

“IT’S ALL ONE TRIBE, ONE FAMILY”: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TO SURVIVE  
AND MOVE BEYOND THE U.S. DOMINANCE COMPLEX IN RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

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## INTRODUCTION

In late 2011, I began to hang out with a group of youngsters from Richmond, California.<sup>1</sup> When I first began to hang out with them, I thought their main reason for coming together was to practice art and music. Eventually, I began to recognize that there was something a lot deeper going on with the group: something that could not be easily explained and is not explained in academia by common narratives of young people that struggle. The youngsters I had begun to hang out with were a part of The Tribe, or La Tribe,<sup>2</sup> which I have grown to understand to be a group of young people from Richmond coming together as a community, family, and source of support for one another. As I continued to hang out and speak with several of La Tribe youth, my understanding of young people's struggles living in cities like Richmond, as well as their personal inter- and intra-relationships, has grown. My understanding of the state's<sup>3</sup> infringement and impact on Richmond and other ghettos similar to it have also been expanded.

With this paper and my work with La Tribe, I am attempting to convey a complex understanding and explanation of how the state impacts our communities—and specifically, youth in our communities. In working with La Tribe, I also attempt to offer a counter to a common view of Richmond and its youth as deficient and criminal. This project provides an understanding and interpretation of young people's struggle within the context of the city of Richmond and through The Tribe. I humbly thank La Tribe for working with me in understanding not only who they are and what they are about, but also for the insight that came from that. Working with La Tribe has helped facilitate a look at the state's impact on young people and how we, as young people, can create change that will move us beyond common narratives of struggle.

## PERSONAL IMPORTANCE OF WORK

This work is important to me for several reasons. My family and I moved to Richmond when I was thirteen and my brother was seven. Ever since moving to Richmond, I not only struggled, but also continuously witnessed other young people's daily struggle, both in the school system and in the community as a whole. I have had a hard time explaining our struggle and making sense of it. There is no denying that people who struggle against the state also struggle against the impacts it has on the community, particularly on women, people of color, and working-class whites. My work with La Tribe is significant because, according to the popular perception of ghettos and the state's infringement on the lives of young people, if youth of color come together in large numbers, it is not supposed to be for support, family, and community. In this paper, some of what Tribe youngsters have shared with me has been incorporated into my explanation and framing of the issues associated with ghettos like Richmond. Yet a significant portion of what youth in La Tribe shared with me is presented to show their struggles, what La Tribe means to them, and what role the group is playing in their lives. My intention with this paper is to provide an essential voice to a community too often framed as criminal. Additionally, I hope to explain how and why communities like Richmond struggle as well as how and why some young people are looking to move beyond that struggle.

## RICHMOND: CITY OF PRIDE AND PURPOSE

Although the city of Richmond was incorporated in 1905, its current social and economic

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<sup>1</sup> Richmond is a city in the East Bay Area.

<sup>2</sup> The Tribe and La Tribe are used interchangeably in this project, as both are used by the group.

<sup>3</sup> Author's note: I define "the state" as the overruling power(s), which would include the government, its institutions, and the ideology that facilitates governmental and institutional rule over a population.

conditions were significantly shaped during the Great Depression, World War II, and the 1960s. In 1930, Henry Ford opened a motor plant in the city, which closed in the 1960s and left thousands of Richmond residents unemployed. At the beginning of World War II, the Richmond shipyards were built along the city's waterfront. Thousands of workers, many of them African-Americans from the Midwestern and Southern United States, were recruited to work at the shipyards. Once the war was over, shipyard jobs were no longer available and thousands were left jobless. In the 1970s, the Hilltop neighborhood was developed and a large shopping mall with big box stores opened. This development depressed the downtown small business economy. As bigger businesses began to overrun the city, few well-paying jobs were available and people who had operated businesses for years were forced to shut down. This, combined with the crack boom of the 1980s—known as the “War on Drugs”—and a large population of people of color, the Richmond community began to struggle with high rates of crime, murder, and drugs.

Throughout Richmond's history, there has been an oil refinery in the city, which today is owned and operated by the Chevron Corporation. The refinery has been a common source of toxic leaks and explosions, with the most recent explosion occurring in the summer of 2012. One argument in support of the refinery is that it provides jobs. However, not all of those jobs are guaranteed for Richmond residents. Essentially, Richmond residents are receiving the toxic effects of a refinery but are not receiving the benefits of job availability, which is clearly visible in the city's crime rate.

With the undeniable occurrences of crime in the city, popular media's overrepresentation of Richmond as a hub for everything negative is not lost amongst the Richmond community, who are forced to witness negative media perspectives on Richmond nearly every day. As Ruben, a young man in La Tribe, notes, “the news paints Richmond in a whole different story than what it really is. . . they're not talking about the good things, they only look at the bad things.” Richmond, California is known for its violence, drugs, and poverty, which is evident in the fact that within the last ten years, Richmond has twice been named among the top ten most dangerous cities in the United States by the media.<sup>4</sup> However, this ranking is not representative of the city and its residents who are struggling to survive, attempting to live a dignified<sup>5</sup> life, and building community and family, as the young people in The Tribe are doing.

As of 2010, Richmond had a population of 103,701, a per-capita income of \$24,781, an unemployment rate of sixteen percent,<sup>6</sup> and twenty murders per 100,000 people.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, in San Jose, California, which has a population of 945,942, a per capita income of \$31,000 and an unemployment rate of ten percent, there were two murders per 100,000 people.<sup>8</sup> In comparing Richmond with San Jose, we can see that the per-100,000 murder rate in Richmond is ten times higher than the murder rate in San Jose. At the same time, the per-capita income is higher in San Jose and the unemployment rate is lower.<sup>9</sup> Further, in Richmond in 2010 there were 391 robberies<sup>10</sup> and 1,470 burglaries<sup>11</sup> per 100,000 people.<sup>12</sup> In comparison, in San Jose there were 100 robberies and 406

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<sup>4</sup> Author's note: Dangerous city rankings are based strictly on statistics, which is heavily problematic and unreliable as numbers do not represent an entire population.

<sup>5</sup> Dignity is defined by Subcomandante Marcos (1995) as: “Respect for ourselves, for our right to be better, or right to struggle for what we believe in, our right to live and die according to our ideals.”

<sup>6</sup> The California unemployment rate is 11.5 percent.

<sup>7</sup> City-Data.com, Richmond, California (2012), <http://www.city-data.com/city/Richmond-California.html>.

<sup>8</sup> City-Data.com, San Jose, California (2012), <http://www.city-data.com/city/SanJose-California.html>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Robbery is defined as taking something from someone while instilling fear into them. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Richmond-California.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Burglary is defined as going into someone's property and taking something from them.

<sup>12</sup> City-Data.com, Richmond California (2012).

burglaries per 100,000 people.<sup>13</sup> Looking at the differences between per-capita income, unemployment rate, and robbery and burglary rates in Richmond and San Jose, it cannot be denied that capital plays a role in the interactions between people and essentially plays a factor in actions that can facilitate survival. The crime rate in Richmond is representative of what is expected once the impact of capitalism, institutions, and criminalizing state policies are taken into account.

The higher unemployment and per-capita income rate in Richmond results in more burglaries and robberies, which results in more arrests and more people on parole, probation, or imprisoned. While reasons for the murder rate vary, the state of the economy has an effect. If we look beyond statistics, beyond the actions that represent those statistics, and beyond the reasons behind those actions, we arrive at the internal impact and effect on those living in the ghetto. Particularly for young people trying to survive the ghetto and going through poor economic conditions, robberies, burglaries, and murders; the impact is what I refer to as “Ghetto Survival Fatigue,” which I will discuss further in the following sections. As we explore Ghetto Survival Fatigue, however, it must first be framed and explained through the context of United States Dominance Complex.

### THE UNITED STATES DOMINANCE COMPLEX

The environment in Richmond and other ghettos exists because of the conditions created and maintained by capitalism. Specifically, capitalist institutions and policies work to maintain an oppressive and stratified society where a small segment of the population is at the top while the rest are relegated to the bottom. That stratification exists in the first place because of capitalism, which creates a vertical organization of human relationships and positions in society, as opposed to a horizontal organization where all would be on an equal plane.

The way society presently functions has historically and traditionally upheld white heterosexual males in a superior position. That superiority allows for easy upward mobility and access to state power—at the expense of people of color, women, and homosexual people. Within this relegated population, the working class people of color make up the largest sector of people whose backs bear up society. Several events in history can be identified to explain how and why the current state of society has come to fruition. Yet, at play has been imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, patriarchy, racism, white supremacy, neo-liberalism, the prison industrial complex,<sup>14</sup> the military industrial complex,<sup>15</sup> the non-profit industrial complex,<sup>16</sup> and the youth control complex,<sup>17</sup> among others. All of these are integral and systematic components in the development and maintenance of United States’ power in the world. I refer to the combination, intersection, and inherent intertwining of these systems, complexes, and institutions such as the U.S. Dominance Complex, with Richmond being a prime example of this complex’s impact on communities. The U.S. Dominance Complex upholds the existence of power abuse through wealth, which has largely allowed for the white male dominance over females, people of color, and working class whites. This is visible in the fact that in the struggling community of Richmond, a majority of the population consists of people of color. The United States was founded on imperialism, colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, which were all manifested through the institution of slavery. Not only are the effects and impacts of these systems and institutions still visible, but there is no denying that they are still in place though they are arguably normalized and essentially desensitized. Essential examples of U.S. imperialism include the invasion and conquest of Mexican land in the mid-1800s and the invasions of countless countries with the

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<sup>13</sup> City-Data.com, San Jose, California (2012), <http://www.city-data.com/city/SanJose-California.html>.

<sup>14</sup> This term was coined by Angela Davis in 1998.

<sup>15</sup> This term was coined by Dwight Eisenhower in 1961.

<sup>16</sup> This term was coined by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence in the early 2000’s.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Rios coins this term in his book “Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys” (2011).

interest of maintaining capitalist control today, for example, the War in Iraq and U.S. involvement in Latin American countries since the 1950s. A large part of this control has not been solely about land, but about ideology, in that there has been an interest in implementing certain government, social, and economic structures; all of which cater to the United States' interests. Imperialism has largely been facilitated through the Military Industrial Complex, which President Eisenhower cautioned against and defined as the economic, political, and social workings between parties leading a war effort and companies or corporations that produce resources for a war effort.<sup>18</sup> The Military Industrial Complex is integral to U.S. dominance because the U.S. exhibits its physical and ideological power through war. Further, the U.S. economy benefits from war because American companies and corporations profit from war efforts. It is through this system that the U.S. maintains its oppressive power structure which is maintained through institutionalized racism.

Institutionalized racism is exhibited in the high number of people of color in prison and the low number of people of color in higher education. Institutionalized racism is further exhibited in the de facto segregated neighborhoods and communities that separate people of color from white people. Such neighborhoods are usually comprised of working class people of color in detrimental social environments that are facilitated by the interests of those in power. Although many might argue that such segregation is *de facto*, the fact remains that many institutions, systems, and laws are in place in order to facilitate and reproduce such a system of white supremacy. Colonialism has allowed white people to assume a role of superiority which has in turn allowed for the social, political, and economic subordination of non-white persons. In essence, socio-politico-economic policies and systems that have been founded and maintained by white people, have oppressed and have continued to oppress non-white people. *De facto* is a Latin term meaning *in practice but not necessarily ordained or enforced by law*. Thus it is *de facto* that people of color are relegated to a lesser position in the world. Domination and oppression is achieved through a procedural stripping of dignity. That process of indignation and oppression by the state is not limited to domination of people of color, but rather particularly against women of color. Oppression of people is not maintained solely through race and class, but rather through patriarchy and heteronormativity. The systematic and institutionalized oppression of women and people who are queer is evident in legislation such as California's Proposition 8,<sup>19</sup> and Proposition 209,<sup>20</sup> disenfranchisement policies,<sup>21</sup> as well as the heteronormativity of romantic relationships and hyper-sexualization of women in media.

Women are degraded and objectified as a result of the media's hyper-sexualization of women. This hyper-sexualization of women in the media has a twofold result. First, women are idealized and treated as objects of and for pleasure. Second, women are the subordinates in any social or political, relationship. Essentially, young men and women are taught that women are weak and subordinate and men are strong and superior. Combined with the pushing of the idea of strong and weak, subordinate and superior, men who react to their environment and social condition often feel a need to prove their manhood, strength, and superiority. Evidently, the result is young men learning to point their aggression—whether physically, verbally, socially, or emotionally—towards women, people who are queer, and anyone else that does not fit the socially defined masculine characteristics. This evident need to release aggression, whilst needing to prove a sense of manhood or superiority, often manifests itself in actions, attitudes, and behaviors, which serve to self-fulfill a prophecy and stereotype of the ghetto young men of color being abusive towards women or queer people.

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Marshall, *9/11 and the North American Military-Industrial Complex: The Descent into Dictatorship*, CITIZEN'S REPORT (Oct. 13, 2006), available at [http://www.infowars.com/articles/sept11/9\\_11\\_military\\_industrial\\_complex.pdf](http://www.infowars.com/articles/sept11/9_11_military_industrial_complex.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> The enactment of Proposition 8 outlawed same-sex marriage in California.

<sup>20</sup> The enactment of Proposition 209 ended affirmative action in California and illegalized the consideration of sex, among others, in decisions on school admissions and employee choices.

<sup>21</sup> Including the denial of women's voting rights until the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920.

In ghettos like Richmond, there is a consistent indignation and disrespect against young men, to the point where, through patriarchy<sup>22</sup> and hyper-masculinization,<sup>23</sup> there is an attempt by those young men at regaining dignity, respect, and an essential a sense of manhood.<sup>24</sup> These attempts often lead to actions and attitudes against women, and in particular often result in sexually violent actions and behaviors, which can be manifested through patriarchal language, attitudes, and practices, the most extreme of which is rape. Men's execution of sexually violent actions may arguably be fostered by masculinity challenges<sup>25</sup> and what Elijah Anderson calls the "young male syndrome."<sup>26</sup> The "young male syndrome" is explained as pressure to perform tough and violent actions that show manhood and work for a young man as a way to receive and maintain respect.<sup>27</sup> Karen Pyke argues that manhood and masculinity is expressed differently by men of different class positions, with wealthy men being able to prove masculinity through money, and poor men using toughness and violence.<sup>28</sup> Following Pyke's argument, in cities like Richmond, toughness and violence are thus the most common form of proving masculinity and manhood for young men.<sup>29</sup> Combined with the evident push for regaining dignity and respect through patriarchy and hyper-masculinization, men may be pushed to detrimental actions that severely harm women. Recently, in Richmond this culminated in the 2009 Homecoming Dance gang rape of a young woman on the Richmond High School campus where several men, of different ages, raped a young female high school student.<sup>30</sup> That rape not only destroyed several lives, but also served as a push towards criminalizing and dehumanizing Richmond residents and youth where the focus has been on the people and their actions, rather than what facilitated those actions. Mainstream media, particularly with the 2009 rape, has essentially framed Richmond residents, who are primarily black and brown, as savage deviants. In ghettos, this deficient view of black and brown people undeniably works to maintain the interests of those in power as it works to ideologically, socially, and politically frame people of color as uncivilized and thus subordinate, and inherently uphold whites as the wealthy, civilized, superior group.

With a particular group of people in power, particular interests are pushed forward and maintained. Essentially, there is an interest to not only stay in power, but to also increase power and maintain it—something that is done through domination. Institutions and policies that work to oppress communities also work to guarantee others a dominant place in society. Inherently, it is in the interest of wealthy whites for the U.S. power structure to be maintained. That power structured is particularly maintained through the constant reproduction and maintenance of the U.S. dominance complex, which thrives on dominance by whites (and specifically white heterosexual males) over people of color, women, and queer people, through imperialist, neo-colonialist, and neo-liberalist policies and institutions.

Neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism are interconnected though they constitute different systems and implementations. Neo-colonialism is understood as a form of new colonialism which does not solely focus on direct physical colonialism of bodies and land, but rather is more ideological, social, and

<sup>22</sup> Defined as a social system and practice where males uphold authority in social organization and interactions.

<sup>23</sup> Defined by Angela Harris (2007) as an "exaggerated exhibition of physical strength and personal aggression. . . expressed through physical and sexual domination of others."

<sup>24</sup> VICTOR RIOS, *PUNISHED: POLICING THE LIVES OF BLACK AND LATINO BOYS* (New York Press 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Defined by James Messerschmidt (2000) as interactions that result in masculine degradation. . . May motivate social action towards masculine resources (e.g., bullying, fighting) that correct the subordinating social situation.

<sup>26</sup> E. ANDERSON, *STREETWISE: RACE, CLASS, CHANGE IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY*, (University of Chicago Press 1999).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Karen D. Pyke, *Class-Based Masculinities: The Interdependence of Gender, Class, and Interpersonal Power*, 10 *GENDER AND SOC'Y* 527–549 (1996).

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> Daisy Hernandez, *Richmond Gang Rape Raises Race Issue*, *COLORLINES* (November 2, 2009), [http://colorlines.com/archives/2009/11/richmond\\_gang\\_rape\\_raises\\_race\\_issue.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2009/11/richmond_gang_rape_raises_race_issue.html).

economic.<sup>31</sup> Through neo-colonialism, an imperial power controls the government of the territory being neo-colonized, or may control the economy of that state. The economy can essentially be controlled through the importation of products, with which local businesses cannot compete. Essentially the result is that the imperialist nation finds a way to infiltrate a sovereign nation directly through having profound influence in its government, economy, and/or society. For example, countries in South America are neo-colonized by the U.S. government through a push for that country to meet the interests of the US, particularly through U.S. corporations like Wal-Mart, chain restaurants, the maquiladora industry, and the importation of cheap U.S. corn made possible by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Neo-liberalism is a set of economic and political policies and practices that work worldwide to uphold the existence, dominance, and power of capital. Neo-liberalism essentially works to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, while concurrently indignant and dehumanizing certain peoples and lands. With neo-liberalism comes the privatization of enterprises and services like hospitals, prisons, electricity, and even water, which not only limits access to those things but evidently works to maintain wealth in the hands of a few.<sup>32</sup> Through neo-liberalism, human beings are viewed and treated as commodities for labor and profit. At the same time people are encouraged to advance themselves in terms of capital, which evidently means social, economic, and political advancement, without taking into account the impact and barriers that the capitalist state has. Neo-liberalism definitely impacts (and arguably helps to reproduce and maintain) the existence of ghettos as well as the conditions for people living in ghettos. Although the working class constantly breaks its back for a wage, there is a constant stress over it not being enough. Through neo-liberalism, people are blamed for not having enough—essentially connecting their struggle to the meritocracy idea that as long as people try hard enough, they will make it, and if they do not, it is their own fault. One aspect of this is the NAFTA, which took effect in 1994. Neo-liberalism can be connected to the ideology that pushes millions of people to buy into capitalism and thus be used as commodities for labor with little question—whether it is manual or mental labor. Systems and institutions in the United States work not only to maintain the United States’ dominance in the world, but work to maintain a dominance of wealthy whites over the working class, and particularly, working class people of color. These systems and institutions result in cultural and biological deficit thinking against working class people of color. This deficit thinking even results in people of color and working class people blaming themselves for not achieving what is framed as the “American Dream” by those in power—the standard being owning a home, holding a well-paying job, and having a family. The fact of the matter is that with capitalism in place, it is impossible for everyone to reach the “top”—a top, which exists and is maintained in the first place by systems, institutions, and complexes.

The U.S. dominance complex produces ghettos like Richmond where people young and older are set up to fail and commit acts deemed criminal by society’s rules, laws, and expectations. In full force is the youth control complex, which is the combination and intertwinement of several institutional entities that work to oppress and repress working class young people of color. In *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Victor Rios focuses on how youth of color in Oakland, California are systematically stripped of their dignity, particularly through what he coins as the *Youth Control Complex*:

A ubiquitous system of criminalization molded by the synchronized, systematic

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<sup>31</sup> KWAME NKRUMAH, NEO-COLONIALISM, THE LAST STAGE OF IMPERIALISM. (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. 1965).

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Martinez & Arnolando Garcia, *What is Neo-Liberalism? A Brief Definition for Activists*, CORPWATCH(1996), <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376>.

punishment meted out by socializing and social control institutions. This complex is the unique whole derived from the sum of the punitive parts that young people encounter. . . the combined effect of the web of institutions, schools, families, businesses, residents, media, community centers, and criminal justice system, that collectively punish, stigmatize, monitor, and criminalize young people in an attempt to control them.<sup>33</sup>

Within and alongside the Youth Control Complex is also the significantly criminalizing Prison Industrial Complex. Angela Davis explains the prison industrial complex:

[P]rivate corporations, whose links to government in the field of what is euphemistically called “corrections” resonate dangerously with the military industrial complex. The dividends that accrue from investment in the punishment industry, like those that accrue from investment in weapons production, only amount to social destruction. Taking into account the structural similarities and profitability of business-government linkages in the realms of military production and public punishment, the expanding penal system can now be characterized as a “prison industrial complex.”<sup>34</sup>

Essentially, there is capital to be made from people being criminalized and incarcerated. That profit potential is increased through laws, policies, and actions that overwhelmingly punish people of color and the working class, who live in environments that foster criminalizing situations. Instead of addressing the root causes of problems, the prison industrial complex works to “solve” problems through criminalization and, evidently, incarceration. A particular example of this is the War on Drugs, which went into full force in the 1980s. The War on Drugs escalated during the Reagan Administration and consisted of laws and policies that were geared to severely criminalize people of color for drug offenses, particularly by adopting, “mandatory minimum laws, which hit inner-city crack users with penalties as severe as those levied on Wall Street brokers possessing 100 times more powder cocaine.”<sup>35</sup> The result has been hundreds of thousands of people being incarcerated for non-violent drug offenses. The criminalization and incarceration of people of color is in the interests of wealthy whites because it neutralizes and further subordinates a population while also providing profit for the state and prison corporations—hence the Prison Industrial Complex.

The Youth Control Complex functions on the preconceived notion that working class young people of color are criminals, and the notion is ingrained into community members and community institutions across the United States and the world. During my time in Richmond, I have seen the Youth Control Complex and its effects at work as many of my friends and acquaintances have struggled through it—though for various reasons the impact has been greater on some than on others. A specific example of the Youth Control Complex is the push for an implementation of gang injunctions in several communities across the United States, particularly and most recently in Oakland, California.<sup>36</sup> What gang injunctions have done for communities is to limit the freedom and dignity of young people by imposing a curfew, as well as limiting their right to assemble in certain areas, live in certain areas, and interact with certain people. Gang injunctions identify gang-affiliated youth as the problem and look to resolve that problem by limiting and restricting mobility. At the same time, hundreds of young people are mislabeled or misidentified as being gang-affiliated or committing crimes without strong factual

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<sup>33</sup> VICTOR RIOS, *PUNISHED: POLICING THE LIVES OF BLACK AND LATINO BOYS* 40 (2011).

<sup>34</sup> Angela Davis, *Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex*, COLORLINES (September 10 1998, 12:00 PM), [http://colorlines.com/archives/1998/09/masked\\_racism\\_reflections\\_on\\_the\\_prison\\_industrial\\_complex.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/1998/09/masked_racism_reflections_on_the_prison_industrial_complex.html).

<sup>35</sup> Ben Wallace-Wills, *How America Lost the War on Drugs*. ROLLING STONE MAG. (Dec, 13, 2007), *available at* <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/clips/foreign/2007/12/14/LatinAmerica/civico.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Oakland City Attorney, *Oakland Gang Injunction: Court Grants Order to Restrict Violent North Oakland Gang*, (Oct. 31, 2011), <http://www.oaklandcityattorney.org/notable/gang%20injunction.html>.

evidence. Essentially, the gang injunction domination tactic is a reactionary policy that looks to punish rather than identify and problem solve the root issue of why a younger person may (a) be in a gang, and (b) commit criminal actions. The end result of the push for gang injunctions includes scenarios where young people are criminalized simply for visiting their family members who live in a restricted neighborhood. Evidently, families are forced to move out of certain neighborhoods, which opens the door for gentrification as more *socially acceptable* and *socially pleasant* people are welcomed. With policies like gang injunctions, communities and its members often react punitively towards certain youth. In response, youth may resist those policies and be criminalized in the process—essentially fulfilling a prophecy or expectation put forth by society. Youth actions and attitudes resisting these policies can vary depending on the context and the intent. Essentially, youth may engage in reactionary behaviors<sup>37</sup> as well as self-defeating methods of resistance, both of which can result in further punitive responses by community members. The Youth Control Complex often leads to the youth being targeted for criminalization because of the clothes they wear, who they socialize with, what ideas and attitudes they express, and how they express them. It is this criminalization that can lead youth to behave in a reactionary manner or engage in self-defeating resistance. Yet, a third type of resistance—transformational resistance—is also identified by Solorzano and Bernal, who define “transformational resistance” as behaviors and attitudes that show a critique of a person’s social situation, or oppression, as well as a desire for social justice.<sup>38</sup> This resistance can be critical among young people, as it can be a drive for social change. Additionally, this resistance can foster a search for something beyond reactionary or self-defeating behaviors—essentially, a search going beyond the expectations set by the U.S. Dominance Complex for young people in the ghetto.

Transformational resistance can possibly occur through a critical drive for proving others wrong. Tara Yosso explains the process of proving others wrong through education where youth “(a) confront the negative portrayals and ideas about Chicana/os; (b) are motivated by these negative images and ideas; and (c) are driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves and other Chicana/os.”<sup>39</sup> Far too common is the deficiency notion that kids in the ghetto are not smart or that they are natural-born criminals. Thus, for young people who grow up in the ghetto, we must prove others wrong and show that our knowledge—street smarts or book smarts—is legitimate and valuable. For some, this offers a source of motivation in working against obstacles the U.S. Dominance Complex creates. Unfortunately, motivation is not enough. The system is designed so that not everyone survives, even those who have the motivation to prove others wrong. Yet, some do survive with the intention of returning to the community to initiate change—essentially seeing themselves as part of a hope for the regeneration of the community—a community that is consistently in survival mode. Considering everything the U.S. Dominance Complex encompasses, young people in the ghetto are not supposed to survive much less thrive. However, a group of young people in Richmond are doing just that. La Tribe, a group of more than fifty young people have come together and are refusing to be brought down by “Richmond Shit,” a broadly-used term that generally refers to any activity that can be deemed criminal in nature and can harm people. More specifically, Richmond Shit includes dealing drugs, being addicted to drugs, prostitution, or involvement in violent crime. Often, there are attempts by non-profit organizations to address “Richmond Shit” and its impacts. What happens is that people who are not

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<sup>37</sup> Reactionary behavior is defined by Solorzano and Bernal (2011) as actions that go against control but are not done with a critique of the person’s social conditions or environment. Dolores Delgado Bernal & Daniel G. Solorzano, *Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context*, 36 URBAN EDUCATION 308, 317 (2001).

<sup>38</sup> Dolores Delgado Bernal & Daniel G. Solorzano, *Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context*, 36 URBAN EDUCATION 308, 317 (2001).

<sup>39</sup> TARA J. YOSSO, *CRITICAL RACE COUNTERSTORIES ALONG THE CHICANA/CHICANO EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE* 109 (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1st ed. 2006).

even members of the community come in and attempt to provide social service rather than work to create social change.<sup>40</sup> With non-profit organizations being in the business of service rather than change, the result is the non-profit industrial complex, which is defined as “the way in which capitalist interests and the state use non-profits to monitor and control social justice movements... manage and control dissent in order to make the world safe for capitalism. . . .”<sup>41</sup> In that way, communities that face the impacts of the U.S. Dominance Complex are infested with non-profits that provide Band-Aids to problems rather than addressing the root causes or working to regenerate the community and build towards self-sustaining change.

Despite the overbearing nature of the U.S. Dominance Complex and the non-profit industrial complex, there are some groups of people who are going beyond it all to create a better environment for themselves different than the one that is presented to them. One of those groups, I argue, is La Tribe in Richmond, California. A largely destructive impact of capitalism and the U.S. Dominance Complex on communities is damage to the social fabric.<sup>42</sup> Subcomandante Marcos explains that “in the current era of capitalism it is necessary to destroy the conquered territory and depopulate it, that is, destroy its social fabric. I am speaking here of the annihilation of everything that gives cohesion to a society.”<sup>43</sup> A significant form of resistance that some offer for subverting capitalism and the U.S. Dominance Complex’s damage to the social fabric is the building and fostering of community.<sup>44</sup> Through capital and the U.S. Dominance Complex, people are not only stripped of their dignity but at the same time are pushed towards a search for dignity, community, and family as well as a concern for survival. But although capitalism is destroying the social fabric and creating a culture of displacement, Pena argues that this facilitates the creation of autonomous zones.<sup>45</sup> The autonomous zones that are created in response to the culture of displacement and the destruction of the social fabric are a major form of subverting the state and the U.S. Dominance Complex. This subversion essentially works to reweave the social fabric by undermining and refusing to tolerate the impact of the state on people and communities.

As we work toward reweaving the social fabric and creating autonomous zones, it can be argued that one way to do this is through anarchist spaces and practices that go beyond the popular media’s presentation of anarchists. We can look at anarchy as a move away from reliance on the state and an overruling power. Kiley explains that, although smashups can be important in catching people’s attention and engaging them in anarchism’s basic ideas, the ultimate vision of anarchy is a generations-long project of building up functional, self-regulating communities that will make the state as we know it irrelevant.<sup>46</sup> Kiley further argues that economic and ecological collapse will come much sooner than we think, and the time to start behaving in an anarchic way—taking care of ourselves

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<sup>40</sup> Paul Kivel, *Social Service or Social Change? INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence* (Eds.); *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* (129–150); Cambridge: South End Press (2007).

<sup>41</sup> A. SMITH, *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX* (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence eds. 2007).

<sup>42</sup> GUSTAVO ESTEVA & MADHU SURI PRAKASH, *GRASSROOTS POST-MODERNISM: REMAKING THE SOIL OF CULTURES* (1998).

<sup>43</sup> Subcomandante Marcos *About the Wars: A Fragment of the First Letter from Subcomandante Marcos to Don Luis Villoro, Beginning the Correspondence About Ethics and Politics*. El Kilombo. (March 1, 2011) Retrieved From: <http://www.elkilombo.org/about-the-wars-a-fragment-of-the-first-letter-from-subcomandante-marcos-to-don-luis-villoro-beginning-the-correspondence-about-ethics-and-politics/>.

<sup>44</sup> JOHN MCKNIGHT, *THE CARELESS SOCIETY: COMMUNITY AND ITS COUNTERFEITS*, (1996).

<sup>45</sup> D. Pena, *Proceeding from NACCS '12, Not Identity, Subjectivity: The Mesoamerican Diaspora and the Re-invention of Revolutionary Subjectivity*, Chicago, IL. (2012).

<sup>46</sup> Brendan Kiley, *Anarchy is Boring: The May Day Smashup Was the Spectacular Tip of a Mundane Iceberg*, THE STRANGER (May 8, 2012), <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/anarchy-is-boring/Content?oid=13597692>.

instead of deferring to government and big business—is now.<sup>47</sup> What is at the core of that argument is the action of mutuality—caring for ourselves and our community without depending on the state. Inherently, the reweaving of the social fabric and convergence as a community is becoming increasingly important. Because the state is not looking out for the best interests of everyone, we must take it upon ourselves to care for one another and build community with one another.

The Zapatista ideal of *everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves* and *a world made of many worlds* can be critical in regenerating and building community. The idea among the majority in U.S. society is that we have to look out only for ourselves as individuals and not worry about others. *Everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves* counters that capitalistic ideology and can be critical to getting people to come together and build a community of mutuality where things are shared and there is no selfishness. At the same time, as essential as the building of community is, we live in a society where many communities exist but do not always coexist. *A world made of many worlds* acknowledges that many of us are different people, with different interests and ways of living. Yet, that does not mean that we cannot live in harmony. Rather, we must create a world where different people and communities can coexist autonomously, peacefully, and with dignity.

The U.S. Dominance Complex encompasses an overarching number of institutions, complexes, and policies that we all struggle against every day. Particularly, it is young people who struggle the most and sustain the biggest impact of the U.S. Dominance Complex. Knowing what the U.S. Dominance Complex essentially encompasses, scholars may indeed argue for a movement beyond capital and towards a dignified world through building community and avoiding reliance on the state. Yet, what is too often missing in arguments and ideas on how we can move to create change is the voice of young people who may already be building community despite the U.S. Dominance Complex. Not only is there a missing voice, but there is essentially a missing acknowledgement of what young people are doing in cities like Richmond that is too often framed solely as a problematic ghetto. Inherently, La Tribe offers a counter to that notion and a counter to the idea that young people are all disconnected from one another. La Tribe definitely offers a different perspective into what and who Richmond is. Youth in and outside La Tribe face similar daily struggles. Despite what La Tribe is doing as a group of young people, there is no denying that some youngsters still struggle and are impacted by the struggle against the U.S. Dominance Complex. I term this struggle as Ghetto Survival Fatigue, as it is a consistent battle against capital that can wear on people physically, mentally, and emotionally.

#### GHETTO SURVIVAL FATIGUE

What the U.S. Dominance Complex provides for people in the ghetto is an everyday struggle on several fronts, which can take a toll on the well-being of the human body. This toll can lead to *Ghetto Survival Fatigue*—the mental, emotional, and physical debilitation of a person, through the effects and impacts of stress<sup>48</sup> and anxiety on the body, particularly because of worries about economic, sociopolitical, and physical well-being. The U.S. Dominance Complex's creation and reproduction of ghettos, as well as the effects and impacts that come from those ghettos, detrimentally impacts people in those communities. I argue that Ghetto Survival Fatigue would have similar effects on the body as what Smith, Hung, and Franklin term “Racial Battle Fatigue,” which is explained as “racial microaggressions and societal problems [that] contribute to more than one third of the cause of MEES (mundane, extreme, environmental stress).”<sup>49</sup> Yet, in terms of Ghetto Survival Fatigue, not only is MEES fostered to

<sup>47</sup> DAVID GRAEBER, *FRAGMENTS OF AN ANARCHIST ANTHROPOLOGY* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004); Brendan Kiley, (2012, May 8), *Anarchy is Boring: The May Day Smashup Was the Spectacular Tip of a Mundane Iceberg, The Stranger*, available at <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/anarchy-is-boring/Content?oid=13597692>.

<sup>48</sup> According to WebMD, “Stress can play a part in problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety” (2012).

<sup>49</sup> William A. Smith, Man Hung, & Jeremy D. Franklin, *Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men:*

damage people's physical, emotional, and mental well-being, but it can also be argued that MEES contributes to damaging and reactionary actions by some in the ghetto—particularly violence against others in the community, something visible with people of color-on-people of color violence. With acts of violence stimulated by Ghetto Survival Fatigue, Ghetto Survival Fatigue facilitates a dispossession of dignity for people; where, once stripped of that dignity, people will do nearly everything and anything to regain it. When community members, and communities as a whole, feel indignant, an urgency for regaining that dignity is born. Within the context of capitalism and the U.S. Dominance Complex, urgency to regain dignity is often manifested through violence and debilitating actions against the community and against oneself.

Ghetto Survival Fatigue is also a direct result of capitalism's dominance in our lives since worries over money and finances can lead to stress and anxiety. Living in a society where we need money to live, people want to ensure they and their families are provided for monetarily. Yet, with the structure of the U.S. Dominance Complex and capitalism, a portion of society is set up to have less or not have anything at all. That portion of society primarily includes ghetto communities and those that live within the ghettos—and it is those communities who are in struggle and have to consistently worry about money, evidently consistently worrying about survival. This worry includes stress and anxiety over being employed, making ends meet, and even having money for food and housing—two very basic human needs. In particular, for heads of households there is a greater pressure to provide not only for themselves, but also for their family or friends. The traditional patriarchal expectation is that males are to provide for their families and if they do not, then they are not real men—they are equivalent to those that do not provide, those that are subordinated because they need to be provided for: women. Evidently, if a male is not able to adequately provide for his family, he is degraded, which can then lead to reactionary actions including violence against those who in the eyes of patriarchy are subordinate—a man's women and children, who in turn are indignified themselves. Essentially, economic stress and anxiety goes beyond money, and more importantly, ties into domestic violence, abuse, and degradation—evidently, one cycle of Ghetto Survival Fatigue.

For young people who grow up in the toxicity of Ghetto Survival Fatigue, criminalizing economic, social, and political state policies and actions add to their worries.<sup>50</sup> California is specifically identified by Watkins as ground zero for criminalizing policies and systems faced by young people, of which Proposition 21 is a prime example. With the passage of Proposition 21 in 2000, young people under eighteen are now tried as adults for certain actions. For instance, youth are now tried as adults if they cause \$400 or more worth of property damage. For street and graffiti artists, there is now a felony criminalization of their methods of expressing frustration, sharing identity, and expressing resistance. Beyond identity, street and graffiti art can serve as a relief from Ghetto Survival Fatigue. The criminalization of street art does not acknowledge that it is not simple destruction or defacing of property, but rather a form of de-fatiguing; a medium of communication and sharing ideas, identity, and knowledge; and evidently a form of regaining dignity and respect. With street art being widely created by a large number of young people in struggle, its criminalization serves to further fatigue youth through the persistent worry of being criminalized for doing something they may have grown passionate about. Hyper-surveillance in a community like Richmond is common and can significantly raise anxiety and stress as people know that big brother is consistently watching what people do, where they do it, and who they do it around. Freedom is limited, if not obliterated. The problem with hyper-surveillance is that there is consistently someone or something looking for someone else to make a mistake—or an action that, though unacknowledged by the state, may be influenced by the U.S. Dominance Complex. The Prison Industrial Complex evidently looks at surveillance as a solution to criminal activity, wherein

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*Racial Microaggressions, Societal Problems, and Environmental Stress*, 80 J. NEGRO EDUC. 63 (2011).

<sup>50</sup> S. CRAIG WATKINS, *HIP HOP MATTERS: POLITICS, POP CULTURE, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SOUL OF A MOVEMENT* (2006).

the root causes of crime continue to be unchallenged and unchanged. Essentially, the consistent surveillance and criminalization of young people can result in the introduction to the punishment of the criminal justice system, rather than a move towards changing the systems that push people towards crime. Hyper-surveillance being a constant presence for young people in the ghetto can be burdensome as they have to worry not only about their situation and their response to it, but also about being constantly watched and criminalized for their actions.

Different situations in the ghetto can put people at risk of physical harm in a variety of ways, from police brutality to environmental racism to struggler<sup>51</sup>-on-struggler violence. Physical harm can obviously damage the well-being of the body. Yet, the consistent potential of physical harm can bring about added stress and anxiety—an added damage to the well-being of the body. Eddy, Cristian, Ruben, and Andres, all in *The Tribe*, explain and describe life in the ghetto. Eddy explains the anxiety and tiredness when he says: “One of my struggles is staying out of the street. I try not to walk a lot cuz I get anxiety. You know, I gotta keep looking left and right. Making sure I see everything. . .” Cristian adds that

Sometimes, you’ll be scared to get out your house, walk down the street to the store cuz you’ll get shot by somebody and you ain’t even got nothing to do with it. You can get caught at the wrong place at the wrong time any day. . .

Ruben acknowledges that “living in Richmond, you always gotta be watching your back.” Andres explains how “you gotta carry something on you to be safe. People can get shot just by getting robbed and resisting, you know. They don’t mean to get killed, but sometimes a bullet just goes where you don’t want it to go.” There is a clear awareness that in Richmond, even without any actual threat of someone looking for you, you have to be conscious of your surroundings as there can be a constant threat to your well-being. Growing up and living with this mentality of always looking over your shoulder can become second nature. Yet, in the case of Richmond and other ghettos, the high degree of worry over safety should not be natural. This consistent worry can arguably lead or add to a stress or anxiety on the body, evidently being a form of fatigue.

Ghetto Survival Fatigue can be the result of criminalizing policies, socioeconomic situations, and the resulting actions by people that force others to worry about their safety. People living in the ghetto worry about and struggle with survival every day. Essentially, people—and young people specifically—can understandably become fatigued as all their worries, stresses, and anxieties mount together. A significant way to transcend Ghetto Survival Fatigue is through support, understanding, and love. Although the root causes of Ghetto Survival Fatigue will still be there with a presence of support, people may be able to cope better. As coping and healing are fostered, the hope would be that people would be emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually strong enough to combat and destroy the root source of their fatigue. Although Ghetto Survival Fatigue can definitely have detrimental impacts on the mind and body, for those that are able to emerge past it, or learn to manage it, it can foster a strength that can only be gained through living in the ghetto and facing struggle. That strength is defined by some young people as “emotional power,” which can be critical in the development and well-being of people living in struggling communities. Further, that emotional power can definitely work to foster not only a healing and coping mechanism against Ghetto Survival Fatigue, but it can also be a drive to take action against the situations and circumstances that bring about stress, anxiousness, and fatigue from living in the ghetto. One of many potential actions against the source of Ghetto Survival Fatigue—the U.S. Dominance Complex—can be the building of a community that comes together for support, care, and survival.

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<sup>51</sup> Author’s Note: “Struggler” meaning a person who is in struggle (for example, people of color, working class, women etc).

## METHODS AND PROCESS

The foundation of this work was done through a fluid and relaxed conversation that took place at my parents' home in Richmond. There were six youth present: Parra, Mikey, Martin, Eric, Anthony, and my seventeen-year-old brother, Eddy. Anthony and Mikey are two of the founders of TRK, *The Richmond Kids*, a graffiti crew, with the other four joining as TRK has progressed and produced The Tribe, or La Tribe. For this conversation, the other founders were absent, but one, David, has been involved as the project progresses. Before meeting for the initial conversation, I had spoken with Eddy about the possibilities of this project and the issues that I was trying to understand. The mentality that I approached this project with was the simple, but constant, reminder that I would be working with young people from my community and thus needed to maintain a humanistic approach not only in the conversation, but also in my interactions with the group and my writing thereafter. After the initial conversation, I have hung out and formed friendships with several of the youth in the group, whom I consider sisters and brothers.

The second part of this work has included informal conversations that have helped to build my understanding of not only The Tribe and youth's struggles, but also the inter- and intra-politics of the Richmond streets and the U.S. Dominance Complex and Ghetto Survival Fatigue. This work, though framed and presented as a project, is not a project. It is rather a process of coming together with The Tribe to understand not only how the group functions, but how the world functions. At the same time, through this work we are looking to spread the word about the group while simultaneously sharing an understanding of how The Tribe functions, particularly within the frame of Richmond and the U.S. Dominance Complex. This work is looking to provide a narrative and explanation into how Richmond youth struggle, as well as what they are struggling with. Further, this work goes beyond the narrative of struggle, and instead focuses on how and why Richmond youth in La Tribe are coming together as a group, and how that serves as one example of how young people are in resistance. A significant part of this work has come through simply hanging out with several people from The Tribe, particularly at a La Tribe clothing function at the Filthy Dripped store inside Hilltop Mall in Richmond. At that event several conversations were had, some of which were recorded on video. Interviewees, who were quoted in this paper, and who will be featured in a video on La Tribe include: Mayra, Eddy, Anthony, Ruben, Andres, Cristian, and Gabriel. In my approach, I have tried to live and practice the Mayan concept of In LakEch. In LakEch is a concept meaning "you are my other me" and is focused on the mutual treatment and respect for all beings.<sup>52</sup> LakEch pushes forward the constant idea that we must not only treat each other as we wish to be treated, but we must treat each other with dignity and respect as we are all human—we are all one. In LakEch is a practice that one cannot carry out at times and suppress at others times. It is a way of life, and one that I have been particularly careful to truly practice while working with The Tribe—and one that I have seen La Tribe practice naturally. I am very grateful that these young people have welcomed me into their spaces, into their group, and have shared their insights, feelings, ideas, and thoughts with me. Within the process of this work, there have not been any particularly problematic challenges. My only concern with this work has been to make sure that I decently represent and explain Richmond and The Tribe. I cannot express my sense of gratitude enough to the young people in The Tribe as their insights offer an essentially unheard voice in the world of academia and in narratives and stories on Richmond and other ghettos. Without the ongoing conversations, this work would not be what it is. I look forward to continuing engagement with La Tribe as we seek to engage with the city of Richmond and continue to create change that will move the community beyond the impacts of capital, Ghetto Survival Fatigue, and at the core, the U.S. Dominance

<sup>52</sup> Roberto Rodriguez, In LakEch, *Panche Be & Hunab Ku: The Philosophical Foundation for Raza Studies or What State Officials Don't Want Arizona School Children to Know*, DISSIDENT VOICE (July 29, 2010), <http://dissidentvoice.org/2010/07/in-lak-ech-panche-be-hunab-ku-the-philosophical-foundation-for-raza-studies/>.

Complex.

#### LA TRIBE

The government don't care about Richmond... They don't care about us... But we care about ourselves. That's what matters.—Eddy

It's more than just a crew, man. It's a family. We all help each other, and we unite.—Cristian

People want the same thing we do. They just wanna kick it. And just chill. And not die.—Martin

In 2009, a group of young people in Richmond came together and formed a crew out of a common interest: a love for art. That crew, known as *Them Richmond Kids*, or *TRK*, branched out into what is today known as *La Tribe*, or *The Tribe*. Anthony describes the group's beginning as having occurred naturally:

This was like 2009, and like me, my friend Mikey right here, my brother David, Chuy, just a bunch of us graff writers we would just always kick it together, feel me? Get in trouble together, do shit together. We started talking about it like "oh," my friend David was like, 'let's start a crew you know, let's label ourselves,' essentially. And you know, we were throwing out crew names, and it kind of just like died off. And then out of nowhere like it just... there it was. . . TRK, *Them Richmond Kids* is what our original name was, it's what we went by and it was just like eight, nine, ten of us at the beginning . . . Bunch who just got in trouble together, who, you know, painted graffiti together, hung out together, and that's where it started, and since then it just hasn't stopped growing.

The distinction between TRK and La Tribe is important, however, as the two are inherently different in their focuses. Although originating and developing from TRK, La Tribe works to represent and symbolize a family of more than fifty young people. La Tribe has grown through familial love from a need to keep each other away from trouble, in a city where individuals can easily find trouble and trouble can easily find individuals. Despite Richmond's problems, David explains that The Tribe has come together to keep its members out of trouble through mutual respect, love, and support—needs that are fostered by the environment in Richmond.

Considering what and how Richmond is, Eddy explains that "if our community wasn't what it is, La Tribe would be a whole different thing. Cuz we're all from the same city, we're all living the same life, we all struggle, we all see the same shit every day, but also, all we have is each other." That unity and struggle is what also sparked the idea for being called Tribe. As Anthony explains:

We chose 'Tribe' because what we were doing was different. It was strange like a tribe. A bunch of kids doing a bunch of things that weren't typically seen as cool. And we didn't care to be cool. We did it cuz it was our way of life, like a tribe, a bunch of weird ass kids together. . . A tribe of them Richmond kids, only name fitting for what we were about.

David adds that The Tribe started as "tribe" because they thought of a tribe as people who, in society, are misunderstood and perceived as wild and that is what Richmond kids are—misunderstood and perceived as wild. Anthony and David explain how they adopted the name because it fit naturally

with what they are—a group of people, or community, with their own customs, ideas, and practices. Yet, The Tribe makes it a point to convey that they are not a gang—particularly considering the negative connotations society and the media attach to perceptions of gangs. Commenting on The Tribe not being a gang, Andres describes that if something goes down, since they consider themselves family, they will still definitely back each other up:

If I get into a fight, I won't be like 'La Tribe! Don't fuck with us like that!' Nah, I'm my own person. If anybody messes with my brother, if anybody messes with somebody in The Tribe when I'm with them, I'll back them up. I wouldn't care. They're my friends. That's my family right there. But if something happens and I'm not there but I see the person later on, I can't just go up to them and be like 'oh I heard you guys fucking with them like that!?' No, can't do that. That's disrespect.

The idea is that La Tribe goes beyond the narrative of youth groups solely for physical protection in the ghetto and is not something that young people claim for protection. For Andres, there is still the definite expectation that as a friend, brother, and family member, he would not hesitate in supporting someone if he is with them. The Tribe is not meant to be a group of youth that goes looking for others with the goal of gaining revenge or starting trouble. The stereotype that youth of color groups are solely looking to instigate problems is common. Yet, The Tribe's ideology and intentions as a group are subverting that stereotype and going beyond it since that is not what La Tribe is about nor is it why they came together in the first place.

In explaining what The Tribe is, Parra explains that, "It's like for me, I view [The Tribe] as my support system. Those are the people I could run to if I ever need something or am having trouble with something. I know for sure anyone in [The Tribe], I could just chop it up with." It is clear from Parra's explanation that La Tribe is not necessarily a group for physical protection, but rather a group that offers mutual support. This expression of what La Tribe represents is the idea that the friendship, community, and support in the group are mutual rather than selfish. Mayra explains that to her, The Tribe is:

More than friends, we can count on each other, if we need something, we know someone is gonna be there . . . Sometimes you get lectures but it's those good lectures and when you go through something you think you're the only one going through something or that went through it but you just open up to one of The Tribe and they guide you through it, you know, you're not the only one alone there. They keep you on check with grades freshman year . . . once in a while I'd get a text from someone saying 'I see you out of class!' . . . But they do it cuz they care.

The sense of mutual understanding, support, and respect is clear in the description and explanation of The Tribe's mentality and interactions. As Andres explains, "La Tribe is one big family. And we got each other to back each other up. . . We're just a big family in a way."

The Tribe offering a place for support and space for youth development is evident in what Ruben shares regarding his experience moving away from gangs and into The Tribe. With the idea of a gang as a group of people committing crimes, Ruben notes that: "The Tribe has kept me away from being in gangs cuz before, I was going in that road and I started kicking it with new people so I gotta say they pushed me away from gang things." Further, The Tribe's importance to young people's lives is also clear in Mayra's sharing of something that she has struggled with growing up:

[T]hat feeling of you don't know who you are. You try to find yourself and when you think you do, you're still picky about it. . . but I mean, with a good group of friends, with a good bond, you kind of know who you are and who appreciates you and who doesn't.

They get you together.

Ivan, who is fifteen-years old, describes his life before he started hanging out with The Tribe and how the group helped him move in a direction that would be better for him as a person:

Real talk, [without The Tribe] I think I would be doing drugs, fighting a lot; I wouldn't be doing good in school. Before La Tribe, I was a little wanna be gangbanger; I would get into hella fights. No respect for women. No respect towards my parents. I hated school. If it wasn't for La Tribe, I wouldn't have realized how important that shit was, you feel me? If it wasn't for that, technically, I would've been kicked out. I would've been kicked out my house, I think I'd even be in jail, I probably would be dead with all the shit I was doing. . . Back then I was a follower. Now I'm not a follower, I'm like a brother. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have the reputation I have now as a pretty cool funny guy, you know.

For Ivan, The Tribe has clearly played a role in his development and maturing as a young man. Ivan explains that La Tribe has definitely made him who he is today and who he will be in the future. Helping young people like Ivan is definitely a manifestation of La Tribe's ideology and practices as a group. For Ivan, The Tribe has served as a tool for self-development and for improving how he interacts with others—both of which have come about through The Tribe family. In response to being asked if it would be easier to get into Richmond Shit without a group like La Tribe, Ivan says: “If you don't have a group like La Tribe, you don't really have anyone to go to.” Essentially, Ivan recognizes that in a place like Richmond, without La Tribe, it can be difficult to find a community of dignity and respect. That sense of family that La Tribe offers is reiterated as Anthony notes that, “. . . I see The Tribe as a family made up of broken families. . .”

As a result of the U.S. Dominance Complex, some young people may face a lack of family or community presence in their lives. Yet, through La Tribe, in Richmond, some young people are finding that. As Cristian explains, “if you don't have nobody in your family that can help you out, that can give you advice. . . you go to La Tribe and they'll help you out. They'll give you advice, all of that. . .” Mikey explains how The Tribe functions as a family, which moves away from the dynamics of some traditional families:

There's some issues that you might not wanna tell your family, you know what I mean. There's some issues that you can't really express yourself to all your family members without them trying to judge you and whatnot. And were not judging anyone, everyone is pretty much welcomed. We just like to chop it up and kick it. And we're here if you need it. There's no real big issues like, 'oh just because you do this we're not gonna kick it with you.'

Non-judgmental friendship is not something that can be easily found in cities like Richmond where a young person can be criminalized simply for having friends who may be involved in criminal activity. Yet, The Tribe is overcoming that barrier and not even acknowledging it as a barrier, since within the group, there is no hesitancy about being there for someone. Non-judgment is critical, especially in Richmond, where there is a diverse set of interests and personalities. Anthony and Parra explain:

We all do different things but that's the thing that makes us different from other per say, cliques or groups of people... We all do different things. We all come from different backgrounds. But we all hang out with each other... At the end of the day, it's all one Tribe, one family.

What is being acknowledged is that The Tribe is made up of people who are different from one another, but at the same time, they are all able to look beyond the differences and instead come together as one community.

Continuing with the idea of La Tribe as a non-judgmental family, Martin explains that in The Tribe, “the best we can do is to try to guide each other.” In a city like Richmond, it can be particularly important for people to look out for each other and guide each other. In the ghetto, it can be too easy to find yourself in trouble—or “Richmond Shit.” Speaking on the fact that some Tribe members are involved in drugs, Anthony explains that:

You know, we still got love for them. Cuz they’re trying to do right. It’s like yeah we’re from Richmond so of course some of us are gonna get caught up in the negativity of Richmond. And we’re not gonna be like: ‘no don’t hang out with us, don’t do that, don’t hang out with us.’ We’re gonna be like ‘come on bruh, why you doing that? There’s a better way.’ We try to help each other out. I see [The Tribe] as a family made up of broken families. Cuz it’s like every family has problems, no family is perfect. It’s like some families do see you in a negative way if you do certain things, some families do talk down to you if you in a certain thing. [The Tribe] is just a family that won’t put you down for anything.

In reiterating Anthony’s statement and regarding the offer of advice and support to Tribe members caught up in struggle, Eddy notes that, “you can’t force someone to do something. . . but if you tell them about the consequences you might change their mind.” When speaking of Tribe members who slang drugs, Eddy’s response indicates his interest in community and family, and he appears to have a sense of understanding and empathy:

I don’t see it as a bad thing, honestly, cuz especially living out here where it’s hella hard to find jobs, you gotta do anything to make your money, man. And there’s a lot of youth who are into weed and shit, you just gotta find a safe way to sell your shit out here. But you don’t have to go to drugs. You don’t have to use drugs as a tool to make your money. Like we been doing lately, we started making money through our own clothing line. . . we came to a different mindset, we started this clothing line, *La Tribe Clothing*. But the money we make, we’re saving it for something big, so everyone is still doing themselves and you gotta do what you gotta do. Cuz later in life, when everyone gets old, you gotta do your own thing. We gotta learn how to hustle our own ways, you know.

Eddy comprehends that in our society, we have to do anything to survive. Yet, Eddy explains that what La Tribe is doing to make money can be an example for others to be self-sustainable without engaging in criminalizing actions. Eddy also explained that for someone who is trying to change their life around, La Tribe can definitely offer support, which is very important for someone seeking an alternative to what they are involved with and an alternative to State “solutions.” As Eddy explains:

Say there’s a gang banger. . . They’re being put into deep shit. . . Until one day, their family member gets shot. It takes a family member for that person to start realizing stuff. Say this gang banger starts realizing that gang banging isn’t the way to go cuz it could lead to family dying so they start trying to change their ways. Even though it might be hard for them depending on the situation. . . Say they do move on escaping all that gang shit. Seeing people like La Tribe around would definitely motivate and support them. What would you do, you know, if you’re trying to get out of that gang shit but you got no

one to support you or be proud of why you're changing. In my point of view, I'd feel all depressed and shit and make me think 'what am I living for? I should just stay being a gang banger.' But having something like La Tribe would definitely motivate them to, you know, changing the way they think like gang banging is not the only way I could survive living. There's other shit like what La Tribe is doing. Creating clothes, doing music, pursuing their dreams, so then that's when, you know, they start looking for what they're passionate about. . . And if by some weird way, that gang banger or ex-gang banger finds La Tribe, we definitely won't judge 'em.

From this point of view, it appears that Eddy definitely sees La Tribe as not only a safe space, but as a possible answer for someone working towards changing how he or she is managing certain situations or struggles. Eddy also makes it clear that people's actions are not solely a matter of individual decisions but rather something bigger that can at least partially be addressed through non-judgmental support and community—which, for La Tribe, happens through peer mentorship and guidance.

Although young people in The Tribe support and care for one another's best interests, it is not lost amongst the group that some of them are encapsulated by "Richmond Shit." In particular, one of the young men, eighteen-year-old Cholo,<sup>53</sup> expressed that he used to sell hard drugs. Cholo explains that selling drugs is something he did not want to do, but rather something he *had* to do. Cholo expressed how tough it was for his family to have a steady income and not worry about money. So Cholo did what he had to do, without his family knowing. He would find ways to sneak money to his parents or his siblings without them noticing or questioning where the money came from. In recognizing and speaking of struggles like Cholo's, La Tribe members acknowledge that some young people will get caught up in "Richmond Shit" even if they are The Tribe, especially if there is a financial need. However, something that sets The Tribe apart significantly from other groups like non-profits or police is that the members do not criminalize each other. Rather than snitching each other out, members advise each other and provide each other with a safe space free from judgment. With La Tribe being that place, even though more than one young person in The Tribe may be involved in drug sales, as a group they do not sell drugs. Cholo explained that some individuals may have a need to make money in ways that can be criminalized. But, even if that is the case, they would not want to criminalize the rest of the group because The Tribe was not intended to be a group of kids committing organized crime, but rather a group of kids out to build community and family with the goal of keeping one another out of trouble.

As much as La Tribe is coming together to keep each other out of trouble, and as much as some argue that the media overhypes the negative aspects of Richmond, it is undeniable that some notions about Richmond are unfounded as violent crime is not rare in the city. In response to why some in Richmond people commit violence in the community, Parra explains that "It's that Richmond mentality: Imma do whatever is best for me. Fuck whatever happens to you." Adding to that, Anthony also explained that:

[Richmond] is a small community, you know. . . It's like, how can we not unite all together? You know, it's like we're so small yet we can create a big ass impact on the Bay Area, on California, on the United States as a whole if we could get together, you know. There's no unity in Richmond, there's no respect, that's like a big negative.

That lack of respect resulting in people looking out solely for themselves and maintaining an individualistic mindset and a toxic environment is expressed by Martin, as he says that, 'We're put into this environment where you have to. . . survive.' That survival can definitely impact young people who struggle through it on a daily basis. For The Tribe, however, it is working to bring them together.

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<sup>53</sup> Author's note: Cholo is a pseudonym used to protect this individual's identity.

Everyday struggles in the ghetto, and worries about survival, are banked on by the mainstream media—which surely not only in Richmond, but other ghettos as well—focuses on the negatives in the city. Several youth in The Tribe definitely recognize how popular media focuses on the city's stereotypes as the community and its residents are framed in a criminal way. As Eddy explains:

We're portrayed in a different way by the media like they see people from Richmond as bad people just cuz of the city's name: Richmond. So you know if I go down thirty miles to a nice city and be like 'I'm from Richmond.' They'll be like 'Oh shit' and be scared.

Considering predisposed notions about Richmond, it is no surprise that those unfamiliar with the city to have a completely negative notion of the community. Yet, La Tribe is countering that popular notion and offering a different story and perspective than the common narrative of Richmond youth as criminals. In response to being asked what one of the best things about Richmond is, Andres explains that even though Richmond has a bad reputation, La Tribe offers something different from that:

One of the best things. . . The way that I am and the way that me and my friends are. . . When people see how we really are they're like. . . 'Richmond, I heard so many bad things, but these kids. . .' some lady told me 'oh you're a really nice kid, where you from again?' I said 'Richmond.' And she was like 'really?!'

Being part of La Tribe is important to Andres as it offers him an opportunity to counter a common notion and expectation of Richmond youth being deficient. Eddy has also experienced the stereotypical notion of young people as failures and is proud of himself for proving that stereotype and prejudice wrong. This is evident in his expression on his Facebook status after submitting his intent to enroll at UC Davis:

no lie im proud of myself..finallygettn ma life right and making something outta myself.. and to my niggas that couldnt make it, damn right im doing all this shit for ya niggas.. caaaant wait to bring Richmond down to Davis.....! HAHAH FUCK THAT LADY WHO SAID I LOOKED LIKE AN F STUDENT.. DONT LET THE LOOKS FOOL YA.

It is evident from Eddy's expression that, for him, going onto college is not only about education or doing something with your life, but essentially it is a way to prove people's prejudices wrong. Cristian recognizes that outside of The Tribe and outside Richmond, some people may have a negative perception of La Tribe as "nothing. . . just a group of kids. Delinquents trying to do stuff and get money." With Cristian and other Tribe youth recognizing the popular deficient notion of Richmond and Richmond youth, the way that La Tribe lives as a group becomes even more significant in that their practices and ideals are essentially working to disprove the stereotype of Richmond youth and the Richmond community.

The unfortunate reality in Richmond is that some people in the community do engage in criminal and violent activity. Although these actions can be significantly explained through the U.S. Dominance Complex, they are nonetheless actions that youth struggle against everyday. Yet, although it is a struggle, for some youth, that struggle is a way to grow and move forward as a person. As Eddy shared:

. . . But the positive thing about it is Richmond making you who you are. Powerful. Not like physically powerful, but emotionally powerful. I seen the struggle. I seen friends go through it all. Their struggle is my struggle, so I feel what they feel. I'm always losing people, I just got used to it after a while. . .

Evidently, Eddy recognizes that being from Richmond carries certain connotations that follow you wherever you go and although it is something that Richmond youth have to deal with, an upside to it is that kids from Richmond are in the same struggle. It is a community in struggle, which makes people strong because they see and live some of the toughest things that anyone will ever have to go through—but for those that build community, they find support and they go through struggle together. Those experiences in struggle, Eddy explains, can make someone emotionally powerful as they continuously live in struggle and have to build up a certain level of emotional strength to cope with it. Essentially, this can be tied to Ghetto Survival Fatigue as young people are living in an emotionally charged environment that they have to struggle and battle through daily. Yet, for some, the result is the development of emotional strength that goes beyond fatigue and instead moves towards emotional power. As Anthony explains, “The negative things. . . definitely made me a better person being impacted by it. Made me a more well-rounded person. I definitely seen people go through the struggle. I definitely seen people sell drugs cuz they have to support their family. Makes you more understanding of everyone’s situation. . . .” Anthony explains that Richmond’s negatives have made him a better person because he not only sees people in struggle, but inherently understands why and how people struggle. Connecting this with Eddy’s explanation of Richmond making him emotionally powerful, we can see one of the significant impacts that Richmond can have on young people. Yet, significantly, for young people in The Tribe, these impacts are faced and managed together through mutual support and community building.

Acknowledging the detrimental activities Richmond youth may participate in, through La Tribe, some young people want to work to create change in the community. As Anthony explains:

Look, we might have done stupid shit but at the end of the day we’re making moves to better our lives and one day our community. . . Cuz I see everyone around me and they’re content with just surviving and we’re raised that it’s ok to just survive but that’s not for me. . . I wanna strive for more. . . I want to get my dreams out, make money off of something that I actually care about doing.

Anthony’s explanation of wanting more than to just survive is powerful as he explains that La Tribe is working to improve their lives and, eventually, the community. Anthony does have the vision of making money through doing something that he loves rather than simply living life and being unhappy. Cristian explains that La Tribe does want to play a role in working through the community’s struggles. For instance, he says that, “Some people understand what we’re trying to do. Just become successful and

La Tribe’s second clothing design



Tribe members silk-screening t-shirts and sweaters.



take everyone from La Tribe with us. Once we get our money up, we gonna try to help out the community, doing murals, anything we can do for the community, we gonna do it.” Inherently, however, it can be argued that La Tribe’s existence and functions is already working to create change in the city of Richmond. Not only is the group doing more than just surviving, but they are also building community and family meanwhile engaging in productive activities as a group—something that not many other groups of youth do.

In addition to creating music, La Tribe also makes clothing using designs created by youth in the group. The designs vary but largely focus on representing the group throughout the city, particularly at mall events in collaboration with rising hip-hop artists. Through these events, La Tribe looks to promote itself, network, connect with other groups and the community, and make money through a legitimate means. One way the group has been working towards its promotional goals is to promote *La Tribe* clothing line. La Tribe clothing has been collaborating with local rap artist *Kool John* and his *Schmop Life* clothing line through *Filthy Dripped*, a store at Hilltop Mall in Richmond. Some Tribe members have expressed that this collaboration promotes the La Tribe clothing name, helps them connect with other Richmond groups, connects them with the Richmond community, and brings different people from Richmond together. Further, and of particular importance is the mutual respect between La Tribe and Kool John as Eddy notes that, “It’s hard to find adults that are into what we do. But [Kool John] supports us and is a great support.” Often, there is a lack of adult support for young people. Yet, in the case of La Tribe, even without extensive adult support, the group is still able to work together and moving forward. Although making connections with other people is welcomed, La Tribe does not rely on anyone but itself to promote the group’s successes and activities, like making clothes and art. Further, The Tribe is working with one another to share and learn rather than relying on someone outside the group to teach them. As Cristian explains, “[La Tribe] can help me on anything. I don’t need no teacher. If I don’t have resources to go to, [La Tribe] can help me.”

Ruben explains that, “Everybody’s teaching each other, man. Nobody’s greedy or cocky with their stuff. If they got a talent and you want help from them, they’ll help you out.” Cristian adds that,

We all have a talent. . . with those talents we all put together, we gonna support each other. And say I’m not a rapper, and one of my friends inside The Tribe he’s a rapper, I can be the one making the shirts and he’ll teach me how to rap.

When asked if they needed a teacher or a professional to help them, Cristian responds, “Nah, hell nah, we don’t need no tutors over here man, it’s all family trying to do it.” With The Tribe, it’s evident that, for those that want it, they can share and learn from one another. As Cristian explains, “if someone wants to learn something, they can learn it if someone else in The Tribe already knows it.” This learning process is also essential because it does not rely on people outside of the group; particularly there is no reliance on the government or non-profit organizations.

Since The Tribe is looking to distance itself from participating in Richmond Shit, they are also rejecting any reliance on what some may see as help systems to distance itself from Richmond Shit, like non-profit organizations, schools, or police officers. La Tribe recognizes and responds to a need for change in Richmond by engaging in community change, Cristian explains that:

Some programs are government funded, we’re just a group of kids tryna come up out of the ghetto. No support from any rich places like any government funding. Nothing. Just us, we don’t need nobody’s help, only each other’s. We don’t need other people to come and tell us what to do and how to change our city. We know what we’re gonna do and when we do it, ya’ll gonna see how La Tribe did it.

Cristian rejects people who are not part of the Richmond community, who try to come in and help when

they do not know the community. Because of their misunderstanding of the community, they do not know what work is truly necessary. Instead, Cristian explains The Tribe, which is part of the community, can and will create change within the community. It can be argued this change is already being manifested in The Tribe's existence, and more specifically, in their dynamics, ideologies, and functions as a space of support, family, and community, in a place where these things are not easily found.

The family and community that The Tribe has built with one another in a city that is encompassed by the U.S. Dominance Complex may not necessarily be something that is uncommon, but rather something that is not widely known. This look at The Tribe and the city of Richmond is not only a step towards acknowledging The Tribe's purpose, but also a pathway to building community with young people and changing our community. The Tribe recognizes the need for survival, support, respect, and love in their community. As a result, the members are coming together to provide those needs for one another. However The Tribe still allows for its members to be young adults and have fun through actions that not only satisfy them, but also move the group forward. With all the struggles that young people face in Richmond, it can be easy to fall into detrimental actions, or colloquially called "Richmond Shit." In response to these tendencies, The Tribe is regenerating community by providing a non-judgmental supportive space. Further, the struggles that young people face are being used as motivation for working towards emotional empowerment and traversing struggle. The Tribe is legitimately and undeniably looking to create a sense of community, family, and in essence practicing In LakEch, the Mayan concept meaning you are my other me, or, for The Tribe, living through what they call "one Tribe, one family."<sup>54</sup>

#### NEXT FOR LA TRIBE

Young people in The Tribe wish to move forward as a group. In speaking of moving forward, there is not a focus on increasing in numbers, but rather a focus on promoting The Tribe's name, as well as promoting a positive view of the city. Anthony explained that La Tribe would like to see real and productive change come to Richmond. Although The Tribe can play a role in that change, he recognizes that as young people, the members have to take care of themselves first and address their struggles before they can take on the struggles of the community. Currently one of La Tribe's biggest projects is sharing its music and clothing with as many people as possible. In the fall of 2012, La Tribe opened a store in Richmond where it sells clothes from the *La Tribe* clothing line. The store is managed primarily by David, Mikey, Anthony, and Natalie. The store, called *La Shop*, is yet another step forward for young people in The Tribe. Through owning their own business young people in La Tribe are able to provide for themselves in a non-criminalizing way, and concurrently share some of their passions—designing clothes and creating art.

With the way The Tribe lives and practices community, many older members serve as mentors for younger members of The Tribe, as well as non-Tribe middle school aged kids in the city. As Eddy notes,

We possibly are role models to some of the younger folks. And then they see us and they be like, 'ah man I wish I could be like them.' We'll probably motivate them to start changing their lives. Doing better things, doing bigger things, and that can change their minds and stuff. The way they think. The way they see things. A whole different perspective. You can't change a person but you can change the way they think. Once you

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<sup>54</sup> Roberto Rodriguez, *In LakEch, Panche Be & Hunab Ku: The Philosophical Foundation for Raza Studies or What State Officials Don't Want Arizona School Children to Know*, DISSIDENT VOICE (July 29, 2010), <http://dissidentvoice.org/2010/07/in-lak-ech-panche-be-hunab-ku-the-philosophical-foundation-for-raza-studies/>.

change the way they think, you can change the person.<sup>55</sup>

That is something that is already happening with one of the youngest Tribe members, Gabriel, as he expresses how he looks up to some of the older people in the Tribe:

Hanging out with older people made me realize what kind of world I'm living in. . . a really screwed up world. It helps me. . . I have their backs and they have mine. . . Man, Mikey is my real brother, but David and Anthony have been there forever. And Eddy. They're like my real brothers too.

It is definitely important for young people, and particularly those in cities like Richmond to have peers they can look to that can aid in their development—and this is something that is happening with The Tribe. With older youth in The Tribe acknowledging that they may indeed be having an impact on young people, Ruben expressed that The Tribe's interest is not so much for numbers to grow, but rather that younger people are inspired to start their own group that has similar ideologies to The Tribe:

Kids are pretty excited about it . . . When they see La Tribe getting together, how everyone gets along so well, like in the future they'll like to be like that . . . They'll probably get their own crew and get together. It's good if that inspires them. Not a crew like a gang, just a crew trying to make it out here. [If word really got out on La Tribe] I'm pretty sure people would be surprised about it. I'm pretty sure they'll tell their kids, 'that's the crew you wanna be with'. . . As a parent you don't wanna see your kids hanging out with the wrong crew.

Because The Tribe is largely based on mutual support and family, the idea of providing inspiration and a sense of mentorship to younger people is not surprising. Hopefully the work that La Tribe is putting in will inspire other young people to come together to create a space outside of the state where they can simply live their lives, build relationships, and not give in to the U.S. Dominance Complex or be entirely consumed by Ghetto Survival Fatigue. As Eddy explains, "we want people to know that the positive shit we're doing is not only cuz we want to do it, it's because we're making better lives out of our negative community and what people look at our community as." This idea can be connected to why Eddy explains that Richmond has made him emotionally powerful. Because he has seen and lived struggle, he therefore wants to work through it and help others work through it. While I would consider La Tribe and the way they function being central to Richmond's future, Eddy explains some sentiments that others in La Tribe feel as far as being a good part of Richmond:

[The Tribe] is a positive thing, but for all the love we get, there's some hate. Those haters gonna talk some shit and be like 'who the fuck are they, we don't even like them.' We can't always be loved. In my opinion, I do see ourselves as not the best out of Richmond but one of the best. Cuz like there's a lot of hidden talent out here in Richmond. There's a lot of people that are doing shit for Richmond but they're not getting known.

I argue that this response is evidence of humbleness and humility, and it also acknowledges that La Tribe is not the only answer to Richmond's troubles. Also, La Tribe is not representative of Richmond as a whole, but rather only representative of people who are actually a part of The Tribe or who are down with La Tribe. As Anthony notes, "With all the love we're getting there's also a lot of [bad] energy that we get. . . a lot of people don't like to see you shine. . . I don't know what it is." At the

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same time, Anthony notes that La Tribe is a source of unity amongst some young people in Richmond. As far as the maintenance of unity—at least within a small group of people—Anthony explains, “What we’re doing is keeping us together always checking up on each other. I’m definitely seeing a lot of faces that I didn’t think I would be seeing. It’s cuz La Tribe, you know.”

I see The Tribe as integral to communities like Richmond. Because The Tribe’s existence is furthered and encouraged by the U.S. Dominance Complex and Ghetto Survival Fatigue, it is important for young people to have a community bonded by togetherness and support, even if it is simply with the goal and purpose of living and not having to worry about their surroundings. Rather than allowing the U.S. Dominance Complex to place them in a detrimental position, through La Tribe, young people are subverting and essentially working to delegitimize government or the state’s negative impact on the community. According to narratives and the design of the U.S. Dominance Complex, large groups of young people in a ghetto like Richmond are not supposed to survive, have support, or have a family and community they can rely on. That work has definitely not come easy for The Tribe; however, and moving forward will take even more work than has been put in so far. As Anthony sums it up:

It takes a lot for us kids to build something that keeps growing. You would’ve asked me a year ago that I’d be making my own clothing brand, selling out of shit, I would’ve thought you were full of shit, you know. It’s just all going so fast and I love it. . . We’re definitely promoting positivity. . . One day I do wanna help my community up to be a better place but for now I’m building myself to be a better person before that. We’re building ourselves up to show the world that Richmond isn’t just what the media portrays it to be. Richmond High is getting its shit together. It’s like, all right that’s good, now it’s time to promote our community and the positive stuff that actually comes out of here. We might not be doing community work right now, but we’re definitely spreading positivity about Richmond.

#### CONTINUING THOUGHTS

Upon reflection on an intertwined analysis of Richmond, the U.S. Dominance Complex, and a group of young people like La Tribe, we may be left with more questions than answers. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that what happens in the world—in addition to the role that the U.S. Dominance Complex plays in our lives—inherently needs to be changed, or at the very least, addressed. One way to move beyond the U.S. Dominance Complex is to begin to move toward what Kiley recommends as taking care of ourselves and building communities autonomous from the state.<sup>56</sup> This is something that La Tribe is already doing in Richmond. I strongly feel that spaces and groups like La Tribe are critical to a just and dignified world free from the impacts of the U.S. Dominance Complex. If we continue our reliance on the state and continue to remain submissive to the U.S. Dominance Complex, we will never truly move toward true dignity, respect, and liberation for all. We must build community, engage with and learn from one another, and inherently trust one another for mental, emotional, and physical support. La Tribe and youth growing up in Richmond are already moving toward this ideal and are essentially manifesting the powerful emotions facilitated by Richmond’s social, economic, and political essence. As long as the state does not infringe upon groups of youth like La Tribe, the group’s building and working toward dignified communities will continue to flourish.

Tara Yosso explains Community Cultural Wealth as a combination of tools that draw on the knowledge and works of communities of color for the survival and dignification of people in struggle. The Community Cultural Wealth includes “aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and

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<sup>56</sup> Brendan Kiley, *Anarchy is Boring: The May Day Smashup Was the Spectacular Tip of a Mundane Iceberg*, THE STRANGER (May 8, 2012), <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/anarchy-is-boring/Content?oid=13597692>.

resistant capital.”<sup>57</sup> These six forms of cultural capital are evident in La Tribe as a group as well as the individual youth in La Tribe. Yosso explains aspirational capital as “the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.”<sup>58</sup> This idea is clearly manifested in La Tribe as they hope to grow as a group and as many of its members hope to either go onto college, help the community, or both. Linguistic capital is defined as including intellectual and social skills achieved through communication. It is clearly being used by La Tribe through the sharing of artistic skills, advice-giving, support, and simple hanging out and conversing. Familial capital is knowledge fostered through family, which carries history, memory, and culture.<sup>59</sup> Everything that La Tribe does is shared with one another and particularly, with art and clothing, shared with the community as well. Further, beyond tangible items, what La Tribe shares is the existence of a family for young people that (a) are not related by blood and (b) are together in struggle. Social capital is understood as “networks of people and community resources,” which is evidently manifested by La Tribe through its openness in working with other groups and with people in the community as well as with each other.<sup>60</sup> Navigational capital is referring to skills for working through society and its institutions.<sup>61</sup> La Tribe clearly serves as a form of navigational capital for youth as it works as a space for young people to learn to and have support in navigating the environment of Richmond—one manifestation being in the opening of a store by La Tribe. Combined, La Tribe itself is a form of resistant capital for young people as the group is defying mainstream views of Richmond youth as deviants disconnected from community and instead are coming together to produce a variety of skills, knowledge, abilities, and relationships as one group and as one tribe living through and around Richmond.

I do not argue that there must be a chapter of La Tribe in every community of the world. Rather, what is at stake is the importance of groups of people coming together to build community and family—not only to survive, but to be happy and be mutually supported. The hope is that as community is built, we will move beyond reliance on the state, and move beyond the U.S. Dominance Complex infiltrating and intoxicating our lives. The result may be several communities, but as long as they are all closely bonded and come together with the interest of living with respect and dignity, we will be closer to, as Zapatistas say to, ‘living in a world in which many worlds fit.’ Now, communities are dominated through the U.S. Dominance Complex and, for that reason, many of our people are dying every day. The Tribe is a group in struggle looking to avert the impacts, and instead look out for one another by providing a safe, communal, familial place.

The Mayan concept of In LakEch, meaning *tu eres mi otro*, or “you are my other me,” is being practiced by La Tribe. The Tribe treats and looks to each other as equals and as a representation of what each of them are.<sup>62</sup> They uphold and practice non-judgment by their acceptance of anyone into the group as long as they are themselves non-judgmental and treat others with the same respect that they are welcomed with in the first place. In LakEch, it is not only a practice, but essentially a way of life.<sup>63</sup> Being in La Tribe essentially comes with the understanding that you are part of a family and have support as long as you provide the same in return. Young people look to each other as more than sisters or brothers, but rather see in each other a reflection of themselves particularly because they all have either grown up in or live in Richmond and have dealt with everything that encompasses Richmond.

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<sup>57</sup> Tara J. Yosso, T. *Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth*, 8 RACE, ETHNICITY, & EDUCATION 69, 69 (2005).

<sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 77.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 69.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> RobertoRodriguez, *LakEch, Panche Be & Hunab Ku: The Philosophical Foundation for Raza Studies or What State Officials Don't Want Arizona School Children to Know*, Dissident Voice, July 29, 2010, <http://dissidentvoice.org/2010/07/inlak-ech-panche-be-hunab-ku-the-philosophical-foundation-for-raza-studies/>.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

The U.S. Dominance Complex and in particular the city of Richmond fosters the creation of emotionally powerful people through struggle. This emotional power, I feel, has been significant in The Tribe's connection with one another and particularly their mutually respectful and supportive practices as a Tribe. In Richmond, it is not easy to find community, support, family, and respect. But all of these qualities are being mutually provided in The Tribe. The practice of In LakEch is of great importance in working to build strong communities, particularly amongst working class young people of color, which are the majority of Tribe members.

I look forward to continuing to work with The Tribe and working to share who and what they are about, as well as sharing what Richmond is about with hopes of countering popular deficient narratives of the city and its population. I definitely look forward to sharing this work not only with youth in The Tribe, but also with the Richmond community, and with those outside of Richmond. My goal is to help others to better understand why and how people struggle, and essentially why and how young people are coming together even in the face of struggle. What La Tribe offers to each other, and to Richmond, is mutual hope, family, community, and support, which according to the structure of the U.S. Dominance Complex should not be there. Essentially what Richmond has created is an emotionally powerful group, one that can go past Ghetto Survival Fatigue and the US Dominance Complex, and one that identifies itself and lives as La Tribe. "It's All One Tribe, One Family."

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