Yale RebPsych Speaker Series

The Art of Decolonization: a Musical Exploration

Speakers: Dr. AZA Allstrop, Dr. Dervin Cunningham

Thursday, October 29th, 2020

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RebPsych Thursday Sessions: The Art of Decolonization - A Musical Exploration
Presenters: AZA Allsop, Dervin Cunningham
Thursday, October 29, 2020
Transcriber: CF, CM

Sreeja Kodali: Thank you for joining. We're letting folks trickle in and then we'll get started in a minute or two.

Why don't we get started? Does that sound good with everyone?

Welcome to another session of RebPsych 2020 on decolonizing mental health. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a South Asian woman with long black hair and a floral top. We have live closed captioning available. Thank you for your help transcribing, Christy and Christine. Instructions will be posted in the chat. Hit more for subtitle or full transcript. There is also a full transcript available.

I want to start by acknowledging that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.

We will have links for our last sessions and the keynotes will be posted on our RebPsych website. I am thrilled to introduce AZA and Dervin who will look at the art of decolonization, a musical exploration.

AZA is a first generation American who grew up in Trinidad. He studied at North Carolina Central University.

His research is guided by the belief that deconstructing these machinimas will provide a better way to look at the development and function of the society at large. AZA is a multi-instrumentalist deeply rooted in African Diaspora. He teaches music and mindfulness as tools that help enhance empathy, social justice, health equity and wellness. He cofounded Renaissance Entertainment LLC which works at the intersection of music, science and community.

He does research and provides clinical care in the department of psychology at Yale.

Dervin is from Georgia and is influenced by a family with strong Jamaican roots. He attended the University of Georgia and got his BA in biological sciences. He was the recipient of the university president's "Fulfilling the Dream" award. He went on to get his MD at Yale. His research interests are in the intersection of medicine, psychiatry, social, cognition, etc.

Just for some housekeeping, we will have a live music session. There will be explicit language. We have a feedback form we would love to get feedback from. We have chat guidelines. Use I statements to avoid generalizing, avoid talking about specific instances of trauma to avoid retraumatization. With that I will turn it over.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: [Reading quote on screen]\_

Good afternoon. Welcome to this RebPsych series. I hope you enjoy it and it's cool. There have been a lot of changes with COVID. I think this will be a cool session tonight. I'm Devin. I'm helping out a colleague, AZA tonight. I think we have something interesting for you.

There are a few ways we will break this down. The first will be an academic lecture lead by AZA. It focuses on music being the heart of decolonization. Then we segue into the experiential part of this, the experience.

There will be musical performances. We encourage you to use headphones to get the ultimate experience. I think this will still be a blast, even coming from Zoom. We will come back and have a discussion.

I know we have a Q&A tonight. We hope the Q&A will invite the discussion. I have a few questions prepared. Ask questions. I will ask them to AZA and we will go from. There.

In starting, with any discussion or talk, I think it's important to define certain terms. Because this surrounds the idea of colonization, I think it's important to define that. I think it means something different to different people. It's a weighty term. What is colonization?

[Reading first paragraph of text on slide]

[Reading second paragraph of text on slide]

In saying that, I will transition to AZA who will lead this academic series.

AZA Allsop: Thank you for setting us up with that, Dervin. I want to talk about my story in more detail. I think it will contextualize why I'm doing this. I have three main threads, the love for music, science and spirituality. I grew up in this immigrant household where you did things to survive. It wasn't about how you felt.

I remember times when my dad would come home after a rough day, play piano for an hour, my mom would listen, and we would be there doing homework. There was so much being communicated there. It was my first realization that this is how people manifest things they can't otherwise express.

This love for music showed up because my dad was a minister and I grew up in the church. Music was powerful and it was clear it helped people express themselves in a way that they couldn't otherwise.

I pursued an academic path because I saw there was a lot of value in using science to help others. I continued to do music through grad school and med school. People always were like, "it's cute that you have a hobby." The higher I went, it made it seem like I had to choose. I couldn't see how to make music fit into academia.

The more I did it, the more it felt like a huge part of my identity I couldn't bring in. I remember a day in Med school - another Black person had been shot. I was like, I can't deal with bullshit today. I can't do it. I called a friend and cried, ranted, like these people don't care about what's happening. He talked me off the ledge.

The surgeon was like, hey how are you doing when I went in. I said, I'm not OK. Do you see what's happening? It led to a good conversation. We made an honest connection. Through this processing of academia, I had become colonized, myself.

This becomes a story about personal colonization; me being my full self somehow made me less of a scientist, a doctor. I had come to believe that. I recognized it and decided to become free, and music was the core of it.

So I did my first project. I was like, I'm AZA, I'm a scientist, and a musician.

My next project talked about survivor's guilt, seeing the things I had seen and then arriving at a place of relative privilege.

My last project contextualized that in the larger story of the struggle for freedom of people of African descent. So music was a personal core of my story.

I learned things and I hope you will be convinced by the end of this talk:

Music is a powerful, universal form of communication. It is a powerful form of healing and it should be an evidenced based part of how we practice psychiatry.

Other people I respect have noted this. [Reading quot4e from Frantz Fanon: We have noted the appearance of the movement in cultural forms . . .]

If you read his ideas about music, two things stand out. Music has a critical role in both encoding and driving the decolonization process.

Second, as we go about decolonization, we shift our model of music to a critical tool for navigating trauma and violence. Why should we care today?

Psychiatry is in the midst of a worsening public health crisis. We need applicable, cost-effective practices to deliver treatment. Music should have an intentional part of this solution.

How has music been used historically? We're talking about the shaman here. It was like they were a mix of medicine man, healer, and so on. We see these threads mixed together. The first formal practice of medicine we find in ancient Kehmet [sp?], they used music with specific vibrancies.

The Greeks picked up on this. Pythagoras, famous in math, found that specific notes resonate at specific frequencies of vibration with specific effects. It was an algorithmic approach to music in a healing context.

So music used to be central to healing - how did we get to where we are now? It's the colonization.

Here are differences between African music and other Native peoples, and western music coming from the European tradition.

In African or Native music, it's a communal sense. Less of a separation between the audience and performer. That's the antithesis of things in western music. There's arts and sciences, the performer and the audience.

Western music is divorced from everyday life, whereas in African music it's part of the everyday. Colonization removed music from its central role in culture. Puritan ideology condemned music and art and dancing. The only acceptable music was that which was used to worship God.

The Slave Act of 1740 barred slaves from using drums/horns/loud instruments. So this is colonization affecting music.

As people pushed back, anytime people push back, we see music taking a central role to this. Music speaks to oppression and galvanizes people, gets them ready for physical conflict. In the Haitian Revolution, there was a preparatory ceremony with music and dancing. But we see this in people of African descent navigating this country. It encoded what they were going through in the original spirituals and slave songs. They were communal, self-soothing mechanisms. Slaves could only get together during church.

So they would take Africanisms and commute it to church, a way of dealing with experiences and pulling together. You can see effects in blues, and jazz is another moment of huge cultural revolution. You see some of the people here, at the forefront. Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Billie Holliday and her Strange Fruit, etc. These are people who pushed back against the idea of Black people being musically un-talented.

Prince says, it's about being comfortable in an unfixed state while improvising topography of your life [reading quote.]

I want to highlight women who had a part in this struggle as well, and gave voice to extreme oppression. Like Nina Simone's Mississippi Goddamn, etc.

I'll give you a minute to read this quote. I think it synthesizes this idea of jazz as cultural decolonization.

[Reading quote: Jazz gives aesthetic figuration to that dialectical process whereby a specific station is transcended. . . .

That same ethos moves to hip hop as it develops. You see artists speaking out against the oppression they face and calling for a new sense of what it means to be Black, about dominant culture. Again, many people are thinking about these things and saying it much better than me. I want to put up this quote and I think it synthesizes the idea of hip hop as cultural decolonization.

[Giving time to read quote on screen: Hip hop culture is born out of the concurrent and convergent evolution of the arts . . .

I want to highlight the last part. [Reading from "peace, unity, love, and having fun]

So, that kind of sets the stage. Music has been removed from a role that it once had through the process of colonization. How would we think of this in terms of decolonization in psychology? Fanon thought about this when he was the chef de service at the Blinda-Joinnville psychiatric hospital in Algeria. He organized adding music, storytelling, etc. He took music lessons to better understand music therapy. We can see the understands music as being important in the academic framework.

We can look at the information we have collected in the western framework. I don't want to go over everything put I want to inundate you with the information that this is important and well documented. [Reading bullet points on slide]

I find this interesting. They studied mice and found they could reduce BDNF and NFG in rodents.

Even when we look at the actual practice of psychiatry, you can put this up. We have accumulated evidence that music can be better than the standard of care for people with depression, anxiety, psychosis, Alzheimers, etc. I have references so you can look through this data yourself if you're interested in it.

Now, I'm interested in how to accumulate more evidence, especially in less contrived settings. How does musically based mindfulness help people of African descent struggling with symptoms of depression and anxiety. One Village Healing, NtheLab, and my company, help work with this. We're looking especially at the outpatient setting where people can act natively.

I want to give an impression on why music is important. Moving away from traditional academia, this is about experience.

On bass I have my bro from a long time. I'm blessed to have my son Malachi playing drums. The first piece we will do is by Gil Scott-Heron. It's raw, there's explicit language, and harsh critiques of assignment.

Then we're doing "Someday We'll all be free" by Donny Hathaway. If you don't know he was a paranoid schizophrenic who committed suicide.

Then I will do a song by Bob Marley. Then I will do a song from my latest album. I think it helps me look at decolonization and self realized freedom.

**[Gil Scott-Heron, "Comment #1]**

The time is in the street you know. Us living as we do upside down. And the new word to have is revolution. People don't even want to hear the preacher spill or spiel because God's whole card has been thoroughly piqued. And America is now blood and tears instead of milk and honey. The youngsters who were programmed to continue fucking up woke up one night digging Paul Revere and Nat Turner as the good guys. America stripped for bed and we had not all yet closed our eyes. The signs of Truth were tattooed across our open ended vagina. We learned to our amazement untold tale of scandal. Two long centuries buried in the musty vault, hosed down daily with a gagging perfume. America was a bastard the illegitimate daughter of the mother country whose legs were then spread around the world and a rapist known as freedom, free doom. Democracy, liberty, and justice were revolutionary code names that preceded the bubbling bubbling bubbling bubbling bubbling in the mother country's crotch and behold a baby girl was born, nurtured by slave holders and whitey racists it grew and grew and grew screwing indiscriminately like mother like daughter everything unplagued by her madame mother. The present mocks us, good Black people with keen memories set fire to the bastards who ask us in a whisper to melt and integrate. Young, very young, teeny bopping revolt on weekend young dig by proxy what a mental ass kicking they receive through institutionalized everything and vomit up slogans to stay out of Vietnam. They seek to hide their relationship with the world's prostitute alienating themselves from everything except dirt and money with long hair, grime, and dope to camo-hide the things that cannot be hidden. They become runaway children to walk the streets downtown with everyday Black people sitting on the curb crying because we know that they will go back home with a clear conscience and a college degree. The irony of it all, of course, is when a pale face SDS motherfucker dares look hurt when I tell him to go find his own revolution. He wonders why I tell him that America's revolution will not be the melting pot but the toilet bowl. He is fighting for legalized smoke, or lower voting age, less lip from his generation gap and fucking in the street. Where is my parallel to that? All I want is a good home and a wife and a children and some food to feed them every night. Back goes pale face to basics. Does Little Orphan Annie have a natural? Do Sluggos kings make him a refugee from Mandingo? What does Webster say about soul? I say you silly chipe motherfucker, your great grandfather tied a ball and chain to my balls and bounced me through a cotton field while I lived in an unflushable toilet bowl and now you want me to help you overthrow what? The only Truth that can be delivered to a four year revolutionary with a whole card i.e. skin is this: fuck up what you can in the name of Piggy Wallace, Dickless Nixon, and Spiro Agnew. Leave brother Cleaver and Brother Malcolm alone please. After all is said and done build a new route to China if they'll have you.

Who will survive in America?
Who will survive in America?
Who will survive in America?
Who will survive in America?

**[Donny Hathaway, "Someday We'll All be Free"]**

Hang on to the world as it spins around
Just don't let the spin get you down
Things are moving fast
Hold on tight and you will last
Keep your self respect, your manly pride
Get yourself in gear
Keep your stride
Never mind your fears
Brighter days will soon be here
Take it from me, someday we'll all be free, yeah

Keep on walking tall
Hold your head up high
Lay your dreams right up to the sky
Sing your greatest song
And you'll keep going, going on
Take it from me, someday we'll all be free
Hey, just wait and see, someday we'll all be free, yeah
Take it from me, someday we'll all be free
It won't be long, take it from me, someday we'll all be free
Take it from me, take it from me, take it from me...

 **[Bob Marley, "Uprising" ]**

Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the almighty
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly
Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs
Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look
Some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fullfil the book
Won't you help to sing
Another song of freedom
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs…

Hopefully you all enjoyed that. We're going to do one more. This is a single from my album. Hopefully it has some meaning.

[AZA, “Reach”]

Dready with the medley Look I’ve been who i am

We just for the culture, for the fam and the fans

I could never sell my soul, but hope the music sell a bit

People be vibin at my shows, power from the melanin

Plus we soundin like the veterans

Plus I got the medicines

Wav$ just keep it icy

Gettin pricey for a set of stems

Shit was lookin dicey

Workin nightly, just to get the rent

We was never settlin

Now we just the better men

I just want my daughter to have nice shit that I bought her

Want my son to have all knowledge just before

he goes to college

Cause this class shit is real

And they was learnin shit that a class couldn't teach

And I was tryna fit in, tryna figure out the deal

I was tryna make a mil

Then I figured I'm that nigga

So i gotta keep it real

So when we aim, its for the truth

Only winnin never lose

When this dream seems a nightmare

just measure life in light years

I was steady makin plans

That was way before the gram

I was down in maryland

Beantown is where i land nigga

I can only bring deliverance

If you play us a little bit

We give u the truth cause we livin it up

Reach reach up to the skies my lord

Tell all of our niggas just to try my lord

We got higher powers, we can fly my lord

And when you get on don’t forget about your guys my lord

Reach reach up to the skies my lord

Tell all of your niggas just to try my lord

We got higher powers, we can fly my lord

So dont you ever let up, never die my lord

Thank you all, that was Reach. We're going to take a short break and hopefully come back and have a fruitful discussion.

Sreeja Kodali: You can't hear the applause, AZA, but I'm sure it's out there.

[Break: Music playing ]

Let's give this one more minute. I hope you guys enjoyed this.

Sreeja Kodali: Please put your questions in the chat/ Q/A function in the meantime, or fill out the feedback form.

Dervin Cunningham: Let's go to the discussion. Please put everything in the Q/A to make it easier.

There are a lot of things we've talked about. AZA, I think we've known each other for about a year and a half. We have interesting conversations.

AZA Allsop: Definitely.

Dervin Cunningham: I have gotten a sense of who you are as I've gotten to know you. You are an intentional person. I want to talk about the songs you chose. The first one - it's very raw, very vulgar. But because I know who you are, I know you had a reason. Why did you pick this piece, what were you saying with the Gil Scott-Herron piece?

AZA Allsop: You may know him from, the Revolution will Not be Televised. He also talks about money spent to send people to the moon while his sister can't afford care. Part of decolonization was about asking ourselves what we are willing to change to change society. He talks about people who participate when it's convenient and feels good, then go back to upholding oppressive systems.

He uses colorful, raw language. If you look at this, I tried to channel his interpretation, and he was speaking strongly, and he struggled with heroin use throughout his career.

Dervin Cunningham: You said it's aggressive and vulgar. I think it's easy to forget the context of the piece. I'm only 28; I wasn't around in that time. But I can imagine seeing the harsh reality he did and having to deal with it. It affects your mental health. How you're feeling. Your ability to survive.

I watched Roots today and I always think - whoah, this happened. So that context might explain the nature of that song.

I want to move on.

I really like the Hathaway piece. I want to be sure I have the lyrics right. He says [reading first paragraph of text]

In 2020, things have been going crazy. I talk to my friends. I know everyone is going through a lot. I have friends who are seeing psychiatrists and therapists because of what is going on.

Music has a way of making you believe that this guy believes what he says. When you talk to a therapist, it doesn't hit you like this. I understand what he means by "hold on tight." Why did you choose this song? I know why I like it.

AZA Allsop: This is so beautiful on so many levels. This song was written for Hathaway by a friend. I recommend that you listen to this. He broke down and cried when he heard it, himself. I understand that emotion as an artist.

Donny Hathaway was a paranoid schizophrenic like I said. When you listen to the words, as a psychiatrist, when you think about our patients' experiences, you could conceptualize what this would mean to someone. One of his paranoias was that white people were trying to hook his sound to a machine and destroy him. There's a modicum of truth to that. This song was adopted for the Civil Rights Movement even though it wasn't written like that.

The chords strike me. They borrow from that tradition. They carry a certain ancestral energy.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: Since we're getting into that, there's one thing I always notice. I think I notice it because I was in a band. I hear the music and not the lyrics. Even if you don't understand it, it can be in a different language, but it can make you feel many things.

Why is this the case, without getting into too many details? Do you think that's a useful tool in therapeutic psychology? I'm a first year intern. I don't have as much experience as you and others. I hear that you want to connect to patients and get them to open up. I understand that music lets you automatically do that. I want you to speak on that for a bit.

AZA Allsop: I think we need more understanding of the mechanism. As a scientist, I want to drill into the algorithm. If you play a 2/5/1, it does this. We don't have that understanding. If we play a certain chord, we know it evokes a different feeling than a minor, half diminished, etc. Notes can evoke happy or sad feelings. Diving into the algorithm is something I'm interested in. We don't have information on that as much.

Pythagorean and the ancient Egyptians were thinking about frequencies, resonance, etc. They were thinking about how this evokes a certain emotion.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: There's another question. This is out there. For example, when you think of psychodynamics and psychotherapy, and there's a new therapy coming out every day, we have these therapies to help people imagine the situation they are in and to help them envision how to navigate that situation in the future.

Can you imagine walking in, having the psychologist hitting some keys and navigate those different emotions or traumas?

AZA Allsop: I think so. One reason I feel so fortunate is that we can study these things. I think music should be an intentional part of what we do in psychology. Maybe you have music playing when people walk in. Maybe you have certain music with certain chords playing during a session.

Broadly speaking, music has so many ways it can be practiced and is practiced. There are many spaces and ways for people who are not musicians or musically interested to still incorporate that as an addition to standard care. Look for opportunities where music is a great way to connect to a patient or set a tone at your practice.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: I appreciate it. Let's get to the next song. I'll pull it up. I think I'm a little bias. My family is from Jamaica.

AZA Allsop: You're a huge Bob fan.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: We have three pictures in my house. What is he saying in this song? What is he trying to convey to people in the audience? What do you think is important?

AZA Allsop: First there's just Bob Marley and what he evokes as a mystic of Rastafarianism. He pushed this philosophy that is about decolonization at the core. Rastafarianism is at its core about decolonization. It says it it explicitly in the lyrics.

[Reading at top of second column]

This resonated with me from a young age. As I got older, I realized there was this power. "My hand was made strong by the and of the almighty." He's talking about a struggle for psychological independence. That's at the core of decolonization. Until that is achieved, the physical manifestation will be what it is.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: I have a bunch of questions. I want to balance with what is said in the Q&A. We can get back to these songs later.

"Reach" is next. I was with my roommate Nick when we met you. We heard that you were doing these songs. We heard "Reach." He said this song and album is interesting.

What made you pick this song? What do you want the audience to know about it? How does it relate to the general theme of the night?

AZA Allsop: "Reach" is a special song for me. There are songs you write where there's a lot of you in it. Then there's songs that are just straight spirit songs that come out. This was one of those songs. I feel it on a deep level. It talks about my life and how, through everything, wherever we reach, we have to remember community, and the people who sold into us and let us blossom where we are. We have a greater context. How do we reach back and still reach forward past the things seen as constraints? How do we reach through those things while reaching back?

I always want to remind myself of that. Coming through these spaces, it can be difficult to remember that. This reminds me to live that path.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: It almost seems essential to forget sometimes. It's interesting what these spaces can do to you as an individual.

I want to talk more, especially about "Reach," but let's see what is in the Q&A.

Flavia is one of our alum at the psych program.

AZA Allsop: She put me on to Fanon.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: We mentioned that Fanon was a medical director.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: I don't think we mentioned he was a psychologist.

Flavia asked if we've thought about body work with the movement of dance.

AZA Allsop: Definitely, these are linked with African Diaspora. You don't see music without a communal movement. In other sources, I've read this, part of thinking about art as cultural revolution and as a way of striving for freedom is that slavery seeks to confine. It's an embodied experiences that seeks to confine movement, ability to communicate, etc. Music lets you communicate even without words and dance is a physical embodiment of freedom. Dance is a powerful way of embodying freedom and evolutionary struggle. I think dance is intimately linked to music and that vibration.

I think about it but you don't want to see me do that. I stuck to music tonight. [Laughing]

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: Okay, next we have Ebony. I hope I'm pronouncing that right. What are the next steps to utilize music? Are there any models I can utilize?

AZA Allsop: I think it depends on the level of training you're at. I love Farnon's model. We will bring these useful forms of healing into the space. You bring in art therapy, music, storytelling, etc. I know people implement these things here. I've seen storytelling and art therapy groups. I think those are easy models.

If there are ways to use music to connect to patients, I find that useful. If a certain song comes up, or there are references to a certain time, that builds a bridge. There can also be playing instrument music. I'm working at mood music for therapeutic sessions. It's at a decibel that is in the background but it facilitates interaction and connection.

As we do better research in clinical settings, we will come up with models to predictably use music to have a therapeutic end.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: I want to get to another question but since you're talking about it, we talked about music being the heart of decolonization and being important in psychology. We saw people utilize it but it's not that utilized. Growing up, if you hear about music, you were at home, at a pretty, with your friends, etc.

You don't learn about music in a way when you go to school in psychiatry. They don't say, "utilize music."

As a practice, we don't have it in our practice. Why is that, do you think? We know music can be helpful. The medication that we have, we need to do more research. Why is music under utilized?

AZA Allsop: I think it's this idea that, the way we practice psychiatry is built around a US-centric model. Music has been removed from healing and spirituality, as it was once used. Fanan talks about this a lot, as well. In my opinion, that's the reason at the heart. I showed a lot of data showing that music can do things in the brain and whatever. But we still have this idea of music as performance art and not to be taken seriously as a form of therapy.

Dervin Cunningham: We have another question. It's more sensitive. It says, probably because I don't have a great background in hip hop and rap, lots of it sometimes glorifies violence against women. As a survivor of sexual assault, how do we address this?

AZA Allsop: There's a book called the Hip Hop Wars. What happened was, in the music industry and colonial power structure embedded itself and promoted/invested in the message that was put out. A lot of what you hear, I think, is deliberately there. Whether it's violence against women, drugs, whatever. They're aspects of real culture that's happening, but it always seems to be the narrative being pushed.

I said, I'll never sell my soul but I hope that the music sells a bit...vibing from the power of melanin. Like I want to make some money but I know that I won't sell out and it might not be the same. If you want to talk about the psychological ordeals of slavery and how it impacted relationships between Black men and women, and impacts today, I think that it has to do with the power structure and the message that they want promoted.

So we have to stop buying that shit, right. We need to buy things that uplift us. Then they will see that and our money will cause change. I hope that was a helpful answer. You can reach me via email and Instagram.

Dervin Cunningham: You can reach out to the curators and organizers too. They will connect you.

I think we hit on this already. Thank you for the presentation. Do you have thoughts about African drumming and its benefits on healing?

AZA Allsop: At the beginning we started off with an invocation and call/response/drumming music. The earliest forms of music was very percussive. In traditional African and Native music, Poly rhythmic structures were prevalent. There is some research, some level of synchronicity that occurs when a bunch of people play drums or music together. It creates a social cohesion that is therapeutic, along with the vibrations and the physical movement.

Dervin Cunningham: I'm going to say this question. It's similar. "Your path is inspiring. How/do you incorporate your work as a psychiatrist, in out\patient work, etc."

Maybe you can talk about clinical practice, studio, how it can be beneficial for the youth. Like what are your thoughts.

AZA Allsop: In the clinical context, I'm still exploring this. On the day to day basis, I try to use music to connect to people. Whether it's talking about current music, what they like and why - you can learn a lot about a person based on that. I use music in that way. I've personally been using music to help people with mindfulness. I do that outside of the traditional clinical context, mindfulness coaching.

I want to make music an integral part of how I practice. Maybe a studio environment like this. A client can come in, talk, and then we make music together and really vibe. You might find people going to a studio for that very reason. They can feel the music powerfully with the big speakers.

I'm grateful to be in this residency program because there's some flexibility. I'm trying out these ideas, trying to build evidence for this.

Dervin Cunningham: Let's talk about where we are.

AZA Allsop: I'm in Renaissance Studios, my studio, where I do all my production and vibe out/meditate.

Dervin Cunningham: I'm going to share another question. Thank you for it.

In 2017, I was accepted to music therapy program. It was white/colonialist in terms of what counts as music and therapy. What about DJing and interrupting impediments to decolonization? In saying all of this, how do you build a space for your research in this type of climate?

AZA Allsop: That's a great question. One of the things I've been learning is that there are certain things that are and aren't possible in academia, depending on where you are. So understanding that is really important. What do I do inside the structure, what do I do outside on my own? Here we have RebPsych, pushing against traditional boundaries and conventionalism. That gives a space where I can do work like this.

If you're in a community very married to a Eurocentric model and doesn't value other perspectives, you can't do it. We should connect. As a DJ and producer thinking about community building, I think that's how music can be and IS utilized to do that work. You have a DJ and an MC. That was community building. People were brought together around music, dance, and art.

There's validity to what you're saying. If you're in a department that doesn't value what you're doing, you need to find a different department or find another way to do this.

Dervin Cunningham: We have only four minutes and a lot of questions.

AZA Allsop: I want to do some acknowledgements. So maybe do one question.

Dervin Cunningham: The next question: What are some of the biggest hurdles to art/music to be integrated into existing models and systems?

AZA Allsop: At this point I think the impediment is enough of us trainees saying, we're doing this. There is evidence this works with both in and out patient settings. If you keep the standard of care and add music, whether it's psychosis, depression, Alzheimers, etc. you see that it's better for them.

So that's one part. Do research in an intentional way, create a model and test it.

Then I think, people who are psych trainees now coming out of training and saying, I'm going to be conscious and intentional about using this. And then use it. People may want to come to you. It's fun. People will then see, oh, you have a thriving practice. I think those are a few ways to do that.

Dervin Cunningham: I feel bad because we're running out of time but there are so many questions. Hopefully we can continue this discussion through another format. It's hard to get together in the time of COVID, but there are other ways.

AZA Allsop: Maybe I can go to the reference section.

If you want, I'm happy to email these out. This goes deep - feel free to look at it. And thank you to the department and RTP for allowing me to do this research and the science/basic stuff. To the RebPsych committee for seeing this as valuable and giving the space to do it. I'm very passionate about this. I hope that came across and was valuable to all who attended.

Sreeja Kodali: Thank you so much. This was incredible. If you have feedback, drop the link in the chat, please fill it out.

If people want to hear more from you, or your music, how can they do that? I know I want to look you up.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: Always unmute yourself. That's important in this time of Zoom and COVID. I'm ashamed. I played trumpet, but for music, AZA does it much better. Our emails are easy to find in Yale. You can put the first name and last name, and Outlook will generate it.

AZA Allsop: If you follow me at Instagram at AZATheMessenger, you can follow me there. You can also find me on any streaming platforms at AZA BL4CKP4CK.

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: AZA is good at being on Instagram. I'm not sure how he's there so much.

Thank through for coming out tonight. It's been trying to modify this to be pleasing to the ears through the Zoom platform. I think we got something done. I hope you have a great rest of the week and year. Hopefully god will get us out of 2020 very soon.

AZA Allsop: [Laughing]

Dr. Dervin Cunningham: Ya'll take care.

Sreeja Kodali: Thank you. Join us for the next and future RebPsych sessions.

[End of Zoom meeting]