Seeking Self-Determination for Black Communities:
Toward Revolutionary Place-based Community Engagement

by

Daren Anderson Ellerbee

B.A., University of Pittsburgh, 2004

M.S. Robert Morris University, 2007

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This dissertation was presented

by

Daren Anderson Ellerbee

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and approved by

Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational
Foundations, Organizations, and Policy, School of Education

Dr. Richard D. Benson, Associate Professor, School of Education

Dr. T. Elon Dancy, Chair and Director of the Center for Urban Education, School of Education

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Daren Anderson Ellerbee, EdD

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Black self-determination and freedom is the goal of Black communities who have faced the oppressive and violent hand of white supremacy in America and throughout the world. Higher education is rooted in the European University and was not created for Black people. Historically, predominantly white higher education institutions (PWHEIs) maintained the social order. As racialized organizations, various PWHEIs created place-based Community Engagement Centers (CECs) located within marginalized communities, including the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). Pitt's first CEC opened in Homewood in October 2018 with a 15-year long-term commitment of "staffing infrastructure, and coordination to facilitate mutually beneficial collaborations between Pitt and the local community" (University of Pittsburgh, 2023a). Homewood is a predominantly Black neighborhood located in Pittsburgh's East End. Black residents face challenges including underemployment and poverty, dilapidated housing stock, lower life expectancy and failing schools. Despite this, its residents have displayed resiliency and a desire to thrive. Though distrust of Pitt by community members loomed, Homewood's leadership, reflected through the Homewood Community Development Collaborative, continued to partner with Pitt and other anchor institutions to improve the community's conditions. This evaluative dissertation in practice examined the perception of Pitt in Homewood and whether the institution's place-based practices were in alignment with principles of Black self-determination and freedom. The ideology of Kawaida (Karenga, 1993, 1998), an African American and social philosophy, and its central values

the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles; Karenga, 1998) are examined and reimagined as a value-system which centers Blackness and could result in community-university partnerships and praxis aimed at supporting Homewood's ability to define, defend, and develop itself.

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Positionality Statement

I am Debbie's daughter, first generation born in the North and a grandchild of the Great Migration. Edith and James Anderson traveled from Greenville, South Carolina in the 1950s, with my mother in tow, seeking opportunities to thrive while escaping the oppression Black people found south of the Mason-Dixon line. The trauma of slavery is written within my DNA.

I am Black woman. Black with a capital "B" and not a lowercase "b," and this distinction matters.

> Black with a capital 'B' refers to a group of people whose ancestors were born in Africa, were brought to the United States against their will, spilled their blood, sweat and tears to build this nation into a world power and along the way managed to create glorious works of art, passionate music, scientific discoveries, a marvelous cuisine, and untold literary masterpieces. (Appiah, 2020)

I celebrate Blackness in this dissertation, recognizing that through the reflexive process of research I can acknowledge my experiences being a Black Pittsburgher who has spent most of my life living and working in predominantly Black communities. I will tell the story of the struggle for Black self-determination in Pittsburgh and of how the University of Pittsburgh's (Pitt) place-based community engagement efforts are perceived in relation to that goal. I will do this while acknowledging my role in representing the university's interests in Homewood.

As a Pittsburgher and an employee of Pitt I am viewed as a hybrid, representing both my alma mater and communities of people who look like me. My professional career spans the not-for-profit, government, and education sectors. Within each I represented institutional interests within Black communities, and Black interests within institutions. Acting as a sturdy bridge

between the two, my titles have varied. Early in my career I was an Outreach Coordinator. When I worked for the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, I was a Community Affairs and Equity Strategist. At Pitt, I became the first director of the university's Community Engagement Center (CEC) and a community engagement professional (CEP). CEPs are "professional staff whose primary job is to support and administer community-campus engagement" (Dostilio, 2017, p. 1). In all my roles I led with a commitment to social change, and I was initially attracted to the CEP (Moten & Harney, 2004) title since professionals have, "an understanding and commitment to work *with* communities" (Dostilio, 2017, p. 59). CEPs are also members of the academy, and with this membership comes privileges and practices which may replicate inequities.

As an *institutional actor*, one who, "as a consequence of their beliefs, expectations, values, and practices, create or perpetuate unequal outcomes" (Bensimon, 2005, p. 101), I understand that the oppressed can replicate the approaches of the oppressor (Freire, 2003). Though I work diligently not to perpetuate deficit approaches towards minoritized people, I must note the contradiction of my position as a *critical academic*.

> To be a critical academic in the university is to be against the university, and to be against the university is always to recognize it and be recognized by it, and to institute the negligence of…that unassimilated underground, a negligence of it that is precisely, we must insist, the basis of the professions. (Moten & Harney, 2004, p. 105)

I grapple with the fact that I represent institutional diversity, and that this equity work is not for others, but for me, too.

1.0 Section 1: Naming & Framing the Problem of Practice

1.1 Problem of Practice

My problem of practice is the University of Pittsburgh's place-based Community Engagement Centers are not advancing self-determination in local Black communities. Black self-determination "encourages the construction and control of Black institutions, prioritizes Black people, creates and legitimizes knowledge, and sets an agenda by and for Black people" (Jeffries, 2020, p. 2). Black self-determination also "demands that we as an African people define, defend and develop ourselves instead of allowing or encouraging others to do this" (Karenga, 1998, p. 50). It is "the power of [B]lack people to decide what should be researched in their community, why, and by whom" (Garcia et al., 1969). It encourages economic independence for Black people while countering "forces meant to disrupt Black communities such as gentrification, urban renewal, [and] massive displacement of entire areas" (Jeffries, 2020, p. 8) among other environmental and socioeconomic determinants impacting Black thriving. Black self-determination involved intentional collective action led by Black people for Black people, and historically, universities have worked with Black communities in ways which furthered white supremacy.

Past approaches by predominantly white higher education institutions towards Black communities reflected deficit theorizing and prioritized institutional goals. Black communities were left feeling overwhelmingly researched and distrustful (Evans et al., 2009, p. 206). History points to the complicity of colleges and universities in supporting the social order, a fact acknowledged by the 18th Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Patrick Gallagher who

called upon the Pitt community to wrestle with "perpetuating unfair structures and systems" following the murder of George Floyd (Gallagher, 2020). Is it possible for a racialized organization (Ray, 2019) like Pitt to further Black self-determination through place-based community engagement efforts?

In October 2018 the University of Pittsburgh opened the CEC in Homewood. Many Homewood community members expressed distrust of the university's place-based community engagement aspirations from the beginning, fearing the institution's conquest of the neighborhood over the institution's expressed commitments to collaborate. Homewood's residents, who are predominantly Black, had a front seat to watch the gentrification of East Liberty – a once African American community that borders Homewood and is now home to Google, Whole Foods, and several trendy restaurants. This *new* East Liberty was created for new people. High-rise apartment buildings filled with Black families were torn down, and residents were displaced. The Shadow Lounge, a venue that celebrated and amplified Pittsburgh's hip-hop scene, was forced to close. Afrocentric murals paying homage to Black heroes were painted over. It appeared that Blackness would be erased from the fabric of East Liberty. Yet, in 2017 local artist-activist Alisha Wormsley profoundly proclaimed through her art that "*There Are Black People in The Future*." Black people will always be in East Liberty.

The residents of Homewood witnessed the gentrification and the struggle their East Liberty brothers and sisters endured, and they vowed not to allow that to also happen in Homewood. This is the ecosystem in which Pitt opened its first CEC, and its opening did not happen overnight. The process involved concerted efforts by Pitt to engage key community stakeholders recognizing the need to build trust and to develop buy-in. Many interactions between Pitt and community members were clouded by distrust.

Residents questioned why Pitt wanted to hold space in Homewood. They inquired if the institution's motives included researching the community's children, or whether Pitt's presence in Homewood would accelerate gentrification. In my role as the inaugural director of the CEC, I had many interactions with various community stakeholders including residents with invested interest in Homewood and the surrounding East End communities. I stressed Pitt's desire to pivot from past practices and to be better neighbors. Some of these exchanges took place on social media with concerned residents engaging their followers about Pitt in Homewood and what it meant for the community. Social media posts gauged public opinion and challenged Pitt's true intentions.

A well-known community activist who had engaged in the early discussions to create the CEC criticized the University for "invading" Black communities, accusing Pitt of wanting to "test out different 'clinical drugs' on our kids for money and pimping the grassroot nonprofits in Homewood for their ideas" (Resident Facebook Post, Aug 16, 2017; see Appendix A). This post generated comments and offline conversations both internal and external to the university, bringing more awareness to the CEC's opening, as well as increased scrutiny of Pitt's activities by community members *and* allies from within the institution. Many stakeholders, both internal and external, took a "wait and see" stance.

In the time since the CEC's opening in Homewood, have Pitt's place-based community engagement activities aligned with principles of Black self-determination? Have Pitt's place-based efforts shifted the community's perception of the institution? My research will interrogate if Pitt's investment in Homewood is truly benefitting Homewood and contributing to Black thriving.

1.2 Broader Problem Areas & Organizational System

1.2.1 A Broader Problem Area: Racialized Organization

Past histories, institutional priorities and transactional practices have upheld an environment of distrust between Black communities and PWHEIs tracing back to the rise of higher education in America. Rooted in the European University (Soska, 2015), American higher education was shaped by "settler colonialism," defined as "a practice of direct global domination which involve[d] the subjugation of one people to another" (Dancy et al., 2018, p. 177). Universities served a critical purpose in furthering European ideals and rule throughout the colonies. "Colleges supplied the administrations of the colonies, supported domestic institutions, and advanced Christian rule over Native peoples" (Wilder, 2013, p. 16). European and Christian ideals were promoted through higher education. "The first five colleges in the British American colonies—Harvard (established 1636), William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), Codrington (1745) in Barbados, and New Jersey (1746)—were…major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery" (Wilder, 2013, p. 16). The establishment of Harvard, for instance, was seen as a symbol of Christianity's success along with the founding of the college being correlated to the "genesis of slavery in New England" (Wilder, 2013, p. 23).

A colonial-era higher education institution, the University of Pittsburgh was founded in 1787, eight-years after the "Pennsylvania legislature decided it no longer wanted to remain a slave-sanctioning state" (Byrdsong & Yamatani, 2017, p. 16) and four-years after the end of the Revolutionary War. Even with the Pennsylvania legislature's decision, the census registered 64 enslaved people out of 2,400 residents nearly 20 years following ratification (Byrdsong & Yamatani, 2017). Higher education institutions throughout the nation upheld white superiority.

They used enslaved labor in many capacities across college campuses and supported the proslavery elite during the antebellum period in the South (Dancy et al., 2018; Dempsey, 2010). "The children of wealthy planters were targeted as a source of enrollments and income" (Wilder, 2013, p. 24). Complicity in the preservation of social constructs permeated all facets of higher education, with black bodies being treated as property or other than human (Dancy et al., 2018; Freire, 2003). Higher education positioned those outside of whiteness as inferior.

Education within American society was shaped around the best interests of white men and preserved social inequality (Dancy et al., 2018). It was not until 1823 that the nation saw its first Black student, Alexander Lucius Twilight, graduate from Middlebury College in Vermont. William H. Dammond became the University of Pittsburgh's first Black graduate in 1893, 70 years following Mr. Twilight and 106 years after Pitt's founding. Mr. Dammond earned a degree in civil engineering from the Western University of Pennsylvania (which became the University of Pittsburgh on July 11, 1908; Levine, 2021). In 1910, the first Black woman to graduate from Pitt was Dr. Jean Hamilton Walls, who majored in mathematics and physics (University of Pittsburgh, 2022b). Excluded from campus organizations, Dr. Walls was a founder of the local chapter of the Council of Negro Women (University of Pittsburgh, 2022b). As conduits of racism, "racialized organizations like Pitt and other predominantly white institutions (PWIs), played a role in the social construction of race" (Ray, 2019, p. 26).

Ray (2019) defined a racialized organization as possessing four criteria including:

(1) Enhancing or diminishing the agency of racial groups, (2) legitimating unequal distribution of resources, (3) Whiteness as a credential, and (4) decoupling of formal rules from organizational practice is often racialized. (p. 26)

In the ways in which PWHEIs have historically operated, Pitt has reinforced the subjugation of Black communities and other marginalized groups perpetuating systemic racism. Ray's (2019) methodology, "replaces the notion of organizations as race-neutral with a view of organizations as constituting and constituted by racial processes that may shape both the policies of the racial state and individual prejudice" (Ray, 2019, p. 27). In considering Ray's two tenets – racial agency, and Whiteness as a credential – here I have situated Pitt as a racialized organization shaped by practices that uphold the racial hierarchy.

1.2.1.1 Enhanced or Diminished Agency

The University has enhanced or diminished the agency of minoritized communities through its community outreach and engagement efforts. For example, the Black residents of Homewood have seen an increased Pitt involvement in their community, including an uptick of faculty, staff, and student interest. Community-based organizations (CBOs) have seen increased contacts from Pitt's institutional actors interested in partnerships and collaborations, according to a community leader. The Executive Director of a Homewood CBO noted challenges in managing the increase of meeting requests from Pitt faculty, citing a need for my intervention as the CEC director to mitigate inquiries so that he could focus on his organization's priorities. I was reminded that the university's timing is not the community's timing, and that "one-way racialized organizations shape agency is by controlling time" (Ray, 2019, p. 36). Misaligned priorities can deter university-community partnership efforts.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEC and Pitt proved to be valuable community partners. In early 2021, the CEC served as convener and supported community vaccination clinics. This collective effort ensured that elders had access to the vaccine during a time when there was vaccine scarcity and vaccination hesitancy due to suspicion and safety, especially among Black

communities. Medical apartheid is real, and Black communities in particular have a long history of medical mistreatment. For example, the following is regarding the Tuskegee syphilis study:

> Black men were invited to participate in the study under the premise that they would be treated for "bad blood," a term locally used at the time for syphilis, fatigue, and anemia. "Proper informed consent was not obtained, and the men were misled and denied treatment, even when one became available" (D. Perkins, 2021, p. 11)

The deadly impact of the Tuskegee syphilis study is etched into the DNA of Black America and continues to be noted as a contributing factor fueling the distrust Black people have of Western medicine, and subsequently research institutions like the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). During the peak of the pandemic, the Black community's skepticism around the COVID-19 vaccine, in addition to vaccine shortages especially among communities considered vulnerable like Homewood and the Hill District, made a coordinated effort important. Community-based organizations, activists, and residents worked with government agencies and Pitt units to provide vaccinations to residents who wanted one. Coordinated registration efforts at the community-level ensured that the limited supply of vaccine went to people who lived in the community. During that time more affluent and predominantly white communities were filling up vaccination clinics. An allotment of vaccines was provided by the Allegheny County Health Department and administered by Pitt's School of Pharmacy with the help of units across the health sciences. The YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh donated their Homewood-Brushton Center as a location. Primary Care Health Services, a federally funded medical center affectionately known in the community as "Alma-Illery" vaccinated and provided volunteers. Alma-Illery continued to vaccinate residents throughout the peak of the crisis. The Homewood Children's Village led registration efforts and Pitt coordinated "Community Connection Callers" to register residents. On

clic days, volunteers from throughout the community and Pitt ensured that the flow of the day was stress-free and organized. Residents reported feeling cared for and supported. Pitt's involvement in the vaccination clinic shows how racialized organizations can leverage their influence to enhance agency around Black thriving, especially within neighborhoods it has invested in.

The opening of the CECs reflected the institution's *Neighborhood Commitments*, a program within the Senior Vice Chancellor's Office and housed within the Office of Engagement and Community Affairs. Neighborhood Commitments are described as a "long-term commitment of investment, infrastructure, programming and dedicated staff in neighborhoods such as Homewood and the Hill" (University of Pittsburgh, 2020a). Pitt's agency in Homewood increased as schools and units throughout Pitt started to create positions focused on community engagement. Institution-wide incentives including the Partnerships of Distinction Award, which "recognizes outstanding partnerships that are exemplars of community engagement" (University of Pittsburgh, 2022), and the Year of Engagement (academic year 2020-2021) grants drew faculty, staff, and students to Homewood and other CEC neighborhoods.

CEC communities like Homewood are considered neighborhoods of *focus* or of institutional priority. With an increased focus comes increased institutional presence, which can fuel community distrust and leave residents and activists fearful that their neighborhood may become a hub for research. "Scholars have often conducted research in African American communities from a conceptual frame of 'pathology,' particularly within low-income African American communities" (Briscoe et al., 2009, p. 206) Historically, white institutions have only advanced the interests of People of Color to promote their self-interests (Milner, 2007, p. 390). From the university's perspective, Pitt's agency through its investment in the CECs symbolized a

desire to work *with* communities and not *on* communities, which communicated a willingness to address the challenges within neighborhoods like Homewood.

1.2.1.2 Whiteness as a Credential

Whiteness is a dominant organizational racial structure shaping U.S. higher education institutions, which served in the institutionalization of routines that benefit Whites, who are the racial majority (Liera, 2020). It provides access to organizational resources, legitimizes work hierarchies, and expands white agency, whereas Blackness, according to Ray (2019) is marked as a negative credential. Given this, can we consider Blackness a credential at all?

Situating PWHEIs as racialized illuminates the paradoxes found in place-based community engagement centers within predominantly Black communities. "Given that White people established and have dominated higher education institutions in the United States, their interests are institutionalized in the foundation of the campus culture" (Liera, 2020, p. 1957). In this regard, whiteness cannot be stripped from third spaces embedded within minoritized communities and operated by racialized institutions. Though intentional efforts were made to make the space *feel* like a community space, including a mural with African symbols, and the addition of a history exhibit created by Black youth, whiteness remained overshadowing. Black visitors know who has true ownership and access to predominantly white spaces. "Institutional image is produced in part for external others" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 33). The creation of an institutional image of Homewood and Blackness was necessary in communicating to residents that the CEC was an accessible front door to Pitt, right in the heart of the Black community.

The CEC in Homewood's walls were adorned with local Black art. Its full-time staff were all Black and their activities were communal and collaborative. Despite these efforts, Black bodies stood out at the CEC, confirming the whiteness of the space (Ahmed, 2012) and that whiteness

can be occupying (Ahmed, 2012). The creation of the CEC in Homewood did not make whiteness invisible, especially for those who do not inhabit it or those accustomed to or desensitized to its inhabitance (Ahmed, 2012). The hospitality of the CEC reinforced it. "Whiteness is produced as a host, as that which is already in place or at home. To be welcomed is to be positioned as the one who is not at home" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 43). There is a glaring contradiction in welcoming predominately Black residents into a physical space that rests on indigenous land.

The development of a community engagement center in Homewood included ensuring that the center aesthetically felt welcoming to residents, as well as to the Pitt faculty, staff, and students who frequented the space. For some, a Pitt space within their community was inaccessible despite efforts by CEC staff to communicate otherwise. Homewood, in turn, had to be made appealing to the predominately white Pitt institutional actors who may have had reservations about traveling into what they perceived as an unsafe and impoverished area.

Outreach was made to residents to communicate the Center's purpose and resources which included computer literacy classes for elders, monthly Community Dinners & Conversations which brought residents and Pitt people together to break bread and to learn about the CEC's activities, as well as other community-benefiting opportunities. People, both from the community and from campus, needed a reason to walk through the doors; and while their photos were taken, their stories were carefully crafted to share via university social media channels and news sources. This helped to demystify and humanize Homewood to cultivate more faculty, staff, and student interest and support of Pitt's place-based activities in the neighborhood. Despite these efforts and others, whiteness kept many people – both residents and institutional actors – away from the CEC and/or out of Homewood.

Though we may see ourselves as part of a community of people in which we share the same culture and kinship, Black institutional actors, including Community Engagement Professionals who work in Black communities like Homewood, are many times viewed as part of the problem. Black institutional actors are affected by their proximity to whiteness. The damned would consider Black CEPs "new missionaries," or "Bourgeois negroes" [who] "came into [their] neighborhoods when [they] rebelled" (the damned, 1973, p. 14). These new missionaries were viewed as being proponents of the authority, and not supporters of Black communities. Though Ray (2019) confirmed that "racial identity trumps the credential" (p. 41) and that Black people within the academy are also enduring systemic racism and prejudice, many Black institutional actors have come into Black communities leading with privilege and perpetuating learned practices as unenlightened conduits of white supremacy. The work of disrupting this learned behavior is necessary.

All Pitt faculty, staff, and students will need to examine their positionality, biases, and beliefs prior to working within minoritized communities, especially institutional actors who deploy and embody deficit-framed approaches. "First, a critical component of doing this work is self-examination, reflection, and action where educators willingly examine their beliefs about and biases towards students from non-dominant communities" (Madkins and Nasir, 2019, p. 72). If this examination and reflection does not take place, potential users of the CEC, from the community and from Pitt, may remain disengaged despite the overall image of inclusivity and belonging promoted through the centers. A racialized organization's place-based CECs have the potential to support community persistence and self-determination but cannot do so without addressing centuries of distrust perpetuated by systemic practices which further white superiority and dominance.

1.2.2 Broader Problem Area: Deficit-Theorizing & Community Distrust

1.2.2.1 Deficit Theorizing & Needs-based Approaches

Racialized institutions, even well-intentioned ones, can perpetuate racial inferiority among Black communities through various practices which have historically benefitted one group over another. Racism was a psychological brainwash technique that made whites feel superior and [B]lacks feel inferior" (the damned, 1973, p. 18). Deficit-framing justified the inclination of PWHEIs to view and engage with marginalized communities based upon perceived needs and not community strengths. "The systems that guide educational inquiry may portray certain groups of people, particularly people and communities of color, in deficit and deficient terms" (Milner, 2007, p. 389). Minoritized urban communities were considered needy, and racialized organizations addressed this by cultivating approaches based upon needs-maps. The community's needs identified by professionals from outside of the affected communities stripped away self-determinism and presented what Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) referred to as "deficiency-oriented policies and programs" as solutions (p. 2). They pointed out the university's complicity in furthering needs-based approaches.

> Public, private, and non-profit human service systems, often supported by university research and foundation funding, translate the programs into local activities that teach people the nature and extent of their problems, and the value of service as the answer to their problems. (p. 2)

Outcomes from deficit framing do little to produce transformation, but instead emphasizes the neediness of individuals, reducing them to receivers or consumers of services while neglecting to consider their personal *gifts* (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), and the *cultural wealth* present within their communities (Yosso, 2005). Freire (2003) stressed that liberating pedagogy does not

treat the oppressed as unfortunates, or objects of humanitarianism. Deficit theorizing and the approaches enacted from it fosters distrust of PWHEIs, especially from Black residents who feel "constantly researched" by research focused institutions (Evans et al., 2009, p. 206).

Underpinning higher-education's culture, research faculty who have approached minoritized communities have prioritized their expressed institutional commitments and not the community's goals. Research benefited the researcher and not those being researched, and as the careers of researchers are transformed the community remains unchanged (de Leeuw et. al, 2012; Evans et al., 2009). This acknowledgement has not translated into transformative community engagement practices, when researchers desire participants while the community demands partnership and change.

Community engagement is seen as a means to pivot faculty away from needs-based approaches. It encourages, "status-hungry faculty to think beyond pure research" (Baldwin, 2021, p. 40). That, coupled with consistent opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to learn about racial consciousness and anti-racist approaches will ensure that PWHEIs are working with communities, based upon strengths, and cultivating partnerships. Professional development is necessary, according to Yamamura and Koth (2018), to address "racially mismatched contexts" in which predominantly white faculty, staff, and students are leading place-based initiatives within minoritized neighborhoods. "Universities must provide faculty with professional development opportunities that directly engage issues of race and culture and focus upon an asset-based approach to community partnership" (Yamamura & Koth, 2018, p. 111). Transformative collaborations, like those between PWIs and minoritized and/or marginalized communities necessitates trust. Mutual benefit cannot exist without mutual respect.

The privileged may be willing to speak the language of transformation yet carry within them a distrust of the people. Freire (2003) posits the difference between solidarity and support. "A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust" (p. 60). When institutional speech acts are not aligned with praxis, minoritized communities suffer the ramifications of obstruction. "Anti-racist engagement approaches are seen as necessary, especially given the racially mismatched contexts of most university–community engagement experiences in which, 'the university staff and students are mostly White while their community members are People of Color'" (Yamamura & Koth, 2018, p. 110).

PWHEIs' community engagement initiatives must ensure that institutional speech acts are productive. "Non-performatives describe the 'reiterative and citational practice by which discourse' does not produce 'the effects that it names'" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). Unfortunately, communities like Homewood are accustomed to non-performative speech acts that do not produce, furthering the "praxis of domination" and distrust (Freire, 2003, p. 137). Attempts to decouple division and power structures from community engagement can also promote distrust. "Existing discussions of community engagement downplay the complexity of community, abstracting and dissolving important divisions and power structures in the process" (Dempsey, 2010, p. 360). These inequalities of power have impeded university-community partnerships and introduced conflicts (Dempsey, 2010). Revolutionary community engagement requires bold and meaningful communication. "Courageous dialogue with the people" doesn't fear their expression or participation and is accountable, frank about achievements, mistakes, miscalculations, and difficulties (Freire, 2003, p. 128). The absence of courageous dialogue can reinforce social

conditions, stymie true neighborhood-level transformation, and perpetuate distrust between the institution and the community.

1.2.2.2 Community Climate: About Black Pittsburgh

Considered the largest city within Appalachia, Pittsburgh was a destination for Black soldiers in the Army of General John Forbes following the Revolutionary War (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2011), and for many southern African Americans escaping slavery, the city was a stop on the Underground Railroad. During the Great Migration following World War I, Pittsburgh offered employment in mining and industry, with many Black people moving from South to North for employment and to escape Jim Crow – people like my grandparents. "African Americans were employed in manufacturing jobs to fill gaps left as a result of the World War and imposed restriction of immigration from Europe" (Alexander, 1998, p. 361). Black labor was needed to fill menial roles in Pittsburgh, and the Black population grew. "Between 1900 and 1940 the black population rose by more than 200% compared with a 42% increase in the city's nonblack population (Alexander, 1998, p. 361). As Black Pittsburgh experienced growth, systemic racist practices like redlining, mortgage discrimination, pay inequity, and neighborhood disinvestment impacted the ability for Black Pittsburgh to thrive.

According to Forbes, 21st century Pittsburgh is known as America's Most Livable City (Levy, 2010), yet Black Pittsburghers are not flourishing. Considered the worst city for Black women (Howell et al., 2019; Philyaw, 2021), Pittsburgh has a population of just over 303,000 with African American/Black residents making up 23% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The 2019 Inequality Across Gender and Race report, published by the City's Gender & Equity Commission (Howell et al., 2019), shined a light on the state of Black Pittsburgh, and measured livability by the following standards indicators including health, income, employment, and education:

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- Health: "Black adult women living in virtually all other cities are less likely to die than Pittsburgh's Black women" (p. 22) with cardiovascular disease, cancer, tobacco use and drug overdoses cited as prevalent causes.

- Income: "More Black children in Pittsburgh grow up in poverty than 95% of similar cities" (p. 29) and "Black women in 90 percent of cities have higher median income than the Black women in Pittsburgh" (p. 34).

- Employment: "Pittsburgh is in the bottom 15 percent of cities for Black employment (p. 37) with the Black male workforce more concentrated in maintenance, factory, food service and construction occupations.

- Education: "White residents [in Pittsburgh] are 3 times more likely to have a college degree than Black residents" (p. 42), though Black men are more educated than Black men in 60 percent of similar cities. However, "60 percent of cities have higher college completion rates for Black women than Pittsburgh" (p. 44). "Pittsburgh has a relatively educated population, but this is not translating into equality in the workplace" (p. 44).

Though livability measures that are primarily designed for and based on white experiences often fail to account for the systemic inequities that have historically and continue to disproportionately affect Black communities, Howell et al. (2019) acknowledged individual and structural racism as contributing factors to the poor health and economic outcomes of Black people in Pittsburgh. They stressed the need for institutions to change: "Effective interventions will aim to transform the institutions that perpetuate these inequities, not the individuals who experience exclusion and marginalization" (p. 44).

1.2.2.3 Community Climate: About Homewood

Homewood is a neighborhood located between Point Breeze, East Hills, and Wilkinsburg in Pittsburgh's East End. Author John Edgar Wideman, jazz legend James Earl Gardner, color line breaker Chuck Cooper (the first African American to be drafted into the NBA), and many other notable and world-renowned Black artists, athletes, and leaders have called Homewood, home. In its early days, Homewood was a suburban escape for elites including Andrew Carnegie and George Westinghouse (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010). Their estates needed workers, which brought the first Black populations to Homewood (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010). With the introduction of the streetcar in the 1890s, the population of Homewood grew. Many skilled workers of Northern European descent moved to the neighborhood (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010). The area was seen as safe, clean, and "the choicest residence locality in the greater Pittsburgh area" (p. 4). Its population peaked at 30,000 residents by the early 20th century and by the 1950s the population began to shift.

It is hard to discuss the history of Homewood without accounting the forced dislocation of families from the Hill District, a historic African American neighborhood bordering the University's Pittsburgh campus and downtown. "A shift in the demographics occurred in the 1950s when the City of Pittsburgh claimed land in the Lower Hill District for the Civic Arena" (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010, p. 4). The displacement of an estimated 8,000 predominately Black residents from the Hill is a trauma woven into the fabric of Homewood and the Hill District. "Many [residents] received little to no compensation for their homes, and were dispersed to other parts of the city, especially the North Side and East End, or to public housing in the Hill" (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2011, p. 17). The exodus of Black residents from the Hill contributed to white flight from Homewood. "This influx of black residents panicked

the neighborhood's white middle class, many of whom decided to move away" (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010, p. 5). By 1960, the population of Homewood was 70% Black (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010).

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the looting and riots that followed permanently impacted the financial stability of these two Black neighborhoods. "Riots and looting occurred in Homewood and the Hill District for a period of two days causing irreparable damage to businesses that led to the decline of the business district in both neighborhoods" (Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 2010, p. 5). Further contributing to population decline was the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which included the Fair Housing Act providing Black families the opportunity of neighborhood choice.

Table 1. Socio-economic & Education Attainment in Homewood vs. City of Pittsburgh

Location	Size	Median Income	Poverty			Education			
	Total Population	Median Household Income (in 2019 inflation adj dollars)	Family Income below poverty level	Family Income at or above poverty level	Population under 18 living in poverty	Less than High School	High School Graduate or Equivalent	Bachelor's Degree	Masters, Professional School or Doctorate Degrees
Homewood	6,181	$18,976	46.1%	53.9%	76.9%	15.6%	40.7%	8.3%	2.9%
City of Pittsburgh	302,205	$47,711	12.9%	87.1%	27.2%	7.1%	25.5%	23.3%	21.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019). American Community Survey 2019 - 5 Year Estimates. Prepared by Social Explorer: https://www.socialexplorer.com/explore-tables

The population of Homewood went from 30,523 residents in 1960 to 15,158 by 1980. Population decline continued and as of 2019 the total population of Homewood was 6,181 with 93% of residents identified as Black or African American (Western Pennsylvania Regional Data

Center, 2020). The trauma caused by decades of individual, structural, and institutionalized racism continues to impede Black thriving in Pittsburgh, and looms over attempts to build trust between racialized organizations and Black communities. Again, "racism was a psychological brainwash technique that made whites feel superior and blacks feel inferior" (the damned, 1973, p. 18). Racialized institutions have historically perpetuated racial inferiority through various practices that disproportionately benefited one group over another.

1.2.3 Organizational System: An Anchor Institutional & Engaged University

"Anchor institutions are nonprofit entities that have a substantial stake in their surrounding community, typically due to landownership and mission" (Wilson & Gough, 2020, p. 245). Anchor institutions have invested in their anchor missions to support improving the quality of life of residents.

> Anchor institutions are place-based entities such as universities and hospitals that are tied to their surroundings by mission, invested capital, or relationships to customers, employees, and vendors. These local human and economic relationships link institution well-being to that of the community in which it is anchored. (Dostilio & Welch, 2019, p. 201).

The University of Pittsburgh is considered the city's university. Likewise, its place-based community engagement centers are anchored in Pittsburgh neighborhoods, like Homewood, as a physical representation of the institution's *neighborhood commitments.* Baldwin (2021) reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun, including higher education's historic seizure of Indigenous land and the privilege of power wielded by universities which have access to ample financial resources and tax breaks, in addition to land control.

Universities and their medical centers are registered with the Internal Revenue Service as 501 (c)(3) charitable nonprofits. Because of the public services that higher education institutions ostensibly provide to surrounding communities, their property holdings are exempt from taxation in all fifty states. (p. 17)

Pitt's investment *and* their potential return on investment in creating the CEC's and increasing their place-based community engagement footprint cannot be overlooked.

According to the CEC's website, these investments include a minimum 15-year commitment of infrastructure, staffing and coordination in neighborhoods – networks of leaders, residents, faculty, staff and students collaborat[ing], in addition to a welcoming space that created a front-door to Pitt in neighborhoods (University of Pittsburgh, 2020a). In return, the CECs and Pitt's larger community and civic engagement activities have afforded the institution coveted recognition and far-reaching acclaim.

In 2019, Pitt was awarded the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Elective Community Engagement Classification. This highly sought-after achievement was celebrated institution-wide and solidified Pitt's place alongside an elite class of higher-education institutions. This award bolstered Pitt nationally as an engaged university and an anchor institution. The Carnegie Classification provides standards and best practices for academic engagement and community outreach (Soska, 2015). The classification has also been noted as driving agency of community engagement initiatives within higher education institutions (Shields, 2015), and promoting a pivot towards "new community building" a concept that draws heavily on building upon assets (Soska, 2015).

Engaged universities have civic engagement written within their missions and strategies, community involvement in campus is "continuous, purposeful and authentic" and includes

mechanisms to hear community concerns, and careful consideration of how institutional decisions impact the community and capacities to collaborate with the community (Evans et al., 2009, p. 3). Engaged universities facilitate, lead, or convene in community development (Dostilio & Welch, 2019; Soska, 2015). Pitt as an engaged university and an anchor institution implies close relationships in the community and being "rooted in a place" (Soska, 2015, p. 121). The Office of Engagement and Community Affairs (ECA) has amplified Pitt's neighborhood commitments, but are these efforts truly benefiting Black communities like Homewood?

Historically, university-community engagements did not prioritize community assets and agendas, instead opting to further institutional goals over community transformation. "A consistent criticism of the town-gown relationship is that the university tends to only see the community as a laboratory for studying needs and pathologies, not as a place of assessing assets and capacities on which to build" (Soska, 2015, p. 117). Through Pitt's ECA led by a Senior Vice Chancellor for Engagement, Pitt has made institution-wide investments to strengthen its relationships in the community while promoting strengths-based and anti-racist approaches throughout the university.

1.2.3.1 Place-Based Community Engagement Centers

Place-based Community Engagement is "a long-term university-wide commitment to partner with local residents, organizations, and other leaders to focus equally on campus and community impact within a clearly defined geographic area" (Yamamura & Koth, 2018, p. 19). It is a strategy within higher education to maximize university and community resources for lasting social change. Noted mutual-benefits of place-based community engagement include:

- A centralized strategy to pursue long-term change on campus and in the community,
- Enhanced visibility to communicate a central coherent commitment, Potential for more funding towards projects invested in campus and community impact,

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- Expanded community partnerships which reflect the strength of the relationship and alignment of resources,

- a sense of place which invites the institution to be more deeply connected to the community,

- and pursuing racial equity by providing opportunities to unpack issues of power and privilege related to racism and systemic social inequalities (Yamamura & Koth, 2018).

Upon its opening in October 2018, Pitt's first CEC in Homewood was the second PWHEI-led place-based center in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships at Drexel University in Philadelphia was the first in Pennsylvania. The Homewood CEC is 3.8 miles and no more than a 15-minute bus ride from campus. Its six main activity areas included:

1. Enriched Education & Youth Experience,

2. Economic Prosperity & Family Support,

3. Enhanced Health & Wellness,

4. Strengthened Cultural Arts,

5. Innovation & Business Growth, and

6. Data Access & Organizational Capacity

The Center had a mix of areas available for public use including classrooms and meeting spaces, alongside of areas operated by various schools within Pitt such as the Wellness Pavilion overseen by the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, MedWell operated by the School of Pharmacy, School of Social Work's office space, the School of Education's multi-purpose room, and the Swanson School of Engineering's science lab, among others. The resources of the

center were created based upon Homewood's existing assets at that time, meaning efforts were made not to replicate the resources already in place. In most instances, use of the CEC was permitted for community-benefitting purposes and at no cost. Room reservations prioritized university-community collaborations, as well as requests from Pitt partners in need of space. For example, the CEC's COVID-19 booster vaccination clinics led by Pitt's Health Sciences working in partnership with the Homewood Children's Village, Primary Care Health Services, and the Homewood Community Development Collaborative were provided full use of the Center.

Pitt's investment in place-based community engagement centers was seen as a tangible commitment by Pitt in the community, promoting mutually beneficial university-community collaborations and partnerships. An anchor institution opening a place-based center required significant financial investment and formal contractual agreements (Dostilio & Welch, 2019), in addition to a willingness from community partners to welcome Pitt in. Instead of purchasing a building and land, the CEC leased underutilized space owned by Bible Center Church, a local African American church. Many residents view Pitt's entry into Homewood as being through the Black church. In the past, Pitt acquired land in the Hill District, which was a point of contention between community activists and the university.

> The University of Pittsburgh has "slowly eaten up the Hill District," said Carl Redwood, a lifelong community activist and Pitt alum from the Hill District. "Athletic fields in the Petersen Sports Complex sit where Robinson Court public housing once was." 'Redwood said he still remembers the people who used to live there. (Harrell, 2021)

Signing a lease in Homewood symbolized a desire by Pitt to keep the ownership of property in the community's hands. However, Pitt cannot escape the stories of Black displacement in the Hill, which are well known in Homewood. Upon hearing that Pitt was opening a place-based center

in the neighborhood, many residents and community leaders questioned who would ultimately have ownership of the building. Land ownership is important, especially among residents of Homewood who have been affected by redlining and other policies that restricted their access to homeownership.

Pitt invested millions of dollars to renovate 622 North Homewood Avenue, formerly a grocery store, a biker's club, and a weather-secured boarded-up building next to a bank (there is only one in Homewood). During my time as the CEC director, I was often reminded that Pitt was a higher education institution and not a social services agency. Residents with challenges outside of the scope of the CEC, including those who suffered from housing and food insecurity, drug and/or alcohol addiction, mental health disorders and more required immediate support to be stable. For instance, I remember the day a man, assumed to be unhoused, was caught washing up in the Center bathroom. The janitors and staff flagged his use of paper towels to wipe clean, flushing them down the toilet and causing back-ups. As director I considered how to handle this situation. The man clearly needed help, my staff needed direction, and I had to consider the purpose of the Center. After consulting trusted community members including a few Homewood Advisory Council members, I purchased and hung a "No Public Restroom" sign, thus limiting access to the Center to those with a purpose for being there. This meant that we restricted restroom access to CEC guests. This situation brought to light the limited availability of public restrooms in Homewood, especially for vulnerable populations like those who are unhoused. The Everyday Café, the neighborhood's only coffee shop (also owned by Bible Center Church), was one of the only businesses with public restrooms. This was a reminder that though the CEC was open to the public, it was not a truly public space.

The CEC opened in the heart of what used to be a thriving business district. Its opening

marked the beginning of Pitt's place-based community engagement centers. Pitt also has a CEC in

the Hill District (2021) and is developing a CEC in Hazelwood (2026), expanding its place-based

efforts throughout the City of Pittsburgh.

1.2.4 Stakeholders

The CEC was created to be a resource for both university stakeholders including faculty,

staff, and students, as well as for community stakeholders made up of residents, organizational

leaders, community activists, elders, local educators, and more as defined by Bryson, Patton, and

Bowman (2010). S*takeholders* are "individuals, groups, or organizations that can affect or are

affected by an evaluation process and/or its findings" (p. 1). For the CECs, two primary stakeholder

groups were clear, *Pitt* and *Community*, with the CEC Internal Advisory Council and the

Homewood Advisory Council representing the interests of each group, respectively. One group

embodied the power that privilege affords to those who are heavily resourced. The other held

influence over a population of people whose buy-in was necessary in fulfilling the institution's

teaching, research, and service mission through the CECs. Within each group existed a myriad of

values, cultures, histories, goals, biases and various levels of power and influence, with everyone

seeking some level of benefit.

This stakeholder description will focus on the "players" defined as "people who have

significant interest and power" (Bryson et al., 2010, p. 5). Players have the most invested in the

CEC, overall. *University Players* hold the most economic power, but *Community Players* hold

influence.

1.2.4.1 Internal Advisory Council – *University Players*

Formed in 2016, the Internal Advisory Council is made up of 60 community-engaged faculty and staff representing 16 Pitt Schools. Many Council members brought their own community and civic engagement experiences as scholar-practitioners. Some worked in Homewood or in communities with similar demographics and/or challenges. Students and colleagues looked to them for direction on how to engage with the CEC and in Homewood. When surveyed as part of the CEC's two-year evaluation, 80% of faculty and staff indicated that they saw a role for the Pitt CECs in their work, with 82% stating that they would be interested in pursuing future work involving the centers (Cross, 2020). However, only 66% indicated knowing how to access the CECs or to work with the Center if they wanted (Cross, 2020). In many ways, Internal Council members were internal ambassadors of the CECs, connecting those within their respective schools and units to community-engaged opportunities at the Center. Successful Internal Council members had thriving community relationships which resulted in collaboration at the centers. As academics, Internal Council members possessed various credentials including graduate degrees such as medical degrees and PhDs, and its members were a diverse mix of men, women, and nonbinary People of Color from various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

1.2.4.2 Homewood Advisory Council – *Community Players*

Founded in 2017, the Homewood Advisory Council at its peak was made up of 30 community members who volunteered their time and expertise to ensure that the CEC's activities aligned with the community's goals. Homewood Council members lived, worked, or prayed in Homewood, owned property, grew up in the neighborhood or surrounding areas, and attended the local schools. Some were paid employees of local community-based organizations, and others supported volunteer-led groups. All wanted to see Homewood thrive.

Homewood Council members were invited to join the group and were an integral part of my hiring process as director of the CEC. Members participated in the CEC's activities for many reasons. Organizational leaders, for instance, were interested in learning how Pitt could further their missions. Activists wanted to ensure that Pitt was not inflicting harm upon the community, keeping close to celebrate the successes of the Center and to hold Pitt accountable for failures. Other members wanted access to Pitt's resources including event sponsorships and donations. There was reciprocity in everything, and having knowledge of individual and organizational interests as well as the community's overall goals was important to me in building and maintaining relationships with Homewood Council members.

The influence of both councils can be seen in the space and in the programs that have taken place at the CEC. The guidance from each ensured that Pitt was not replicating or replacing existing assets, and that the collaborations were filling gaps and providing capacity for community-based organizations. The involvement of both councils in the CEC was important to ensure the efficacy of university-community collaborations.

Given their in-depth involvement with shaping the Homewood CEC, this research study will center the perspective of the Community Players – Homewood Advisory Council Members and whether they see the community's self-determination being furthered because of Pitt's place-based community engagements in their neighborhood.

In reviewing the literature, I sought to define Black self-determination and higher education's role in impeding it. How have past PWHEI community engagement approaches reinforced Black oppression?

Black self-determination is closely tied to the Black liberation and freedom movements, and to Black Studies – an interdisciplinary field that examines the experiences of Black people. Karenga's (1993) *Introduction to Black Studies*, and Benson's (2015) *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun* will provide expressions of Black self-determination, which will ground this review of literature and shape a contextual framework. These bodies of work will position Black communities as empowered, resistant to oppression, and capable of working collectively towards their own autonomy.

1.3.1 Black Studies and Black Self-determination

Black Studies provides historical context of Black liberation and Black freedom movements. It challenges identity and misrepresentations of Black people while promoting the exploration of Black history, culture, and thought. In addition, it serves as a foundation for advocating for self-reliance and social change. "The discipline of Black Studies is rooted in the social visions and struggles of the 60s which aimed at Black power, liberation, and a higher level of human life" (Karenga, 1993, p. 3). Black Studies has been rooted in the community since its inception. "Black Studies saw itself in relationship and in service to the Black community" (Karenga, 1993, p. 486). Furthermore, the mission of Black Studies included community transformation as described by sociologist Nathan Hare: "We must transform the community and

make it relevant to the educational endeavor at the same time as we make education relevant to the community" (Hare, 1978, p.14). Education is seen as essential to collective self-determination and self-reliance.

The struggle for Black self-determination is related to various movements such as The Civil Rights Movement, The Nationalist Movement, and The Black Student Movement. The children of the Civil Rights Movement became the driving force behind The Black Student Movement. For students, the movement reflected the pursuit of Black self-determination as they advocated for and achieved the creation of Black Studies Departments at PWHEIs across the nation, including at the University of Pittsburgh.

1.3.2 Black Studies at the University of Pittsburgh

The *Black Paper for Black Studies* authored by Black Action Society (BAS) members Brother Curtiss E. Porter and Brother Jack L. Daniel described the racial climate at Pitt during the summer of 1969. In a detailed proposal to launch a Black Studies program at the University of Pittsburgh, they discussed how the American school system had failed Black people, including PWHEIs that continued to produce ineffective Black graduates ill equipped to support the Black community. Porter and Daniel (1969) further described these Black college graduates as, "non-functional member[s] of the Black community…purged whitely of all concern and adaptive ability that would make [them] valuable agent[s] in pursuing the needs, goals and destiny of [their] people" (p. iv). They attributed the omission of a Black Studies program at Pitt to institutionalized racism (Porter & Daniel, 1969). "For example, this university still provides students with the opportunity to study the defunct Greek and Roman societies as well as the contemporary white middle-class society. Yet a proposal to study the Afro-American's culture and history is met with

resistance" (p. v). The creation of a Black Studies program at Pitt was seen as meeting the needs of Black people including, "the economic, social, political, cultural, and spiritual areas of human existence" (p. 62).

On May 20, 1968, the Black Action Society made the following demand to the University of Pittsburgh:

…that a Black Studies Program, which would be staffed and directed by Black scholars in its entirety, be instituted immediately at the university. This program would be inter-departmental in nature. Black professors in the departments of Political Science, History, Sociology, Anthropology, English, Psychology, Music, and Fine Arts would present the Black existence from the point of view of their respective fields of study. (Porter & Daniel, 1969, p. vi)

Pitt administration did not respond to their demand for six months, and on January 15, 1969, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's birthday, BAS reiterated their demand:

The Chancellor will urge the faculty to establish an institute for Black Studies for research and teaching, with a director and an assistant director to be appointed by June, and that these people, when they arrive, will have the necessary funds available for their work. (Porter & Daniel, 1969, p. vii)

The Black Action Society then appointed Jack L. Daniel and Curtiss E. Porter as directors of the Black Studies Program citing the need to take back control of Black education. "The appointment of a Director and Associate Director of Black Studies signifies Black people's recognition that a re-shuffling of the reins of influence and responsibility is necessary to meet Black educational needs" (Porter & Daniel, 1969, p. vii). The most revolutionary act by the BAS happened that evening.

1.3.3 Black Action Society Computer Lab Takeover of 1969

Artifacts show that 25 Black students at Pitt locked themselves in the campus computer center located on the 8th floor of the Cathedral of Learning at 8:30 pm on January 15, 1969 (Brodt, 2023). Demands by the Black Action Society to the University of Pittsburgh's Chancellor, Wesley Posvar, included not only the creation of a Black Studies department, but also the formation of the City-Wide Black-Connected Studies Program –a cross city structure of Black Involvement Studies to centralize the concerns for Black relevant education (Porter & Daniel, 1969). BAS students also demanded the development of the Fanon Institute of Cultural Exchange, a program, "designed to bring both the Black American student and community member to closer consciousness of African bonds which were disturbed some centuries ago" (Porter & Daniel, 1969, p. 51). Additional demands included financial aid and scholarships for Black students, excused absences for Black students on Malcolm X's birthday, and a section of Hillman Library dedicated to African American studies (Brodt, 2023), among other requests. The sit-in was seen as "disruptive action" by Chancellor Posvar, according to his statement published in Pitt News on January 29, 1969.

> I regret that the black students felt they had to take disruptive action in order to bring the depth of their concern to the attention of this academic community. I agree that the response to racial inequalities has been slow and unsatisfying in many aspects. (Posvar, 1969 as cited in Brodt, 2023)

In the end, BAS efforts established the Department of Black Community, Education, Research and Development (University of Pittsburgh, 2023a). Its first faculty hires included legendary educator-activist Sonia Sanchez and Pittsburgh's own playwright and poet Rob Penny (University of Pittsburgh, 2023a). In addition to launching the Black Studies program, commitments were made to increase the number of Black staff and Black students at Pitt (Brodt,

2023). However, 54 years later the University of Pittsburgh continues to struggle with Black student enrollment. For instance, in the Fall of 2022, 14,410 (59.8%) of undergraduate students at Pitt's Pittsburgh campus identified as white (University of Pittsburgh, 2023c). In comparison, only 1,586 (7.9%) of the undergraduate students attending Pittsburgh campus identified as Black or African American (University of Pittsburgh, 2023c).

1.3.4 Malcolm X, Black Nationalism, and Self-Determination

Pitt BAS sought autonomy, and Malcolm X was seen as a pivotal figure that propelled them forward. "The Black spirit and ideas of Black men such as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz [Malcolm X], W.E.B. DuBois, Patrice Lumumba and Frederick Douglass still live" (Porter & Daniel, 1969, p. 47). Malcolm X's revolutionary praxis lit a fire among Black students by providing a framework to obtain Black self-determination steeped in Black nationalism instead of Civil Rights.

> In life and death, Malcolm has been variously interpreted as the spirit of a revitalized Black Nationalist tradition, as the embodiment of Black urban psyche that roared with aggression and pain, and as the preeminent champion of Black militancy in opposition to the social assimilation, integration, and passive action often attributed to the Civil Rights Movement. (Benson, 2015, p. 6)

Malcolm's legacy has endured.

Karenga (1993) defined Black nationalism as, "a social theory and practice organized around the concept and conviction that Blacks are a distinct historical personality and they should therefore 'unite in order to gain the structural capacity to define, defend, and develop their

interests'" (Karenga, 1993, p. 337). According to Karenga (1993), Black nationalism is reflected in three ways:

1) "It is first a redefinition of reality, a redefining of the world in Black images and interests, i.e., from an Afrocentric perspective" (p. 334).

2) "It is a social corrective, i.e., a thrust to build alternative structures, which check the deprivation and deformation of European institutions and house and advance Black aspirations and interests" (p. 334).

3) It "is a collective vocation, a call and active commitment to liberate Black people, restore them to their traditional greatness and 'make African presence both powerful and permanent throughout the world'" (pp. 334-335).

Malcolm X was a key figure within the Black Nationalist Movement and served as a model, ideologically and personally, for countless nationalist groups and leaders (Karenga, 1993, p. 175). As an advocate for Black self-determination and the ability for Black people to create their own strong and independent communities, Malcolm planted seeds that propelled Black nationalism throughout the world.

Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism exhibited by Malcolm X exemplified revolutionary praxis to cultivate Black self-determination.

Malcolm, the revolutionary educator, Malcolm the populist pedagogue, Malcolm, the teacher, changed forever the nature of education by effectuating a call for a national elevation of consciousness and self-reliance that was actualized in the Black Student Movement, through Black Studies programs, and in the growth of a Black Nationalist cultural aesthetic in the postsecondary arena. (Benson, 2015, p. 7)

In 1964 Malcolm broke away from the Nation of Islam and set up his own organizations, the Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI) and the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU) (Benson, 2015; Karenga, 1993). The OAAU, "was a nonsectarian, Pan-Africanist, and intended to merge the intellectual, political, and social capabilities of Malcolm's increasingly varied associates" (Benson, 2015, p. 43). Through the OAAU, Malcolm was able to broaden his activities, build coalitions, and reach beyond the religious profound effect on the Movement (Benson, 2015; Karenga, 1993). These activities ignited the Black Student and Black Studies movements (Benson, 2015; Karenga, 1993). "A significant aspect of Malcolm's objective for the OAAU would be to emphasize the role of youth and students in constructing ideas and strategies to build grassroots activism and promote Black Nationalism" (Benson, 2015, p. 43). Malcolm provided a strong framework.

> He encouraged students to focus on the Black community and the control and maintenance of its resources and institutions; to reject any effort to restrict their academic and intellectual liberty; to develop an ethic (Malcolm proposed Black Nationalism) that would unify the Black community and make it immune to outside control; to connect with Black people in Africa and other parts of the world; and to recognize that their primary enemy was, is, and has always been the legally established institutions and government of the United States, whose efforts were to maintain the status quo through psychologically oppressive measures. (Benson, 2015, p. 20)

The promotion of Black nationalism included a cultural thrust that was defined by its stress on a new education for Black people (Karenga, 1993). A model was established through the Black Student Movement which, "stressed the need to bring campus to the community and the community to the campus" which aspired to create, "a new educational process which would be

focused not only in established academia, but also in alternative institutions in the community (Karenga, 1993, p. 175). Malcolm's expression of self-determination included an expansive educational philosophy which valued various knowledges and historical contexts, self-reflection and growth, and collective action towards economic, cultural, and educational freedom. "Clearly, Malcolm's philosophy of education must be regarded not only as historically centered, intellectually expansive, and self-reliance based, it also must be viewed as inclusive and open to all who seek social change" (Benson, 2015, p. 25). Malcolm's expression of Black self-determination presents a strong framework for Black communities to achieve transformative outcomes.

1.3.5 PWHEIs and Black Self-determination

Minoritized self-determination, including Black self-determination, is in opposition to the social order racialized institutions have upheld (Ray, 2019). It is actively sought and requires the marginalized and oppressed to reject and replace this image with autonomy and responsibility (Freire, 2003). Institutions and communities must be aware that self-determination requires *revolutionary action* described by Freire (2003) as *communion*. "In this communion both groups grow together, and the leaders, instead of being simply self-appointed, are installed or authenticated in their praxis with the praxis of the people." (Freire, 2003 p. 130). In considering Freire's communion as a form of *revolutionary* community engagement, it would require institutional actors to also be *revolutionary teachers* with the autonomy to invest the time and resources to further the community's vision.

> The human factor must be primary in the revolutionary teacher and material things must
> come second. That means the revolutionary teacher works for the triumph of his students

over the oppressor--that is primary. The revolutionary teacher does not work primarily for

money, whether he be outside the school or inside the school. (the damned, 1973, p. 119)

The posture of a revolutionary teacher must be respectful and effective. "It is necessary

for…revolutionary teachers to gain the trust of the people through being patient, disciplined,

punctual, and honest" (the damned, 1973, p. 131). Their approach must recognize the community's

assets and strengths. A strengths-based framework has the potential to build from the community's

cultural wealth while disrupting positioning marginalized communities as needy, lacking, and in

need of saving (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Schmitz, 2012).

As previously mentioned within the problem of practice, PWHEIs did little to support

Black self-determination. Karenga (1993) described the university as a tool furthering the

subjugation of Black people while maintaining the established order.

Pictured as a microcosm of society, the university was defined as racist, sick, unresponsive,

rigid and supportive of war, exploitation, oppression and exclusion of Blacks, other peoples

of color and the poor from the social knowledge, wealth and power of U.S. society.

(Karenga, 1993, p. 4)

PWHEIs have not aided Black autonomy, and because of this, Dancy, Edwards, and Davis

(2018) posit that the path to Black self-determination requires *Black divestment*.

Radical self-determination requires both a departure from the White social contract and

directed investment in the creation of Black counter intellectual and economic spaces. The

only way to establish Black human agency is to exit the system that insists upon Black

dehumanization. (Dancy et al., 2018, p. 190)

This casts the notion of institutional actors embodying the role of revolutionary teacher as

contradictory.

PWHEI-led place-based community engagement initiatives have the ability to challenge entrenched conceptions of the academic as expert and the transfer of knowledge as primarily outward-directed" (Dempsey, 2010, p. 384). A call-to-action offered by Blake (2009) spoke to the need for higher education to work in full partnership with the African American community and provided a glimpse into ways PWHEIs can support self-determination:

(1) Recognizing and affirming that community (civic) engagement has been a linchpin for survival for African Americans since the first Africans came to America in 1619.

(2) Recognize and operate on the premise that any civic engagement that does not result in community advancement and resident empowerment is worthless.

(3) Learn to define and measure success in terms that are dictated by perspectives of the community.

(4) Revise its rewards and recognition programs so that faculty will be encouraged to invest significant time and effort in civic and community engagement.

(5) Commit to use portions of its endowments to fund and support civic and community engagement.

(6) Revise some instructional methodologies to take advantage of strengths of the community and incorporate them into the structure of the education process so that students can value being civically engaged.

(7) Devise programs that will significantly or totally eliminate a student's educational debt upon graduation.

(8) Make a commitment to long-term sustainable programs and projects related to civic engagement (pp. 245-246).

Blake's appeal may be considered far-reaching as Black self-determination cannot be gained under the white gaze of racialized organizations.

1.3.6 PWHEI Culture and Approaches

Can a racialized organization support Black self-determination?

The oppressor knows full well that this intervention would not be to his interest. What is to his interest is for the people to continue in a state of submersion, impotent in the face of oppressive reality. (Freire, 2003, p. 52)

This union of advantage known as *interest convergence*, a tenet of critical race theory (CRT) describes how "racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class whites (psychically)" in which, "large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, pp. 32-33). This level of complicity has preserved the social order. In what ways have higher education's engagements with Black communities maintained structural racism? If the "generosity of the oppressors is nourished by an unjust order, which must be maintained in order to justify that generosity," (Freire, 2003, p. 60) are PWHEIs capable of supporting the self-determination of the Black community? How have higher education's approaches towards minoritized communities reinforced oppression?

Past engagements between PWHEIs and Black communities have been primarily transactional in nature. Transformational university-community engagements must begin with acknowledgement of past activities which traumatized and harmed Black bodies.

Higher education has contributed to the problems that exist in the African American communities in a number of ways, but two in particular: (1) helping to perpetuate the myth regarding the inferiority of Blacks when it was popular to do so, and (2) when changes

were made, higher education did not take a real leadership role in correcting the conditions

that continue to trouble large sectors of the African American community. (Blake, 2009, p.

228)

The literature points to a need for higher education institutions to do a level of internal

work to engage external communities.

What remains pertinent in assessing the development of American higher education is the

need to look inwardly at the academic profession and its influences on the university-

community relationship, as well as at higher education's external institutional nature and

form as it relates to the local and larger community and the development of community.

(Soska, 2015, p. 108)

Knowing the history and gaining an understanding of the community's culture is an

important part of the university-led community engagement process. A lack of understanding of

community history and culture can deter the cultivation of relationships and trust.

Before initiating a partnership, the university team should have a history with and

understanding and knowledge of research and program evaluation methods with cultural

groups. University researchers should also have a thorough understanding of African

American functioning at the individual, family, and community levels. (Briscoe et al.,

2009, p. 193)

Navigating a community with the understanding of its strengths and assets is invaluable.

According to the literature, PWHEIs leading placed-based community engagement

initiatives must be realistic about their goals.

…The institution must first be explicit about whether the desired forms of community

engagement are predominantly transactional or socially transformative, whether their

function is primarily to advance the reputation of the university in its community or to be truly transformative and mutually beneficial. (Shields, 2015, p. 235)

Without defined goals there will be misalignment between "organization and reward structures" (Shields, 2015, p. 235).

Schools and colleges are required to set clear goals for research, grants, and development, but activities that fall under the rubric of community engagement are primarily encouraged as they help to attract favorable publicity or aligns with the interest of a major potential donor. (Shields, 2015, p. 234)

Buy-in is necessary in the community as well as within the institution, recognizing that the lack of clearly expressed incentives for faculty beyond grants will do little to benefit the community. "There is little encouragement to engage in activities that assist with…transformation, and the redress of social inequities or disparities, unless they promote revenue generation or grant acquisition at the same time" (p. 234). These deficit approaches are evident not only in how PWIs have engaged minoritized communities, but also speak to the experiences of faculty, staff, and students of Color within the institutions themselves.

Deficient theorizing positions Black people as outsiders. "Diversity action plans typically describe people of color as outsiders to the university, disadvantaged and at risk before and after entering higher education, and in this discursive framing, propose strategies aimed at individuals to compensate for deficiencies" (Iverson, 2005, p. 588). While positioning Black people as deficient, PWHEIs are situating whiteness as superior. Dancy, Edwards, and Davis (2018) presented that

All Whites are beneficiaries of the contract, though some Whites are not signatories to it. At the center of this contract are agreements that define a White class as superior and

various subsets of human beings as "non-White" and therefore a different, inferior status. (p. 179)

This *othering* shows in the form of needs-based community engagement approaches that reinforced power imbalances and inequities. "Campus–community partnerships are characterized by inequalities of power that impede collaboration and introduce conflicts" (Dempsey, 2010, p. 360).

Nevertheless, there remains hope that successful university-community benefitting partnerships are possible. "Community engagement initiatives have the potential to foster mutually transformative relationships between universities and the communities of which they are a part. (Dempsey, 2010). Dempsey continued, "At the same time, there is a need for greater understanding of the challenges involved with these efforts, including how they are impacted by– and may unwillingly reproduce–material inequalities and cultural differences" (p. 385).

Transactional approaches by universities have reinforced racial inequalities and impeded revolutionary and transformative community engagement opportunities while hindering Black self-determination. The literature has shown that past PWHEI approaches to engage Black communities have not reflected principles of Black self-determinism which include autonomy, cultural pride, educational excellence, political representation, social justice, and economic and community empowerment.

2.0 Section 2: Understanding the Problem & Seeing the System

I aimed to interrogate whether Pitt's place-based community engagement activities in Homewood support Black self-determination through the following two inquiry questions:

1. How have Pitt's place-based community engagement activities in Homewood supported the community's self-determination, if at all? How do these activities reflect principles of self-determination?

2. What is the CEC Homewood Advisory Council Members' perception of Pitt and its place-based community engagement efforts?

Exploration of these research questions helped to inform the activities and approaches of Pitt's institutional-wide placed-based community engagement activities, particularly those embedded within Pittsburgh's predominantly Black communities.

When the CEC opened in October of 2018, Pitt's Chancellor expressed a desire to see up to five centers within five Pittsburgh communities. The Hill District CEC opened in 2021, and the newest center is slated to launch in the Hazelwood community in 2026. According to university stakeholders, institutional efforts in Homewood have been viewed as successful and well received. Do community stakeholders perceive these endeavors in the same way?

As the inaugural CEC director (July 2017 – January 2022), much of this research assessed my own work in Homewood. For Community Engagement Professionals, a deep level of feedback is critical to our practice, ensuring that our actions and approaches benefit the communities we serve and the institutions we represent. Leaning into my positionality and role in knowledge production has I believe enriched the data analysis and allowed space for intersectionality and meaning making. The relationships I hold within the institution and community are valuable

commodities. I am reminded that my social capital is *cultural* capital (Yosso, 2005), and despite being well-known to many of the Community Players who participated in this research study, interview questions centered Pitt as a racialized organization and Black communities as asset-rich and capable of seeking its self-determined goals.

2.1 Methods

Community Players who were current or former CEC Homewood Advisory Council Members were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. As previously mentioned, Community Advisory Council members are an influential group of participants to engage as they have been involved with the CEC since its inception. Most Homewood Advisory Council members have leveraged the CEC physical space, or collaborated with a Pitt school or unit, and/or lived, worked, or prayed in the neighborhood. Advisory Council members who were involved in the creation of the Homewood Community Comprehensive Plan, and who may have also been members of the Homewood Community Development Collaborative ("the Collaborative") are extremely valuable given their depth of knowledge and displayed commitment to Homewood's thriving.

The Collaborative, according to the group's website, was founded in 2015 by leaders of local community-based organizations working together to "facilitate a unified, comprehensive development process that addresses holistically the needs of the community" (Homewood Community Development Collaborative, 2022). The Collaborative is a Registered Community Organization (RCO) by the City of Pittsburgh, giving the group a significant amount of influence over community development projects, particularly those involving public funding. CEC

Homewood Advisory Council members with multiple roles in the community will be targeted for semi-structured interviews, including Collaborative members. This group offered multiple perspectives pertaining to the overall revitalization of Homewood and insight into how the community perceives Pitt's activities in the neighborhood. My sample size goal was five (5) interviews targeting nine (9) stakeholders who served on the Homewood Advisory Council and the Homewood Community Development Collaborative. Braun and Clarke (2019) recommended a minimum of five interviews for small projects, such as this case study. "Our pragmatic 'rule of thumb' is at least five or six interviews for a (very) small project, assuming the data are rich, the sample relatively homogenous, the research question focused, and the output an unpublished dissertation" (Braun et al., 2019, pp. 851 – 852). The Collaborative is made up of 11 total members. At its peak, the CEC Homewood Advisory Council had 30 members.

2.2 Analysis of Data

Amplifying the voices and perspective of the community is important for CEPs committed to *revolutionary* placed-based community engagement, which I define as community engagements which disrupt racialized organizations and provide mutual-aid to marginalized communities in alignment with their self-determined values and goals. CEPs who promote effective and respectful community engagement without challenging institutional systems, processes, and access are only scratching the surface of potential impact. The strengths-based approaches promoted by CEPs who are compelled to embody *revolutionary* traditions must reflect anti-racist policies and practices as they seek impactful collaborations and co-constructed university-community partnerships. Given this, it is necessary to leverage a method of data analysis which honors the

uniqueness of perspective gathered from community members, while ensuring that their contributions inform the future practices of many institutional actors engaging Black communities.

2.2.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) is "an approach to analyzing qualitative data to answer broad or narrow research questions about people's experiences, views and perceptions, and representations of a given phenomena" (Brule, 2020). It is described as, "a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of 'reality'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81), as well as an approach that, "can address questions about, and be used to describe, the 'lived experiences' of particular social groups" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 850) like the Community Players – Homewood Advisory Council members, who were targeted for this research project.

RTA was leveraged to "emphasize the active role of the researcher in the knowledge production process" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 848). I cannot erase what Homewood means to me, personally and professionally. As previously mentioned, I was the first director of the Community Engagement Center in Homewood. However, my first contact with Homewood did not start as the Center director. As a child I grew up in East Hills, the neighborhood that borders Homewood. I remember the Homewood Coliseum, a well-known structure in Homewood that used to be a skating rink and an event space, and is now the focus of development discussions regarding its future use. While an undergraduate student at Pitt, my first volunteer opportunity was at the YWCA in Homewood. As a professional I heard the call back to Homewood, drawn to this Black mecca to help uplift what was once magnificent. While employed as a community affairs and equity strategist for the City of Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), I spent a significant time in Homewood. Prior to leaving the URA I was involved in initial discussions

around the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan ("Comp Plan"). By the time I settled into my role as the CEC director I was involved in the Comp Plan as a community partner serving on the Workforce Development Sub-Committee. My positionality, personal connections to the East End, knowledge of Homewood's dynamics and Pitt's neighborhood commitments, and my desire to see Black thriving in Pittsburgh all impacted my analyses of the data.

The six-phase process of RTA helped me to "find repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86) across the semi-structured interviews of the community stakeholders for this case study. The six phases include:

1. Familiarization which required immersion in the data. During this phase data is transcribed, read, and re-read. Casual notes were taken, and initial ideas cultivated.

2. Generating codes is a systematic process to identify meaning throughout the dataset (Braun et al., 2019). This phase included attaching clear labels to chucks of data to organize the data around meaning-patterns (Braun et al., 2019).

3. Theme construction is described as an "active process" (Braun et al. ,2019, p. 854) for the researcher. During this time codes are developed into candidate themes and meaningful patterns begin to emerge across the dataset (Braun et al., 2019). Generating a thematic map which is defined as, "a process of visually exploring potential themes and subthemes, and connection between them" (Braun et al., 2019, 855) is recommended and is considered a useful step.

4. The process of revising and defining themes is important and involves checking whether themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set.

5. Defining and naming themes seek clarity in final themes and theme names which capture what is meaningful about the data related to the research questions (Braun et al., 2019).

6. Producing the report provides an opportunity to revisit research questions, notes, lists of codes, and candidate themes to ensure that final themes remain close to the data and answers the research question well in order to produce a scholarly report (Braun et al., 2019).

2.2.1.1 Step 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.

With the study's inquiry questions in mind, the interview protocol [see Appendix B] was constructed. Again, the inquiry questions are (a) How have Pitt's placed-based community engagement activities in Homewood supported the community's self-determination, if at all? How do these activities reflect principles of self-determination? And (b) What is the perception of Pitt and its place-based community engagement efforts?

I was able to recruit four (4) current or former CEC Homewood Advisory Council members who agreed to participate in 60-minute semi-structured interviews. These four Council members were targeted due to their positions within the Homewood community including their involvement in shaping the Homewood Comprehensive Plan (2020) as members of the Collaborative. All are considered well-respected voices in the community, leaders in their fields, advocates for Black people, and activists for social change who have displayed a commitment to Homewood's thriving. This group is rooted in the community with decades of involvement in Homewood. They are considered subject matter experts of Homewood's past actively working towards improving Homewood's future.

Interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom, and transcribed using an online transcription service, Rev.com. I listened to and re-read interview notes, immersing myself in responses related to not only how interviewees viewed Homewood, its place in Black Pittsburgh

and its future, but also their perception of Pitt in Homewood since the CEC's opening. "Immersion usually involves 'repeated reading' of the data, and reading the data in an active way – searching for meanings, patterns, and so on" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interview Questions included:

1. How do you view your relationships to Homewood? How would you describe Homewood, the neighborhood, the culture, and the people?

2. What are assets in Homewood that strengthen the community? Ways Homewood has capacity? What groups are furthering community goals?

    a. What about them adds strength?

3. What is special about Homewood to the Black community?

    a. What has been Pitt's relationship to that?

    b. Have Pitt's activities supported existing community assets (like those mentioned before)?

4. What are Homewood's challenges? Ways Homewood's needs are not being addressed?

    a. Have Pitt's activities in Homewood addressed any of the community's challenges?

5. What does self-determination or freedom look like for Homewood? What is Homewood's vision for itself?

    a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements or activities supported collective visioning and dreaming of possibilities beyond present circumstances?

6. Do you feel like communications have improved with the University of Pittsburgh since the CEC's opening?

a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements or activities in Homewood supported community-university communication via language, visual art, music, and/or poetry?

7. Do you see Pitt supporting community-wide wellbeing? Ways of maintaining healthy connections to Homewood and its resources?

    a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements, or activities displayed a commitment to community wellbeing, including the importance of maintaining healthy connections to the community and its resources?

8. Has Pitt demonstrated anti-racism?

    a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements or activities displayed a *resistance to (or refusal to accept)* subordination (or oppression) exhibited by Communities of Color including Black communities?

9. What was your perception of Pitt before the creation of the CEC in Oct. 2018?

10. Now that it has been open for over (4) years, how has your thinking changed?

An important step in familiarizing myself with data was to compare the provided transcripts with the audio recording. Braun and Clark (2006) recommend doing this to ensure accuracy (p. 12). The data collected from each interviewee proved to be rich, insightful, and hopeful.

2.2.1.2 Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

To gain a better understanding of the data I sought a method to organize it. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz's (2017) approach provided "content analysis templates and a practical means to condense, code and categorize data" (p. 95). This method of content analysis coupled with RTA helped me to gain a better understanding of the reflexive and iterative processes of content analysis.

I constructed meaning units from the text, and then produced condensed meaning units in which Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) defined as, "a shortened version of the same text that still conveys the essential message of the meaning unit" (p. 96). From there I was able to develop codes or "descriptive labels for the condensed meaning units" (p. 96). Meaning units, condensed meaning units, and codes were organized in a spreadsheet, helping to categorize codes and shape themes.

2.2.1.3 Step 3: Searching for Themes

Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) encouraged, "sorting codes into categories that answer questions who, what, when or where" (p. 96) to develop themes. Braun et al. (2019) spoke of intersectionality: "Themes are built, molded, and given meaning at the intersection of data, researcher, experience and subjectivity, and research question(s)" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 854). During this phase of data analysis, I reviewed interview transcripts, notes, meaning units, and condensed meaning units to create potential themes. "'Prototypes' (or candidate themes) are developed from the analytic work of the earlier phases, and 'tested out' in relation to the research question/dataset overall" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 854). Several candidate themes were created including:

1) Black Pittsburgh does not trust Pitt

2) Pitt's seen acts in the community vs. impact

3) People and Relationships

4) Need to demystify Pitt

5) Selective engagement practices hindering community trust building

6) Inconsistent community engagement approaches by Pitt faculty, staff and students

7) Lack of institutional connection beyond the CEC

8) Community perception of Pitt differs from the perception of the CEC

9) Pitt is going to take care of Pitt first

10) Too soon to see transformation in Homewood

11) Inconsistent cultural awareness among Pitt faculty, staff, and students

12) Accelerate missions through effective outreach

13) Bridge the best resources to Homewood – same or better than privileged communities

14) Need to engage residents broadly around community goals

15) Homewood is an Asset-Rich Community

16) Institutional Interdependence vs. Self-Determination

17) Pitt Power, Privilege & Influence

18) Lack of transparency around diversity measures and anti-racism

19) Becoming an anti-racist institution

20) Measuring Impact

2.2.1.4 Step 4: Reviewing Themes

Organizing candidate themes into a table (see Table 2) in order to get a sense of how one theme relates to the other is an important step in defining themes (Braun et al., 2019, p. 855). In addition, as RTA recommended, I revisited earlier phases and considered the study's inquiry questions to ensure alignment. "Revisiting the research question, your notes from the earlier phases of familiarization and coding, your lists of codes, and theme definitions can be useful to ensure that the final themes remain close to the data and answer the research question well" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 857).

Table 2. Development of Themes

STEP 3: Candidate Themes	STEPS 4 – 5: Themes
- Homewood is an Asset Rich Community - People and Relationships - Need to engage residents broadly - Need to demystify Pitt - Bridge the best resources to Homewood – same or better than privileged communities - Institutional Interdependence vs. Self-Determination - Self-determination in Homewood	Theme 1: **Self-determination in Homewood must be community led and support relationship assets**
- Black Pittsburgh does not trust Pitt - Pitt's seen acts in the community vs. impact - Selective engagement practices hindering community trust building - Pitt Power, Privilege & Influence - Inconsistent community engagement approaches among Pitt faculty, staff and students - Community perception of Pitt differs from the perception of the CEC - Pitt is going to take care of Pitt first - Lack of transparency around diversity measures and anti-racism	Theme 2: **Not Forgotten – Past university-community interactions towards local Black communities continue to impact the perception of Pitt in Homewood**
- Too soon to see transformative outcomes from Pitt in Homewood - Lack of institutional connection beyond the CEC - Inconsistent cultural awareness among Pitt faculty, staff and students - Becoming an anti-racist institution - Accelerate missions through effective outreach - Measuring Impact	Theme 3: **Pitt needs to double-down on investment**

2.2.1.5 Step 5: Refining, Defining & Naming Themes

The process of revising and defining themes is considered important because candidate themes are prototypes (Braun et al., 2019). The revision process included creating clear definition of each theme which according to Braun et al. (2019), "helps clarify the essence and scope of each theme" (p. 855). Definitions were cultivated by reviewing and defining all coded data for each candidate theme to ensure that the data relates to a central organizing concept. For this, candidate themes were grouped in a table and analyzed against the previously created codes to check that themes do not overlap and to visualize how the themes and names fit together (Braun et al., 2019).

Table 3. Theme 2: Not Forgotten -- Past university-community interactions towards local Black communities continue to impact the perception of Pitt in Homewood

Candidate Themes	Distrust of Pitt	CEC viewed differently	Pitt Power & Influence	Anti-racism & Pitt
Condensed Meaning Units (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017)	Pitt actions in the past created distrust within the Black community/ Institutions don't keep their promises	The CEC has helped to align university-community interests	Pitt will ensure their return on investment first before community benefits	Symbol of anti-racism means anti-racist
Codes	Broken Promises, Distrust	Alignment	Pitt Priorities	Symbolic Anti-racism

2.2.1.6 Step 6: Producing the Report

This final step of RTA produces a report in which the themes work well, stretching beyond a "writing-up exercise" (p. 857) as Braun et al. (2019) discourage. The problem of practice for this

case study is "Pitt's place-based community engagement centers not advancing self-determination in local Black communities," Homewood being one of them. As previously mentioned, my positionality as a Black Pittsburgher who has lived, worked and worshiped in predominantly Black Pittsburgh communities, and as an institutional actor intimately involved in the shaping of the CECs, was the lens in which I interpreted study data. The principles of Black self-determination served as a guide for document analysis.

Interviewee responses both resonated with my desire to see thriving Black communities, as well as to see impactful outcomes from Pitt's neighborhood commitments. I kept this, as well as the study's inquiry questions in mind as I began to sharpen the themes' content, structure, and names according to RTA. "The scholarly process of making connections to existing research and literature on the topic of interest, and weaving this into the written results and discussion, may offer final moments of inspiration and a deeper insight into the analysis" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 857).

3.0 Evaluation Results

3.1 Theme 1: Self-determination in Homewood must be community-led and support relationship assets

3.1.1 Self-determination in Homewood: People and Relationships Assets

Every Advisory Council member interviewed expressed a deep connection to Homewood, the place and the people. Their statements identified many assets throughout the community, with people named as the strongest and most important asset. Long-term residents were described as "social capital" and all responses affirmed that people were invaluable and necessary contributors to the community's goal to thrive. They cited the commitment and contributions of individual residents all the way up to the City of Pittsburgh's first Black Mayor Ed Gainey (who has personal and professional ties to Homewood and Pittsburgh's East End), and everyone in-between. Each expressed a deep relationship with Homewood and passionately conveyed a desire to see its people prosper. Some sample quotes from council members:

- "So there are people in Homewood who are, in my opinion, they're the greatest asset, more than organizations and more than bricks or mortar, it's the resilience and determination, and the self-esteem of people who live in Homewood".
- "So like I said, from people to land... We got flat land, which is great for building on, in the city that is one of the hilliest cities I've ever been in my life. We got a bunch of flat land. That would be great to build and reimagine whatever it is that we want to do.

Again, we have people who are talented, who are super passionate. We've got different nonprofits, so the ability to fundraise and bring in additional resources if needed. We have people who have experienced some development, who've built houses, not just on the developer side, but also actually laying brick or hanging drywall. We have people who have those skills in the community. So I think to me, that's one of the greatest strengths I see, is that there's so much that's already here".

- "I think the biggest asset is the social capital; that's people, long-term residents in Homewood".

- "I think a lot of us can say thankfully, to have a mayor that is from Homewood, knows Homewood and loves Homewood, I consider that an asset. But right here, I think it's also those who live and go to church or any other type of faith-based entity that they would attend to and who work here in Homewood, many of which, as well as the residents, are just committed to this neighborhood and have no desire to leave. They just want to see Homewood thrive."

People, those who live in the community and who work and worship within Homewood were considered assets, and relationships among these groups of people, or what I am referring to as *relationship assets,* were deemed essential by Council Members to ensure the community's self-determined dreams. An interesting spectrum of relationship assets were provided – on one end *institutional interdependence* or a need for the community to work within systems and institutions, and to have access to their resources as a path to self-reliance. On the other end *institutional freedom*, or the fight for autonomy and self-determination, which is more aligned with Black nationalism. Interdependence in the same sentence as self-determination seemed like a contradiction; however, I viewed this interviewee's call for interdependence as a representation of

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Black capitalism as described by Karenga (1993): "Black capitalism demands subsidization from the dominant society, i.e., government and the private sector" (p. 378). The below responses communicate the spectrum of interdependence *and* self-determination.

- "So to use the term, "self-sufficient," to me is not recognizing the interdependency of communities on each other, and interdependence of communities on the government."
- "… You have some of us that are still resistant and fighting for self-sufficiency and self-determination, and you have some of us that have been able to connect a little better with traditional institutional systems that are in our community."

Responses indicate that there is a desire for deeper and more meaningful relationships among some Council Members. These relationships must reach beyond the CEC and to campus to ensure continuity of the work. They want relationships which supersede those built with center staff, including the CEC director. Staff transitions at the Center were pointed to as a reason to cultivate institution-wide relationships and connections.

"My thinking has changed in terms of trying to think more long-term because people change positions, and that's inevitable. You can't get tied to the person who's sitting in the seat. At some point, you're trying to do long term work. Yes, you got to build a relationship with the person in the seat, but you also got to think institutionally. And so, I think that's one of the things that's kind of shifted for me is, staff has changed on our side, staff has changed on the CEC side, and now we're almost like trying to reset."

I could not help to think about my own transition out of the role as director of the CEC, and how my departure impacted the trajectory of the Center's collaborations. I leveraged a

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tremendous amount of social capital on behalf of Pitt and the CEC, and as mentioned before, I had worked with many Homewood Advisory Council Members prior to becoming the CEC director. When I transitioned, many relationships left with me. Long-standing relationships surpass positions. However, staff transitions can and do inhibit progress. Relationships, particularly those attached to long-term commitments, like the decade's-plus long place-based investment made by Pitt to Homewood, have to be cultivated beyond the neighborhood-level with intentional efforts made to forge strong and sustaining pathways between the community and the university. As CEC director I was described as a single point-of-contact to Pitt, but based upon the statements provided by Council Members, a relationship to the CEC is just one of many needed to further their missions. Though Council Members noted relationships to Pitt beyond the CECs at the neighborhood level, there was a sense that Pitt remained unknown.

> "I think we don't know Pitt. I mean, I think that has a lot to do with it also; have relationships where you actually know... And when I say I know Pitt, I'm not just talking about just knowing individuals. I'm talking about there is a leadership within the university that the community doesn't know. So those are the ones that have to make a broader commitment to the broader community."

Black self-determination must be community led and address Homewood's challenges. Council members had plenty to share as they discussed Black self-determination in Homewood, which they described as the struggle for empowerment, protection, and ownership. A vision of Homewood provided by a Council member included the neighborhood becoming a safe haven for Black people. In another statement, self-determination amounted to ownership of the community's institutions. All agreed that community members, particularly residents (homeowners and renters)

must lead efforts. Interesting distinctions were made between long-term residents who owned their homes compared to younger more transient residents who rented, noting the need to engage both groups. Younger resident involvement is highly desired. As members of Collaborative, interviewees expressed a need to engage residents around Homewood's goals and its path forward, including what efforts should be prioritized, in addition to garnering support of and investment into the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan. Community-led engagement by the Collaborative must encourage action, especially among residents, to address Homewood's challenges head-on including public safety, poverty, and improving educational outcomes. The following quotes provide a glimpse into how council members view self-determination for Homewood.

- "Well, empowerment is self-determination; self-sufficiency, self-determination. In other words, ownership of land, and ownership of institutions in your community. The development of not just brick and mortars housing in your community, having the community having access to services in your community. But the main thing is ownership. Becoming less dependent on other folks in terms of our livelihood".

- "Self-determination for Homewood looks like, or the vision of it, is that we, as community members, not only are sort of informed, but we are a part of the planning ideas and we actually offer our own ideas as far as solutions to problems, and then we're a part of the execution of those ideas and implementation of those ideas, that it isn't on any level that we're excluded or simply kind of pushed aside, like, okay, now we'll take care of that. I think that that's what self-determination looks like to me for Homewood, and I think that's what Homewood is sort of screaming for".

- "I think the HCDC (Homewood Community Development Collaborative) is attempting to bring the nonprofit community together to begin to leverage development resources to push that forward".

- "Well, like most marginalized Black and Brown communities, marginalization, exclusions of assets, an equitable distribution of investments in the community. There needs to be more entrepreneurship and businesses in the community that can move towards establishing Black wealth and a generation of wealth for young people".

- "I think that we still are developing what that vision is. You can't say that the small group advisory board are those individuals that are determining what the vision of Homewood is. This is going to take a lot of work to bring individuals, institutions, businesses together, so you can get a broader perspective on the vision".

- "The Collaborative needs to be able to have a staff. The collaborative needs to be able to also entice the community; bring the communities together, different community meetings and activities to discuss their vision that you're talking about. So the Collaborative has a lot of work to do in addition to the implementation of the comprehensive plan. I think it's a great document, but now we have to talk about the implementation of it".

- "I think sometimes it's professionals and "helpers". We have an idea about what success looks like and we want to impose that upon people. And I think self-determination looks like working with people, and people need to be taking the lead on that. Doesn't mean they won't have anything to offer or to share or anything like that, but it does mean that people have to take the lead in terms of where they want to go in their own lives".

- "And so I just said all that to say that, like I said, I don't have a great sense of even my own understanding, but I listen and I have a heaviness because I feel like a lot of people feel

like they're not being heard on that end, as far as self-determination, the area of violence, they feel like this is such a big issue for Homewood and for Homewood's self-determination, Homewood's future, Homewood thriving".

- "And also, we have challenges with violence, and that often comes with poverty. You got people who are struggling and then eventually, folks try to find other means to make a living. And oftentimes, that ends up crossing paths with sort of violent crime and things of that nature".

- "My experience for Black folks is, it ain't so much that we don't want other people in, but it's just like, how do you maintain an environment that is a safe and healthy space for Black people? Because that doesn't happen everywhere. So I think that's one of the other things that's really significant about Homewood. People have ties to the community, and I think it represents hope that there could be this reclaimed, sort of amazing, Black community where our people can thrive."

3.2 Theme 2: Not Forgotten – Past university-community interactions towards local Black communities continue to impact the perception of Pitt in Homewood

3.2.1 Distrust of Pitt

Responses indicated that Pitt has a bad reputation among Black Pittsburgh communities, and that despite best efforts through the CEC, that perception remains. Pitt's access to Homewood's assets, including relationships throughout the community, does not signify the community's trust in the institution. Homewood trusted Pitt enough to permit the CEC to open,

but trepidation of Pitt's true motives linger Responses named incidents involving Pitt which furthered distrust among local Black communities including dealings with UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center). Interviewees spoke about Pitt prioritizing Pitt and leaving the Black community at a loss. They provided examples like Pitt helping to write grants to start non-profits and then keeping the majority of the money, the uprooting of Black families from the Hill District for university expansion, past research projects on Black people and Black bodies, and the many rumors around the CEC being an open door for UPMC's entry into the community. Quotes from council members around their distrust of Pitt include:

- "Well, Pitt doesn't have a good reputation in the Black community. I've been working with Pitt quite a while, but I'm saying broadly, when you start looking at what occurred on the Hill, uprooting of poor folks, lead acquisition, expansion of the university, that put a real sour taste in people's mouths in terms of that."

- "I think there's some research stuff that happened years ago, and black people in Pittsburgh have not let that go. It's in the collective memory of black people in Pittsburgh."

- "Having said that, with some, because they already have judged Pitt as far as being a part of UPMC, they still don't trust even the CEC. Whatever's going on, they're like, "Yeah, they're doing that for now, but pretty soon they're going to do something that just basically looks like UPMC.""

- "I think that the perception of a lot of people over the years, and again, that was 1995 when I came here, has been that Pitt is the same thing as UPMC. And I think that UPMC has gained more and more of a negative reputation in Homewood, like some other

communities, as being a very large, powerful, rich organization that doesn't care about poor people."

Remember, Karenga (1993) teaches that the "university was defined as racist" and furthering the "oppression and exclusion of Blacks…" (p. 4). The damage inflicted by PWHEIs upon Black communities cannot be erased, despite the best efforts of community engagement professionals. Interestingly, responses indicate that the perception of Pitt as an institution is different from the perception of the CEC. Overall, the CEC and its staff were seen as positive, and since the CEC opened there has been a pivot towards prioritizing community benefits. However, the CEC's positive image did little to shift the deeply entrenched overall negative perception held by community members of the institution. Distinctions were noted between how the CEC and CEPs adjacent to the center approach Homewood compared to other institutional actors. Responses pointed to a disconnect between the CEC and Oakland, with CEPs making an effort to genuinely engage Homewood respectfully and effectively, and other institutional actors who only desire to meet their self-serving interests. What remains in spite of best efforts is an institution that Black people do not trust, and the CEC perceived more favorably as a community asset. Responses acknowledged that people in Homewood will accept Pitt's resources and yet, not trust the institution. The following quotes represent the CEC's perception among council members, and how it is viewed more favorably than the overall university.

- "And what's been interesting is, even after multiple positive encounters, it doesn't seem to necessarily change that narrative for so many people. I know people who got paid for Pitt, was on 15 different projects, and they still got no trust for the institution."

- "And I would say [to faculty],"But why would you do that? And did you talk to anyone when you were planning this? And it doesn't make sense to me." And it was like, "Oh, well, we just felt this is needed. And we talked to a lot of people that said it's needed, and we know some people really want it." And I would just shake my head and then go, "All right, this seems like the same old thing." So I think that that still exists, at least on some level, but I think that the Pitt CEC more specifically, has done a great job at chipping away at that old narrative and changing things."

- "Yeah, I think Pitt's work has always been in support of at least one or more of those challenges. I think since the CEC's come in place, Pitt has done a much better job of aligning the interests of its faculty with the interests of the community."

- "And so, typically, now, if a faculty member is doing something in Homewood, there's at least some substantive group of people who actually are going to yield some type of benefit from that activity. And so, I think that that's been certainly a positive thing."

- "So I think it's funneling it down into ways that actually do the things that you're talking about doing. And so I think the CEC has definitely increased the ability of the university to do that kind of stuff, because otherwise, it only happened in pockets. And as a community member, you don't really know whether this person coming before you is more on the, "I really want to make this a win-win," Or if they're really like, "Well, I got this project and I just need some people to do these interviews." So I think that the CEC has definitely done a good job of trying to support that."

3.2.2 Pitt Power & Influence

Pitt is seen as an institution with a significant amount of power and resources. When the community engagement center opened, overnight Pitt became the largest and most resourced organization in Homewood. Creating a self-described "front-door to Pitt" the CEC was a means to cultivate university-community collaborations while ensuring residents had access to the resources of Pitt. Despite best efforts to navigate the community in ways that displayed asset-framed and strengths-based approaches, Pitt's arrival to Homewood and their perceived power impacted community level engagement. One Council Member implied that Pitt leverages selective engagement practices in which certain CBOs are favored over others. Statements from other Council members indicated that Pitt was doing a good job of working with and engaging the community in ways that didn't position Pitt in the driver's seat, and though comments noted that Pitt was still prioritizing Pitt, responses acknowledged an apparent shift towards supporting community priorities. There was a sense that Pitt was going to take care of Pitt first, and Pitt had the power and privilege to choose how it moved in the community and to what extent. Quotes here reveal that Pitt's movement in Homewood was viewed as Pitt-benefiting before community-benefitting, and that Pitt's best efforts to engage Homewood in effective and respectful ways may still miss the mark.

- "So I think sometimes, well-intentioned efforts by the university can still end up not supporting some existing stuff. So for example, if I, as an individual, with a cool idea, come to Pitt and I'm like, "Hey, nobody's doing this in the neighborhood, we need to do this." And Pitt's like, "Okay, that sounds great. This is a community member; they're saying it's not happening. We're going to support that." Well, if in reality, that person's just disconnected from the other things that's happening, there could be 2, 3, 4, 5 other

groups already engaged in X, and now Pitts at the table engaging in X as well. So that kind of dynamic happens very often, and it's hard to just point a finger at Pitt, you know what I mean? Because in many ways, I've not seen the CEC move in ways that was not with some entity within the community."

- "I think my perception before the CEC was that although it was mostly positive towards Pitt, I felt that Pitt was not too dissimilar from many other large entities. And that they were first and foremost, and not just first, but maybe the first 10 slots on the list, concerned about themselves. And then now, once we take care of all those things that we think are important to us, now how can we help the community? And I think that since the CEC has opened, my perception is that that's changing, that at least some more slots in those first 10 on the list are including community now."

3.2.3 Anti-racism and Pitt

Is it possible for a racialized institution to be anti-racist? Responses varied and were insightful. One council member expressed that Pitt was not anti-racist, citing the lack of diversity among Pitt faculty, staff, and students as an indicator of the institution's commitments. However, the CEC itself was offered as a symbol of Pitt's pivot towards anti-racism, with people connected to the center seen as exemplifying a commitment to anti-racist engagement and praxis, in comparison to other institutional actors. The CEC's all Black full-time staff was also seen as a symbol of Pitt's anti-racism ideals. Quotes by council members acknowledge the glimpses of anti-racism from Pitt's community engaged institutional actors adjacent to the CEC, while acknowledging uncertainty pertaining to the overall university being anti-racist.

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- "So I think that just the fact that the Community Engagement Center, the first one was in an underserved challenged, predominantly African American community, that in itself was an act of anti-racism, so yes."

- "I haven't seen it. I mean, I don't even know how to qualify that term. I mean, because one thing how you can do that is whenever Pitt comes into our community through different activities or research or what have you, we haven't seen a lot of African Americans or minorities that are part of that. So I guess we have to look first internally in terms of how Pitt has been able to develop diversity and access and recruiting students of color and those types of things. But no, I haven't seen that broadly, no."

- "So I would say the folks that I interact with at the Community Engagement Center certainly appear to sort of lead with anti-racist policy and thinking, but that's not always the case with every interaction that I have with the University of Pittsburgh."

- "I think there's been distinct intentionality as far as seeing people of color in leadership positions, at least from I'll say the optics, which are very important, and to see that, like I said, being an intentional thing to look at how we work and thrive together. And that, for me, is one of the most important things as far as anti-racism."

- "So I would say institutionally, the jury's still out but I do think there's been some good steps and I think Pitt has done a good job of at least positioning, I think, very anti-racist individuals in key positions when it comes to community engagement."

3.3 Theme 3: Pitt needs to double-down on investment

3.3.1 Too Soon to See Transformation

The consensus from Council members is that it is too soon to say whether Pitt has benefitted Homewood since the CEC opening in October 2018. Council members recognized the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented and how it impacted and shifted how Pitt supported Homewood through that time. Post-COVID, there is a desire to see continued and increased investment in Homewood from Pitt, who still has a decade on their CEC lease. Homewood did not arrive at its current state overnight, so it is too soon to see any significant transformation as a result of Pitt in Homewood in such a short amount of time. Compared to pillar organizations who have stood the test of time in Homewood, the CEC is considered a newer asset. However, Pitt is not new to Homewood with Pitt faculty, staff and students having worked in Homewood for decades, and many Pitt alumni who consider Homewood home. In the snapshot of time that the Pitt CEC will be in Homewood (as previously noted Pitt signed a 15-year lease with the option to renew an additional 10 years), there is a desire to see long-term community benefits. Responses indicate that activities of the CEC were appreciated for building good-will and meeting a need, but there has to be more investment from Pitt in engaging residents, business owners, and organizational leaders in ways that will improve educational outcomes, support economic prosperity, health and wellness, and the other social determinants to health plaguing Black communities. Council member quotes indicate that apparent Pitt impact in Homewood has yet to be seen.

- "Because I cannot think of anything specifically that the university has done, that's made a difference. It's made itself available to say, "We'll partner with you and we're here for you to meet so you can discuss how to make these things happen." But in terms

of, "We're going to send our engineering department out to do this, or we're going to send ..." With the exception, I will say, I mentioned the COVID vaccination, they sent the School of Pharmacy out, and that happened. But that was a one-off, or maybe two-off, depending upon where you got your second shot. But that's over. And can we point to something tangible, that's lasting, that the university has done? And I can't say that I can point to anything like that."

- "Personally, I don't think so. I just mentioned that. And that's not to take nothing away from at least attempting to do that. But right now, as I said, Pitt doesn't have a lot of history in terms of our community, so we really can't weigh or assess that right now because they haven't been here long enough."

- "Now, historically, the role that Pitt had played in Homewood was mainly research and a lot of people didn't really know about Pitt and the work that Pitt was doing. So it's still relatively new in our community and we still haven't seen the outcomes yet."

- "There is not a lot of history yet that we can assess the role and outcomes of Pitt in our community."

Measuring the success of Pitt's place-based efforts in Homewood was viewed by Council members as premature but necessary.

- "And I think that your research, and I don't know what anyone else is going to say, but I think that there's going to be an opportunity when you publish your research, to show a better way forward, and a better way to make that original dream and vision become a reality."

- "Because if no one measures it, it's not going to get much better."

3.3.2 Accelerate Missions through Effective Outreach

Responses not only indicated the desire of Council members to engage residents in meaningful ways, but they acknowledged Pitt needs to do the same. An important component of the CEC's approach in the community is to be invited into conversation or to the table. That posture is important, especially coming from a racialized institution working within a predominantly Black community. Outreach in higher education is viewed in comparison to community engagement as a negative and a more transactional approach wielded by PWHEIs recruiting research subjects. Community engagement is seen as a strengths-based alternative that includes community members in the process. This expressed desire for what I am calling effective outreach by Pitt in Homewood indicated the need to support community members in ways that go beyond the CEC opening its doors to the public and saying, "We are here." The CEC had a full-time Outreach Coordinator who promoted the CEC's programs and activities throughout the community, inviting residents to participate. Here, Council member quotes call for a team from Pitt to consistently engage organizational partners around their missions and to be a bridge to resources which will accelerate their goals.

- "So I think if the university said, "okay, part of the responsibility of the executive director, or someone from the university, make a personal contact." Don't just send an email or say, 'Our doors are open, these are the hours," call Mubarik with the Homewood Community Sports, "What can we help you to make your program more successful?" Call Community Empowerment Association and say, "What can we do to make your afterschool program more successful?" Call the Children's Village and say, "We know you're trying to improve academic performance. What can we do to make that happen?" So I think that rather than saying, "Our doors are open and you can come

and meet here," be proactive, go out, go beyond the walls, go beyond the meeting room, and go talk to organizations in the community and say, "What can we ...".

- "…on a monthly basis, someone from the CEC would contact each member of the Homewood Community Development Collaborative say, "What can we do to help you with a project? Where do you need help? Where do you need resources? Where do you need expertise? Where are you being stymied in accomplishing your mission?"

- "Rather than waiting for people to come to you. Because a lot of times they don't reach out. They'll complain, they'll be upset, they'll be frustrated, sometimes even depressed. But that doesn't mean they're going to reach out."

Listening to these statements I knew as the former CEC director that the center was under capacity for such a heavy lift. The CECs are run very lean staffing-wise. The Center operated under the premise that Pitt had to be invited. What would it look like for an increased investment of human capital by Pitt to better support Homewood's institutions? The level of outreach and community engagement needed to cultivate transformative outcomes for Homewood, especially those that tackle the social determinants to health, require dedicated full-time personnel.

4.0 Section 4: Learning & Actions

4.1 Discussion

My research explored the ways Pitt's placed-based community engagement activities in Homewood have supported Black self-determination, and the community's perception of Pitt and its place-based community engagement activities. Historically, racialized organizations did not support Black self-determination or liberation. Pitt's neighborhood commitments, including opening its first place-based community engagement center within a predominantly Black Pittsburgh community, expressed a desire by Pitt to be better neighbors and to support the community's thriving. Black self-determination is the pursuit of Black freedom and liberation. Considering racialized organizations perpetuate white superiority, I questioned whether Pitt could truly engage local Black communities in ways that would further Black self-determination, and if so, did this manifest in Homewood?

4.1.1 How have Pitt's placed-based community engagement activities in Homewood supported the community's self-determination, if at all? How do these activities reflect principles of self-determination?

My findings indicate that Pitt's place-based community engagements have not directly supported Homewood's self-determination. Despite this finding, there seems to be the potential for impact. CEC Advisory Council Members acknowledged that change takes time and Pitt's investment in Homewood through the CEC's is still too new to see tangible outcomes. Though

five years is not long enough to cultivate long-term change, it is a good amount of time to reevaluate, pivot, and to double-down on the institution's initial neighborhood commitment to Homewood and the East End.

4.1.1.1 Anti-Racist Institution

Pitt was not seen as an anti-racist institution, but instances in which Pitt had demonstrated anti-racism on the community level were cited. For instance, the opening of the first CEC within a predominantly Black and under-resourced community was named as an example of anti-racist action. The institution's struggle with diversity among its student population was called out as proof that Pitt was not anti-racist; however, the opening of the CEC and its all-Black staff symbolized anti-racism, though an anti-racist posture was not guaranteed from every institutional actor interested in working in Homewood. There was inconsistency in Pitt's approaches depending upon the institutional actor and their research or job-related goals. I gathered from Council Members' responses that they approached every new Pitt contact with apprehension, waiting to see what type of person they were going to be – someone focused on community, or someone focused on their own self-serving interests. This apprehension remained despite glimmers of anti-racism displayed by Pitt's CEPs and the CEC.

4.1.1.2 Pitt Activities and Black Self-Determination

As previously mentioned, the principles of Black self-determination include autonomy, cultural pride, educational excellence, political representation, social justice, and economic and community empowerment (Karenga, 1993). Responses indicate that there is potential for Pitt to support long-term goals pertaining to Homewood's self-determination, but activities of the CEC are mostly considered one-off. The COVID-19 vaccination clinics held in 2021 were named as a

benefit. Black people were considered a vulnerable population which was disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due in large part to the social determinants of health, including racism and discrimination (Reyes, 2020). Vaccine scarcity in marginalized communities brought genuine concern that residents of the East End and Hill District, who were primarily Black, elderly, and low-income would not have access. The clinics reflected true collaboration and the CEC's role as convenor provided administrative and logistical support. Pitt's involvement here should be commended, especially given the circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic, however a self-determined Homewood would have been able to coordinate this resource as lead.

The CEC in Homewood operates a tutoring program for elementary-aged students called PittEnrich, which was shared as an example of a Pitt partnership focused on improving math and literacy skills. The program includes the Homewood Children's Village, Bible Center Church, Homewood Community Sports, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and the Pitt School of Education. During the fall and spring semesters, PittEnrich provides Pitt student-teachers classroom experience serving as push-in support at Lincoln elementary and Faison elementary schools in the Homewood area. They also meet with youth at the CEC for Saturday programming. Though academic enrichment in math and reading is important, youth engaged in PittEnrich are not being grounded in educational experiences pertaining to Black life and culture. Instilling cultural pride is missing from the program's curriculum, a key tenet of Black self-determination. In the long-term, youth involved in PittEnrich may be better positioned to access a post-secondary education due to support received from the program, but in the absence of Black Studies these youth may not be positioned to support Black self-determination and thriving. Glimpses of genuine and authentic community-university collaboration emerged through PittEnrich, and because of this I am certain reading and math scores will show improvement for the youth involved. However, are

they learning about ways to support the thriving of their own communities? Are we preparing them to be change-agents to contribute to Black thriving and to tackle the challenges of Black communities? I wonder in what ways can the seeds of self-determination and social justice be woven into that experience?

4.1.1.3 Black Capitalism vs Cooperative Economics

Research findings show that the path to obtaining tangible community-benefitting outcomes from Pitt's community engagements in Homewood differed, with a Council member leaning more towards a Black capitalist viewpoint of interdependence and self-sufficiency, in comparison to another's response which took on more of a cooperative economics stance. As stressed by Karenga (1993),

> Black capitalism demands subsidization…. Subsidization may take the form of loans, grants, property equipment or training and is seen as a contribution to capital formation as well as moral and economic debt U.S. society owes African Americans for long-term discrimination and deprivation. (p. 378)

Opponents of Black capitalism see it as counter to self-determination. "Allen (1970) and Zweig (1972) argue that the political economy of subsidization is negative to Black self-determination and will mean creation of a manipulated class still dependent on outside sources" (Karenga, 1993, p. 379). In both instances, supporting Black businesses and establishing Black wealth were cited as a necessity to achieve economic and community empowerment in Homewood. However, there remains economic and social benefits to keeping marginalized Black communities reliant upon support of racialized organizations and the government.

4.1.1.4 Mutually Beneficial Outcomes and Racial Schemas

Community engagement approaches which promote the principles of Black self-determination should not only align with the community's goals but should consider mutual aid over mutual benefits. Mutual aid is grounded within the Black community and has supported the community's survival. "Theory and practice of cooperative economics has an early history in the mutual aid societies in northern Black communities which pooled resources and dedicated themselves to social service and community development" (Karenga, 1993, p. 381). Mutual aid is defined as collective coordination to meet each other's needs, usually from an awareness that the systems we have in place are not going to meet them" (Spade, 2020, p. 7). It also recognizes that the systems we currently have in place oftentimes have created crises or made things worse (Spade, 2020). In contrast, mutual benefit or mutuality is defined as, "each party in the relationship benefit[ing] from its involvement" (Dostilio, et al., 2012, p. 18). Seeking mutual benefits can lean towards more transactional practices which align more so with the capitalistic goals of racialized organizations, perpetuating racial hierarchies.

Ray (2019) offered, "racial structures are produced when central schemas connect to resources" and that, "Race, as a multidimensional concept, encodes schemas of sub- and super-ordination that can be activated when connected to resources" (Ray, 2019, p. 32). Ray added that, "segregation is a schema limiting (or granting) access to material and social resources" (Ray, 2019, p. 32). Based upon Ray's explanation, Pitt's place-based resources provided through the CEC in Homewood to Black stakeholders are upholding racial schemas which communicate Pitt superiority and dominance, inherently situating the Black receivers of those resources as inferior. Why did Pitt open its CEC in Homewood and not the more affluent community of Squirrel Hill? Racial structures cannot be overlooked, especially in how PWHEIs engage Black communities

including the policies that perpetuate racial disparities and limit access. "Racial structures arise any time resources are (intentionally or passively) distributed according to racial schemas" (Ray, 2019, p. 32). Responses indicated an awareness of racial schemas, though not named outright.

Council Members' mentioned Pitt's size, wealth, and power, in the same breath as naming Homewood's challenges impacting the ability for Black people to thrive. Pitt's efforts to engage community partners in respectful and effective ways has not erased the views of interviewees who point to Pitt's authority to choose whether to lead or follow, as convenient and beneficial to the institution. A racialized organization like Pitt was recognized by Council Members as having the influence to co-sign one community organization over another, impacting community level relationships and dynamics, or to choose its position in a university-community partnership, whether to lead or to follow. Council Members have appreciated approaches displayed by CEC and community engaged faculty, staff, and students which are grounded in respectful and effective community engagement practices. Pitt's CEPs and other institutional actors may have pivoted their approach to community engagement with Black communities from past deficit-framed methods, but the perception of the institution among Black populations remains unchanged in many ways since the 1969 BAS Computer Lab Takeover. Overall, the sense is Pitt is investing in Homewood because they want something or have something to gain from the community. However, what the community will gain from Pitt has yet to be seen.

4.1.1.5 Outside of the White Gaze

Black self-determination in Homewood cannot be attained until Homewood does internal work outside of the gaze of whiteness. Black self-determination requires Black people to work as a collective or coalition to bring about change in their own communities.

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We could think for ourselves, given half a chance. We had ambitions of our own--not to

be bourgie, but to reach out to everybody like us and move with them to change all our

lives. We knew we were somebody! (the damned, 1973, p. 94)

Revolutionary change in Homewood must be rooted in the community and include

residents in meaningful ways. Though the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan (2020)

was created with the input of residents and other relevant stakeholders, my research found that

work must be done to include and increase resident voices and encourage resident action. People

were named as the strongest asset in Homewood by all Council Members as well as a strong desire

to connect and reconnect with the people in the community. COVID-19 taught us the importance

of intergenerational perspective, from youth to elders, from poor to well-off, and everyone in-

between, recognizing the need for Black people to show up and to be involved, collectively. Youth

and young adults were named as groups that are more transient and difficult to engage, and a desire

was stressed to target this group around community development initiatives. Gathering Black

people together to intentionally etch out a plan towards self-determination, under one accord, must

include as many voices as possible. What is the thread pulling the Black community in Homewood

together? What is unifying Homewood?

4.1.1.6 Values and Practice

The collective's work must be grounded in the right values, and the values driving

community and economic development forward in Homewood are not blatant. The Homewood

Comprehensive Community Plan (2020) speaks to the community's goals, but not its values.

Responses from interviewees alluded to values, especially around unity, but what values are

driving forward practices that will see Black freedom come to fruition in Homewood? What values

should institutional actors embrace to ensure that community outreach and engagement from Pitt,

and other PWHEIs, truly benefit Black people? Black freedom requires that relevant values are in alignment with practice, and in analyzing the data and Pitt's neighborhood commitments, I could not see where Homewood's values intersected with the CEC's activity areas. Yes, those areas were Advisory Council approved. Yes, CEC approaches insist upon collaboration, mutual-benefit, respectful and effective engagement led by strengths-based practices, but how are these in alignment with traditional Afrocentric value systems? Establishing and reinforcing Homewood's values must be done within and among the Black residents of Homewood to drive community transformation forward. This is Homewood's homework! Misaligned community-university values and practice will not benefit the community.

Karenga (1998) reminds us of the reciprocal relationship between values and practice:

For even though we start with cultivating the values for a particular desired life-affirming practice, it is in practice that their worth is affirmed or disproved. 'Moreover, practice rooted in positive life-affirming and life-developing values, creates a context which not only sustains positive values, but also gives rise to new and even more expansive ones. (pp. 36- 37).

Homewood must determine the right value-orientation, which according to Karenga (1998), "makes possible the right kind of practice" (p. 36). Again, misalignment of values and practice will do little to cultivate transformative change in the community.

4.1.2 What is the perception of Pitt and its place-based community engagement efforts?

4.1.2.1 Pitt Can't be Trusted

"They are using you," was a warning whispered in my ear by naysayers of Pitt's commitment. They cautioned me out of concern for the community, of which I was also a member.

Under my leadership as the director of the CEC responses indicated that strides were made to shift the perception of Pitt and to build trust. However, it appears that Pitt the institution, overall, is not viewed as favorably as the CEC. Many Black residents hold Pitt to account for past harm towards Black communities and for that reason the institution could not and should not be trusted. My research found that the institutional actors associated with the CEC who exuded a posture of genuine collaboration and respect were trusted slightly more than the institution. The majority of Black staff at the CEC were from Pittsburgh, and/or had personal or professional ties to Homewood and the East End prior to working for the center. It was important to Pitt and to Homewood that people from the community were leading and working within the CEC, which responses indicated was viewed not only viewed as a positive, but also, to an extent, a display of antiracism. We cannot forget what Sarah Ahmed reminded us about institutional image, that it is, "produced in part for external others" (2012, p. 33). Providing an image of Black authority was important and necessary to the success of the Homewood CEC, but true power and influence remained in Oakland.

My role in cultivating a positive perception of the CEC cannot be diminished. As previously mentioned, I leveraged a great deal of social capital in the 15-months leading up to the CEC's opening, and thereafter through the CEC's first three-and-a-half years. During that time, I leveraged existing relationships and built new relationships which I have carried into my new role within Pitt. My time in Homewood preceded my role as CEC Director, with residents and community leaders cultivating me into a sturdy bridge representing community and institutional interest. I never made promises that I could not keep, and I worked diligently to ensure community benefits in as many ways as possible. In Homewood I felt at home. I was invited to cookouts and held intergenerational relationships. I did not take for granted the position I had to seek the wisdom of elders, and of youth who would take calls or answer text messages from me. Respect and trust

building takes time, and my best effort did not erase all trepidation of Pitt, the institution, and it should not have. I like to think during my time community members learned how to engage Pitt in beneficial ways. Distrust of Pitt remained, and responses show leanings towards a "wait-and-see," and a "what-have-you-done-for-me-lately," stance related to seeing what comes of Pitt's investment in Homewood. The wait-and-see posture that many Council Members described remains optimistic and feels more like wait-and-hope – praying that something good for Homewood is the result of Pitt's speculation.

Comparisons offered by council members between the CEC and the institution reflected an overall wariness and skepticism of Pitt held by many Black Pittsburghers. Distinctions positioned community engagement professionals as being aligned with community goals more so than campus practitioners or other institutional actors. Black institutional actors who are community engaged experience both university and community differently. Though most of us who worked in the CEC identified as Black, we stood under the shadow of the ivory tower. Remember, Black CEPs could be viewed by residents as "new missionaries" and as such, we are loyal to our hustle or jobs. Remember that new missionaries were described by the damned (1973) as, "Bourgeois negroes [who] came into our neighborhoods when we rebelled…to cool us down so they could operate on their hustle'" (p. 14). The trust we built in the community as people who share the same culture and represent Pitt's interests through the Homewood CEC only went so far.

4.1.2.2 Pitt is Powerful

Described as an "800-pound gorilla," I found that Pitt was seen as a powerful and well-resourced institution with the freedom to be selective. Pitt had the power of choice. They could choose to move into Homewood. They can choose to lead-or-to-follow on projects and community collaborations. Pitt could choose what and who to prioritize through partnership, and by doing so,

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increasing or diminishing agency based upon who they decided to support. Thus, Pitt exemplified previously mentioned tenets of racialized organizations provided by Victor Ray (2019) including, "enhancing or diminishing the agency of racial groups," and "legitimating unequal distribution of resources" all while reinforcing "whiteness as a credential" (p. 26). Access to resources provides a nimbleness permitting Pitt to move how it wants to move in the community, though it primarily takes a stance of working with a community partner and ensuring mutual benefits. Even that action is a choice. Many CBOs and resident groups do not have this level of flexibility and freedom. Access to Pitt's resources could unintentionally shift the neighborhood's resource economy, further complicating collective community development efforts. The example provided by one Council Member demonstrates how Pitt's best intentions to engage Homewood in respectful and effective ways could still have negative community-level ramifications:

> "So I think sometimes, well-intentioned efforts by the university can still end up not supporting some existing stuff. So for example, if I, as an individual, with a cool idea, come to Pitt like, "Hey, nobody's doing this in the neighborhood, we need to do this." And Pitt's like, "Okay, that sounds great. This is a community member, they're saying it's not happening. We're going to support that." Well, if in reality, that person's just disconnected from the other things that's happening, there could be 2, 3, 4, 5 other groups already engaged in X, and now Pitt's at the table engaging in X as well. So that kind of it's hard to just point a finger at Pitt, you know what I mean? Because in many ways, I've not seen the CEC move in ways that was not with some entity within the community. But if those entities within the community are not necessarily aligned, then Pitt moving with one entity can still sometimes cause interesting sort of artifacts within the collective dynamic within the neighborhood. So I think that that still remains a challenge."

In this example, Pitt unintentionally provided agency to a disconnected community member or organization, and in turn potentially diminished the agency of existing groups.

Pitt's power allows the institution to prioritize what it wants, and I found that despite this perception, Pitt is viewed as prioritizing community benefits since the CEC's opening. However, responses indicate a view and awareness that Pitt will prioritize itself in these interactions and the institution will always walk away with some benefit. Prior to the CEC's opening, the perception was that community interests were low on Pitt's list of priorities, especially concerning research. Now, there is more vetting of faculty, and project alignment, in addition to collaborations which include community stakeholders at the planning table, and overall increased effort by Pitt in seeing favorable community outcomes. Given this, Council Members know that Pitt seeks more than a demonstration of their benevolence. Mutual benefit requires give and take, and vice versa. As previously stated, it is transactional and requires, "each party in the relationship benefit[ing] from its involvement" (Dostilio, et at., 2012, p. 18). Any community benefit resulting from a Pitt partnership in Homewood was seen as a win, whether meeting space, access to the CEC's computer lab, a vaccination clinic or an educational program, all were viewed favorably. My research found that long-term outcomes as a result of Pitt in Homewood have yet to be seen.

4.1.2.3 Pitt Needs to Do More

Pitt is perceived as scratching the surface of effectiveness. The opening of the CEC was the first step in supporting Homewood's thriving. Pitt's investment through the Community Engagement Center was appreciated by Council Members, but as my career and the careers of other CEPs transformed due in large part to the institutional perception of success in Homewood, the community has remained the same. One-off community benefiting activities were acknowledged, but Council Members noted the need for effective and continuous outreach by Pitt

to engage a larger community of people like Black business owners and entrepreneurs, for example. I found that Pitt is viewed as not supporting Homewood's challenges en masse. Pitt may be giving them fish, but they are not teaching them how to fish. Self-determination requires the latter. What future investments can Pitt make that will contribute towards significant change for the Black community? The opening of the CEC was a notable start, but it was not enough.

4.2 Next Steps & Implications

Social determinants of health overshadow the Black experience in American cities, and Pittsburgh is no different. Homewood residents share the same challenges as those living in marginalized Black communities across the country. The struggle for Black liberation and thriving includes tackling failing schools, poverty, poor health outcomes, and gun violence. Decades of systemic and institutionalized racism have surmounted to community disinvestment, especially in Pittsburgh's Black neighborhoods. Past interactions with the University of Pittsburgh have reaped little to no transformation for Pittsburgh's Black residents, and overall distrust of the university has shaped how the institution is perceived among Black communities, including Homewood. There is internal collective work to do among Homewood's leadership and residents to strengthen interconnectedness, and Pitt has internal work to do to embody and enact anti-Black racism in posture and in practice. In order to see Pitt's long-term investment in Homewood through the CEC achieve transformative community outcomes, community members and institutional actors must work together in solidarity. Revolutionary community engagement requires it and goes beyond it. Revolutionary community engagement stresses respectful and effective community engagement and seeks to align community values with institutional practice. Next steps from Pitt and the

Homewood community must center Blackness, aligning values and approaches with Afrocentric philosophies.

4.2.1 Centering Blackness

Strengths-based approaches wielded by CEPs at Pitt have fallen short in addressing the challenges of local Black communities in any tangible way. *Community cultural wealth* (Yosso, 2005)*,* or *asset-based community development* (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), for instance, provide frameworks on how to view and engage marginalized communities and groups. These are referenced by CEPs and though both are beneficial to the collective practice of community engagement in higher education, they lack the uniqueness of the Black experience and fail to address the distinct needs of the Black community. It will take more than blanket approaches to see thriving in Homewood.

Transformation in Black communities requires approaches from PWHEIs which confront anti-Blackness. Dumas and ross (2016) explained the need for Black specificity.

Understanding this distinction between a theory of racism and a theory of blackness (in an anti-Black world) is key: whereas the former may invoke Black examples, and even rely on Black experience of racism in the formation of its tenets, only critical theorization of blackness confronts the specificity of anti-blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance, and perhaps most importantly, as an antagonism, in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself (but not person for herself or himself) in opposition to all that is pure, human(e), and White" (Dumas and ross, 2016, p 417;).

Pitt's anti-racist approaches through the CEC have not truly centered Blackness in ways that are aligned with Black self-determination, or any Afrocentric value systems. Values that center Black communities will produce praxis which center Blackness. Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba provide a philosophy and value system which can produce transformative practices for the betterment of Black communities.

4.2.2 Ideology of Kawaida

Kawaida is an African American and social philosophy created by Maulana Karenga in the 1960's. It is described as "a communitarian African philosophy which is an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world" (Karenga, 1998, p. 35). Karenga further defined Kawaida by, "its central focus on views and values and its commitment to an ongoing dialog with African culture which involves using it as a resource rather than a reference" (1998, p. 36). Karenga (1998) cultivated seven central values rooted in the ideology of Kawaida called the Nguzo Saba or The Seven Principles. These values are the core and consciousness of Kwanzaa (Karenga, 1998). The Seven Principles are African cultural values analyzed, chosen, and established to best serve the interests and aspirations of the African American family, community, and culture (Karenga, 1998). They reflect Pan-Africanism, the African American struggle for freedom and liberation, and rebuilding community (Karenga, 1998). As previously mentioned, Karenga (1998) stressed the importance of values to practice, and the reciprocal relationship between the two. The values that proceed practice must be rooted in Blackness and led by the Black community. The Nguzo Saba offers a value system grounded in African tradition, and they are:

1. Umoja (Unity)

2. Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)

3. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)

4. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)

5. Nia (Purpose)

6. Kuumba (Creativity)

7. Imani (Faith)

The Nguzo Saba can instill a sense of cultural and community pride while encouraging active transgenerational resident involvement in the community's transformation. Homewood leaders can leverage the Nguzo Saba while insisting that Pitt and other predominantly White institutions who desire to work in Homewood adhere to these Afrocentric values. In turn, PWHEIs like Pitt can leverage The Seven Principles to effectively engage Black communities in ways that will contribute to Black liberation. However, this posture of freedom requires solidarity described by Freire (2003) as:

> The oppressor in solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor— when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis. To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce. (Freire, 2003, p 50)

Below I reimagine how the ideology of Kawaida and The Seven Principles could revolutionize Pitt's place-based activities in Homewood, and how this can serve as a framework for other PWHEIs engaging Black communities. In addition, I offer ways in which Homewood's

leadership can leverage Kawaida and Nguzo Saba, including self-determination, to engage residents around current community revitalization efforts.

4.2.2.1 The Nguzo Saba and Homewood

4.2.2.1.1 Umoja (Unity)

- Value: Emphasizes the importance of unity among individuals and communities. It is a principle and practice of togetherness, according to Karenga (1998), as are all of the principles. Karenga also positions unity as active solidarity described as, "a firm dependable togetherness that is born, based, and sustained in action" (p. 46).

- Approach: Through the creation of collaborative partnerships among community organizations, local businesses, schools, and residents, Homewood can achieve unity by aligning resources to directly address the community's challenges. A CEC Advisory Council Member spoke about the need to continue outreach to residents around the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan. All Council Members spoke about the importance of people and the need to get residents more involved in the collective work. Homewood and its leadership can foster Umoja among residents by supporting the four categories of unity provided by Karenga (1998): family unity, generational unity, community unity, and Pan-African unity.

Within the family, unity is viewed as a moral principle of family and community (Karenga, 1998). It is grounded in rejecting harshness, practicing togetherness, and stresses the importance of adults displaying unity for the children. The family is considered the focal point of unity for generations (Karenga, 1998).

Generational unity is described as, "the respect and collective concern and care for the elders" (Karenga, 1998, p. 47). It encourages active elder participation, "for it teaches [youth] to understand and appreciate the process of growing old, gives them access to seasoned knowledge and experience and helps prevent the so-called generation gap so evident and advertised in European society" (p. 48).

Community unity starts in the family and extends into the world. "Unity begins in the family, but it extends to organizational affiliation and then the unity of organizations" (Karenga, 1998, pp. 48-49). Malcolm X embodied community unity. He encouraged Black people to join organizations and to put aside, "organizational differences and religious differences to unify around their common identity as Africans, and their common interests, especially the interests of liberation" (p. 49).

The last category of unity noted by Karenga is Pan-African unity. Pan-African unity is considered the ultimate level of unity for African people (Karenga, 1998). "Pan-African unity "honor[s], preserve[s], and expand[s] [Pan-African] history in the struggle for liberation and even higher levels of human life" (p. 49).

Pitt and other PWHEIs can promote Umoja through their place-based initiatives by working closely with community members to collaborate on various activities that will unify people and goals. The CEC is one of many spaces in the community that can be leveraged for this purpose. It can house gatherings and celebrations that will bring community members together; host dialogues among CEPs and community members to identify shared values and goals, creating the foundation necessary to encourage solidarity; and the CEC could become a beacon for youth and young people and a safe space to engage them in community decision-making and leadership roles, among other uses which can be identified through effective and consistent outreach.

4.2.2.1.2 Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)

- Value: Self-determination is a value that encourages individuals to define themselves, speak for themselves, and control their own destiny. "It demands that we as an African people define, defend and develop ourselves instead of allowing or encouraging others to do this" (Karenga, 1998, p. 50). Defining identity, including collective and personal identity, "urges us as a people not to surrender our historical and cultural identity to fit into the culture of another" (p. 51). It is the practice of Afrocentricity, which, "as the core and fundamental quality of our self-determination, reaffirms our right and responsibility to exist as a people, to speak our own special truth to the world, and to make our own contribution to the forward flow of human history" (p. 52).

- Approach: Homewood leadership can empower community members around Kujichagulia by fostering a strong sense of Afrocentricity through self and collective identify and Afrocentric thought and practice. Pitt can work with Homewood CBOs to build organizational capacity which will accelerate their missions and impact. Community-university collaborations to further Black self-determination must include opportunities to: educate and encourage community members to make informed decisions pertaining to their lives and futures; develop skills among community members that will enhance their ability to shape their own destinies; promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being that will encourage residents to take control of their health; and provide resources about financial wellness to support financial independence, etc. Pitt activities which further Black self-determination in Homewood must aid Black people in defining, naming, creating, and advocating for themselves.

4.2.2.1.3 Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)

- Value: Promotes the idea of working together to solve problems and uplift the community. Ujima "is a commitment to active and informed togetherness on matters of common interest" (Karenga, 1998, p. 53). It involves collective work and shared accountability. It rejects individual freedom in any unfree context and, "poses the need for struggle to create a context in which all can be free" (p. 54).

- Approach: Homewood leadership can promote collective work and responsibility among residents in ways that will establish strong networks to share information, pool resources and to collaborate around community revitalization and thriving. Council members discussed the need to encourage action among residents and to garner additional resident input and involvement. Input from a small neighborhood advisory council, such as the CECs, is not enough. Strengthening community networks around community benefitting projects, sharing skills and knowledge from one neighbor to another, establishing supportive mentorship, supporting Black-owned businesses through patronage and capacity building, volunteerism and giving back, and celebrating the achievements of community members are some of ways that Homewood and other Black communities can uphold Ujima.

Pitt and other PWHEIs that lead place-based community engagement initiatives in Black communities can promote collective work and responsibility by fostering collaboration while addressing systemic challenges. Strategies to do this include but are not limited to: ensuring collective decision-making with community involvement at the planning level; effective outreach that supports community capacity building especially among CBOs and local businesses, and reflective practices to promote a culture of improvement among institutional actors. Despite Pitt

seemingly exhibiting glimmers of these strategies through the CEC, at the time of my departure none of these had taken root in an organized way that is benefiting Homewood. Operationalizing and knitting these processes into the fabric of the CEC will ensure that Pitt's long-term commitment supports the collective work of Homewood.

4.2.2.1.4 Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)

- Value: Cooperative Economics is, "a commitment to the practice of shared social wealth and the work necessary to achieve it" (Karenga, 1998, p. 56). It promotes economic independence, stressing "self-reliance in the building, strengthening and controlling of the economics of our own community" (p. 57). In addition, Ujamaa puts emphasis on generosity to the poor and vulnerable.

- Approach: Homewood and other Black communities can promote cooperative economics by fostering a culture of collaboration, resource sharing, and mutual aid. Strategies which foster Ujamaa include but are not limited to creating employment opportunities with a focus on hiring residents, promoting entrepreneurship including cooperative enterprises, sharing facilities and infrastructure, access to funding through community created partnerships, entrepreneurial mentorship and support networks, and community workshops and seminars around cooperative economics including financial literacy, business planning and sustainable economic practices.

Pitt and other PWHEIs can support cooperative economics in Black communities by working in solidarity with community stakeholders. Conversations with Homewood's leadership should identify pathways to collaboration that provide the community with access to industry professionals and faculty who can provide mentorship or guidance; networking opportunities that bring community members, investors, and business leaders together; market research to identify

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business opportunities; technical assistance such as accounting and marketing support, etc. Collaborative efforts can also include internship and job placement programs that will help connect Black students with meaningful career opportunities. Pitt's involvement in Homewood must further Ujamaa by supporting financial freedom and thriving among Black residents and organizations.

4.2.2.1.5 Nia (Purpose)

- Value: Encourages individuals to identify and pursue their collective purpose for the greater good. More so, Nia is "a commitment to the collective vocation of building, developing and defending our community, its culture and history in order to regain our historical initiative and greatness as a people and add to the good and beauty in the world" (Karenga, 1998, p. 59). Karenga identified and stressed the relationship between personal and social purpose. "The highest form of personal purpose is…social purpose, i.e., personal purpose that translates itself into a vocation and commitment which involves and benefits the community "(p. 61). Personal purpose can contribute to social purpose to bring about social change.

- Approach: The goal of Nia is social contribution and not self-serving careerism. "Our purpose is not to simply create money makers, but to cultivate men and women capable of social and human exchange on a larger more meaningful scale" (Karenga, 1998, p. 61). Homewood's leadership can foster a sense of individual and collective purpose by encouraging and providing opportunities for personal growth that stress the importance of social contributions. "Education for social contribution" as promoted by DuBois is a necessary step in cultivating Nia throughout the community (p. 61).

Pitt can further the principle of purpose in Homewood by supporting Homewood's leadership in educating residents for social contribution. This support can include tapping into the expertise of the Africana Studies Department and the Center for Urban Education to co-construct initiatives with CBOs that will advance Nia. Pitt can then consider how its engagements through the CEC, especially pertaining to Black youth, encourage social good over just college and career attainment.

4.2.2.1.6 Kuumba (Creativity)

- Value: Kuumba is a principle of "restoration and progressive perfection" (Karenga, 1998, p. 64). Progressive perfection is defined by Karenga as a Kawaida concept, "to leave what one inherits more beautiful and beneficial than it was before" which stressed, "leaving a legacy which builds on and enriches the legacy before you" (p. 64). Kuumba celebrates innovation that contributes to the development and progress of the community.

- Approach: Homewood leadership can promote Kuumba throughout the community by fostering an environment where members are encouraged to contribute their talents to create longstanding positive change in the community. Creative solutions to address the community's challenges can involve community-based arts projects, writing and storytelling, cultural celebrations, youth empowerment, artistic therapy and healing, cross-cultural exchanges, etc. All of these and more can create an environment that fosters a sense of cultural pride, enduring interconnectedness, and innovation to address Homewood's challenges.

Pitt can support Kuumba in Homewood by making intentional strides to ensure restoration and innovation as a result of place-based community engagement activities through the CEC. This

goes beyond meeting an immediate need. Reciprocity which reflects Kuumba from university-community activities will restore what was lost, including setting aside reparations in the form of scholarships for Black residents, while actively supporting innovative solutions to support tangible change in the community.

4.2.2.1.7 Imani (Faith)

- Value: The seventh principle, Imani is, "a profound and enduring belief in and commitment to all that is of value to us as a family, community, people and culture" (Karenga, 1998, p. 65). Karenga explained faith's purposeful connection to unity. "Unity brings us together and harnesses our strength, but faith in each other and the Good, the Right, the Beautiful, inspires and sustains the coming together and the commitment to take the work to its end" (p. 65). Unity binds us together, but faith keeps us going. Imani begins with a "belief in the Creator" and leads to "a belief in the essential goodness and possibility of the human personality" (p. 65). In addition to having faith in a Higher Power and each other, maintaining Imani includes faith in the collective struggle to, "set in motion a new history of humankind...in alliance with other oppressed and progressive peoples…" (p. 66). Imani encourages faith in each other and faith in the collective struggle for liberation.

- Approach: Many of Homewood's leadership are faith-based leaders, so promoting Imani should come naturally for a group already spiritually connected. Homewood's leadership can further the principle of Imani throughout the community by creating a sense of belonging, reminding residents of their resilience and the source of their strength. Cultivating a sense of faith in themselves and faith in the struggle, activities that advance Imani involve organizing regular gatherings, rituals, and ceremonies that

celebrate shared values and reinforce the community faith in its identity, preservation of cultural practices, languages, and traditions, among others. What would it look like for the Homewood Collaborative's monthly community meetings to open with prayer and with pouring of libation? "Libation is performed for the ancestors, their intercession and blessings are invoked, their names are called out in a ritual of remembrance, and they are given praise and thanks for their legacy and guidance" (Karenga, 1998, p. 25). Imani can be incorporated into the existing fabric of Homewood to breathe new life into community development initiatives, propelling efforts forward while encouraging sustained involvement from all members of the community.

By collaborating with the Black community, respecting their values and offering resources that support the collective's goals, Pitt can contribute to the promotion of Imani. University-community collaborations that promote Imani include sharing spaces for reflection, and co-creating initiatives with community members aligning values, priorities, and aspirations, etc. Meaningful dialogue between Pitt and community members can help to determine the role Pitt has in furthering Imani through its activities.

4.2.2.2 The Seven Principles & PWHEIs

Black communities have unique challenges and CEPs representing PWHEIs should lead with approaches that center Blackness, call out and reject anti-Black racism, and take action to support Black thriving. Embracing the philosophy of Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba will better position Homewood to work with Pitt and other predominantly white institutions to obtain positive outcomes for Black people. Predominately white higher education institutions, like Pitt, can support Kawaida praxis by authentically embedding the Seven Principles, including self-

determination, within the activities of their place-based community engagement activities. There was intentionality in ensuring that the CEC was aesthetically pleasing and welcoming to Black residents, from the art on the walls to the staff hired to lead its work. However, missing were efforts to align the community's value system with Pitt's place-based activities. Reimagining the CEC in Homewood's activity areas aligned with the Nguzo Saba could propel efforts in a way that reaps tangible long-term benefits to the community. By working with Homewood leadership and residents to align The Seven Principles with the Center's programs will make Pitt's activities through the CEC truly meaningful. In addition, as previously stated, the relationship between values and practice is reciprocal. Reimagining the CEC's six activity areas alongside community members will serve to strengthen Pitt's commitment to Homewood. The CEC's activity areas are: (1) Enriched Education & Youth Experience, (2) Economic Prosperity & Family Support, (3) Enhanced Health & Wellness, (4) Strengthened Cultural Arts, (5) Innovation & Business Growth, (6) and Data Access & Organizational Capacity. How could the Seven Principles meld with and enrich educational programs through the CEC? An educational youth experience guided by The Seven Principles could promote cultural pride by teaching Black youth about their history, while increasing reading and math comprehension. For instance, PittEnrich, the CEC's elementary-aged tutoring program, could intentionally incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy into its curriculum and hands-on activities and contract Black educators to help implement the program alongside Pitt students and staff. Math lessons could focus on cooperative economics. Art activities could unpack social injustices and empower elementary-aged youth to express themselves, and more. The possibilities of this communion of Kawaida values and PWHEI praxis are endless, and attainable, with an authentic and genuine commitment between Pitt and the community. "In this communion both groups grow together, and the leaders, instead of being simply self-appointed, are installed or

authenticated in their praxis with the praxis of the people" (Freire, 2003 p.130). Revolutionary place-based community engagement in Homewood unifies Black values and all of Pitt's community engagement activities through the CEC, reflecting praxis and outcomes which contribute to Black thriving.

5.0 Section 5: Reflections

A racialized institution's investment in true and long-lasting change through its place-based community engagement efforts in Black neighborhoods seems like fiction, but there are people on both sides working to make it fact. Higher Education was not created for Black people. Past encounters with PWHEIs have reaped little to no reward for Black communities. If anything, past encounters have harmed Black communities, stripping them of assets and resources. Pitt has professed a pivot from past deficit-led approaches, and in many ways through the CECs, the university has demonstrated that turn. Despite efforts, Pitt is not trusted by Black Pittsburgh. Interviewed Homewood Advisory Council members spoke candidly about the deep distrust of Pitt and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center among residents. Yet, the CEC was seen as a community partner and asset to Homewood and the East End, and a catalyst for university-community partnerships and collaborations. Despite distrust, use of the CEC and community-institutional relationships continue to take shape between Homewood and Pitt, reflecting the university's commitment and investment in the community's thriving. As I reflect on my past role as the CEC director, I know the importance of having the right person standing in the gap, as well as access to the right resources.

5.1 The CEC Director

The CEC director must embody the community and the university. A strong bridge, translator, and advocate for the community's interest among university audiences, the director

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must secure resources, cultivate collaborations, and ensure community-benefits which are in alignment with the community's values and goals. This requires a person who can build relationships among community and university audiences. An institutional actor who can navigate Homewood's streets and university hallways with ease, the director must seamlessly transition from the culture of higher education to the culture of the community. This highly skilled person must be provided with the proper resources, including salary, staffing, and access to adequate campus support to operationalize processes in ways that will ensure the consistency of engagement and positive community outcomes.

A leader, the CEC director should reflect a praxis in solidarity with the people, standing in the gap to ensure that institutional actors interested in engaging residents through the CEC are wielding approaches that are not only anti-racist, but also reflect anti-black racism. The director should be an ambassador of Black value systems and ensure that the activities through the center are in alignment with them. The CEC director must be positioned to support Black communities in a way that will rectify and address ongoing disparities. Stressing the importance of a political education through their work is one way to further Black self-determination through the CEC. Political education is defined as, "the practice of studying the history and analysis of struggles for social, political, geographic, and economic power with the explicit purpose of strengthening political organizations and movements for social change" (Herzing, 2023). For Black communities a political education can advance empowerment, critical thinking, community organizing, policy analysis, understanding of institutional power, historical context, intersectionality, civic engagement, and more. Herzing (2023) encourages us not to, "fall for the myth that study is the enemy of action". The Director must knit together collaborations between Pitt and Homewood to advance political education through the CEC. Activities could include

curriculum development in which Black community organizations work with Pitt to develop and integrate more inclusive and diverse curricula, contributing to the design of courses, material and resources that cover Black history, culture, and social issues. Hosting lectures, workshops, and guest speakers who are Black scholars, activists, leaders, and community members to present on relevant topics, as well as supporting community-led research collaborations. The CEC director has the influence to shape the activities of the center around political education which supports Homewood's self-determination while guiding faculty in intentional ways.

The faculty plays a crucial role in nurturing collaborations between the university and the community, and their actions mirror the institution as a whole. It takes just one negative institutional actor to damage relationships within the community. Faculty members can actively promote the advancement of Black communities by engaging in their own studies of Black culture and the eradication of anti-Black practices, including enhancing their understanding of political education. As a result, faculty can impart these learnings to their students and demonstrate, through their own practices, strengths-based approaches that resonate with the core values of the Black community. The Director is a broker, positioning faculty to be both learner and teacher in community settings and demonstrating through practice a commitment to the community.

 A CEC director must have a heart for the people, possess cultural awareness, and an ability to advocate for and be a conduit of resources to the Black community as a representative of the academy.

> We not only need organizers who can organize institutions, and campaigns, we especially need organizers who can mobilize and organize ideas. The community organizer of the 20th and 21st century has to be able to transform Western attitudes, Western thoughts and Western behavior. (T'Shaka, 1990, p. 72)

The wrong CEC director can set trust building efforts back, in addition to cutting off access to community-benefiting resources through the center. Since my departure in January of 2022, the CEC in Homewood has hired its third director. This individual will need access, both to the community and within the academy in order to effectively do their job. Intentional support including proper on-boarding involving the university *and* community members will ensure that this person is impactful.

Identifying a CEC director who bridges the community-campus divide, promotes political education and Black studies, and encourages partnerships that will support Black thriving might seem impossible. Increased community involvement in the hiring and on-boarding process, in addition to centering the interview process around Kawaida will increase the chances of finding a professional with the acumen, demeanor and resourcefulness to be an effective Homewood CEC director. Whether Pitt will position the director to do what needs to be done is yet to be seen. For instance, as of my departure CEC directors did not have the autonomy to even manage their own budgets.

5.2 Homewood and the Black Community

Residents have a responsibility to ensure that community benefits are obtained from Pitt's investment in their neighborhood. Freire (2003) teaches that, "freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift" (p. 47). Through the widespread adoption of a value-system rooted in Blackness there is an opportunity to accelerate transformation in Homewood which will see Black thriving. Efforts to strengthen resident involvement in this transformative work must be community led. Neighbors working alongside neighbors. Homewood's leaders must avoid positioning themselves as

designated "thinkers" and residents (or the oppressed) as "doers" (Freire, 2003, p. 126), instead making efforts to leverage the many gifts and cultural capital that residents bring to the table. Through this research project I rediscovered the importance of consistent dialogue with Black communities, the people, the culture, and traditions, in order to ensure the correct goal-minded approaches and resources are being leveraged. Homewood's leadership, the aforementioned Community Players, must establish, educate, and enforce alignment of the community's values with institutional practices. This requires ongoing dialogue with the Pitt CEC and university leadership to ensure long-term commitments expressed by the institution are more than performative, but they are truly rooted in Homewood and reflect the community's values.

5.3 Renewed Commitments

Commitments and agreements made five years ago need to be renewed. *What has Pitt done lately* was a sentiment expressed from interviews. In addition, the community is a different community compared to five years ago. After Pitt's initial investment in Homewood, UPMC opened a Neighborhood Center in East Liberty's Bakery Square, minutes from the CEC. In August 2023 media outlets reported that acclaimed performer Billy Porter, who is from Homewood, is working with the City's Urban Redevelopment Authority to revitalize the Greater Pittsburgh Coliseum (Harrop, 2023), turning it into a community-benefiting space focused on the arts. In addition, Verizon in partnership with Neighborhood Allies opened the Verizon Community Forward Homewood-Brushton Youth Learning Center located in the Homewood-Brushton YMCA and the Community Forward Homewood-Brushton Adult Center located within the Community College of Allegheny County (Neighborhood Allies, 2023). Their focus is youth and

adult STEM education. How do Pitt's commitments stack up in a small community with many long-term institutional investments? More importantly, how does Pitt show its love for Homewood and for Black people?

In order for Pitt to truly show its love for Black people it would have to actively work towards Black self-determination. As a PWHEI, Pitt would have to shift its inherent purpose of advancing white superiority by defecting its power, essentially abolishing the institution. PWHEIs will not abandon the "white social contract" they created and have benefitted from (Dancy et al., 2018, p. 190). With this understanding, dialogue with Homewood's leadership should focus on reevaluating Pitt's commitments and the community's goals. Homewood's self-determination and thriving depend upon it.

Appendix A   Resident Facebook Post

facebook.com

Wan Wes was 😄 feeling awake.
14 hrs ·

PSA: Pitt is invading our communitites & studying our habits, offering to test out different "clinical drugs" on our kids for money and pimping the grassroot non profits in Homewood for their ideas. I recieved a letter addressed to my daughter???? offering money to test things on her and kids of all ages even adults. (dont know how they got my kids name and address)
Somebody "SOLD OUT"
There was a Request For Proposal from the Univ. of Pittsburgh asking non profits in Homewood for specific ideas on how to engage the community for there Community Engagement Centers last year. They wanted the ideas from us but dont want to provide any finances to help push forward the processes of our work. They want to place there students in our organizations to "help" as interns so they can learn how we work. They have already bought buildings in prime locations throughout our communities right under our noses.
I read a report outlining how they are going to use sports and sports related activities as the hook to get into our lives, businesses and community. The fix is in folks! Dont get it twisted they have the resources ($) but not the relationships with the people to pull this off. We are basically a research study for the University and they do not want to invest any resources ($) to the people! Guard your ideas, Guard your families! The POWER is with the PEOPLE #StayWoke PT1....to be continued!

Seeking Self-Determination Interview Protocol

The purpose of this research study is to investigate self-determination (freedom) among Black communities, exploring how community members perceive the University of Pittsburgh's place-based community engagement activities in Homewood. Responses will identify approaches that are seen as supporting self-determination, and those which are barriers to progress. This information will help to inform future Pitt place-based community engagement activities in the Homewood and the city's East End. The Community Engagement Center (CEC) in Homewood, the first of Pitt's place-based community engagement centers, opened in October 2018. Since its opening, how have Pitts engagements in the community furthered Homewood?

- This conversation will not be shared publicly.
- The information provided will inform my research exploring Pitt's role in supporting Homewood's self-determination since the opening of its first Community Engagement Center.
- You will remain anonymous.
- Do I have your permission to record the interview?
- Do you have any questions?
- The interview will last up to 60 minutes.

Questions:

1. How do you view your relationships to Homewood? How would you describe Homewood, the neighborhood, the culture, and the people?
2. What are assets in Homewood that strengthen the community? (Prompt: Ways Homewood has capacity? What groups are furthering community goals?)
   a. What about them adds strength?
3. What is special about Homewood to the Black community?
   a. What has been Pitt's relationship to that?
   b. Have Pitt's activities supported existing community assets (like those mentioned before)?
4. What are Homewood's challenges? (Prompt: Ways Homewood's needs are not being addressed?)
   a. Have Pitt's activities in Homewood addressed any of the community's challenges?
5. What does self-determination or freedom look like for Homewood? (Prompt: What is Homewood's vision for itself?)
   a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements, or activities supported collective visioning and dreaming of possibilities beyond present circumstances?

6. Do you feel like communications have improved with the University of Pittsburgh since the CEC's opening?
   a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements, or activities in Homewood supported community-university communication via language, visual art, music, and/or poetry?
7. Do you see Pitt supporting community-wide wellbeing? (Prompt: Ways of maintaining healthy connections to Homewood and its resources?)
   a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements, or activities displayed a commitment to community wellbeing, including the importance of maintaining healthy connections to the community and its resources?
8. Has Pitt demonstrated anti-racism?
   a. In what ways have Pitt partnerships, programs, engagements, or activities displayed a *resistance to (or refusal to accept)* subordination (or oppression) exhibited by Communities of Color including Black communities?
9. What was your perception of Pitt before the creation of the CEC in Oct. 2018?
10. Now that it has been open for over (4) years, how has your thinking changed?

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