMDENTOWN FOUNDER)



I saw the vision of Camdentown's Culture + Capacity materialize right in front of me as the U.S. Bank CFO and DEI team visited Camdentown on a funders site visit.

CAMDENTOWN FLATS



In partnership we embarked, this project grand,
With Camdentown's residents and businesses at
hand, Exploring the essence of a housing market
fair, In a neighborhood where Black wealth takes
the air.

We sought a thriving haven, sustainable and
strong, Where Black joy and excellence could
dance along, Both inclusive and expansive,
breaking free, From rental and home models
traditionally seen.

Imagining a mix, diverse and complete, Housing
that nourishes, a place so sweet, For the people
who shape this vibrant space, A sanctuary where
they can find solace and grace.

For feeling safe, intertwined with feeling at
home, Our journey begins here, where hearts
roam, With public safety and housing, a unique
stance, From a Black-centered perspective, we
enhance.

For too long, the approach has been laden with
lack, But Camdentown declares, we won't turn
our back, Unapologetically focused on Black
excellence's might, Community development
that nurtures joy, pure and bright.

So let us weave a tapestry, vibrant and fair,
Where dreams find refuge, filling the air,
Together we'll build a future, bold and free, In
Camdentown, where Black brilliance will forever
be.

-(ChatGBT, response , June 15th)

**Camdentown Flats will
elevate and inspire the
next generation of Black
professionals while
reflecting their culture.**

-CamdentownFlats.com





It was great to see Houston's vision of a Black centered living space come to life over my time at Camdentown. Being a part of the outreach for tenants, design process, and marketing has been an experience of a lifetime!

BLACKSPACE

MANIFESTO

We are Black urban planners, architects, artists, activists, designers, and leaders working to protect and create Black spaces. Our work includes a range of activities from engagement and projects in historically Black neighborhoods to hosting cross-disciplinary convenings and events.

While what we do is very important, the way we do it is also critical. Acknowledging our triumphs, oppressions, aspirations, and challenges, we've

created this manifesto to guide our growth as a group and our interactions with one another, partners, and communities.

We push ourselves, our partners, our fields, and our work closer to these ideals so we may realize a present and future where Black people, Black spaces, and Black culture matter and thrive.

CREATE CIRCLES, NOT LINES

Create less hierarchy and more dialogue, inclusion, and empowerment.



CHOOSE CRITICAL CONNECTIONS OVER CRITICAL MASS

Quality over quantity. Focus on creating critical and authentic relationships to support mutual adaptation and evolution over time.*

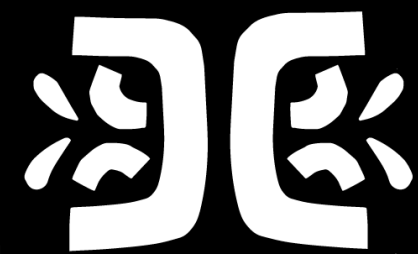


MOVE AT THE SPEED OF TRUST

Grow trust and move together with fluidity at whatever speed is necessary.*

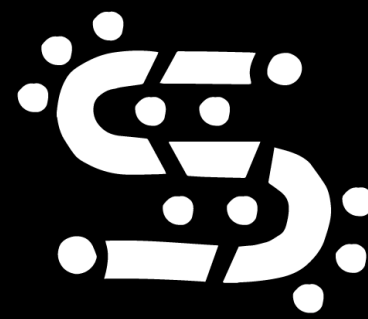
BE HUMBLE LEARNERS WHO PRACTICE DEEP LISTENING

Listen deeply and approach the work with an attitude towards learning, without assumptions and predetermined solutions. Take criticism without dispute.



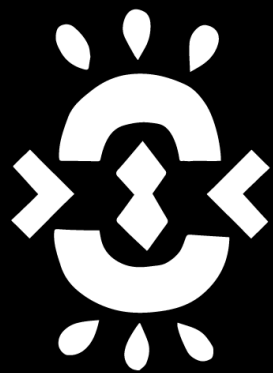
CELEBRATE, CATALYZE, & AMPLIFY BLACK JOY

Black joy is a radical act. Give due space to joy, laughter, humor, and gratitude.



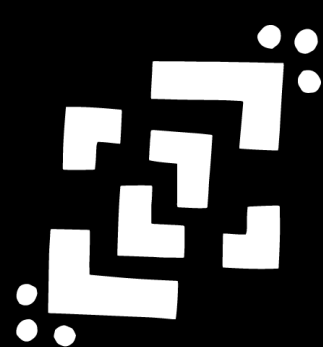
PLAN WITH, DESIGN WITH

Walk with people as they imagine and realize their own futures. Be connectors, conveners, and collaborators—not representatives.



CENTER LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lived experience is an important expertise; center it so it can be a guide and touchstone of all work.



SEEK PEOPLE AT THE MARGINS

Acknowledge the structures that create, maintain and uphold inequity. Learn and practice new ways of intentionally making space for marginalized voices, stories, and bodies.

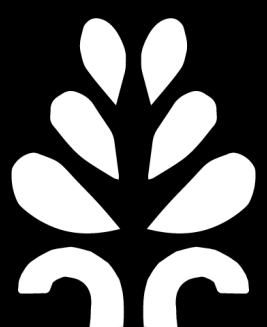
RECKON WITH THE PAST TO BUILD THE FUTURE

Meaningfully acknowledge the histories, injustice, innovations, and victories of spaces and places before new work begins. Reckon with the past as a means of healing, building trust, and deepening understanding of self and others.



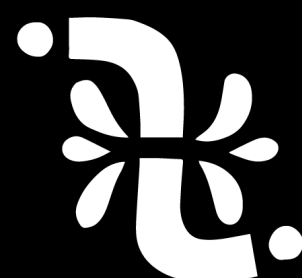
PROTECT & STRENGTHEN CULTURE

Make visible and strengthen Black cultures and spaces to honor their sacredness and prevent their erasure. Amplify and support Black assets of all forms—from leaders, institutions, and businesses to arts, culture, and histories.



CULTIVATE WEALTH

Cultivate a wealth of time, talent, and treasure that provide the freedom to risk, fail, learn, and grow.

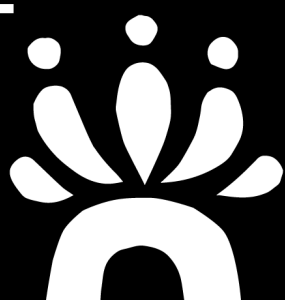


FOSTER PERSONAL & COMMUNAL EVOLUTION

Make opportunities to expand leadership and capacity.

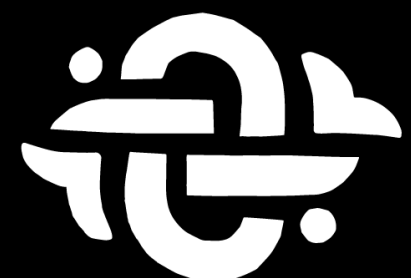
PROMOTE EXCELLENCE

Amplify, elevate, and love Black vanguards and the variety of their challenging, creative, exceptional, and innovative work and spaces. Allow excellence to build influence that creates opportunities for present and future generations.



MANIFEST THE FUTURE

Black people, Black culture, and Black spaces exist in the future! Imagine and design the future into existence now, working inside and outside of social and political systems.



*This principle is derived from Adrienne Maree Brown's Emergent Strategy: *Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*.

We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations that inspired these principles.

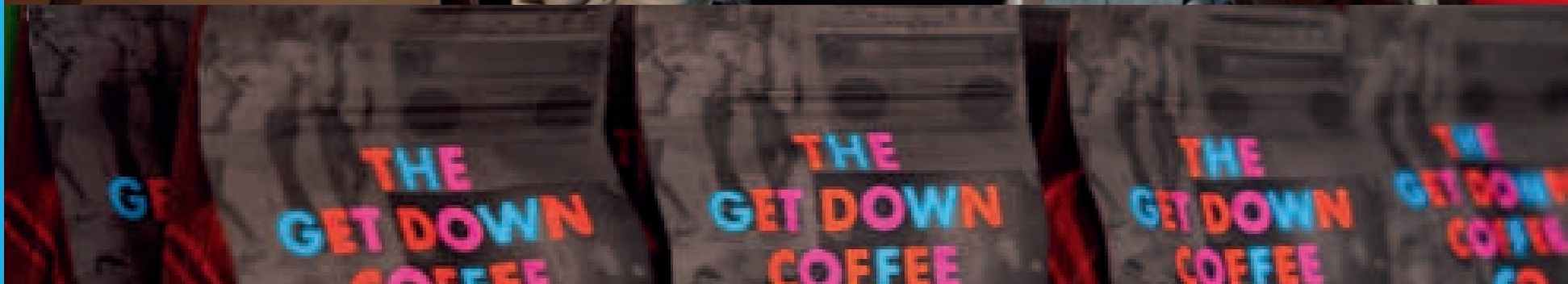
THE GET DOWN COFFEE CO



The Get Down Coffee Shop in Camdentown center was my office throughout my service year. It is an integral part of Camdentown and its mission

The Get Down is inspired by hip-hop music and its tight-knit community. Especially the early days—an era that broke down sociocultural barriers and spilled over to everything from the pop-and-lock electro of Kraftwerk to the neon-tinged new-wave of Blondie. “If you came up through the ’80s,” White said, “you were informed and inspired by hip-hop in some way. Art and culture was a uniter no matter who you were—white, Black, Asian, gay, straight.

-- (Mnunsure, 2021)





Director of Coffee at The Get Down Coffee Co CJ Porter Born says "most beans are still harvested by Black and brown people in Africa and Latin America, but the majority of roasters in the United States are white...The way to start changing that is by doing something as simple as existing and being a space that changes that narrative on one corner, one cup at a time...there's a growing movement across the country by Black entrepreneurs to reclaim their ancestors' roots in coffee's history."
-(Glover, 2022)



Hayley Mathews-Jones is the COO of the Get Down. She has collaborated with me on many projects that partnered with Camdentown (especially NNO). Funny enough she grew up in Camdentown in London and is a big asset to the Camdentown team

The future for The Get Down:

I assisted in campaigning for funds and resources to build a coffee roastery in camdentown. This roastery will bring capital, interest, and jobs to Camdentown Center.

CAMDENTOWN'S VISUAL PLACEMAKING:

Color and creativity was brought to Camdentown this past year through banners and a community led mural project! The fantastic artist Melodee Strong led the mural making as a part of the Flow Northside Art Crawl. Through these visual placemaking efforts, empty spaces were activated and identity was strengthened. This was made possible through the City of Minneapolis Community Planning & Economic Development Great Streets 2022 Business District funding..



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT MURAL UNVEILING

"this NNO [mural unveiling] is all about injecting vibrancy in the community I grew up a young as an artist I love art, and like music it is a unifier and so for us it signifies Camdentown as a place that is vibrance, collaboration...and make sure that the black experience and culture is at the forefront of what we are trying to do here."

- Houston White



"I actually live on the northside not too far from here and I frequently shop here [North Market in Camdentown Center] so this is really nice for me to be able to contribute to a business and organization that I believe in and support so the mural came to be through a conversation with Pillsbury Communities they said they wanted to express the theme that justice lives here so when I was thinking of the design of the piece I wanted to make sure that it was signifying food justice because I know a lot of the complaints in our neighborhood is that we don't have access to really good whole foods, like not packaged, pre-packaged, you know convince store, potato chips, pop, we want some good fresh food and I think that is what this market provides,

so on Saturday during flow we had this whole area blocked off and the kids helped paint it so they picked the colors, I don't believe in color by number I believe in the flow and freedom of expression in the moment. the only sections that had a specific color picked were the hands, rice, and the flowers. it was painted on polytab which is a parachute material that a lot of muralists use and so it makes it more accessible when you're working with large groups of people."

-Roho Collective Mural artist Melodee Strong



"This is the ward I represent it is the most beautiful ward to me so this is just an addition to the beauty of this ward... this entire neighborhood what's been developed Houston you should be so proud of yourself I want this to be the blueprint, we need more of this on the North side."

-LaTrisha Vetaw 4th Ward City Council Representative



"When you have so many talented people that are insisting on success and excellence you gotta know that something good is happening and coming down the pike and when you got an extraordinary vision of people like Houston um you know you got a partner here for the city we got art, we have food, we have people who care so deeply about this neighborhood and it's something special. you almost get the sense that exceptionalism is starting right here and then building out its almost like you feel concentric circles because there's so much positive energy and there is a lot of great things happening and as council member Vetaw said its just good to be here with all of you"

-Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey

this is also our neighborhood we are right up the street so we take great pride in being able to do something in our neighborhood the Roho Collective is a nonprofit organization that works to support artists of color like Melodee Strong and connecting them to people and amazing opportunities

-Roho Collective



ORGANIZING CAMDENTOWN NATIONAL NIGHT OUT:

Organizing and marketing Camdentown's 2022 National Night Out was the highlight of my time at Camdentown. Bringing together all of the elements of Camdentown that make it great: local vendors, local food (Quince, Billy's Backyard BBQ, The Get Down), music, and art (mural unveiling, Spraytag workshop) for community members and those visiting the neighborhood.



ar

I learned A LOT about the ins and outs of event organizing and man was it detailed work!

The Spraytag booth was a spray paint workshop run by Peyton Scott Russell who is a longtime friend of Houston and supporter of Camdentown. He is the artist behind many iconic works across Minneapolis most notably the black and white portrait of George Floyd and the Prince Gold Star.



some National Night out Vendors



MacPhail Northside Youth Orchestra came to perform at National Night Out



North Market Hydroponic farm tours



CAMDENTOWN MPLS MARKET

SHOP LOCAL & EAT BURRITOS

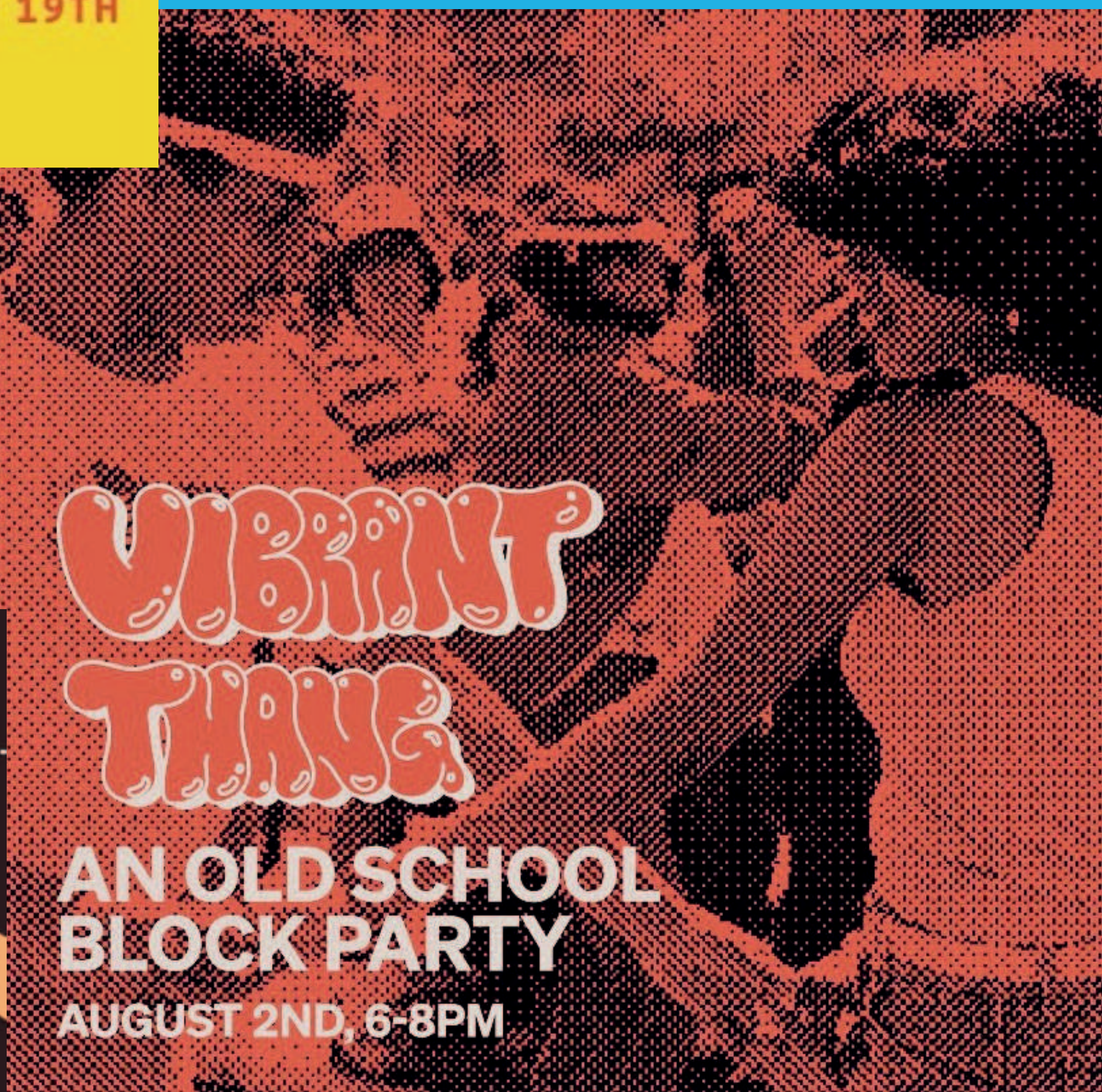


SUMMER SERIES

9AM- 12PM: JUNE 17TH, JULY 15TH, AUGUST 19TH

NORTH MARKET PARKING LOT

(More Events I helped promote/ plan)



VIBRANT THANG

AN OLD SCHOOL BLOCK PARTY
AUGUST 2ND, 6-8PM

Twin Cities Black Santa and Mrs. Claus
are coming to (Camden)town
Hosted by North Market

At North Market
Sunday Dec 18th
2pm - 4pm



THE FUTURE FOR CAMDENTOWN: AKA PHASE 3

INCLUDES BELL BANK FACILITIES,
SOLIDIFIED BOARD (SQUAD), A CO-
CREATION WORK LOUNGE, THE GET
DOWN COFFEE CO ROASTERY AND
MUCH MORE



My Future

My time at Camdentown has taught me so many things that I will carry with me into my future career, but also how I navigate everyday interactions. Seeing how the way Camdentown played with time as a form of resistance was awe inspiring. They reckoned with the past while in turn molding a future. Camdentown resists the notion that Black is tied to "Lack" and has lovingly showed me that Non-profits often operated by white "do-gooders," such as myself, can bring negative framing to community projects rather than asset framing. Houston has explained to me how that retraumatizes and demoralizes a community. To do the work means to celebrate, to share in joy, and co-create beyond what one believes is possible for a community.

Being a white woman born and raised in Missouri having never stepped into Minneapolis before (other than a Mall of America trip when I was seven) and entering a project in North Minneapolis that centers Black joy, culture, and futures, I knew that I had much to learn and be attentive to. I have come to understand that you must move at the speed of trust with those you are collaborating with and with yourself.

There is a strong legacy of Black leadership/ mentorship and artistry that flows through Camdentown. I understood this from the first day when Tom Monk, a young Black man, ran up to Houston and embraced him. He exclaimed that he recently returned from his travels in Asia. He was holding a T-shirt with a meticulous design sprawling across the shoulders and chest that he passed to Houston. Tom exclaimed that it was from his new line of T-shirts and he had made this one specifically for Houston. It was a thank you for Houston's mentorship and creative success that pushed Tom to create as well. Tom turned to me pointing to Houston and said that he was "creating legacy." Tom's sentiment echoed throughout much of my time at Camdentown. There was deep legacy that has been fostered and continues to be fostered. I am sad that I was only there to witness a blip in that chain of legacy but I intend to remain in touch and keep up with all of the incredible things that are to come.

I like to think that I can still honor Camdentown by holding on to the lessons that it's revealed to me. I will be doing conservation policy and community engagement in Syros, Greece beginning in August and I know that I will be bringing Camdentown along with me.

Rooted in Love,

Emily

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