

What does antidiisciplinary mean.

Black Sound as Liberation Technology

Hello, everyone. Welcome to Black Sound as Liberation Technology, featuring Taylor Johnson, Anais Duplan, and Camae Ayewa, aka Moor Mother. My name is K. Henderson. I'm a third-year MFA Candidate in Poetry at the University of Pittsburgh, and the Graduate Student Assistant for the Center for African American Poetry and Poetics. As you heard in Dawn's introduction, I describe myself as an antidisiplinary artist. Tonight, we're going to hear from three artists who engage Black sound, music, and liberation in what I believe to be antidisiplinary capacities.

Okay, so, what do I mean by antidisiplinary? I'm obsessed with this concept, [which I stole](#) from the MIT Media Lab. Beyond being multidisiplinary or interdisiplinary, antidisiplinary work exists outside of—or between—the realm of specific disciplines. Antidisiplinary work is not easily categorized; not only by genre, but by field.

Sound, itself, is antidisiplinary. We can approach sound through physics—acoustics. We can approach sound through biology, anatomy, the effect that it has on the brain—psychoacoustics. We can approach sound through the arts in music, the percussive nature of dance, sound sculptures and installations, theater and film. And of course, we use it if we speak. Sound is all around us—something that we make but can't touch. Something that touches us, moves our cells, even if we can't hear it. It's in our heartbeats.

I'd argue that Johnson, Duplan, and Ayewa's work exists between and across disciplines via the realm of sound—specifically, Black sound. Jazz, funk, go-go, experimental music, noise music, sampling, gospel, the blues. There's a sense of flexibility, a tangible intangible, transformation, and closeness. In the poem "Containing Continuity," which appears in the book *Inheritance*, Taylor Johnson writes, "The sound is a hovering. A presence pressure." And later, "What gender should I be in this sound?"

I first read the phrase "liberation technology" in an interview with Camae Ayewa about *Circuit City*, her debut theatrical work. Ayewa said that "jazz was a liberation technology. It can be a whole tool or a piece of a tool." And that it can be an instrumental tool for healing.

The first track on Moor Mother's 2016 album *Fetish Bones* is called "Creation Myth." In that piece, Ayewa's voice feels and sounds like many voices, channeled. In that piece, Black sound is Black history. The history is in the lyrics, but also in the music: Ayewa's use of samples, overscored and underscored by the buzz of a synthesizer twitching, vibrating, insistent on making noise. It's not pleasant, and I love it. It's literally moving.

Maybe we should have called this event Black Sounds, plural, as liberation technology. Blackness is not a monolith, and neither are Black sounds. In Anais Duplan's fourth collection, *I Need Music*, he writes—"I can't let myself wonder what Black gonna be in the future." And later—"I am trying to improvise small paradises." And later, on the collaboration between keyboard and synth player [Joe Zawinul](#) and saxophonist [Wayne Shorter](#),—"In our intimacy of the music, there's so much of Black history there."

So at this convergence of past, present, and future via sound—I'd like to introduce our guests.

[Read artist bios.]

—April 4, 2022

Pittsburgh, USA