



Youth  
Collaboratory

Thursday, August 15, 2025

AMPLIFY  
CONNECT  
EXPAND

# THE MARGIN AS THE CENTER

Keynote Address

Alexandria C. Onuoha, M.S.

“I stood at the border...claimed it as central ...and let the rest of the world move over to where I was.”

Toni Morrison



## ABOUT YOUR SPEAKER

I am an agitator of white supremacy, a Black feminist scientist, and I don't play about my Black girls.

PhD Candidate in Applied Developmental Psychology at Suffolk University

Connect:

[alexandriaonuoha.com](http://alexandriaonuoha.com) (coming soon)

Twitter: @theacostyles

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Google fascism.

What is **concealed** if we only go by these images?

# FASCISM FALLACY



“When **our fears have all been serialized**, our creativity censored, our ideas "marketplaced," **or rights sold**, our intelligence sloganized, our strength downsized, **our privacy auctioned**; when the theatricality, the entertainment value, **the marketing of life is complete**, we will find ourselves living not in a nation **but in a consortium of industries**, and wholly unintelligible to ourselves **except for** what we see as through **a screen darkly.**”

Toni Morrison (1995)



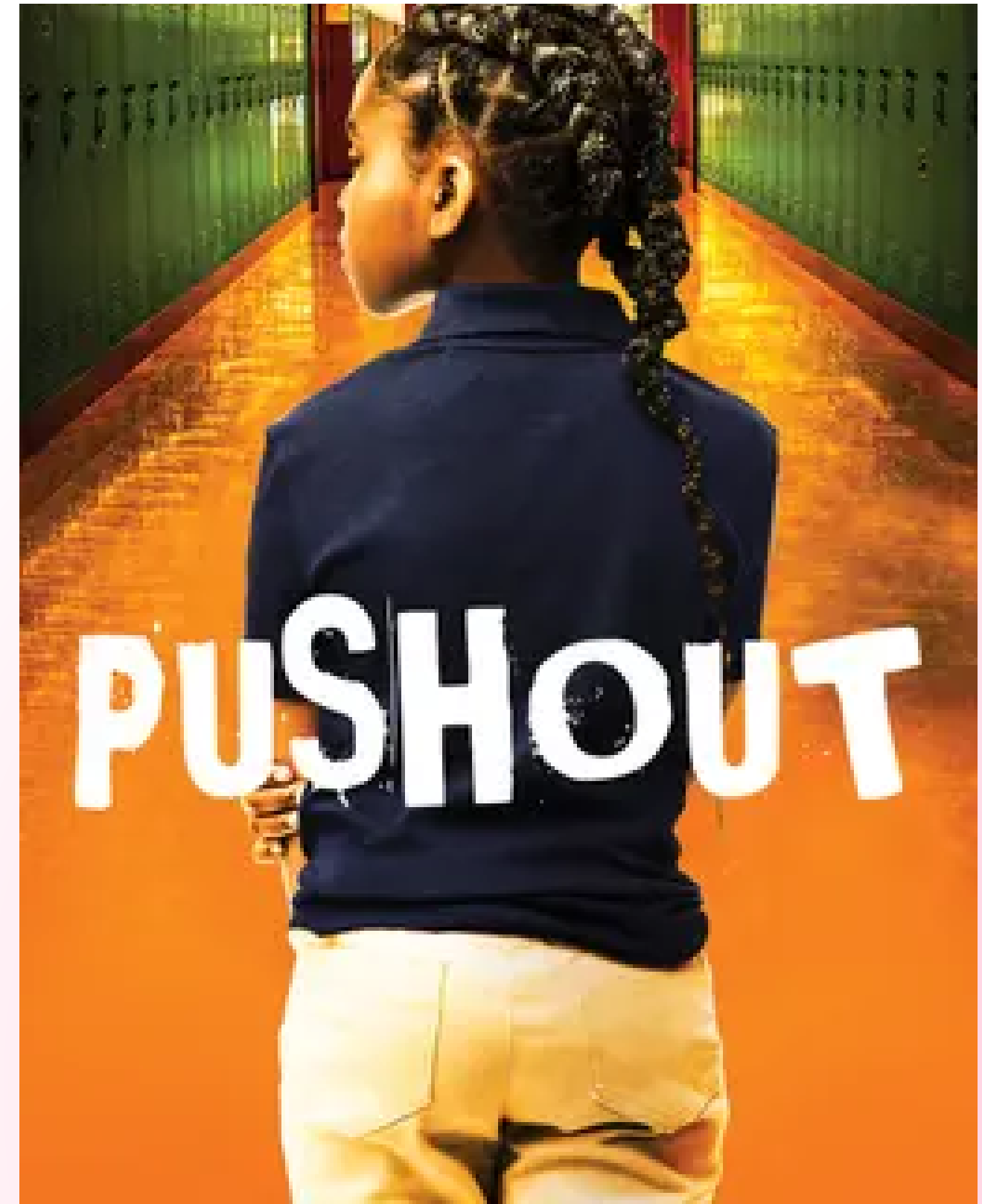
SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

PUSHOUT.

MENTAL HEALTH.

Black girls are being impacted in many contexts and there are intersections.





According to the FBI

at least 4  
per day.

Black women and girls were murdered in  
the United States in 2020.

According to the National Black Women's  
Justice Institute  
among girls involved in the legal system

84%

have survived some form of family  
violence or abuse prior to confinement.

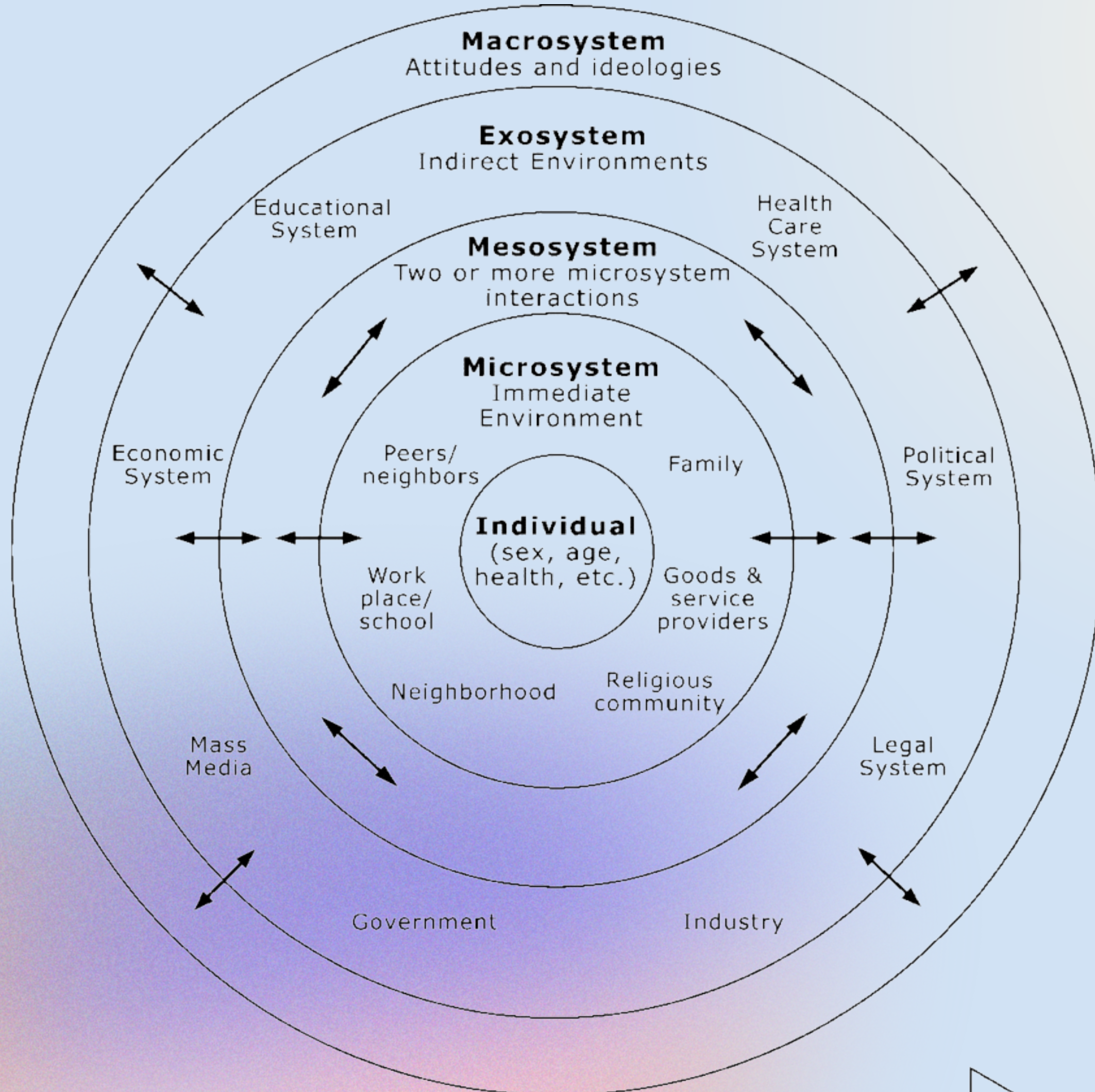
Black girls are **3x** as likely as their  
white peers to be incarcerated

Fascism is embedded in the policies and practices that threaten the futures of Black girls.

The strategies that Black women and girls take to survive are criminalized, creating an an incarceration pipeline that targets Black women and girls

TOWARD A  
VISION OF  
POSITIVE  
BLACK  
GIRLHOOD





# BLACK GIRLS AT THE MARGINS

Schools

Policies

Child Welfare

Juvenile Justice  
System

BLACK GIRL  
DEVELOPMENT  
& JOY

Faith-based  
Communities

Mental Health  
Support

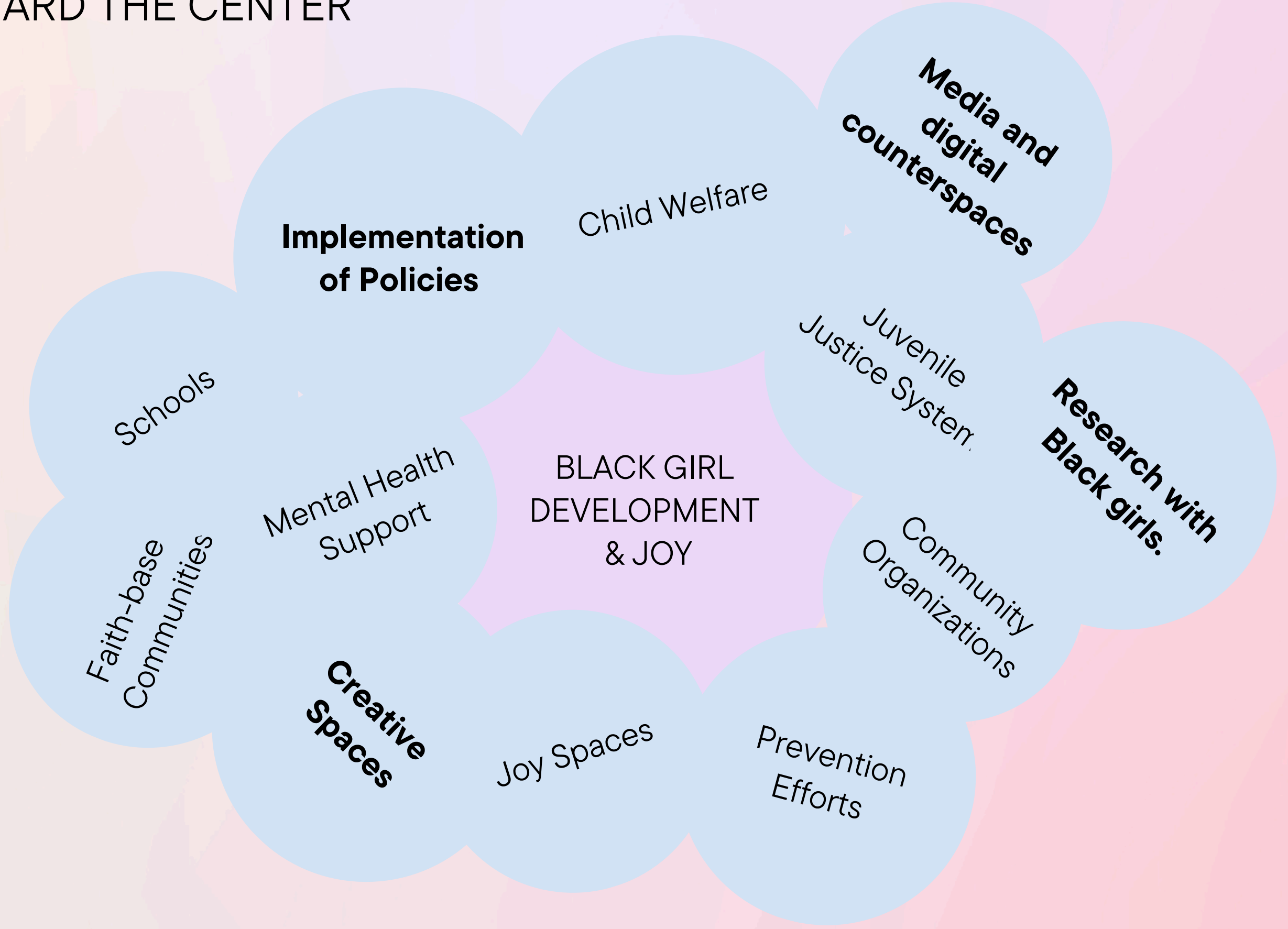
Community  
Organizations

Prevention Efforts

Creative  
Spaces

Joy Spaces

# MOVING TOWARD THE CENTER







If you are an educator,  
you may ask, "What  
should I do in the  
classroom?"

Reframe the idea that Black girls are loud.  
Position them as **leaders** and  
changemakers.

If you are a mental  
health professional,  
you may ask, "How do I  
create a safe space?"

Understand their experience as unique,  
and allow them to share what they feel. Ask  
them about what their strengths are, and  
what **freedom** looks like to them?

# THE ROLE OF JOY IN BUILDING A COLLECTIVE FUTURE



We need to **create more joy spaces** for Black girls.  
These spaces are **acts of resistance against fascism.**

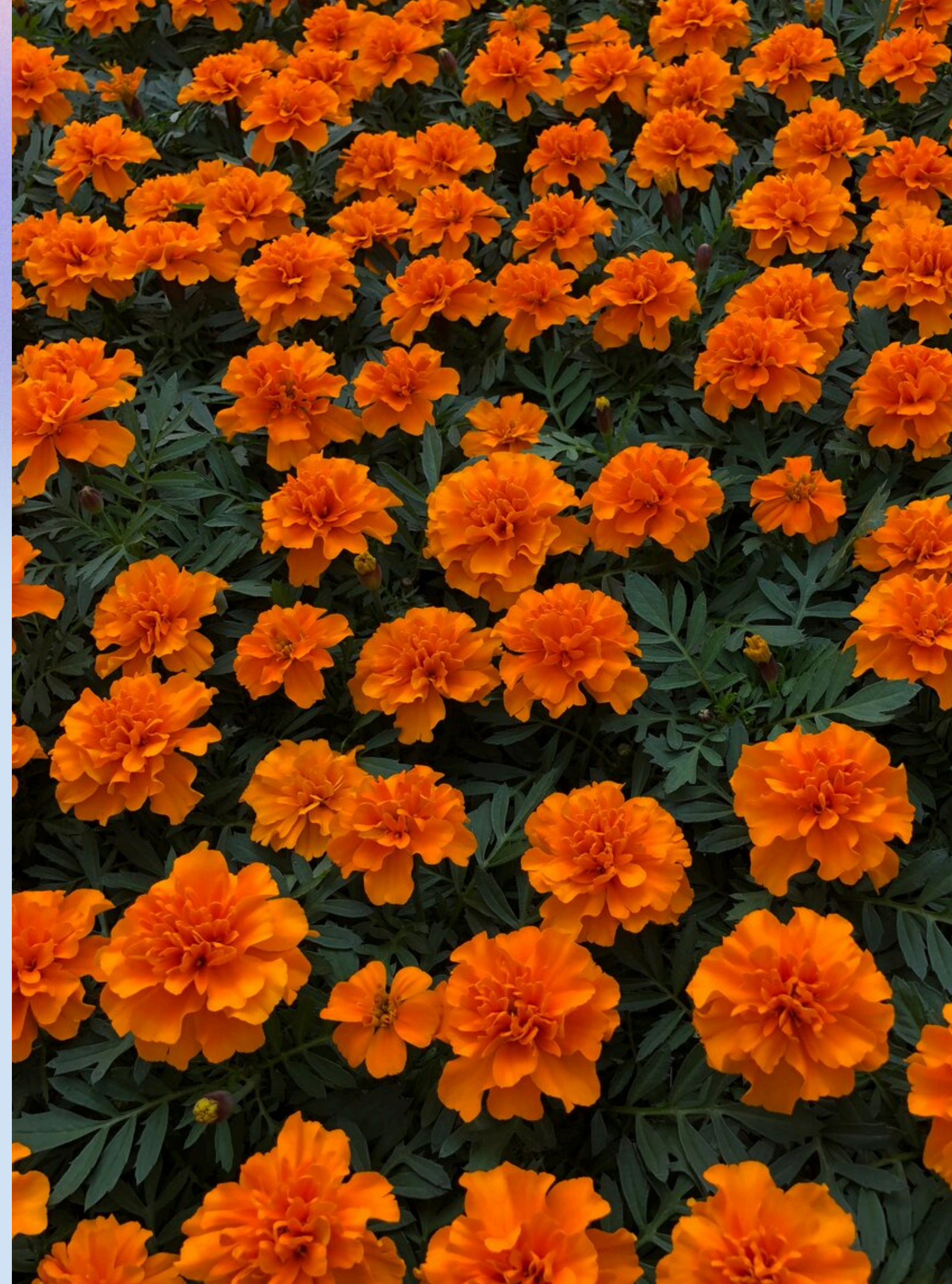




RELISHA RUDD

“We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the marigolds did not grow. A little examination and much less melancholy would have proved to us that our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody’s did.”

***The Bluest Eye***  
by Toni Morrison



BLACK GIRLS ARE  
THE PROTAGONIST  
IN MY STORIES.

ARE THEY YOURS?



# THANK YOU!

With gratitude to the Youth Collaboratory for  
this honor and an opportunity to share my  
insights with you all.

ACO STYLES

RE-LAUNCHING IN 2025

A joy space for Black girls to create and promote their  
development.

[www.acostyles.com](http://www.acostyles.com)

## **Connect:**

Website: [alexandriaonuoha.com](http://alexandriaonuoha.com) (coming October)

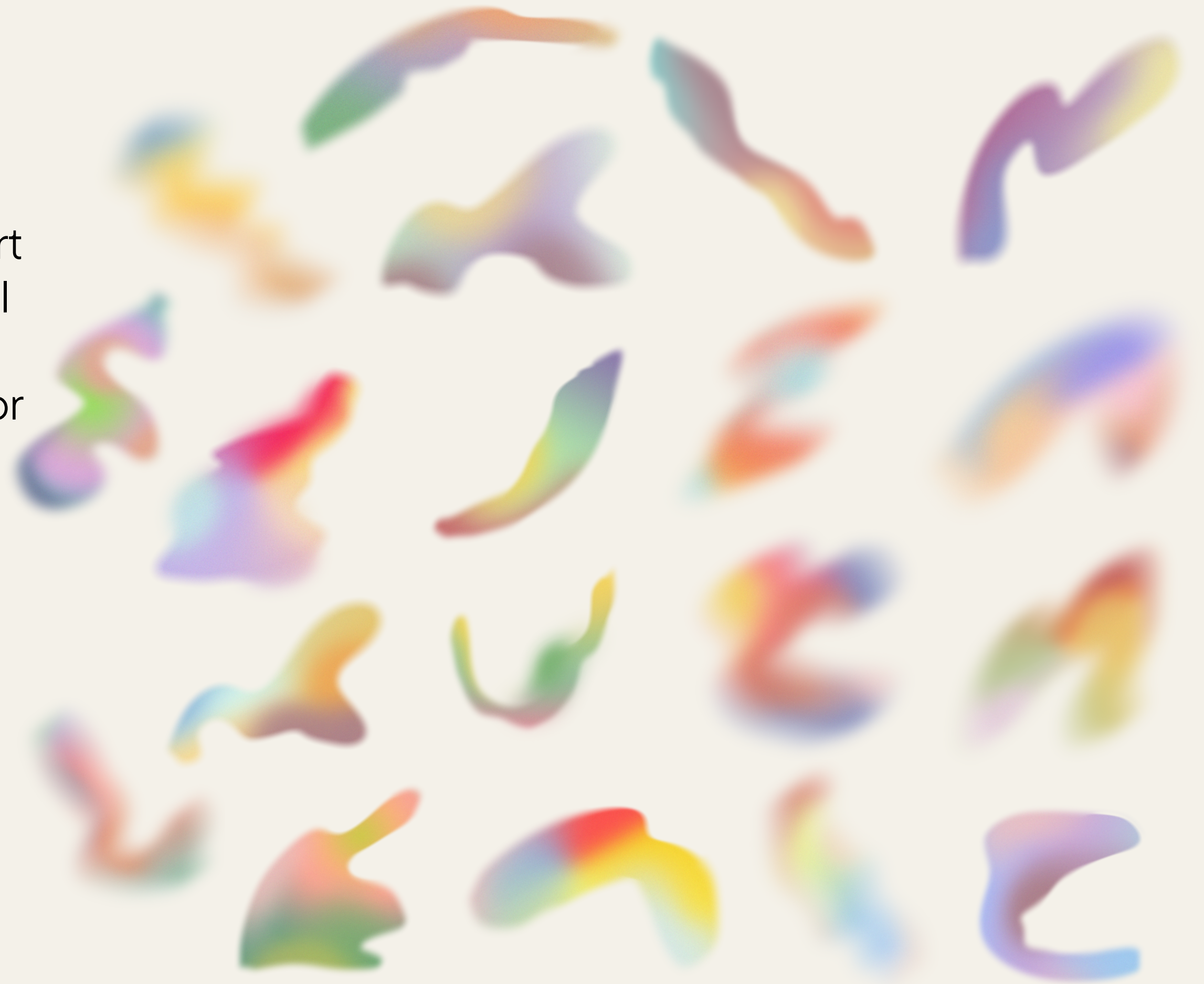
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# RESOURCES

I have a list of books, articles, and art pieces to supplement the keynote. I also shared a playlist with the team for folks to use in creative spaces for Black girls.



Q+A

Happy to answer questions.