



**PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND BLACK LIVES MATTER: UNDERSTANDING
THE CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY¹ IN THE DIASPORA²**

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Abstract

In the summer of 2020, there was a collective uproar of protests, riots, and marches associated with the ongoing police brutality experienced by African American/Black communities and communities of color. Many groups from diverse backgrounds came together in support of Black Lives Matter and movements for justice and action against police violence. One of the groups that took part in these protests were the Pacific Islander communities. Their involvement in a March and Die-In hosted by Pasifika First Fridays, a prominent community and arts business in the local Salt Lake area, is the cause for this study of solidarity. During this time of political tension, a global pandemic and police violence, why were Pacific Islanders involved in this March and Die-in? How were Pacific Islanders standing in solidarity with oppressed communities here in the diaspora? Also, how were Pacific Islanders using cultural knowledge and values in order to support these groups, specifically the African American/Black communities during the summer of 2020? This paper will focus on the third question specifically, addressing the significance of cultural expressions such as the *fa'aumu*, or characteristic yell/shout of Pacific Islanders in various situations, during the march portion of the event. In this study we will learn about the historical and traditional uses of the *fa'aumu* as well as its uses in modern contexts. Then, we will identify the roles of the *fa'aumu* in the march. Using sociological and indigenous theory and knowledge we will explore how the *fa'aumu* is an expression of solidarity. Additionally, how cultural knowledge, values and expressions can be used to strengthen ties between groups of people and motivate a movement. This study is part of a larger dissertation project which will continue to explore the concept of solidarity in connection to the involvement of Pacific Islander communities in social movements.

¹ Solidarity is defined as a “union or fellowship arising from common responsibilities and interests, as between members of a group or between classes, peoples, etc.” (Dictionary.com, 2020)

² Diaspora in this context means places Pacific Islander communities reside that are outside of their homelands like the United States.

Introduction

The chill of early morning had melted away as the heat started to settle on us. We had started in Washington Square hearing from community members and leaders. Our minds and hearts flooded with empowering statements, heart-felt art and poetry, and a recollection of our connectedness. We were reminded of kuleana³, tā/vā⁴, tauhi vā⁵, and the cosmogony, epistemology, and Indigenous knowledge/experiences that tied us together as Black and Brown communities in the diaspora. As we laid on the ground of Washington Square, we remembered the violence, settler colonialism, white supremacy, and police brutality which have also surrounded and affected our communities. Our march to the Utah State Capitol reunited us as Pacific Islanders to the notion that we are a part of something greater. We chanted “Black and Brown unity”, “Black Lives Matter!”, and “Solidarity!”. At almost every block we would stop and fa’aumu, our shouts echoing through the streets. We were going to be heard. We were going to uplift.

This study will focus on the solidarity expressed by Pacific Islanders during the Pasifika First Fridays “Pacific Islanders for Black Lives Matter: March and Die-in” held on Friday, June 5th, 2020. This event was held from 6:00am to 1:00pm with three parts. The event began with a mixture of African American/Black and Pacific Islander speakers who spoke on a variety of topics such as solidarity, police brutality, violence, community, inequality, and racism. Following the speakers, everyone participated in a “die-in” where the group silently laid on the ground with their signs for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, the amount of time the officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd’s neck (Fox News, 2020). The die-in was a way to visually represent the collective Black and Brown bodies who were victims to police violence in 2020. The last piece of the event was a march up to the Utah State Capitol which was accompanied by vocal expressions such as chants and the *fa’aumu*, or a characteristic yell/shout of Pacific Islanders in various situations. By studying the last part of this event (the march) and the *fa’aumu*, we’ll learn more about why Pacific Islanders were involved in this March and Die-in? How were Pacific Islanders standing in solidarity with oppressed communities here in the diaspora? Also, how were Pacific Islanders using cultural knowledge, values, and vocal expressions in order to support these groups, specifically the African American/Black communities during the summer of 2020?

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Pacific Islander population in Utah increased by more than 60 percent between 2000 and 2010. Pacific Islanders residing in Turtle Island--North America bring not only themselves and their families, but connections to Oceania⁶ in the past and present sense. They bring with them rich genealogy, cultural values, traditions, and a strong sense of identity and who they are. Whether born and raised in Utah, or spending the majority of their life here, these children who grow into adults live an “American” lifestyle and simultaneously maintain a cultural identity. W.E.B. DuBois describes this phenomenon as “double consciousness” (Dubois, 1903) and similarly Gloria Anzaldúa describes the

³ *kuleana*: an indigenous Hawaiian concept meaning responsibility to community, land, people, time, and space.

⁴ *tā/vā*: The indigenous Tongan concept of time/space. (Ka’ili, 2017)

⁵ *tauhi vā*: The indigenous Tongan concept of making space beautiful or strengthening relationships. (Ka’ili, 2017)

⁶ Another term for the Pacific Islands and Pacific Islander communities.

“borderlands” as the spaces between and “mestiza consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 2007). While Pacific Islanders have an identity at home with their families, because they live in the diaspora, they are also part of a broader community. Pacific Islanders are therefore affected by societal issues such as police brutality and racial inequality because they live in a society that upholds white supremacy, racism, police violence, oppression, and discrimination. This white supremacy and violence are evidenced by statistics surrounding police brutality as well as the rhetoric surrounding white supremacy, racism, and violence in 2020. This responsibility to stand-in, show-up, and demonstrate to those that experience the violence of white supremacy sparked a call to action for many Pacific Islander communities during the summer of 2020 in the form of the Pasifika First Fridays March and Die-In. This call aligns with cultural and traditional values rooted in relationality, solidarity, and care for the land and people. These values are usually expressed through vocal/cultural expressions such as the *fa’aumu*.

Studying the *fa’aumu* specifically, holds a lot of significance to this study as well as for broader research on social movements, activism, and Indigenous practices. Behind every cultural expression in Pacific Islander communities, there is a deeper meaning and story attached to the action. The *fa’aumu*, while it physically catches the attention of those around, holds a deeper meaning and story which contributes to the motives, actions, and beliefs of Pacific Islander communities and this act of solidarity. Cultural expressions have been overlooked in academia and research because they have been thought of as minor practices or insignificant to history or further study. However, cultural expressions like the *fa’aumu* hold intimate connections with events and people which lasts over time. These expressions can be the key to understanding inter-ethnic relations. These relations are a critical piece to social movements in the contemporary United States. Also, those in the African American communities who identify with Africa through genealogy, heritage, and/or culture, could be characterized as an Indigenous group to Africa. This concept also applies to those who may identify with homelands outside of the United States. These groups would have connections to homelands through ancestry but have connections with America because of displacement, mistreatment, war, colonization, or the slave trade. Therefore, by studying cultural expressions, we can further understand trans-indigeneity. According to Dr. Vaughn, “Indigeneity encompasses creation stories and details existences from specific places. It exemplifies genealogical responsibilities to land and resources for the next generations.” (Vaughn, 2019) Trans-indigeneity is therefore the working relationships between indigenous groups based on indigenous protocol, practice, knowledge, and histories for the betterment of the future. My hope is that as I continually study this event and other social movements through a Pacific Islander or Indigenous lens, we will be able to strengthen our relationships to one another to bring about better educated social change and justice as collaborative indigenous groups living in the diaspora.

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Literature Review

“How does it feel to be a problem?” (Dubois, 1903) W.E.B. DuBois wrote about the African American/Black experience through a personal lens. His relationship with the world had been plagued by continual systems of racism. Dubois tried to resist these systems and suggest

ways for equality. In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois explains the constant tension between living the “norms” of society (being American) versus feeling separate from that world, “the veil”, and having a “second sight” or unique way of viewing the world. Being Black in America for DuBois meant you wore “the veil”, had “second sight”, and also had another identity outside of an American norm. Two co-existing identities formed the idea of a “double consciousness”. “One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” (DuBois, 1903) Pacific Islanders living in the diaspora experience “two warring ideals” as their identities are both connected to Oceania but they live here on Turtle Island in a settler colonial society, the United States. This leads us to question how one can combat double consciousness or find ways to have harmony between these two conflicting identities? DuBois continues to explain:

“But when the earth and brute is added an environment of men and ideas, then the attitude of the imprisoned group may take three main forms, - a feeling of revolt and revenge; an attempt to adjust all thought and action to the will of the greater group; or, finally, a determined effort at self- realization and self-development despite environing opinion.” (DuBois, 1903)

DuBois names revolt/revenge, assimilation, or self- realization as three ways to deal with double consciousness. Self- realization, the tactic DuBois preferred, related to having a voice and participation in politics and using education as a tool for change. Also, realizing personal worthiness and working through barriers. (DuBois, 1903) Pacific Islanders have similar solutions to dealing with double consciousness relating to self- realization. This is done by [re]claiming identity and history, using the tool of education, and increasing civic and political engagement (social movements). Gloria Anzaldúa presents different solutions for creating harmony within a double consciousness.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa she mentions a similar idea to “double consciousness” called “mestiza consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 2007). This consciousness stems from the concept of “borderlands” or what divides space and separates people, land, and identity. The borderlands can split people to act in two separate ways and one way may be more acceptable than another. Anzaldúa relates the borderlands of her identity as a queer woman of color living in the United States, the separation that divided her for so long. There was rejection with her being queer as well as a woman of color in the United States leading her to reside in the margins and feel forgotten or lost. In order to combat this divide and embrace her whole self and bridge communities she introduces the “mestiza consciousness”:

“The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality transcended.” (Anzaldúa, 2007)

Anzaldúa in this Chicana cultural, feminist, and queer theory gives us a unique view of DuBois’s double consciousness. Instead of self- realization and working on the self, Anzaldúa says the solution “lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts.” (Anzaldúa, 2007) Pacific Islander communities through solidarity are attempting to heal divides of being an indigenous and racialized people within a white supremacist society, where the American dream is by in large an illusion being brought about by police brutality, political turmoil, and frustrations with a global pandemic. The summer 2020 response with the Black Lives Matter movement resonates with mestiza consciousness.

Through bridging those gaps in different aspects of our lives, we will find more healing, meaning, and life. “*Soy un amasamiento*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.” (Anzaldúa, 2007)

DuBois and Anzaldúa present different frameworks of how to combat “double consciousness” or “borderlands”. These frameworks aim to create a more cohesive and holistic outlook on our lives, identities, and relationships to one another. For Pacific Islanders and Indigenous communities, there is specific knowledge addressing solidarity not only in personal identity but also with each other. Epeli Hau'ofa discusses the concept of identity for Pacific Islanders in his article, “Our Sea of Islands”. He is speaking about our perspective of the Pacific Ocean and the islands/people that reside there. He mentions, “There is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as ‘islands in a far sea’ and as a ‘sea of islands’.” (Hau'ofa, 1994) He mainly discusses how the viewpoint on the Pacific Islands has been related to smallness, emptiness, and dependence (‘islands in a far sea’). However, Hau'ofa wants to change that mindset into greatness, expansiveness, and interdependence (‘sea of islands’). Hau'ofa discusses in his work the use of the “small” perspective as related to colonization. By making the islands seem “small”, people in power can more easily manipulate and exploit these lands and people. However, by changing the mindset and regaining power with words, our people in Oceania will see a rich history of survival and knowledge connecting generations back to them. In relation to solidarity, knowing who you are and having harmony within yourself will help you have harmony with others.

So'o le fau ma le fau

In working together, we can accomplish great things

While Pacific Islanders use their identities and values as a way to strengthen their relationships within themselves and with others especially here in the United States, there is indigenous knowledge and research to further explain this connection. Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer's *Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense* explains connections between Indigenous epistemologies and their relation to science. She describes the relationship between the physical, mental, and spiritual ways of viewing and learning about the world. By integrating body, mind, and spirit equally, Pacific Islanders will discover new ways of thinking and harmony in their identities. Additionally, Meyer states, “Discover what interdependence really means by listening to others, by watching how those who have more experience do things, and by sharing ideas when asked. Then go out and watch the moon rise and swim in waters freshly seasoned with Spring rains.” (Meyer, 2013) In terms of solidarity, Meyer uses physical, mental, and spiritual interconnection to describe how Pacific Islanders need to listen and learn from each other and other communities. Through listening and learning Pacific Islanders are able to make lasting social change in our world. Meyer reminds us that Indigenous practices can aid in these efforts.

Additionally, Dr. Tēvita O Ka'ili addresses forms of solidarity in his book, *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations*. He speaks to the indigenous theory of time and space and their relationship to socio spatial ties in a variety of cultural contexts. Relating to the migration of Pacific Islanders away from their home islands, Ka'ili mentions the viewpoints of Lilomaiava- Doktor. “In the geography of *vā* [human space], ‘distance does not separate *aiga* [kin], but only provides further interconnection of social pathways. Nor does greater distance translate into diminishing commitment to families, because social connections

constitute a significant part of their identity and self-esteem.” (Ka’ili, 2017) Again, we see in Ka’ili’s work the importance of harmony within identity leading towards commitment with one another. Even though there is distance (space) between families, there is still the sense of responsibility to the community. The *vā* or relationship between people cannot break unless it is separated from the identity. The sense of solidarity for Pacific Islanders is known in this book as *fatongia* or *tauhi vā* (also known as *tauhi vaha’a*), the nurturing of space and time. By participating in the art of *tauhi vā*, one will discover they are making their social ties/spaces beautiful and strong. Ka’ili suggests this can be done in a variety of ways through mutual support, mutual love, compassion, respect, unity, and cooperation.

Likewise, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* the implications of how research is done and how it could be harmful to indigenous narratives. She presents historical accounts of trauma, dehumanization, and colonization in education and research for indigenous communities. Her work also presents indigenous practices that can heal the wounds from the past and even the present. Pacific Islanders during the summer of 2020 witnessed reoccurring violence, oppression, and brutality done to their African American brothers and sisters. Smith’s indigenous models, practices, and projects, while aimed at restoring indigenous research, knowledge, and stories, can also help Pacific Islanders practice restoration within an inter-ethnic relationship. Pacific Islanders bring unique perspectives to research and social action. By understanding these perspectives, we can further understand the actions done by Pacific Islanders and define what an act of solidarity is in their perspective. One message throughout the book is that through interconnectedness and solidarity between land and people, there can be success and a deeper learning/understanding of what African American/Black and Pacific Islander communities experience. Also, ways to be in further harmony with each other and push for social change and awareness.

For Pacific Islanders, one way to express harmony within self and with others is through cultural expressions:

CHOO-HOO!!!

If you have ever experienced Pacific Islander culture or been to any of their events, you are sure to hear the *fa’aumu* or “choo-hoo”. Historically, the *fa’aumu* has been used in *fa’aSamoa*⁷ tradition as a way to announce gatherings. The *fa’aumu* was also a way for non-titled⁸ people to present gifts or delicacies to a high chief or family. This vocal expression was to show joy, pride, and high respect in the *fa’aSamoa* culture. The *fa’aumu* was also used as a way to boost warriors before battle. (personal communication, Laititi, 2020). The word “fa’aumu” is actually considered a more modern/slang phrase introduced after colonialism. According to G. B. Milner’s 1966 Samoan Dictionary, the term *fa’aumu* comes from the island of Tutuila and is now widely used. The correct/standard term originating in Samoa is “*ususū*”. G. B. Milner also mentions a couple of social contexts and linguistic variations of the *ususū* in his dictionary. He defines this term as “giving a characteristic cry (kind of yell or whoop) uttered when one is violently angry, when challenging someone to fight, when feeling particularly lively or happy as in the course of dancing, or on serving *taufolo* to a chief or honoured guest (when it is good

⁷ *fa’aSamoa* is the “Samoan way”. It is the traditional way to perform Samoan culture.

⁸ Those who did not hold a chief title in the village and were regular citizens.

manner to let it be heard).” (Milner, 1966) Councilman Jake Fitiseanu provided a further description of the term:

“The word "usu" can refer to any vocalization ("usu le pese" = sing a song, "usufono" = speak during a council meeting, etc.) and "sū" means to pour water (also "susū" = wet), so one folk etymology is that the "ususū" (aka *fa'aumu*) is a vocal expression that is intensified with heightened emotion in a way that it "floods" (*sū*) the vicinity with your voice (*usu*).” (personal communication, Fitiseanu, 2020)

While there aren't official publications on the *fa'aumu* and its uses, I was able to gather an oral tradition used in telling the origins of the *fa'aumu*. This oral tradition stems from Satuimalufilufi village, 'Upolu island:

“The Samoan demigod Ti'iti'i-a-Talaga is an analog of the universal Polynesian figure known as Maui in the rest of Polynesia. Ti'iti'i was the one who snuck into the underworld called Sālefe'e where he watched demons prepare an *umu*⁹, where he tasted cooked food for the first time, and where he defeated Mafui'e (god of earthquakes and volcanoes) and brought the secret of making fire up to the mortal world. When Ti'iti'i climbed up from Sālefe'e, he carried a torch in his right hand and balanced a carrying pole (*amo*) laden with baskets of cooked food on his left shoulder. After his long climb from the underworld, he stopped at a place inland of where Vaialele village is today and laid his *amo* on the ground so he could catch his breath. That place is still called Sāamo ("sacred carrying pole"). Because he had only seen an *umu* once, he decided to try it himself so that he would be better prepared to demonstrate cooking for the villagers. There is supposedly a place in the hills behind Fagali'i village called Alatauaifu'efu'e where Ti'iti'i made the first *umu* in Sāmoa and uncovered (*fu'efu'e*) the food next to the path (*ala*). When he showed people fire and cooked food for the first time, the Samoans all cheered with emotion over experiencing cooked food and the *umu* for the first time, hence "fa'aumu" referring to a lively shout embodying exuberant emotion.” (personal communication, Fitiseanu, 2020)

In contemporary times, the *fa'aumu* has been used in a variety of contexts. We hear it in graduation ceremonies, weddings, athletic events, protests/marches, etc. The *fa'aumu* is widely used, even by non-Pacific Islander people to either express joy or confrontation. There are many opinions on the appropriate uses of the *fa'aumu*. However, for the following sections I will describe the uses of the *fa'aumu* in protests and its effectiveness in establishing solidarity. In the following sections, I am telling the stories of Pacific Islanders at the march through my own perspective. Using a first-person point of view, I want to emphasize the impact this event and research has had on my own identity as a Pacific Islander woman. I cannot separate this event or research from myself and do not want to continue in an objective or divided view of my communities that a settler colonial mindset would encourage or call “professional”. By continuing on in first person, I hope readers realize the value and power that comes from an Indigenous perspective and how we as Pacific Islanders have deep interconnections with the work we do. Now to officially begin with the *fa'aumu*. As we marched up to the Utah State Capitol a lasting effect rang through the downtown streets of Salt Lake City. Our heightened emotions brought on by events involving the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breanna Taylor, and many others made its way into a vocal expression. This expression, amplified with

⁹ An above-ground oven usually made with hot stones.

many voices, *flooded* the streets and harmonized into one unified voice. Black and brown communities united as one force, with one sound.

Fa'aumu

I. Fa'aumu: Interconnection

“Aloha is the primal source of our collective emergence.” (Meyer, 2021)

The march: We gathered our signs decorated with tribal designs, Black power fists, and phrases we would start to chant. Gathering on the corner of University Blvd. and State St., we) faced away from Washington Square in pursuit of the Utah State Capitol building. Rae Ducksworth, a member of the BLM Utah Chapter, held a megaphone and led our march with Moana Palelei HoChing and leaders of Pasifika First Fridays. We began to move, a force of Black and Brown unity. There was power in the way we were walking. There was power in the words we were speaking. There was power in our raised fists and signs. There was power in the people around us. There was power in our goal. There was power in our struggle to walk, our struggle to continue, our struggle to survive. Our first fa'aumu. Moana made sure to pass the message on through our whole group. “Loud and proud, don't hold anything back... 1, 2, 3!” CHOO-HOO! We're sorry this happened. CHOO-HOO! We won't let it happen anymore. CHOO-HOO! We stand with you, we appreciate you, we love you.

According to the comprehensive database “Mapping Police Violence”, 1,127 people were killed by police in 2020. Out of that 1,127 killed, 28% were African American/Black. This community makes up only 13% of the US population (Mapping Police Violence, 2021). People of color, especially people who are African American/Black, experience high rates of police brutality and violence. In the summer of 2020, we heard many names of people who were killed by police. These names include George Floyd, killed as Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. Breonna Taylor, shot and killed as police raided her Kentucky apartment. Elijah McClain, died in Colorado after police forced him into a chokehold and paramedics sedated him. Locally in Utah, Bernardo Palacios, Darrien Hunt, Bobby Ray Duckworth, Siale Angilau, and many others were killed by police in recent years (Mapping Police Violence, 2021). Many of these cases led to anger and frustration within communities of color. We were questioning the use of excessive force and asking why our family/friends/neighbors/community members were being killed? And why were they being killed right before our own eyes?

The Pasifika First Fridays event was in direct response to the violence we constantly witnessed. Using their platform, they dedicated the first Friday in June to create a social space where we could have conversations about solidarity, unity, and further discuss the next steps for healing. Through this gathering, our Pacific Islanders, young and old, reflected on the hurt they've experienced, remembered the names of those affected by violence, and tried to articulate what they could do in the future. As leaders from the Black Lives Matter Utah chapter came up to speak, the founder Lex Scott expressed, “I don't know if the Pacific Islander Community knows that Black Lives Matter Utah is here for you as well.” (Fox News, 2020) A mutual feeling of solidarity and union was created. Looking deeper into this event, I wanted to know how we as Pacific Islanders were participating and enriching these relationships. I found one of those

critical ways to be the *fa'aumu*. Pacific Islanders throughout the event had connected their identities to place and the people around them. They were concerned about the well-being of their African American/Black brothers and sisters. They were concerned with the environment which fostered continual racism, oppression, and violence. How could we restore the harmony between us? How could we express that to our brothers and sisters?

These questions align with the broader question: what is an act of love and solidarity in an indigenous perspective? Looking at Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's indigenous projects in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, three projects stood out to me. The first is protecting. Protecting is deeply rooted in care, nurturing, love, respect, and survival. Smith said, "It [protecting] can be as real as land and as abstract as a belief about the spiritual essence of the land." (Smith, 1999) The presence of the *fa'aumu* was an abstract act of protection. As mentioned in its history, the *fa'aumu* has been used in confrontation, fighting, and war. While this was a peaceful protest, the *fa'aumu* symbolically acted as protection. In a sense it was our armor against the wrongs that were done to our communities. Also, the *fa'aumu* symbolized our responsibility and acceptance to protect, watch over, and care for our African American/Black brothers and sisters. In a Fox 13 news article, community organizer Verona Mauga said this: "There is that strong connection because this is about being kind good humans...It's about taking care of each other and supporting each other." (Fox News, 2020) Many of the traditional ways we refer to ourselves are as "the people"- or as "the humans". John Trudell¹⁰, in a discussion with *The 11th Hour* by Leila Connors, said, "It's about us getting to that point where we recognize our own value in a system that devalues us and the trick of the devaluing was it got us to devalue ourselves." (Trudell, 2005) John Trudell in this interview explains just like Verona Mauga the importance of being human, and being kind good humans. Through the *fa'aumu* and its protection, we are able to slow down and deconstruct the devaluing from what John Trudell calls the "industrial ruling class". In this event, the devaluing stems from police brutality, violence, white supremacy, and racism. Protecting is again a way for us to reassert our identities as human beings and recognize our spiritual responsibilities to one another. Also, to fight against powers that uphold these violent actions against our communities.

This leads to the second project which is restoring. "Restoring is a project which is conceived as a holistic approach to problem solving. It is holistic in terms of the emotional, spiritual and physical nexus, and also in terms of the individual and the collective, the political and the cultural." (Smith, 1999) While the *fa'aumu* was meant to show protection, it was also a way to restore well-being "spiritually, emotionally, physically and materially". Through the *fa'aumu*, we as a group found healing and a restoring of pride and purpose. We also found healing by being together as a holistic group and spreading awareness about the pain and grief that was created surrounding these violent events.

The final project is celebrating survival or "survivance". This is the act of celebrating survival and resistance through performance or expression. The *fa'aumu* is used mostly in celebratory contexts. In the march, we were celebrating unity, solidarity, and love. We were also celebrating our survival through hardships and injustice. Finally, we were celebrating our love for humanity. The *fa'aumu* was a way to center our love or *aloha* and *aloha* is the primal source of our collective emergence (Meyer, 2021). We are pushing back against individualized tendencies to be selfish and uncaring and focusing on relationalities which encompass *aloha* and family. By strengthening our bonds to one another through protection, restoration, and

¹⁰ John Trudell was a Native American poet, actor, musician, and political activist.

celebration, we are able to come to a mutual understanding of purpose and therefore enact our demands for social change.

II. Fa'aumu: An Echoing of Emotion

During the night in American Samoa, you'll see fruit bats parading around the trees and darting across the sky. Bats as well as dolphins are known for a specialized way of locating. Echolocation "refers to the use of sound reflections to localize objects and orient in the environment." (Wilson & Keil, 1999) Bats and dolphins use this skill for survival, mainly to detect prey, understand their surroundings, and communicate. "In echolocating animals, detection of a sonar target depends on the strength of the returning echo. Large sonar targets reflecting strong echoes are detected at greater distances than small sonar targets." (Wilson & Keil, 1999) The echo is used as a tool to support these animals. Used metaphorically, the echo could be used by us as well. The reciprocity of a powerful echo filled with *mana*, or spirit, can also help us find our locations, or our goals.

When you hear the *fa'aumu*, it is an unmistakable sound. About one hundred people gathered for the march and each one of us raised our voices. Why was there so much power in the unity of our voices? Why was it when the *fa'aumu* echoed off city buildings we felt inspired and empowered to keep marching and push forward? Why did we feel the need to have our voices be heard? In Dr. Tēvita O. Ka'ili's work, *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations*, he explains the sociospatial concepts of *tā* (time/rhythm/beats), *vā* (space/relationships/between), and *tauhi vā* (art of maintaining these spaces). Additionally, he explains the concept of *fatongia* and social reciprocity in Tongan culture. "*Fatongia* (or *vaha'angatae*) is a social duty that relates and connects Tongans to one another. At a societal level, each person has a *fatongia*, and reciprocity (*fetauhi'aki*) governs the *fatongia* relationship." (Ka'ili, 2017) My second point is the *fa'aumu* as an echoing of emotion. As the *fa'aumu* bounced and echoed, it created a reciprocal relationship, strengthening the *fatongia* we had during the march. As the *fa'aumu* left our mouths, it was used to reveal the historical and current hurt that had been done to the African American/Black community as well as our own. Ka'ili articulates that "In the Tongan language, *tā* means 'to beat, to mark, to form, or to perform. In a temporal sense, *tā* is the time marker that marks time with beats, markings, or social acts." Dr. 'Okusitino Mahina added on to the definition of *tā* as a "beating of space". (Ka'ili, 2017) As a social act, the *fa'aumu* created a marking of time for our march. Ka'ili further describes *tā* in canoe racing. "Drummers beat the drums to signal the rowing pace (time) and to encourage rowers to give it their all." (Ka'ili, 2017) Through the echo of the *fa'aumu* and our continual pattern to *fa'aumu* at every block, we were creating our own beat and pace. With each *fa'aumu* amplified, we could then "give it our all" to the vocal fight against police brutality, violence, racism, and colonialism. The *fa'aumu* also encouraged us physically to take each step in time toward the Utah State Capitol.

Furthermore, Ka'ili explains the concept of *vā* as "a relational space between two time markers." (Ka'ili, 2017) He continues by saying, "In social contexts, *vā* is a space that is formed through the mutual relations (or intersections) between persons or social groups, and it is also an indicator of the quality of the relationship... Mahina argued that the symmetrical intersection of time in space gives rise to beautiful artistic creations and harmonious social spaces." (Ka'ili, 2017) Through the uniting of our voices, chants, and yells, we were participating in the positive

notions of *vā*. Our relationship to one another as family, friends, activists, community members, and concerned citizens was the space in which we were enriching and serving. Solidarity is also a form of *vā*, as it is an intersection of realities, connection of identities, and the union of our group. This leads us to the concept of *tauhi vā*, or ways to upkeep the space between us. While the *fa'aumu* functioned as a timekeeper, it was also an art of *tauhi vā*. The alignment of time (the echo and pattern) with space (our relationship to one another during the march) was cared for with the presence of the *fa'aumu*. The symmetrical relationship of the echoing of emotions that followed us in our march created a harmonious relationship. The release of pain, grief, anger, and separation during the *fa'aumu* echoed back to us in the forms of strength, joy, peace, pace, and unity. Ka'ili would explain this as *vālelei*, good space. With having created *vālelei* through the connection of *tā*, *vā*, and *tauhi vā*, the *fa'aumu* was not only used as a way to give up negative emotion, but to gain positive emotion as well. *Vālelei* could also attribute to good solidarity, a reciprocal relationship tethered through time and space.

Looking out for each other or the “distance in between” is important for the work of solidarity and social movements. Ka'ili mentions Halapua and his understanding of *vā* and *tauhi vaha'a*. “He [Halapua] explained that *tauhi vaha'a* is a ‘combination of three community principles, namely, *tauhi* (nurturing, caring, and sharing), *vā* (human space), and *ha'a* (clans or cultural groups).’ He also argued that *tauhi vaha'a* ‘emphasizes the need for nurturing and sharing of, and caring for the human space and relationship between different cultural groups or people in society.’” (Ka'ili, 2017) Referring back to echolocation, the reciprocity of sound helped animals find their goal. Again, with the *fa'aumu*, the reciprocity of sound helped us to find our goals mentally and spiritually. The “nurturing, sharing of, and caring for of human space” is evidenced in our echo of emotion. Our cry for the healing of one another out into time and space (the universe) responded back in motivation and a vision of our future location.

III. Fa'aumu: A Bridge for Change

CHOO-HOO! We've reached the bottom. Rock bottom. The bottom of the barrel. At our lowest point. We looked up at the Utah State Capitol looming before us. A couple more blocks up the hill. A couple more blocks to bring our unity to a peak. A horizon. To rise up from the bottom as human beings. As loved ones and friends. And to face police officers, officials, and this white institution. CHOO-HOO! We've made it! In the face of it all, we've done it. We've reached the goal and endured through the pain, grief, and heartache. Tears and embraces. Officers in uniform feel our emotion. They bring their own tears. We've made it to the top. Together. With one voice and one sound. With one aloha. Our collective emergence as humans restoring humanity. CHOO-HOO to be heard. CHOO-HOO for ancestors and family. CHOO-HOO for love and mana.

Fa'aumu as a bridge for change. In Dr. Meyer's talk “Ho'i hou i' ka mole”, she addresses her holographic epistemology and describes the significance of the number three. She showed her holographic epistemology word list which shows words that connect to each other in threes. Her main three categories are “Body, mind, and spirit”. Under these terms are other groups such as “Life, mind, and joy” or “*Manaloa, Manaolana, and Aloha*”. (Meyer, 2021) In her article “Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense”, Dr. Meyer explains, “It has been proven, stitched, sung and experienced that we are more than our bodies, more than our minds. Matter is not separate from spirit...” (Meyer, 2013) In her talk, Meyer explains how we need to expand

body, mind, and spirit. We cannot be stuck in the physical realm which is always calculating and perceiving. She said, “anything you do will be shaped by laughter, understanding, by awareness...”. (Meyer, 2021) The *fa’aumu*, while a physical and emotional act, is bridging us to the spiritual realm. Another hologram as Dr. Meyer would call it: *Fa’aumu* as a physical voice (body), an echoing of emotion (mind), and finally as a bridge for change (spirit). The *fa’aumu* as a way to connect to our personal spiritual realms is powerful evidence of how cultural expressions hold deeper meanings and functions when presented in social events. As mentioned in “Fa’aumu as interconnection”, by connecting to the spiritual realm, we are connecting to humanity. The more we connect to humanity and deeper spiritual values/understanding, it makes us better people who then recognize the responsibility to contribute to the betterment of the world and society.

In Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, she talks about indigenous social movements and their structure. “This social movement contains many features which reflect both a huge diversity of interests and objectives, of approaches and ways of working, and a unity of spirit and purpose.” (Smith, 1999) Again, we see another correlation of threes as mentioned by Dr. Meyer. According to an indigenous methodology, social movements require a relationship between not only the physical and mental, but also the spiritual. Dr. Smith continues by saying, “It [the social movement] involves a revitalization and reformation of culture and tradition; an increased participation in and articulate rejection of Western institutions; and a focus on strategic relations and alliances with non-indigenous groups. The movement has developed a shared international language or discourse which enables indigenous activists to talk to each other across their cultural differences while maintaining and taking their directions from their own communities or nations.” (Smith, 1999) While Dr. Smith is addressing the aspects of an indigenous social movement, we can relate her words to the Pasifika First Fridays march. Some people think the use of the *fa’aumu* should not be used in environments such as a protest. The confrontational aspect of the *fa’aumu* in these settings is seen to be taking away from culture and tradition. However, connecting to Dr. Smith’s analysis, the *fa’aumu* used at this march and protest could be seen as a way to “revitalize and reform” culture and tradition. Also, to fight against or resist Western institutions who uphold white supremacy and police brutality. Additionally, we need to communicate with one another using our identities in culture. By using the *fa’aumu* we are creating a language of solidarity and unity between our communities. The *fa’aumu* is also bridging us into the spiritual realm, helping us to form a deeper love, *kuleana*, and celebration of our humanity together.

Conclusion

So’o le fau ma le fau

In working together, we can accomplish great things

Reiterating the Samoan proverb from the beginning of this study, I want to reinforce the notion that in working together we *can* accomplish great things. Pacific Islanders hold a unique cultural and personal identity here in the diaspora which contributes to their civic engagement and relationships with other communities. The harmony we have within ourselves specifically as Pacific Islanders with *kuleana* to land and people led to the greater harmony experienced with the African American/Black community during the summer of 2020. In other words, by knowing who you are and where you come from leads to a greater understanding of your purpose and

capabilities, which in turn leads to where you'll go and what you'll do next. Additionally, as we remembered indigenous practices, values, and cultural expressions (ex. The *fa'aumu*), we put them to use in the forms of activism and showing our *aloha*.

Through each of our sections we learned that the *fa'aumu* functioned as interconnection, an echoing of emotion, and a bridge for change. Connecting these concepts to Dr. Meyer's "Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense" we were able to see the relationship between body, mind, and spirit with the *fa'aumu* being a function and expression of each category. With interconnection, the *fa'aumu* was used as a verbal cultural expression to ground identity and purpose for our cause. By using our identities and ties with one another to beautify our space, solidarity was created and strengthened between our groups. An echoing of emotion was formed to mentally work through issues and problem solve. Through body and mind, verbal interconnection and emotion, we were able to connect spiritually to each other and our goals. This holographic image of the *fa'aumu* is the formation of love and the endurance of solidarity.

In conclusion, the *fa'aumu* was an act of aloha and solidarity because of its connection to cultural identity and *kuleana*. We are able to understand this action because of the relationship between activism and research. Activism and research are at the front lines for social change, meaning they both fuel each other to contribute to our social understanding of the world. Again, by understanding who we are as communities and our needs on the ground level (activism), we are able to know how to create solutions (research) to inform further activism and civic engagement that is more inclusive and effective. In a future, larger project, I am hoping to explore more ways Pacific Islanders are contributing to activism and inter-ethnic or trans-indigenous relations historically and in the present. Also, I hope to continually remind my readers of the importance of indigenous research and activism in the diaspora, and how it can further social science research and social movement frameworks. Our collective action cannot be coupled with empty meaning. We must fill our actions with *mana*, *aloha*, and *kuleana* in all that we do in order to achieve the great things we strive for.

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