



“Young community leaders increasingly acknowledge that both organizing and healing together are required for lasting community change. Both strategies, braided together, make a complete and durable fabric in our efforts to transform oppression, and hold the power to restore a more humane, and redemptive process toward community change” (p. 35).

Radically Healing Black Lives:

A Love Note to Justice

1. What is the research about?

A number of historical barriers have prohibited the capacity of Black leadership, and stunted the development of young Black leaders: a lack of Black organizing infrastructure, fragmentation and isolation of the Black organizing class, and a lack of meaning and hope. These barriers have made it challenging for Black leaders to address the political needs of Black youth, further contributing to their civic disengagement.

This research explores the way that young leaders of colour are changing our understanding of what it means to organize for social change. Using **radical healing** as a guiding framework, the article explores how the #BlackLivesMatter movement has exemplified elements of **healing justice**, and provided a blueprint for other healing-inspired movements.

2. Where did the research take place?

The author discusses events that took place in the United States.

3. Who is this research about?

This article focuses on Black youth and their role in the creation of new modes of leadership.

4. How was the research done?

This study draws on the #BlackLivesMatter movement as an example of a growing number of movements that are rooted in the healing justice framework. **Healing justice** has a two-fold purpose, and is defined as “an emerging movement that seeks both a) collective healing and well-being, and also b) transforming the institutions and relationships that are causing the harm in the first place” (p. 38).

This article locates the root of the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the police killings of a number of Black men, whose deaths received minimal response from the justice system. The author examines the ways in which the leaders of the movement are questioning why these deaths are seen as acceptable to white America, and calling for a different kind of response.

The author also draws on examples of #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations, such as one in West Oakland, California, in which protesters brought the Bay Area Rapid Transit system to a halt by forming a human chain on a busy platform. These actions highlight the “connection between power and well-being” (p. 40), and exemplify the way that this new generation of leaders is incorporating non-traditional methods of seeking justice.

5. What are the key findings?

Using #BlackLivesMatter as an example, this article highlights the ways that young people are using their **courage, outrage, and the power of their collective voice** to bring forth a change that will heal the wounds created by racism. Through this work, young leaders are also reimagining and recreating a society in which Black leadership, and the vibrancy of Black communities, are restored.

The author outlines three arguments:

a) Love is one of the important elements of this new mode of leadership.

A **love ethic** is described as “an unconditional desire for human dignity, meaningful existence, and hope” (p. 35). Along with outrage, love is the driving force behind many social movements today. The author argues that #BlackLivesMatter is being spearheaded by outrage at the way that Black bodies are treated, and a love for self that has led to demands for this treatment to change.

b) The new modes of leadership are both inwardly and externally focused.

There is a recognition that there must be internal healing from the wounds created by oppression while the work is being done to create change. Change and healing must coexist in order for the results of movements like #BlackLivesMatter to be long-lasting. The author uses the example of a braid to argue that weaving together healing and social change creates a result that is more durable and harder to unravel and destroy.

c) Healing and self-care are not to be done alone.

Since healing justice views policies that harm individuals and communities as political, the response to the harms created by these policies must also be politically-driven. Wellbeing is not an individual responsibility because the damage is often experienced collectively. Therefore, the process of healing, and the change that comes thereafter, must also be collective.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

This study suggests that the new modes of leadership are largely being taken up by young people. Young leaders are no longer waiting for Elders to take up their cause and lead the way; instead, they are using their collective numbers, outrage, and love for each other to demand justice. As young people have often been on the receiving end of policies and practices that have been harmful to them, young leaders are taking part in healing-inspired movements to change this dynamic and create the conditions that will better position them to make meaningful change.

The author suggests that healing justice **can address systemic injustices, and restore communities back to their vibrant and thriving baseline**. Organizations can draw on healing justice approaches to address issues of civic disengagement among Black youth, and to repair the damage caused by barriers to Black organizing.



Ginwright, S. A. (2015). Radically healing Black lives: A love note to justice. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2015(148), 33-44.