

# Decompress Manifesto

## June 12, 2023

Three years since the 2020 uprising, in the wake of the tenth anniversary of Trayvon Martin's murder, and sixty years since the Montgomery Bus Boycott, like many of you, we are burnt out from the fight to end racial violence.

Today we announce the creation of a space to decompress - from a world where prisons are the state's response to the affordable housing crisis, where algorithms decide our futures, and a world where our life expectancy is most correlated to our ability to pay a 'cost of living'<sup>1</sup>.

The verb decompress has meaning in everyday language and technology: to relieve pressure to unwind and the process that a data file must undergo to be used for a purpose. Now more than ever, we need places to unplug and disconnect from the systems that exploit our attention, energy, and time. We must decompress to find alternatives; we must be able to breathe and envision.

Decompress is a DIY multidisciplinary event space and movement laboratory in Miami, Fl. Decompress will also serve as the first HQ of Data for Black Lives, a movement of scientists and activists working to make data a tool for social change instead of a weapon of political oppression. From the beginning, we knew that transforming data from a weapon into an instrument of social change was also culture change. When we say Abolish Big Data or demand No More Data Weapons, we demand the end of technologies *and* the cultures around which they are used: cultures of surveillance, intimidation, and technological aggression.

At Data for Black Lives, we believe that the only good system is a sound system. We believe in the power of sound and recognize that high-vibrational spaces where people can congregate safely are needed right now. We know the power of dancefloors to desegregate and unite. Spaces built by and for the community are where new modes of being and new worlds are created.

Black people have reinvented pop culture over and over again as, first and foremost, a method of cultural and spiritual resistance to the status quo. For us, music is a Black technology that will overthrow Babylon through sound, data, and collective action<sup>2</sup>.

Early Jamaican sound systems were hybrid networks equally spiritual and technological: selectors, promoters, MCs, and community members were united around super-amplified customized systems that played exclusive dubs records by Rastafari artists. These messages were delivered at high wattage with wardrobe-sized speaker boxes the community would gather to hear at venues and, purged of negative emotions, be emboldened further into a sense of identity and solidarity.

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<sup>1</sup> [datacapitalism.d4bl.org](http://datacapitalism.d4bl.org)

<sup>2</sup> Chanting down Babylon : The Rastafari Reader. Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, et al. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998. + "Behind Babylon." Reshma B. *Tidal Magazine*. July 1, 2020. <https://tidal.com/magazine/article/behind-babylon/1-73444>

Techno music was invented by the Belleville Three and inherited by Black, Brown, and queer youth worldwide echoing the spirit of the great African American freedom movements that had preceded it. Across the world, techno transmits coded signals expressing an inherent romance and trauma that carries centuries' worth of stories.<sup>3</sup> Today - raving continues to be a powerful instrument of social change<sup>4</sup>.

August will mark the 50th Anniversary of hip-hop. Through the improvisation and experimentation of hardware technologies, young Black people in the Bronx's response to the political and social conditions of the 80s became a global multi-disciplinary movement and perhaps the most significant creative force of our time<sup>5</sup>. We decompress so that we can continue to carry this torch forward.

Upstairs, our temporary space is a residence and gallery. Downstairs is a 3,000 sq venue, including a black box sound stage. We are building our first D4BL Headquarters strategically and intentionally in Miami, FL. Miami is a city that is both at the center and the edge of the experiment we call 'America.' Haiti was the first free Black Republic - a country built by enslaved Africans who overthrew their masters. Little Haiti is an extension of what they built, an extension that traverses 689 miles of land, sea, and culture that continues to challenge neo-slavery in the form of American neoliberalism and the very concept of American democracy.

Our Founder & CEO, Yeshimabeit Milner, spent a significant part of her childhood in Little Haiti and returned to the neighborhood after college, where she lived as she first pioneered the D4BL methodology of using data as a tool for concrete social change.<sup>6</sup> Right now, Miami is undergoing immense transformation, and Little Haiti is at the heart of it.

At the Data for Black Lives II conference in 2019, Valencia Gunder, Co - Founder of Freedom Inc and the Blk Collective Black predicted what is happening in Miami today<sup>7</sup>. Little Haiti is the highest point in the city and COVID-19 real estate speculation has accelerated the gentrification of the neighborhood<sup>8</sup>. In

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<sup>3</sup> "The Timeline of Black Exodus Technology." Jr DeForrest Brown, et al. *Techno Worlds*. Berlin Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> In the summer of 2022 Data for Black Lives sponsored and co-organized a Town Hall at Nowadays in Brooklyn, NY that convened over 300 musicians, promoters, organizers, venues and the broader community around the role of techno in social change, venues as community centers and reparations for Black artists. The town hall audio is archived here:

<https://soundcloud.com/djmissparker/nowadays-nightlife-townhall-audio>

<sup>5</sup> On August 11, 1973 DJ Kool Herc threw a "Back To School Jam". DJ Kool Herc was just 18 at the time and he was throwing a party for his sister Cindy in the South Bronx. *CAN'T STOP WON'T STOP : A History of the Hip Hop Generation*. Chang, Jeff. 2005.S.L.: Wednesday Books.

<sup>6</sup> "A Call for Birth Justice in Miami." Milner, Yeshimabeit, et al. Power U Center for Social Change, 2013. [https://issuu.com/yeshimabeit/docs/a\\_call\\_for\\_birth\\_justice\\_in\\_miami](https://issuu.com/yeshimabeit/docs/a_call_for_birth_justice_in_miami)

<sup>7</sup> "The Seas Are Rising & So Are The People: Data, Disaster & Collective Power". D4BL II Conference Panel. <https://d4bl.org/videos/63-the-seas-are-rising-but-so-are-the-people-data-disaster-collective-power>

<sup>8</sup>Addressing Climate Driven Displacement: Planning for Sea Level Rise in Florida's Coastal Communities and Affordable Housing in Inland Communities in the Face of Climate Gentrification. Butler, William, et al 2022.

<https://lci.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2022/02/Butler-Jackson-Holmes-et-al.-2021-Final-LCI-Report-Climate-Gentrification-Updated-min.pdf>

addition to climate gentrification, the community is fighting a multi-million dollar initiative to transform Little Haiti into the Magic City Innovation Center is poised to displace 3,000 households by 2030<sup>9</sup>.

It is divine timing to be grounded in Little Haiti as its future is being decided. By creating a space to decompress culturally, we assert a vision of innovation that recalls the contributions of Black people to the building of this city - from the predominantly Black 'convict laborers' who built the Tamiami Trail<sup>10</sup>, to the political refugees from Haiti, a country reeling from the impact of US Foreign Policy, who came to Miami with nothing and built a thriving cultural and commercial sector in an area no one else wanted until everywhere else began to flood.

We are here to proclaim that cultural resilience is data resistance. Through the curation of timely and conscious programming, we are extending the invitation for you to come and decompress with us.

### **Decompress with us on June 19th in Miami, Florida.**

Register at [d4bl.org/ decompress](https://d4bl.org/decompress).

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<sup>9</sup> Potential Environmental and Social Costs of the Magic City Innovation District: Technical Summary. Page, R., Madsen, T., Mojica, J., Kerr, N., Armistead, C. 2019.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/561dc6e4b039470e9afc00/t/5d0abfe73cbc950001a596a8/1560985585232/CJP-LittleHaiti\\_EarthEconomics\\_0612-2.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/561dc6e4b039470e9afc00/t/5d0abfe73cbc950001a596a8/1560985585232/CJP-LittleHaiti_EarthEconomics_0612-2.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> "The Secret History of Florida Prison Labor." Goyanes, Rob. The New Tropic, 5 Jan. 2016, [thenewtropic.com/prison-labor-florida/](http://thenewtropic.com/prison-labor-florida/).