"The black person seeking soul rejuvenation and renewal.
We are tired, we are sick and tired of being sick and tired.
Rejuvenation is key in the age of self-preservation.
Our bodies are fragile, but our minds are full of a thousand songs, poems, books, the rejuvenation library.
We are asking for a year of relaxation, reflection, safety.
The spa year for the black soul, self-love, safety and tranquility in reminder that you are not alone in the struggle for black liberation.
Rest your body in the warm words and songs of Solange, Nina Simone, James Baldwin, caressed by Audre Lorde.
Full soul massage, bliss at change, prayed for the black love and black bond in our veins.
We are, in love with ourselves, and each other.
Family reborn in the rejuvenated black love and black pride.
We are, in love with ourselves, and each other."

This is the manifesto of junior art student Kasem Kydd’s ongoing project The Black Soul Rejuvenation Library, opening its first show at the Frame Gallery. This all began October of last year, in response to rhetoric and coverage of violence against people of color in the United States. With both the activist Black Lives Matter movement and the white supremacist alt-right movement gaining momentum through social media and online platforms, the sharing of information began to play a central role in his conception of this project: “This information overload’s insidious.” In says, resulting from researchers’ psychological toll that unassimilated violence and inescapable reports of legacy takings on black intellectual. He describes the impacts to be akin to PTSD, anxiety which wakes you in day-to-day life.

This constant fear for one’s safety and well-being that Kydd describes, is a theme that researchers are still wrestling with, potentially across many groups. Researchers have found that rates of clinically assessed PTSD symptoms in urban communities touched by violence are comparable to those in regions affected by Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam 

"It has been described through forensic analogy involving a glass of water. A psychologist supposedly asked his class, ‘How heavy is the glass of water?’ After hearing protest of the weight, the reply said that the absolute weight does not matter. Rather, the significant factor is how long the man holding the glass. Holding the glass for a second might not feel the glass of water is heavy, but holding the glass for two hours will make the glass heavy. The same is true for the black man in the United States." Kydd said. (Sandwiched in the center of a two-page spread of Kydd’s text.)

The black man in the United States is likely to wonder, "Is my identity on the line?" When worrying about one’s safety and those like you becomes highly regular, it translates into a kind of hypervigilance which is emotionally exhausting and ultimately unhealthy.

From this issue was The Black Soul Rejuvenation Library born. Kydd describes this project as an act of looking for those who are fighting for justice. Intended to be both an online and real-life presence, it is a place for people to pause and reflect — so the title suggests — rejuvenated through the celebration of self and identity. Activism is a marathon and not a sprint. Kydd’s work points to the importance of staying physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy throughout the process, and the need for spaces to exist where one can do so. Through online platforms 

http://blacksoullibrary.tumblr.com
https://www.instagram.com/blacksoulrejuvenation/
The exhibition at the Frame Gallery is Kydd's first move to bring this offline and marks the halfway point of this project. The show is a site of art objects, including an installation called "When the Squall Links up and Tornado the Militarized Police" and a public library of books where viewers can take and place literature on topics of race. His own work is also placed in the exhibition, dealing with topics of black masculinity and shrines, with pieces that invite the viewer to connect with the topic.

He talks about cultural alchemy, exemplified in "Spilled My Wave Cream but I'M still 360" where he takes everyday objects such as waves and transforms them into saltwater. Through the use of gold and chiasmatic lighting, traditional to Italian religious painting, the sculptural presentation of his self-portrait photographs have a similar effect of the visualization of self. Normalization in this society often dehumanizes black individuals, making black males one to be shamed, predatorial, criminal, and less than. The spiritual love of the self in such a society is perhaps one of the most powerful acts of rebellion to counter this kind of messaging. Self-portraiture and cultural icons have a long history in art activism for this reason.

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And thus, the viewer is asked to follow in his footsteps. We reflect on culture and history, to reflect on who you are and where you've come from. It creates this beautiful dialogue between context and content, subverting the rules and the distance between pieces. The exhibition at the Frame is a start. It shows the incredible potential of the Black Soul Rejuvenation Library. He is hoping to receive more submissions from people of color in the CMU and Pittsburgh community to fully embrace the collaborative nature of this project. He is also planning to move outside of the University, working around Pittsburgh community spaces and restaurants to build projects involving the community and healing of self love and economic stability. Healing of a broken society and healing of the self. If there were ever any questions of whether art can be healing, Kydd’s work is a force to look out for that will remove any doubts from your mind.

CMU students are circulating a petition asking the university's senate to take action in response to the COVID-19 crisis in India. The petition, which has over 250 student and 60 faculty signatures, asks the CMU President to help India deal in four main ways.

PC: The New Yorker