



FIELD NOTES

A Cultural Reflection Guide

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Paying attention is an act of care.

Field Notes: A Cultural Reflection Guide

We are always inside culture, even when we pretend that we are only consuming it.

The music we listen to in our headphones.
The language reshaped in comment sections.
The headlines we skim and the grief we scroll past.
The beauty, the humor, the spectacle, the harm.

Black culture is not a trend cycle. It is not simply aesthetic. It is not merely content. It is inheritance, invention, memory, resistance, and imagination happening in real time.

And yet, we rarely pause long enough to ask what it is doing to us — and what we are doing to it. To witness culture requires more than participation. It requires attention.

It asks:
Who is being amplified?
Who is being erased?
What is being commodified?
What is being protected?

As Black people — and particularly as Black women — we are often both creators and carriers of culture. We generate language. We shape style. We carry memory. We innovate. And at times, we are extracted from.

To think intentionally about Black culture is not to critique from a distance. It is to care enough to look more closely.

It is to ask how joy survives.
How grief is remembered.
How power circulates.
How stories travel.
How identity is negotiated in public.

Field Notes are not conclusions. They are observations. They are a practice of paying attention

They ask us to slow down and sit with the complexity of what is unfolding around us — and within us.

Because culture is not separate from our lives. It shapes how we see ourselves. It shapes how we love. It shapes what we believe is possible.

And if we are going to inherit it, contribute to it, critique it, and preserve it — we must learn to observe it with intention.

This guide is an invitation.

To think more deeply.

To question more carefully.

To notice what others overlook.

To participate with awareness.

To record what matters.

Let these pages be a beginning — not of answers, but of attention.

Questions to Sit With

Identity & Representation

- Who is being centered in the stories we tell right now?
- What parts of Black life are simplified for consumption?

Memory & Inheritance

- What cultural practices have you inherited that you rarely examine?
- What does preservation look like in your everyday life?

Performance & Power

- When does visibility empower us — and when does it commodify us?
- Who benefits from the trends shaping the culture right now?

Personal Responsibility

- How are you contributing to the culture you critique?
- What does cultural care require of you?

My Picks for Reading. Watching. Noticing.

1. *Sister Outsider* — Audre Lorde

Not just poetry — political clarity, cultural interrogation, language as power. Lorde sharpens how we think about difference, responsibility, and voice.

2. *The Fire Next Time* — James Baldwin

Still urgent. Still precise. Baldwin models how to critique America without abandoning complexity.

3. *Essays by Jelani Cobb*

Especially his cultural and political commentary. He exemplifies journalism that contextualizes rather than sensationalizes.

4. *Work by Zora Neale Hurston*

Her anthropological lens on Black life reminds us that observing culture is sacred work.

5. *Thick: And Other Essays* — Tressie McMillan Cottom

Sharp cultural analysis grounded in personal narrative and structural critique.

6. Independent Black media platforms (rotating)

- The Root
- Essence
- The 19th

7. Contemporary Black art & film

- Sinners
- If Beale Street Could Talk
- Visual art by Kara Walker