A Case Study of the Lincoln Theater in Columbus, Ohio:
A Participatory Social Action Research Study

DISSertation

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By

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Abstract

Through this case study of the historic Lincoln Theatre in Columbus, Ohio, race, gender and class converge in a renegotiation of what art means in a marginalized community, struggling to re-vitalize itself in a postmodern, multicultural context. This study will examine the redevelopment of the historically black Lincoln Theatre by the city of Columbus, Ohio under the administration of the city’s first black mayor. The examination will be presented as an autoethnographic narrative informed by critical, black feminist and urban regime theories as applied to participatory social action research on the near east side.

This research will focus on community-based arts as a tool exploring issues of self-esteem, community empowerment and neo-colonialism in the black community. Within the African American landscape, community based arts have traditionally functioned as “sites of resistance” (Daniel, 2003) to offset the vestiges of colonialism (poverty and racism) that still exist as sturdy threads in the fabric of American culture. This study will expose issues of power and agency as performed at the nexus of city government, black artists and local community politics during the $13 million dollar renovation of the historic Lincoln theatre. Chapter one will foreground the personal history that made this research of interest to me. It will describe the purpose, significance and limitations of the
study and present my research questions. Autoethnographic narrative presented as vignettes will establish the historical environment that acted as a crucible for the development of the African American, female, cultural political perspective that brings me to the research that I have undertaken and the push for social justice my research seeks to evoke.

Chapter two puts my personal history into a larger context through a review of the literature that informed my thinking and guided my research approach. Highlighting the relevance of the cultural practice of “uplift” that prevailed historically among African American women and the historic sociological tradition of community-mindedness that moved the black community forward through cultural community based efforts, this chapter will look at the traditional elements of black culture and how cultural institutions function within the black community. Autoethnographic narrative contextualizes the discourse and the chapter concludes by overlaying the renovation of the Lincoln theatre on the historical map of socio/economic and political progress within the near east side black community, exposing the challenges for community based arts and issues of marginalization, commodification and self and community disempowerment inherent in a postmodern, capitalistic environment.

Chapter three provides the rationale for the design of the study, a mixed methodology of participatory social action research combined with autoethnographic narrative. The research location, data collection methods and analysis, and study limitations are presented.
Chapter four provides the data analysis. Survey results, excerpts from interviews and additional autoethnographic narratives are included in this chapter.

Chapter five concludes by offering my reflections on this case study and the implications for black community-based arts institutions. I revisit my research questions and reflect on my role as researcher, artist and community member. I also offer future study considerations.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my family, Lamar and Lillian Shorter who created a beautiful life for me and my three brothers who shared it with me. It is also dedicated to Dr. Mary McManus and Dr. Gloria Lauderdale whose examples of courage, dedication and excellence continue to shine like a beacon for those of us who come after.
Acknowledgments

I happily take this opportunity to thank my advisor, Dr. Vesta Daniel for the unflinching support, intellectual guidance, mother wit and friendship she provided me during this process. Her grace and concern for her students is gift. I thank Dr. Christine Ballengee-Morris for her fine example of “getting it done,” Dr. Margaret Wyzomirski for encouraging me to think about policy, Dr. James Sanders for his field support, and Dr. Candace Stout for her insistence that this work is “important.” Thanks also to the entire Art Education department under the able leadership of Dr. Patricia Stuhr. My success would not have been possible without the full support of this department.

I also thank my family, especially my daughter Brianna Lillian for her maturity, my mother-in-law Reita, who always stepped up to help out as needed, and my three brothers for the gifts they gave me. To Elton, the first true scholar I ever knew, to Lamar, Jr., a dedicated and discipline athlete and musician, and Craig, whose creativity abounds, I thank you. To my extended family, Regina, Suzanne, Philicia, Pat, Malikah and uncle Mac, please know that your commitment to my success was of great encouragement to me. I thank my colleagues Tanisha, Shirley, Ivy, Jung and Loring for their perseverance, good humor and passion for the work that we do. I thank Dr. Marian Musgrave for her
brilliant example and Dr. James Upton for always encouraging me to move forward.
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With A Focus on Arts Policy and Administration
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CHAPTER 1

Background To The Study

I wish I knew how it would feel to be free
I wish I could break all the chains holding me
I wish I could say all the things that I should say
Say 'em loud, say 'em clear, for the whole round world to hear…
(Nina Simone, 1967)

I used to hear that song a lot when I was growing up on the near east side of
Columbus, Ohio. As the only daughter of Lamar and Lillian Shorter, I held a
privileged space among the three boys in my family. I also had the freedom to be
rough and tumble in my play, to speak my mind as forthrightly as the boys, and to
have private time to contemplate the world in the only unshared bedroom in our
small house at the end of our tree-lined street. Growing up in the 60’s and 70’s
was a marvelous time of discovery and exploration of black history, black
consciousness and black political development.

Our family had one television set on which we watched the evening news as a
family. The black radio station, WVKO radio, played R & B and Motown during
the day, Gospel on Sunday, jazz on Sunday afternoons and went off the air after
sundown. Columbus had two daily newspapers, the Columbus Dispatch and the
Citizen Journal; we subscribed to the Journal. There was also one black weekly,
The Call & Post, which we purchased weekly and alternative papers that we had
access to on occasion, *The Black Panther Party* and *Muhammad Speaks*. We got *Ebony, Jet* and *Life* magazines by subscription, *Look* and *Time* magazines on occasion and *Crisis* magazine periodically.

My parents both hailed from the South, so we kept a close eye on Civil Rights developments in Alabama, in particular, and other Southern states where we had relatives. At dinner, our family discussed the politics of the day. With so much reading material we had well-informed discussions. Everyone”s opinion was important and we were all brilliant thinkers…we knew because our parents proudly acknowledged when we made salient points. Heated political arguments with friends in our basement were supported by additional snacks. “This discussion sounds like it needs more food!” my mother would say as she sent me downstairs with more potato chips.

As we grew up, we each participated in opportunities to change the status quo either by participating in sports like my brother did as a pitcher (a non-traditional role for a black boy) or taking piano lessons and playing in recitals at Capital University like I did. But we also participated, as did our friends and neighbors, in opportunities to change the political landscape by attending student rallies or like some, participating in student activist groups. The fact was, I grew up in a time when activism wasn”t called “activism” it was just being involved and involvement was the objective, participation the expected and normative, and social justice the goal.
As a child of the civil rights era, my propensity to work for social justice is ingrained. As an artist, I seek arts projects that allow me to combine my love of the arts with the potential for transformative outcomes. The process of renovating the Lincoln Theater which began as early as 2002, presented itself as a research project that coalesced my propensity for social justice action with the potential for a transformative result. When combined with the engagement of a community-based group of artists, the Lincoln Theater renovation project became a natural subject to examine in the form of a case study.

This case study was conducted and will be presented using mixed methodologies. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was the initial design and objective of this research, however, an internally revealing autoethnographic narrative study emerged from that externally focused beginning. Some of the autoethnographic material will be offered as italicized writings in sections between the more traditional forms of scholarly presentation. These sections will include my musings, anecdotal information that I obtained during this research, alternative discourses that have a connection to or bearing on the case study of the Lincoln Theater and my own emotional responses to the project. These narratives are offered as “thick data” to provide a more holistic reading of the Lincoln renovation phenomenon while offering the reader insight into my own reflexivity regarding this study.
Significance of the Study

What’s Going On? (Marvin Gaye, 1971)

Columbus... is trying to come to grips with the growing problem of gang violence…I’m working with government official and community groups to see if federal financial assistance and other resources can be brought into the fight against gangs on Columbus’s near east side in my congressional district. This area has the highest crime rate in the city and one of the lowest family income levels. (Congressman Pat Tiberi, 2005)

The area to which Congressman Tiberi is referring is the near east side of Columbus, Ohio. That description is very different from the area in which I was reared, attended school, made friends, crashed parties and went off to college. As an African American female with a daughter of my own, it is difficult to accept that description of the place we still call home.

This year already has a significant number of homicides, many involving youth, many on the near east side (Dispatch, 2010). Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman called a press conference to announce the creation of a special unit to handle what he calls a “spike in violence.” He (Mayor Coleman) said yesterday that there had been nine homicides in Columbus in the past two weeks. Seven were the result of gun violence, and seven victims were African-American, he said. Four were younger than twenty-six. This annual policing approach to the problem of teen violence has worked relatively well when it’s funded but funding is always an
issue. In addition, increased policing only addresses part of the problem of black teens killing each other. A comprehensive approach to the nihilism of black and poor youth is highly regarded and widely recommended (Huff, 1996, West, 1993).

In a 2004 memo about urban sprawl offered as resource material for my community work on the Lincoln Theater project on the near east side, Jason Reece of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity made several noteworthy points about the so-called King Lincoln District where the Lincoln Theater is located. Here are a few of those important facts:

- The near east is the “epicenter of the African American community” in Columbus, Ohio
- Columbus is experiencing suburban sprawl, like most of America.
- In Columbus, 91% of white population growth occurred in the suburbs while 75% of black population growth occurred within the central city in the 1990’s.
- Racial segregation is still evident in Columbus’ growth patterns.
- Poverty is high among African Americans in Columbus.
- Recreational, economic, arts and cultural amenities have disappeared in the inner city.
- “Preserving the Lincoln Theater and enhancing the cultural opportunities in the neighborhood could be a critical step to help stop the decline of the area and stabilizing the community.” (Reece, 2004)
Having worked for a number of arts organizations in Columbus, I knew the potential the arts had and continue to have to address issues. I knew from an artist’s perspective. Confirmation from an academician would strengthen my position so I sought one out.

In 1998, Professor of Criminology Dr. C. Ron Huff conducted a study in Ohio, including Columbus, on gangs and juvenile delinquency prevention and juvenile violence prevention. Among key findings, Dr. Huff’s study corroborated previous data that found gang membership increases the likelihood of violence and crimes. Other key findings showed the median age for joining gangs to be 14 years of age and that there is an opportunity for “aggressive intervention” in the early stages of gang membership. (Huff, 1998)

I got in touch with Dr. Huff and told him about my research. When asked if he thought the arts could be a deterrent to gang membership and/or juvenile delinquency Dr. Huff wrote

I am a strong supporter of the arts for many reasons (including having two daughters with training in the arts, (one of whom has a BFA from Ohio State). I believe the arts can play an important role in both prevention and in diverting active gang members from gang life to more pro-social activities, especially after school to fill those vulnerable hours.
But my research is not a study about teen violence or community policing or even the city’s record on safety. This is a participatory action research case study on the Lincoln Theater as an exemplar of the arts and its value to a community as a means of passing on values, engaging one’s spirit and even addressing issues of violence among youth. This research on the Lincoln Theater is about community based arts and how they can help anchor a community. It is also about what happens to a community once those moorings are gone. This study will look at the $13.5 million dollars invested by the city of Columbus in renovating the Lincoln Theater, to try to determine whether our tax dollars have been spent in a way that benefits the black residents that lived with and through the decades of neglect on the near east side.

In addition, this study will be, in part, an autoethnographic narrative of my personal experience with the Lincoln Theater renovation. As an African American, native Columbusrite, artist, female, single parent, art education researcher, I have various lenses through which I view the cultural, educational, social/political and spiritual issues surrounding the Lincoln. My goal is to turn the viewfinder to use these various lenses to make sense of what I am seeing. I begin with my view of the past. My musings will be presented in italics throughout.

*Thinking, Remembering: My Big Picture*
Valley Dale, Lincoln Theatre, Long Street and Mount Vernon nightclubs, the largest black churches, Union Grove, Mt. Vernon AME, a black hospital, hotels, boarding houses, a hardware store, Spicer’s furniture, restaurants, drug stores, grocery stores, two post offices, Laundromats, barber and beauty shops, Lee’s Style Shop, florists and Chinese carry-outs, Franklin Park, Beatty Park, Nelson Park and Hayden Park, Rollerland, Beatty Center, East High’s tennis courts and Maryland Pool. We spent summer afternoons riding our bikes to Franklin Park, picnicking, rolling down the hills watching 4th of July fireworks while listening to WVKO. “A family reunion, a family reunion.” (The O’Jays) Scoping out cars and guys and being scoped out as teens, we’d sit on the hill at Franklin Park and meet others and talk “smack” and check out the rides cruising slowly by... Sometimes we’d have political rallies. Marvin asked, “What’s Goin’ On?” We answered “Keep Your Head to the Sky” (Earth, Wind and Fire) or “Say it Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud!” (James Brown) depending on your philosophical frame of reference that day. As little girls we dreamed about elegant nightlife like we’d seen in the movies; dancing in long dresses like our mothers did with our dads at Valley Dale. Or we’d pretend to be listening to top jazz entertainers Ellington, Basie, Sweet Nancy at the Lincoln theatre, with eyes closed like the beatniks did. As Smoky Robinson said, “Ooooooh, Baby, baby” It’s so fun to be black.

We traveled around the east side after high school football games to “party” with our rivals. We worked at the swimming pool in the summer to make money for clothes in the fall. Within the sanctuary of our community, we felt safe, independent, “potential.” “What’s happenin’?” “You got it!”
Dr Preston, the dentist, lived down the street; Dr. Clark around the corner. Mr. Little, the mailman, had six kids and no dogs; Mr. Davis, the truck driver had four kids and two dogs for hunting. The barber across the street, the other Mr. Davis, was notorious for his “bowl” cut; he’d sung with the Mills Brothers, which I knew was important even though I didn’t know who they were. Mr. Timmons, Cheri’s dad, played jazz. My parents (and many others) were government workers with southern roots and clear minds and good hearts. They’d point out the Tuskegee airman’s house across the way and volunteer at Isabelle Ridgway, the only black old folks’ home in town.

My mom was a Grey lady, volunteering at the hospital. Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Davis took over as Girl Scout leaders after Mrs. Cartier. Mrs. Curtis taught college and belonged to Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

We’d do better than our parents; that was the legacy. Their ancestors had built the Lincoln theatre, they’d built middle class communities all over town but chose mostly to remain here, we’d build malls. They had a black hospital; maybe we’d have two. To do more, create more, help more in our community, was the legacy we would live up to. It was our birthright. “It’s a family affair” (Sly Stone). (September, 2006)

That is how I remember the near east side. My growing up there was charmed. Some have even suggested I “romance” my childhood and my near east side community. Perhaps, but it wasn’t just that way for me. Conversations with my former neighbors reveal many have similar warm memories of our growing up. It
was in my community that I learned how beautiful black culture is and how challenging being female and black can be in a world that idolizes whiteness and white femininity.

Yet like Zora Neale Hurston, I never felt “tragically colored” as my family and my community nurtured my strengths and fomented hope within me and throughout the community. DJ turned international motivational speaker Les Brown did block parties on my street. His message of “Yes We Can and Yes We Will” became a popular retort in the vernacular. Through the arts of Aminah Robinson and Elijah Pierce who lived in my neighborhood, and the stories of my parents and neighbors, I learned about my culture, black culture. My older brother and his friends spoke about Nancy Wilson, Bernie Casey, Rahsaan Roland Kirk from a personal perspective as they all came out of our community. I recognized the possibility and saw evidence of communal progress, nation-building, community and personal autonomy and voice and I grew to look for these possibilities wherever I lived.

*In her book, *Belonging*, bell hooks states, “Aesthetics then is more than a philosophy or theory of art and beauty; it is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming.” (hooks, 2009, p122) My case study of the Lincoln Theater tells a story about how a black community, my community, “inhabited” a historic theater and the near east side and how the government purchase and renovation of the space threatened to change it. My
When I returned to Columbus after having lived several years in Atlanta, I expected to regain those possibilities here just as I had left them. I quickly realized the gift of hope was no longer prominent among black people on the near east side. When an alternative paper reported on the impending renovation of the Lincoln Theater, that seemed like a place to begin working for change as I had been brought up to do. Born too late to have visited the Lincoln in its heyday, I was eager to take advantage of the opportunity for cultural participation through the renovation of the historic space. I envisioned my daughter taking dance lessons from black seasoned professionals who had danced on Broadway and throughout Europe. I imaged my future plays being produced on the redesigned stage and supported by local residents who would come to expect high caliber art like they do at the Apollo.

My daydream was interrupted as I read further in the article. Plans to renovate the space included the possibility of turning the Lincoln theatre into loft apartments. Surely that could not be right! The idea seemed wrong on so many levels…who would want to live in a loft apartment on Long Street, with no amenities, no necessities and no other high end urban dwellers. Why would anyone take a famous, historic black theatre and turn it into something other than a theatre since the black community loves black theatre and the city has no black professional
one? Why wouldn’t the developers find and/or combine the handful of community theatres into a single black theater company, culling the best from each group, and corner the market on black theatrical entertainment? Everybody knows black culture makes money…that’s why people appropriate it.

The 80’s were full of black traveling shows from “For Colored Girls Who’ve Committed Suicide, when The Rainbow is Enuf” and “Momma, I Want to Sing” to “One Monkey Don’t Stop No Show,” “Diary of a Black Man” and “Beauty Shop I” and II” and Columbus, Ohio was a lucrative stop on what used to be called the “chitlin” circuit. My girlfriend (an actress) and I (a playwright) had been dying to see one of these traveling shows but were too ‘cultured’ and frugal to purchase tickets to such lowbrow entertainment. Fortunately, someone gave us two…We were present during an evening performance of Shelley Garrett’s “Beauty Shop” when the company brought a woman on stage to present her with a gift. She received a bouquet and a magnum of champagne, for being personally responsible for selling 400 tickets to the play! And she didn’t even work for them… (June, 2010)

There was no shortage of audience or ticket buyers in the African American community so why NOT redo a theatre in the heart of the black community? ¹

¹ A city-conducted feasibility study on renovating the Lincoln Theater was completed in 1982. This study found that insufficient buying power within the black community, coupled with the “discomfort” those from outside the community might experience in coming to the near east side, negated justifying the expense of renovating the theater at that time. (1982, City of Columbus, Lincoln Theater Feasibility Study)
Surely we could help them see the error of their thinking. A renovated Apollo-type theater on the near east side…Great Idea!

My Research Question

My research question is: how does a historically black arts institution emerge in a postmodern, capitalistic, patriarchal, culturally desensitized society? Embedded in this question are broad issues of cultural policy, material culture, self esteem and personal autonomy, gender equity, racial and or cultural imperialism, community empowerment and multiculturalism. These issues will not be answered in depth but will inform the social action research as it unfolded. There were also questions that personally challenged my understanding of what it means to be black in today’s environment. For example, does or should the election of black city officials increase financial support for black arts or are we in a post racial era where “black” arts are no longer necessary? As a black female, will my exposure of findings of the city’s first black male administration be viewed as disloyal? Will the Lincoln Theater continue to be a material, cultural and educational asset for the black residents of the near east side as it has been in the past or will neo-liberal influences negate the social, educational and spiritual functions of the old Lincoln re-constituting it as a “depthless” (Jameson, 1991) commercial entity?

The Plan

I would get together some of my artist friends and we would meet with the powers that be about the Lincoln Theater. After all, how hard could it be to convince a city administration lead by a popular black mayor to keep a historically black
theater in the heart of the black community, aesthetically, functionally black? In addition to the 400 ticket story, we had documentable facts showing that the Lincoln Theater functioned as a safe space, an anchor, an educational center for the edification and preservation of black life. Research had already proved that the arts are an effective way to reach young people, to address criminality, to train students for school and for work, to keep elders youthful, to inspire and imbue. And the artists and other volunteers we had on hand were experts at doing all those things. It might take a little work to insert ourselves into the process but we already knew the decision-makers and once we connected with them, this was going to be “a piece of cake”!

That was our attitude beginning this project...a little naïve perhaps but not without foundation. We saw a problem, a way to fix it, “let’s begin.” Our approach was not without precedent, however. Cornel West writes about “American pragmatism” as a “distinct philosophical tradition,” begun by Charles Sanders Peirce, through John Dewey, W.E.B. DuBois and others, as pragmatism that is principled and focused on democracy. (West, 1993, p 20)

Statement of the Problem

The near east side community understood the Lincoln Theater as a valuable asset with a powerful history that was a testament to its ability to address community needs (Allen, 1922, Smith, 2010). Yet some in city government, the local media and those outside the area seemed to hold a different view of the Lincoln Theater’s potential to move beyond entertainment. The renovation articulated by
the current city administration revived the call by artists and community activists for the space to address some of the current devastating problems of the area. Major issues for King-Lincoln District (KLD) teens include alienation and disengagement, dropping out or what Cornel West describes as “nihilism” (West, 1993), joblessness, the rise in gang activity, a lack of positive educational resources and more. When combined with adult issues like high unemployment and underemployment, limited social outlets, a lack of safe spaces for educational enrichment of children and more, a financially and socially depressed and underdeveloped community emerges.

While these are areas that local governments attempt to address, these are areas that black artists, ministers and other community leaders with whom I spoke could envision being addressed through arts training, educational programming, vendor and contractor commitments for jobs, on-the-job training programs for youth and more, at a newly renovated, multi-use, state of the art high-tech theater space. The question became, would the city see that same potential and if they did not, could black artists and others persuade them otherwise? A $13.5 million dollar investment into the near east side could address numerous problems while generating long-term impacts if used creatively and intelligently. The question was whether the city would be creative and intelligent in its approach.

Early media reports suggested that governing officials did not understand the value of the Lincoln Theater as a multi-function asset and therefore, were not
likely to employ it to address the kind of community needs it had addressed in the past.

_The Lincoln_

The designation of the Lincoln Theater as a material, cultural and educational asset is culled from the earliest descriptions of the theater by blacks and whites. A 1922 article written by Nimrod Allen for the NAACP’s publication, _The Crisis_ magazine, notes the building on the corner of Long and Garfield “which has three floors and a business annex, is easily worth $50,000. This (the Lincoln) is one of the first buildings owned by Negroes to be erected on East Long Street” (Allen, 1922, p14). The article, written before the addition of the theater, showed the Lincoln to be a clear property asset in the community.

Capitol Lodge no. 1903 had purchased the corner lot in 1920, then sold or transferred it to the Ohio District Grand Lodge no. 24 in 1927 according to Franklin County Recorder’s Office records. Theater construction began in 1928 and was completed in 1929, with a grand opening on Thanksgiving Day. The Lincoln Theater National Historic Register application notes that Mr. Al Jackson, who leased and operated the theater with his partner Ernie Williams, equipped the theater with a $20,000 pipe organ. In addition to being known for its Egyptian Revival style, the Lincoln was known as one of the few community theaters outside of New York constructed with fly-space, wing-space, loading bridge, dressing rooms and an orchestra pit (National Register application, 1981).
Although the Oddfellows, a black Masonic group originally built it, ownership of the Lincoln theatre changed hands many times. During the late 1920’s and into the early 1930’s, the Oddfellows maintained control of the Ogden Theater and Ballroom even as it grew in monetary value, beginning at $22,610 for the land and the original building in 1920 which increased to $31,960 by 1929 for the land and unfinished theatre building. By 1930, the land and completed theater were appraised at $90,760 and revalued at $102,670 by 1931 (Franklin County Recorder, 2009), making it a material asset for the community by even during our country’s most challenging economic period.

As a social gathering spot, the Lincoln had a reputation within the near east side community as a “safe place” (Lincoln Theater survey, 2010) and “an experience” (Smith, 2010) as both young and old mingled there during the more than 40 years of its operations. As a business, the theater was a part of the economic engine of Long Street that gave it its nickname, the “million dollar block.” (Allen, 1922, National Historic register application, 1981)

**Contextualizing the Problem**

In 2003, William Strickland was the guest speaker at the Greater Columbus Arts Council event where my adaptation of a children’s book illustrated by Aminah Robinson into a children’s play had been nominated for an excellence award; not surprisingly “Symphonic Poem” a retrospective of Aminah Robinson’s work at Columbus Museum of Art won! Strickland spoke about the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and Bidwell Training Center that he had created in Pittsburgh.
that took an old, dilapidated building and turned it into a premier arts space. That
sounded like a model for the Lincoln Theater.

That same year, a group of artists of which I was one, began informally talking to
see if we could have input into Lincoln Theater redevelopment plans. We began
getting in touch with people. Mr. Strickland was generous and referred me to one
of his partners. We also got in touch with local elected officials and community
actors to seek their support and guidance. An early supporter was Jonathan Beard,
the executive director of Columbus Compact, the agency charged with
community development and dispensing Enterprise Zone dollars from the federal
government. (Beard, 2003)

By 2004, we artists had formalized ourselves into a group. We called ourselves
PANDU, which meant “artistic” in an African language Lisa Talley found (I don’t
remember which one). Jonathan Beard liked our comprehensive approach to the
Lincoln incorporating arts education, job training, mentorship programs and
mental health services through multiple disciplines. Our proposal included fine
arts teaching, on-the-job training and social services. (Pandu, 2003) Beard
provided us a scholarship for organizational development to increase our fledgling
group”s capacity. We called on the mayor”s office to try to schedule a meeting
and were quickly referred to the mayor”s point person for this project, deputy
director Boyce Safford. Safford is a black man well known in the community who
I first encountered out in the community. When we broached the subject of the
Lincoln Theater and told him of our proposal, he was unenthusiastic and noted we didn’t have any money. Over the next several months and years, that would become a common refrain from Safford. That, and the statement only half-jokingly made that he didn’t know anything about art, he was just there for the money (for the project) (Safford, 2004).

Our group consisted of Alfred Dove, a dancer/choreographer whose dance program’s repertoire included ballets created by his brother, Ulysses Dove of Alvin Ailey fame; Lisa Talley, an actress/theatrical producer with national credits; Reita Smith, a local historian whose work on her family history got her inducted into Ohio’s First Families (families who were in Ohio before it became a state 1803); Suzan Bradford Kounta, West African dance/mentoring programs; Kojo Kamau, multiple award winning photographer and gallery owner; Michael Washington, professional musician/sound technician; Toni Smith, award winning playwright. I mention these credentials to assert the validity of our claim to offer input into the city’s plan for the Lincoln. We had something to contribute and yet none of the decision makers in city government seemed the least bit interested. Other artists made overtures to help as well. One even had a signed contract to become the resident theater company however; the contract was never honored (personal conversation, Pitts, 2009, Appendix A). One restaurant vendor’s

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2 PANDU met for regularly for more than 4 years. Suzan Bradford Kounta paid her dues but attended only one or two meetings. We promoted her and Alfred Dove heavily to decision makers as one of a team of potential occupants for the Lincoln. Kounta is the only PANDU member with a paid position in the renovated Lincoln Theater. She is the general manager. Dove is listed as a resident company as are several others groups, but he has no functional affiliation with the Lincoln Theater beyond renting the space as anyone is able to do.
contract was withdrawn by the city after it was decided that his restaurant business was not appropriate for the storefront space he had contracted to use (Dispatch, 2005).

We believed with the help of competent, committed artists, the Lincoln Theatre could be like the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and Bidwell Training Center in Pittsburgh or the Apollo in Harlem. Did city staffers whose jobs required them to have expertise in government, also have expertise in the arts? It seemed unfair and unnatural to think that they should. But wouldn’t they want to create the best, most economically sound, financially profitable, artistically functional, versatile space possible? Not being artists themselves, couldn’t city staffers and other representatives like the attorneys, urban planners and aides use some assistance with this kind of arts project? Mayor Coleman’s cover letter for the King Lincoln District plan had invited citizen participation. Yet Pandu’s attempts to participate were being soundly rebuffed.

The renovation of the Lincoln Theater did not happen in a vacuum. A timeline of important events, including headlines from some of the more impactful stories within the black community, are delineated. As a member of Pandu and the near east side (notice I wrote member, not resident), I experienced the individual and small group struggles of trying to negotiate parity for black artists within the Lincoln theater while simultaneously experiencing the collective offense by the media of the headlines and media stories that I have included in the timeline.
These headlines and stories were commonly discussed in barber and beauty shops, cafes and other places where black people gather in small groups. They were vigorously debated both initially and subsequently, as a part of the running commentary the black community has about black media images, blacks and the criminal justice system, blacks and the educational system and blacks and the political system. Here is the timeline:

July, 2002  King Lincoln District Plan (KLDP) completed
(per date on the cover of the King Lincoln District Plan)

November 2002 KLDP is released based on date of Mayor’s cover letter.

July 13, 2003 Buckeye’s academics questions Columbus Dispatch Front Page
Professor says she gave football star Maurice Clarrett special assistance to help him overcome difficulty with class work. Freeman New York Times

Nov. 27, 2003 Call and Post  Columbus Children’s Theater (CCT) is lining up support from the Old Towne East Neighborhood Assoc.

and most recently, the Near East Area Commission to take over the 80-year old theater…The deal proposed by the CCT would give the theater the building for the price of $1 per year for 10 years, on a 20-year lease…

“We have been interested in expanding our audience,” Bridgeland said.

Dec. 4, 2003  Call &Post  Black arts groups concerned CCT will be major tenet of Lincoln Theater

Some black arts groups are concerned that CCT, a predominantly white arts group with little previous involvement with the African American community, is set to be the major tenet of the building. They are
concerned that African American arts groups have not been given the opportunity to make a proposal…KLDAC Chair L. James has said publicly…there is no deal on the table… any group coming forward would have to demonstrate its willingness and ability to raise funds for a “build-out”…and would have to be able to fund ongoing operation of the facility….

Feb. 27, 2004 Dispatch  CCT-Growing Troupe hopes to use Lincoln

Grossberg  CCT said building was a “wreck”, bad neighborhood; CCT outgrowing 170-seat space; study to see if 450 seat “nationally recognized" children’s theater space feasible, down from the 750 seats that existed. James recommended CCT and radio stations, Mayor concurred.

March 1, 2004 Pandu denied committee seat, extension to submit proposal;

No formal RFP

Main Lib 6PM Mtg w/BSafford. Safford asked why we had not inquired about LT a year ago. Our response was there was no public announcement made (no RFP) about re-doing the Lincoln. Safford told us we could submit a proposal. Also suggested if we had a million dollars we could purchase the building as well. T Smith asked to be on committee that is responsible for outcome of LT. Per Safford, “no.” Smith asked about extension for submitting proposal. Per Safford, “no.”

March-May, 2004  Cols. Compact Grant to Build Pandu Capacity

We named our organization; sent a letter to the editor re: Lincoln Theater, sent ltr to James, decided core values included integrity.
April  2005  J. Beard  Cols Compact tells K. Smith “Meeting was not Community Input”; K. Smith says City fulfilled its responsibility

J. Beard, wrote to K. Smith. RE: April 6th meeting, outlining problems with how KLD plan is unfolding. “The meeting last night was not community input. It was not dialogue. It was not a forum for people to talk about their hopes and visions for the area…The community needs and deserves, as it was promised, the opportunity to have input.” K. Smith writes back April 8th, “The City fulfilled its responsibility to provide an opportunity for the community to have input and dialogue on all topics related to KLD…It is not our responsibility to put words in people’s mouths… The meeting was exactly what the community made it-no more, no less. We appreciated them participating and will continue to provide them with information and opportunity for questions, comment and conversation.”

August 5, 2005  BILL MOSS CARTOON WAS IN POOR TASTE

Dispatch  Beloved and outspoken school board member Bill Moss was lampooned in an editorial cartoon the day after his death. The black community was outraged.

August 8th  Flyer announcing march to protest the Moss cartoon

11 AM 34 S. Third Street (Columbus Dispatch offices) Notice: We the people of the black community in the city of Columbus PROTEST IGNORANCE AND INJUSTICE. While many called the black radio
station to complain and hundreds attended Moss’s funeral, only a handful of protestors came to the march according to newspaper photos.

**Sept. 2005 Pandu Gets Unanimous Support from Near East Area Commission**

Pandu attends Near East Area Commission meeting and after contentious questioning, gains unanimous approval for letter of support, despite the fact that NEAC had already provided a letter of support for CCT.

**September 2005 Barry Edney’s Grassroots Economic Development Conference.**

One hundred and fifty people attend conference at OSU Af/Am and African Community Extension Center created by community activist Barry Edney; Pandu is on the agenda. Community support for Pandu is growing. Pandu sends mayor our proposal in the absence of a Request for Proposals and requests a meeting. No response to our submission and meeting request is turned over to L. James.

**10/25/05 Phone conversation w/ Dir. of Development Barbash “no art policy”**

3. What is the city's policy on the involvement of artists in major arts initiatives directed by the city of Cols? Leading in to question 3 with other examples of art-focused city initiated projects (Ameriflora, Son of Heaven which Barbash quickly denied having any part of since they were before his time), Director Barbash said there is no "policy" with arts initiatives that the city has, that this (Lincoln Theater) project is: 1) looking at market reaction to the plan, 2) trying to attract dollars and 3) looking at govt.
support. He referred me to look at the Near East plan, the City Plan, and to look at Kansas City which had a very similar community to KL…

**Nov 2005 Pandu, Jon Beard meet w/ L.James to have input, mtg is “right time”**

to assure L.James of our expertise and interest in working with decision makers on planning and implementation of Lincoln redevelopment. James writes FU letter stating that planning for Lincoln will begin in February 2006 noting that our meeting with him is at “just the right time.”

**Feb 2006 L. James 2/17/06 letter says they’ll call us after decisions have been made.**

Pandu, J. Beard receive letter from L.James stating “We are at least six months away from having any idea as to tenants, leases or use of the facilities by any entity or institution. The Mayor has challenged us to come back with a plan, funding, and a design by September of 2006, with a construction date of Spring of 2007, and a completion date of January of 2008…Thank you for your patience until we are in a position to have serious discussions. Any discussions now would simply be without any meaning. I apologize for not being able to tell you anything certain. However, this is the reality…”

**Feb 21, 2006 Letter to Mayor and L. James from Business Owners “Put on Hold” all decisions (Appendix B)**

Letter requests all decisions on KLD plan be “put on hold” until all groups-City, KL Development Corp, business owners and community-
“can meet and discuss our concerns and outcomes.” Letter is signed by 11 organizations, businesses and individuals including Cols. Compact, East Cols. Dev. Corp, John Waddy atty., Stenson Powell Dev. Corp.

April 2006  City Councilwoman O’Shaughnessy w/ JBeard and other business owners meet; plan larger mtg

John Beard invited other letter signers plus “others who might be interested” to April 13th meeting at City Hall per Council woman O’Shaughnessy’s request. Other council members and city staff were also invited. Pandu got invitation from J Beard.

April 13, 2006  O’Shaughnessy asks to meet more at City Hall; Pandu, others denied access

Only letter signers were permitted to enter the meeting. All others (all arts orgs.) were stopped by security at the entryway and not given passes to go up to the meeting. Keena Smith was adamant that JBeard was incorrect to invite others and no others would be given access. State Rep. Joyce Beatty’s aide Diane, insisted on being permitted to attend as Rep. Beatty’s representative. She was given access but not Pandu, Ujimaa Theater, former superintendent Dr. Evelyn Luckey and OSU’s Rick Livingston of the Humanities Institute, or others who had been invited.

August 2, 2006  Recreation and Parks Commission Places Director Wayne Roberts on Administrative Leave.

This is significant because Director Roberts, a black man, was the next person Pandu was going try to meet with re: the Lincoln.
Aug 28, 2006  Pandu Mtg with Boyce Safford; no artists will be housed in Lincoln

Smith reported that per a meeting with Boyce Safford (8/28 meeting w/Smith requested by Safford: attendees ADove, VDaniel, TSmith, city reps. Safford, Scales, Winbush) Safford stated: 1) Mayor Coleman wants Lincoln to be a place where black artists thrive and present their work, 2) Lincoln should be "sustainable," 3) There will be no administrative offices in Lincoln/no artists will be housed in Lincoln, 4) Jazz Arts Group will occupy the 4th floor, 5) a new non-profit comprised of city, county, KL neighborhood folks, will be created; the non-profit will manage the Lincoln, 6) Lincoln will be operationally under King Arts Complex/CAPA will have oversight since KAC doesn't have capacity.

Sept 13, 2006  Old Towne East Neighborhood Association (OTENA) mtg,
Safford, Conner present Lincoln plan, there will be no RFP

Boyce Safford (Mayor's deputy chief of staff) and Bill Connor (President of CAPA) spoke of LT. Safford shared city's goal for KL district and Lincoln theatre specifically, noting 1) there has been "no (city) investment in the near east side" for years, 2) there are public $ for infrastructure, SBA loans, etc., 3) $6.9 mil Gateway project across from the Lincoln, 4) mayor's goal for Lincoln is: for Af/Am culture and performing arts space, 5) local, regional, national; be sustainable, 6) city is contributing $4 mil, county $4 mil, state $1.5 mil, $.5mil from KL, 7) new non-profit of city/county/neighbors will lease Lincoln for 99 years for $1. T. Smith
asked if theater is to be for black culture, why was CCT, now JAG being put in the space? B Conner noted he hadn’t said JAG would be occupant; he had “talked to many groups.” T. Smith suggested a shared space like the Riffe, Conner said “we’re on the same page.” Smith then asked about an RFP. Per Safford, “We are not thinking about an RFP.” Connor stated, “there are so many groups.” “Exactly,” Smith persisted, “since there are several groups who want the space, why not an RFP? Wouldn’t that be fair?” Per Safford, “We’ve talked to Suzan (Bradford) several times.” Safford said CAPA would manage, then as the King Arts Complex “develops” capacity, CAPA will go away.

11/6/2006  County pledges $4m, black culture described as “clubs and bars” Dispatch M. Ferenchik.

County pledges $4mil. Mayor Coleman wants to make KL area a cultural center again…between Mount Vernon Avenue and Long Street was a thriving district of clubs and bars for Columbus' black community from the 1930s through the 1960s. "We're going to make this a national model," he said.3

1/15/2007 “Y’all are the niggers!”

R. attends meeting at Ethniciti with Pandu members including advisor professor J. Sanders. Tells us the reason we can’t get anything done is cause, “Y’all are the niggers!”

3 A 1922 Crisis magazine article by Nimrod Allen, future head of the Columbus Urban League noted nearly 100 business enterprises on East Long and vicinity including photographers, optometrists, music shops, music studios, beauty and barber shops, printing companies, tailors, corporations, and more. More recently a page from the 1972 directory provided listings of over 400 businesses on Long Street at that time. Only a small fraction was bars and clubs.
4/2007  Willis Brown and KLBNA prepare to file suit against city for violating Sunshine laws
    since no business is conducted at the public meetings; no minutes are taken, no reporting back to community. These are “open houses” per K. Smith

May 1, 2007  B. Conner wants to meet Dr. Daniel
    “I would love the opportunity to review the Lincoln Theatre with the Pandu Collective. Please let me know times that might work for you… Look forward to meeting with you.” Dr. D. strongly suggests Toni Smith be included in the meeting as Pandu representative.

June 7, 2007  Big Meeting with black artists
    June 1st we received emails from Keena Smith. “You are cordially invited to attend a conversation with the leadership of the King Lincoln District Redevelopment Corporation and Lincoln Theatre project, Mr. Larry James to discuss the role of community artists in the operations of the Lincoln Theatre. When: June 7, 2007 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Where: Room 226 Columbus City Hall City Council Conference Room”

June 7, 2007  L. James, B. Conner request proposals from artists; suggestions for LT board members
    “From those who are interested in teaching, programming, and/or leasing of space” at the Lincoln by July 15th. They also requested suggestions for board members although funders made board appointments. I submitted several board suggestions including 4 OSU professors, 2 gallery owners,
professional actor, musician, choreographer, jewelry designer, art
education graduate student. No one from my list received a call or any
indication of consideration.

July 20, 2007 L James ltr to Pandu’s M.Washington, can’t tell what he wants
to do…

Per James, “I was unable to determine whether you are requesting to
become an independent contractor or salaried employee…I would strongly
urge you to put something more complete together.” Washington”s
proposal was supposed to have been drafted by a friend of Dove”s, but that
did not happen. Per Dove, his own proposal was not submitted on time. As
far as we know, Suzan Bradford Kounta”s was.

September 2007 Pandu’s Board member suggestions to L. James ignored

Pandu”s submitted over 20 names as potential board members; most are
professional artists, university professionals in the arts who are highly
regarded. No one was even contacted.

September 4, 2007 Pandu sends FU letter to L.James re: big mtg

Subject Re: Letter from Larry James re: Lincoln Theater Project
(excerpts) Dear Mr. James, Thanks again for the June 7th meeting with
black artists and for keeping me apprised of the movement to include
black artists in the Lincoln Theatre Project. I was personally gratified by
the tone of that meeting and your statements that noted some projects may
make money and some may not (to paraphrase your statement) but that the
goal was to find the best combination of activities and to work
collaboratively to create a Lincoln theater that "shines like a beacon" and delivers on the mayor's commitment to be a part of his "legacy to the black community" as well as an economic boost to the near east side…You may recall that Pandu worked for over 4 years to help bring the June 7th meeting to fruition. It is noticeable that although PANDU never received a response to our initial proposal submitted to the mayor, many of our ideas found their way into the permanent plan for the Lincoln theatre for which we are thankful…Members of Columbus City Council have shown support for inclusion of local black artists in this redevelopment project. I would also hope that local black artists who have the training and skills to run a successful program at the Lincoln would be given as much consideration as non-local artists who have big names…I look forward to updates on the progress of the Lincoln Theatre redevelopment project and thank you for your continued commitment to creating a Lincoln Theatre in which the proud legacy of an institution that anchors black culture in this city can be revived. Sincerely, Toni Smith

3/25/2008  Hines hopes to develop dancers, actors as Lincoln Theatre artistic director; Lincoln will create opportunities for black artists; B. Conner (white male) says this is "incredible moment for blacks" Dispatch S.Williams

Hines sees the theater as providing a training ground for a new generation. The Maurice Hines Dance Experience will also be a part of the center: Hines plans to use the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as a template, creating a company from the "limitless supply of talent"
in...Columbus...he expects to direct three productions a year... (and) to involve central Ohio young people....as actors and writers, and tap his network of Broadway colleagues to make onstage appearances...Tony winner Phylicia Rashad and her sister, Debbie Allen, are willing to lend their talent and star power to productions...

1/30/2009 “Unforeseen expenses” add $ 2.3m for roof, up seats to 574, Jazz Academy

Request for $2.3 mil. Dispatch. M. Pramik. More money requested for “unforeseen capital items” a new roof, change in the scope of the project. L. James, is spearheading restoration. $1 million is to add a balcony to increase seating to 574. (Original seating was over 700, which was reduced for CCT to 450). $650,000 is to create a jazz academy to be run by the Columbus-based Jazz Arts Group. Funds will make space more “functional.”

5/29/2009 Mayor Coleman and Larry James want Lincoln to be site of black Mecca in arts

Once known as the “Million Dollar Mile” Long Street has fallen a long way from its previous glory, facilitated by the construction of I-71 and I-270 “leaving a rotting urban corpse in its wake.” L. James and M. Coleman would like to see a “major” black festival between King Center and Lincoln in a few years. Per Coleman, “The idea here is to make this a Mecca for arts and theater for the African-American culture nationally.”
May/June 2009 Maurice Hines just wants to give to community; mentor young people. S.McMahon CityScene.

Hines would like to do hit play Sophisticated Ladies next year.

5/27/2009 Call and Post JAG kicks off “Inside Track” series to expand listeners ears

"Inside Track" is designed to feature a cross-section of music, including jazz and blues, but also expanding into rock and R&B and beyond… JAG E.D.Robert Breithaupt said "Inside Track" is for "the Columbus music lover who wants to hear great artists in a terrific setting, and who is willing to stretch their ears a bit."

11/5/2009 Jazz Academy redefines “jazz”; plans for “at-risk” teens in Weinland Park Dispatch K. Joy

Jazz; already under way are programs for at-risk preschool and teen residents of the Weinland Park neighborhood near Ohio State University… “We are a community space.” (What of “at-risk” preschoolers and teens in King Lincoln District?)

Aug 12, 2010 Dispatch Wolford Hines no longer referred to as Artistic Director Dispatch article quotes Maurice Hines; refers to him only as former artist-in-residence not artistic director

Oct/2010 Metromix website lists Lincoln Theater as A CAPA Venue

The near east side is in trouble…has been for years now. Some say the trouble started with the 1970’s freeway that split the area off from downtown limiting
access and displacing families. Others blame the integrationist impulse that accompanied the civil rights gains of the 1960’s that ushered in the willing movement of our black upper and middle class to suburban reaches. And then there was urban renewal and other failed government programs that took their toll on remaining area residents.

So we have this one cultural asset left over from the days when Long Street was known as the “Million Dollar Mile.” Its use value can benefit the community, that is those who live, work, socially and spiritually engage on the near east side, just as in the past. Or the use-value of the renovated space can benefit those OUTSIDE the community...so far the city’s decisions, contracts, positions and anything else you can think of, inordinately benefit those outside the King Lincoln area which bodes ill for the remaining vestiges of the black “community” in the King-Lincoln district. Someone else making decisions about the design, use and purpose of a major financial asset in your midst renders you powerless in your home, like Gates being arrested for breaking into his own house. It also bodes ill for other ethnic institutions around the country, as I doubt what happens here in Columbus is a singular phenomenon. It bodes ill for people like me, black people who want to use our cultural institutions to maintain the connective tissue of our past so that we can thread together a warm, wholesome future for our progeny. Yes, the $13.5 million dollar building will be nice, beautiful, high-tech…and that helps us how? (October, 2010)

Researcher Subjectivity
In an article titled, “Founders: Reconsidering Racial Policy in a Community Art School,” the problem of researcher subjectivity is presented. James Sanders, an artist and founder of the arts school, openly examines his role in the politics and culture promotion at the organization. As a reflexive researcher, Sanders is confronted with his personal aesthetics and “entrenched” ideas and how that set of ideas may be unintentionally moving the organization in a particular way. My own personal set of entrenched ideas is at the forefront of this inquiry, leading me, perhaps unwittingly, to choose certain modes of inquiry and forms of study.

As a writer, I am compelled to “tell a story” which may or may not enhance the research model I’ve selected. Storytelling has been “marginalized” in some scientific circles as biased self-indulgence. However, ethnographers like Lisa Tillman-Healy in her article “Men Kissing” featured in Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetics, adamantly espouses the benefits of ethnographic narrative asserting 1) that the goal is not to be dispassionate or apolitical, which is both undesirable and unachievable, 2) that we are taking a “purposefully ethical stance in our fieldwork and with participants, 3) that we are conducting research with and for our research communities, not merely in and about, and, 4) that such work as we do “sparks conversation and action directed toward greater social accord and justice” (Denzin, 1997, 2000, Jackson, 1989, Punch, 1994 as referenced in Bochner and Ellis, 2002, p339).

Scope and Limitations of the Study
I will examine the words and activities reported on the Lincoln Theater in local print media (Columbus Dispatch, Call and Post, Citizen Journal and Business First) from about 1980 to the present, as well as field notes, emails and conversations. This includes information from over 200 articles and while not exhaustive, will attempt to cover some of what I consider for my study to be the most salient media statements and actions regarding the Lincoln Theater during that period.

Although the Lincoln has a history dating back to 1928, the Columbus Dispatch did not cover Negro news such as this during that period according to the National Historic Preservation Application for the Lincoln Theater submitted in 1980 and based on an exhaustive search of microfiche. The Columbus Dispatch public archives begin in 1965. The archives of the black newspapers the Call & Post, Columbus Post, if existent, are either not catalogued or available as a public resource. A more extensive study of these records may be possible at a later time through personal contacts with individual owners of these materials.

Additional documents and speech will also be analyzed including notes from meetings I attended, memos and flyers and conversations regarding the theater. In some ways this becomes an examination of our (black middle class community’’s) citizenship, and in particular my (black female) status to see whether what is practiced in my neighborhood is “democracy” that, as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, gets “transformed from thin paper to thick action” (King, 1955) as
representative government with majority rule and minority rights as we had always been taught.

Like Sanders, I will also attempt to unpack my own behaviors and thoughts as a social action researcher (Sanders, 2001). How has my presence impacted this work? As a black woman, artist, mother and community member engaged in the life of the near east side of Columbus, Ohio, how have these aspects of my identity collided with the work that needed to be done? Through autoethnography I attempt to critically study the Lincoln theater renovation as an academic subject, reflexively recognizing my own biases and predispositions, understanding that my femaleness makes me perhaps overly sensitive to perceived sexist manners and behaviors of disingenuousness and that my desire as an artist to have a “home” in which to produce my plays that also offers my daughter excellent, culturally sensitive professional instruction in the arts is based on a maternal desire to see my child flourish in her own culture.

My involvement is as an “actionist” (I made that up), an engaged citizen (I hesitate to use the term “activist” or “activism” based on the negative connotations the word carries in the vernacular of a white power structure) of a middle class black neighborhood which has felt itself, in the not too distant past and even now on occasion, under assault by the City of Columbus. For example, when plans for a freeway called for encroachment into the Shepard neighborhood, my “actionism” was not well-received by city administrators. More recently, a
seven year bout with the city over the placement of a storm sewer on my property that would have obliterated a small wood may not have been forgotten. Yet as I approach this “emancipatory” participatory social action research case study of the Lincoln theater attempting to remain open and objective, I am aware the city administration, like many municipalities, has undertaken an economic development approach to the arts (Columbus Dispatch 4/28/05, 8/27/05, 12/12/06, 10/13/07, Ballengee-Morris, 2003, Smith, 1999, Stone, 1993, Jonas and Wilson, 1999) which some may consider neo-liberalism, that situates us at a distance from the outset. Through this research, I worked within a community group to emancipate a community asset from external control for use by and for the community while simultaneously attempting to “emancipate” myself to understand the complex interlocking issues that bind my thinking and behaviors to their current limitations.

In addition to the documents, survey and interviews my own narratives function as an integral part of the data in this study. My perspective, the lens through which I view this research is a direct outgrowth of my upbringing and understanding of who I am in the matter. An explanation of that thinking is available through the information on black culture from a female perspective that I include here as foregrounding to the description of what happened in this case study of the Lincoln Theater.

An Overview
Initial renovation cost estimates for the Lincoln Theater began at around $1 million dollars more than 20 years ago. At that time, the City of Columbus had conducted a study to estimate the cost to redo the theatre (Citizen Journal, 1980). Under the new ownership of Charles Adrian in 1991, the estimate grew to a $1.9 million-dollar range. (Cols Dispatch, 5/12/92) Adrian made a public commitment to restore the theater for children in the area to have a place to watch movies in the neighborhood, among other uses. After the city of Columbus bought and began to make public statements in 2004, estimates for renovating the Lincoln had risen to $4 million with an estimated completion date of 2007, then 2008. The commitment to do something for area children dropped off. The final estimate rose to $13.5 million dollars with a completion date scheduled for 2009 which the city finally met. During this process, the city paid $60,000 for a new feasibility study and in 2007 hired New Yorker and entertainment veteran Maurice Hines as artistic director in residence for the space. (Bournea, 2007)

Today, the black community on the near east side is in the throes of a political and cultural power struggle (Near East Digest, 2009) that threatens the historic legacy of the theater; a legacy of a black cultural institution whose aesthetic serves the black community. But who is fighting and why? And what is at stake?

A part of the power struggle with the black community is over who “owns” a black cultural institution and who makes decisions for the black community on the near east side. Local black artists and an artist organization named Pandu of
which I am a member, have a vested interest in community-based arts. A near east area residents’ organization called King Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association (KLBNA) comprised of those who live in the historically black Bronzeville area, have a vested interest in a comprehensive, rather than scatter shot approach to revitalization in their community that is now called King-Lincoln District, so named by the city. KLBNA is concerned with maintaining the historic significance of the community and they view the Lincoln Theater as an important cultural entity within a historic legacy in their neighborhood (Brown, 2010, personal interview).

KLBNA president, Willis Brown, expressed concerns with the Lincoln as part of the overall revitalization efforts of the city for the King Lincoln area. Brown was not alone, however. A 2006 letter to the Mayor and Larry James from eleven business entities in the King Lincoln District including two development organizations and an attorney illustrates the concerns of King Lincoln residents and the defective process undertaken by the city in the area’s revitalization. Their letter identifies concerns as a “lack of overall vision, questions about the approval process (for contracts)” (KLD group letter, 2006, Appendix A) and ineffectual communications. The group went so far as to ask for work to be put on hold until problems could be worked out yet problems did not get worked out as more problems were identified.
The City of Columbus purchased the theater in 2003 from Charles Adrian via its non-profit real estate arm, Columbus Urban Growth, for the purpose of kick-starting economic development initiatives in the area. Initial reports said that the theater would be under the arm of the King Arts Complex, managed by CAPA for an initial period, because the King Arts Complex lacked the “capacity” to run it. Since the 2009 grand opening and a year’s worth of activity, the Lincoln Theater is clearly identified as a CAPA property (CAPA website, Two Scoops” flyers) with CAPA in control of all aspects of the space.

Why is this a concern for me and other black artists, business owners and residents of the near east side? After all, CAPA is a sound manager of the other properties it owns? As long as the Lincoln Theater is a viable cultural space, what is the problem?

What is at stake is cultural and socio/political autonomy for the theater as a cultural institution in and for the black community. Is this cultural hegemony by a capitalistic, patriarchal corporate entity in the form of CAPA? Does this represent a trend for ethnic cultural spaces and activities? Is this an example of the culture industry’s “social and intellectual conformity” in the making (Macey, 2000, p79)?

The Lincoln theatre represents what Lewis and McKay call a “culturally alive community hub” that functioned as a space for cultural democracy. (Lewis and McKay, 2008) The Lincoln Theater, whether black or white-owned, worked as a
site for reinforcing the “cultural heritage” of the black community since its inception, more than 50 years. Although it was never occupied by any single arts organization, it did provide “culturally diverse (black) activities” (and by that I mean a range of activities from concerts to movies and stage plays, not activities of various ethnicities) and was a “creative space to intergenerational participants” (Lewis and McKay, 2008 p 295). Now under CAPA, a white institution, that could all change. (CAPA is “white” by virtue of the predominance of Caucasian administrators, staff, and board members.)

“This was the center of civics, culture, commerce, church in the black community,” said Mayor Michael B. Coleman. “This was the area,” said Coleman. “It was all right here!” (Columbus Dispatch, 5/28/07)

The mayor’s enthusiasm is a double-edged sword inviting residents to enthusiastically support revitalization efforts of the “long-neglected” near east side, while simultaneously reminding them of how far from its former hey-day the area has come. The King-Lincoln District, as the area is now called, remains 85% black as it struggles with the twin challenges of both high crime rates and low income levels (Census 2000, Dispatch, 2010). Mayor Coleman, in describing the area, is speaking from an historical perspective rather than as one who is from the area.

While some might look at the current situation of a city-initiated renovation of the Lincoln Theater as progress for the community, others-local black artists,
community residents, and contractors-see something more worrisome. The loss of even one “site of resistance” (Daniel 2003, Hill Collins, 1991) against the onslaught of negative representations in popular culture is a significant loss for black autonomy and empowerment. The daily battle for blacks to maintain dignity in a city where the only remaining daily newspaper, the Columbus Dispatch, continually refers to the city’s most historic black neighborhood as “low-income” “crime-ridden,” “neglected” and “pocked with vacant lots” and more recently, “emerging” is a great concern.

Contextualizing the Arts in the Black Community

“Is there a black culture?” (hooks, 1989)

In the late 1980’s at Yale University, black feminist scholar and author bell hooks poignantly acknowledges this very real question “is there a black culture?” asked by a young black student at Yale. A follow up question that might logically accompany the initial query could be, “If there is a black culture, is it any good?” In an essay by Henry Louis Gates in The Future of the Race, Gates essay “W.E.B. Du Bois and “The Talented Tenth” begins by noting that William E.B. Du Bois charted the contours of the (African descended American) civilization—the arts and sciences, the metaphysical and religious systems, the myths and music, the social and political institutions, the history both before and after Emancipation-that defined a truly African-American culture at the outset of the new century (Gates, 1996).
Gates goes on to assert that in 1897, Du Bois highlighted two elements that distinguished black culture from “American” culture. First, Du Bois declared that black culture in America, because of its historic beginnings, was group oriented and did not adhere to “Jeffersonian individualism.” In addition, Du Bois identified “tradition” as a cultural construct of groups, not individuals - an important distinction because, as Gates suggests, Du Bois saw tradition as inextricably tied to the concept of nationhood (Gates, 1996).

Wynton Marsalis, in the book, Jubilee! notes that growing up in New Orleans provided him the opportunity to be immersed in a black culture that was derived from a historic practice that developed during slavery. Marsalis reports that more than twenty tribes of the enslaved Africans were allowed to gather in Congo Square weekly to share in, perform and practice their native cultures. That coming together led to “new forms of American music and dance, and new African-American cultural forms emerged” from the synthesis of Africans and Europeans coming together in New Orleans. (Marsalis, 2002)

The history of black women in the 1800’s being uplifted through community-based organizations is well documented in Paula Giddings book When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women On Race and Sex in America (Giddings, 1984). Giddings notes that in 1886 a number of black women founded their own schools, filling the vacuum left by the Freedman’s Bureau. Black women were offering courses in liberal arts at a time when Black education in the state was
restricted to vocational training and Georgia had no public schools for blacks. According to Giddings, Lucy C. Laney maintained such a school for over half a century (Giddings, 1984).

From the earliest discourses of black scholars on black culture, the concepts of nation building, sustainability and community based group effort were and continue to be fundamental ideas. The trend of black students to understand the “black tradition” reaches back to the fundamentals of nation building established by Du Bois” early writings. As hooks, Gates and other scholars in white academic institutions attest, black students and professors consciously or perhaps subconsciously engage in the rudiments of the “uplift” mentality to offset what Kevin Gaines has described as the “culturally dominant views of national identity and social order positing the United States as a „white man’s country”” (Gaines, 1996).

The Value of Culture

In the essay, “Parable of the Talents,” Gates acknowledges the current dilemma of black culture stating

…the current flowering of black art and culture-with its inherent schisms and tensions-is unfolding against a conflicting socioeconomic backdrop. For despite remarkable gains, a sense of precariousness haunts this new black middle class, and the art that it creates and consumes. Its own economic advancement remains newfound and insecure (Gates, 1996).
In that same book, Cornel West substantiates this assertion. In his essay, “Black Strivings,” West notes

With the vast erosion of civic networks that nurture and care for citizens—such as families, neighborhoods, and schools—and with what might be called the gangsterization of everyday life…we are witnessing a pervasive cultural decay in American civilization…Yet race…remains a central signifier in the political debate (West, 1996).

West, referencing all of American culture, delineates race as a signifier that continues to impede black culture’s ability to do its work of helping to sustain and empower the black community. He predicts that a “heroic few” will try to organize and mobilize the “economically devastated, culturally degraded, and politically marginalized black working poor and very poor” but that it may be too late to turn back “nihilist and hedonistic” youth who have little interest in public life and little sense of moral purpose. (West, 1996) This in turn will discourage and frustrate the “talented tenth,” those up and coming select few of the black community that Du Bois charged with leading the community to salvation but who will, like the rest of us, suffer from “cultural rootlessness” (West, 1996).

Black culture then, according to West, seems to have to do with a black community being politically engaged, culturally uplifted and economically safeguarded while also working to involve young people in public life with a sense of moral purpose. This provides a “rootedness” that anchors the community.
Cultural spaces like the Lincoln Theatre and the Pythian Building (now home to the King Arts Complex) of the past were sites of both empowerment and resistance for a geographically homogenous black community in Columbus, Ohio (Bishop, 1982). Most black people lived on the east side of Columbus, where a central business district thrived and black churches were full on Sundays.

The black community was not monolithic as the wino on the sidewalk down the street from the church and the unkempt children playing tag in the lot next to the church on Sunday attested. Yet even the children and the wino comported themselves differently when church people passed them on their way into service, not in reverence to the people but rather as tacit acknowledgement of it being “the Lord”’s day,” a shared value. While some of those attending services might have shaken their heads in that “isn’t that a shame” way, most of us understood and were encouraged by church leadership to recognize our link to those children and adults who existed on the fringe of a close-knit black society, myself having been taught this after service as my dad and I stopped for ice cream at the black Dairy Queen around the corner and down the street from Shiloh Baptist Church.

A Lesson

I ordered my favorite, a chocolate ice cream cone; dad ordered his favorite strawberry milkshake. The wino whose sleep we’d interrupted as we stepped around him to place our orders, seemed to have felt obliged to entertain us. He jumped up and began pantomiming a baseball game in which he was the pitcher, the batter, base runner, third baseman and announcer. The five-minute
freewheeling drama included two fast-ball strikes, a solid hit, explosive base running that ended with him sliding home as the announcer declared the runner “safe!” As daddy and I applauded his remarkable enactment (for truly it was brilliant), the actor suddenly became fully aware of us as individuals, not just baseball fans.

“Uh, oh…Are you a preacher?” he asked my dad looking at his dark suit.

This brought on new gales of laughter from us as my dad was often mistaken for a man of the cloth. His Stetson hat, dark suit and comfortable carriage somehow signaled “clergy” to people.

“You’re a preacher! I’m so sorry…” the man began.

“No,” my dad laughed, “I’m not a preacher.”

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t know you was a preacher!” the man continued.

“No,” said daddy still laughing, “I’m not…good game though!

“Oh yeah, did you see that hit? A home run!”

Lawrence Levine, in his book, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* suggests that those who might overlook the uneducated, would do well to pay attention to the ” richness of expression, the sharpness of perception, the uninhibited imagination, the complex imagery” found in black culture (Levine, 1977).

In that exchange and many others during my childhood, I was learning about the connectedness of the black community. I learned to appreciate the creativity and expressiveness, what some scholars call “vernacular” culture” that was so readily
apparent within the black community where we lived. It taught me to honor the accomplishments of others as well as my own—“Mr. Yates was a Tuskegee Airman, Ton!”—“See that house? Elijah Pierce lives there! That’s the artist Reverend Parrish was talking about…”—so that even though I didn’t know what a Tuskegee Airman was, I knew that my father thought it was significant and that my minister valued artist Elijah Pierce. Such information was passed down to me in the oral tradition.

In those acknowledgements, black culture was being valorized in a most natural way and although my world was small, I found that same process being replicated in the larger black community such that I felt connected to other black people wherever we went.

**The Lincoln Theater**

**The Players**

The question of who performs and what discourses and dynamics are at play are important questions that are key to understanding the struggle over the Lincoln Theater. As the mayor, city and county officials, city workers, community residents, artists and others engaged in a socio/political dance around issues of economic neglect and cultural domination, the Lincoln theater’s potential as a cultural marker for the black community declined even as the cost for the renovation project increased. Public speeches by the mayor, his staff, county officials, hired administrators and residents highlighted the crux of the undeclared
dispute over the Lincoln Theater. As the mayor brought on corporate donors, the goals for the space shifted away from community needs purported by the previous owner, as they moved toward corporate (and thereby capitalistic) expectations under the city’s aegis.

**Mayor Coleman: The Leader**

Mayor Coleman’s tone and pronouncements varied greatly from the tone and pronouncements of Charles Adrian, the previous owner of the Lincoln. Adrian’s mission was to provide a place for neighborhood kids. (Cols Dispatch, 2005) Mayor Coleman’s rhetoric had a more universal ring, a kind of pragmatism that Cornel West connotes is often meant in the media as “practicalism or opportunism” (West, 1993). In 2002, the King-Lincoln District Plan (KLDP) was presented to the public. Mayor Coleman’s letter of introduction to the plan states that the plan is a “cooperative effort between the city of Columbus; neighborhood residents, organizations and groups; and other stakeholders in this important section of the city’s Near East Side.” (KLDP, 2002) The letter goes on to say that the “intrinsic value” of central-city neighborhoods is recognized and that the plan takes

a holistic approach to the District’s imminent rebirth, focusing not only on physical development and redevelopment, but also on education; health and public safety; and District cohesiveness, pride, and promotion within the community at large (KLDP, 2002).
4/28/05  “We are on a mission to bring new life and investment to the King-Lincoln District.” (M. Coleman, Columbus Dispatch, 4/28/2005)

8/27/05  Per spokesperson Mike Brown, Mayor Coleman believes the Lincoln Theater can be a cornerstone to transform a blighted neighborhood. (Cols Dispatch 8/27/05)

8/27/05  Per Mike Brown, the mayor says the Lincoln Theater is a “historic icon.” (Cols Dispatch 8/27/05)

11/11/06  “We’re going to make this a national model” (M. Coleman Cols. Dispatch 11/11/06)

5/28/07  “This was the center of civics, culture, commerce, church in the black community…This was the area…it was all right here. (Coleman, Cols Dispatch 5/28/07)

9/5/07  Whitney Young Apartments are referred to as the site of a crime-ridden public housing complex which the mayor called “a symbol of blight.” ¹ (Cols Dispatch 9/5/07)

Media (The Organ)

The media has been complicit in concretizing the idea of the King Lincoln area as a broken, crime-ridden community that the mayor is committed to fix using the Lincoln as a major tool.

4/25/05  The city razed blighted Whitney Young Apartments to complement other area projects, such as the redevelopment of the historic Lincoln Theater. (Business First, 2005) ²

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¹ Mayor Coleman’s reference to blight includes the vacant lot created when the city razed the Whitney Young apartments 2 years earlier.

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Success (for the Lincoln project) is by no means guaranteed, plans must be executed *competently*…Toward that end, the involvement of CAPA, with its stellar track record…is an encouraging sign. …The inclusion of black cultural-arts groups and neighborhood interests is key. (Columbus Dispatch 2006, emphasis mine)

This historic structure will be a keystone in the overall economic development of the King Lincoln District. (Business First, 2006)

The Lincoln became a “focus” of Mayor Michael Coleman’s interest several years ago, when the city began seeking public and private investment for the estimated $9 million dollar project. (Business First, 2006)

Officials hope the renovation project will improve the “neglected neighborhood around the theater.” (Business First, 2006)

The restored Lincoln Theater will include homage to the past. ….CAPA, who is overseeing the project with the Lincoln Theater Association, is collecting photos, posters…about the Lincoln’s glory days. They’ll go on display when the theater opens in 2008.” (Dispatch, 2007)

The Lincoln Theater is “expected to reopen as an arts and cultural center in 2008.” (Business First, 2007)

**Gatekeepers**

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Notice the 2 year period between the city razing Whitney Young Apartments (4/25/05) and the Columbus Dispatch report that “restoration work” had not begun (5/30/07). Even as the Dispatch was reporting on the “neglected” neighborhood that needed improvement, the city of Columbus had razed a building and left the lot vacant for over 2 years, contributing to the “neglected” appearance of the area.
City staff and administrators of the King Lincoln renovation plan have been highly effective at limiting outside input while at the same time inviting participation. Even some city council members felt uninformed about the project. For example, during 2006 and 2007 a number of public meetings were hosted by the city’s department of Development in the Lincoln Theater. Flyers placed in limited locations (of 200 flyers printed for one meeting, about 100 of them were placed at a community agency several blocks away from the Lincoln theater) advertised the meetings as opportunities to learn about the progress of the Lincoln theatre. When King Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association (KLBNA) members complained that no votes were ever taken at these meetings, the city representative advised that these were not “meetings” but rather “Open Houses.” (K. Smith, Open house 5/2007) KLBNA subsequently entered a lawsuit against the city for violating “sunshine laws.”

8/27/05 Boyce Safford, in response to a complaint by previous Lincoln Theater owner Charles Adrian that the city removed Adrian’s sign from the building in violation of his contract, stated “the city isn’t obligated to abide by the terms of that agreement.” (Dispatch, 2005).

6/11/06 We really see quite a few African American companies operating in this theater. (Conner, Dispatch, 2006)

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6 The city staff worker who distributed the flyers told me she had printed 200 flyers. I happened to go to a meeting at a community agency on Main Street where I saw approximately 100 of the flyers. The agency is not a high traffic agency; in fact one has to be “buzzed in” to see anyone there so community members were not likely to drop by to pick up a flyer.
6/30/06 The city of Columbus is interested in asking for help to redevelop the Lincoln Theater. (Dispatch, 2006)

5/3/07 Larry James and CAPA President Conner “want to restore the theater”s reputation as well.”…Larry James, the city and CAPA have begun showing off their plans for the 79-year-old Lincoln. (Dispatch, 2007)

5/3/07 (referencing Maurice Hines, who”s been hired as artistic director, and Otis Sallid) “That”s the kind of marquee value we need,” James said. (Cols Dispatch, 2007)

10/13/07 “People ask,” Boyce Safford said, “Why are you investing in the arts when we need street lights?” “The answer is that the arts and culture generate synergy with the economy while enhancing lives.” (Cols. Dispatch, 2007)

When I read the statement about investing in the arts I was floored. By then our artists” group, Pandu, had been knocking at the door of this renovation process for three years but to us, nobody was home. The “synergy” statement is good! I wonder how long it took them to come up with it. Did they work on it as a team or did the PR department just hand it to them and say, “use it whenever you can!”

Town Criers/Community Voices

One major group whose voices are noticeably absent is that of the black community members. While not monolithic, black people, i.e. artists, black residents and business owners, black civil rights groups certainly should be saying
something about this massive infusion of capital into their long-neglected area. As a community resident, artist and mother, I had a vested interest in how the Lincoln Theater is redeveloped. My interest in the theater was both collective and individual. Individually, it is important for me to be able to provide my daughter with cultural experiences that positively reinforce her self-knowledge as an African American. The church teas and fashion shows that re-presented blackness as a positive aspect of character when I was a child are surely missing from today’s fast-paced society. At the same time, negative images of blackness abound in the news, in movies, on videos and elsewhere in popular culture. With the lack of inclusive history being taught in the schools or by parents, particularly young, who may not know much black history themselves, black children are bombarded with information that negates feelings of self-worth (Hale, 1986).

Collectively, I found I was not the only one raising questions about some aspects of the project.

1/26/05 I’m disappointed that (Columbus) leadership didn’t push more for King Lincoln. (Rep. J. Beatty, at project failing to get county funding) Cols. Dispatch, 2005)

1/26/05 We tried to look at projects that offered economic growth. (Rep. C. Calvert re: Lincoln funding, Cols Dispatch 1/26/05)

11/8/05 Henry Butcher, owner of Creole Kitchen “had a lease with the Lincoln Theatre, but the city objected to that use.” (Dispatch, 2005)
“They have put a wedge through this community like Moses parting the Red Sea.” (local developer, Clyde Powell referring to the city’s KL plan implementation (Dispatch, 2006).

New housing in the pipeline (65 total units) won’t bring enough residents to sustain the Lincoln. (K.Bailey, Near East Area Commission chair, Dispatch, 2006)

“This may well be his (Mayor Coleman’s) legacy. The city destroyed the community with its network of freeways; it’s the city’s responsibility to restore it.” (J. Williams, Dispatch, 2007)

Willis Brown of KLBNA said his group deserves a seat on that board. (Referring to the board charged with running the Lincoln theatre) (Dispatch, 2007)

__Clyde Powell was an affable guy; clean cut, intelligent looking, and obviously devoted to his beautiful wife and son. Together the couple ran an urban development company called North of Broad (NOBO). Powell was the person who gave me back story information about the King Lincoln district acknowledging that he had been an essential part of its initial conceptualization. A few years down the road with this thing, Powell made the statement about “parting the community like Moses parting the Red Sea” which I liked because it was so visual. I only saw him once more to speak with him about the Lincoln. He attended a Pandu meeting where he reported he’d been closed out of getting contracts for the KLDP. His disappointment was palpable, as if it wounded him. I
was later told that he had been “run out of town” because of his public statements. That wounded me.

The Patsy/Columbus Children’s Theater

Columbus Children’s Theater was courted by representatives to move into the space while black art organizations were being rebuffed. The on-going negotiations with CCT dislocated negotiations with other entities even as CCT’s considerations about moving to the Lincoln Theater seemed tentative.

12/4/04  Columbus Children’s Theater has selected Hardliners Design firm to study if the Lincoln Theater can be converted to two stages.

12/26/04  We don’t have to move…but we’re looking for a home for our future growth. (Goldsmith, CCT, Dispatch, 2004)

3/2/05  Columbus spent $1 million to buy the Lincoln Theater on the Near East Side. It plans to spend at least another million to help fix it up for the Columbus Children’s Theater. (Dispatch, 2005)7

6/20/05  CCT has its sights set on the Lincoln Theater, a city-owned building that is slated for renovation. (Dispatch, 2005)

6/3/06  CCT “hurt” city’s effort to fix the Lincoln Theater by not moving to the Lincoln. (Dispatch, 2006)

6/11/06  CCT has backed out of plans to move into the Lincoln citing repair costs. But (L) James said leaders plan to talk to theater officials

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7 At the same time Pandu was being advised to raise money to renovate the Lincoln, the local news is reporting the city is raising money for CCT’s occupancy.
about using the Lincoln’s third floor for administrative offices and rehearsal space. (Dispatch, 2006)

**The Challengers**

This group is primarily comprised of PANDU members but also includes other black artists, businesses and residents who value black culture and want to imprint a black aesthetic into the renovated space so that the 85% black King Lincoln District community (Census 2000) continues to gain value from all aspects of the Lincoln Theater, from the physical design to the commercial elements (i.e. jobs, contracts), social and educational aspects. Jon Beard is our champion.

8/23/05 Pandu drafts Letter of Support to be circulated throughout community; highlights Pandu founders and six advisory committee members including former deputy school superintendent, four professors from OSU (Music, painting, black studies and service learning/community based arts), retired government worker.

5/17/06 Met with City Councilwoman Tavares to discuss Lincoln Theater. She didn”t know why this was a problem, it was a black theater in a black community but admitted city council was not being informed about the project.

12/06 T. Smith advised by local artist regarding the Lincoln that a “political web” was being spun and to wait till dust settles.

3/19/07 On March 8th, Pandu again requested to meet with the mayor; ten days later referred to B. Safford with whom we”d already met;
mayor’s office would “let me know” about our request to meet. We never met.

2/8/08 My final ambush of Mayor Coleman at a public venue. (I had taken to approaching the mayor whenever he was accessible in public.) As usual I asked him about community based arts in the Lincoln, to which he responded, “I think we’ve got that covered,” to which I replied, “No, I don’t think you do.”

Pandu met regularly for over 4 years to try to impact the direction and outcome of the Lincoln Theater. As professional artists, we represented the disciplines of photography, dance, theater, literature, music and history and at modest estimates, totaled over 50 years of experience in the arts. In addition, I had made inroads recruiting other professional artists and educators to our cause including two music professors (jazz), two mixed media artists, one community based arts professor, one painting professor, one classical music professor, one humanities associate director, a host of local professional musicians and other performance artists. Our knowledge base was broad and deep and included a former musical writer and arranger for the Temptations, a MacArthur “genius,” and award winners in various disciplines. Together with government resources and a firm commitment to excellence, we could make the Lincoln Theater a transformative space for the near east side and the greater Columbus area as well.

While Pandu is defined as the challenger, we didn’t realize that was our position until well into the fray. We began as outsiders trying to get on the team. We had a lot of skill but no one to champion our cause, no envoy into the process. As
citizens of this nation imbued with the right to participate in our government,
community residents of the near east side with a vested interest in the
development of our community, experts with knowledge and resources for the
kind of project the city was undertaking, we thought our help would be
welcomed.

Déjà vu all over again

A prominent black television journalist, who had a national news program, was
one of my early heroes. I wanted to grow up to be a journalist just like him,
tackling difficult issues of race with nationally recognized figures, taking stands
on positions of integrity during the Civil Rights era, wearing dashikis and a
natural to show a proud black consciousness, that was an admirable calling. I
had the opportunity to see this renowned journalist at a friend’s home once. My
friend hosted him for a small group after a paid presentation he had done in town.
I was excited to get to meet him face to face.

The journalist was all I had expected him to be. He gave a brilliant talk
about some issues of concern to our community. Afterwards there was a question
and answer period. One of the Africans in the group asked how black Americans
and Africans should relate to each other given their shared history, etc. The reply
was essentially, “like anybody else.” That response seemed incongruent with his
previous statements honoring our past and our ancestors’ triumphs. Apparently
another African felt a disconnect, so he rephrased the question. Again, the same
response. Now I was really confused. Perhaps he didn’t understand the
question...In light of his prior comments, this idea that Africans and African
Americans should have no special relationship seemed wrong. I ventured to reframe the question and ask it a third time. The response was a stinging, “You figure it out!”

Completely humiliated and thoroughly confused, I left the gathering early. When I tearfully reported the incident to my older brother Elton, he said, “Ton, Ton, you missed all the queues. When the first guy asked the question and didn’t get an answer, that was a clue. When the second guy asked the question and got the same response, that was confirmation. When you asked, now he’s annoyed so he blasted you to take the weight off himself. Ton, Ton, he didn’t have an answer.”

Not willing to leave it there with my feelings still hurt, Elton went on. “In your whole life, and the future you have ahead of you…how important is this guy to your life?” After a pause to consider the question, I answered honestly, “not very important.” “Right…so let it go”…which I did. I let go of the hurt but not the lesson but now it seemed the lesson was being repeated.

“Who’s Zoomin’ Who?” (Aretha Franklin, 1985)

In the case of the Lincoln Theater, the media effectively rearticulated “victim status and an associated sense of threat and vulnerability to a hegemonic political rationality that maintains that the dominant core of society is encircled and must be preserved from the contamination of competing narratives of marginalized groups-indigenous minorities or immigrants.” (Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001)
In other words, the city, rather than the disrupted, under-resourced near east side community, became the victim.

9/3/06 Columbus Dispatch editorial on a Biking event in front of the Lincoln Theater: The day lacked the rancor that has sometimes marked efforts to bring change here. City fathers…have often been at odds on how to reclaim the boarded up buildings lining this section of the street. (Dispatch, 2006)

9/3/07 On a project replacing the Whitney Young Apartments razed near the Lincoln Theater, Mayor Coleman called the former housing project a “symbol of blight.”

Bill Harris, a 40-year resident, called the projects in his community “a tremendous opportunity” but only if neighbors take care of the neighborhood. (Dispatch, 2007)

5/28/07 “It’s almost like a ghost,” said Larry James. “It’s there and it haunts you, and you don’t know why?”(James is referring to the Lincoln Theater) (Dispatch, 2007)

Statements such as these suggest the city has made several attempts to redeem or “bring change” to this area occupied by black residents and that it might be successful only if black people don’t tear it up or scare them off! This kind of
insidious presentation of the black community reflects an axiology is not new, but that is out of synch with a black cultural community consciousness. (Allen, 1922)

While the decision-makers’ public narrative surrounding the Lincoln presumed to re-constitute black heritage, municipal processes simultaneously disrupted community cultural codes that would have assured significant input from the black community, rendering the decisions that were made to be supportive of a hegemonic status quo.

11/18/06 Re: the Lincoln: Mayor Coleman “envisions it as a ,national model,” a showcase for black cultural events.” (Dispatch editorial, 2006)

CAPA will oversee the $10 million renovation and will help operate the theater. ..without the expertise and experience CAPA offers, the whole enterprise could fail for the most mundane of reasons: running out of money. (Ibid, 11/18/06)

4/2/07 In his eighth State of the City speech, the mayor gave a progress report for ongoing projects. In the King-Lincoln District, where the city and Franklin County are paying $8 million to renovate the

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8 In 1922, The Crisis magazine ran an article by Nimrod Allen that both disparages the black community from the white media perspective and undermines that disparagement with positive facts about the black community presented by the black media perspective.
historic Lincoln Theater, he said the Jazz Arts Group will create a Jazz Academy to teach young musicians. (Dispatch, 4/2/07)

2/28/08 The city is pumping millions into the area, including $4 million toward the $12 million Lincoln Theater redevelopment, as Mayor Michael B. Coleman tries to create a legacy in what was once the heartbeat of the city’s black community. (Dispatch, 2/28/08)

As the mayor invoked the memory of a celebrated black past, many in the community believed that the restoration of the Lincoln will once again, evoke a cultural and economic resurgence on the near east side that would restore “community” in the area. Yet some of the administration’s actions put the theater under the administrative control of a white arts institution that has little connection with the black community. Columbus Association for Performing Arts (CAPA) holds the reigns over the Lincoln where the most prominent and in fact only occupant of the theater is Jazz Arts Group (JAG), a predominantly white big band organization. Cornel West notes, “…the use of state power enables you to cast out not only individuals but whole cultures.” (West, 1993, p 127)

So how did this all come about and what should be made of this phenomenon? Again using an educational model as referent, Dimitriadis and McCarthy assert that multicultural curriculums are being co-opted to re-assert the hegemony of the “now persecuted white middle class.” Similarly, I believe the Lincoln theater

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9 Jazz Arts Group, a jazz Big Band organization in Columbus, Ohio where I was once briefly employed, has had few black members over its 30 plus year history. Today, the organization has a white executive director and a black artistic director.
renovation process reasserted the hegemony of a dominant power structure, in this case an urban regime. (Stone, 1993) In 2004, Jason Reece of the Kirwan Institute sent me a memo in which he delineated the benefits and negative impacts of “urban sprawl.” Referencing John Powell the memo asserts,

   The implications of sprawl for minorities are so severe, that it has been categorized as the most important civil rights issue of today.10 In the early days of suburban growth, racially restrictive covenants and discriminatory housing policies limited access to the suburbs for the nation’s African American population. In contemporary times, exclusionary zoning policies and limited opportunities restrict many African American’s from leaving the inner city. (Reece, 2004)

These governmental policies and practices severely limit the ability of marginalized citizens to recognize the “self-evident” truths with which they are endowed as Americans. The pursuit of their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, take a backseat to the pressing requirements of urban living.

Definitions

Community

In this study, I use Vesta Daniel’s definition of “community.” In her paper entitled Components of the Community Act as Sources of Pedagogy, Dr. Daniel states that a community is “a collection of people who are unified by place/locality (or not), similar circumstances and/or history, shared interests

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and/or spiritual linkages.” What I am attempting to examine is the use value of a “community” based ethnic art space in the current post modern, capitalistic, patriarchal, culturally desensitized or “commodified” society under which my community on the near east side of Columbus is subsumed. Some, like bell hooks, would add “white supremacist” to the prior list of adjectives.

Similar to Pat’s Barbershop in the article, “Never A Dull Moment” Pat’s Barbershop as Educational Environment, Hypertext, and Place” by B. Stephen Carpenter, 2003) the Lincoln Theater operated as a community space for various forms of education. Just as the barbershop functioned as a space for aesthetic transformation, the Lincoln Theater operated as a space for social and cultural transformation. Meeting girls as a young man, recognizing boundaries and “appropriate” interactions with young men as a young woman, being accompanied by younger siblings or monitored by elders and neighbors all took place in the highly aestheticized space called the Lincoln. As Reita Smith stated in her interview, the Lincoln was a place where positive role models in the form of the adult owners, ticket takers, technical staff, concession personnel and patrons, presented young blacks with examples to whom they could look up and learn (Smith, 2010, Lincoln Theater interview).

I place myself in the center of the discourse as a black feminist researcher using the term “my community” to indicate the subjectivity I experience as a member of this researched community, while attempting to maintain as much as any, the
objective gaze of a researcher. I reference the position of Patricia Hill Collins in her book, *Black Feminist Thought*, in which she tackles head-on, the duality of her position in producing scholarship (Hill Collins, 1991, p xiv).

**Culture industry**

As an art educator concerned with arts institutions, and in particular community-based arts facilities that provide space beyond the school house door to engage and nurture art, especially among young people, I am keenly aware of the potential of trends in the arts. The fate of a venerable ethnic arts space in my community may portend foreboding for the future of other ethnic community art spaces in the current economically conservative and intellectually restrictive political atmosphere. In his dictionary of critical theory, David Macey affirms that the “culture industry” (defined by Cherbo and Wyszomirski as “the output of artists and other creative workers in entertainment, publishing, audiovisual, music, and recording) (Cherbo and Wyszomirski, 2000, p6) in a capitalistic system “…produces works of art whose every detail is tailored to the needs of mass consumption, devalues the experience of art and dulls the critical faculties of the consumer.” (Macey, 2000, p 78)

This cultural system evolved out of a version of Marxist theory of commodity fetishism that relies heavily on exchange-value rather than use-value, where evaluation becomes the “sole criterion of value” (Macey, 2000, p79). The effect of the culture industry, Macey asserts, is to “promote social and intellectual
conformity,” (Macey, p 79) a trend about which I hope we, as art educators, art
appreciators, community members and human beings, are all concerned. In this
context, the transformation and/or loss of community based art spaces like the
Lincoln Theater, then takes on an importance beyond the geographic boundaries
of its location.

In chapter one, I presented background information to contextualize and
historicize the problem of this case study of the Lincoln Theater. After identifying
the research question, theory, study design and methodology initially undertaken
as participatory action research, I found a different study element emerging as
events and activities of the research unfolded. A narrative element was added to
provide an autoethnographic telling of the study as I realized my experience as
part of the “researched” group were also data. In chapter two, I will provide some
theoretical grounding for my approach to this case employing critical theory,
including race and feminist theories, and autoethnography as tools.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature which influenced the formulation of this research examining the renovation of the Lincoln Theater, an historic black cultural space in Columbus, Ohio from the perspective of both a researcher (outsider) and the researched, (artist, community resident insider) comes from five areas: critical theory (including critical race and black feminist theory) urban regime theory, art education pedagogy, material culture and autoethnography. These were the overarching literary components that created the framework for my understanding and interpretation of the Lincoln Theater as a phenomenon, providing the foundational theories and philosophies that grounded my research.

My research of the Lincoln Theatre incorporates the history of a black community struggling to re-structure after a long period of poverty and neglect. Central to the possibility for community renewal is the historic Lincoln Theatre in East Columbus, once a premier cultural phenomenon nurturing, promoting and presenting black culture as a source of community pride, artistic accomplishment and economic empowerment.

As an African American female researcher, alternative interpretive tools are essential to impart subtleties of personal experience intertwining with social,
historical, political context. My strategy to engage this social inquiry is through participatory action research case study. This form of inquiry affords me the perspective of participant observer and insider/outsider perspective. As an insider, I am an artist from the near east side community where the Lincoln Theatre is located. As an outsider, I am an academic researcher, a representative of that group of scholars who historically studied ethnic communities only to use the findings, from the perspective of the studied groups, against the interest of the ethnic community (Jewell, 1993, Smith, 1999). This dual position might be understood as a further iteration of the “double consciousness” to which the scholar W.E.B.DuBois referred (DuBois, 1903).

Not only was I operating as a black in a predominantly white society with the complexities enunciated in DuBois” seminal work, The Souls of Black Folk, I was also performing as an academic studying myself, a near east side resident of Columbus, Ohio. For this reason, autoethnographic narratives form the core of my research as I reflexively examined the status of black culture, my culture, on the near east side of Columbus and my reactions as a black female, artist and mother. Just as bell hooks uses autoethnography to present the counter narrative of her upbringing to locate and contextualize her political understandings of what she terms the “imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy,” (hooks, 2009), I use my stories to place myself as inquisitor activist, one who’s position is outside the traditional acceptable position of a black female community member. This is how I engaged the phenomenon of the Lincoln Theater renovation.
The literature that informed my thinking about the complexities of black cultural life in today’s postmodern capitalist environment is primarily that of critical theory, including the subsets of black feminist and critical race theory, art education, material culture, urban regime theory and autoethnography. The basic tenets of these theoretical discourses have the capacity to build deeper understanding of the case being studied through the deconstruction of the status quo and the re-imagining of the cultural reality from an African American female artist perspective. My stories then, become the thread that ties seemingly disparate pieces together making sense of what appears as non-sense to those of us in marginalized, ever busy trying to make it positions of daily interaction with a capitalistic, patriarchal, culturally and ethnically desensitized reality called living in America today.

**Critical Theory**

The place in history of almost any group of people anywhere can be clearly determined by historical records, cultural markers, ancient works of art, and the like, but for most African Diaspora peoples this simply is not possible…  

(Dash, 2006)

Critical Theory is a term that “seeks to give social agents a critical purchase on what is normally taken for granted and that promotes the development of a free and self-determining society by dispelling the illusions of ideology.” (Macy, 2000, p75) Derived from the Frankfurt School in which Adorno, Benjamin and Habermas were key players, critical theory begins with the Marxist view of
materialism and incorporates it into discourses beyond that of labor (Macey, 2000).

My initial interest in the Lincoln theatre was two-fold: first, as a playwright I was especially interested in a theatre with such a proud history that could once again become a space where productions of local, black artists, (including myself) could be presented; second, as a community resident and mother, I was keenly aware of the lack of existing spaces where black children could be immersed and nurtured in their own culture, and learning of the Lincoln theatre’s past, thought that it could become a safe haven for acculturating black children (including mine) to black culture and a black aesthetic once again.

One of the most powerful aspects of Critical Theory is its usefulness in deconstructing the status quo. Research methodologists Somkeh and Lewin describe the major tenets of critical theory as

…looking beyond the surface of what people say, write, do to analyse the unspoken power relations governing their actions and understandings. It incorporates from the work of Marx the notion of „false consciousness” to describe how individuals are disempowered by the social structures which shape how they think as well as how they act.

(SomKeh and Lewin, 2005, p344)

David Macey references Raymond Guess (1981) when describing critical theory as a “theory that provides for human action (that) is inherently emancipator, has a
cognitive content and, unlike scientific theory, is self-conscious, self-critical and non-objectifying.” (Macey, 2000 p75) Macey goes on to assert that critical theory most often takes the form of a “critique.”

Thomas Schwandt asserts that “critical race theory” is the “theoretical and methodological framework with roots in legal studies, political theory, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology connecting research, policy and race” (Schwandt, 2007 p53). He goes on to note the “assumption” that race and racism are at the center of social and institutional life and that stories, narrative inquiries and other forms of both quantitative and qualitative research are employed to challenge existing assumptions about the social construction of race. (Schwandt, 2007, Ibid). Paul Duncum, in his article “The Theories and Practices of Visual Culture in Art Education” writes of “cultural studies” including visual culture, that embody critical theory, media studies, feminist studies and more and that cultural studies are “grounded in the beliefs that society is structured by dominance and that signifying practices are always a means of establishing and maintaining power, but nevertheless that people can resist and negotiate meaning for themselves.” (Duncum, 2003)

These definitions are central to my research analysis as my goal is to “trouble” the social/political processes that were undertaken in redeveloping the Lincoln Theatre to examine issues of power in this city-initiated arts project. I am also querying whether a social reconstructionist end, one the re-empowers the black
community, is plausible given past and current actions of the city administration regarding this project. According to Ballengee-Morris, social reconstruction “considers social, cultural and political context as part of the education process but also nurtures and encourages action/reaction based on one”s finding” (Sleeter & Grant as referenced by Ballengee-Morris, 1988).

Value of the Arts

The arts are one of humanity”s deepest rivers of continuity. They connect each new generation to those who have gone before equipping newcomers in their pursuit of the abiding questions: Who am I? What must I do? Where am I going? At the same time, the arts are often an impetus for change, challenging old perspectives from fresh angles of vision, or offering original interpretations of familiar ideas…the arts are society”s gift to itself…(Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994)

Giving voice

The arts have long been a source of invention, representation and actualization of self in and for the black community. In her book, A Voice from the South, Anna Julia Cooper used her voice to not only address white society as it continued to oppress black people just out of the bonds of slavery, but also to address black men whose political activities excluded the valuable input of black women in the struggle toward greater autonomy for the black community.
In the introduction to *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing...And Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive*, a Zora Neale Hurston Reader, editor Alice Walker states

We love Zora Neale Hurston for her work, first, and then again (as she and Eatonville would say), we love her for herself. For the humor and courage with which she encountered a life she infrequently designed, for her absolute disinterest in becoming either white or bourgeois, and for her devoted appreciation of her own culture which is an inspiration to us all.

(Walker, 1979, p2)

Zora Neale Hurston represents what is possible in terms of self-acceptance and self-empowerment through the arts. Although she never attained commercial success, her writing still inspires modern films to be made by the likes of Oprah Winfrey, who is one of the most commercially successful people in the world today.

As an autoethnographer, Hurston was ahead of her time. Her reflexivity about her position as an “un-bowed” Negro woman writer highlighted the multiple truths of her time and space. Although she was a successful black writer during the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, there was little “common language” among her and her contemporaries. Yet there has been a resurgence of interest in her work, particularly among young women and young scholars who see Hurston as an exemplar of self-actualization and self-containment.

*Passing on cultural values*
The Black Power movement of the Civil Rights era propelled southern blacks and ultimately the United States to wrestle with questions of equality and justice for black people and other minorities. Studying, documenting and explicating black culture for the black community became a tradition begun by the earliest black scholars, most notably W.E.B. Du Bois and was a part of the larger “Black Uplift” movement that engaged the entire community. Disagreeing with the notion that the black man could carry the race to those lofty places he might attain, Anna Julia Cooper, who Henry Louis Gates, Jr. hailed as a “prototypical black feminist” for her 1892 book, declared, “Only the Black Woman can say „when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.“” (Cooper, 1892 as quoted by Giddings, 1984)

Education
Traditionally education has been understood as a basic element of nation building for the black community. Education was, and still is, seen as a key element in black autonomy, community and individual social, political and cultural advancement. Joel Spring in The American School 1642-1985 notes that in 17th century America, education was a means to maintain religious beliefs and ensure social stability. This was understood to mean that citizens should have enough education to read the Bible and the laws “to maintain Protestant religious beliefs and ensure social stability” (Spring, 1986).
Schools were established to assure the “perpetuation of religious values and obedience to government.” Later schooling became a way to confer status and provide for upward mobility (Spring, 1986). By the 18th century, Robert Molesworth was one who disagreed with this strictly utilitarian approach and thought that education should “contribute to liberty and freedom.” Between 1720-1723 John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon wrote a series of essays known as Cato’s Letters that provided a broad defense of “freedom of ideas and learning” asserting “that tyranny and slavery stop social development and improvement in human well being…” whereas freedom and liberty lead to progress and happiness. (Spring, 1986, emphasis mine) The debate between Useful and Ornamental learning continued throughout the century. Spring notes that schools served two needs: they provided useful education and they transmitted the culture, which was required for entrance into the middle class.

French philosopher Jacques Rousseau presented ideas about education in contrast to the colonial approach and Spring seems to agree that learning and knowledge should be tools to be used by the individual—not the reverse, that is, individuals should not be used as tools themselves. By the 19th century, American schools enhanced social status and “represented a direct threat to aristocratic control because their existence suggested that individuals could be educated to rule.” (Spring, 1986) Harvard is described in a pamphlet on its founding, as a place to “advance Learning, and perpetuate it to Posterity” (Spring, 1986). The secret was
out. After the Revolutionary War, colonists realized the value of learning “for gaining independence, not just instilling subservience” (Spring, 1986).

Giroux, in his book *Teachers as Intellectuals*, asserts that through the discourse of “lived cultures” and the theory of “self-production,” teachers and students can give meaning to their lives through the complex historical, cultural and political forms that they both embody and produce.” (Giroux, 1988) He goes on to explain that this discourse examines and interrogates “how people create stories, memories, and narratives that posit a sense of determination and agency.”

Community based arts program can become a site for cultural support through education. Programming that asserts that people with different histories and experiences have different “readings” of the world, can offer the opportunity for these readings to be explored and understood through the self-production of learning in the community environment. The historic element of “uplift” begun by African American women in the 1800’s can be refreshed and can revitalize young African Americans as before. Giroux references Gramsci to support his argument that domination in our society has shifted from the use of force to “the use of cultural apparatus which promotes consensus through the reproduction and distribution of dominant systems of beliefs and attitudes.” Giroux goes on to point out that from the perspective of Gramsci, Bourdieu, Bernstein and others, “the cultural apparatus for reproducing the dominant culture and communicating it to the public becomes an important political issue.” (Giroux, 1988)
The community based Lincoln Theater of the past, was created to offset the negative consensus about blacks as shiftless, lazy, unintelligent and incapable of doing for themselves. Community based arts programs have the ability to both confirm the knowledge and experience of students and then help them raise questions and seek answers to those questions that come out of their own lived experience. The Lincoln Theatre re-constitution will impact the current African American community in which it resides, including the over 2,000 children in the area. The Lincoln may also represent a larger trend in our country in which ethnic cultural institutions are being redeveloped into more mainstream institutions that lack the community self-empowerment ability innate in their genesis or done away with altogether.

*Communal Action*

Political activism and community engagement efforts, so powerfully stimulated during the civil rights movement, now lacked the arts as a sustaining vehicle through which the community could be linked, motivated and activated. (Cruse, 1966)

The arts have the ability to transform our communities in a powerful way. Community based arts can serve as transformative sites that empower communities to become all that they can believe and conceive. Vesta Daniel affirms, “The community can function as a site/place of resistance…” (Daniel draft, 2003) Kerry Freeman suggests community-based arts programs can help to “develop rich meanings through life experience.” (Freedman, 2003) The Lincoln Theatre can become a site for community transformation through the use of
community-based arts at a professional level if moved in that direction by the mayor and the King Lincoln District Community Development Corporation (KLDCDC).

Columbus has successfully undertaken a similar project before. The Kwanzaa Playground stands as a testament to a transformative process brought about via the arts. Artist Shirley Bowen immersed herself in the creation of the space and told Vesta Daniel

> For us, the playground project became an outdoor learning lab where we could explore…the potential of African art concepts to educate, impact and reclaim the minds and hearts of our children and their families. In the process of resurrecting a neglected playground, we had to heal relationships, improve communications, educate the community about African values and concepts, and especially increase self-esteem and self-pride among children constantly threatened by crime, violence and substance abuse.

(Bowen, S. as quoted by Daniel, personal communication, 1996)

Will the city of Columbus take this opportunity to revitalize the near east side through the tradition of black cultural expression to again empower the people or will a political agenda unfold that privileges those who would commodify and re-sell black culture for their benefit? Will “self-initiative, self-reliance, and imagination” be allowed to enhance children’s ability to compete? (Funk, 2003)
These questions loomed in the community and particularly among the black artists with whom I associated. This case study was conceived to provide a closer look.

**Black Culture and Community Based Arts**


My research focuses on community-based arts as a tool for addressing issues of self-esteem, community empowerment and neo-colonialism in the black community. Within the African American landscape, community-based arts have traditionally functioned as “sites of resistance” (Daniel, 2003) to offset the vestiges of colonialism (poverty and racism) that still exist as sturdy threads in the fabric of American culture.
As an artist, I am engaged in the struggle (both figuratively and literally) to create and preserve cultural expressions and artistic traditions in a postmodern capitalistic society where art has often been marginalized, commodified and/or relegated to its utilitarian value, (Ballengee-Morris, 2002, Smith, 1999, Jameson, 1991). In an article entitled, “Raison d’État, Raisons des Arts: Thinking about Public Purposes”, Margaret Wyszomirski begins with a quote from W. Carey McWilliams that states, “The arts of government…rightfully order all lesser arts for the greater good and the higher glory.” Wyszomirski then goes on to note, “History is replete with debates and shifting tides of opinion about which public interests are furthered by the arts, how the interests of the arts and of the public coincide or diverge, and how the organizations of the arts and of government interact” (Wyszomirski, 2000).

I am interested in issues of power and agency as performed at the nexus of city government, black artists and the local black community during a $13 million dollar renovation of the historic Lincoln theatre. Saving and re-inscribing the Lincoln theatre by the City of Columbus under a black mayor is a significant political act, fulfilling the mayor’s tacit commitment to the black community to do something “important” for the black community. The renovation of the Lincoln Theatre, a black cultural institution, represents the city’s first major financial commitment to the near east side in over 20 years (Safford, 2006, Cols. Dispatch, 2006, Business First, 12/12/06).
The Lincoln Theatre project also represents cultural, economic and social revitalization for the black community in what has been renamed the King Lincoln District. With a history of nurturing a black aesthetic, the Lincoln has been reconstituted in its latest iteration. Under the leadership and direction of Michael B. Coleman, the city’s first black mayor, the renovation of the Lincoln Theatre, its programming and operations were placed under Columbus Association for Performing Arts (CAPA), a white art administration organization with little connection to the black community, a move which I believe threatens to subvert the role this black cultural institution traditionally played.

The city’s early decision to turn planning, operations, and programming over to Columbus Association of Performing Arts (CAPA) calls into question the validity of the mayor’s “legacy to the black community.” That consideration set me on a journey of examination of the black cultural community, the nexus of municipal government and arts projects, and my personal understanding of black artists in a postmodern capitalist society.

A Little History

The Lincoln theatre as a structure is important to the black community as a reminder of a great history now fading in our memories. Georgianna Short describes the value of historic or ancient structures:
Ancient structures enable people to appreciate where they came from, to understand themselves better, to acknowledge the perspective of others, and to place their own time within the frame of history. (Cuniffe, 1994) As such, they represent a generational link and form of human communication between past, present and future. Because extant permanent structures represent a “non-renewable record of human culture and achievement, they form one of humanity’s deepest rivers of continuity. (Short, 2005)

Short goes on to say that how these structures are cared for is an indicator of the interest in “maintaining and sustaining its historical legacy” and that the “care” of such structures includes “active participation on the part of cultural groups in crafting policies related to conservation, preservation, and restoration of ancestral structures” (Short, 2005).

Nadine Ehlers, in her article “Black Is, Black Ain’t: Performative Revisions of Racial „Crisis,”” uses the 1896 case of Plessy v. Ferguson to recall the legal restrictions on blacks owning property. (Ehlers, 2006) Ehlers article helps historically contextualize governmental procedures involved in renovating the Lincoln Theatre that privileged white control of the property rather than black “ownership” and reminded me of how politics and the law have played a major role in black realities. The Columbus Dispatch expressed the anachronistic sentiment of a white power structure regarding black property ownership.
Success (for the Lincoln project) is by no means guaranteed, plans must be executed competently…Toward that end, the involvement of CAPA, with its stellar track record…is an encouraging sign. (emphasis mine, Dispatch, 11/18/06)

For the editorial writer at the Columbus Dispatch, the involvement of CAPA seemed a necessity for the venture to have any chance of success. The Dispatch statement reminds me of a trip I took in 1990 to Charleston, South Carolina.

Charleston

I hadn’t known how prominent Charleston, South Carolina had been in the American slave trade until I visited there with my historian friend. Everywhere we went there seemed to be remnants of America’s “peculiar institution,” from the bookshops and historical tours to the Old Custom House and the open market where all kinds of “commodities” had been sold. There was a curious “air” about the city that promoted its history to attract tourism but simultaneously presented its history as if in the third person, as if the present descendants of its past had no personal connection to it.

I shopped at a sundry store where a charming young black sales clerk handled my sale. It was one of those old fashioned stores where the merchandise was laid out flat in bins. I found a tee shirt that I thought would be cool as the heat in Charleston was sweltering that summer. As I looked into my bag to pull out money to complete the transaction, the young woman deftly receded into the background. Almost as if by magic, her retreat was quick and complete as a white male appeared to take my money. Looking around for my sales clerk and finding
her nowhere, I paid the man and left the store. I was perplexed about the incident until my friend and I discussed the event outside the store. Even as late as 1990 in some establishments, blacks were not privy to handle money, especially in a white establishment. Old habits die hard and blacks owning or handling property, money or anything of value competently is still untenable for some whites…and some blacks as well.

Urban Regime Theory

Urban regime theory attempts to explain politics and policies beyond pluralism and elitism, providing insight into current political reality. (Stoker, 1995, Stone, 2008). The intersection of arts and arts policy with politics and governmental economic, social and urban policy determines the cultural landscape, and thereby the health and well-being of communities. Urban regime theory is considered by Stone, to be perhaps the latest paradigm shift in policy studies allowing us to answer some questions but, as with any paradigm, not all.

Stone references Wilson (1963), Banfield (1961) and Dahl (1961) in summarizing the evolution of political theory from modernism (a movement from “traditional ethos of private regardingness to a modern ethos of public regardingness”) (Stone, 2008) characterized by pluralism, coalition-building and ethnic patronage toward an economistic paradigm where the world is viewed as a market. In the old traditional modernistic paradigm, a skilled politician operated from a command center to move constituencies toward a collective agenda. In the economistic
paradigm, there is no command center and leadership “does not much matter.” Stone (2008, p 122) references Peterson (1981) to assert that what does matter is the mobility of investment capital. This paradigm asserts that as cities compete for investment capital, they are wont to do anything too supportive of wealth redistribution so as to remain “competitive,” leaving the state (federal, state and local governments) to address social (welfare, well-being) needs of its citizenry.

Urban regime theory attempts to speak to the dual role of those who would govern by addressing the “division of labor between state and economy.” In this paradigm political leaders must balance the community’s needs with the needs of acquiring private investment. (Stone, 2008) In order to accomplish this, the leader must have a “governing regime.” The governing regimes’ leadership is “preemptive” in two ways: by appropriating the position of the community, identifying its actions as that of the “community” and effectively preempting true community response; or, forestalling any rival response via its resources and institutional strength. These preemptions are possible because community actors are often under-resourced, unorganized or unaware. Stone suggests the nature of urban regimes is their ability to hold together enough institutional resources and capital investment to move an agenda forward, to govern (Stone, 2008, p123).

**Autoethnography-Speaking for Myself**

Professors and social critics bell hooks and Dr. Cornel West write about the black community as a “marginalized” community and the implications of that on
several fronts-political, social, economic and cultural (hooks, 1989, West, 1996). Jennifer Mason suggests, “qualitative research faces new opportunities in a social world that is increasingly thought to be complex and multi-dimensional, and where the particularly qualitative strengths of understanding context, diversity, nuance and process might potentially be very highly valued.” (Mason, 2002, p1) Mason goes on to say that qualitative research is “capable of producing very well-founded cross-contextual generalities” that allow us to not only understand “how” things work but also how things work in a particular context.

Thomas Schwandt deepens the definition of qualitative research by asserting that “qualitative” denotes “of or relating to quality” thus implying that the thing that is being studied is essentially worthy of study, thereby associating “value” with the subject of the inquiry. He goes on to reference Elliot Eisner’s explication of qualitative inquiry with reference to teaching and learning that asserts “the idea that the experience of art is closer than that of science to the way of knowing …and that there is a kind of truth and knowledge available through art that cannot be obtained by scientific method…” (Schwandt, 2007, p 248)

The art of ethnography including poetry, narrative storytelling, playwriting and other means of creative research becomes a useful tool in heightening the ability of qualitative methods to “celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity” (Mason, 200, p2). Employing an ethnographic approach to my research topic allows me to provide a context for the study. The
“setting” or prelude for the narrative of the Lincoln Theatre and the near east side community’s history is an important part of one’s ability to understand the “truth” of what is happening in the community today. What is at stake for the near east side black community is more than merely dwindling economic possibilities derived from the current evolution of the space. My researcher’s instinct (an unquantifiable aspect of research but present nonetheless) suggests that rather more at risk for the community is the loss of “community” itself.

There are researchers who do not value ethnography as a form of research. In the *Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Macey’s definition of ethnocentrism, which is the state of being ethnocentric or putting people at the center of the research seems curiously derogatory:

> The tendency to judge the characteristics and cultures of other groups by the standards defined or recognized by the observer’s own ethnic group. Cultural judgments made on an ethnocentric basis are inevitably negative and pejorative, and serve to justify the denigration of other cultures and to promote racism. Both Eurocentrism and Afrocentricity are forms of ethnocentricism. Afrocentricity or Afrocentrism builds upon the precedents of Negritude and the pan-Africanist writings of Marcus Garvey… most argue that Afro-Americans are a distinct nationality with a civilization of their own…Afro centrists such as Malefic Andante (1988, 1990) insist that the Ancient Egyptians were black, and that Greek civilization, supposedly the source of European culture, was the product of
interaction with African civilizations. Europe and Asia are viewed as mere variants on the original theme in philosophy and science… (Macey, 2000, p 6).

Obviously research such as mine, coming from an ethnocentric (and particularly Afrocentric) perspective would be deemed, at least by Macey, as marginal, at best. Yet scientific study of the world has been dominated by an “ethnocentric” perspective that “others” cultures, customs, and points of view that are not from a white, patriarchal, capitalistic perspective. (hooks, 2009, Clarke as quoted by Ami, 1994, Smith, 1991)

Ethnographic researchers defend their approach to writing. In the book, *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature and Aesthetics*, Bochner and Ellis suggest that alternative ways of inscription allow researchers to “break away from the conventions of social science” and experiment with “polyvocality, poetry, pastiche, performance and more” (Bochner and Ellis, 2002, p 14) This, they assert, allows for new “territories of expression” and “spaces of relationship.” Autoethnography, the practice of using one’s self honors the unique voice of the researcher. (Bochner and Ellis, 2002, p 14) Additionally the authors are quoted within an article by Karen Scott Hoy entitled, “The Visitor: Juggling Life in the Grip of Text” as stating this about autoethnography

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness. Back and forth
autoethnographers gaze, first through and ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is move by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations. Concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories impacted by history, and social structure, which themselves are dialectally revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts and language.

(Hoy, 1999, p 673)

There is an historic tradition among black scholars to search for avenues of expression that solidify their position via non-traditional means. In Patricia Hill Collins book, *Black Feminist Thought* asserts that black feminist thought consists of theories or specialized thought produced by African American women intellectuals designed from a Black women’s standpoint. The dimensions of this standpoint include the presence of characteristic core themes, the diversity of Black women’s experiences in encountering these core themes, the varying expressions of Black women’s Afrocentric feminist consciousness regarding the core themes and their experiences with them (Collins, 1991).

Other qualitative researchers encourage multiple ways of telling (Lincoln, 2009, Madison, 2009) even as these alternative approaches create new concerns about reflexivity. William Tierney, in his article “Get Real” suggests that the use of narratives can lose focus on the issues inherent in the research if the stories
become a “cathartic” exercise for the researcher. He notes concerns he has about
reflexivity suggesting that rather than working to understand the world of the
“other” that more cathartic intentions are at play. Tierney states

This form of reflexivity represents a turn away from praxis and toward
humanist, modernist ideals that focus on the concerns and inner worlds of
the author. Although texts need to be rightfully positioned so that the
author’s stance is clear, one ought not drop a concern for understanding
particular phenomena, people, or ideas. (Tierney, 2002, p 392)

Like black scholars before me, I am seeking an approach to the research that
allows for what Bridwell-Bowles quoting Spender calls a “multidimensional
reality” where the writing process allows the researcher to “combine
hypothesizing with reporting data, to use patterns of writing that allow for
multiple truths…rather than a single thesis and so on.” (Bridwell-Bowles, 1992)
In this regard, I am also kindred with white feminist, social workers, queer
theorists and others who perform multiple realities. Lesa Lockford, in “Breaking
Habits and Cultivating Home” takes on the topic of disease and death through
what Bochner and Ellis call an “ethnographic alternative” whose aim is to make
us feel as well as think. (Lockford, 2002) Using performances about women with
metastatic disease Lockford notes that we are repeatedly asked to situate
ourselves “between competing discourses in the social construction of the
meaning of disease.” (Lockford, 2002, p81)
In my research regarding the Lincoln theatre, the readers will be repeatedly asked to situate themselves, as I have had to do, in competing discourses about race, class and gender. For example, what is the responsibility of the black community to a popular black politician whom they have elected? Can challenges on issues of “community” be leveled or would such a challenge embarrass both the politician and the black community in the eyes of the larger public? Can a black female researcher effectively challenge black male leadership on their roles and responsibilities on anything? Do black politicians relate to blacks in the lower economic strata or have they aligned themselves with middle and upper class agendas sans race?

These questions are of particular interest to me, the researcher, black, female, middle-class and curious, participant observer whose goal is the social reconstruction of the black community back to “community.” Autoethnography provides a space in which to examine the community while I also examine myself. The use of autoethnography allows me, as the researcher to move beyond empirical data analysis to evoke an emotional response, somewhat disregarded in hard science (Bochner and Ellis, 2002, Mason, 2005), to build empathic understanding of phenomena that may move policy and action toward transformation and social justice, which is the goal of my research.

An Evolution: Historicizing Critical Theory and Autoethnography
Since the days immediately following the enslavement of black people in this country, black men, women and children have earnestly sought to maintain a connection to the African heritage of their ancestors. John Henrik Clarke, professor emeritus of African World History at Hunter College in his book, My Life in Search of Africa, states emphatically, “I am a Nationalist and a Pan Africanist, first and foremost” (Clarke, 1994). While many blacks may not go that far, the era of the Civil Rights Movement solidified for black Americans, their distinct status as descendants of Africa.

The Black Power movement that propelled southern blacks and ultimately the nation to wrestle with questions of freedom, equality and justice for black people and other minorities in America was fueled and sustained by the cultural underpinning of the Black Arts Movement. Studying, documenting and explicating black culture for the black community became a tradition begun by the earliest black scholars, including most notably W.E. B. DuBois, and was a part of the larger “Black Uplift” movement that engaged the entire black community. While the club movement among black women addressed the everyday needs of a people fresh out of bondage, black scholars used their scholarship to determine the conditions of and solutions for a neophyte community (DuBois, 1903, Cooper, 1893, Giddings, 1984). Much of the help from the mundane to the intellectual was shared through cultural connections so much so that it became a tradition among black Americans to inform, motivate and sustain each other through a cultural base (Cruse, 1996).
The tradition of learning about and incorporating community values via black culture continues today. Former Chair of the Department of African and African-American Studies at Harvard University, Henry Louis Gates in his book, *The Future of the Race* notes the black students he calls “first generation ivy” at Harvard writing:

But while they sought to enter the traditional professions—the academy, curiously enough, was not a popular option—a remarkably large percentage sought knowledge about their cultural and ethnic heritages in the newly established programs of Afro-American Studies.” (Gates, 1996, p x)

He goes on to assert, “We (he and his students) were seeking to read and understand the canonical texts of the black tradition, which, we hoped, would enable us to tap into a vast black cultural „unconscious”” (Gates, 1996).

Black culture as performed through its institutions has, until recent years, played a major role in maintaining and sustaining black people in America. The completion of the City of Columbus renovation of the Lincoln Theatre in 2009, while restoring a cultural anchor to the community, simultaneously virtually turned over the last remaining historic black cultural icon to the control of a white arts organization, subverting (perhaps unintentionally) the role black cultural institutions have traditionally performed within the black community. Cornel West, in *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*, describes the loss of black institutions as contributing mightily to nihilism in the black community.
…these demons which are at work the demons of meaninglessness, of hopelessness, a sense of nothingness conjoined with the institutional and structural marginalization of large numbers of black people…produced the highest level of self-destruction known to black people since we arrived. And the reason why is because for the first time there are now no longer viable institutions and structures in black America that can effectively transmit values like hope, virtue, sacrifice, risk of putting the needs of others higher or alongside those of oneself. (West, 1993, p150-151)

The fact that this translation, re-presentation of the Lincoln Theater took place during the administration of the city’s first black mayor raises the question, “Why?”

bell hooks suggests that a movement away from overt racial discrimination is taking place which is masking “how all-pervasive white supremacy is in this society both as ideology and behavior.” (hooks, 1989) She goes on to assert Likewise, “white supremacy” is a much more useful term for understanding the complicity of people of color in upholding and maintaining racial hierarchies that do not involve force (i.e. slavery, apartheid) than the term “internalized racism” …The term “white supremacy” enables us to recognize not only that black people are socialized to embody the values and attitudes of white supremacy,
but that we can exercise “white-supremacist control” over other black people.” (bell hooks, 1989, p113)

Critical Theory helps raise issues and postulate responses to questions of self-hatred, nihilism, and disassociation among dispossessed peoples (Smith, 1999, West, 1993).

Cultural, black feminist and post-colonial theorists provide frameworks through which to view this renovation phenomenon. For black communities, controlling cultural institutions is an important element of establishing and maintaining cultural autonomy. Patricia Hill Collins in her book Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment notes that separate communities, established after the emancipation of enslaved blacks, “served as one contradictory location stimulating an African-American women”s culture of resistance.” (Hill-Collins, 1990) In a chapter entitled, “Beyond Postcolonial Aesthetics,” theorists Dimitriadis and McCarthy acknowledge that critically conscious artists and intellectuals have readily “negotiated the worlds of establishment aesthetics and popular or vernacular cultural life outside educational institutions.” (emphasis mine, Dimitiriadis and McCarthy, 2001) Hill-Collins notes the “historically concrete communities among African Americans” have stimulated “cultures of resistance” (Hill-Collins, p226). Other scholars have valorized the use of community settings, including cultural institutions, as sites of resistance, reaffirmation and pedagogical development.

As blacks have previously been denied affirmation and consistent education about themselves in the traditional school setting, black institutions and other non-educational sites i.e. barber and beauty shops, churches, recreation centers, etc., within the community have acted as seats of learning. These sites of reification for “blackness” are such that efforts to maintain control of community-based institutions become a fight not just for a space for creative expression but also for a place that generates and sustains resistance to a society and popular culture that valorizes “whiteness.” In Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times, Cornel West explains that the issue of race is significant because African things have been degraded and black institutions and structures have less access to resources, both material and intangible. By material West refers to money, housing, food, healthcare; by intangible, West references things like self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. (West, 1993)

But there is something else at stake in this fight. After all, why should anyone in the black community have an issue about revitalizing their neighborhood? What could be wrong with that? Dimitriadis and Cameron in Reading and Teaching the Postcolonial: From Baldwin to Basquiat and Beyond, use the educational system and specifically curriculum development to explicate issues of multiculturalism, popular culture and difference. Noting that while globalization is pushing the
world toward multiplicity and difference” (Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001) educators tend to narrowly interpret these implications in curriculum and pedagogy. While world developments necessarily move toward a more inclusive society, various interpretations of multiculturalism continue to reinforce Western hegemonic readings (Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001).

The Lincoln Theater, as a site for multicultural pedagogy, has the potential to promote the arts and culture from a black aesthetic. It also has the potential to counterbalance and resist the hegemony of the status quo.

**Erasing Identity- Material Culture**

In an article on the subject of art education, art educators Freedman and Stuhr make a case that “cultural production connects and empowers people.” (Freedman and Stuhr, 2004) Jules David Prown, (2000) in an article entitled “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?” states “material culture …is the manifestation of culture through material productions.” He goes on to add that the study of material culture is “the study of material to understand culture, to discover the beliefs-the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions-of a particular community or society at a given time” (Prown, 2006). Michael Rowlands, in the article “Heritage and Cultural Property,” (Rowlands, 2002) suggests that heritage comes from the way a group “slowly constructs a collective memory for itself by telling stories about itself.” (Rowlands, 2002, p 108) He goes on to state that these stories constitute a “tradition” which structures a narrative that relates “a past, a
community and identity…” (Rowlands, Ibid) Tradition is not neutral “but is created by an aesthetic relationship between objects, memories and stories which can transmit to future generations a sense of dignity, self-respect and a right to have a future” (Rowlands, 2002 Ibid) or, conversely I believe, a sense of shame, disrespect and no right to exist as an equal.

The material culture of Columbus” black community includes Franklin Park, the corner where the black hospital once stood, the Pythian Theatre, now a part of the King Arts Complex, Shiloh Baptist Church, the Long Street Dairy Queen and Frazier’s Fish (both now gone) and the Lincoln Theatre. The Lincoln represents the spirit of excellence cultivated in the black community as its neo-Egyptian architecture put it on the National Register of Historic Places. Sadly, however, much of the architectural detail that made the Lincoln “historic” was removed or destroyed.

The Lincoln also represents the spirit of economic independence and cooperation within the black community, having been constructed by black masons in the 1920’s as a result of discrimination. Unfortunately, the complaints of black contractors at community meetings I attended during the renovation of the Lincoln suggest that economic participation of black contractors is an unresolved issue. (Smith, 2009)
The near east side of Columbus speaks to the powerful economic, educational, and cultural contribution blacks have made to the growth and development of the city of Columbus. Yet more and more one would be hard pressed to find physical identifiers of that history and contribution. It is as if the black contribution is being systematically erased from the collective consciousness of blacks in Columbus and the Columbus community at large. Jennifer Hambrick, in her 2006 article “Columbus Caught on Film,” about east side artist photographer Kojo Kamau asserts

The gradual desegregation of America during the civil rights movement opened up to African-Americans places from which blacks once had been arbitrarily banned. On the other hand, this relative racial openness, along with a host of other cultural factors, had the effect of decimating areas like the Mt. Vernon Avenue business district, leaving in its place only a sense of nostalgia for a lost community…There seems to be little way to reconcile the disturbing conflict of longing for a past that essentially forced black Columbusites to establish their own businesses and a more open present that has erased a once-thriving aspect of African-American culture in our city (Hamrick, 2006 emphasis mine).

One of the last and perhaps most important erasures, changing the Lincoln Theatre from an authentic black cultural institution to a multi cultural venue, seems to have gotten a pass from the black community. Have we entered a new era where we no longer need “black” cultural institutions? My email survey on black culture is designed to get feedback on this query.
Postmodernism and culture

Sydney Walker asserts that “doubt” is the by-word for the postmodern era, promoting perspectives that assault traditionally held values, beliefs, and practices by questioning truth, authority, and social norms (Walker, 1997). Postmodernism is recognized as a discourse for its ability to “undo, disrupt, de-center, dislocate and contradict modernist assumptions of fixed meaning” according to Jane Gooding Brown as quoted by Sydney Walker. (Walker, 1997) Fredric Jameson suggests that post modernism supports an environment for a “purer stage of capitalism” which for him equals, in this third stage or “late” stage of capitalism, multinational capitalism. Highly critical of postmodernism, Jameson asserts that postmodernism acts as a “cultural dominant” that, rather than revolting against modernism which implied closed structures of knowledge, has itself become institutionalized to be “one with the official culture of Western society.” (Jameson, 1991)

Another aspect of the postmodern discourse is concerned with language and grows out of the discussion of whether “truth” is found or made. Rorty suggests that truth is constructed of a convergence of these two theories, the significance being that language then, becomes a tool to re-ascribe meaning, (Rorty, 1989) which in a postmodern era, can alter political, behavioral, cultural realities toward new political, cultural and social ends. In other words, as Ray Linn notes,
“we would say that what we call knowledge is determined by „conversation”” (Linn, 1996).

The significance of this postmodernist view for my research is that it allows for the “de-centering” of traditional definitions and understandings of culture, specifically black culture. In this environment, multiculturalism becomes a stand-in for black culture as now, other ethnicities can appropriate or represent black culture, making it possible for a white jazz orchestra to occupy the only available organizational space in the Lincoln theatre, effectively precluding black jazz musicians (of which there are many) from being there. In the book Powernomics Claud Anderson notes, “…ambiguous concepts of minorities, cultural diversity and multi-culturalism do not benefit Blacks as a group.” (Anderson, 2001, p 27) Comedian Paul Mooney declared on a late night talk show, “White is the new black!” (Mooney, 2008) bell hooks describes a pseudo-multiculturalism as “virtual multiculturalism” where many ethnicities are represented and yet the power structure of white cultural dominance remains the same. (hooks, 2009 Speech at The Ohio State University, 11/5/2009)

Many past studies of black and other ethnic communities have focused on the socio/political conditions within the community. (Du Bois, 1903, Smith, 1999) Studies that have focused on community based arts have often also had a sociological or educational focus. (Safehavens, 1993, Daniel, 2003 draft) Like those studies, this case study has an interest in the social, political and educational
aspects of community based arts, yet the postmodernist elements that are often used to disrupt oppressive policies and behaviors, I believe can also be convoluted to support forms of “virtual” multiculturalism and neo-colonialism.

Cultural Policy and Neo-Colonialism

*Claiming Open Spaces* is a documentary film by Columbus native Austin Allen that looks at the use of public space and challenges ideas of re-gentrification. In the film, the 1992 international flower show *Ameriflora!* held in Columbus, Ohio during the bicentennial is examined. Ameriflora! inhibited local (predominantly black) residents use of a city park on the near east side for more than two years before the event was to open. City fathers approved a plan to turn Franklin Park into a revenue producing floral spectacle. The problem was that Franklin Park had been a staple of recreation for the black community for over forty years. While the community was consulted and the film shows contentious community meetings about the subject, the community’s recommendations were ignored. Many claimed that the park was deliberately chosen to destroy the community-based activities that had long taken place in the park (Allen, 1998).

In 2003, a Black Entertainment Television (BET) poll voted Columbus the “best place for blacks” and an updated poll ranks Columbus as the second “best city in the nation for African American families,” according to a February 16, 2007 press release sent out by Mike Brown in the Mayor’s office. Yet on the near eastside, where black businesses once thrived and sustained a burgeoning black middle
class, the current picture now seems bleak. In the zip code where the Lincoln Theatre is housed:

* Over 83% of the residents are black
* Over 66% of households earn less than $25,000 a year
* Only 26% are homeowners, and of those
* 37% expend over 37% of their incomes on housing
* 73% of families are headed by single women
* 62% of area children under 5 live in poverty (Census Bureau)

“Columbus is ranked the 8th most dangerous city in the United States with a population of 500,000 or more,” according to Wikipedia.

In the article, “Cultures For Sale: Perspectives on Colonialism and Self-Determination and the Relationship to Authenticity and Tourism,” Christine Ballengee-Morris (Ballengee-Morris, 2002) uses an ethnographic portrait study to observe tourism consumption and its impact on Appalachian West Virginia artists and the “outside” artists who created competing commercial products that the government supported against the native artists. As tourism grew, the state of West Virginia decided to create a tourist destination that would present “local” art for purchase by tourists. Yet “Artists from the area were denied access, and people from outside the state were being juried in with the help of purchasing a post office box in West Virginia for the residency policy,” notes Ballengee-Morris. She concludes, “The government in the name of tourism was colonizing their (Appalachian artists”) culture and visual culture.” (Ballengee-Morris, 2002)
Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts a modern colonization of her people in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* as researchers came to explore the Maori culture. Evidence of their trespass came in the form of “cultural protocols broken, values negated, small tests failed and key people ignored.” (Smith, 1999) Smith described “imperialism” as the “system of control which secured the markets and capital investments.” Similarly, in the case of the Lincoln Theatre, capital investments became a primary goal rather than adherence to cultural protocols necessary to honor the black community during the development of the project. In more than one conversation with Boyce Safford, Development Director for the City of Columbus, we (PANDU members) were informed that we could not be “in the Lincoln” because we had “no money” (Safford, 2006).

Ethnic researchers and feminists write about the present-day versions of colonization and the sense of hopelessness or as Cornel West describes it, “nihilism” produces in the oppressed group. (Smith, 1999, Staples, 1987, West, 1997) Kerry Freedman, Marimba Ani, bell hooks and Paul Duncum explore how some members of oppressed groups join with the power structure to become oppressors themselves. The subtle system of control exerted through language provides a powerful way to turn a group against itself. (Giroux, 1988) Giroux has written much about the use of education as an institutionalized means of oppressing students and minorities. Giroux suggests that built into the language
and processes of traditional education is the hidden curriculum of cultural
hegemony (Giroux, 1988).

**Narratives constitute culture**

In her article “Doing Narrative Research,” Heather Fraser offers several reasons
to embrace narrative analysis as a post-positivist research approach. First, Fraser
declares that narratives are “integral to human culture” because culture is
constituted the stories we tell about ourselves. (Fraser, 2004) She goes on to
assert that stories constitute culture, culture produces conventions (social
practices) and shapes how people view the world, yet, people do not always “take
up” the narratives that they’re supposed to, neither do they always tell the stories
as intended. This charting of human behavior leads Fraser to conclude from a
critical social work perspective that draws on critical theory, feminism, post
modernism and post colonialism, that “narratives may be used to reinforce but
also contest dominant social practices.” (Fraser, 2004)

As an African American female researcher then, I am painfully aware of
narratives that have been reinforced about who I am, who my community is, what
we want, when we want it, and so on. Yet my narratives can provide a distinct
ontology and epistemology even from those of whom I am a part that will inform
the evolution of my research and present and support my axiological perspective.
In this chapter, I presented qualitative research theories that were utilized in this participatory action research study of the Lincoln Theater. Critical theory, including black feminist and race theory, informed my perspective of the overarching problem in this case. Autoethnographic narrative performed as a tool for reflexivity as I embodied both researcher and researched roles. In chapter four, I will summarize and explicate the empirical data from the Lincoln Theater survey and analyze both the interviews and my own stories of how the renovation of this near east side black community asset was experienced by some of us within the black community.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Design of the Study

The design of this study follows the methodologies and procedures of case study research, participatory action research and autoethnography. The literature on these methodologies that provided the foundation for this approach include: Troubling Angels, Patti Lather and Chris Smithies, 1995; The Art of Case Study Research, Robert E. Stake, 1995; Qualitative Researching, Jennifer Mason, 2005; Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, 2005; Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black, Gloria Watkins, 1989; and Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetic, Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis. These works provided guidance in the formulation of the research design as well as examples of the various forms a mixed methodological study like mine might take.

In this chapter I address the use of case study, participatory action research and autoethnography as the research methods for the inquiry into the renovation of the Lincoln Theater, a cultural icon of the black community on the near east side of Columbus, Ohio. This study examines the case of the redevelopment of the Lincoln Theatre, an historically black cultural institution, as it undergoes transformation under the ownership and direction of Columbus city government.
to become a multicultural venue. The underlying question of what happens to
black, community based cultural spaces that function as repositories of the black
aesthetic in the current ethnically desensitized, capitalistic, patriarchal (and bell
hooks would add) white supremacist society is examined as a case study utilizing
the additional methodologies of participatory action research and
autoethnography. These combined methodologies allow for the acceptance and
illumination of multiple realities which can be observed and interpreted from the
multiple perspectives I hold as an African American female artist/researcher
(Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005, p305). Document analysis, survey and interview
methods complemented my participation as a community member engaged in
political and social activities to attempt to impact the outcome of the Lincoln
renovation process toward a community based agenda.

This research examines the redevelopment of the Lincoln Theatre through the
lenses of critical race theory including black feminist theory, and urban regime
theory to try to explicate whether the current city administration’s procedures and
processes to renovate an historic black cultural space enhanced or diminished the
Lincoln theatre’s historic legacy as a social, cultural and material asset for the
black community. Employing the methodology of case study implemented
through participatory action research incorporating conversations, document
analysis, survey responses, as well as my own experience autoethnographic
experiences as an artist and community member interacting with the Lincoln
redevelopment process, this research privileges social reconstruction toward community re-empowerment as a goal.

Case Study

*The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base.* (Sharan B. Merriam, 2009)

Case study allows for a deep understanding about a specific event, organization, or person. (Mason, 2007, Schwandt, 2007, Stake, 1995, Stark and Torrance, 2005). Robert Stake, in his book *The Art of Case Study Research*, asserts that the case study involves the art of the particular, the unique. Yet while providing insights into the particular, case study research can also provide insights into the universal or that which can also be generalized. (Stake, 1995 p7) Stake suggests that traditional case studies are “noninterventive and empathic” (ibid, p9) such that the researcher tries “not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case.” However, this case study, conducted as participatory action research troubling the notion of “nonintervention” engaged me as researcher in multiple roles I performed throughout this study.
Case study has often been criticized for not separating out the biases of the researcher and for the lack of generalizability from a study that is focused on one or a few cases (Stake, 12, Somekh and Lewin, p34). The importance of acknowledging and maintaining, as much as possible by the researcher, the multiple ontologies and epistemologies represented by the participants and the researchers is emphasized by Stake (p12) and Mason (p 17). Lather and Smithies” case study of HIV positive women who tell their stories through the support groups in which they participate, provides a virtual as well as a visual example of maintaining and valorizing the multiple realities that exist within their research through the design elements of their book pages (Lather and Smithies,1995, p1). By presenting both the women”s stories and the researchers” reflections on the same page, with the women”s stories literally on top of researcher reflections, Lather and Smithies not only present their participants” ontology in their own words but also “privilege” the ontology of the participants by literally giving their words “top billing.” In addition, the researchers acknowledge the “vibrancy and hopeful realism that are lessons in living” (ibid, p xvi) offered through their participants” narratives, again challenging the notion of a lack of universality derived from case study.

For my own research as a case study researcher, I had the opportunity to play different roles in this process (Stake, 1995, p 91). Stake suggests that the roles of teacher, advocate, interpreter, biographer are perspectives of the researcher that can coalesce to create “thick data” and thereby, a more comprehensive,
experiential inquiry into the subject of the study. Some scholars like Torrance (Torrance, 2005, p33) suggest that case study provides an opportunity to “tell it like it is” from the participant’s point of view. As both researcher and researched, my point of view alternated between those two perspectives. Schwandt asserts that case study is a preferable “approach”

when the inquirer has little control over events being studied, when the object of study is a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context, when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear, and when it is desirable to use multiple sources of evidence. (Yin as quoted by Schwandt, 2007 p 28)

The issues surrounding the Lincoln Theatre renovation were indeed not clear either politically, socially or artistically; I had no control as a researcher or community member over the events that were unfolding; and the use of multiple sources of data was necessary to provide validation of a perspective other than my own. The Lincoln proved to be a formidable case to undertake.

Participatory Action Research

Thomas Schwandt in *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* asserts the participatory action research (PAR) is a broad concept for several kinds of action research that are characterized by three basic elements: its participatory nature, its democratic impulse and its objective of producing both useful knowledge and action, and consciousness-raising. (Schwandt, 2005, p 221) Somekh’s discussion supports Schwandt’s description adding that “action research is always rooted in
the values of the participants” (Somekh, 2005, p 91). Somekh notes that in the United States a “particular strand” of PAR originating in the civil rights movement “contributed significantly to social action to promote social justice” (ibid, p91) and that that aspect provides for research that does not necessarily begin with a research question. Rather an “impetus for change/innovation” leading to “strategies to bring about improvement” may be the beginning point for the research. (Ibid) Somekh suggests that PAR participants may increase as knowledge increases and more people are drawn into the work of the research. Susan Noffke notes that participants seek to build knowledge within communities assuming “a direct connection between understanding and action (Noffke, 2005, p 93).

These definitions and explanations were useful as I came to this research having already become enmeshed in the process of trying to impact the city’s Lincoln Theatre renovation process as a resident of the near east side and as a black artist with a vested interest in the redevelopment of a black cultural space. The cyclical nature of PAR (O’Leary, 2004) was already well established as we (the artist group Pandu) were initiated into the process of observation, reflection, plan and action illustrated by Zina O’Leary in The Essential Guide to Doing Research (O’Leary, 2004, p141). By the time I entered graduate school at The Ohio State University in 2005, our group had been involved in the process of trying to gain access to the city’s renovation process for at least a year. Our regular meetings were times used to look at what was happening, reflect on what it meant, plan for
ways to gain access to the renovation process that we had not yet exercised, and
divvy up responsibilities for the next set of actions.

**PAR Data Collection**

Some of the benefits of PAR, although we did not really know it then, were the
opportunities for a group of like-minded artists to come together, reflect and plan
our next moves as we continued to try to grow our constituency to include not just
black artists, but black contractors and businessmen whose statements suggested
they were experiencing the same distancing from the project that we as artists
were experiencing. Our discussions, phone conversations and emails make up the
data from those experiences. We also sought to gain community support through
civic associations made up of community residents who were interested in
community autonomy, so that the data from those experiences are the notes,
conversations, emails, notices we received at local meetings, flyers and
information from community meetings.

**Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is described by Schwandt as “a particular form of writing that
seeks to unite ethnographic (looking outward as a world beyond one’s own) and
autobiographical (gazing inward for a story of one’s self) intentions” (Schwandt,
2005, p18). He goes on to assert that the intention is to keep both the subject
(knower) and the object (that which is being examined) in view in order to
illustrate and evoke rather than to state or claim (ibid). David Hustler suggests
that ethnographic writing is designed to provide insight into how a culture “ticks.”
Thick description, blurred lines between the researcher and the researched, emergent theory and delineating "voice" are elements of ethnographic research that distinguish it or challenge it as a methodology. Autoethnography both simplifies some of these aspects and troubles others.

In addition to the texts cited at the beginning of this chapter, I also utilized an article titled, "Founders: Reconsidering Racial Policy in a Community Art School," penned by art educator and organization founder James Sanders. Sanders writes of his involvement with and ignorance of the role he and other administrators may have played in "concretizing" practices and policies of a community art school in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. As a researcher, Sanders "undresses" himself and his own "embeddedness within that institution" as the school’s executive director. What Sanders acknowledges as his "textual exploration" exposes entrenched ideas about aesthetics and culture and the attempts of past and present cultural workers to "introduce democratic practices at a time of racial segregation; retrieving public spaces that many may contend are still the property of wealthy white elite" (Sanders, 2001).

Autoethnographic data collection

Like James Sanders, in this study I attempt to unpack some of my own considerations as a social action researcher on this project. Certainly, I reflected upon the impact of my presence on this work as a black woman, an artist and mother and as a community actionist on the near east side of Columbus, Ohio. Each of these aspects of my identity informed my thinking and behaviors even as...
I attempted to critically study the Lincoln theater renovation as an academic subject. My femaleness makes me perhaps overly sensitive to perceived sexist manners and behaviors of the men, particularly the decision-makers, I encountered during this process. My desire as an artist to have a “home” in which to produce my plays that also offers my daughter excellent, culturally sensitive professional instruction in the arts is based on a maternal desire to see my child flourish in her ethnic culture. My activism as a member of a middle class black neighborhood which has felt itself, in the not too distant past and even now on occasion, under assault by the city of Columbus when plans called for encroachment into our community, has not always been well-received by the city administration and has certainly not been forgotten. Yet as I approached this research attempting to remain open and objective, I felt compelled to write my experiences as narratives. As a playwright, I felt compelled to express my feelings as I worked to sort out the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of this research.

Survey (Appendix D)

To allow for triangulation and validation of my research, I elected to conduct a small survey of African Americans who had an interest in the Lincoln Theater

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11 During the 1970’s my community, the Shepard community, waged a 20 year battle via the Shepard Community Association with the City of Columbus over the placement of the I-670 freeway. At one point the project called for a 10-lane freeway to obliterate our community to create a direct route to downtown from the airport, even though the best route was through Bexley, an upscale city within the city of Columbus. Ultimately, our community association was successful at keeping Shepard intact as a community, much to the annoyance of some in city government. A 1985 Columbus Dispatch article reports it as a “loss” for our community, yet 30 years later the Shepard community has the same boundaries I remember as a child growing up here. (Cols. Dispatch, 9/8/1985)
renovation based on: 1) residency, as one who lives in the King Lincoln district, 2) a vested interest as an African American artist, business owner, contractor who saw this as a potential creative venue or business opportunity, 3) an interest in black community development from a socio/political perspective or 4) any combination of those identities. The designation of “interest” is an assumption I made based on my own interest and parameters that I applied to others in a verbal pilot test for this project. I specifically wanted to hear from black people about this major activity taking place in the traditionally held geographic “black community” so my efforts were not to conduct a random study.

I planned to query a representative group of black people who would know something about or have a particular interest in the Lincoln Theater as a historic structure, a cultural venue, a potential work site, and so on. Based on these parameters my sample was purposive and not a “convenience” sample as some might suggest. My goal was not representativeness but rather “relativeness” (O’Leary, 2004), to give voice to a group of people significantly impacted by the city’s plan to renovate the Lincoln, but who were so far as I could determine, “unvoiced” in this process.

Conducting the survey was a multi-step process. I created the survey instrument through an independent study class in the Statistics department at The Ohio State University. My goal was to survey black people, preferably on the near east side or who had some knowledge of the near east side, to get their opinions on the
Lincoln Theater, the renovation of the space undertaken by city government, and their feelings about black culture in general. Enrolled in this class for two quarters (20 weeks), I worked initially with an international graduate student who helped me formulate my questions.

The process went like this: I would tell the grad student what I wanted to find out and formulate a question designed to elicit the information I wanted; the grad student would first verify what he thought I wanted to know, then look at my question to determine if it, in fact, was asking what I wanted to know; and finally, the grad student would tell me if my question was biased. If the question was biased, we would reword the question to eliminate the bias. In this way, I created a survey instrument of about 24 questions designed to find out the information I delineated previously.

Once the survey instrument was complete, I elected to do a small pilot study to see if the questions I asked would get the information I was sought. I conducted a pilot study with the Interdenominational Minister’s Wives and Widows (IMWW) organization. I selected this organization after seeing their meetings advertised on the local cable community channel. I thought this group might be open to allowing me to conduct the survey and I was correct. The president of the organization was very gracious and allowed me to attend one of their monthly meetings. The survey was designed to take about a half an hour.
On February 25, 2010 I attended the monthly meeting. Mrs. Paula Sellers, the president of the local chapter of IMWW, had already advised the ladies of my attendance and purpose so after a shortened meeting I was allowed to conduct my survey. There were nine members present. The first few minutes of the gathering was a greeting session where the ladies caught up with each other on family situations, health conditions, job status and so forth. The formal meeting began with a prayer and song. Having grown up in the Baptist church, I was able to join in the singing to the approval, it appeared, of the ladies present. I mention this because the fact that I was not a wife or widow of a minister made me an outsider; however, because I could acknowledge, understood and easily participate in the organization’s rituals, I gained quasi-insider status.

In addition, as a black female seeking a higher education degree, the group’s propensity was to help me however they could. This is based on the custom within the black community, particularly the black female community, of valuing education and women helping women that evolved out of the women’s club movement during Reconstruction. These values are the modern day practice of “uplift” that transformed the post-slavery era into one of tremendous advancement for neophyte citizens and these inclinations toward aiding one another continue to be sustained within many segments of the black community today. This was a primary reason for my seeking out such a group for my pilot study. Their support allowed me to not only conduct the study with their full cooperation, but also
gave me the opportunity to speak with them briefly about their experience (once the pilot study was completed) and get feedback about the survey instrument.

The pilot study was useful because it showed me that my questions were not successful in acquiring the information I was seeking. The graduate student and I continued to work on the instrument. During the second quarter independent study statistics class, I also worked with the supervisor of the graduate student because of my short time-frame to finalize the study instrument, conduct the study, receive the results and analyze the results.

There were benefits and challenges with this new arrangement. The supervisor clearly knew more and could quickly move me through the process of revising the instrument, setting up the data collection apparatus and calculating the results. However, unlike the international grad student who had no knowledge or opinion about the subject matter I was studying, the supervisor, a white female, had knowledge and impressions about some of the material being surveyed. For example, I wanted to find how black people in the King Lincoln district felt about the Jazz Arts Group (JAG) being the sole arts organization resident in the renovated Lincoln Theater. My intent was to see if the historic significance of the Lincoln Theater as a venue built by black masons in the 1920’s in response to the discriminatory practices of that period held any current bearing on how black people felt the renovated Lincoln Theater should be used. Is it acceptable for the only white arts organization to be the only presence in the space? Or does it not
matter; are we in a post-racial era where the history of the building has no bearing on its current iteration?

The supervisor with whom I was working had an impression of JAG that was very positive. When the organization was first mentioned, she enthusiastically offered her supportive opinion of JAG and its programming. When I tried to frame the discourse around the appropriateness or JAG being in the Lincoln, a historically black community space, there was some resistance to the notion of JAG being inappropriately placed. We had a pleasant but somewhat contentious discussion about my perceptions and my desire to question the black community on the issue.

I had a dilemma. My considerations were these: should I argue the point to try to convince the supervisor that JAG being the only arts organization housed in the historic Lincoln theater seemed inappropriate and risk, in some sense, continuing the get the enthusiastic professional help from the supervisor? Or should I drop the entire JAG line of questioning in order to maintain a positive and enthusiastic relationship with the supervisor but subvert a fundamental aspect of my survey, which is to determine if other blacks think as I do, that the historic Lincoln theater should be occupied by the descendents of those who built it to maintain the purpose for which it was built?
I settled on a single question about JAG which basically asked if JAG should be an occupant of the Lincoln. Without any context or knowledge of a respondent’s familiarity with JAG, the jazz scene in Columbus, their interest or knowledge of jazz as an art form, the single question is ambiguous. It is possible that the international grad student would have noticed the insufficiency of this single question or at least pointed out the limitations of the question. Or I could have elected to pursue the line of questioning at the risk of impacting my good relationship with the supervisor. It is possible that pursuing the JAG issue might have had no negative impact on our working relationship, as the supervisor is a professional and is likely capable of objectivity despite her personal feelings. I elected not to take the chance. This incident is representative of the kind of considerations other black scholars have reported on as black researchers in the academy (hooks, 1989, Hill Collins, 1991). Knowing others have experienced similar issues makes it no less challenging to address.

Initially I was to be given access to a mailing list from a black gallery owner of approximately 3,000 email addresses. Such a list would contain the primary group that I was trying to reach. Although there would also be others on the list such as non-blacks who were interested in black arts, they were not seen as a large enough group to skew my purposive sample. The plan was to conduct an email survey that allowed those who received the email, the option to participate with the assurance that their participation would be voluntary and anonymous. In order
to assure anonymity I did not ask to be given the list but would send the survey from the gallery office.

On June 13, 2010 when I arrived at the gallery to send out the surveys, I discovered some difficulties with the agreed upon plan. Because of technical and logistical challenges, the survey was not sent out to the email list on that day. In addition, during that initial session the gallery owner, after initially agreeing to give me access to the email list, at one point did an about face expressing what I considered acute distrust over my intentions as a researcher. As a black female researcher, I had prepared myself for the possibility of being marginalized by the academy based on other scholars’ experiences (Hill Collins, 1991, hooks, 1989). I was completely unprepared for the suspicion of my “agenda” exhibited by the gallery owner’s claim that I might be “studying black people to turn the information over to the white man!”

A brief heated discussion ensued where I acknowledged that the outcome of my research would be “turned over” to the university in pursuit of my degree but that my “agenda” was to somehow “get” the Lincoln Theater was unsettling. After that discussion it was impossible for me to know whether the owner remained committed to the process we had agree upon. Subsequently, I was asked to work via email with an administrator for the gallery to try to assure a mailing to the full list of 3,000 addresses. I received no final confirmation that the survey was sent out although it was posted as a link to the gallery’s web page as they had agreed.
As an alternative I used cluster sampling to build an alternative email list. Cluster sampling allows for the researcher to create a purposive sample by starting with a “cluster” of the population to be sampled then growing that list. I began with a group of African Americans from my personal email list that I know have an interest in the arts. I also got in touch with other black gallery owners, fraternal organizations and businesses to request that they email the survey to their email lists. In this way, I was able to send the survey out to approximately 700 email addresses. The survey went out on June 13 and closed July 13, 2010. We received 114 responses, of which 110 were useable. This was enough for a purposive sample that could offer what O’Leary calls “rich understanding” of this population (O’Leary, 2004, p 104) with respect to their opinions of the Lincoln Theater process.

Interviews
I conducted six personal interviews in order to add depth and texture to the basic information that my survey rendered. The individuals I interviewed did not take the on-line survey; however, they are a part of the same purposive sample group I designed. Many of their responses replicate those of the survey respondents however there are some marked differences which I will highlight. The interviewees were: Tim Anderson, Jonathan Beard, Willis Brown, John Coats, Martha Dillard and Reita Smith. Excerpts of their interviews are included as appendices E, F, G, H, I, and J.
The individuals I chose to interview represent some of the variety of thinking confirming that the “black community” is not monolithic. I selected individuals that I knew either as acquaintances or very well, in part, so that I could rely on a drama-free experience. I also selected people who had either some special knowledge or interest in my topic which was determined through casual conversation.

Tim Anderson has lived on the near east side for over 20 years. I had met him years ago through a mutual friend but had no idea of his politics or community interests. I ran into him at a social affair in the summer where we had a chance to interact. When I casually mentioned the Lincoln Theater and asked had he been there yet, he stated that he had not yet been in the renovated space because he hadn’t seen anything of interest. I asked him to be an interviewee. During the interview I learned that Anderson has created an organization to address diabetes in the African American community. He believes the arts to be integral to improving the health of the black community.

Willis Brown is the president of the King Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association and I know from seeing him at King Lincoln meetings that he has followed the Lincoln Theater development closely. I got his number from a friend who has worked with him on neighborhood grants and asked him if I could interview him for this project.
Jonathan Beard is the head of the Columbus Compact Corporation, an urban development organization responsible for dispensing and managing the Enterprise Zone funds in Columbus, Ohio. Beard was one of the community leaders who took an interest in Pandu, acting as our “champion” and providing us with training to build the capacity of our fledgling organization. Because of his unique “insider” positioning I wanted to get his opinions on the Lincoln Theater process.

Reita Smith is an “elder” on the Council of Elders in the black community, an official title bestowed on a small group of elder “heavy hitter” community activists that make recommendations to city council and work on or have a say in various community issues. Smith is also an accomplished lay historian who has documented her family’s history back to the 1700’s giving her admittance to First Families of Ohio Lineage Society, Society of Civil War Families of Ohio, Settlers and Builders of Ohio in the Ohio Genealogy Society. She is also a member of Pandu.

Reverend John Coats is a close personal friend who has worked with me in an advisory board capacity for two arts organizations where I was employed. He is a gifted church musician and a community activist with a conservative perspective, representing the Republican party at many public functions. Rev. Coats represents sometimes vastly different opinions from the mainstream of local black political thought and I know of his interest in and love for the arts, particularly arts with a black aesthetic.
Martha Dillard is an acquaintance that I worked with as office staff years ago at The Ohio State University Black Studies Community Extension Center when I was working on my Masters Degree. Dillard had heard me on a radio call in talk show asking about the Lincoln Theater and she asked me about it when I saw her recently. Because of that I knew that she had been following the Lincoln Theater development process. Dillard mentioned that her family has some history with the Lincoln Theater during the 1940’s. I asked her to be an interviewee. I subsequently was told by Aminah Robinson that Martha Dillard is also a talented artist, so her perspective will be doubly informative.

All interviews were digitally recorded with the exception of Jonathan Beard’s which was hand written. All interviewees signed agreements to allow me to use their names and words as taped even though the agreement form gave them the option of withholding their names. The interviews were recorded between August and September of 2010. The questions posed were the same questions presented in the survey with the allowance for follow up questions for clarification. Each interview took about an hour to complete. If the respondent went into other related areas in their response, I allowed them continue so as not to interrupt their flow. Upon review, if any information moved into an area that could be “harmful” according to IRB parameters, that information was not included. Excerpts from the transcripts are included in the Appendices. The complete tapes are in my possession.
In this chapter, I presented the methodological elements of case study, participatory action research, and autoethnography and the data collection methods associated with each that coalesce to create the methodological design for this study. Case study allows for deep understanding of a unique phenomenon. Participatory Action Research permits the researcher to work with other participants in a collaborative manner that is democratic. Autoethnography sanctions my story of the way in which I experience the functional transformation of the Lincoln cultural space as a method of data collection, privileging my voice as representative of one of the traditionally “unvoiced” in political exchanges between communities and city government.

Borrowing from Lather’s *Troubling Angels* as an example of the non-traditional presentation of data that is complex, knowledge constructing, contradictory, compelling and evaluative, the mixed methodology of my research includes document analysis, interviews, survey and my narrative accounts of the phenomenon that is the renovation of the Lincoln Theatre.

In chapter four, I will analyze the collected data using traditional methods of analysis for the empirical data collected. An analysis of the autoethnographic narratives will contextualize my observations of the various entities as they performed their roles, and also reflect upon my own roles as researcher, community member, female actionist and artist.
Chapter 4  
Data Results and Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze the data collected for this case study. Specifically, I explicate then expound upon the responses to a survey that was conducted via the internet. I also examine personal interviews I conducted with members of the community, former residents and non-residents, whose work is integrally connected to the near east side. Additional sources of data include newspaper articles, scholarly articles, conversations, meeting notes, emails and my own autoethnographic experiences related to this research. The goal of my methods is to be inductive, moving from specific observations to broader generalizations; dependable, that is systematic and rigorous; and, auditable or verifiable as a result of the transparency I provide.

Survey Results

The survey population was from 18 years of age to over 55 years of age with the breakdown as follows: 4% were 18-24 years old, 5% were 25-35, 40% were 36-54, and 51% were over 55 years of age. Over 85% of respondents had lived in Columbus for more than 10 years and 40% lived on the near east side. It should be mentioned that depending on the age of the respondent, their definition of the near east side could be the now so-called King Lincoln District, which is the area
immediately surrounding the Lincoln Theater, or it could range from as far south as Livingston Avenue to East Fifth Avenue on the North, I-71 on the west and Nelson Road on the east. Eighty-three percent of respondents were African American, 25% worked in education, 10% in government, 12% were professional, 6% in technology, 5% in finance, 3% in manufacturing and 7% in the arts. The remaining percentage of respondents worked in various fields such as communications, public safety, research and development, homemaker and self-employed. Over 76% of respondents earned incomes above $35,000 annually.

Questions about important elements of culture found that aspects of culture respondents considered important or very important included: attitude (74%), music (76%), community (84%), arts (77%), language (77%), customs (79%), parenting (82%), religious practices (76%), politics (55%) and food (75%). The elements of “Clothing” and “Sports” ranked of average importance or less with 55% rating “clothing” of average importance or less and 62% ranking “sports” of average importance or less.

Most, (86%) responded that there is “black culture” with 72% responding that there is more than one. Several types of black culture were identified including: hip hop, Afro-Hispanic, southern black, religious, thug, bourgeois, West Indian, talented tenth and more. A significant percentage, 44%, responded that their perception of black culture in Columbus is positive however their association of particular words with black culture is mixed. For example, 37% perceive the word
“violent” to be associated with black culture, 24% associate “every man for himself” and 26% associate “disrespectful.” Twenty-eight percent perceive the word “criminal” to be associated with black culture. Conversely, 45% perceive the word “uplifting” to be associated with black culture, 50% associate the word “nurturing,” 51% associate the word “intelligent,” 66% associate the word “spiritual” and 40% perceive the words “community minded” to be associated with black culture. Additionally, only 4% associate the word “low” with black culture in Columbus, 15% associate the word “uncaring” and 33% perceive the word “dignified” to be associated with black culture.

While 47% responded that it is the responsibility of persons of the ethnic culture in question to pass on that culture to their children, 39% responded that it is the responsibility of both persons of other ethnic cultures and persons of the culture in question to pass that culture on to others. Thirty percent of respondents had not been to the Lincoln Theater, 60% had been and half of those or 32% had been before the new renovation. Perceptions of the old Lincoln Theater expressed were:

- A place as a young man, it was a meeting place on Saturday/Sunday for movies for African American children.
- Community Theater for the East side residents.
- Beautiful and cultural.
- During my childhood it was unkempt…However, we had several affairs in the upstairs ballrooms. I have many memories from the Lincoln Theatre.
• An old theatre with historical presence that was stripped of its historic value.

• I saw the theater in 1999. I was filled with sadness at the state it was in prior to the current renovation. You could feel the spirit of its great past. But in 1999 that spirit had been de-valued and ignored.

• I was a little girl at the time and used to go to movies there.

• It was a historical landmark with rich tradition in African American live performance, movies and gatherings.

Perceptions of the newly renovated theater include:

• Beautiful, clean, polished, professional, proud, legacy worth the investment

• Beautiful and intimate theater setting

• Beautiful. It needs to be more inclusive with decisions and programming made with the adjoining community.

• Beautifully renovated.

• Cute but small. Adequate to infuse the neighborhood with culture-specific programming.

• A source of pride and a wise investment.

• I was disappointed with the price, parking, participation and programming.
• It is a nice building which has a cultural identity only to the people who reside there. There is little if anything to identify it as a site of African American culture except for its location and history.

• It is a wonderful venue for helping to “reawaken” the lost musical and performing arts cultural mores that have been “missing.” Celebrating the talents of our own Creativity, Black performers.

• I have been to only one affair since it opened. It was an OSU event.

• It was nice.

While 39% knew that the City of Columbus owns the Lincoln facility, almost as many, 33%, did not. A majority of respondents, 65% said that the Lincoln should be a multicultural space; 17% responded that it should be a black cultural space only. As many respondents either did not know (34%) about the programming or thought that it was average (16%) or less than average (6%) as (34%) thought programming was good or very good. A majority (69%) responded that there should be free community classes.

Half (50%) of those who responded felt that the Lincoln was a good legacy to the black community for Mayor Michael Coleman, 8% thought it was not a good legacy and 30% had no opinion or did not know. Sixty percent of respondents thought the Jazz Arts Group should be an occupant of the Lincoln while 26% had no opinion or did not know.
Most respondents thought government should use tax dollars to do arts projects like the Lincoln (76%) and that artists should have heavy participation in such projects (75%). The majority also thought government should do projects that focus on specific ethnic communities (56%) and that members of that ethnic community should have heavy participation in such projects (74%); and finally, 61% thought government should do projects that focus on specific geographic areas and 75% responded that members of that geographic community should have heavy participation in such projects.

Interview Results

The survey results presented some predictable results and some surprises. For example, it was not surprising that half of the respondents thought the Lincoln Theater was a good “legacy” for the black community from the mayor. It was surprising that a majority (65%) of respondents thought that the Lincoln should be a multi-cultural space and only 17% thought it should be black. Because the survey had no way for respondents to elaborate on their answers, interviewees were given the opportunity to expand their answers which I speculated would allow the nuances of their positions to be revealed.

Question: How would you define culture?

Jon Beard

Culture is the environment that shapes and guides you; it shapes and guides the community. It reflects who the people are and ideally who they want to be.
Tim Anderson

Well, culture is the spice of life. It is it's like making a cake. You can make a cake that of the yellow cake or you can make a carrot cake, and the difference in the yellow plain cake and the carrot cake is those spices… I look at culture as the spice of the life, and that language and experience, the way we dress, the way we interact with one another that those things are specific to each one of our lives depending on how we, where we were raised, and how we were raised. So, I kind of think of culture as the spice to our individual lives.

While the survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the Lincoln Theater should be a multicultural space, for example, the interviewees overwhelmingly disagreed with that assessment declaring instead that the Lincoln should be a black cultural space. All acknowledged the fact that as a city facility, it could not be discriminatory or exclusionary but most felt culturally, the Lincoln should have remained a “black-identified” (Dillard, 2010) cultural space. Rev. Coats put the multicultural question in context.

Question: The Lincoln Theatre should be … (please check only one): A black cultural space only, a multicultural space, Don’t know

John Coats

If the black community had demanded a bigger voice in it, I mean demand and not request, but demanded a bigger voice in it and if we owned it and
if it was in black ownership, then I think we should have made that
demand and said that it should be a black cultural space. (Coats, 2010)

Question: Does it matter?

Coats: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Coats: It has to do with the heritage of the area and you can't count on others to
keep the heritage of the Mount Vernon and Long street area alive. I
believe it's primarily our responsibility in the black community, our
responsibility to do so.

Interviewer: But we have black leadership in our administration.

Coats: Black leadership has failed the black community.

Tim Anderson

I think it should be a primarily an African-American complex that
supports other ethnic theater and art type of things. But I don't think it
should be like it was downtown. I think you should pretty much have a
feel for the neighborhood, and the population that it is … (?), for example
like I would hate to see the Wizard of Oz at the Lincoln Theater, but the
Wiz would be okay.

I mean I think they spent a lot of money, and I think that probably for the
kind of money that they spent it on the Lincoln Theater I don't see the
community impact. I don't see it... I don't see the correlation of $15
million, and how that's improving our community… (Patty) we’re not
patronizing it… (Tim) We're not patronizing it. We're not patronizing, and
there is no carrier, there is no cultural carrier from the Lincoln
Theater…the Lincoln Theater… is trying to be many things to many
people, and as a result has watered down the African-American
experience.

Martha Dillard

It should be black-identified without excluding anybody.

To the question of programming Martha Dillard said it was “poor.” She went on
to comment on programming.

Martha Dillard

From what I can see there is no programming and whatever there is, is not
black.

In answer to the question about the Lincoln Theater being a good legacy for the
black community from the mayor, the interviewees commented:

Willis Brown

I think, no, he has no legacy with the Lincoln. He just did a job. I mean
that he used, if he had used his own money, yes. But using the public”s
money to fix a public building or that came into the hands of the public,
you're just doing, you're just taking care of public works, so there is no
legacy because if he didn't do it, someone else would have done it.

Martha Dillard regarding mayor”s legacy

No…it (the Lincoln) should be a black presence.
Reita Smith provided extended answers to the questions. A major issue that she addressed was the changing role of black people in the newly renovated Lincoln Theater.

Question: What kind of programming would you like to see at the Lincoln Theatre? (Please check all that apply.) free community classes, Broadway productions, Children’s productions, Opera, National touring productions, Local productions, professional training in arts: dance, Theater, set design, videography, Lighting design, Costume design, Photography, Other

Reita Smith

The other could include cultural research and training to heighten the interest in black culture in all forms, all mediums. But in keeping with why it was built and who built it was to be the center for the black community. And it was. It was the community center in terms of kind of programs held in the ballroom, jazz greats performed there and that history in itself should be a part of the piece that brings the programming alive.

It was an experience to go to the Lincoln Theater because it was around the arts that were close to us as a culture, the jazz, even the comedians, the black roots that sang there like the Ivory brothers who could not perform in the white theaters. You got a sense of who you were and who you could be by the activities that were there.
Even if you had a comedian like Moms Mabley She didn’t perform at the Palace Theater. She brought our black culture to the community… It could be a learning center.

It was a business for black people, you got a job there, you operated the movie projector so you learned that technical part of it. Those were opportunities for learning. The lighting, etc… and could serve as an incubator for young blacks to go elsewhere.

When you saw black folks doing those kinds of jobs, as a young person, you could say “if they can do that I can”…you could aspire. All of the programming should be where young blacks can see blacks performing so that they could aspire. They could be the technician; you could be the lighting person, regardless of what kind of programming…

We have been reduced to consumers…now we have to rent the space. Young people have no opportunity to see role models who built the theater, business owners who worked there. The young people don’t know that we owned the space. They don’t know…

Tim Anderson

What I’ve seen on the marquee I haven’t been happy with because I think that they are pandering to the community outside of the near east side, and that shows and other events that go on are attracting people from outside the community, and my concern is that it won't be our own. The Lincoln Theater historically was built by black folks for black events, and then so now what we see is the redevelopment of the Lincoln Theater not for
black folks, but for other folks outside of our community, and that's the travesty to me I think that's a terrible thing to happen. That's how we lose these monuments and these assets in our community because money is poured in from sources outside of our community and then those sources control the assets that we have. I think you can have a share, but I don't think they have to claim it.

Martha Dillard shared some family history around the Lincoln Theater.

Martha Dillard

One of the events that happened is that my auntie…back in the day, they were the activists, community based, they had been to OSU, this man in the middle, this man on the end is my father, Lloyd Dillard. 1936…my auntie belonged to something called the Vanguard League, (I heard about it from your brother) So what happened is that there was an incident and my auntie and her people picketed, because at the time, blacks couldn”t go to the theaters downtown, so to protest that they picketed the Lincoln… so people would go to the ballroom and they would try to get the sedity *(black speak for high falutin ’)* people…to be aware…so they sat down with Neff (theater owner) and Neff said he was losing money…*(because he owned other theaters downtown that blacks couldn’t attend?)* that”s right so they leveraged that…so they signed some kind of agreement…to integrate all the theaters.

Almost everyone commented about the “process” of renovating the Lincoln Theater but Jon Beard”s comments summed them up.
Overall, the process was disjointed, momentum in working with black artists was lost, there was concern about losing the theater’s historic connection to the black community, particularly with the first proposal being pushed. Thankfully the very nice building that was completed includes representation of black arts and black artistry.

Thoughts on the Interviews

The detailed responses provided by the interviewees paint a much more nuanced picture of how some black people now relate to the Lincoln Theater. While the survey sampled a relative group whose responses offer a glimpse into the feelings and thoughts of African Americans regarding the Lincoln Theater, the interviews were designed to fill in some of the gaps. The limitations of the survey instrument precluded the kind of textured responses elicited by the personal interviews. The interviews reveal a complex set of metrics at work for the black community in evaluating the Lincoln as a restored historic space.

As a black artist, community member, art educator and social actionist engaged in attempting to preserve and promote the Lincoln as a place of black cultural reinvigoration, I had and continue to have strong feelings about the outcome of the space. As a qualititative researcher, I am keenly aware of my entrenched ideas however, I am also aware of the built in bias of all researchers as we are informed by the socially constructed knowledge (Macey, 2000) to which we adhere. Zina
O’Leary concedes this point by beginning the fourth chapter of her book, *The Essential Guide to Doing Research* with a quote by Jacob Bronowski which says, “No man is immune to the infection of politics and the corruption of power.” O’Leary then emphasizes the position in her own words noting, “We are all products of the social forces that surround us. We carry with us the biases and prejudices of both our attributes and our socialization” (O’Leary, 2004, pp 42, 43).

My objective in providing interviews of some of my community members was to confirm that my perspective is a shared one and not merely that of an isolated or disgruntled artist. My opinions, which I will share more fully in the final chapter, are the culmination of the documents read, speeches heard, meetings attended as a Pandu member and as an interested resident of the near east side, articles presented in the local media, and personal conversations had in addition to the survey results and interviews. While mine may not be considered a vital opinion, it is a studied one borne of long hours of discovery and inquiry to try to make sense of the Lincoln Theater renovation and what it means to and for me and my community.

In this chapter, I analyzed the data to present my view of the Lincoln Theater renovation process which took over nine years to complete. In chapter five, I attempt to synthesize all of the data to present a comprehensive interpretation of
the Lincoln Theater re-iteration as a cautionary tale for art educators, researchers and others who seek social justice and transformation through the use of the arts.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Lincoln Theater: Transformative Terrain or Multicultural Trope?

Earlier I posed this question as one of many about the new Lincoln Theater. The culmination of my research has led me to some conclusions about this renovated historic cultural space within the heart of the black community in Columbus, Ohio. During the overhaul of the Lincoln Theater which took over six years (2002-2009) to complete, many substantive changes occurred within the black community. Among these changes were: WVKO radio “the voice of the community” went off the air; Bill Moss, an outspoken community leader and member of the Columbus School Board died and was subsequently spoofed in the Columbus Dispatch, the city’s only daily newspaper; the Marble Gang restaurant, a local gathering place for blacks of all economic strata and political leanings closed and Brownstone Restaurant, the new black gathering place after the Marble Gang closed; Maurice Clarrett, black star football player for The Ohio State University and the pride of the black community, was arrested and sentenced to prison; Wayne Roberts, head of Columbus Division of Recreation and Parks and the one potential black ally for keeping the Lincoln theater community based and black aesthetically focused, lost his position and faced possible jail time for improprieties in his office. While this is not an exhaustive list, it acknowledges some of the major factors that diminished the socio/political power within the
black community, rendering some of us within it feeling even more vulnerable than before.

In addition to the specific challenges highlighted in Columbus’ black community, there was major upheaval in our society overall including the terrorist attack of 9/11/2001; the resulting economic upheaval created by the new uncertainties of the environment, especially for arts and culture organizations; increased xenophobic attitudes manifesting as increased American patriotism; resurgence of the culture wars over social issues including movement towards the social reconstruction of cultural “postmodern hybridity” versus “cultural particularity” (Jackson, 2010, personal conversation); the election of the country’s first black president, Barack Obama; and the inclination to dismiss racial discourse in a new “post-racial” environment.

What then, does this new social, political, economic environment signal for an aesthetically ethnic cultural institution such as the Lincoln Theater? Formerly charged with and tacitly accepting its roles as a “site of resistance” (Daniel, 2003), an educational and social center, a jobs program, a spiritual nurturer how now will it anchor the surrounding still predominantly black community? How does an historically black arts institution emerge in postmodern, capitalistic, patriarchal, culturally desensitized society?
My answer to these questions will necessarily reflect my “cultural particularity” that operates outside the mainstream accepted Eurocentric male majority view. Yet, I submit that even my outsider perspective may reveal some notions worthy of consideration to those interested in American principles of justice, equity and fair play.

My Findings

There are four major findings that my case study of the Lincoln Theater evoked. First, as a city initiated project using tax dollars in an area long neglected in terms of city investment, the $13 million dollar renovation of a theater with no built-in commitment to job creation, crime prevention or educational curriculum geared toward reducing the high unemployment, high crime rates and increasing the educational and social capacity of the residents in the area (eighty-five percent of whom are black) is a questionable investment of public dollars, a social justice travesty and a breach of trust for the community. In addition, the lack of smart economic elements to assure a good return on investment such as the reduction in the number of seats from 750 (and in some early reports as many as 800) to 582 seats, jeopardizes the economic profitability that could be derived as well. According to one local promoter, eight hundred to one thousand seats are the minimum needed to attract national acts to a theater; anything smaller requires so many more shows or higher seat prices as to make the venture financially perilous (the Southern Theater renovation reduced seats to 923 seats, still enough to attract national acts according to the promoter with whom I spoke).
Secondly, from an arts policy perspective, the lack of significant public input from black artists, educators, contractors, and the community at large, who have an interest in the cultural and historical preservation of the Lincoln Theatre and the functions that it served, feels overbearing and paternalistic and has created an imbalance in the relationship of the near east side community with the revamped cultural space. The rejection of major input from various experts from the black community (i.e. OSU professors Ted McDaniel, Shawn “Thunder” Wallace, Vesta Daniel, local professional artists Queen Brooks and Kojo Kamau and others) and the myriad small cultural code infractions that put off, rebuffed or disengaged individuals and resources such as barring guests like Dr. Evelyn Luckey and OSU Humanities director Rick Livingston from a meeting (City Hall, 4/2007), codified a “no policy” cultural practice that disserved the black arts community and community based arts programming as a whole.

Third, my personal experience of the renovation process as a community resident, artist, concerned parent and social “actionist” researcher has been challenging and disheartening. Rather than empowering me and others who desired to participate in the social transformation of our community as invited by the mayor in his November 2002 cover letter to the King Lincoln District Plan, my experience left me feeling disempowered, humiliated and disappointed (Coleman, 2002). Mayor Coleman’s letter suggested that a spirit of cooperation between city government, area residents, groups and organizations would prevail, my experience and that of
other artists and residents I interviewed, was one of disenfranchisement and exclusion, the very opposite of the experience the mayor’s gleaming invitation seemed to offer.

Finally, as an art educator attempting to create and enhance “community” and other positive social justice outcomes through various aspects of community based arts, I found the reductive, neo-liberal commodification of the arts in this case study to be an ever more pervasive perspective. This is a disturbing trend among decision makers and in popular culture which I encourage future researchers and art educators to challenge by interruption of the standard procedures that only serve to reinforce an objectification of the arts.

From my perspective, the new Lincoln Theater has been transformed from a black cultural “site of resistance” (Daniel, 2003, Hill Collins, 1991) to one that upholds and reinforces the same kind of “imperialistic, capitalistic, patriarchal” (hooks, 2009) hegemony that black cultural institutions like the Lincoln were established to oppose, reject and resist. There will be many, including some blacks, who disagree with this statement; yet, I submit that there is a basis for my assessment. According to Wyszomirski and Cherbo in “Mapping the Public Life of the Arts in America” from the book Public Life of Arts in America (Wyszomirski and Cherbo, 1999), there are five broadly perceived system functions that are central to the operation of the arts. These are: creation, production and presentation, distribution and marketing, maintenance, and evaluation. My examination of
Lincoln Theater renovation data suggests that all but one of these functions has been assigned to a white institution turning the decision-making for production and presentation, distribution and marketing, maintenance and evaluation over to CAPA. Only the creation of the arts and the physical art space was produced by blacks, transforming the black community from, as Reita Smith declared, producers to consumers. (Smith, 2010) Haki Madhubuti, in his book *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?* describes this phenomenon as two different consciousness” held by blacks and whites. In his example, his mother had bought him a toy plane, already assembled, that rolled on the floor. His white counterpart’s parent had bought him a plane to assemble that upon completion, flew. Madhubuti states

I was learning to be a consumer who depended on others to build the plane for me. The child in Dearborn made an investment, worked on it, and through his labor and brain power, produced a plane that flew….I was being taught to buy and to use my body from the neck down, while the white upper class boy, was being taught, very early, to prepare himself to build things and run things, using the neck up. Two different worlds: my world-depending on and working for others, and his world-controlling his own destiny. (Madhubuti, 1991, iii)

The physical recreation of the Lincoln Theater, the logistics of how the space will be utilized, decision making about programming and even an expanded “redefinition” of an established black artistic discipline (jazz) by a white arts organization, ((Joy)Dispatch, 11/5/09) support this claim.
**CAPA Connection**

Someone asked me if I had any history with CAPA that might be influencing my perception of them as merely a “white” organization. Other than my Pandu activities during which I interacted with CAPA’s leader, Bill Conner, I have no history or detailed knowledge of the organization. I was inadvertently introduced to some of CAPA’s activities with black artists when I took a service learning class with Dr. Vesta Daniel. We visited “CAPACITY”, a CAPA youth arts program administered by Jackie Calderone. The space was a drop-in center for teens, mostly black, mostly financially challenged, that offered arts programming and mentoring by professional artists like Richard Duarte Brown. As a way to beautify the area and keep the teens out of trouble, they created challenging activities and experimented with the arts.Apparently the program worked well, creating a community garden and a hip-hop group call Fatty Koo that became nationally recognized. After our tour of the CAPACITY site and the information sharing I just described, we were told the CAPACITY program was being defunded by CAPA.  (December, 2010)

**Imperialism, Capitalism, Patriarchy**

I asserted in Chapter 1, that this case study perceived elements of imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy in data being collected. My claim of “imperialism” is derived from my personal experience and assessment of the decision making practices employed by city fathers in the publicly described purchase and renovation of the Lincoln Theater. Definitions of “imperialism” include, “the
policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas” or the “extension or imposition of power, authority, or influence” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). Marimba Ani defines cultural imperialism as the “systematic imposition of an alien culture in an attempt to destroy the will of politically dominated people… (causing them) to lose access to their source of political resistance.” (Ani, 1994, p xxvi) She also says that this mechanism causes insecurity and cultural self-doubt. This Lincoln case study exposes the imposition of “power and authority” over a cultural asset in the black community engineered through the exclusion of significant input and/or participation from African Americans artists, business owners, community leaders and residents from the surrounding community (Beard, 2010, Brown, 2010, Coats, 2010, James, 2007, Smith, 2010) in favor of outside community forces (Call & Post, 11/27/03, Dispatch, 2/27/04, Pandu, 2006, 2007, Peffer blog, 11/2007). Using a majority of white contractors, with the exception of interior design by Carolyn Williams, hand selecting tenants, and ignoring prior contractual agreements were the methods employed. For Henry Butcher, the owner of Creole Kitchen restaurant, his lease for a small eatery was nullified when “the city objected to that use.” (Cols. Dis. 11/8/05). Theatrical producer Ron Pitts” unconsummated 2007 contract with CAPA for multiple shows and rehearsal space during the opening season of the Lincoln is further evidence of the authority and control of the space by interests from outside the community (Appendix A, Pitts, 2007).
Capitalism, the economic system of the United States, is a free market system in which black business owners operated very well on Long Street in previous times. (Allen, 1922) Although it has been widely reported that the City of Columbus purchased and owns the Lincoln Theater, a contract with the Lincoln Theater Association whose only member is CAPA, shows the Lincoln going to its membership at the end of the contract period (Appendix B). Already websites and flyers acknowledge the Lincoln Theater as a CAPA venue.

Patriarchy is defined as “social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). A JAG offering at the Lincoln Theater is a new series called “Inside Track” where rather than focusing on African American jazz and history as the mayor’s public pronouncements suggested, executive director Bob Briethaupt asserts they would try to “stretch our ears a bit” by featuring a cross section of music including blues, rock and R&B in addition to jazz (Call & Post, 5/27/09). The idea seems to be that through this series, JAG will help us or teach us to expand our musical tastes like a parent goading a child to eat his or her vegetables. The children may not like it but it’s good for them and “father knows best.”

The deficit model approach to black patronage is misplaced and unnecessary since blacks are as diverse in our musical tastes as we are in our thinking. In addition, many of the genres the “Inside Track” intends to introduce are genres
that black musicians have had a significant historical hand in creating. Also, as a musical genre, jazz is as broad and complex and inclusive as one can imagine such that a focus on jazz could be all-encompassing and still honor the history, imagination and genius of the black community from whence it sprang. Finally, if the series is not designed to attract black patrons who make up 85% of the surrounding community, why not? Breithaupt notes that the “Inside Track” series will be presented at the Lincoln Theater, in a venue that is unique to Columbus and “like very few others in the nation” (Call & Post, 2009). What makes the Lincoln “unique” is its history and contribution to the black community. If that history is what is being promoted, why wouldn’t the community members who share in that history have a special invitation? In that same article JAG education director asserts, “We are a community space” yet, the Dispatch reports that programming is already underway for “at-risk” pre-schoolers and teens from the Weinland Park area. (Joy, 11/5/2009) What about the “at-risk” pre-schoolers and teens right outside the doors of the Lincoln? However, on the other hand, as my elder friend Elizabeth Laney would say, or “…and then again…” as Zora Neale Hurston would say, if the Lincoln is simply a venue with a unique marketability, then it is disingenuous to claim joint ownership (“we are a community space”). It becomes what Jameson might call “degraded” and “commodified” (Jameson, 1991).

Urban Regime Theory Actualized

In the Literature Review, urban regime theory is presented as a strategy employed by local governments, to move an agenda forward (Stone, 2008). Unlike pluralism
or elitism, political theories employed by governments that are externally driven, that is the focus is on specific populations outside the governing regime, urban regime theory is internally driven, that is the regime is concerned with itself and how it can operate most effectively almost without addressing to external constituencies.

Two salient elements of urban regime theory have to do with its pre-emptive ability and its ability to forestall. Successfully implemented urban regime theory allows governing bodies to both pre-empt counter arguments to its position by staking out the contrary position for itself; and, to forestall opposition to its position by employing the sheer magnitude of its resources. In the case of the Lincoln Theater, the decision-makers for this process did both.

As mentioned earlier, I was a part of an organization of black artists concerned with maintaining the historic and cultural value of the Lincoln Theater as we saw it. As Pandu, we met regularly for over three years working toward our commitment to the theater remaining an entity that served the black community socially, educationally and spiritually (although by spirit I do not mean religiously). Our conversations with city staffers were consistent. Pandu put forward a comprehensive community based cultural arts proposal designed to address issues of crime, poverty and low self-esteem among young blacks by engaging them in community based arts programming taught by professional black artists and mentors. Our plan had the potential to be financially successful because of a shared use of space and expenses as it developed professional black
theater, dance and performance artists, giving them a place to learn, work and make a living. Interestingly, artistic director Maurice Hines expressed designs to produce similar programming vehicles.

While Pandu was being kept at bay, insisting that we (black artists) didn’t have the capacity to implement our program, the city was simultaneously courting other artists (mostly white) to come into the space to provide programming similar to that which we were proposing (Dispatch, 2/27/04). In this way the city effectively pre-empted our position of trying to provide programming for the people of the King Lincoln District.

Additionally, the city utilized the second element of urban regime theory, that of forestalling in its dealings with Charles Adrian. While Pandu certainly was forestalled in the process of trying to develop programming, there were also others. Chuck Adrian, the Lincoln’s former owner and developer who had worked on Mt. Vernon Plaza and other major projects on the near east side, wrote a book about his experiences of trying to redevelop the Lincoln Theater. In his 2007 book entitled, Our/Their Town, Paradise Lost: The Unspoken Racial Challenge to Urban Revitalization in America, the word “Our” is under erasure. Adrian uses over 200 pages to detail his ordeal with the city, Mayor Michael Coleman and Larry James, the president of the Lincoln Theater Association. Claiming reverse racism, Adrian elaborates on the steps he took and the stumbling blocks he encountered in trying to renovate the Lincoln Theater. Adrian’s theoretical explanation for the difficulties is stated clearly in his introduction. He asserts
The hard truth is that one reason urban revitalization efforts fail in America is because there are black politicians and black leaders who would rather see urban property decay than suffer the political embarrassment of having it in white hands; or even worse-watching a white man successfully revitalize a black community (Adrian, 2007, p 6).

That is a pretty strong charge and certainly one that would have difficulty gaining traction against a popular first black mayor in a major city. In addition, the charge hardly seems logical since the Lincoln Theater was placed squarely in the hands of Bill Conner, the head of CAPA, who is also a white male. Conner, with the support and assistance of Larry James, lead the revitalization process in all aspects the Lincoln theater renovation.

Here is where urban regime theory really offers an alternative perspective. Unlike pluralism or elitism where a recognizable and fairly consistent constituency exists with whom the governing body is forced to deal to move their agenda forward, urban regime theory suggests because the governing regime has enough resources to move their agenda forward, it is not necessary to cultivate or answer to specific constituencies. The institutional resources, bureaucratic know-how and capital investment capabilities of the “governing” regime make it possible for the regime to succeed in completing its agenda, in some cases, in spite of their political constituencies. (Stone, 2008)

A Feminist View
In an incisive article by African feminist scholar, Patricia McFadden, the dual oppressions of racism and sexism are excoriated in a neo-colonial versus post-colonial debate. McFadden critiques the current status of African nations that are struggling under oppressive regimes, many of which are now headed by their African countrymen. Arguing the black Africans have supplanted previous white colonialist regimes, McFadden identifies the issues of black on black oppression brought on by the “blatantly rambunctious greed and impunity of neo-imperialism and re-colonization that is occurring in many parts of the continent at the present time, led mainly by the USA and Britain.” (McFadden, 2007, p 36) While her focus is continental Africa and the islands that are geo-politically African, she provides insightful analysis of the socio/political environment that subjugates post colonial African leaders and turns them into oppressors of their own people, exposing an extreme example of the potential for the oppressed to assimilate into oppressors.

McFadden’s analysis of the geo-political conditions of transcontinental Africa may be a far cry from a formerly black cultural institution in Columbus, Ohio, however her elucidation of how the transformation of black leaders takes place is both universal and instructive. She acknowledges that the transference of power from the prior colonialist to African leaders, predominantly male, has essentially kept the same hegemonic power structure in place, only now with blacks at the helm instead of whites. The organization and uprising of women, McFadden suggests, provides a real reason to be hopeful, as the anti hegemonic movement
lead by women moves the people toward “human and social transformation” (McFadden, 2007, p36).

In *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith identifies aspects of research methodologies that are utilized by imperialist colonizers of marginalized cultures noting

> It appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations. (Smith, 1999, p 5)

The Lincoln Theater has functioned as an anchor for the near east side. This case study gives me as a black feminist scholar, the opportunity to highlight the historic past and question the theater’s future as a community based entity. If one studies the history of the Civil Rights Movement, or the history of America or the black community in this country from any period, it is reasonable to assume that my status as a black woman had a bearing on my ability to research and act on behalf of this subject. It is not possible to know to what extent or in what way but this example may provide some insight into this issue.

*The Meeting*

We needed help with strategy since our group had not yet been able to penetrate the very sturdy gate that surrounded the Lincoln Theater renovation process. A few of us were going to meet with two developers from the Gateway project, one
of whom was a former classmate of mine. I was the only female in the room with
two Pandu members, a professor and a dancer; and two high-powered
developers, one of whom was my friend. We got right down to business and since
I was the unofficial force behind this meeting, I began to speak. Right away I
noticed the other developer, not my classmate, begin to nod as if he were falling
asleep. “He must have had a tough day,” I thought. “He can barely keep his eyes
open.”

We went around the table and spoke in turn. The developer roused himself
and made very helpful points. He was fully engaged! There was quite a lively
discussion going, yet when I began to participate, the developers head began to
nod…My voice must be very soothing to him, I thought. Each time I speak, it’s
like a drug! Now I began to pay close attention. Whenever a man would speak,
the developer would be wide awake and engaged. Whenever I offered a comment,
his eyes would start to flutter. I could see him trying to rouse himself but it was no
use…I was like a sleeping pill.

How sexist is that! I thought. He can just tune himself out whenever I open
my mouth. I thought about that for days. The developer didn’t seem sexist; in fact,
he seemed quite progressive when we spoke after the meeting. Still…

I was still thinking about it when we arrived at church on Sunday
morning. My daughter and I took our usual seats toward the back of our small
sanctuary. As our female minister began to speak, a curious thing happened. My
eyes got so heavy I could barely keep them open! I must have had a rough night, I
thought. But I hadn’t…I roused myself to pay attention. Again, after the choir
sang, when the pastor began to speak, my eyes started to flutter...her voice must be very soothing, I thought. But really...was I sexist too? (January, 2007)

If our socialization makes us predisposed to perform certain behaviors that we know to be prejudicial, discriminatory, sexist, racist, etc., even as we occupy the space of those normally discriminated against, that is a powerful tool to try to disassemble. It is also a powerful piece of information to know and understand about ourselves.

**Diversity and Multiculturalism**

In a March, 2008 article entitled, “Tapping Columbus talent: Hines hopes to develop dancers, actors as Lincoln Theatre artistic director” by Sherrie Williams, Bill Conner was effusive. “The Lincoln Theatre will enhance the cultural scene in Columbus and create opportunities for black artists,” said Bill Conner, president of the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts, the booking agent for the theater (according to the article). “It's an incredible moment in history for Columbus' African-American community,” Conner said (Williams, 2008). Such a statement from an African American community leader may have resonated with the black community; coming from the white male given decision-making authority over the entire Lincoln renovation project, the statement sounds uncomfortably close to what bell hooks refers to as “imperialistic, capitalistic, patriarchal, white supremacy” (hooks speech, 2010). The absence of a community “voice” is glaring.
In a 2009 article entitled “High Hopes: Can the Lincoln live up to expectations?” written by *The Other Paper* reporter Richard Ades, Larry James said he wants the Lincoln to collaborate with the King Arts Complex to create a “major African American arts festival a few years down the road.” In that same article Mayor Coleman, readily agreeing with James’ vision for a future African American festival is quick to point out that such a festival is not simply for African Americans (Ades, 2009). “The idea is the Lincoln Theatre and the King-Lincoln District will have strong community ties, but we’re going national,” Coleman notes. “The idea here is to make this a *Mecca for arts and theater for the African-American culture* nationally” (The Other Paper, Ades, 2009, emphasis mine).

These kinds of statements lead the black community to wholeheartedly support efforts to restore the Lincoln and to be excited about the prospect of a renewed emphasis on black culture and history at the theater. But there is a kind of political double-speak that took place surrounding the Lincoln theater. While presenting a “we’re focused on African American culture” front, the renovation process set up by the administration was simultaneously inhibiting the involvement of blacks while preaching diversity is key. The prominent “diversity” focus of the reconstituted Lincoln Theater has no heavily black programming focus nor is African American history and jazz a significant part of its programming. In fact, the line up of programming has been and continues to be decidedly multicultural.
For example the fall line-up for 2010 includes a belly dance performance, a white blues band and an “Irish Christmas in America.”

In a June 2009 Call and Post article about the Lincoln grand opening, Bill Conner is quoted as stating, "Today is the culmination of years of work. We witness a new vision for our community, one that's inclusive, (as opposed to exclusively black) that's filled with history, heritage, and one that will enter into a new era of artistic growth and economic development." The article notes that CAPA will manage the space.

Of whose history and heritage and community is Conner speaking? To whose artistic growth and economic development is Conner referring? The black residents of the King Lincoln district residents gained very few jobs during the Lincoln renovation; they don’t have ownership or even financial investment in the Lincoln as do the major corporations who contributed heavily to its completion. Black artists who are listed as “resident” companies have very limited engagement with the Lincoln based on perusal of their links from CAPA’s website. Where are the statements from the NAACP, Urban League, black civic and community association leaders? A thorough search of both the Columbus Urban League and NAACP websites produced no statements on this major activity. Their silence on a major investment in the near east side is conspicuous.

In the first chapter, I presented the environment in which I was reared (raised in the vernacular) as a major component of why I took on this project of examining
the Lincoln Theater as it was renovated by city government. My neighborhood on
the near east side was and still is a fairly independent, middle class neighborhood.
I say this even as its middle class aspects are getting frayed around the edges.
Shepard was one of the many small neighborhoods that make up the near east
side. Others like East Gate, Bolivar Arms on the north and as far south as Driving
Park, were all a part of the near east side black community that has since been
carved up into smaller, incongruent pieces by the city’s area commissions. In
short, our black neighborhood and the larger black near east side community
experienced middle class American life much in the way I imagine most middle
class, middle American communities did from the 1950’s through the 1980’s.
That is why the devastating changes of the last few decades are so stunning.
According to a memo from Jason Reece of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of
Race and Ethnicity, suburban sprawl fueled inner city decline within the last half
century. This white flight from the cities and concurrent increase in black urban
core population accounts for the apportionment of city resources and amenities as
resources followed and sometimes lured white residents to suburbia. (Reece,
2004)

While this explanation addresses how an inner city ethnic group can lose
so much ground in so little time, it begs questions of governmental resource
reapportionment, political will and community autonomy. What institutions that
held the black community together are missing or no longer fulfilling their roles?
Who is responsible for the well-being of those remaining urban core dwellers on a
practical and spiritual level? What function do ethnic cultural institutions play in
the maintenance of the well-being of a people and have our cultural institutions
abdicated their responsibilities or been subsumed in this new postmodern,
suburban identified, post 9/11, post-racial era?

A Thought

In the midst of the public debate about race that has overtaken the public
airwaves since the election of President Barack Obama, the question of black
culture keeps inserting itself into the public consciousness. In the segregated
enclaves of black survival, the discussion of race relations and blacks’ status as
Americans is vigorously examined, yet the public discourse, while inflamed and
touchy, is superficial and in some ways artificial. The problem of “the color line”
in the United States, according to imminent scholar W.E.B. DuBois, was the
problem of the 20th century however, the election of the first black American
president has brought it to a boil spilling over the cauldron of the new
millennium, wreaking havoc on America’s melting pot.

My heightened sense of awareness about this public/private discourse is
based, in part, on the fact that I am in the midst of writing about a local black
cultural institution that, like our country itself, is in the upheaval of a paradigm
shift. The Lincoln Theatre, a privately owned theatre and ballroom that
functioned as a aesthetically black community resource in Columbus, Ohio since
the 1920’s, was recently renovated and re-opened as a multicultural venue owned
by the City of Columbus. At a time when public statements insinuate that we, in
the United States, live in a post-racial society, the facts about power and
resources even as they surround the re-development of a small community
establishment like the Lincoln Theatre, reveal that race is still a major factor in our society.

Part of problem with talking about race, I believe, stems from the differential knowledge and value placed on black culture such that much of the discussion is at cross purposes. If black culture doesn’t exist or exists but is objectionable, distasteful, abhorrent as popular media most often depicts it, why would anyone want to sustain that? If, conversely, black culture is valuable, beautiful, precious, treasured, why aren’t black people in positions of power supporting and sustaining it? (October, 2009)

Writer Toni Morrison stated that being born black “meant something” earlier in our history, noting “There were some things you could count on…” (Morrison as quoted by Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001, p 78). In Columbus, Ohio the Lincoln Theater used to be one of those “things” that held Columbus’ black community together. With over $13 million dollars spent, over seven years for its completion and with the administration of the facility in the hands of CAPA, I want to know if the black community still can. How does an historically black arts institution emerge in a postmodern, capitalistic, patriarchal, culturally desensitized society? In the case of the Lincoln Theater, it emerges physically renovated, beautifully appointed, commercially high-jacked and culturally defused.

Future Research
As the Lincoln Theater is but one of many ethnically focused institutions that has recently undergone transformation in some form or other, I believe a future examination of these institutions would be timely and useful. As the country becomes more engrossed in racial politics, the impact of ethnic anchor institutions could illuminate some of the trends that are being manifested in our social and political lives.

Material Culture

While material culture was not the major focus of this study, I could not help but notice the battle that is taking place within the inner city to save and preserve historic buildings. In the black community, many of these buildings have significance as a living document of the early accomplishments of black people. During the timeframe of this research, more than one historic building was lost after a community battle to save the structure. The most recent, Centenary Church on Long Street, was lost at the hands of the black church that owned it and its loss was lamented not only by the community but also by the local preservation organization.

Some in the black community see this as an attempt to erase the visible accomplishments of our ancestors who made tremendous strides during the early history of Columbus, Ohio. I would also challenge future researchers to look at structures like the Lincoln Theater, that may remain standing but lose or have appropriated all of its historic significance to those who might benefit financially from its past.
Future researchers will certainly find ample material to study in the area of cultural or arts policy. As an art educator who understands the utilization of arts to engage social justice issues, I believe this is an important area for research. While the Lincoln Theater is one example of an ethnic arts space being reified into a commodified commercial entity maintaining the status quo, it is not the only example of which I am aware. Many have pointed to Franklin Park during the bi-centennial as another local example of cultural space being reconstituted into a commercial space to benefit a white power structure (Allen, 1992).

In other parts of the country the current situation for black jazz musicians in New Orleans is an area of concern for the preservation of an ethnically originated art form that is systematically being reified to limit participation from the originating ethnic group. This situation bears examination. I also have anecdotal information about the Cinco de Mayo festival, in Atlanta, Georgia, like the Latino festival here in Columbus, being overtaken and presented by a corporatized entity. In Atlanta, Cinco de Mayo is now run by the High Museum; in Columbus the Latino Festival originally funded and presented by the City of Columbus (a governmental entity), has been turned over to CAPA, a corporatized administrative entity, to control. This seems to me a dangerous trend for the arts and artists involved based on the research of scholars like Ballengee-Morris, Funk, Barbosa, Freire, Giroux, Daniel, Freedman, Stuhr and others who warn against: the use of the arts to maintain an oppressive status quo, the commodification of arts to the detriment and
diminution of local native arts and artists, the loss of “spirituality” in the arts and, the use of visual images (and I submit, language and music) to encourage, compel, coerce people to adopt thinking and behaviors that are “antithetical” to their own well-being.

Community Empowerment

I believe there is more to explicate regarding the history, socio/political and cultural aspects of the black community in Columbus, Ohio. The renovation of the Lincoln uncovered a rich history that artists like Aminah Robinson and Roman Johnson have documented visually. Continued research on and preservation of that history is a rich vein for study. Included in that prospect is the political behavior of a black community that currently enjoys a plethora of black elected officials while simultaneously continuing to struggle economically, politically and socially as a community. As one of my girlfriends is apt to point out, “Columbus has a lot of black people in power, and yet the black community can’t get jackshit done!” Further study of Columbus’ black community could have great implications for other areas of the country as the era of “post-racial” politics continues to be touted in popular culture nationwide.

Black Scholarship

A final suggestion for consideration of future study would be research on the ability or inhibition of black scholars to do their work. In my own research, I was struck by the subtle push back I encountered when the work began to challenge the methods and motives of white institutions. Not only did I feel it necessary to modulate my position in order to move the work forward, I also thought about
researchers who are specifically researching areas such as “white privilege,” neo-colonialism, and issues of race and ethnicity such as the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University.

Additionally as a black female researcher, I sometimes encountered what I deem to be discomfort and a lack of cooperation based on my gender when going about doing this work and “talking back” as bell hooks describes. If there are to be gains in our understanding of how we construct knowledge, who it benefits and how, there must be the freedom to challenge our own thinking as well as the constructed knowledge that maintains the status quo.

A Memory of Home

I remember a birthday party at my house; I was about eight years old... All of my friends were invited which at that time was every kid who lived on our end of the street. My birthday is in the Spring and this day was perfect for a party. My mom had baked a cake and we played a hide and seek game called “sardines” in the house. After everyone was “found,” I opened presents. One gift I especially liked was a box of 100 Crayola crayons. 100 crayons! It had colors I’d never heard of like “thistle” and “cornflower blue” and” burnt sienna.” I couldn’t wait to use them.

After opening gifts we were shooed outside so mom could finish the food preparations. As we all ran and played I didn’t notice that one child was missing. After a few minutes mom called me to the house. My girlfriend from down the
street was with her. She was holding my box of crayons and each one had been carefully broken.

After my tears, my immediate response was to beat her up...good! But mom talked me out of it. While my “friend” waited on the porch, mom talked to me about patience and forgiveness. She also told me about jealousy and selfishness. I guess I figured out that beating her up wouldn’t mend my crayons. When I went out to the porch, my friend apologized. We both cried again over the loss of something we couldn’t describe. But I forgave her and she forgave herself eventually...and I still had 100 crayons but they weren’t the same. My friend did get a whipping from her mom but this story is not about that! We have been dear friends ever since.

I thought of that story when the Lincoln Theater opened. It was like I had been kicked in the stomach, something I did once to my brother so I know how much it hurts. I wondered why I was taking it so personally then I thought about how I was brought up to think of my community as my family; and how others (white and black) may not have been brought up that way. When your family breaks your crayons or kicks you in the stomach it hurts. So when Patti (one of the interviewee’s fiancé) talked about seeing white people flood into the Lincoln Theater but there was no programming that seemed to welcome or interest her, she said, “It hurts my heart.” Having your cultural center be turned into something that doesn’t nurture and support you hurts. And just like those broken crayons, although the crayons still work it’s not the same. (November, 2010)
Some may read this case study and decide that I was unhappy with the redevelopment of the Lincoln theater because I “didn’t get a space” as Mayor Coleman\(^\text{12}\) suggested in one of the many brief encounters I had with him during this period. (personal conversation, February 8, 2008) That was not at issue; I didn’t need a space. I had no program; I’m a writer. I do acknowledge being disappointed and feeling defeated by a process of redevelopment in my community to which I had little to no access or input. In fact, it broke my heart.

Anthropologist Ruth Behar writes about what she considers to be the vulnerability needed to be an effective anthropologist in her book, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Behar, 1996). I experienced heartbreak in conducting a case study of the Lincoln Theater.

**Heartbreak**

My heartbreak is not because I felt unempowered; I was mad about that. And my heartbreak is not because I felt we wasted a lot of time to not have the outcome be more focused on the visceral needs of the community; that makes me sad. My heartbreak is more about the world missing the best of my community for lack of a place to nurture it. I feel heartbroken because my child doesn’t have what I had

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\(^\text{12}\) At the opening of the OSU Urban Arts Space, I had a brief encounter with Mayor Michael Coleman as I was apt to do during this period before the completion of the Lincoln Theater. As I took his arm, I mentioned again the need for community-based arts programming in the Lincoln to which he replied, “I think we’ve got that covered,” to which I replied, “I don’t think you do.” The mayor then asked, “What’s the matter Toni, didn’t you get a space?” I replied that I didn’t need a space but was concerned about the children in the community having access. The mayor’s comment highlighted a common perception held by the decision-makers for the Lincoln project, that I must have had a personal request for something that had been denied. What I wanted was a space for my daughter and other children to learn dance from a black professional who would nurture their talent while not disparaging their physical build or have a place where I could produce plays about my community for my community. My personal need for a “space” was not at issue but there were others who did need a space who were denied.
in her own back yard; that is a place that will acknowledge, accept, encourage, promote, present, inspire and challenge her to be her best.

In one of Maya Angelou’s great books, I think it’s *All God’s Children* Need Traveling Shoes, she tells the story of a woman in Ghana who is crying loudly in the street. When people approach her to see what is wrong, she points to a story in the paper about a man’s body being at the morgue and nobody coming to claim it or identify it. How can he belong to no one? Be related to no one? She laments. Angelou talks then about the loss of something in the culture so significant to that woman that she mourns terribly for the loss. Toni Morrison says that being black “used to mean something.” Now that something is gone.

I feel like that with the redevelopment of the Lincoln Theater by people who had no deep appreciation for or commitment to what it stood for, (I know they think they did, but they didn’t) like when Abby Lincoln took the stage during that special Katrina Concert, after Wynton Marsalis, and Wycliffe Gordon and the other musicians had come on stage stomping to a funeral dirge, the audience applauded wildly after they finished not recognizing that it was not a performance but a ritual of mourning that was helping them release and heal...The audience clapped loudly for each performer after that until Abby Lincoln took the stage and sang “For all we know, we may never meet again”...Her group played through the song and when she got to the end, recognizing that the audience still just thought these were performances, she stopped the band, “I got it Perry,” she said ... but Perry kept playing the piano because, he wasn’t sure, and Abby Lincoln was kind of old and a little fragile, so he kept playing. “I got it Perry,” she said
again and Perry stopped accompanying her...And Abby Lincoln took a few steps forward to get in their faces and with her broken voice sang, For all we know, This may only be a dream, We come and we go, Like the ripples of a stream...So love me, love me tonight, tomorrow was made for some, tomorrow may never come for all we know...and all of the pain and depth of the destruction and chaos and unreality of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina became real for the audience, and they could mourn together and celebrate life together and it no longer was just a performance...that is what art can do and that is what the Lincoln Theater offered, that is the possibility it represented to a community and what it could mean again, using the arts to sustain, resuscitate, condemn, revive, re invigorate, restore, bless my community...my heart cries loudly in the street for the loss, my soul mourns the loss... (December, 2010)

Denouement/Resolution

“...Being black used to mean something...” (Toni Morrison, 1991)

In a book entitled, The Death of Rhythm & Blues, Billboard music critic and Village Voice columnist Nelson George delineates the history of modern black music and its transformation from “race music” created by black artists for black consumers to its recent submergence as “crossover” music created by almost anyone, to the detriment of black artists, and consumed by primarily white listeners. The book compelled me to look at the black culture I”d grown up with in Columbus, Ohio, to examine the current cultural landscape in that same city and ask the question, is black culture dying?
My case study of the Lincoln Theater, explicating the reconstitution of perhaps the last vestige of an era of community that sustained me and other near east side African Americans, allowed me to take stock of black culture in Columbus, Ohio. I looked at the cultural atmosphere where I was “raised” from the perspective of a native daughter. Black progress had clearly been made on political and economic fronts, as evidenced by the election of the city’s first black mayor and the movement of the black upper middle class to the suburbs over the last forty years. Cultural advancement was not so clear cut or easy to evaluate. After all, how does one assess cultural progress? Who are the arbiters and what are the markers that say whether culture is functioning as it should?

In chapter 1, I defined cultural value as culture that enhances these elements of community: political engagement, cultural uplift, and economic safeguard, while “working to involve young people in public life with a sense of moral purpose” (Smith, 2010, p 43). As a young person growing up in the area that encompasses the Lincoln Theater, there was ample evidence of these community elements within my experience. During the civil rights era, many of us participated in political activities such as going to hear civil rights workers speak about conditions in the south, then donating part of our allowances to support their work. Many of us attended teas and fashion shows held in church basements or community centers like the Lincoln Theater or recreation facilities. These events functioned as social gatherings and as activities in which to practice the social
graces instilled in us by home, church and school. No one wanted to be accused of lacking “home training” or the kind of common social graces that defined one as a lady or gentleman. Economic safeguards came in the form of self-sufficiencies such as growing your own food, repairing your own clothes, making your own money which, for both women and children, was very highly regarded as necessity.

Life was fairly orderly for me and many in my community with parents working from 8 AM to 5 PM during the week with weekends off. Because one salary was often sufficient to sustain a family, there were several stay-at-home moms within the ranks. These ladies were able to contribute visual surveillance for the children walking to and from school, and they did so by providing detailed reports of any unseemly or unusual behavior from children or adults.

Most shopping was done on the weekends and took place within the black community. On the weekends, we had chores and nobody played until they were finished with them. This was the case, not only in our house, but in black households throughout the community. On Sundays we visited relatives who lived in town or within an afternoon’s drive. In the absence of stores being open on Sundays and liquor being sold except in state stores during the week which you had to be old enough to enter, the black community, without being monolithic, was very stable. Holiday traditions included visiting as many homes of friends
and relatives as possible, eating as much as you could hold, and getting caught up
on all the family business.

For me, the regularity of life was both comforting and somewhat boring; however,
it was because of that kind of repetitiveness that I know my relatives today having
made their acquaintance during those Sunday afternoon excursions. That stability
remained intact until the impact and results of the Civil Rights era began to take
hold and unintended consequences began to surface.

We have entered a new era, one in which black culture has changed dramatically
from my perspective. No longer is there the broad sameness that defined my
childhood environment. This lack of “sameness” that tied us together indicates a
disparate environment in which the very concept of community is under assault.
Long held traditions are disintegrating, cultural norms are often abnormal and the
philosophy of “uplift” seems to be buried under a neo-liberal, consumerist, self-
absorbed ideology of individuality.

While those trappings may not seem significant in and of themselves, they were
indicators of something deeper, more soulful. Even as radio disc jockeys hawked
the upcoming Christmas concert, there was the sense of Christmas spirit that
reminded us of our better selves and the lessons of humanity embedded within
those trappings. We added our unique family rituals upon the pallet and traded,
shared, and enhanced traditions to create a bushel of memories for a lifetime of remembrances.

Now the Gospel station plays just two Christmas songs per hour (Dawn, 2010, personal conversation) and the ratings for both the R & B and Gospel stations determine whether Christmas music is played at all. The new R & B drive time DJ does a dancehall stream of songs for thirty minutes and listeners call in to confirm their “head bobbing” for that entire period. While white radio stations are steeped in Sinatra, Mannheim Steamroller and Nat King Cole, the local black station presents an “a-spiritual” string of music that entices us to “boogie down,” reducing us, as listeners, to the two-dimensional representations of us so commonly presented in movies and on television.

Presently there are few trappings and no celebration of Christmas that is distinctly black. It is mostly commercialized, neo-liberalism. No radio collection of toys for tots; no Christmas carols performed by classic black entertainers to remind us and inform our children of the musical genealogy that brought us through the storms. The rituals are consumer based and lacking in the kind of “spirit work” (Daniel, 2003) of old and we, the community who by our former self-segregation evaded much of the consumption of our selves by the market place, have now succumbed to its “depthlessness” (Jameson, 1991) and destruction. Now Christmas is strictly a business proposition. As a result, black radio stations that used to play classic
holiday fare from Brook Benton and Marian Anderson to Charles Brown and Mahalia Jackson, now allow Christmas to pass with barely a whimper.

What does this have to do with the Lincoln Theater? The Lincoln, like the black radio stations, was a reminder of something more significant than just the performances that took place within it. The Lincoln Theater, even as it sat vacant for so many years, was evidence of the potential and possibilities of our higher selves. The Lincoln Theater reminded black people that we could succeed in spite of the odds, and that our culture, in its infinite variety and forms, could sustain and uplift us to meet the challenges ahead. The Lincoln Theater, through its history and commitment to a black aesthetic, gave us hope and pride and confidence in our proclivity to succeed.

We need that now more than ever. Reduction of even one space of black nurturing and cultivation is a loss for black community. The Lincoln could remind some and influence others to aspire to something greater as elder Reita Smith stated earlier. In the absence of traditions and community rituals, our community has become disconnected, dangling, deceptive and disempowered.

During my childhood, there was a lot of talk in our community about “soul.” Everyone had it or tried to get it. Eventually we conflated blackness with soul. “Soul Brother Number 1” James Brown oozed it through his funky rhythms and politically encouraging lyrics. We grew up believing black people had it by virtue
of our “blues” experiences (West, 1993) even calling some black singers “soul singers.” Black people had it and white people tried to get it. But lately even *Ebony* magazine, the arbiter of black history, culture and upward mobility, questioned whether “blackness” is innate. A few years ago an *Ebony* magazine arrived at my door, featuring a half-nude, tattooed, hat cocked to the side-wearing, Chris Brown on the cover. The black and white text overwritten on the cover photo raised this timely question, “*What Does Black Sound Like?*” In a postmodern, post structuralist world of blended images, sounds and meanings, “what *does* black sound like?” If we enlarge that question to address a broader cultural landscape, what does black sound like, look like, act like and think like? What does it mean to be black?

*A Contractor Story*

*Recently a general contractor shared his experience with the Lincoln Theater process. This contractor knew someone close to the decision makers and, like Pandu, thought “wouldn’t it be great to see a lot of black people have a part of restoring this building.” The contractor mentioned to the decision maker a way that this might be possible, suggesting they hire a Construction Manager. The Construction Manager approach allows big jobs to be packaged into smaller jobs that smaller construction organizations can handle which usually helps minority and newer companies. It also levels the playing field by taking the bulk purchasing issue off the table as the Construction Manager can leverage the entire project to allow smaller contractors who can’t buy in bulk, the ability to*
still participate. The Construction Manager approach was rejected and the Lincoln Theater decision makers went with the hard bid approach, hiring an out of town company that had no connection to the community. (December, 2010)

Spaces like the Lincoln Theater historically helped us sort out and debate such questions through the arts and entertainment presented there. Through its commitment to a black aesthetic, it even helped us expand definitions of black culture because we knew from whence we came. The new iteration of the Lincoln obliterates the starting point, leaving us fumbling around in a sea of forgetfulness, grasping at the straws of popular culture. If black culture is dying, we help it along by removing the soul from our arts, ignoring our rituals and forgetting our past.

We believe the arts to be an educational, economic and social lifesaver for black people on the near east side and throughout the Columbus community. (Pandu, 2006)

This case study attempted to answer the question of how does a historically black arts institution emerge in a postmodern, capitalistic, patriarchal, culturally desensitized society. In the case of the Lincoln Theater, such a space emerges as a rootless, commercial, corporatized venue with no particular cultural aesthetic which may be successful as a commercial venture but falls short as a community based black arts space. As a black female graduate student researcher, my inquiry into the Lincoln renovation process stimulated discourse around issues of gender and class that are on-going and useful. The contribution of this research is to
provide an insider perspective on the execution of urban regime theory in a real-time project of community transformation. Autoethnographic narratives provide information about my personal reflexivity while traditional data sources reflect community and municipal information and perspectives. This process was not easy however, I believe my decision and that of others who took a “purposefully ethical stance” (Tillman-Healy, 2005) to push toward equity and inclusion in this process was an important decision for African Americans and others that “multiculturalism” and diversity are purported to benefit. I am certain that our visibility around issues of community involvement and community based arts, positively impacted the current outcomes of the Lincoln Theater.

Ultimately, I believe that the renovation of the Lincoln Theater is good because we need all of the arts spaces we can get; the space is a valuable addition to a small list of venues for performing arts in Columbus, Ohio. I question, as have others, the length of time and the process by which it was completed and I challenge CAPA to make it a space that is accessible and welcoming to the black community situated right outside its doors.

I also believe that the challenges encountered by those contractors, artists, elected officials and residents who tried to gain access to and participation in the lengthy and for some lucrative renovation process that took place, were more the design of structural challenges than by personal biases, at least that is what I choose to
believe. As that is my belief I am encouraged by the words of John Powell, a world-renowned lawyer and international actor in the field of civil rights.

John Powell, the executive director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity housed at The Ohio State University, is an internationally recognized authority in the area of civil rights, civil liberties and issues relating to race and ethnicity. In his 2003 article published in the University of St. Thomas Law Journal entitled, “Lessons from Suffering: How Social Justice Informs Spirituality” Powell writes of challenging structural forms of racism. He concludes this article by asserting

We cannot simply reject where we are in hope of being someplace different. We have to create the precondition for guarding against orthodoxy and the space for our shared humanity. This space cannot be created just by goodwill. It requires structural and institutional support. But we can be intentional in reconsidering and building toward this imagined future…This is a call to enhance love. This is a call to intentionally support the creation of these structures informed by and informing our sense of social justice and spirituality. This is a call to become responsible for the institutional structures we inhabit and inhabit us. This is a call for self and world-making and the bridge between them… (Powell, 2003, p127)

I agree with John Powell and I hope that this study is a contribution to the bridge.
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Appendix A: Ron Pitts Agreement
February 15, 2007

Mr. Ron Pitts  
Ujima Theatre  
P. O. Box 361811  
Columbus, OH  43236

Re:  Letter of Agreement - Ujima Theatre  
Lincoln Theatre

Dear Ron:

This Letter of Agreement confirms the terms and conditions for rental of the new Lincoln Theatre by the Ujima Theatre Company (hereinafter "Company"), an Ohio non-profit organization, and the Lincoln Theatre Association (hereinafter "the Theatre"), an Ohio non-profit organization, for three productions as part of the Theatre's 2008-2009 season.

The Theatre is holding time in the second floor ballroom/rehearsal room as well as the Theatre as follows:

"Love and Street Corner Harmony"

Rehearsals begin Monday, October 6 through Sunday, October 19, 2008 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the second floor ballroom; load-in in the Theatre beginning on Monday, October 20; with performances on Friday, October 24, 2008 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, October 25, 2008 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, October 26, 2008 at 6:00 p.m., Friday, October 31, 2008 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, November 1, 2008 at 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, November 2, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.

"Fences" by August Wilson

Rehearsals begin Monday, January 5, 2009 through Sunday, January 18, 2009 in the second floor ballroom/rehearsal room from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.; load-in in the Theatre begins Monday, January 19, 2009; with performances on Friday, January 23, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, January 24, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, January 25, 2009 at 6:00 p.m., Friday, January 30, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, January 31, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, February 1, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

"To Be Announced"

Rehearsals begin Monday, March 30, 2009 through Sunday, April 12, 2009 in the second floor ballroom/rehearsal room; load-in in the Theatre begins on Monday, April 13, 2009; with performances on Friday, April 17, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, April 18, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, April 19, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.
Mr. Ron Pitts  
Ujima Theatre  
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Friday, April 23, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, April 25, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, April 26, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

The non-profit rental rates anticipated at the Lincoln Theatre and rehearsal hall are as follows:

Second floor rental: $10.00 per hour, 2 hour minimum.

Theatre rates are:

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Theatre rental rate does not include stagehand cost, front of house cost ($50 per performance), or lamping fee of $100 per week and ticket expenses.

The Theatre would be interested in commissioning Ujima to perform “Love and Street Corner Harmony” as part of the opening events for the Lincoln for $15,000, payable $7,500 on first rehearsal and $7,500 at the last performance.

All of us are very excited about the possibilities the newly-renovated Lincoln Theatre will bring to our community. Thank you and Ujima Theatre for your interest in being a part of the new Lincoln.

Best wishes.

William B. Conner, Jr.

cc: Larry James  
Paul Brewer  
Diana Ferguson  
Todd Bemis
Appendix B: Beard Group Letter
February 21, 2006

The Hon. Michael B. Coleman
Mayor
City of Columbus
90 W. Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43205

Larry James
Partner
Crabb Brown & James
500 S. Front Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Mayor Coleman and Mr. James:

We, concerned residents and stakeholders of the King Lincoln District, are enthusiastic about the potential for the King Lincoln District and we have seen some positive developments.

However, we are tremendously concerned about the absence of an overall vision, and the specific processes by which projects are moving forward.

Among our concerns are: the process of approvals for the Whitney-Young and Monroe Cluster development sites, the apparent avoidance of the Near East Area Commission in the land management process, the purposes and disposition of a $100,000 marketing grant, and various other issues.

We would ask that all projects and decisions currently pending be put on hold until representatives of all parties -- administration, council, King Lincoln District Redevelopment Corporation, and community -- can meet to discuss our concerns about the processes and outcomes.

To schedule a time and location, please contact Phil Locke by phone at 614-258-8143, or by email at trade2befirst@yahoo.com, within the next week.

We look forward to a positive and productive meeting to address these issues.

Sincerely,

Benita Gatewood
East Columbus Development Corporation

Clyde Powell
Stenson-Powell Development Corp.

- continued on page -
Melvin Steward  
MVADIA

Jonathan Beard  
Columbus Compact Corporation

Barry Edney  
Grassroots Economic Development

Omar Shaheed  
Kibibi's Art Gallery

Phil Locke  
First U.S. Trade

Annie Womack  
Long Street Businessmen's Ass'n

Willis Brown  
KLBNA

John Waddy  
Attorney at Law

Talle Bamazi  
Gallerie Les Beaux Arts

cc: The Hon. Matt Habash  
The Hon. Michael Mentel  
The Hon. Kevin Boyce  
The Hon. Mary Jo Hudson  
The Hon. Maryellen O'Shaugnessy  
The Hon. Charleta Tavares  
The Hon. Patsy Thomas  
Boyce Safford  
Mark Barbash  
Keena Smith  
KLDRC Board  
Kathleen Bailey, Near East Area Commission
I support the letter dated 2-21-06 of agreement with everything in it.

I will sign letter as soon as other Stakeholders are contacted as they are aware of letter.

John Wood
2-21-06
Georgette Lade
Sybil McNabb
Lee Fanning
Pete Lescot
Geke at Cameroon
Lady at Colony
Ms. Colson
Tony, etc.
Kathleen Bailey
LSRD
Appendix C: King Lincoln Group Position Statement
POSITION STATEMENT:
Recommendations to Improve Implementation
of the King Lincoln District Area Plan
March 16, 2006

The King Lincoln District Plan expresses the wishes of many for a vibrant and cohesive arts-entertainment district that is rooted in the African-American history of the area, and that can serve for all Columbusites as a celebration of African American focused business, culture, and heritage. We applaud Mayor Michael B. Coleman and the Columbus City Council for embracing and supporting this vision. We support wholeheartedly the visions that have been expressed by the Mayor and others in this regard.

However, over the past several months many of the stakeholders in the King Lincoln District redevelopment effort have expressed increasing frustration and dissatisfaction with the implementation of the KLD Area Plan. While we may have difference of opinions about the merits of specific projects, we collectively agree that the implementation of the area plan has been extremely problematic, and that the current course must be dramatically altered to achieve the articulated vision.

Over the past years, many of the stakeholders have, on numerous occasions, clearly expressed concerns to those people and entities identified as being charged with implementation of the KLD Area Plan. Most of the stakeholders believe that their legitimate concerns have not been adequately addressed: in short, issues have been ignored, promises have been made and broken, and confusion has been the norm.

To avoid degenerating into finger pointing and "he-said, she-said," we would ask that all stakeholders recognize the extraordinary concurrence of opinion that allowed such diverse stakeholders to sign a letter expressing such a deep level of concern. Each of the stakeholders that signed the letter has specific issues and perhaps unique concerns, and collectively we believe it will be unproductive to try to address these specific concerns at the meeting of March 16, 2006.

It is not the intent of this collective body to champion the causes and issues of any of the stakeholders. It is the intent of this collective body to work in a positive and productive partnership with the City of Columbus and the King Lincoln District Redevelopment Corporation. We seek to identify at a high level what is not working, fix what is broken, and move forward together to develop a coherent plan of action that has broad based community support and City buy-in.

To that end, we would ask the following as the major objectives of the Meeting of March 16th:

1. Recognition that 3 days meeting notice for a meeting with this many stakeholders is insufficient for developing a coherent agenda;
2. Recognition that fixing what is broken is not something that will happen in the hour-long meeting of March 16th. We would not do ourselves the disservice of trying, nor would we try to force the City into such a speedy resolution of complicated issues;
3. Recognition that the Mayor and members of City Council must personally commit to no less than four subsequent group meetings to hear and resolve issues and concerns and develop a positive plan for the future development of the District;

4. Recognition that there must be an adequate allocation of resources, including but not limited to funding and personnel, to realize the often stated commitment of the Mayor and City Council that the development of the District is a “High Priority”;

5. Recognition that there is a global strategy that we seek to resolve through this effort, and that we collectively commit to pursuing agreement on such a higher level strategy. This global strategy is independent of the specific issues of the individual parties, but it does not supplant their rights to pursue redress of their individual issues; and

6. Recognition that there is a sense of urgency to develop the District.

We would group these global issues into two major categories: 1) Communication, Input, and Planning, and 2) Accountability. Collectively, we have agreed on the basic issues and we have identified a series of general desired outcomes for each of the issues. We would expect to work with the Mayor and members of City Council during the proposed meetings to work through each of these listed issues and outcomes.

COMMUNICATION, INPUT, AND PLANNING

Concern: The King Lincoln District implementation effort is characterized by a scattershot approach, with no cohesive development planning and poor communication among the parties. We want to have a high-quality effort, and the current approach to implementation puts the ultimate goal of a high quality outcome at risk. The current roundtable format is a poor means of gathering stakeholder input, and the current communication processes are ineffective.

- Discussion: Page 25 of the King Lincoln District Plan (Other Plan Strategies) states that bi-monthly District Roundtables will be held to discuss progress in Plan implementation and to ensure community participation. It also calls for a periodic newsletter on Plan implementation progress. Page 30 of the King Lincoln District Plan (Plan Implementation), states that “an Implementation Program” will be developed to address the critical first eighteen months of the Plan implementation period.
  
  - Outcome 1: To gain high quality stakeholder input, the KLD should have bi-monthly roundtables, as called for in the area plan. Area stakeholders should have input into the development of the agenda for those meetings, and the format should allow for meaningful input, discussion of various issues, and commitments to action and/or policy development as appropriate.
  
  - Outcome 2: Work with the community to develop an Implementation Plan for the King Lincoln District, with the specific actions, responsibilities, and timelines for implementation as outlined on page 30 of the KLD Area Plan.
  
  - Outcome 3: Work with the community to create a related Development Plan that provides specific direction to real estate developers on the desired uses at the remaining major development sites in the District, including addressing issues such as ownership/rental, single-family/multifamily, mixes of price points, and character of retail.
ACCOUNTABILITY

Concern: Processes and decision-making in the King Lincoln District do not appear to have a high degree of consistency and accountability, and they often appear to be at cross-purposes with the will of key stakeholders.

• Discussion: All the major community stakeholders are concerned that the current implementation processes circumvent existing input and decision-making channels for the City of Columbus. Further, these implementation processes almost ensure that well-qualified people, including those in established community-based organizations, are minimally involved in making major decisions about the direction of the KLD.
  o Outcome 4: A review and re-thinking of the role and purpose of the King Lincoln District Redevelopment Corporation, and its relationship to the existing resident and stakeholder groups, such as the Near East Area Commission, King Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association, Long Street Business Association, and Mt. Vernon Avenue District Improvement Association. This review should include dialogue with area stakeholders about how the KLDRC role can best be tailored to serve the community’s needs and purposes.
  o Outcome Five: A detailed review of the decision-making processes on the purposes and disposition of the marketing grant secured by the KLDRC, the RFP and selection process for Whitney Young site, the RFP and selection process for the Monroe Cluster site, and potentially other major issues.

Again, we believe it is critical that this problem resolution process not be rushed, and that it have the personal attention of the Mayor of the City of Columbus and the members of Columbus City Council. The current path is unacceptable, and we commit to finding common ground that will make our collective work rewarding, more effective, and of higher quality.
Appendix D: Lincoln Theater Survey
Lincoln Theatre Research Survey
Conducted by Toni Smith, Doctoral Candidate
Art Education Department
The Ohio State University

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this written research survey on the Lincoln Theatre in the King Lincoln District. The questions you will be answering will become a part of a larger exploration of the black cultural community on the near east side of Columbus, Ohio. Your answers are anonymous and are very important. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

At the end of the survey, you may choose to enter a raffle for a $50 gift certificate to Black Art Plus. There will be two $50 gift certificates given. Thank you for your valuable contribution to this research.

General Information (please check one)

1. Age: □ 18-24 □ 25-35 □ 36-54 □ 55 and up

2. How long have you lived in Columbus, Ohio?
   □ 1-2 years
   □ 3-5 years
   □ 6-10 years
   □ 11-20 years
   □ Greater than 20 years

3. Do you live on the near east side of Columbus?
   □ Yes (Go to Question 5) □ No

4. Have you ever lived on the near east side of Columbus?
   □ Yes □ No If yes, how long? ________

5. What is your ethnicity?
   □ African American
   □ Caucasian
   □ Native American
   □ Asian
   □ African
   □ Hispanic

If another ethnicity, please identify ________
6. What is your field of employment? *(Please check only one.)*
   - Education
   - Healthcare/Medical
   - Finance
   - Manufacturing
   - Retail
   - Professional
   - Government
   - Agriculture
   - Technology
   - The Arts
   
   Other, please specify

7. What is your job function? *(Please check all that apply.)*
   - Business Owner
   - Clerical
   - Technical
   - Contractor
   - Self-Employed
   - Unemployed
   - Student
   - Supervisor
   - Laborer
   - Customer Service

   Other

8. What is your household income range?
   - Under $15,000
   - $16,000-$35,000
   - $36,000-$50,000
   - $51,000-$80,000
   - Over $81,000

The next few questions are about culture.

9. How would you define culture?

10. How would you rate the importance of some key aspects of culture?

   *Rate each aspect 1 through 5; 5 being most important, 1 being least important*
   
   1= not important; 2= little importance; 3= average importance; 4= important; 5= very important

   - Food
   - Music
   - Language
   - Customs
   - Clothing
   - Community
   - Parenting
   - Sports
   - Attitude
   - Arts
   - Politics
   - Religious practices

11. Is there a “black culture?”
   - Yes
   - No

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If yes, is there more than one? □ Yes □ No

(Please name some).

If no, go to question 13.

12. How would you rate your perception of black culture in Columbus, Ohio?
   1= very negative; 2= negative; 3= neutral; 4=positive; 5= very positive
   □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □

12a. Please rate all words that apply to your perception of black culture.
   1= very negative; 2= negative; 3= neutral; 4=positive; 5= very positive
   □ Violent □ Spiritual □ Community minded □ Nurturing □ Disrespectful
   □ Dignified □ Low □ Intelligent □ Uplifting □ Criminal
   □ Uncaring □ Every man for himself

13. Whose responsibility is it to pass on aspects of ethnic culture to future generations? (please check only one)
   □ Persons of that ethnic culture □ Persons of other ethnic cultures □ Both

The next few questions are specifically about your perceptions of the Lincoln Theatre.

14. Have you ever been to the Lincoln Theatre?
   □ Yes □ No (go to Question 18)

15. Did you go to the Lincoln before the new renovation?
   □ Yes □ No (Go to Question 16)

   a) What was your perception of the old Lincoln Theatre?
16. Have you been to the Lincoln since the new renovation?
   □ Yes  □ No *(Go to Question 17)*

   a) What is your perception of the new Lincoln Theatre?

17. Who owns the Lincoln Theatre? *(Please check one.)*
   □ King Arts Complex  □ King Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Assoc. (KLBNA)
   □ City of Columbus  □ The Black Community  □ The Lincoln Theatre is privately owned
   □ Don’t know  □ Other

18. The Lincoln Theatre should be ... *(please check only one):*
   □ A black cultural space only  □ A multicultural space  □ Don’t know

   18a. Does it matter?
      □ Yes  □ No  □ No Opinion

19. Should the Lincoln Theatre be a national or community theater? *(please check only one)*
   □ National productions  □ Community productions  □ Both national and community productions theater
   □ Theater only  □ Theater only

20. During the renovation of the Lincoln Theatre, seating capacity was reduced from 750 seats to 566 seats. Does that matter to you?
   □ Yes  □ No  □ No Opinion

21. What is your opinion of the programming at the Lincoln Theatre?
   □ Very Good  □ Good  □ Average  □ Poor  □ Don’t know
22. What kind of programming would you like to see at the Lincoln Theatre? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- [ ] Free community classes  
- [ ] Broadway productions  
- [ ] Children's productions  
- [ ] Opera  
- [ ] National touring productions (i.e. Tyler Perry)  
- [ ] Local productions  
- [ ] Professional training in arts:  
  - [ ] dance  
  - [ ] Theater  
  - [ ] set design  
  - [ ] videography  
  - [ ] Lighting design  
  - [ ] Costume design  
  - [ ] Photography  
- [ ] Other, Please name

**The next few questions are about Policy.**

23. Under the mayor's renovation plan, the Lincoln Theatre has become a multicultural space. Do you think the Lincoln Theatre is a good legacy for the black community from Mayor Michael Coleman?

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know  
- [ ] No opinion

24. Do you think the Jazz Arts Group should be in the Lincoln Theatre?

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t Know  
- [ ] No opinion

25. Do you think city government should use tax dollars to do arts projects like the Lincoln Theatre?

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know

*If no, please check all that apply:*

- [ ] Scarce tax dollars  
- [ ] Taxes should be used for primary services like police/fire/garbage  
- [ ] City doesn't know how to do arts  
- [ ] Arts should be self-sustaining  
- [ ] Arts are not city business  
- [ ] Too political  

*OR*  
Tell me your reason:

26. When the city does arts projects like the Lincoln Theatre, how much participation should artists have in the project?

- [ ] Heavy participation  
- [ ] Little participation  
- [ ] No participation  
- [ ] Don’t know

27. Do you think city government should do projects that focus on a specific ethnic community?

- [ ] Yes  
- [ ] No  
- [ ] Don’t know  
- [ ] No Opinion
28. When city government does projects that focus on a specific ethnic community, how much participation should members of that community have in the project?

☐ Heavy participation ☐ Little participation ☐ No participation ☐ Don’t know

29. Should city government do projects that target a specific geographic community?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don’t Know ☐ No Opinion

30. When city government does projects that target a specific geographic community, how much participation should members of that community have in the project?

☐ Heavy participation ☐ Little participation ☐ No participation ☐ Don’t know

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

If you would like to participate in the raffle for one of two $50 gift certificates to Black Art Plus, please provide your name and mailing address below. Winners will be randomly selected from those persons who respond to the survey and provide their mailing information.

To ensure confidentiality, all names and addresses will be removed from the data before analysis and will be used only for determining the winners of the raffle.

Name

Street Address

City State Zip
Appendix E: Excerpts John Coats Interview
John Coats Interview excerpts

Interviewer: Ok that is good. Tell me your definition of culture.

Interviewee: Culture is the thing that a group of persons do. What they eat, music they listen to, clothes that they wear and their practices and etcetera.

Interviewer: Ok. How would you rate the importance of some key aspects of culture, am going to give you ratings one to five. One being not important to practice five being most important. Food.

Interviewee: Eight.

Interviewer: Ok. One through five.

Interviewee: Ok. Five.

Interviewer: Music.

Interviewee: Five.

Interviewer: Language.

Interviewee: Five.

Interviewer: Customs

Interviewee: Five.

Interviewer: Clothing.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Community

Interviewee: Five.

Interviewer: Parenting.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Sports.

Interviewee: Two.

Interviewer: Attitude.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Arts.

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Interviewee: Five.

Interviewer: Politics.

Interviewee: Four.

Interviewer: Religious practices.

Interviewee: Five.

Interviewer: Is there a black culture? Yes or no.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there more than one?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you name some?

Interviewee: Black culture maybe because it's very different, religious affiliations therefore culture is different within the religious, their social economical cultural differences between the impoverished or the bourgeoisie, the cultures are different, political cultures.

Interviewer: How would you rate if a section of black culture in Columbus again one being very negative five being positive.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: Why would I rate it at three? Columbus is unique, as in I believe the uniqueness of this city is that.

Interviewee: It is a capital city and within capital cities it seems as if there's always been a movement to keep the natives under control so therefore there's, there are certain things that exist here such as you don't have the poverty, the visible poverty in Columbus that you would have in the Cincinnati or Cleveland Ohio or even a Dayton.

Subsidized housing is you know centralized air conditioning in the suburban areas in the city. Therefore there is a greater degree of complacency, also the amount of African Americans that are employed by the Government, Federal states, City County, the Government and utility companies is very large.

So there is a great amount of us that are employed which I think builds into the complacency within the city and I think we are the, sad to say, where there is greater degree of poverty. People rise up out of that but you have to call a lot of community cost is it necessarily lost, I think its developed within that out of that.
Interviewer: So in a place where there is complacency and people don't come together to rise up we lose our culture?

Interviewee: Yes. And I think that there is a greater degree of cohesiveness in the black community in the cities like Dayton and Cleveland.

Interviewer: Ok. Please rate all the words that apply to your perception of black culture in general. Not just in common with, one again is negative five is positive. Violence.

Interviewee: One.

Interviewer: Spiritual.

Interviewee: One.

Interviewer: Community minded.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Nurturing.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Disrespectful.

Interviewee: One.

Interviewer: Dignified.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Law.

Interviewee: One.

Interviewer: Intelligent.

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Uplifting.

Interviewee: Four.

Interviewer: Criminal.

Interviewee: One

Interviewer: Uncaring.

Interviewee: Three
Interviewer: Every man for himself

Interviewee: Three.

Interviewer: Ok. Whose responsibility is it to pass on ethnic culture to the future generations? Persons of that ethnic culture, persons of other ethnic cultures or both.

Interviewee: Persons of that ethnic culture.

Interviewer: Ok. The next few questions are specifically about your perceptions of the Lincoln Theater. Have you been, ever been to the Lincoln Theater?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you go before the renovations?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What was your perception?

Interviewee: It was already abandoned at that point, it was unoccupied at that time period so it was very dilapidated.

Interviewer: So have you been since the renovations?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: And what’s your perception?

Interviewee: Very nice. That was good.

Interviewer: Ok. Who owns the Lincoln Theater?

Interviewee: The City of Columbus.

Interviewer: The Lincoln Theater should be one, black cultural space, two, multi cultural space, don't know.

Interviewee: A multi cultural space.

Interviewer: Are you saying what is politically correct.

Interviewee: No. I am thinking, am trying to remember what I answered the first time

Interviewee: No, I, a black cultural space.

Interviewer: I mean is that what you really mean?
Interviewee: No because the city owns it, because the city owns it, I believe it should be a multi cultural thing, because the city owns it. That’s my rational reasoning for that. If the black community has the mandate a bigger voice in it, I mean demand and not request, but demanded a bigger voice in it and if we owned it and if it was in black ownership, then I think we should make that demand and say that it should be a black cultural space.

Interviewer: Ok. Does it matter?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: It has to do with the heritage of the area and you can’t count on others to keep the heritage of the Mount Vernon and Long street area alive. I believe it’s primarily our responsibility in the black community responsibility to do so.

Interviewer: But we have black leadership in our administration.

Interviewee: Black leadership has failed the black community.

Interviewer: In what way?

Interviewee: We’re, none of our issues are on the fore front of the agendas nor has there ever been on the fore front ...

Interviewer: Should the Lincoln theatre be a national or community theatre? National theatre only, community productions or both.

Interviewee: Both.

Interviewer: On the renovation of the Lincoln theatre, during the renovation the seating capacity was reduced from 750 to 566 seats, does that matter?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: The number of seats available in comparison to ticket pricings and ability to attract national or regional artists.

Interviewer: Okay, explain that a little more. You are saying the number of seats?

Interviewee: The maximum number of seats the more the tickets will have to cost, the more seats you have the less tickets cost.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your opinion of the programming of the theatre? Very good, average or poor.
Interviewee: Average.

Interviewer: And why do you say that?

Interviewee: I think it is its pretty stated, I don't think they have the ability to attract the type of programming that a lot of us would like to see, because of the seating capacity is a little bit small.

Interviewer: When you say "a lot of us" you mean a lot of us in the black community?

Interviewee: Yes.

Skipping...

Interviewer: Okay, other than the mayor's renovation plan, the Lincoln theatre has become a multicultural stage which gets talked about. Do you think that the Lincoln theatre is a good legacy for the black community for Mayor Coleman?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Interviewee: Because the community doesn't—it does have very little input.

Interviewer: Okay, but I'm going to need you to explain more to settle that, you can only just figure the other side for a moment, so even though you are saying the community doesn't have input in the black community, the new building, that's not enough?

Interviewee: No, I think it is good; I mean, I think it is good, I don't think it is enough. I don't think that the old guard process is a productive process in the community.

Interviewer: And by that you mean?

Interviewee: Where you make up your mind totally as to what you want to do. And that is all you here and that is all you know about, so anything else whether it is people knocking on the doors I mean favorably positively wanting to be involved in that process, and they are just they are not even pacified. the door is never answered.

Interviewer: Okay, do you think the 'Jazz Arts group' should be in the Lincoln theatre? Yes, no, don't know, don't care.

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: Okay, and why?

Interviewee: I like the program that they are running in the Lincoln.
Interviewer: Which is what?

Interviewee: 'The jazz academy', and its impressive. And part of what helps achieve the cultural eye within our community I would love to see black artists do the same thing that you know didn't happen, prevented it from happening when encouraged but at least there is something going on.

Interviewer: You mentioned in the other interview too that about that jazz arts group came to your high school? What school was that?

John Coats: I was a senior at [Walnut Ridge] high school.

Toni Smith: Ok. When JAG came. Do you think that the government should do art projects like promoting theater?

John: Yes.

Smith: Why.

John [Pope]: Culture in America is under funded and should be funded and I think it may indirectly help many areas within our country. We should finance the arts like you would see the arts financed in France.
Appendix F: Excerpts Tim Anderson Interview
Tim Anderson interview excerpts

Tim Anderson

Well, culture is the spice of life. It is it's like making a cake. You can make a cake that of the yellow cake or you can make a carrot cake, and the difference in the yellow plain cake and the carrot cake is those spices were own culture. I look at culture as the spice of the life, and that language and experience, the way we dress, the way we interact with one another that that those things are specific to each one of our lives depending on how we, where we were raised, and how we were raised. So, I kind of think of culture as the spice to our individual lives.

Skipping...

Okay. is there a black culture?

Tim Anderson

Yeah there is a black culture. It's not I'm a genius, but there is a black culture.

Interviewer

Is there more than one?

Tim Anderson

Yeah definitely more than one.

Interviewer

Okay, can you name some?

Tim Anderson

Well, I think it's based on social economic statements. I think, that putting the most of us who were just working to have black folks [ph] that our culture is grounded in. Our long-term, our ethnic aspect of our experience even that since we came over here that culture that came from the slave culture to the segregation culture to the integration culture that we whatever that have most of us operated in that culture. And then those who are what I consider we found wealthy black folks or middle income black folks, or higher income black folks. I think they assimilated the culture that is more generic and more associated with mainstream. But the both black folks recognize accepting recognize their culture that grew up food, music, clothing, attitude, things that you asked me about, I think most of it that's how we're able to understand all that [ph].

Interviewer

Okay. how do you rate your perception of black culture in Columbus, and from one to five, of one being very negative, five being very positive?
Tim Anderson

I think that black culture in Columbus is a two.

Interviewer

Okay. Please rate all the words that apply to your perception of black culture in general not just promising [ph] think of the some [ph] problem. So, again one being very negative, five being very positive.

Tim Anderson

Okay.

Interviewer

Violent?

Tim Anderson

How do I rate this violence (inaudible)?

Interviewer

As it applies your perception of black culture how does the word violent relate to your perception of black culture?

Tim Anderson

I would say that violence in the black culture is probably I don't think it's a part of black culture, so and what number --

Interviewer

So that would be in the lower end.

Tim Anderson

Okay, two.

Skipping...

Interviewer

Okay, have you been to the Lincoln since the renovation, the new renovation?

Tim Anderson

No [ph].
Interviewer

So, then you don't have a perception though? Do you have a perception of the new Lincoln Theater?

Tim Anderson

I mean after they spent a lot of money, and I think they probably put the kind of money that they spent it on the Lincoln Theater I don't see the community impact. I don't see this. I don't see the correlation of $15 million, and how that's improving our community.

Female

We're not patronizing it.

Tim Anderson

We're not patronizing, and there is no carrier, there is no cultural carrier from the Lincoln Theater.

Interviewer

And what do you mean by that?

Tim Anderson

Cultural carrier?

Interviewer

Yeah.

Tim Anderson

Well, I'll that the Lincoln Theater that's a community which is trying to be do many things to many people, and as a result is watered down from an African-American experience.

Interviewer

Okay. Who owns the Lincoln Theater? Let me give you the choices that I have, and I'm just asking you to check one. King Arts Complex, King-Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association, City of Columbus, Black Community, the Lincoln Theater is privately owned or don't know or other.

Tim Anderson

I know that there is a private development corporation headed up by Larry James, and members of the art community, the overall art community and the neighborhood are supposed to sit on the board.

Skipping...

Tim Anderson
I think it should be a primarily an African-American complex that supports other ethnic theater and art type of things. But I don’t think there should be it was downtown. I think you should pretty much have a feel for the neighborhood, and the population that it is rotated in it like give you for example like I would hate to see that with the Wizard of Oz at the Lincoln Theater, but the Wiz would be okay.

Interviewer

Okay. that’s a good example. Okay. Should the Lincoln Theater be a national or community theater, and so here are my choices, national productions only, community productions only, or both national and community productions?

Tim Anderson

I think that it should be primarily a community with national productions, but the focus should be on community productions because there is such a history, such a great history in our community apart that I think it’s missing the mark, and if they were to focus only on national then what we do here locally is not going to have a platform to be displayed on. So, I think that it should have a primary, local with the national supplement.

Interviewer

Okay during the renovation of the Lincoln Theater seating capacity has reduced from 750 seats to 560 seats does that matter to you, yes, no or no opinion?

Tim Anderson

Does it matter to you?

Female

Yeah it matters to me.

Tim Anderson

Why it matters to you?

Female

Because if we’re going to renovate what was the reason for downsize?

Tim Anderson

Well, yeah it matters to me, and I’m telling you the reason why it matters to me is because it limits what the number of people who can have access to it, and reducing the number of seats increases the average ticket price, and so that has an a economic impact on people on the community who can’t afford to go and see shows in that particular venue, so I had to had more seats. Their problem was when I had a lower ticket price and more folks [ph] to see it, and so when you take the ticket price up higher
for fewer seats then you got to ask that at the community and or you get folks to patronize and then support. Have you ever been to Harlem?
Appendix G: Excerpts Willis Brown Interview
Willis Brown interview excerpt

Willis Brown

Culture is a behavior, a expression of traditional behavior, as consistent with that ethnic group, so it shows its heritage, the group's heritage, its taboos, it dos and don'ts. The culture is an expression of the essence of that ethnic group.

Skipping...

Willis Brown

As far as black culture, you have Caribbean culture. You have African culture, and that can be divided from West Africa, East Africa, African culture then you have African-American culture, and then you also have, and I want to say the aborigine I mean the people of color that's their own culture too. And you also have one of the Brazilian South American that have a different culture in Black culture.

Interviewer

Okay. How would you rate your perception of black culture in Columbus, and that's again one is very negative, five is very positive. So, how would you rate your perception of black culture in Columbus, Ohio from one which is very negative, three is neutral, five is very positive.

Willis Brown

I think we have a positive culture here.

Interviewer

Okay so what number did you --?

Willis Brown

Five.

Skipping...

Willis Brown

Seeing it before the construction it was overwhelming that building of such caliber was built by us, built by African-Americans, and managed in with such creativity and design, and it was this one of stellar appearance even in its ruin state or deteriorating state. It still has a sense of magnificence.

Interviewer: Okay.

Willis Brown
The marbles all over the place, wrought iron and just a layout of it was just phenomenon as well as its construction it was built to last over time.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you been to the Lincoln Theater since the new renovation?

Willis Brown

Yes.

Interviewer: What is your perception of the new Lincoln Theater?

Willis Brown

It's impressive as far as modern day, décor and trying to capture what was there before, and it's ecstatically pleasing, and it has a new ...(inaudible) is that add a little more (inaudible) it's more of a very intimate type theater, medium size theater, and so as far as its function, form and function, it's impressive.

Interviewer: Okay. Who owns the Lincoln Theater now, and I'll give you some choices? King Arts Complex, City of Columbus, King-Lincoln Bronzeville Neighborhood Association, the Black Community, the Lincoln theater is privately owned don't know whatever?

Willis Brown: The City owns that.

Interviewer: Okay. The Lincoln Theater should be, and please check just one, a black culture space only, a multi-cultural space, don't know?

Willis Brown: It should be a multi-cultural space.

Interviewer: Okay, does it matter? Yes, no or no opinion [ph]?

Willis Brown: It does.

Interviewer: Okay. Should the Lincoln Theater be a national or community theater, please check there only one, National productions only, Community productions only or both?

Willis Brown: Both.

Interviewer: During the renovation of the Lincoln Theater, seating capacity was reduced from 750 seats to 566 seats, does that matter to you?

Willis Brown: Well, yeah it does...(inaudible)

Well it matters because having more people in there helped to fund it, but also I understand that's something's had to be given. It may be a compromises on, but I think that the number of seating is critical, but having the fewer seats give it a more intimate, (inaudible) but again it reduces the amount of
who that can come in, so it lends itself to that if a production comes here that's very popular, they would have to have multiple days to accommodate the number of people that we want to see a major production that was in there.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your opinion of the programming at the Lincoln Theater? Very good, good, average, poor, don't know?

Willis Brown: I think that the program is about the average (inaudible).
Martha Dillard

Lived about 30 years (on near east side)

Culture is the community, arts, history, religion and food

Interviewer: Is there black culture? Oh, yes

Martha Dillard: Assimilationists, academia

14. Have you ever been to the Lincoln Theatre?

Yes as a child. They used to have movies (1955). It was filled with people, so it was clearly a
community based kind of activity. Physically it is beautiful, it is stunning. I was surprised that all
the technicians were white and there was no hint of any kind of

18. The Lincoln Theatre should be … (please check only one):

☐ A black cultural space only  ☐ A multicultural space  ☐ Don’t know

Well I think it should be mostly black, black identified without excluding anybody. Because it’s
a way of memorializing our past. In Columbus, we should have a part, a piece of the arts that is
black.

21. What is your opinion of the programming at the Lincoln Theatre?

Poor because there is from what I can see there is no programming and whatever there is is not
black…and it should be…

24. Do you think the Jazz Arts Group should be in the Lincoln Theatre?

No because it should be a black presence

I don’t see the jazz arts group as black…they should be there but they should be black…They
should have black members
One of the events that happened is that my auntie...back in the day, they were the activists, community based, they had been to OSU, this man in the middle, this man on the end is my father, Lloyd Dillard. 1936...my auntie belonged to something called the vanguard league, (I heard about it from your brother Tom.) So what happened is that there was an incident and my auntie and her people picketed, because at the time, blacks couldn’t go to the theaters downtown, so to protest that they picketed the Lincoln so people would go to the ballroom and they would try to get the sedity people...to be aware

They sat down with Neff and Neff said he was losing money so they signed some kind of agreement.

We have no cohesion to challenge to people...it makes me sad.

Multiculturalism is not truly multicultural...our culture is not funded, supported...When they say multicultural, they recognized their roots and culture but not accepted in the general society.

This is a good time to be vigilant...
Appendix I: Excerpts Reita Smith Interview
Reita Smith interview excerpts

Interviewer

22. What kind of programming would you like to see at the Lincoln Theatre? *(Please check all that apply.)* Free community classes, dance classes, other

The other could include cultural research and training to heighten the interest in black culture in all forms, all mediums. But in keeping with why it was built and who built it it was to be the center for the black community. And it was. It was the community center in terms of kind of programs held in the ballroom, jazz greats performed there and that history in itself should be a part of the piece that brings the programming alive.

It was an experience to go to the Lincoln theater because it was around the arts that were close to us as a culture, the jazz, even the comedians, the black roots that sang there like the Ivory brothers who could not perform in the white theaters. You got a sense of who you were and who you could be by the activities that were there.

Even if you had a comedian like Moms mabley She didn’t perform at the Palace theater. She brought our black culture to the community. It could be a learning center. It was a business for black people, you got a job there, you operated the movie projector so you learned that technical part of it. Those were opportunities for learning. The lighting, and could serve as a incubator for young blacks to go elsewhere.

When you saw black folks doing those kinds of jobs, as a young person, you could say you could aspire. All of the programming should be where young blacks can see blacks performing so that they could aspire. They could be the technician, you could be the lighting person, regardless of what kind of programming.
I was involved with the Lincoln was about 10 years ago with Center stage theater. Don Day was trying to acquire the Lincoln for the community....

23. Under the mayor’s renovation plan, the Lincoln Theatre has become a multicultural space. Do you think the Lincoln Theatre is a good legacy for the black community from Mayor Michael Coleman?

No, most people would think so but when you look at the process under which all of this occurred, they were so eager to give it away...

We became consumers again, except for people who are volunteering, the theater is now an addendum to CAPA if you are an addendum, you don’t have the same drive... Or that rich opportunity that could be there for young people.

In my career, I came through being the only black person. That didn’t mean I ran the business...(JAG) They have a venue at the southern hotel, when I look at who’s playing in their orchestra, I don’t see it represented in the running of the jazz arts group...
Appendix J: Lincoln Theater

Articles of Incorporation
INITIAL ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
(For Domestic Profit or Non-Profit)
Filing Fee $125.00

THE UNDERSIGNED HEREBY STATES THE FOLLOWING:

CHECK ONLY ONE: (1) BOX

1. [ ] Articles of Incorporation
   Profit
   ORC 1701
   ORC 1702

2. [ ] Articles of Incorporation
   Non-Profit
   ORC 1702
   ORC 1702

3. [ ] Articles of Incorporation Professional
   ORC 170
   ORC 170

Complete the general information in this section for the box checked above.

FIRST: Name of Corporation Lincoln Theatre Association
SECOND: Location Columbus
          (City) Franklin
          (County)
Effective Date (Optional) Specify date (mm/dd/yyyy)

☐ Check here if additional provisions are attached

Consider the information in this section if box (2) is checked. Completing this section is optional if box (1) is checked.

THIRD: Purpose for which corporation is formed

The purposes for which the Corporation is formed are exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended or corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law (the "Code"). These charitable and educational purposes shall specifically include, (See attachment for the continuation of Article THIRD)

FOURTH: The number of shares which the corporation is authorized to have outstanding (Please state if shares are common or preferred and their par value if any)

(Refer to instructions if needed)

(ph. of Shares) (Type) (Par Value)
FIFTH: The following are the names and addresses of the individuals who are to serve as initial Directors.

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NOTE: P.O. Box Addresses are NOT acceptable.

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NOTE: P.O. Box Addresses are NOT acceptable.

REQUIRED
Must be authenticated (signed) by an authorized representative
(See instructions)

William B. Conner
Authorized Representative
President and Chief Executive Officer of The Columbus Association for the Performing Arts

August 28, 2006
Date

Authorized Representative

(print name)

Date

Authorized Representative

(print name)

Date

Authorized Representative

(print name)

Date

Last Revised May 2002
ORIGINAL APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY AGENT

The undersigned, being at least a majority of the incorporators of Lincoln Theatre Association, hereby appoint the following to be statutory agent upon whom any process, notice or demand required or permitted by statute to be served upon the corporation may be served. The complete address of the agent is:

Statutory Agent Corporation, Att. Librarian
Address:
52 E. Gay Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

NOTE: P.O. Box Addresses are NOT acceptable.

Must be authenticated by an authorized representative:

Authorized Representative: [Signature]
Date: AUGUST 30, 2006

ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

The undersigned, Statutory Agent Corporation, named herein as the
Statutory agent for, Lincoln Theatre Association,
hereby acknowledges and accepts the appointment of statutory agent for said entity.

Signature: [Signature]
(Statutory Agent)
Additional Provisions to
Initial Articles of Incorporation of
Lincoln Theatre Association

THIRD: (Continued) but shall not be limited to, operating the historic Lincoln Theatre and offering presentations in music, dramatics, the arts and related fields in order to foster public interest and education therein.

FOURTH: (intentionally left blank)

FIFTH: (intentionally left blank)

SIXTH: The Corporation is formed exclusively for purposes for which a corporation may be formed under the Ohio Nonprofit Corporation Law and not for pecuniary profit or financial gain. No part of the net earnings of the Corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its directors, officers or other private persons or organizations, except that the Corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article THIRD hereof. The Corporation shall have the power to do any and all lawful acts and things and to engage in any and all lawful activities which may be necessary, useful, suitable, desirable or proper for the furtherance, accomplishment or attainment of any or all of the purposes for which the Corporation is organized, and to aid or assist other organizations whose activities are such as to further, accomplish, foster or attain any such purposes. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation (except to the extent provided in Code Section 501(h)), and the Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publication or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any provision of these Articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on: (a) by
A corporation exempt from federal income tax as an organization described in Code Section 501(c)(3); or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Code Sections 170(c), 2055(a) and 2522(a).

SEVENTH: The sole member of the Corporation shall be The Columbus Association for the Performing Arts, an Ohio nonprofit corporation (the “Member”).

EIGHTH: Upon the dissolution of the Corporation, the Board of Directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all liabilities of the Corporation, distribute the assets of the Corporation to the Member provided it is an organization described in Code Section 501(c)(3) at the time of such distribution; provided, however, if the Member is not an organization described in Code Section 501(c)(3), the Board of Directors shall dispose of the assets of the Corporation exclusively for the purposes of the Corporation in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, testing for public safety, literary or scientific purposes or to foster national amateur sports competition or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Code Section 501(c)(3) and as an organization or organizations described in Code Sections 170(c), 2055(a) and 2522(a) or to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose, as the Board of Directors shall determine. Any of such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes, or to one or more organizations which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes, as said Court shall determine to best accomplish the exempt purposes of the Corporation.

NINTH: These Articles may be amended from time to time, in whole or in part, by the affirmative vote of the Member.