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Black Wellbeing as Black Methodological Praxis in the Age of Anti-Black Racism

Dionisio Nyaga, Ph.D.^{1,2*}

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¹School of Social Work, Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada

²ORCID: 0000-0003-2884-4240

*Corresponding author: Dionisio Nyaga, dnyaga@torontomu.ca

Abstract. This paper examines Black well-being as a critical research methodology by interrogating and implicating conventional colonial research practices in producing and sustaining anti-Black racism. It argues that western scientific research traditions are rooted in violent colonial logics that mark Black communities as objects of inquiry to be measured, categorized, and corrected, rather than co-creators' of knowledge. Drawing on scholarship on anti-Black racism, colonial violence, and the "value gap," the paper contends that western academic research has historically functioned as a technology of devaluing of Black life while legitimizing corporate greed. The paper invites us to imagine Black based approach to knowledge production as a way of acknowledging the Black diversity, Black complexity, Black uniqueness and Black lived realities while rejecting universalizing and positivist assumptions about a neat and singular Black. Black based methodological framework is grounded on ethical witnessing, historical accountability, and relational knowledge-making. At the centre of this framework is the concept of a "third eye," a philosophical approach of knowing that move beyond narrow and simple notions of objectivity and rationality to imagine Black histories, values, spiritualities, relationalities, vulnerabilities, and collective experiences as an ethical requirement in production of knowledge. Third eye is employed to centre Black well-being in knowledge making. In the context of western knowledge making, Black well-being is never as considered as belonging to neither emotional nor rational world of caring for oneself and as such erased from human knowledge and reality. The determination of Black life as instinctual further denies the presence of Blackness in both rational and emotional worlds of knowing. Third eye as a Black philosophical and linguistic approach centres and verbs Black and Blackness beyond and between the western cartesian duality and helps imagine how Black wellbeing as ethical knowledge making. Rather than institutionalizing knowledge, third eye instinctually operationalizes the process of knowledge making in ways that are respectful, and responsive to everyday Black experience.

Keywords: Praxis, Methodology, Africa, Anti-Black Racism, Philosophy.

Introduction

From the space of Blackness as invention, worlds are made/constructed and possible, over and against the colonial violence that intended to strip Blackness of meaning-making potentialities. (p.141. Okello, 2026)

This paper conceptualizes Black wellbeing and joy as a Black based methodological praxis. As a research method/ologies, Black wellbeing brings to bear the ethical, philosophical, relational, and political orientation to knowledge-making by centering rather than objectifying Black life (Knight & Vitoroulis, 2026). Black wellbeing contrasts western prescribed self-care to bring the sense of community as both a method and theory of creating knowledge. Western societies have employed self-care as a model of taking care of the individual. Foucault (1988), spoke at length about how in Greek culture, one had to take care of their self to lead other. Alcibiades was expected to take care of himself so that he could lead the city. Initially, Alcibiades thought that by taking care of his body and possession, he would be able to lead others. To him, he thought that having wisdom would help him to lead others until Socrates reminded him that taking care of one self-meant digging deep into one's soul to find yourself. Within the western standpoint taking care of the self is therefore understood as a form of travel into the self to bring out yourself. In Foucault's work, care of the self in the western world was about self-government and consciousness. Foucault invites us to understand how care of the self-became one connected with knowledge making while simultaneously deleting spirituality as the cornerstone of knowing.

In the context of Black tradition Black wellbeing is not just an individualised exercise to care about the self but one that is inextricably connected to Black culture and methodologies of creating knowledge. Black well does not just look from inside but also outside to see what affects its existence. Black wellbeing is a Black framework that flows and interrupts western ontological and epistemological analysis of social norms and practices that mark Black bodies as disposable and expendable. This paper brings back spirituality into the discourse of knowledge making by employing Black wellbeing as a community-based methodology of knowledge creation and liberation. A Black based methodological approach to knowledge making visualizes how research can be designed, conducted, interpreted, and mobilized (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2025) in ways that honour Black histories, Black spiritualities, Black social relations, and Black struggles against anti-Black racism (Nyaga, 2023). Such an orientation to research refuses and fails contemporary western based methods that mine data from Black communities while simultaneously concealing and hiding the violent colonial and neoliberal architectures that have overtime produced, packaged and generated Black suffering as data or institutional problem that needs to be fixed through erasure (Nyaga, 2023). Instead,

Black wellbeing and joy is imagined here as a tool of healing, spiritual restoration and resurgence and resistance against colonial violence. This means a way of producing knowledge that contests epistemic violence while affirming Black life, Black relationality, Black joy, Black grief, Black memory, and Black futures (Wallace & Davis, 2025). Such an orientation is grounded on the belief that Black communities must protect themselves from epistemic aggression and violence that gives credence to Western scientific research as the only basis for understanding Black communities. Black based methodologies belief that Black is not singular and cannot be reduced into numbers. This is not to argue that we cannot produce or work with numbers but rather find ways to make those numbers grief the death of many Black peoples who have died in the alter of knowledge making. Such a claim would therefore be one that imagines numbers as our relative who must be made Black through a Black based research methodologies. This means we must show radical love to numbers by reminding them that they are part of our long-lost relative who must be made to return home and serve us rather than violating out existence as Black life. To make that possible the numbers must therefore be made to mourn and grief in ways that enhances their wellbeing as part of Black existence. This means that Black wellbeing must be understood as trauma-based model of creating knowledge while at the same time seeking social justice against historical Black erasure.

Blackness as a philosophical tradition:

I would like to acknowledge that as a Kenya-Canadian living in North America, I bring with me a unique transnational focus on how we look at Black and Blackness. I am aware that Black politics and spirituality is not singular, neat nor straight and that it is informed by various unique experiences that Black peoples continue to face in their everyday existence. From the standpoint of the Black philosophical orientation taken throughout this paper, I begin with Black and Blackness as living (Okello, 2026), historical (Zaremba & Duklewski, 2025), spiritual (Carruthers & Phillips, 2025; Price, 2014), relational (Quashie, 2021), and unfinished categories (Nyaga, 2023). Black is not approached as a fixed biological essence or as a singular and neat identity to be measured, coded and organized through colonial scientific categories (Okello, 2026). Rather, Black is imagined as fluid, complex, intersected and political. This conceptual imagination of verbing Black cannot noun or preserve Black but rather be open to its variousness as an ethical necessity for social justice (Walcott, 2023). Black names a people, a set of histories, an embodied relation to the world, and a collective struggle against systems that have attempted to render Black life disposable (Walcott, 2023). To name a people does not necessarily call for biological sameness but rather a call for a community that is bound by common struggle. This being the case, Blackness, in this paper, is imagined as a broad and open field of beingness; with various ways of knowing, feeling, remembering, creating, and resisting (Wallace, 2022). It is not a

closed and preserved essence but rather one that intersect and relate with other struggles in complex ways. Blackness is a philosophical, social, political, and spiritual condition through which Black people imagine and interpret the world and remake it (Crawley et al., 2023). This is an important Black approach to how we come to think about knowledge making.

Black philosophical turn rejects and challenges the western dualistic separation of ontology and epistemology that often structures Western methodological thought (Nyaga, 2023). Within Black knowledge-making, being and knowing are not isolated philosophical domains. Rather, they are connected through blood memory, community, spirituality, embodiment, place, and struggle (Jenkins, 2021). Black people come to know through lived relations (Nyaga, 2023), collective survival (Anyiwo et al., 2025), Indigenous practices (Dei, 2018), stories (Dei et al., 2025), resistance (Mathieu, 2020), and through the everyday resilience under conditions structured by anti-Black racism. The question of what counts as knowledge, therefore, is an ontological one and seeks to uncover how Black Live has been disregarded, denied, misread, erased, and dispossessed of humanity and marked as unintelligible by dominant western research traditions (Rose & Nyaga, 2021; Okello, 2026).

A Black methodological approach to research therefore disrupts Euro-American epistemic attack by centering Black spiritualities (Morton, 2020), Black histories (Davis et al., 2010), Black relationality (Nyaga, 2021), and Black communal care as grounds of knowledge making. This approach is shaped by Black scholars and communities who insist that Black people are not merely a research object but a site of theory, method, relation, and possibility. Katherine McKittrick's work on Black and anticolonial methodologies lays the ground that positions Black storytelling, citation, music, wonder, and relationality as practices that interrupt knowledge systems designed to discipline Blackness (McKittrick, 2021). These practices must therefore be taken as ethics of knowledge production that centers Black healing at the center of how we come to know what we know. Christina Sharpe's theorization of wake work provides a method for reading the afterlives of slavery, anti-Black racism, and the ongoing conditions through which Black life survives and resists (Sharpe, 2016). Sylvia Wynter's critique of the colonial overrepresentation of "Man" further grounds this paper's refusal of research traditions that treat Western categories of the human as universal (Wynter, 2003). Black wellbeing is not a citational methodology or afterthought; rather it is an ethical requirement in research with and for Black communities. It seeks to look at whether knowledge making honors and contributes to Black survival, Black flourishing, Black healing, Black self-definition, and Black liberation. Black wellbeing as a methodology looks at whether academia, classrooms, policies, and overall social practices reproduce the new forms of anti-Black logics that organize violence in the street. As such, Black wellbeing is both the content and the method of this paper.

Historically, Black communities have employed spirituality (Weir-Soley, 2009), song (Saleh-Hanna, 2010; Valentim, 2025), stories (Chioneso et al., 2020; Lewis-Giggetts, 2022), ritual (Gaskew, 2022), land-based practice (Royster, 2025), mutual care (Reese & Johnson, 2022), and collective memory (Triece, 2024) as methods of Black liberation and emancipation from colonial violence. These acts and practices of Black resistance and resilience are not outside methodology. They are methodological and help imagine how Black bodies are able to resist anti-Black racism while at the same time taking care of their body, mind and spirit. They are expression of Black wellbeing amid Black hate; and help create knowledge that help counter colonial encroachment. These Black strategies and tactics of community care and resistance against anti-Black racism point to the fact that Black knowledge has often been produced in conditions where official archives, academic disciplines, and state institutions have attempted to erase, punish, or misrepresent Black life (Turner et al., 2025). This paper therefore asks: What is Black and Blackness when Black life is continually earmarked by social death and epistemic violence? What does wellbeing mean within institutional architecture that is designed and suctioned to delete, commodify or domesticate Black historical records? How do classroom environments reproduce and replicate the violence of the street, and how do Black educators and communities resist such reproduction? How can Black wellbeing operate as a methodological framework that affirms Black cultures, protects Black life, and unsettles colonial definitions of knowledge?

This methodological orientation also draws from Black feminist (hooks, 2013; Lorde, 1984; Oyěwùmí, 2005) and Black diasporic scholarship (Mbembe, 2017; McDuffie, 2024) that treats citation, memory, translation, and relational accountability as part of the method itself. Christen A. Smith's call to "cite Black women," her work on Black feminist praxis, and her collaborations on transnational Black feminist constellations help frame citation as an ethical and political practice rather than a neutral academic convention (Smith et al., 2021; Smith & Leu, 2023). In a similar spirit, recent work on Black methodologies in education calls for the centering of Blackness as a liberatory, relational, rebellious, and unfinished practice that transforms how inquiry is imagined and conducted (Nyaga, 2021, 2023; Okello et al., 2025). These Black scholarly artistries help this paper clarify Black wellbeing as a method of relation, bravery, care, refusal, and knowledge-making.

My own work on Black Afrocentric methodologies further deepens this framing by refusing what I have called colour-coated investigation: research that adopts the language of Blackness while leaving intact the colonial structure of inquiry. Black methodology cannot simply mean placing or depositing Black bodies into already established research designs. It must interrupt the very universalist methodology that frame Euro-American research by asking several questions: who asks the

question, who benefits from the answer, how stories are assessed and interpreted, where does knowledge returns, and whether the research process contributes to community healing or merely converts Black pain into academic capital and profits. In this sense, Black research is temporal, unfinished, ethical, and communal. It does not seek to master Black pain as an object of explanation; rather, it acknowledges Black historical experiences while refusing to place knowledge before ethics. Black methodology therefore requires a movement from extraction to return, from policy capture to community accountability and capacity building, and from instrumental truth-making to what I have described as mental insubordination against colonial narratives that mark Blackness as inferior, unintelligible, or unable to tell its own story (Nyaga, 2021a).

Black methodology as a spiritual approach to knowledge making must remain messy and unfinished. Messiness is not a weakness of method; it is a refusal of the colonial desire to reduce Black life to a single, clean, measurable, and consumable truth (Nyaga, 2023). When Black narrative are quantitatively converted into numbers, codes, and categories without attention to grief, history, spirituality, gender, migration, land, and community, research repeats and reinvents in new ways the racially based violence it purports to study. A Black methodological approach therefore treats narrative, memory, affect, mourning, spirit, and community relation as epistemological sites. These sites make visible what formal western scientific institutions often discount: the complexity of Black life, the unfinished nature of Black becoming, and the ethical demand to return research to the people whose lives make knowledge possible.

Anti Black Racism as Colonial Organizing Logic

Anti-Black racism is not merely a breakdown of social ethics; it is a colonial organizing logic that structures and institutionalizes the very terms of being and becoming Black (Fletcher et al., 2022). We continue to witness anti-Black racism in policies (Ndumbe-Eyoh, 2025) and culture (Bartholomew et al., 2025) that believe that Black communities are lesser beings than white people because of the colour of their skin (Glaude, 2020). In that sense, the question of anti-Black racism is one that values more white bodies than Black life to the extent where Black bodies are earmarked for death (Torres & Nyaga, 2021). The death of many Black bodies in North America streets is a physical testament of the kind of psychic anti-Black culture that continue to exist today and that renders Black lives as violable, disposable and socially and intellectually irrelevant. The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and many other who have faced similar racial death in the hands of police testifies the violence that black lives must endure in a society tailored to fails and misrecognize their rights and freedoms. These deaths mostly faced under blatant racial circumstances must be contextualized from the historical perspective. What that means is that Black Death is connected to Black enslavement where Black Lives were seen as property to be owned and sold. The question of property making is

one that looks at Black Lives as improper and therefore illegal. In fact, to be Black in a society that denies Black excellence is beyond any legal determinism. This forms of racial violence in the street are replicated in academic space in unique ways.

In my collaborative work on research as inconsolable mourning, this problem is framed as a methodological and ethical question: how can research account for Black life when Black bodies are repeatedly made disposable, deportable, injurable, and ungrievable? The point is not simply that anti-Black violence happens in public space as a spectacle, but that research itself has often participated in making Black life available as material, evidence, object, and archive without making Black life grievable. The deaths of Black people in streets, under police violence, and through institutional neglect therefore demand a methodology that can mourn, witness, document, and refuse closure (Torres & Nyaga, 2021). Black methodology becomes a practice of inconsolable mourning because it does not allow the academy to convert Black death into completed analysis and coding exercises. It insists that documentation, testimony, video, story, protest, and public witnessing are forms of knowledge that move research from the comfort of science to the discomfort of accountability (Torres & Nyaga, 2021).

Academia and Anti-Black Racism: When the Street Enters the Classroom

We continue witnessing anti-Black racism in academic ivory towers across North America (Thobani, 2022). As a Black educator, I am repeatedly reminded that my presence in academic space is treated as questionable, provisional, or out of place. When students question why I am standing in front of the class, or when they ask where my accent comes from, these are not only moments of curiosity; they are social deportation in their nature and practice. These questions are meant to push me out of a space that has historically been employed to mark Black life as incapable of intellectual exercise. They are political and epistemic questions that draw from colonial histories in which Black peoples were imagined as unable to speak, think, teach, or represent knowledge (Mbembe, 2017). I consider such questions as a means of disremembering and dismembering Black bodies in academic spaces. These are questions of whose membership is allowed and who gets to be disposed, dispossessed and exposed to violence. To employ Mbembe's work on necropolitics (Mbembe, 2019), we come to see how a classroom becomes a tent for some of us who are Black while at the same time a place of living for others who identify otherwise. Such moments reveal how the classroom can become an extension of the street: a site where Black presence and ontology is surveilled, surveyed, coded, displaced, and made to consistently, continuously and unverifiably prove itself. It is in those moments that we must recall our Black membership for our Black wellbeing. Black well-being becomes a methodology that helps

us navigate violence in academic space while simultaneously creating knowledges that help affirm ourselves in knowledge making and its spaces.

Black Care, Love, and Wellbeing as Method

Therefore, promoting Black wellbeing supports both educators and the broader community. Black wellbeing as methodology helps gather the community and educators to produce knowledge while simultaneously providing a space for community care and healing. One key aspect of care within Black educational spaces is the practice of connecting with other Black educators and students by holding hands, sharing stories, and taking classroom and academic space together. Black wellbeing as a methodological approach is one that remembers. It provides an environment for Black people to hold hands as an expression of taking space and ground. Black wellbeing is equally a way of telling Black stories in their various ways to help build a body of knowledge that can help resolve their everyday needs. When people tell their stories, they affirm their capacity to speak about their lived experiences and therefore open new forms of how we see and act within and beyond the social world. To speak is a political stand that Black people take to represent themselves within a world that has marked them as incapable of representing themselves. This opens new modalities of Black representation that seeks to question western knowledge. Within Black wellbeing, care is not merely interpersonal kindness; it is methodological. It creates the conditions through which Black people can speak, remember, grieve, theorize, and teach from their own locations. When Black educators employ Black stories into academic spaces, they interrupt the preferences of whiteness that often organize curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, and institutional authority (Nyaga, 2017; Nyaga & Torres, 2019). To value Black stories as a method of teaching and learning is to create relational spaces of care between classrooms and communities.

My work on spirituality and African community care also highlights why Black wellbeing must be understood as a methodological and spiritual practice. Black wellbeing is a decolonial practice of reimagining ourselves as Black peoples in Canada and across the world. It resists colonial definitions of Blackness as singular, evil, improper, out of place, or socially excessive. To gather together for Black wellbeing is to reconnect with spiritual selves, ancestral memory, land, story, and community relation in ways meant to inspire resistance against everyday anti-Black racism. Black wellbeing is therefore a form of space-making: it allows Black peoples to imagine themselves as part of the earthly community rather than as problems to be solved, and managed by colonial policy, psychiatric labeling, institutional surveillance, or academic extraction. In this sense, care and spirituality are not outside research; they are part of the ethical ground from which Black methodology becomes possible (Wane, Nyaga, & Torres, 2019).

Conclusion: Toward Black Wellbeing as Methodological Refusal and Possibility

This paper has argued that Black wellbeing must be imagined and thought of as a Black methodological approach steeped in the philosophical orientation of Black and Blackness. Such an approach refuses colonial western research traditions that reduces and simplifies Black bodies as objects of inquiry, while forgetting the historical and institutional conditions that make Black life vulnerable to harm. Drawing from McKittrick, Sharpe, Wynter, Smith, Leu, Okello, Nyachae, Jenkins, and my own work on Black Afrocentric methodologies, critical research methodologies, inconsolable mourning, and community care, the paper positions Black life, Black memory, Black storytelling, Black citation, Black spirituality, and Black relationality as methodological grounds that help unpack universality of traditional researcher methodologies. Black wellbeing as a methodology moves beyond the western scientific dualism of ontology and epistemology by insisting that Black ways of being and Black ways of knowing are relational, spiritual, embodied, historical, and collective. To place Black wellbeing at the centre of knowledge production is therefore to situate Black life as method: a practice of care, refusal, healing, memory, mourning, accountability, and world-making. In the age of anti-Black racism, Black wellbeing becomes not only a subject of study but an ethical demand on how knowledge itself must be made and returned to Black communities.

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