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Remembering Fred Ho

The Legacy of Afro Asian Futurism

Zachary Price

What's little known is that Bruce Lee was really, truly a jazz artist.

—Fred Ho (2011a)

On 12 April 2014, baritone saxophone player, composer, Asian American activist, and theatre artist Fred Ho passed away after a near decade-long battle with cancer.¹ Throughout his life, Ho was involved in various political movements and organizations, including the Asian American movement, Marxist-Leninist-Maoism, the Nation of Islam (NOI), the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), *I Wor Kuen* (Society of the Harmonious Righteous Fist), eco-socialism, and matriarchal-socialism. A second-generation Chinese American, Ho wrote and published extensively on art and political practice and was heavily influenced by the Black Arts Movement. His journey to find an artistic and political space within multiple cultural spheres was driven by transformation, transgression, and contradiction.

Ho's Afro Asian² jazz martial arts performance pieces, which he began creating in 1997, are important works in US theatre and the field of performance studies in terms of understanding how performance can be used to create nonessentialist identity formations. Ho's core band, the Afro Asian Music Ensemble, formed in 1982 in New York City, provided the music for his martial art theatrical performances. The Afro Asian Music Ensemble represented a revolution within Asian American music, the Asian American movement, and Asian American theatre and performance. Its compositions integrated traditional Chinese instruments such as the *erhu* (two-stringed bowed lute), *sona* (double-reed pipe), *p'ip'a* (four-stringed plucked lute), *xiaoluo* (small gong), *daluo* (large gong), *muyu* (wood fish idiophone), *ban* (wood block), and *naobo* (cymbals)

1. Ho was diagnosed with stage 3b colorectal cancer on 6 August 2006, just before his 49th birthday. After numerous surgeries and attempts at conventional Western medical treatment, Ho turned to radical alternative strategies such as a raw food diet. For Ho, the elimination of the toxicity that gave growth to cancer cells in his body was a war against capitalism and the toxic conditions that such a system produces. As Ho wrote in *Diary of a Radical Cancer Warrior: Fighting Cancer and Capitalism at a Cellular Level* (2011a), "Capitalism [...] is the cancer for Planet Earth; and cancer [...] is the exponentially increasing environmental and social toxicity of capitalism assaulting the individual person" (Ho 2011a:xl).

2. In keeping with Ho's use of the term "Afro Asia" I am foregoing the hyphen.

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as well as instruments associated with the African American jazz tradition: alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone; double bass; and hi-hat, kick, crash, and snare drums (Asai 2005:99). The Ensemble was also a vehicle through which Ho and his performers articulated a radical Asian American consciousness. Afro Asian martial arts performances synthesized performance disciplines, thus offering transculturation as a strategy for developing “a solidarity of politics and culture between people of color in the face of white supremacy, capitalist domination, patriarchy, and old and new forms of colonial imperialism” (Mullen 2004:165).

An analysis of the political context that informed Ho’s work, together with close textual analyses of two of Ho’s performances, *Voice of the Dragon: Once Upon a Time in Chinese America* (1999) and *Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali* (2011) illustrate the ways in which Ho’s work created alternative epistemologies that offer a way forward to a post-essentialist identity through cultural production and cross appropriation.

Ho wrote about W.E.B. Du Bois’s relationships with Asian leaders in his edited anthology *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (2008) and in his collection of essays *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader* (2009). For Ho, articulations of Afro Asian juncture drew upon a transhistorical narrative of solidarity and efforts at decolonization. Du Bois articulated these notions at the turn of the 20th century when he wrote, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” ([1903] 1989:10). Writing on Japan, China, India, and the South Pacific, “Du Bois perceived globalization, national interdependence, and multiple ethnic diasporas as ineluctable elements of the modern world” (Mullen 2005:xiii).³

Despite Du Bois’s efforts to create international solidarity between Asians, Africans, and African Americans, Asian Americans and African Americans in the United States have often been situated in diametrical opposition. Asian Americans are framed as a “model minority” whose ability to assimilate and achieve economic and educational success is contrasted to African Americans’ assumed inability to take advantage of various governmental programs to



Figure 1. From left: Fred Ho, Ricardo Valentine, Roderick Callaway, Marcus Braggs, Edward Brito, and Gilbert Reyes performing with the Green Monster Big Band ensemble in *Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali*. *The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY, 13 November 2011*. (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

3. While Du Bois did much preparatory work for the Bandung Conference in April 1955, he was unable to attend when the United States Department of State denied him a passport due to his political stance. The Bandung [Indonesia] Conference brought together 29 countries from Africa and Asia to define the direction of the non-aligned nations, the “Third World,” of the postcolonial world.

transcend “black pathology” and dysfunctionality within urban epicenters such as Los Angeles⁴ Ho critiqued the falsity of model minority mythology in both his writing and performance pieces. In “Nobody Knows the Troubles I’ve Seen: The Roots to the Black–Asian Conflict,” Ho wrote:

Some Asians themselves buy into this myth, attributing it to “cultural values” such as Confucianism, the education ethic, respect for family, etc. Educational achievement and attainment is often viewed as a means to economic advancement, and on a limited level, it works. However, education and income are not a measure of real economic and political power. The presence of successful Asian Americans does not equate with power on the level of the monopoly bourgeoisie, which is all white. (2010:26)

Examining Ho’s work opens up a nuanced perspective on the Afro Asian juncture and dis-juncture, and the cultural production of the Afro Asian Music Ensemble, in conjunction with Ho’s writing creates an important dialogue around issues of identity and racial politics in the United States in the 21st century and forcefully counters any claims of the nation as a post-racial society.

Fred Ho, Sun Ra, and the Radical Imagination

Born as Hou Weihai in 1957 to Chinese immigrant parents in California, Ho grew up in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he had to confront the violence and alienation of racism from a very young age. As early as preschool, Ho was forced to use a segregated sandbox and endured direct racial slurs from other students (Smith 2013). After joining the Marines in 1973, Ho was dishonorably discharged in 1975 when he struck an officer who called him a “gook” (Brown 2005). Ho’s experiences were not unlike those of writer and activist Frantz Fanon’s encounter with the white “normative gaze.” In *Black, Skin White Masks* (1967) Fanon recounts his experience of a young, white French boy crying out, “Mom, look, a Negro; I’m scared” upon seeing Fanon emerge out of a Paris subway (Fanon [1967] 2008:91). Such encounters reveal how racialized knowledge constructs the body from a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories simultaneously creating the necessity for counternarrative strategies. By his high school days, Ho had begun to embrace the liberatory impulses embodied in the writing of Fanon and Paulo Freire.⁵

Racism and racist violence permeated Ho’s early childhood inside the home, as well. Ho attributes the physical and emotional abuse he suffered from his father, a Confucian scholar at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, to a self-hatred inculcated by the same white society into which his father sought to assimilate. In Ho’s account, the academy disavowed his father socially and professionally, relegating him to the status of perpetual outsider. Ho linked his father’s violence with a Chinese “double consciousness” (Mullen 2004:168) whereby his father projected onto his family the “twoness” of “unreconciled strivings” (Du Bois [1903] 1989:3), his desire for academic recognition thwarted by the wall of discrimination. Ho developed a thought process of negotiating the external racism of the outside world with the internal racism that had such a painful impact within his father’s home.

Ho was fond of quoting Sun Ra’s mantra: “Everything possible has been tried and nothing has changed. What we need is the impossible” (Sun Ra [1974] 1993). Ho appropriated the prolific jazz composer, bandleader, piano and synthesizer player, poet, philosopher, and Afrofuturist’s radical imagining of the impossible in order to create what I advance here as a

4. According to Robin D.G. Kelley (1997), the neoconservative trope of dysfunctionality promotes stereotypes such as the welfare queen and undermines organized labor movements.

5. Based on research I conducted at the Fred Ho Archives, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut. See Ho’s high school essay “Is There a Way” in the Amherst Regional High School’s collection of essays and poems, *As We Walk Together: Third World Liberation Experience*, which Ho edited (Ho 1975).

concept called “Afro Asian futurism.” Afro Asian futurism is a method by which marginalized communities create “new collectivities based not just upon eviction and exclusion” (Johnson 2013:x) but also by “turning pain into power,”⁶ and are able to form “new and imaginative uses of technology, creativity, and spaces” (x). Working through this framework makes visible how Ho was able to transform his own “double-consciousness” (Du Bois [1903] 1989:3) into a paradoxical mode of embodiment from which one reimagines and recreates a new epistemology based on his or her lived experiences.

Double-consciousness, in its dogged strength, offers a lens through which to develop alternative performance strategies for the survival of Black Americans and other historically marginalized subjects within “racial regimes” (Robinson [2007] 2012:xii).⁷ Cedric Robinson defines racial regimes as “constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power” (xii). Afro Asian futurism is a performance modality that contests the mythic authority of racial regimes and their “makeshift patchwork masquerading as memory and the immutable” (Robinson [2007] 2012:xii).

For Ho, the dialectics of transcultural and transnational Afro Asian futurism began with his exposure to Black radicalism, or what Cedric Robinson has offered as the “Black radical tradition” (Robinson [1983] 2000:1)—a way of understanding the experience of Black intellectual, political, economic, and artistic life as both an ontological and an epistemological resistance to Westernism and Eurocentrism. Ho’s intellectual and artistic lens was formed by his personal and political relationships with African Americans, and his experience with the violent and traumatic ruptures that systemic racist structures produce.

Teachers like Marilyn Lewis and poet Sonia Sanchez initiated Ho into Black and Latino struggles at an early age, introducing him to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and the Black liberation movements of the 1960s, respectively.⁸ In “Tribute to the Black Arts Movement: Personal and Political Impact and Analysis,” Ho wrote:

As a young Chinese (Asian) American growing up in the 1970s, I was profoundly drawn to and inspired by African American music as the expression of an oppressed nationality, because of its social role as protest and resistance to national oppression, and for its musical energy and revolutionary aesthetic qualities [...] “Jazz” or African American music is the revolutionary music of the twentieth century—not just for America, but for the planet as well. It is the music that embodies and expresses the contradiction of the century, fundamentally rooted to the world’s division between oppressor, imperialist nations, and the struggle of the oppressed nationals and nationalities. Its historical emergence and development parallel the rise and development of imperialism—the globalization of finance capital—at the turn of the century. Its musical and stylistic innovations reflect the changes in the twentieth-century life of the African American oppressed nationality. (Ho 2009:93, 94)

Ho’s early life elucidates how Asian American radicalism was in conversation with, and even guided by, the aesthetics of the Black radical tradition. Ho latched onto a musical energy that Fred Moten articulates as a “revolutionary force of the sensuality that emerges from the sonic event” (2003:12), as an expression of resistance and struggle. It was “the generative force of a venerable phonic propulsion, the ontological and historical priority of resistance to

6. *Turn Pain Into Power* is also the title of a CD by the Afro Asian Music Ensemble.

7. If we can pause and embrace the notion that Africa and Asia, as temporal and geographic localities, contain the world’s largest populations, longest history, largest reserves of natural resources, and largest labor force, then Ho’s performance pieces are imaginative possibilities of the future as well as interlocutory echoes of the past.

8. In *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice*, Ho credits Lewis and Sanchez as being two influential figures who helped him discover his own identity while growing up in Amherst (2009:170, 171).

power and objection to subjection, the old-new thing, the freedom drive that animates black performances” (12).

Ho came of age during the “roaring ’60s” (Ho 2009:161) and gravitated toward Amiri Baraka and the Black Arts Movement, which in turn drew him into the politics of international socialism. Just as Baraka sought the efficacy of music, poetry, visual art, and theatre as a political strategy, Ho conceived Afro Asian futurism as a confluence of disciplines, acculturation, and political strategy in which martial arts movements were intertwined with Afro Asian sounds. As Ho recounted during an interview, “Afro Asia represents a different paradigm. Within the context of the performances, these are vision quests to demonstrate that the system is not infallible or invincible. They don’t subscribe to the illusion that capitalism has perpetuated” (2011b). The synthesis of disparate performance disciplines creates an expanded vision of socioeconomic justice in which “new forces are exemplified and new forms of struggle are generated” (2011b).

As an African American theatre and martial arts practitioner, I was initially drawn to Ho’s use of Asian martial arts as stage combat. However, the jazz and martial arts performance pieces were more than just stage combat for the purposes of entertainment. Rather, they were neomyths that incorporated a confluence of Chinese folktales, popular representations of Japanese *budo* imagery found in *manga* and *anime*, Blaxploitation and Hong Kong kung fu cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, and the performative boxing styles of legends like Muhammad Ali. As writers such as Vijay Prashad, M.T. Kato, and Ho have suggested, martial arts films have been a form of decolonizing cinema and a vehicle by which people of color can reimagine their identities. Ho writes, “The Asian martial arts have continually been an area where non-white dominance is uncontested. The huge impact of the late Bruce Lee and the release of his film *Enter the Dragon* (1973) projected ‘non-whites’ as flawed heroes who could kick the butts of physically powerful and sometimes armed white males” (2006:296). Along with *Enter the Dragon*, Lee’s *Game of Death* (1978) as well as Blaxploitation martial arts films such as *Blackbelt Jones* (1974) and *Three the Hard Way* (1974) provided Black, Latino, Asian American, and working-class youths with non-white heroes and heroines.

The influence of these popular representations of martial arts on hip hop artists such as the Wu-Tang Clan and the S1Ws of Public Enemy provides further evidence of the impact and transcultural interplay between hip hop (as part of “hip hop’s appropriation of the modern jazz tradition” [Neal 1999:165]) and kung-fu cinema both in lyrics, presentation, and performative vernacular stylistics. José Figueroa, a Bronx-born Puerto Rican T’ai chi ch’uan practitioner, choreographer, and cofounder of the Rock Steady crew, told me in an interview that “If it hadn’t been for Black and Latino kids watching those poorly dubbed Hong-Kong kung-fu flicks over and over again, companies like the Shaw Brothers wouldn’t have made it. We were the fans that kept them in business” (Figueroa 2011).⁹ As Figueroa also suggested, the consumption of martial arts choreography on the screen also served as inspiration for breakdancers and for the Wu-Tang Clan’s entire aesthetic.¹⁰ The Wu-Tang Clan album, *Enter the 36 Chambers*, was based on the Shaw Brothers’ *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (1978).¹¹

9. Of Afro Caribbean descent, Figueroa collaborated on almost all of Ho’s Afro Asian adventures in the theatre. Figueroa choreographed *Journey Beyond the West* at the 1997 BAM Next Wave Festival, the Guggenheim Museum, and elsewhere. He is a professional Chen Style Taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) practitioner, filmmaker, breakdancer, and original member of the Rock Steady Crew.

10. “B-boying” was the original term used by breakdancers, and is used by Figueroa. B-boying was developed by African American, Puerto Rican, and other working-class youth in New York City during the same period as the rise of kung fu cinema in the United States. A b-boy might copy a movement seen in a kung fu movie, incorporate it into his or her repertoire, and perform the motion when breaking against another crew member.

11. For a discussion of kung fu cinema’s influence on the Wu-Tang Clan, read Carman Tse’s article “Wu-Tang Clan’s RZA Discusses How ‘The 36th Chamber Of Shaolin’ Inspired Him” (2014).

Afro Asia

A Jazz Martial Arts Journey

Ho's *Voice of the Dragon* served as a critique of Asian Americans who settled for model minority mythology in order to gain access to the social privileges of whiteness.¹² Ho composed the musical score and cowrote the script with playwright Ruth Margraff; the production was directed by Mira Kingsley, choreographed by José Figueroa, and performed live by the Afro Asian Music Ensemble. *Dragon* decried Asian Americans who discarded the history of Asian American discrimination and turned their backs on Asian American activists whose efforts dovetailed with other radicals of color.

Originally envisioned as part of a trilogy, *Dragon* reimagines the mythic story of the formation of the Shaolin Temple and the temple's subsequent betrayal by a renegade disciple, Gar Man Jang. Instead of casting trained dancers, Ho utilized martial art practitioners; Wu Shu fighting forms were the base vocabulary for movement. The story was guided by a didactic omniscient narrator who helped orchestrate the plot and the action onstage by introducing the name of each disciple, along with the particular kung fu form that the disciple represented.

Voice of the Dragon began as the Narrator, dressed in a fusion of 19th-century US Southwestern- and Chinese American-style clothing, introduced a multiethnic ensemble of martial artists dressed in kung fu attire. The ensemble then entered from the wings, white paper with Chinese *hanzi* that also represented the Shaolin Scrolls. The hanzi and Scrolls served as the scenic frame, making the ensemble seem like cartoon characters. The martial artists moved to the rhythm of the music of the Afro Asian Music Ensemble, located upstage, as the Narrator delivered the prologue, "The Way of Shaolin":

Once upon a time...in a Place beyond History and Fantasy, in a time when Human Conflict was not Waged by Weapons of Mass Destruction but by the Martial Arts... and the Martial Artists were much more than Warriors or Fighters, they were revolutionaries...the Shaolin Temple exemplified THE WAY!!!" (Ho and Margraff 1999)¹³

The character of Gar Man Jang from 17th-century China allies herself with the Manchu imperial forces who had sacked the temple. She discovers the legendary Shaolin secret scrolls, which include all of the accumulated knowledge of martial arts. By absorbing the scroll's deadly power, she becomes an invincible supernatural destructive force. The Five Disciples, who survived the attack on the temple, refine their kung fu skills and reunite in the end to destroy Gar Man Jang. The confluence of jazz and Chinese mythology created a new space in which each martial artist embodied one of the five animals of the Shaolin fighting system. These animal styles distinguish the Five Disciples from each other. We are introduced to Chen Jak:

First of the Five to escape was Chen Jak, visionary strategist. His philosophy: "Not to resist is to acquiesce to your own oppression. To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill, to subdue your enemy without fighting is the highest skill." His element: Water. His animal: the Dragon — to ride the wind. His fighting style: T'ai chi ch'uan.

The character of Chen Jak is a play on both Chen-style t'ai chi ch'uan, as well as the Chinese American activist, Jack Chen. The choreography that creates Chen Jak's character is initially fast and snapping movements throughout the narration. However, when t'ai chi ch'uan

12. For my analysis, I used a 2004 video recording of a live production of *Voice of the Dragon* presented at Kean University. I also used supplementary materials provided to me courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media, and Mira Kingsley.

13. All quotes from *Voice of the Dragon: Once Upon a Time in Chinese America* are from the unpublished playscript by Fred Ho and Ruth Margraff.

is introduced, his movement changes to a markedly slower tempo emblematic of tai chi's stylized slow motion. Chen Jak is immersed in a soft blue light that matches his blue uniform. The melodic sound of an alto sax that flows with jingling chimes suggests the sound of wind. Another player enters and attacks Chen Jak. Chen Jak is no longer solo; he is engaged in a dynamic sparring that metaphorically conveys his story (fig. 2).



Figure 2. Chen Jak (right), battles a soldier loyal to Gar Man Jang, with the Afro Asian Musical Ensemble led by Fred Ho (upstage center), in the 2004 performance of *Voice of the Dragon: Once Upon a Time in Chinese America*. Kean College, New Jersey. (Screengrab courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.)

The scene illustrates Chen Jak's philosophy of "To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill; to subdue your enemy without fighting is the highest skill." The opponent is aligned with Gar Man Jang, and metaphorically with the Asian American reactionaries. Chen Jak's victory is thus a metaphor for the desired success of Asian American radicals in their struggle against assimilation.

Each of the subsequent disciples is introduced by the Narrator. "Second of the Five was Miao Hin, Master of Knives. 'A man of peace, armed always to the teeth.' His element: Metal. His animal: the Snake—for suppleness and rhythmic endurance.

His fighting style: Snake-style kung fu." Miao Hin slithers snakelike back and forth, hypnotizing his opponents, neutralizing their attempts to attack. The introduction of the Third and Fourth disciples brings about a direct interplay between the musicians in the quartet and the martial artists. "Third of the Five was Gee Shin, the Builder. His philosophy: 'The deeper the root, the stronger the tree.' His element: Wood. His animal: the Leopard—to harness power. His fighting style: Leopard-style kung fu." Gee Shin carries a long wooden staff which becomes an extension of his body, as the drummer and the keyboardist's rhythms synchronize in time to Gee Shin's movement. When Gee Shin's staff hits the staff of his foe, a call and response is created between the staff and the drummer's rhythmic tapping of shells. The staff transforms from a weapon into a musical instrument, and then into a theatrical prop.

The introduction of the Fourth disciple injects a new feel to the music and choreography. "The Fourth of the Five was Li Wen Mao, the Cantonese Opera artist. His philosophy: 'Opera is warfare without bloodshed. Warfare is opera with bloodshed.' His element: Fire. His animal: the Crane—for grace and self-control. His fighting style: Crane-style kung fu." Li Wen Mao's performance did not imitate Beijing Opera, but rather was an idiomatic expression of Ho's transcultural creation that generates its own authenticity, the origins of which are produced through the movement of the martial artist. Li Wen Mao makes use of an iron fan, which, like Gee Shin's staff, becomes an extension of his body, a weapon to fend off his attacker's sword.

The last of the Five disciples, Ng Mui, holds a significant place in the mythology of kung fu, as it is commonly believed that she was the progenitor of the Wing Chun-style of boxing.¹⁴

14. It is commonly believed that Ng Mui taught boxing to Wing Chun, a peasant woman who used the combat repertoire to defend herself against a forced marriage. For more on the history of Wing Chun and the legend of Ng Mui, see *Wing Chun Kung-Fu* (1972) by J. Yimm Lee, technical editor Bruce Lee.

as in firearms, cannons, and Weapons of Mass Destruction with which we could negotiate our human conflicts instead of hand-to-hand in the cumbersome Shaolin way). So they kowtow low before a new and very, very, foolish little monk, down on his knees and scrubbing at the Shaolin Temple.

(*An apology:*)

And I reached down. I sold the firecracker and my soul. And so on goes the pirating of poisoned souls against Shaolin. Every passing century, every once upon a time, and every ever after.

With the Narrator's closing speech, Ho linked the legend of Shaolin with Chinese technology and the invention of gunpowder. The Narrator's sartorial combination of Western and Chinese clothing emulated the synthesis of Ho's semiotic process and reminded the audience that the Asian diaspora was part of the construction of the West as both a discursive and physically racialized space. Chinese immigrant labor built the transcontinental railroad,¹⁷ yet it was the technology of gunpowder that Western colonial powers used to dominate Asia and Africa and maintain a racial hierarchy within the white settler project of the United States.¹⁸ The closing polemic suggests that by having the ability to speak within the world of the play, the Narrator is an agent whose language is fallible because it is not embodied in the form of martial arts movement or music. The Narrator was both an intermediary and a sellout assimilationist unable to transcend the limitations of didacticism.

In 2011, Ho was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to develop a new performance piece for the museum's Works and Process program.¹⁹ The *Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali*, was Ho's last performance. A collaboration with choreographer Christal Brown, the piece was intended to be both an homage to "Muhammad Ali's indomitable spirit" (Ho 2011c) and another exploration into Fred Ho's Afro Asian martial arts jazz theatrical performances. To cope with the woes of his fight with cancer, Ho watched Ali's documentaries and old fight films. He encapsulated his vision of the piece during the first Q&A held on the stage at the museum's Peter B. Lewis Theater between *Movements 2* and *1* with moderator Valerie Gladstone. "I sat down and I decided that I was going to write an homage to Ali, his spirit, but do it in a transgressive kind of way. Something that would evoke the period of the '60s and '70s, particularly the soundtracks of the black exploitation and yellow exploitation films, but with a Sun Ra-nian futuristic bent to it" (2011c). The *Sweet Science Suite* served as a transhistorical connection between Ali and Ho's former memberships in the Nation of Islam as well as Ali's transformation from Cassius Clay to a political figure outside of the ring.²⁰

In 1964, Clay unveiled an unorthodox and graceful fighting style when he TKO'd Sonny Liston to win the heavyweight championship. Surrounded by more than 400 reporters from around the world during the weigh-in, Clay repeatedly echoed his famous phrase: "Float like a butterfly sting like a bee! Hey, rumble young man, rumble!"²¹ Clay's prefight loquaciousness manifested itself in the ring as he slipped around and in between the more truculent and hard-hitting Liston. Clay sent stinging jabs to Liston's head and flying body blows to his collaps-

17. As writers such as Frank Chin (1991) have demonstrated, the historical trajectory of the Chinese diaspora cannot be separated from the Asian American experience in the Southwestern United States as laborers of the railroads.

18. While it is popular knowledge that China is credited for inventing the mixture of sulfur, coal, and potassium nitrate that became gunpowder, the expansion and appropriation processes of this technology are still very much contested in history.

19. The Guggenheim Museum's Works and Process is a performing-arts series that promotes artistic creation through stimulating conversation and performance, offering unprecedented access to creators and performers.

20. Ho joined the NOI and took the name Fred 3X.

21. The bout can be seen here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OezriPEepZs.



Figures 3–5. Muhammad Ali momentarily rears back to avoid Sonny Liston’s jab and then counterstrikes, knocking Liston to the canvas during their rematch for the world championship. Lewiston, Maine, May 1965. (Screengrabs by Zachary Price)

ing abdomen over six rounds before Liston failed to answer the bell for the seventh round. One year later, after changing his name to Muhammad Ali, he would display a similar kind of elusive, graceful movement when he defended his title against Liston, knocking him to the canvas with what seemed to be a phantom counter punch to a Liston jab that Ali simply sidestepped (figs. 3, 4, 5).

When Ali refused to be inducted into the US Army in 1967 during the Vietnam War, he was stripped of his title, barred from the boxing ring, and threatened with jail time and a \$10,000 fine. In 1971, the Supreme Court reversed Ali’s conviction, but nearly four of his best fighting years were lost. However, as the 1996 documentary *When We Were Kings* demonstrates, Ali was determined to regain his heavyweight title. He would ultimately do this by beating the undefeated heavyweight champion, George Foreman.

The Foreman bout dubbed the “Rumble in the Jungle,” was staged in Zaire on 30 October 1974. The event had implications that reached far beyond the realm of sport. It became something more than boxing; it was about competing ideals of Black masculinity within the dialectic of struggle. Foreman represented an agenda of assimilating into American capitalism, whereas Ali represented the Pan-Africanist campaign, which he imbued with the NOI’s performance of discipline and Black cultural nationalism.

Rather than fight Foreman punch for punch, Ali’s guerilla tactic, referred to as “rope-a-dope,” adapted the strategies of the Vietcong, who could not match the US military’s firepower. The asymmetric distribution of power necessitated that the Vietcong exhaust their enemy through hit-and-run techniques, or to use a boxing term, stick-and-move, in which the faster and more agile fighter keeps moving away from a larger flat-footed opponent.

By throwing a series of right-hand leads at the beginning of the bout, 32-year-old Ali confused and enraged the younger, stronger 24-year-old Foreman. Ali convinced Foreman that he was going to dance, as he had often done in the past, encouraging the crowd in Zaire to cheer “Ali, bomaye” (Ali, kill him). However, because of Ali’s long absence from the ring, and subsequent decline in athletic ability, he could not beat Foreman by trading blows. Instead, Ali retreated to the ropes, leaning against them allowing his body to absorb Foreman’s power until the fifth round of the fight. By the seventh round, Foreman had



Figure 6. George Foreman hits Ali with a left jab as Ali leans on the ropes during the fight for the world championship. Kinshasa, Zaire, 30 October 1974. (Screengrab by Zachary Price)

run out of gas, and with 12 seconds left in the eighth round, Ali knocked Foreman out with a left jab and a right cross.

By placing the bout in Zaire, formerly the Belgian Congo, the Pan-African and Asian liberation struggles embodied at the Bandung Conference were once again made visible to a broader global audience. The “Rumble in the Jungle” was an orchestration of political solidarity between the struggles of Blacks in the United States and the decolonizing struggles of Black Africa. As film director Spike Lee suggests at the beginning of *When We Were Kings*: “For these two African Americans to come home was of great significance. Because of Hollywood and TV a lot of us had been taught to hate Africa. There was a time when if you called a Black person an African they would be ready to fight” (in Guest 1996). Lee’s statement shows the change in perspective wrought by the liberation struggles of the 1960s, a perspective that Ho transliterated as the music and choreography of his *Movements 1* and *3*.

While Ho created a total of six movements, three different pieces comprised the version of *Sweet Science Suite* that I experienced on 13 November 2011 at the Guggenheim Works and Process presentation: *Movement 2: Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like an Afro Asian Bumblebee*; *Movement 1: Shake Up the World*; *Movement 3: No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger!* *Movement 2* began with a brief introduction by Works and Process producer Mary Sharp Cronson. The lights dimmed and the buzzing sound of Ho’s baritone sax performing a variation of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee” (1933) in 5/4 time opened the piece.

In keeping with his cancer warrior ethos, Ho performed his baritone in spite of his illness. He accompanied the all-African American dance ensemble, which consisted of six men and one woman, Toni Renee Johnson, who also served as dance director for the piece.²² The dancers’ bodies were draped in kente and dashiki-style clothing during Ho’s solo, *Float Like a Butterfly*, which was inspired by Billy May’s “Green Hornet” theme (1966) and the Rimsky-Korsakov interlude.²³ The solo was backed by the Green Monster Big Band conducted by Whitney George. Half of the band was divided between house left and right of the audience, with the other half in the pit.

Sweet Science Suite historicized, problematized, and in some cases even mythologized Afro Asia as a form of coalitional politics. The production and subsequent question-and-answer session explored Ali’s refusal to participate in the Vietnam War, his conviction for draft evasion, the subsequent loss of his title, his impoverishment, and his eventual comeback against George Foreman. The production was counternarrative choreography, with permutations inside and outside the ring mirroring Ali’s graceful and at times unorthodox tactics. One of those tactics was to develop a cult of personality, which he used to contest domestic racism and global imperialism. The collaboration between Ho and Christal Brown, whose father was a Vietnam veteran, was also a vehicle through which to make visible the body politics of choreography. Ho and Brown used modern dance, jazz music, and boxing—“the sweet science”—to illustrate the Black experience in the Vietnam War through Brown’s memories of her father.

Movement 2 set the stage for the metaphorical death of Cassius Clay, the story of Muhammad Ali’s conversion to the NOI, and Ali’s comeback. I was able to feel the vibration of sounds, see the live movement of flesh, hear and participate in the whistles and the “yaaaahs” that acknowledged the audience’s appreciation of the choreography and its seven dancers, and the 20 musicians in the Green Monster Big Band. Each movement of the dancers seemed to be a celebratory response and affirmation of the young Cassius Clay. His identity was captured by

22. Besides Johnson (rehearsal director), the dancers were Marcus Braggs, Dante Brown, Edwardo Brito, Roderick Callaway, Gilbert Reyes, and Ricarrdo Valentine.

23. For a complete description of the event’s programming see the Guggenheim archive at <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/794928204>. The page refers to the video of the event (see Cronson et al. 2011).

the interplay between ensemble members as they sparred amongst each other—shadow boxing, bobbing and weaving like Clay’s graceful dancing in the ring in his first Liston fight.

The lightness and nimbleness of Clay’s body came alive through the weightless dancers onstage as each member of the ensemble alternated between the structured boxer’s stance and the choreographed pirouettes and jetés of their sometimes balletic solos. Ho and the Green Monster Big Band’s constant refrain of the *Green Hornet* theme underscored the movement. Edward Brito, a dancer with boxing experience, leapt through the air, his feet, abdomen, and head parallel to the ground for what seemed almost a meter, until his fingertips finally reached the stage again, as he landed in a controlled roll. The ensemble then picked him up and hoisted him above their heads before placing him back down on his feet. Then they retreated offstage in a series of choreographed steps: they folded their arms, took one step back upstage right, made a Black Power salute with their fists in the air, pointed, took one step back upstage right, and repeated the sequence again until they had completely exited offstage.

Their retreat segued into one of two dance solos by Toni Renee Johnson as she continued to weave the story of the transformation of Cassius Clay into Muhammad Ali as a metaphorical search for a Black American identity. The sartorial presentation of Johnson was vastly different between her first and second solos (figs. 7 and 8). In the first solo, Johnson wore a black-and-white striped dress that was split up the front and connected by small metal chains, revealing her abdomen. The solo ended with a raised open palm to the audience, demanding that we “talk to the hand”—she was to be taken seriously. In Johnson’s second solo, she appeared in an all-black *khimar* (a long headscarf worn by Muslim women, typically gathered or fastened under the chin and covering the body to variable lengths). The change illustrated the



Figure 7. Toni Renee Johnson, in a modernist looking dress, looks back at the audience, bringing her first solo to a close of Movement 2 in *Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali*. *The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY, 13 November 2011*. (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)



Figure 8. Toni Renee Johnson, wearing a khimar, appears alongside Ho in her second solo of Movement 2 in *Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali*. *The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY, 13 November 2011*. (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

shift in political consciousness from 1966 to 1967—from Negro to Black, from Clay to Ali, and from Civil Rights to Black Power.²⁴

One of Ho’s sax solos provided the music for Johnson’s second dance. As he played, Ho leaned back, recalling Ali’s submissive posture on the ropes as he received punishing blows from Foreman. Ho’s entire body seemed as if he was pulling the weight of his feet into his lungs and raising his baritone to the highest altissimo possible. This in turn elicited a “yoooo” response from a spectator as Ho’s voice took his audience to the edge of sound with a piercing pop of the saxophone’s reed, and then, ever so gently, led us back down to the soulful bottom of the instrument’s lower register. At this point the dancers paused in their movement, faced the audience, and simply sat down on the floor. When Ho hit these octaves within the piece, the sound became an interlocution between saxophone, dancing body, and spectator.



Figure 9. Members of the dance ensemble square off in Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali. The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY, 13 November 2011. (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

Movement 1 followed *Movement 2* and sharpened the image of the transformative experience that Ho was attempting to capture. At the top of *Movement 1* the lights came up on two dancers onstage revealing their black-and-white clothing: black suit trousers, white shirt, and black tie. The dancer downstage right stood still, an erect spine proclaiming pride. This erectness was contrasted by the fluid movement of the upstage dancer, whose body pulsed back and forth from all fours on hands and knees to standing. The difference between stillness and movement staged a tension among the ensemble that correlated to the mounting tension within the Black community. The Black intelligentsia of the 1950s and '60s—the dancers in black pants and ties—were juxtaposed

with the more proletarian dress code of the other dancers in tank tops and casual khakis. In turn, *Movement 1* signified the discord within the Black community about how to deal with US social-economic inequity. *Movement 1* employed tableaux in which the dancers were positioned in contrapuntal alignment to each other—tableaus that were more synchronized into specific poses and gestures than the nonspecific free flow of *Movement 2*.

The intelligentsia could have been the NOI itself, but the NOI was just one of many groups within the Black liberation movement and representative of the various approaches in the struggle for social justice. Like Ali, radicals such as the Black Panther Party’s Huey P. Newton and Radical Action Movement’s Robert F. Williams led transnational Afro Asian movements that sponsored meetings, letter-writing campaigns, underground newspapers, and armed self-defense education. Thus, the stylistic transition of the early 1960s, as witnessed in the choreography of *Movement 1*, paralleled the uncertain and perhaps multifarious transition from Civil Rights to Black Power. This transition was inscribed in the choreography as the dancer wearing the afore-

24. Stokely Carmichael gave his “Black Power” speech in Greenwood, Mississippi, on 20 October 1966.

mentioned two-toned suit finally performed the erect posture of the Black Power salute (fig. 10).

After the performance, I interviewed dancer Ricarrdo Valentine. I asked about Brown's directing during the rehearsal process: How did Brown engage the Black Power movement? I wanted to know how much Brown emphasized the actual movement as a manifestation of political action and what kind of research was involved. Valentine:

VALENTINE: I found myself wanting to do my own research about the Black people coming up in the movement back in the day. I would read books on different leaders like Marcus Garvey. I would watch a lot of documentaries just to really understand what was going on back in the '60s. I had to really personalize it and just use it in my movement. When it was time to do the fist—especially one section when we create the portrait of the two guys who went to the Olympics, the two Black men, they hold up their fists—we used that in our choreography. I think that picture was very important. They didn't have any shoes on. It was Black Power in the air. They felt confident in who they were as young men at that time. I think a lot of the ways that they carried themselves back in the day, very confident, and it's something that you don't see now in my opinion. (Valentine 2011)

The *Sweet Science Suite* attempted to recall connections between global political movements and Ali as a “choreography of empathy” (Foster 2011:2) and solidarity. The image of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, US sprinters at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, with bowed heads and raised fists in protest against racism in the United States, connected with people around the world who were struggling against oppression.²⁵ As the dancer struck the Black Power pose, the other ensemble members immediately collapsed to the ground: they were literally knocked over by the force of the gesture. The Black Power salute was a recursive thematic gesture anticipating the climax of *Movement 1* in which one of the Black Power dancers dressed in a shirt and tie threw a flurry of punches aimed toward the other ensemble member, also in a shirt and tie, who reacted as if being knocked out. The dancer who'd thrown the flurry of punches then delivered a knockout blow to the audience, bringing *Movement 1* to a close and the audience to its feet.

The phrase, “No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger,” is popularly associated with Ali because of his stance against American involvement in Vietnam, but the phrase was actually first used by Stokely Carmichael (Carmichael 1967). While the slogan signifies the converging struggles of those who opposed the Vietnam War and those fighting racism, it also raises the

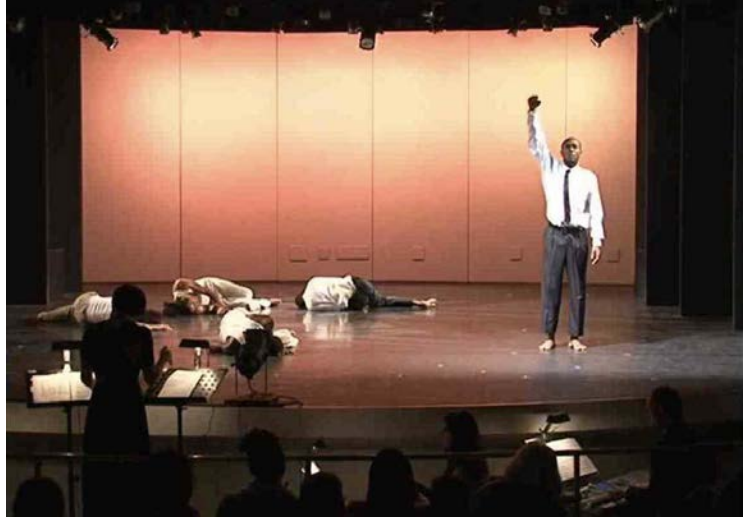


Figure 10. Roderick Callaway, his fist raised high, has knocked out the rest of the ensemble in *Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali*. *The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY*, 13 November 2011. (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

25. Mexico City hosted the 1968 Olympic Games amid serious civil uprisings. Ten days before the Games were scheduled to open, scores of university students were killed by army troops, mirroring both the resistance and suppression of aggrieved people everywhere. Smith and Carlos were immediately dismissed from the Olympic team by the US Organizing Committee and stripped of their medals. Smith's mother received death threats, manure, and dead rats in the mail; she died of a heart attack two years later. His brothers were dismissed from their high school football teams, and his brother had his academic scholarship revoked by the University of Oregon. Ironically, Smith carried a box that contained an olive tree sapling, which he intended as an emblem of peace.

visibility of the large numbers of the Black community who fought in Vietnam. This legacy was embodied in Christal Brown's choreography. During the second Q&A, Gladstone asked Brown about her movements:

I think that artists are a lot like vessels. You pour a lot of things in them and you can mix a lot of things together. What happened here was that everything that was in me, just kind of poured out. I started with *Movement 3* which is what you'll see next and I started with *Movement 3* in terms of how I could relate to it. *Movement 3* is "No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger." My father lost his legs in Vietnam. I was really pulled to the music because it had a melancholy type of feel to it. The soloist that you'll see, Dante Brown, I was fortunate enough to be in a room with him where he didn't ask me a lot of questions. I would just do something and he would do it too. (Brown 2011)

Movement 3 exists for Christal Brown as a process of expressing how the Vietnam experience affected her and her family. Her father's experience prompted Brown as a researcher and artist to embody his loss of legs. She went on to reveal how she internalized her father's experience and grafted it onto male bodies during the rehearsal process.

GLADSTONE: Can you fly up in the air like they do?

BROWN: Of course! (*Brown smiles to the audience. Loud laughter and applause.*)

HO: She can fly!

GLADSTONE: Sorry I even asked.

BROWN: Just because I'm a girl?

HO: She can fly!

BROWN: I should also say that when Fred asked me to do this project, it's a huge leap for me because my company is all women. So working with men, I had to bring my own level of bravado to the table. So having Dante there as a body to help me figure out what happens on a man's body was really important for the entry into the process. (2011)

The grafting of Christal Brown's experience onto Dante Brown's body (no relation to Christal) vis-à-vis the choreography was an act of imagination and interconnection (Taylor 2003:82) which enabled Brown to trace the echoes of her father's experiences in Vietnam and bring them into the present in relation to the collective experience of Afro Asia. When reconsidered in this context, the legacy of Black masculinity in Vietnam is reinscribed into the present as the past is brought forward through the Black female body.

The traces of events and memories grafted onto Dante Brown's body were visible during the opening moments of *Movement 3*. Brown emerged into a blue spotlight as a tenor sax duet without mouthpieces created a sound that resembled a Japanese *shakubachi* flute. It was ghostly in spirit, with a melancholy, almost bluesy feel. Dante Brown's body seemed to float on the stage as he moved in slow motion, performing a series of gliding turns, his arms extended and rotating. The stage lent itself to a ghostly past that was enhanced by a moaning sound created by the bassist sliding his fingers along the neck of the bass.²⁶

This mapping of Dante Brown's body with past experiences became most vivid when Brown was stripped to his briefs by other members of the ensemble wearing black ski masks and paramilitary fatigues. The dancers then proceeded to school the almost naked Dante Brown in the lessons and tactics of guerrilla warfare. His body was symbolically resurrected as a focal point of transformation, simultaneously actualizing the transformation of his physical body changing

26. At one point, I looked into the pit because I was certain that the sound was a person humming, but there was no vocalist. I realized after several seconds that it was the upright bass creating this human-like sound.

from a fighter in military fatigues into a political spokesman in a dark suit (fig. 11).

Movement 3 combined guerilla representations, US military, and NOI marching disciplines, putting the liberation struggle of US Blacks in conversation with Blacks who fought in Vietnam. It climaxed with a tableaux of the six dancers in black suits (fig. 12). Having done a quick-change offstage during Dante Brown's solo, the other dancers, now dressed in the NOI's signature bowtie and dark suit, point at the audience, almost as if speaking back to the witnesses of the event, asking: "What is your response?" It was their "final call," beckoning to the audience as did the newspaper of the NOI, *The Final Call*.²⁷ In recalling Christal Brown's father's experience in Vietnam, the violence enacted upon his body, and his loss of mobility, pain was transformed into power through the choreography of the dancing body.

What Remains Scientific Soul Sessions

At the end of his life, Ho committed himself to a major push to free political activist Russell "Maroon" Shoatz,²⁸ advancing eco-socialism, and building upon his idea of matriarchal socialism through a new organization he helped develop called Scientific Soul Sessions (SSS). A refrain on Afro Asian futurism as "alternative temporal and special maps provided by a perception of past and future affective worlds" (Muñoz 2009:27), the SSS represents Ho's final transformation on his lifelong journey.

27. The precursor of *The Final Call* was *Muhammad Speaks*.

28. Shoatz was incarcerated for 40 years at the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution at Graterford; he was held in solitary confinement for 22 years. While Shoatz remains incarcerated, the attention brought to Shoatz's case by the Scientific Soul Sessions (SSS) helped bring about his release from solitary confinement on 22 February 2014. For more on the SSS, visit www.scientificsoulsessions.com/maroon.



Figure 11. Dante Brown's nearly naked body begins to move to the new repertoire that the guerillas have taught him in Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali. *The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY, 13 November 2011.* (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)



Figure 12. The ensemble has transitioned from paramilitary fatigues into suits in the style of the *Nation of Islam* in Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Session Honoring Muhammad Ali. *The Peter B. Lewis Theater, Guggenheim Museum, NY, 13 November 2011.* (Screengrabs courtesy of Fred Ho and Big Red Media Inc.; by permission of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

The SSS is an intergenerational collective of writers, artists, and activists who are committed to “recogniz[ing] spirituality as an essential element in the struggle for liberation” with the understanding that the struggle for liberation is “scientific” because it seeks answers and solutions. The SSS has “soul” because it believes in “each self moving beyond its limits, reaching out to people, natural creatures, and to the cosmos, imagining and doing the impossible” (SSS n.d.). Many of the members active in the SSS are younger musicians—such as composer, singer, and writer Marie Incontrera, and Ben Barson, Ho’s baritone protégé—who performed in the Afro Asian Music Ensemble and jazz martial arts performances. Like the Black Panther Party’s Ten-Point Program,²⁹ the SSS mission revolves around 11 points that aim to “prefigure a new society free of imperialism, colonization, racism, heteropatriarchy and capitalist exploitation” (SSS n.d.; see “Scientific Soul Sessions Manifesto”).

However, unlike the Black Panther Party, which emphasized masculinist conceptions of leadership and organizing, the Scientific Soul Sessions is predicated on being led by women towards “a matriarchal future [...] in which the social construct of gender is eliminated and humanity is re-socialized, in which the values of caring, nurturance, creativity, compassion and collectivity dominate.” Since Ho’s death, the SSS has been committed to performing his musical works dedicated to matriarchal socialism, eco-socialism, and developing a queer subjectivity. Ho’s songs such as “Yes, means yes. No, means no. Whatever she wears, and wherever she goes,” have been the theme for live performance events such as the *Year of the Queer! & Sun Ra Celebration*. The event was held at Joe’s Pub on 19 January 2015, performed by the Eco-Music Big Band, and led by Marie Incontrera, who acted as composer, conductor, and bandleader, and whose work spans queer opera, political big band, and music for the oppressed. Through her writing, Incontrera has explored “Bisexuality in the Blues: the legacy of women’s sexual and musical liberation” (Incontrera n.d.) and what I refer to here as a “queer blues epistemology.”³⁰ Ho’s aggregate performances, including *Voice of the Dragon* and *Sweet Science Suite*, were more than mere performances. They were ways of organizing communities through performance in order to rehearse for a posthumous political mobilization into the future.

Ho’s work placed into conversation a multiplicity of transhistorical connections around struggles for racial, gender, and class justice, which were embedded in his political activism, live performance, recorded music, and writing. In many ways, Ho’s work was a reiteration of the writings of both Fanon and Baraka and their efforts for liberation from the varied effects of white settler colonialism. The archive and cultural imprint that Ho developed through his collaborations with many artists and scholars left behind a model for forging a pathway forward, away from self-destruction. His critique of capitalism’s effect on a sustainable environment has proven accurate, anticipating the very global crisis that we find ourselves in as a species in 2016. “Capitalism [...] is the cancer for Planet Earth; and cancer [...] is the exponentially increasing environmental and social toxicity of capitalism assaulting the individual person” (Ho 2011:xl). At this particular moment, it is the very cancerous effects of capitalism that threaten a sustainable relationship between human beings and their environment. It is for this reason that scholars, activists, and artists continue to engage Ho’s work in their classrooms, theatres, texts, on their streets, and in the sonic-scapes that embody his spirit.

29. In October 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale created the Black Panther Party’s Ten-Point Program, which included a call for freedom, full employment, “an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our Black Community,” “an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people,” and, summarizing in point 10, “We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black colony in which only Black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people as to their national destiny.” The Ten-Point Program was published on all of the Party’s newspapers and in Newton’s book, *Revolutionary Suicide* ([1973] 2009:122–24).

30. For more on blues epistemology see Clyde Woods’s *Development Arrested* (Woods 1998).

Scientific Soul Sessions Manifesto

Together, as members of Scientific Soul Sessions:

1. We promote ecosocialism: the unity of humanity with the planet's ecosystems. As aspiring ecosocialists, we aim for existence based on the same respect indigenous peoples have always had for the earth and returning to producers the rightful share of the fruits of their labor. We respect our Mother Earth as provider of all life on this planet. We take concrete steps to lessen our ecological footprint for the health and well-being of all beings and future generations.
2. We are building towards a matriarchal future, which will be the opposite of patriarchy, not its mirror image. Matriarchy will be a revolutionary future, in which the social construct of gender is eliminated and humanity is re-socialized, in which the values of caring, nurturance, creativity, compassion and collectivity dominate. We denounce gynocide: the ways that capitalism and white supremacy have attempted to break the spirit of struggle by inflicting violence upon and de-valuing women and all we represent.
3. Our decision-making process emphasizes imagination, improvisation and intuition leading the way into the new and unforeseen; perception, wisdom, communal balance, and the art of listening and reception, as ways to overcome brute power. In all decisions, we keep the seventh generation of our descendants in mind (as taught by many indigenous peoples).
4. We recognize spirituality as an essential element in the struggle for liberation. Our name is Scientific Soul: "Scientific" because we seek answers and solutions; "Soul" because we believe in each self moving beyond its limits, reaching out to people, natural creatures and to the cosmos, imagining and doing the impossible!
5. We bring art and politics together in provocative ways in our quest for excellence and the impossible dream! We see anti-capitalist analysis and anti-imperialist aesthetics as the paradigm for a new way of being and living that is not dictated by Western capitalist values.
6. Through forward-thinking artistic creation and political organizing, we realize SSS leadership principles of commitment, capacity, and clarity.
7. Recognizing the self-determination of oppressed nationalities and the strength of a United Front, our leadership is principally composed of oppressed nationalities and women. Each of us checks our privilege and takes responsibility to change the ways we reproduce our internalized racism and oppression.
8. We refuse to compromise and be made mediocre by institutions such as the NGO/ Non-profit Industrial Complex. We aim to be self-sufficient.
9. We are intergenerational. We acknowledge the experience and dedication of our elders. We respect the energy and fresh visions of the young.
10. We are internationalist. We seek to build a united front across boundaries and divides.
11. We are revolutionaries! We don't think capitalism is fixable.

[<http://www.scientificsoulsessions.com/scientific/>]

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