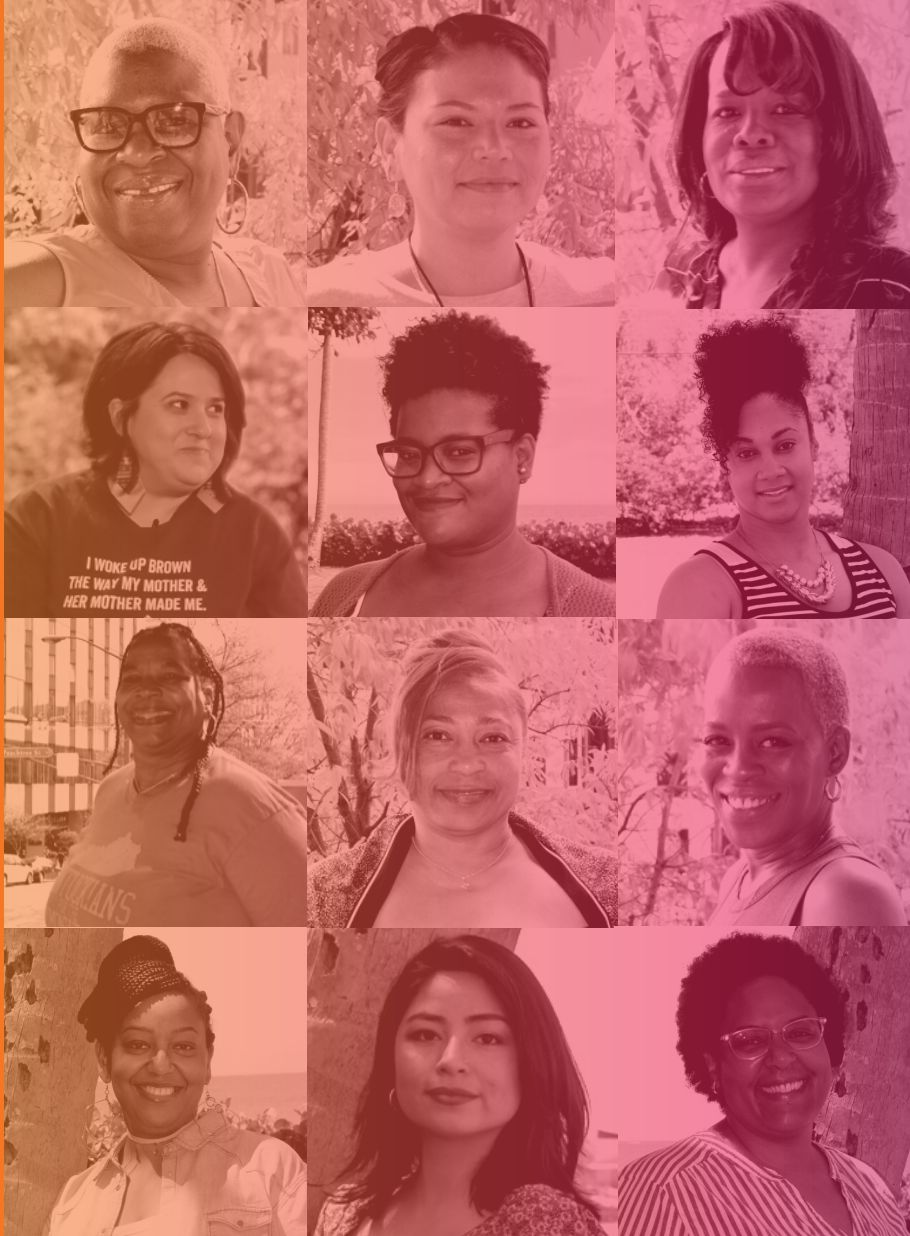


Calling In & Up

A Leadership
Pedagogy for
Women of Color
Organizers



Trish Adobea Tchume & Aida Cuadrado Bozzo
with Viveka Chen, Zuri Tau, Holiday Simmons
and Susan Wilcox



Calling In & Up was built on shared knowledge.

Throughout the guide you will see that we attribute the source of the ideas, tools and methods included whenever possible. This guide is also a living document, an open source for Women of Color and their comrades that will grow and improve through input and new perspectives. Please use this guide freely and spread it widely, and as you do, we ask that you attribute it as a source and use the tag ***#CallingInandUp*** when you post on social media.

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Dedication

*We dedicate this tool to our nieces, Madison, Neveah, and Awo.
We want you to know that we strive everyday
to build a world that can hold your fullness.*

Acknowledgments

To our current and future ancestors, particularly our mothers and grandmothers. Whenever something good happened in the space, something powerful or divine that we didn't have an explanation for, we knew it was their hands at work. We appreciate our mothers for being living examples on this plane and our grandmothers for their continued guidance from the next plane.

To our biological sisters —Betsy, Lisa, Samantha, and Trudy—who taught us through bathroom battles, bedroom shares, and parent negotiations our first lessons in interdependence and principled struggle.

To “Team Liberated Zone” — Viveka Chen the Oracle, Zuri the Compass, Holiday the Healer— who expanded our imagination and breathed life and wisdom and skill and love into our vision.

To the first sowers of the seeds of these programs and those who cultivated the soil along the way: Dr. Charlene Sinclair, Nijmie Dzurinko, Tufara Waller Muhammad, Brittini Gray, Margaret Post, Yolande Cadore, Jaimie Walker, Grecia Lima, Ronnie Galvin, Wendoly Marte, Deirdre Reed, LaDon Love, Marcia Dinkins, Erika Peralta, Elsa Barboza, and Tammy Thomas-Miles.

Staff of CC who provided support, wisdom, expertise and encouraged us. There are too many to name but special shout out to Kathy Mor (the GOAT) for handling logistics with such love and intention and Susan Wefald and Community Change Field Support Team for championing this work.

To the visionary creatives who used their time and their talents to make the power of this work visible to a wider audience: Cristina Rayas, Tamika Blu Wright, Jennifer Cossyleon, Karla McClean, Clem Sinclair, Maris Medina, and Maya Simpkins.

Deepest reverence and gratitude for the women of the women's fellowship, Power 50, and the WoC Gatherings who have been our inspiration and our teachers. Thank you for your insistence that another way of organizing is not only possible but that it's on its way. We just have to hold space for it.

Last but never least, to Susan Wilcox who is responsible for crafting the curriculum that follows. Thank you for seeing us — TRULY SEEING US. And for translating this into an offering for others. Ase.

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pedagogy ['pe-də-gō-jē]

n. the art, science, or profession of teaching

curriculum [kə-'ri-kyə-ləm]

n. the subject comprising a course of study; the lessons and academic content

Akwaaba/Bienvenido!

Welcome.

We welcome readers who are picking up this guide in many different contexts—Women of Color (WoC) who just have a feeling there's something to their leadership beyond being a good manager, independent consultants looking to design inclusive spaces, organizations looking to support WoC staff in a deeper way, funders looking for radical ways to support the cultivation of authentic leadership. We see you and we're glad you're here.

Readers Indigenous to this land, those of African descent, Black, African American, Caribbean. People of Asian descent, Arab descent, European descent. Those who identify as Hispanic, Latinx, and people of mixed, multiple descents — we're glad you are here.

This guide focuses on building woman-centered space and we welcome all the ways gender is expressed (whether you are trans, cis, gender-queer, or anywhere along a spectrum.)

Readers with differing abilities and disabilities, visible or invisible, we welcome you.

Readers who identify as activists or as organizers and people who don't, this guide is for all of us and we are grateful that you showed up.

We welcome readers with different faiths, religious traditions, faith practices, private practices not belonging to a tradition, agnostics, atheists, seekers.

We welcome in all the emotions that drew you to this guide: joy & bliss, fatigue, anxiety, grief, rage, indignation, disappointment, contentment. We welcome the uncertainty you're feeling about whether these models will speak to you and perhaps your desire for something more familiar. We're still with you and we hope you'll stay with us for awhile.

THE DIVERSITY WELCOME

was adapted from a Training for Change tool. It launches each gathering and helps to “build the container” for shared learning and growth by reminding folks from the outset that we will make space for all parts of themselves and everything they carry with them.

Who is the workshop or program you're building dedicated to? Who helped you get to where you are today that you want to acknowledge?

A series of horizontal lines for writing, with a vertical dotted line on the left side.



1: The Root

reparations [re-pə-'rā-shəns]

n. a repairing or keeping in repair

v. the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury

*Remember to imagine and craft the worlds
you cannot live without,
just as you dismantle
the worlds you cannot live within.*

Ruha Benjamin

We are the descendants of our teachers, generations of Women of Color and People of Color whose writing honors our lives, our hopes for our communities, and all the culturally-rooted ways that we show leadership. Some of their names are known to many —Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Ocatavia Butler, adrienne marie brown, Paulo Freire, Grace Lee Boggs, the Combahee River Collective, Johnnie Tillmon. Some of them live closer to our hearts —our abuelas working in the spirit realm and women who joined us at critical moments to shift our consciousness and shape our thinking.

We are from all the places where we circled up to step back: a dim Harlem apartment, Haley Farm in Tennessee, Viveka Chen's fruit and flower-filled backyard in San Francisco, a community center in Tucson, AZ, the balcony of Trish Tchume's old apartment in Takoma Park, the sand dunes in Death Valley, countless airport and Amtrak terminals, river walks in Colorado, and the vestibules of old Black churches in the South.

We bring with us our questions, our curiosities, our superpowers, our multiple ways of knowing, and humor to spread joy. In our big red suitcase, we carry charms that make whatever space we are in feel like ours—lavender to bring peace, palo santo for the spirit, homemade shea butter to keep us soft yet protected, and Aida's abuela's handkerchiefs to wipe off the bullshit.

CREATING AN "I AM" POEM

This activity creatively brings the women and facilitators into community. Because the poems bring out unobservable characteristics, they reveal aspects of each person's unique story without focusing on economic, educational or professional status.

Give participants about 10 minutes to write, then have each person share all or part of their poem, making sure everyone offers something.

I am the descendants of (name ancestors or parents)

I am (the smell of your grandmother's/family member's home cooking that you love)

I am (describe your personality by using sound or music)

I am from (cross streets, neighborhood, or town)

I know (something you know is true)

I dream (something you actually dream about)

I bring with me (one thing you have to share with the community whether physical or non-material)

I hear (sound that brings you joy)

I stand for (something you stand for)

I try to (something you try to do)

I am (your name/gender pronouns/ aka or however your people refer to you)

Adapted from Aida Cuadrado Bozzo

We hear sometimes soft, sometimes bold voices singing along to Spotify playlists of Ana Tijoux, Erykah Badu, Lauryn Hill, Bomba Estereo, and Beyonce as women move into the circle. We hear sighing and snapping and yes-girl-yessing affirmations once in the circle, gentle weeping followed by deep belly laughs.

We know we are the ones who will build a world worthy of our nieces—a world in which they are free.

We are the holders and facilitators of sacred Women of Color spaces, she/her/they/them/us.

Why We Call Women of Color In & Up

Oppression and inequity are sustained and advanced through the control of systems (economic, educational, judicial, etc.) and ideas. The powerful—those in charge, those with authority and money—have always used their ideological power to shape thought and define what is normal, valuable, right, and wrong. And within a social order that is firmly rooted in the practices of nationalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, it follows that the knowledge and leadership of the people who society considers marginal will be suppressed. Even organizations and individuals with the best intentions can and do replicate these patterns. Practicing equity starts when the ideas and strategies of marginalized people are elevated.

- Zuri Tau

For years, we (Trish and Aida) identified with a very particular kind of leadership development. We were taught and ascribed to a model that put us in the business of identifying anyone from grassroots member leaders to emerging nonprofit professionals and imbuing them with a set of skills and experiences that would move them up a predetermined “leadership ladder.” The goal of this model was ascension, ideally for traditionally marginalized individuals. By the time both of us arrived at our positions with the Center for Community Change in 2016 and 2017, we were carrying many questions and concerns about the value of this model to

A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground.

- Cherokee proverb

We worked to make sure that despite what they were presented with, they would be able to provide the sort of leadership the progressive movement needs right now to achieve its lofty goals of building an America where everyone can thrive.

- Trish Adobea Tchume

Power 50 Evaluation Support, a report prepared by Social Insights. July 2019

the communities we cared about based on our experiences with leaders and as leaders ourselves. Where exactly was this ladder leading us and our people? We were clear enough to know that if the answer wasn't liberation, then there was no real point.

We were fortunate enough during this period of questioning to have our analysis sharpened by other women who had been sitting with similar questions—Dr. Charlene Sinclair, Zuri Tau, Nijmie Dzurinko, Tufara Mohammed, and Margaret Post. Together we held what we called a “second space” to begin to consider what it might look like to cultivate leaders who built community power through self-, organizational-, and community-wide transformation rather than by amassing it individually and ascending to positions where it could be wielded. We wondered and experimented together about what a training space might look like that had these goals in mind. How would the curriculum and the pedagogy be different than what we had experienced and taught in the past? How would we create an environment brave and grounding enough to spark radical imagination and for folks to proceed from a deep sense of purpose? Who and what would have to be present? What assumptions might we have to let go of and unlearn?

This guide is an offering of some of the lessons learned from our journey into and through these questions.



Picking up the Mantle

Fifty years ago, some of the founders of Black Feminist ideology—the Combahee River Collective—were in the process of articulating how to dismantle injustice. Their words resound today as a reminder of how far we need to go and the path we must take to get there:

We might use our position at the bottom, however, to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.

We are bearing witness to the reality we see legislatively, electorally and situationally, that time and again when Black women set the agenda for transformative solutions to structural racism, we all do better. We also bear witness to the current, enthusiastic rhetoric around “trusting” WoC when the one thing our movements and organizations have consistently failed to do is demonstrably embrace their leadership.

We call in and lift up WoC, holding space for them to cultivate their leadership within a community that activates love as a tool for getting free and repairing harm.

SECTION SOURCES

Combahee River Collective Statement

“Black Mama’s Bail Out Day”: Movement Grows to Free Black Women from Jail for Mother’s Day on Democracy Now (May 10, 2019)

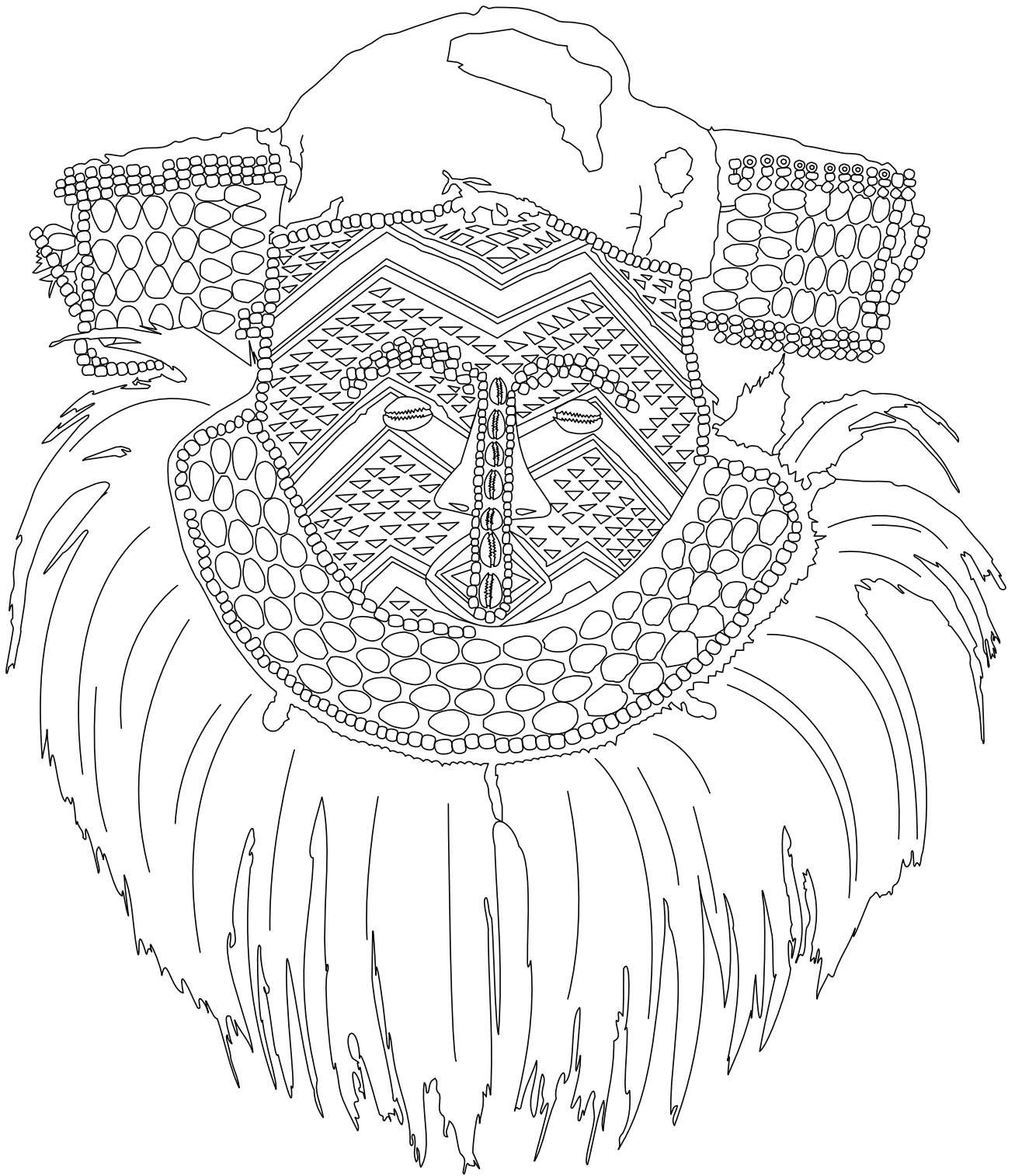
Practicing Equity: Activating Oppositional Consciousness from the Margin by Zuri C. Tau for Non Profit Quarterly (27 February 2020)

Race to Lead, Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector by Ofronama Biu for Building Movement Project.

Learning to (Re)member the Things We’ve Learned to Forget, Endarkened Feminisms & the Sacred Nature of Research & Teaching by Cynthia B. Dillard (2012)

Black Women Leaders Lean Into Resilience by Ayoka Wiles (April 2020)





Kuba (Bushoong subgroup) mask personifies Woot, the mythical ancestor of the Kuba people of Central Congo, and embodies royal power and prestige.

Why is it important to you to support and cultivate the leadership of Women of Color?

A series of horizontal lines for writing, with a vertical dotted line on the left side.

2: Our Core Pedagogy

pedagogy [pe-də-gō-jē]

n. the function of the work of a teacher, teaching; the art, science, or profession of teaching, education, instructional methods

In our quest to center Women of Color (WoC) pedagogically, we sought out models that disrupt the traditional “expert-learner” dynamic by trusting, valuing, and integrating their wisdom into a reciprocal process of teaching and learning. This meant building and maintaining spaces that could hold complexity, bring WoC into solidarity, and instill a practice of reflection (on ideas, information and experiences) and reflexive thinking (thinking about one’s self). In other words, curriculum is present everywhere—in our stories, our bodies, our communities and other places. When designing our programs (see **Section 4: Envisioning & Design**), we sought a developmental framework that could flexibly contain our ethos and be applied to varied topics and activities. **Vertical Development**, a model coined by the Center for Creative Leadership, became the heart of our pedagogy.

Working specifically with WoC organizers, we also wanted to create opportunities for leaning into models of organizing that align with the liberatory vision we foresaw participants carrying into their communities. We sought to achieve this by blending the constructive tools of traditional organizing with space for deep emotional and spiritual healing, not as an aside or marginally, but as integral to advancing local, state, and national policy change.

Liberation is realized by ending both systemic oppression (from the external extractive political economic system) and from personal suffering (the internal response to external conditions we face). Therefore a structural analysis must act in tandem with self-inquiry.

- **Social Justice Leadership**

The design and content of our programs is therefore rooted in a **Transformative Organizing** framework that took us beyond transactional organizing, and is the other pedagogical thread you will see running through this guide.

FROM ANALOGY TO PRACTICE

Imagine you’re at the entrance of a crowded party where there are food stations throughout the room. One is almost right in front of you and its food looks fine. You see people walking by, though, with snack plates that look amazing! You know you’ll have to muddle through the crowd in order to find those treats and decide it’s worth the effort to venture in. Along the way, you chat up folks who direct you to a shrimp cocktail table and arrive across the room at a glorious buffet with contacts and information you would not have gathered had you not muddled through the crowd.

Vertical development complements traditional “horizontal development” by strengthening the mind and body’s ability to identify, wrestle with, and push through complex challenges, building a leader’s confidence and commitment to figuratively muddle through a crowded room for better options.

In practice: I organized with an organization that worked with clergy to pass legislation, but I wanted grassroots leaders —like the tamale lady down the street —to have a say in our demands. I was told to make sure the clergy was at a meeting and not spend time on grassroots folks. Knowing it would be hard, I honed into my vision and muddled through to come up with a hybrid approach. I got the clergy AND five grassroots leaders to attend. The clergy took the lead but the others gained a deeper political education while contributing. Our demands were ultimately met.

By the last Power 50 session, our visions had grown. We could imagine reparations in our lifetime knowing we could have the vision first, then muddle toward solutions. Vertical Development helped me lead in a different way.

- Arleen Vargas (Power 50)

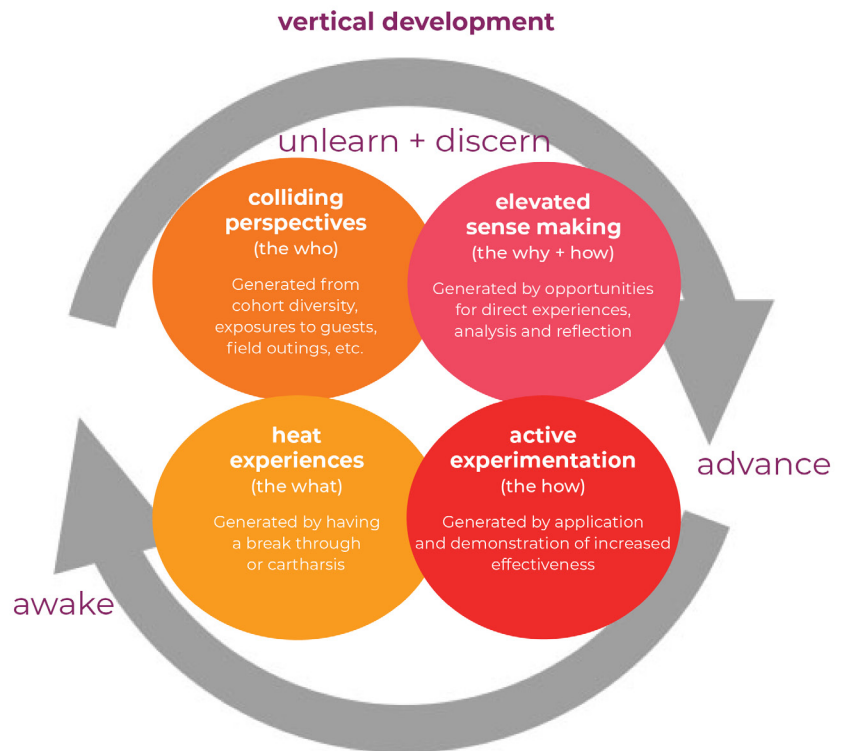
Vertical Development

WoC leaders, we know, grapple with issues affecting their lives, families and community while organizing to solve them in an environment where movement building is increasingly multi-faceted and globalized. Presently and in the future, their work requires a sharp political analysis and the ability to maneuver through volatile and unpredictable situations. It has been shown that leaders operating at higher levels of development will perform better in complex environments such as these. By complementing traditional training or “horizontal development” (focused on developing new skills, abilities, and behaviors), we believe a “vertical development” approach offers a pedagogical framework that gives WoC an important advantage in strengthening their minds’ and bodies’ ability to identify, wrestle with, and push through complex challenges.

We incorporate a vertical development framework into session design and facilitation to move participants through three points of ever evolving awareness: 1) Awaken, 2) Unlearn + Discern, 3) Advance.

Awaken (*the what*): Participants become aware that there are different ways of making sense of the world (diverse worldviews) and that doing things in new ways is possible.

This phase often uses intentional provocation and normalization of “heat” experiences to generate breakthrough thinking. Facilitators are advised to 1) carefully and responsibly introduce “heat” and 2) employ a trauma-informed approach to help center participants and offer healing.



Unlearn + Discern: Participants' old assumptions are analyzed and challenged, while new ones are experimented with as new possibilities for one's day-to-day work and life.

Colliding perspectives (*the who*) are generated from the diverse insights within a cohort and exposure to readings, guest speakers and site visits.

Elevated sense making (*the why + how*) is generated by opportunities for direct experiences and by analysis and reflection.

Advance: After practice and effort, a person develops more complex ideas that start to dominate previous, less nuanced ones and they build new leadership logics. Even when we attain deep insights and strong leadership capacities, we can grow further.

Active experimentation (*the how*) is generated by application and demonstration of one's increased effectiveness.



vertical development in action

Transformative Organizing

Evaluator and core team member, Zuri Tau, summarizes Transformative Organizing in this way,

Similar to more transactional organizing, transformative organizing teaches political education, mobilization, and strategic power building as methods to address injustice. It differs from transactional organizing, however, in its emphasis on long-term vision, self-awareness, naming and addressing oppression that is replicated in our strategies, and the healing of personal suffering. Transformative Organizing is an outgrowth of community organizers' dissatisfaction with the short term wins, political setbacks, and the struggles of organizers to maintain balance and fruitful relationships within their personal and professional lives.

The principles and practices of Transformative Organizing in which our content and outcomes are rooted are:

- **Begins with self-awareness in recognizing habitual behaviors that influence how we show up and create positive impact**

Practices: Acting from center using somatic practices, mindfulness, healing justice frameworks

- **Requires the intentional practice of new ways of being.**

Practices: Sustaining one's high performance including achieving short-term goals while attending to personal and organizational well-being to advance long-haul needs

- **Requires envisioning the kind of society we seek in the long-term that traverses the personal, organizational, movement or field, and societal**

Practices: Deepening one's ideology to develop a clear vision, purpose and worldview; supporting other leaders to identify and practice their authentic leadership.

- **Requires ideological, strategic, and mass-based organizing**

Practices: Building power strategically including developing the leadership of WoC with a long-term, non-transactional orientation

How to Incorporate This Pedagogy

In addition to the vertical development and transformative organizing frameworks, our pedagogy borrows from a number of sources that harmonize with our work and have demonstrated results. Although our team had knowledge of organizing, structural racism, patriarchy, leadership development, and trauma-informed methods, we continually steeped ourselves in new materials and research, exchanging information with each other and frequently reviewing it together. To get the most from this guide we advise you to work similarly and that your team also simultaneously position themselves as informed teachers and learners, responsive facilitators and engaged participants.

How to Use This Guide

In this guide are suggestions ranging from how to assemble a superpower team, to creating a program from scratch or tweaking your program, to outlining a year-long flow inclusive of different gatherings. Wherever possible, illustrations are used to make tangible what we did and why. There are links to content sessions and accompanying handouts, such as:

- How Structural Racism is Internalized & Disorganizes Us
- What Happens When We become “The Man”
- Our Ancestor Stories
- Yes, Girl, Yes! Practicing Strategic Imagination

We additionally took into account individual preferences during in-person gatherings. Some of us are avid note takers and diarists, others are doodlers or poets, and so throughout this guide are writing and drawing pages for creative expression and recentering.

The structure of this guide loosely follows our planning and facilitation process. It opens with a version of our “Diversity Welcome” (Akwaaba! Bienvenidos!), followed by an introduction that lays out the roots and rationale for WoC programming, which brings us to this section on our core pedagogy. The guide now proceeds as follows:

3: Assembling Our Ride or Die - A description of the knowledge, skill sets and dispositions on our team (our superpowers), our roles and our preparation process

4: Envisioning & Design - Includes a design guide template for creating or tweaking programs, description of our programs and the desired outcomes, and our evaluation approach

5: Wireframes & Sessions - A description of our process for laying out a comprehensive plan for a gathering such as a retreat or mini-intensive. Also includes links to individual workshop outlines

SECTION SOURCES

Transformative Organizing: Toward Liberation of Self and Society from Social Justice Leadership

Future Trends in Leadership Development by Nick Petrie for Center for Creative Leadership

Emerging Trends Report: Talent Reimagined (2019) - 7 Emerging Trends for Transformative Leaders in Center for Creative Leadership

6: Creating a Liberated Zone - A detailed how-to for creating an intentional and brave space for learning, growing and dreaming

7: Leaning into Generative Conflict - Strategies for using conflict to strengthen group solidarity

8: Tools & Spaces for Embodying New Habits - A set of between gathering practices for deepening impact and staying connected





#BLACK

LIVES

MATTER



3: Assembling Our Ride or Die

ride or die

n. the person (people) who you stand by in any problem and vice versa

We understood very early on that the first step in building programs focused on transformation was to identify a team who not only aligned philosophically with our budding vision, but who also aligned with our deeply collaborative approach and had the necessary combination of skills to implement this vision.

Our First Radical Act

The programs we are reflecting upon in this guide were created within an organizational context. Interestingly, although the programs we (Trish and Aida) were creating both focused on developing the leadership of Women of Color, within the organization they were seen as completely unrelated bodies of work because they had different funding streams and the two of us worked on separate teams. We were not encouraged to see our work as connected or to work collectively— in fact just the opposite. In many ways, those surrounding each of us presented the other person and their developing program as a threat to the success of our own. Meanwhile, each of us was struggling to find the creative thought partnership and technical support within our own teams to bring our respective programs into being.

Separately, we were each asking ourselves, **“How can we, with integrity, design programs that encourage women to center interdependence but allow our institution to keep us siloed?”** Finally, we were brave enough to ask this question of each other. After a deeply healing conversation where we explicitly named all the ways that society generally and our institution specifically had discouraged us from seeing each other fully, we recognized we each possessed unique gifts that when joined would make our respective programs that much stronger. On that day, we committed to supporting each other’s programs no matter what; we also committed to

When a sista is real, she is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It’s good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind.

- Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

supporting each other no matter what, having no idea what that would mean in practice.

What this has meant is that today, we still have primary institutional accountability for our respective programs (the women's fellowship for Aida, Power 50 for Trish), but behind the scenes hold responsibility for the programs collectively. It also means we've built and continue to experience the deepest of personal and professional sisterhoods into which we also had the privilege of inviting in an incredible team.

Bringing in Outside Collaborators

Our next step in building our programs was to assemble a team that had the skills, shared analysis, and deep commitment to creatively cultivate the leadership of Women of Color. We deliberately built a team: 1) with knowledge of organizing, structural racism, and leadership development to enhance our offerings and 2) whose external perspective would continuously push our thinking beyond our organizational deliverables. We also believed our team must comprise people who have been directly impacted by the conditions making it crucial to call Women of Color in and up. These lived experiences significantly contribute to program design and facilitation as we are already seeing in the 2020-21 women's fellowship whose ride or die team includes alumnae.

Our primary team members — **Viveka Chen**, **Zuri Tau**, and **Holiday Simmons** — became our vital outside collaborators. These were individuals we had encountered in different spaces over the years — some who we'd worked with extensively and some who we'd interacted with only briefly but whose body of work and presence demonstrated that they might be down to build something deep and radical.

Our Superpowers

It is difficult to reduce any team member to a single attribute because each has many talents. But we do so here to illustrate a few of the seven superpowers we identified on our team (see Superpower figure on page 30). For each person, we lift up some of the resources and practices they exposed to us.



Viveka (*knower*) is called “the oracle” because of her deep facilitation experience, her workshop design prowess, and her vast knowledge across our content areas, particularly racial equity. She wrote the design guide for Power 50 (see **Section 4: Envisioning & Design**), created the wireframe structure we use (see **Section 5: Wireframes & Sessions**), and coaches participants.



Zuri (*compass*) is skilled at honing in on outcomes to make sure they correspond with program design, and at creating adaptable learning and assessment tools that are comprehensible, fun and do not undermine the power in the room. As a sociologist and evaluator, she has a deep interest in naming Women of Color as knowledge creators. Zuri evaluated Power 50 & the women’s fellowship and helped translate what was happening in the room into frameworks the team could use to understand the larger contributions of WoC in society. (See *Assessing Our Impact* in **Section 4: Envisioning & Design**.)



Holiday (*healer*) masterfully matched somatic practice to content to nurture a culture of safety, resilience, empowerment, and healing; exposed us to decolonizing tools; and embodied a tender masculinity that participants received openly. Holiday was initially brought in to support the women’s fellowship team to deepen their trauma-informed approach, and ended up becoming a team member, facilitator and one-on-one coach for participants. (See *Principles of Trauma-informed Care* in **Section 7: Leaning Into Generative Conflict** sidebar.)

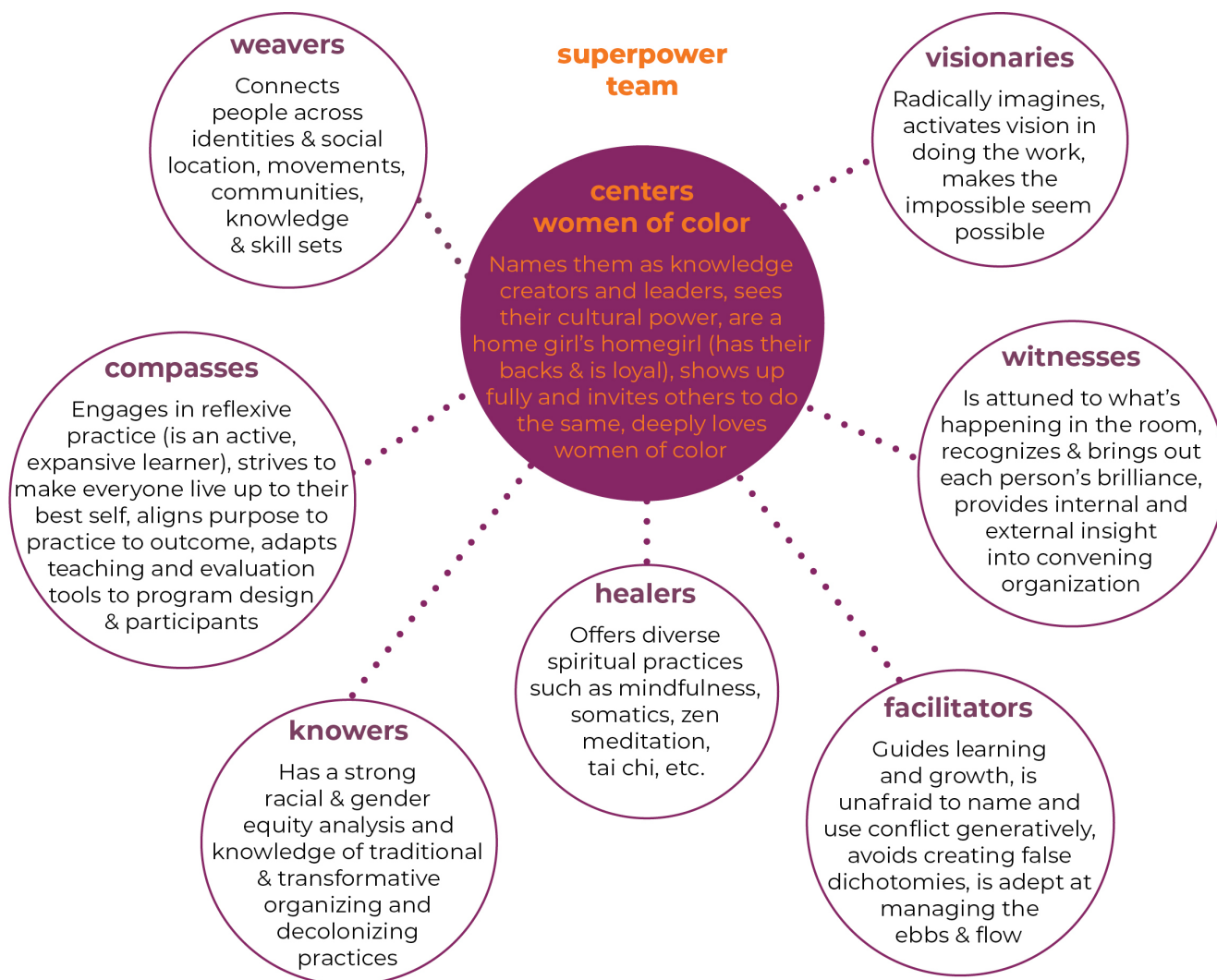


Aida (*witness*) is masterful at observing what is happening in the moment, quickly sensing emergent opportunities for learning, and is unafraid to lean into generative conflict. She is often the first team member to name the issue simmering under the surface of the room and stop conversation to address it. She took the lead on designing the women’s fellowship at Community Change and currently leads all aspects of WoC programming for the organization.

our core team:
Trish & Aida, Zuri, Viveka, Holiday

Trish (*weaver*) is described as “the dopest connector” because of her adeptness at identifying what mix of talents are needed to bring something to life, seeing how those talents show up in people who are often overlooked, then connecting those individuals across diverse social locations in a manner that makes everyone feel they belong and are brilliant. She led the design of Power 50 at Community Change and carved out the space for broader WoC programming at the organization.

There were other people along the way —many of whom we honor in the Acknowledgments —who shared their gifts with the team at critical moments offering guidance, expertise, or co-facilitation, but this team formed the core.



Starting with Self

Our team goal was to facilitate programs that WoC invest in and can be proud of, an aspiration that began during the visioning phase of program design and continued through the planning of each gathering. We knew that how we showed up and what we offered were foundational and that to ask the women to be receptive and generous without having practiced the same among ourselves would be disingenuous and counter-constructive. Starting with self, there were a couple of questions we kept at the fore:

- *What is necessary to know or have experienced to feel prepared to lead this space?*
- *How can we enter into the space we've designed from a place of centeredness and possibility?*

Here are three learnings that were revealed about the critical link between team preparation and program facilitation. They are not definitive — other facilitators will no doubt glean different lessons —but they are true to what we experienced and attempted to deliver.

1: Getting to know our strengths, challenges and triggers as a facilitator and as a team

As we were initially getting to know each other, we relied on more formal tools such as Gallup's *Strengthsfinder* and the Move to End Violence program's *Facets of Core Strengths* tool. Over time, however, we got to know the depths of each other's strengths through feedback from one another, informal check-in questions (i.e., *How are you aligned with or a contradiction of your zodiac sign?*), and by witnessing each other in design and facilitation mode.

Being acutely aware of each other's strengths, challenges and triggers also prepared our team to lean into generative conflict while remaining grounded in purpose. As conflicts arose, we came to know who asks great questions that lead the women to deep reflection and awaken their thinking? Who has experience with what's showing up in the room right now? Who can bring us back to center at this moment?

2: Understanding what might be projected onto us and how it can trigger vulnerabilities

Each of us comes from a social location that informs our worldview and makes it more or less difficult for us to recognize embedded societal norms. Social location includes unchangeable elements (race) and mutable elements (economic status, gender, physical ability.) Some questions we asked ourselves to explore our social location were:

- What aspects of my social location are shared by the majority of the people in this program and which are not?
- What types of experiences have I had because of my social location?
- What are my biases because of my social location?
- How might I be perceived by others outside of my social location and what feelings does this evoke in me?

Knowing how we are perceived helps us to recognize what we embody—what our bodies convey and what it triggers in others.

- For example, there is general discomfort discussing economic class differences however this does not mean the differences go unnoticed. Unspoken are the qualities attached to class and cultural capital that can create tension (i.e., a person's manner of speech or the way they dress.) When associating high salaries and degrees in higher education with whiteness, we may treat those who possess these qualities as the “white person in the room” or may feel treated as such.
- In another example, facilitators are timekeepers and keepers of the agenda and in this role might be reminiscent of a strict teacher, parole officer, or some other controlling entity serving an organization or system rather than the people.

Understanding potential triggers helps facilitators interpret the responses that feel unnecessarily resistant or as refusals from members of the group.

3: Sharpening our observational skills to understand “disruption”

We also prepared ourselves individually and as a team by thinking about common ways “disruption” manifests. We identified four questions to keep in mind during

SOCIAL LOCATION is a set of factors (race, gender, socioeconomic status, education level, etc.) determining our social status within our community and affecting our sense of what is real. It informs our worldview, at times making it difficult to recognize embedded personal norms and those of others. See *Social Location Overview & Worksheet*, SEW Consulting.

OUR GO-TO REFLECTIVE TOOLS

Like, Wish, Wonder is our daily end-of-day debriefing during retreat, mini-immersives and other gatherings where we discuss the experience, recording our responses to tweak the next day's activities or an upcoming planning.

Also see the **Program Reflection & Reimagination Process** for the collaborative strategies we used across our programs and over the program year.

gatherings. See **Section 7: Leaning Into Generative Conflict** for illustration of these questions through four portraits of disruption.

- **How is the disruption showing up?** For example, someone has stepped outside of the circle or shut down a conversation.
- **How is it impacting the space?** For example, the mood in the group has shifted and the women are becoming distracted.
- **Why is the woman being disruptive?** For example, is she fearful of going deep or exposing something about herself?
- **How and who can we call her in?** For example, can we remind her of the community agreements, ask her critical questions that invite everyone into the discussion, or have the group pause to do reflective writing?

How & Where We Build Together

We see our forming as a team as an ongoing process requiring both long, spacious spells of time together for deep planning and relationship building, as well as short, regular check-ins that allow us to reconnect and move the work. The thread that connects all of these moments is genuine reverence for each other's gifts, respect for each other's ideas, trust in each other's intentions, love and celebration of each other as whole people.

Design retreats: As we were first developing the programs, we gathered the core team for a series of multi day retreats aimed at naming the core outcomes and activities of the programs. (See **Section 4: Envisioning & Design**) Another explicit goal of these retreats, however, was to get to know each other deeply as people and as teammates. So our design time was intentionally punctuated with centering practices like Tai Chi to ground us upon arrival, long meal breaks that allowed for laughter and casual conversation, exercises that revealed our strengths and triggers, and whenever possible, we took retreats in and near each others' homes so we could get to know each other's families and lives beyond the program.

4 QUESTIONS FOR LEANING IN WITH YOUR RIDE OR DIE

Tension shows up even where there is love, and external influences can shape how you engage with one another. Leaning into conflict is a chance to disrupt hurtful experiences or undermining influences to regroup and recommit in purpose. We know perfection will not be achieved. What we hope for is a beautiful struggle.

A tool we used to move through conflict within our Ride or Die was to respond separately to then discuss together the questions below. The last question articulates together our way forward. It's helpful to have a trusted colleague facilitate this experience.

1. What were the things we did to build a liberated zone with each other?
2. In the past, what have we resisted and what have we had to surrender in order to be in right relationship with each other?
3. What principles and practices would we want to model for others, especially the participants in the space we are holding together?
4. What do I need to reenter the relationship and to hold space?

Regular Check Ins: Design and facilitation is an ongoing, adaptive process so we pre-scheduled and committed to regular check-ins through the course of the programs. Frequency depended upon role (i.e., program staff, such as Aida and Trish program staff, met twice weekly). Outside collaborators met monthly to check in and more frequently in the lead-up to a retreat.) The purpose of these spaces was to create intentional opportunities to share reflections on how the program was developing, give each other feedback about our facilitation and how we were showing up, and to design upcoming sessions.

WoC Pedagogy Conversations: Our evaluator and compass, Zuri Tau, helped us recognize our role early on as knowledge-creators in addition to being program facilitators. So we created a separate space monthly from our regular check-ins where we would bring in other people in our circles with an understanding of or interest in WoC leadership cultivation to place the program experiences we were having in broader historical and sociological contexts. Whenever possible we would translate what we were learning or observing into learnings for publication or frameworks that could be applied to different areas of organizing and leadership development.

Reading & Reflection: In addition to connecting with other individuals who were cultivating WoC leadership, we also shared and reflected upon readings with one another to help create a shared understanding of what we were trying to create and rooting ourselves in a legacy of thinkers/learners.

WhatsApp Group: Our WhatsApp group became and remains the place where we build and deepen our relationships on-the-go. It is the in-between space to ask the team for a tool or for advice on how to handle a situation. More importantly, it became the space to let our fellow teammates know that we were thinking of them—whether it was sharing good news, updates on how a plant that had been gifted was progressing, videos of each other's families, or a photo of a beach sunset we wanted the others to enjoy along with us.

OUR GO-TO RESOURCES & INSPIRATIONS:

Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Talents & Parable of the Sower*

adrienne maree brown's
Emergent Strategy

Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Social Justice Leadership's
Transformative Organizing: Towards Liberation of Self and Society

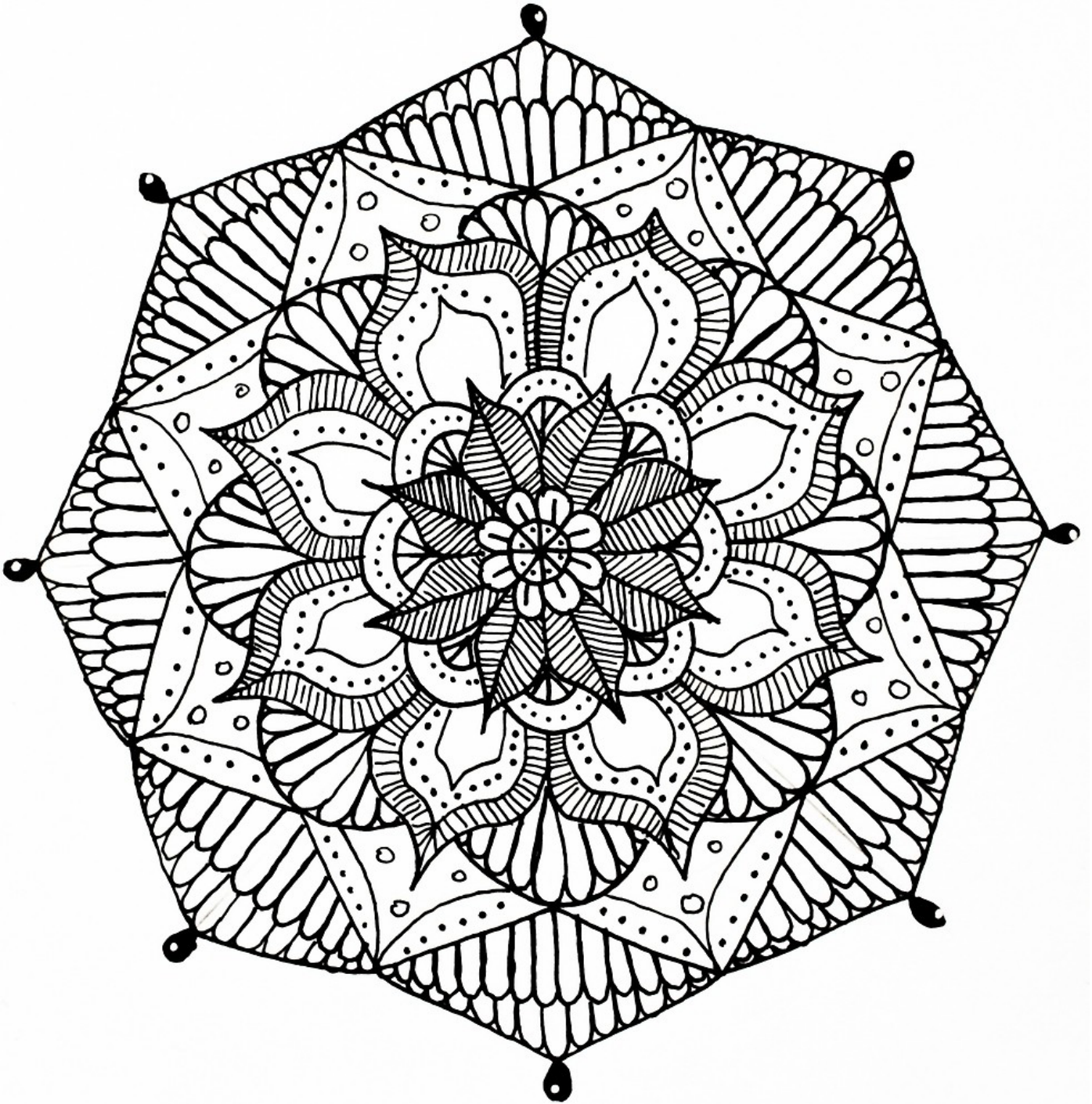
Paulo Freire's
Pedagogy of the Oppressed

SECTION SOURCES

Gallup's *Strengthsfinder*

Move to End Violence *Facets of Core Strengths* tool

Practicing Equity: Activating Oppositional Consciousness from the Margin, Zuri Tau in *NonProfit Quarterly* (February 2020)



Mandala, from various Eastern spiritual traditions, is a configuration of symbols used to focus the attention of practitioners and as a spiritual guidance tool to establish a sacred space.

Time to draw! *Recreate the superpower team figure (page 28) and brainstorm some folks who remind you of these qualities. Make the circles BIG so you can make expansive lists of your possible Ride or Die.*

4: Envisioning & Design

envision [en-vizh-uh n]

v. the manner in which one sees or conceives of something, the mystical experience of seeing something that is not in fact present to the eye

design [dih-zahyn]

v. to formulate a plan for or devise; to have as a goal or purpose; the purposeful or inventive arrangement of parts or details; deliberate intention

Consider: Whether you're a human being, an insect, a microbe, or a stone, this verse is true.

*All that you touch
You Change.*

*All that you Change
Changes you.*

*The only lasting truth
Is Change.*

*God
Is Change.*

- Octavia Butler

Parable of the Sower (1993)

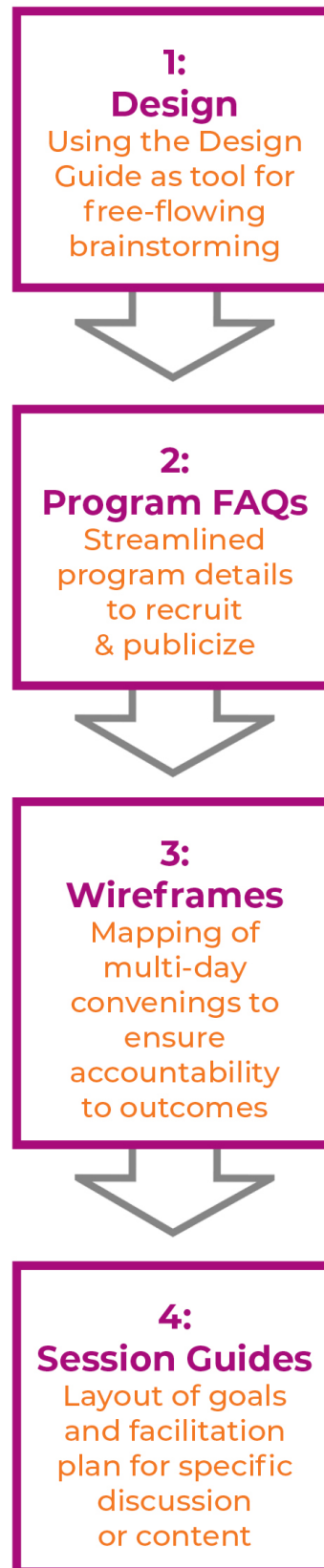
In this and the next chapter you will be introduced to four tools which flow from each other to create the actual content for our Women of Color programs.

1: The Design Guide (pages 38)

2: The Program Overview & FAQs (page 42)

3: Wireframes (Section 5: Wireframes & Sessions)

4: Session Guides (Section 5: Wireframes & Sessions)



The Design Guide

Our first collective design process as a team (for Power 50) inspired the creation of many tools along the way which we have subsequently used to develop and refine other programs. One such tool, originally conceived by Viveka Chen, is our Design Guide for conceptualizing the vision and core components of a program (and that we now offer to you!). Like a vision board, the Design Guide captured our radical imagination, inspirations, purpose, approach, and goals — in other words, our “why” and “how” of holding space for Women of Color.

The Design Guide (pages 39-40) is your broadest vision for your program. It creates a container for free flowing brainstorming from different vantage points, looking ahead to impact and backward to our ancestors' wisdom. It includes placeholders for defining goals and indicators whether for a program, a convening or a session/workshop.



DESIGN GUIDE FORMAT

Purpose of this template: The Design Guide (see **Section 4: Envisioning & Design**) creates a container for free-flowing brainstorming from different vantage points, looking ahead to impact and backward to our ancestors' wisdom. After completing the Design Guide, you can extrapolate details into a program overview and FAQ documents then develop wireframes to design your gatherings and identify content based on desired outcomes (See **Section 5: Wireframes & Sessions**).

Program name	
Designers	
Date	

1 - Basic Rationale for the Learning Space ('problem statement')

2 - Vision (your big ideas and long term objectives)

3 - Goals & Indicators (see Outcomes Matrix)

Goals Identify effects of the program (overarching goals) or of the convening or session.	Indicators What are indicators that your goals have been reached? What will be seen?
1.	> > >
2.	> > >
3.	> > >

4 - Core Components: Name all of the spaces that make up the 'learning universe' for the group we are working with and the distinct purpose of each space.

Component	Purpose

5 - Who is the space for at 10,000 feet? Name major groupings of participants and whatever identities feel important to highlight. Name how many people there will be overall and per grouping.

6 - Who the space is for up close? Describe three actual participants you expect to be in the room. Name what they bring to the space. Name what they expect to get out of the space.

7- Imagery about the impact of the space being created Add a few images to help imagine what will be different as a result of the learning space we create.

For example, Women of the 116th: Unified in white but wearing their own cultural signifiers (hijab, hoops, language); Celebration and joy (partying before moving in unison to claim their power)

8 - When people are in the space, what do we want them to . . . (list examples under each quality)

Feel	Know	Do

9 - Now name the “heart of the heart” (one priority from each category)

Feel	Know	Do

10 - After people leave the space, what do we want them to . . . (list examples under each quality)

Feel	Know	Do

11 - Name some learning techniques & facilitation practices that help make it possible to “feel, know, and do” these things (For example, establish group agreements for the space, have ‘weavers’ who responsible for connecting conversations, storytelling, organized debate, popular education that politicizes personal narratives)

12 - Name some core team and facilitator practices that help make it possible for participants to “feel, know, and do” these things (For example, core team huddle mid-day and closing; facilitators begin each session with quick centering)

CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING THE GUIDE & MAKING DESIGN CHOICES

General process design checks:

- Are must-have outcomes sufficiently designed for? Any changes needed?
- Have we stretched to achieve epic outcomes? Should we? How could we?
- Does the sequencing of components work? Any changes needed?
- Do the activities work for the components? Are there other activities we want to try instead?
- Does the pacing of components work? (More time for X? Less time for Y?)

Checks based on your specific design guide:

Note: Design and facilitation teams should regularly reorient themselves with this document throughout the program to regroup and be re-inspired. Additionally this tool can be used to design a retreat or individual sessions to make choices about content, flow and tone.

Design Guide Applications

NAMING LONG & SHORT TERM GOALS

For Power 50 and the women's fellowship, developing skills in and habits of Transformative Organizing were our apex goals, while the incremental goals were **Transformation of Self** and **Transformation of Organization & Community**. Here's how we articulated them in the design process using the outcomes matrix:

<p>Goals What are the effects of the program or experience, not the activities?</p>	<p>Indicators What are indicators that your goals have been reached? What will be seen?</p>
<p>Long-Term Goal: Through TRANSFORMATION OF SELF we want the women in our programs to be:</p>	
<p>1. Grounded in Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies their authentic self and purpose they can articulate into a rationale for being an organizing leader • Is self-aware about how they show up and what choices they make to arrive in new, more constructive ways • Has an expanded ability to imagine strategically and lead their communities in implementing transformational alternatives
<p>2. Grounded in Strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepens knowledge of ancestral wisdom on which they can build • Effectively uses coaching for leadership enhancement • Has ability to lead from their strengths rather than fear and assumptions • Recognizes and welcomes the power in the room
<p>3. Grounded in Centering & Resilience Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the importance of individual and community racial healing • Has an emerging practice of self-care

ASSESSING IMPACT

We implemented a robust evaluation approach that helped us to continually learn about what we were doing well, how we could improve, and to highlight program impact along the way. The outcomes and metrics were developed over several months using the above matrix and coincided with curriculum planning to ensure the desired impacts would be measurable. We understood that a traditional transactional approach to evaluation (such as a year end anonymous survey) would not effectively capture the outcomes of Power 50 and the women's fellowship. Since we were interested in measuring complex changes in participants' consciousness, leadership development and attitude, we use mixed-methods to collect data:

- **Surveys** were administered after each gathering and frequently in real time to capture ideas about the day and preferences for the rest of the gathering.
- **Evaluative vignettes** describing a leadership challenge and questions about how to respond to them were created to assess participants' approach and mindset.
- **Ethnographic observation** to observe impact as participants showcase their grasp of concepts and strategies and their growth as presenters and facilitators.
- **Interviews** were conducted with select participants prior to and after each gathering.
- **Focus groups** were conducted with participants prior to and after each gathering.



DEVELOPING PROGRAM OVERVIEW & FAQs

The Program Overview and FAQs organizes the expansive vision and details of the program you imagined through the Design Guide process into something succinct that you can use to recruit for and describe your program to others (see template on the next page). The programs that grew out of design processes for us are Power 50, the women's fellowship and the WoC Gathering Space that together support Community Change's Path to Power. You can learn more about these programs on pages 44-46.

TRANSLATING THE DESIGN GUIDE INTO YOUR PROGRAM OVERVIEW & FAQs

Program Overview Element	Design Guide Element To Draw From
Brief background and history	Basic rationale
<i>What is this program?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Who is this space for at 10,000 feet • Name the “heart of the heart” • Name some of the learning techniques & facilitation practices
<i>Who would make a strong candidate?</i>	<i>Who is this space for up close?</i>
Timeframe & time commitment	Core components
<i>How will participants benefit from participating in this program?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals & Indicators • When people are in the space what do we want them to... • After people leave the space, what do we want them to...
Other FAQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan your design guide for elements or approaches that seem non-traditional or that run counter to what participants might expect (ie. “Is Power 50 a management training program?”) • Draw from questions you have heard so far from colleagues.





Launched in 2018, Power 50 was named to honor Community Change's 50th anniversary of building grassroots power in low-income communities and communities of color. Power 50 takes inspiration from Acorn, the community founded by Lauren Oya Olamina, the Black woman leader in Octavia Butler's science fiction novels *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*. Acorn arose out of a belief system called Earthseed (see verse in sidebar), formed to provide protection and learn adaptive skills, especially for people of color and mixed race people, in a future where society has collapsed due to climate change, growing wealth inequality, and corporate greed. In Power 50 we imagined a

space invested in women of color as the engineers and stewards of the progressive movement; a space where WoC leaders can safely, bravely acquire practices and knowledge necessary for our complex time of change. As these are uncommon skills in our society, there is also the need for women of color leaders to pass on their knowledge and skills.

Power 50 is a 9-month, cohort based program for WoC already steeped in basic leadership that provides organizing and management skill development with deep grounding, tools, practices, and inter-relational and political analysis to stay the course of their convictions. Power 50 members are staff at current Community Change/Action partner organizations and:

- Are "mid-trajectory" in their movement lifespan having demonstrated past leadership and impact in their organizations and the field and are poised to make a significant future impact in these spaces
- Have a base that they are accountable to and are positioned to build other leaders
- Work in organizations that see the value of investing in leadership development and demonstrate clear commitment to making time and space for the Power 50 member to fully participate

Power 50 gathers at retreats and mini-intensives four times a year for relationship building, workshops, site visits and other teaching/learning experiences. Between these gatherings the women met virtually for coaching, accountability and to stay connected, and this was enhanced by digital communication through WhatsApp.



Launched in 2018, the name honors the legacy of the Women's Gathering and all women of color who have given their love for the movement. The women's fellowship was motivated by the appalling realities of United States' carceral state and immigration policies.

The US incarcerates more people than any other country in the world and worldwide women living in the U.S. represent 4% of the female population, but comprise over 30% of the world's incarcerated women. Women are being criminalized for their responses to gender-based abuse, discrimination and domestic abuse and for engaging in sex work. Once in prison they are likely to face severe disciplinary action, reducing any time off earned on their sentences for good behavior or for parole, and deal with the dehumanizing nature of incarceration that impacts their mental, physical and emotional wellness. Concurrently there is increased detention and deportation of immigrants in the US and the accompanying fear of people who are undocumented simply for wanting to provide for their families. Mothers, daughters and sisters whose families include both US citizens and those who are undocumented carry a particular burden as essential workers in and outside of their homes, and like their formerly incarcerated comrades, are susceptible to mental, physical and emotional distress.

And yet, formerly incarcerated and immigrant WoC have stepped up as leaders to expose the fraud and force used to criminalize WoC and poor people and to organize at the risk of being deported. The women's fellowship was created to support the self-initiative of these women in a model of development that not only recognizes their experiences with trauma, but uses it as an asset for prison reform and abolition.

The women's fellowship is a 10-month cohort based program that builds the leadership of WoC who are directly impacted by the criminal injustice and immigration system. We equip WoC leaders with the tools they need to engage in strategic discussions and partnerships that shape policy decisions and establish how power is attained and wielded at home, work and their communities. Through training and political education sessions, the program aims to support justice-involved women so they can envision themselves out of their current realities and craft an agenda that is for and by them. Women in this program:

- Have personally experienced incarceration or detention or that of a close loved/convicted of a felony and/or are immigrants
- Staff members or leaders of current Community Change/Action partners
- Lead local campaigns and/or organizing on social justice issues (e.g., They have demonstrated leadership and impact in their organizations and the field and are poised to make a significant future impact.)
- Have a base that they are accountable to and are positioned to build other leaders.
- Come from organizations who see the value of investing in leadership development and demonstrate a clear commitment to making time and space for staff to fully participate in this program.

The women's fellowship gathers three times over the course of the program for concentrated blocks of time that include workshops, relationship-building, and guest speakers. In-person retreats are supported by monthly virtual circles that through peer coaching create opportunities for the women to share knowledge, provide mutual accountability, and build interdependence that breaks traditional notions of who can offer "expert" counsel.

Women of Color Gathering Space

Launched in 2020 and anchored by our Cross Movement Convening, the WoC Gathering Space is a mutually held space (Community Change staff and partners) meant to regroup, to reinspire, and to direct the eyes of WoC on the horizon. We use storytelling, discussion, culture, and tool sharing to build shared analysis, build relationships,

and share tools that ground us in our authentic selves and that are helpful in creating the conditions we need to thrive in the movement (e.g., the six D's tools, strategic imagination during a pandemic and widespread protests).

The women have the option to engage in an annual retreat that happens ahead of CC's Cross-Movement (CMC) Convening, and which is intended to provide an opportunity for WoC to connect with, learn from, and accompany each other throughout the CMC (and beyond). Virtual gatherings take place every month to connect the joys and struggles of the WoC, reconnect them to our vision and purpose, and to exchange great practices and tools. The calls are organized and led by CC staff and partners. Ongoing communication is additionally supported by a WhatsApp Group and email listserve to help maintain ongoing emotional support and connection as well as a place to share or request resources.



DESIGNING A PROGRAM LOGO

Coming up with a logo for our program was an important step in the process of conveying the identity and culture we hoped to cultivate for and with our participants. It was also an opportunity for our team to be imaginative and get creative by turning our vision into a visual. Check out our program logos on pages 44 and 45 and read below about how they came to be.

Power 50: The core team for Power 50 struggled for months to design a logo that properly expressed the journey they hoped to take with their participants. During a design retreat, the team got to talking about their shared admiration for the work of movement artist, Favianna Rodriguez, and decided to explore her work for inspiration. The group instantly fell in love with Caterpillar in Chrysalis which Favianna so graciously agreed to let them incorporate into the logo. The image honors who the leaders are at present, the leaders they are becoming, and the sacredness of the space that facilitates the transformation.

women's fellowship: women's fellowship is written in lowercase to honor the author, educator and activist bell hooks and to focus on her way of being that is grounded in black feminist theory. The ten butterflies represent transformation, the heart of the heart of the women's fellowship. The design was created by Karla McClean.

ASSEMBLING A COHORT

Developing a cohort, translating the vision of who this program is for at the macro and micro level, was a critical application of our design process that is both science and art.

The Science (Criteria): During the design process, we developed a set of criteria for the individuals we wanted to comprise a cohort. For example, the women's fellowship we sought:

- People who identify as **indigenous women and/or Women of Color** who have personally experienced incarceration or detention or that of a close loved/convicted of a felony.

- Staff members or leaders of **current Community Change/Action partners**
- People who are **leading** local campaigns, and or are organizing on social justice issues, meaning they have demonstrated leadership and impact in their organizations and the field and are poised to make a significant future impact in these spaces
- Those who have a **base that they are accountable to** and are **positioned to build other leaders**
- Those coming from organizations who **see the value of investing in leadership** development and **demonstrate a clear commitment to making time and space for staff to fully participate**

Size of Cohort: Here we considered our resources and capacity along with the following.

Long division: Much of our curriculum content involved breaking the group into smaller groups (about 4 people) or pairs and for very practical reasons, assembled a cohort size that was easily divisible aligned with our program plan.

Capping for intimacy: We found that it is difficult (though not impossible!) to achieve cohort intimacy with groups larger than 16. If you proceed beyond that number we suggest you do so with intention!

The Art: Our goal was to welcome in the valued perspectives offered by the different criteria while minimizing tokenization in order to balance the diversity of selection criteria with the actual individuals making up the cohort. Reflecting on example criteria, see the next page for some questions you might consider.

SECTION SOURCES

Where they Walk: What Aging Black Women's Geographies Tell of Race, Gender, Space, and Social Transformation in Brazil
Celeste. S. Henery in *Cultural Dynamics* 23(2) (2011)

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTING ON COHORT CRITERIA

<p>Race & ethnicity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you achieve the highest possible diversity of race and ethnicity? • Can you include at least two representatives from each racial or ethnic group to reduce tokenization? • AND, are there any races or ethnicities that have been traditionally underrepresented in our spaces that we need to hold more space for (i.e., holding extra slots for indigenous women)?
<p>Experience & politics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the basic commonalities you want folks to have that will allow conversation to move at a quicker pace and advance to a higher level (i.e., everyone should be an experiences organizer, everyone should be leading an organization or team, everyone should self-identify as a progressive or feminist)? • What is the range of personal and professional experiences you want to be present in the room? Is there a minimal level of professional or life experience needed to the conversation and learning to advance at a certain pace?
<p>Personality traits</p>	<p>While no one exists fully within these binaries, here are some considerations for cohort balance that can be drawn out through interviews or references:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introverts and extroverts • External and internal processors • Visionary thinkers/strategists and implementers • Nurturers and provocateurs
<p>Relationships & building power</p>	<p>If your program is situated within an organization or coalition, you'll also want to consider which affiliates need to be represented within your cohort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which affiliates need some deep investment to build their strength? • Are there affiliates who strengthen this program by being in the mix?

Lessons From Facilitating Programs in a Virtual Space

Consistent with Community Change's standard of working closely and in-person with partners, allies and staff across the country, we also gave preference to bringing the women into the same space. But due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we had to move all our programs to virtual platforms, at least temporarily. Black feminist thinkers "treat geography not only as human and social landscapes, but also as systems of thought that move across, move through, and span space and bodies." And so we pushed ourselves to think innovatively about our virtual space as a kind of geography to co-create with the women in hope of, to borrow from Celeste S. Henery, "rethinking human-spatial dynamics to explore and combat social inequalities as well as to identify practices of liberation from gendered and racially oppressive forces." In other words, there is opportunity in this moment of physical distancing for social deepening that will continue to emerge.

Shifting Content & Flow

After learning we would need to move to a virtual platform, our core design team formed a subcommittee of women from the Power 50 cohort to help us think through adjustments to the content and flow of the session, then made these shifts.

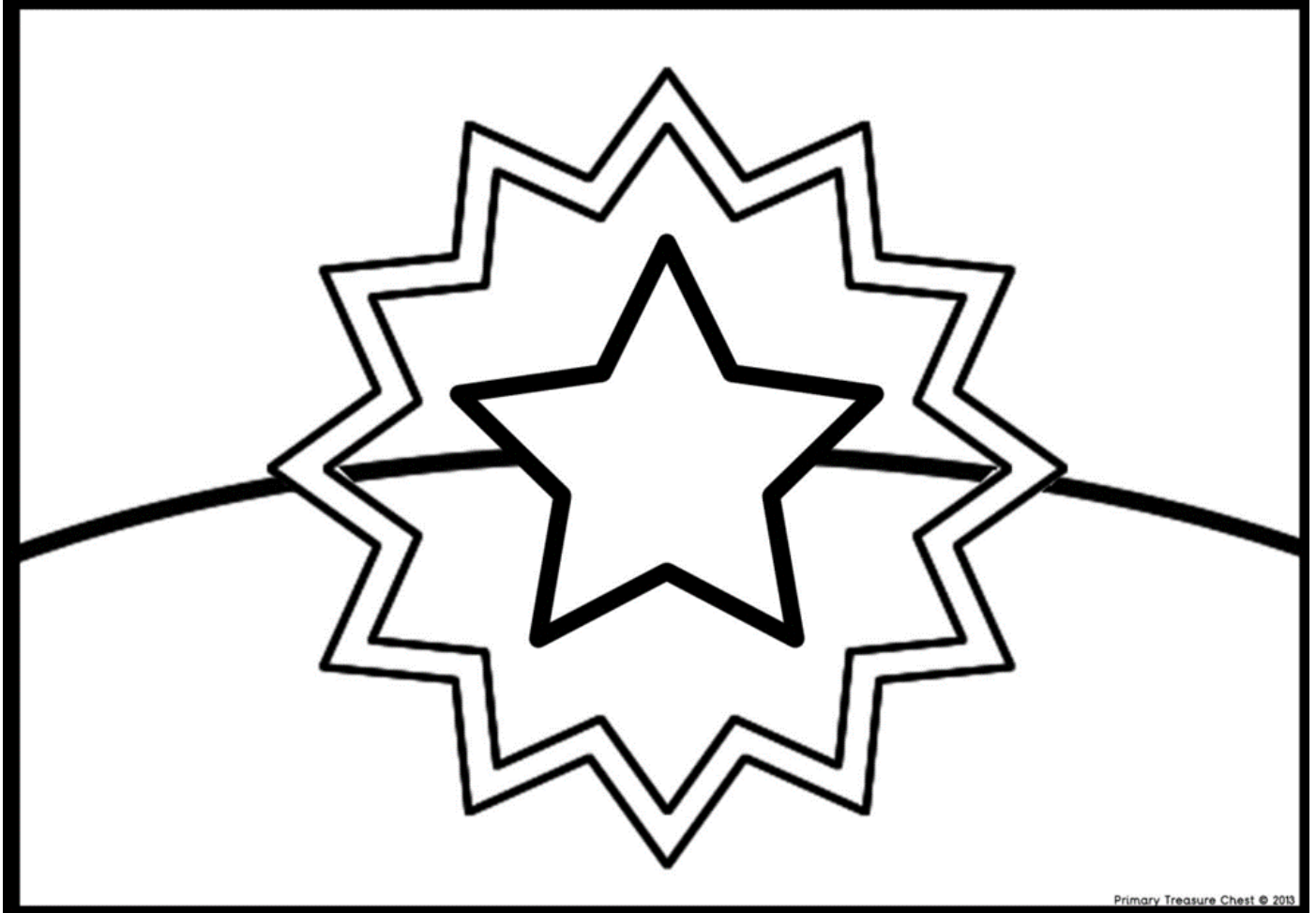
- We limited programming to 3 hours/day and shorten our 4-day closing retreat by a day.
- We agreed to have 90 minute sessions between the longer gatherings.
- We adjusted the planned content by considering:
 - *Where are the opportunities to draw clear lines between planned content, current context, and historical context?*
 - *How do we retain the "stepping back" feel of the Power 50 space while offering practical tools that move participants through the current context?*
- We considered the schedules of outside guests and which topics could translate into a standalone session between retreats.
- We incorporated stretch and movement activities.

Creating Sacred Space Virtually

Along with the above shifts, we incorporated recommendations from the women to enhance how we engage virtually.

- We encouraged the women to think through what they'd need to fully participate before meetings so they are prepared when they take place.
- We offered multiple ways of participation to keep them attentive including by having them take on roles during our virtual gatherings.
- We sent each woman a "care package" in advance that contains some of the essential things they would expect to see if we were at an in-person retreat.
- We made sure they had a quiet place for meetings and one where they could recreate the sense of a decolonized space they would experience were we gathered in-person.
- We made sure they had access to adequate WiFi.
- We made sure they had child care in their homes yet also welcomed on-camera visits from their children into our virtual space.

See Maximizing My Learning (during during Covid 19 & homelife)



Primary Treasure Chest © 2013

5: Wireframes & Sessions

wire-frame [wīr'frām']

n. a sketch or graphical representation of the layout or structure (of a website or app)

adj. of or relating to a visual representation of the layout or structure (of a website or app)

After articulating our vision in a design guide (**Section 4: Envisioning & Design**) we were ready to develop a wireframe for each retreat, mini-intensive and virtual meeting. In simple terms, a wireframe is a facilitator's guide that lays out everything our team members needed to know about what was planned for the space and experience, along with the specific goals that were linked to the primary program objectives in order to instill a practice of Transformative Organizing. (See *Wireframe Components* on page 58.)

Each wireframe comprised a series of sessions and depending on their complexity, were either incorporated into the wireframe or were on a separate document linked to it for easy online access. Foundational activities such as the welcome or closing do not require much detail because they are facilitated at every gathering. A session on internalized racial oppression or strategic imagination includes information, discussion prompts, instructions for activities and possibly handouts, all of which cannot fit in a wireframe. By providing essential information (what to do, when, and by whom), wireframes ensured our team was prepared and on the same page.

A wireframe is ultimately just a tool. A plan on a piece of paper is never as substantive or procreative as what transpires among the women; the work is what happens when we come together. What unfolded in the room, therefore, took precedence over what we planned as centering the women necessitated we welcome them with open hearts and minds and were responsive to unanticipated needs, trauma, and arising issues. When issues arose we regrouped to rework the wireframe as necessary by identifying the “must-do” sessions and those we could save for another time.

*Rest is a great thing.
Rest is resistance,
it's reparations.*

- Nikole Hannah-Jones
What is Owed in New York Times Magazine (June 24, 2020)

*Caring for myself is not
self-indulgence, it is
self-preservation, and that is
an act of political warfare.*

- Audre Lorde

The Arc of Our Programs

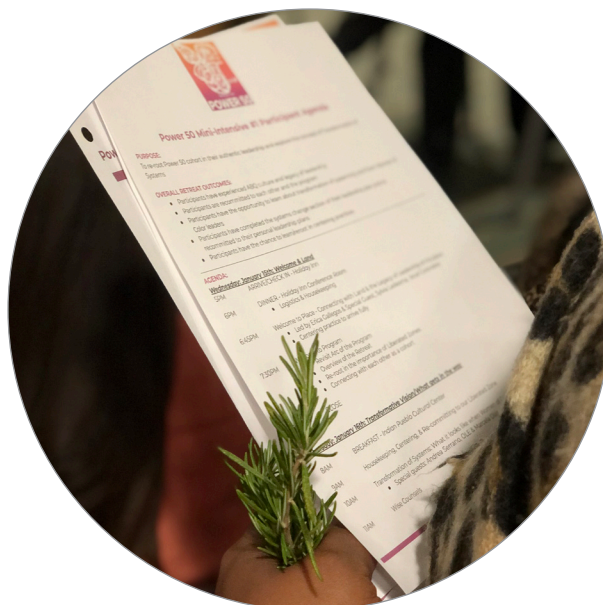
Typically, each gathering was bracketed by a half-day long welcome and a half-day closing, between which were two to three full days of activities. Both the arc of the program and each gathering had a similar rhythm that became very familiar to the women. Like the various parts of a song, each element brought forth a particular energy and signaled what was to come. (See the *Excerpted Wireframe Agenda* on pages 59-60 and *Snapshot of a Week-Long Gathering* on page 61 which references program elements.)

Before each gathering our first task was to **decolonize the space** by creating the physical, emotional and spiritual conditions for deep engagement (see sidebar on page 68). Every “day one” (of the year or gathering) accordingly focused on building or deepening relationships to create the conditions for the women to practice interdependence in real time, to take risks and to challenge their thinking. The women came to know they would land in a space of nurture and principled struggle.

Using the metaphor of song, the flow across the year and within gatherings is outlined below. Activities in bold can be found in the *Session Matrix* pages 62-63 and other sections in this guide are referenced or linked to provide more detail.

INTRO = **Welcome & Land** and **Housekeeping**

To help the women transition into our communal space, our first coming together was always about **welcoming the women to land** in our decolonized space. This intentional act disrupted white dominant cultural ways of engaging and indicated that our space would be one of healing and belonging where the women could bring their whole selves, know they would be taken care of, and be helped to detach from all that is pulling on them outside of our space. Our goal was make them feel as though they arrived at a good friend’s home after a day of travel and could rest, eat and release in a beautiful space chosen for their comfort, enjoyment and growth.



Allocating time for **housekeeping** kept the women informed while modeling transparency. Each gathering and every day opens with announcements, Q & A, addressing participants' needs, reviewing the agenda, and transitioning into the day's activities.

HOOK = **Creating the Conditions**

To create the conditions that enabled us to receive the offerings of the program and each other, we always began our first full morning together co-creating a liberated zone (then recommitted to it every morning and at each subsequent gathering). The objectives were to: 1) define how we will be in community, 2) identify barriers that prevent us from leaning into each other, and 3) ground us in purpose and interdependence. Reviewing our commitments amplified them and allowed us to continually assess our progress toward achieving our shared objectives. It was tempting to skip this process because we too are subject to being time-focused, but making the investment strengthened our community and pushed each of us to show up as our best selves.

VERSE = **Political Education**

Sessions on transformative organizing or that fostered a shared political analysis were facilitated in 2 to 3 hour-long blocks. Topics were initially selected based on the program objectives and from assessing the unique interests and needs of a cohort. As we came to know the women well, we recognized growth edges or opportunities and incorporated their preferences.

Like the wireframes, every session employs the POP process (see page 58) to assure program alignment and focus on immediate outcomes.

Using Vertical Development as our core pedagogy, we introduced heat through discussions and experiences that would awaken long held, under-examined perceptions. We were always mindful to 1) remind the women that the vertical development process (awake, unlearn/discern, advance) is not one they need to do on their own—they have their sisters to lean on—and 2) always facilitate a cooling experience in the session that followed.

To support the women's meaning making about the sessions, we used pair-ups, journaling, group reflection, and **TeachBacks** (wherein participants use their own voice and experiences to revisit a core concept with their peers).

OUR CONTAINER KIT

No matter what, EVERY FULL DAY of a gathering we:

- Reaffirm our commitment to a liberated zone
- Take care of logistics letting the women know they are being cared for and what is expected
- Ground ourselves in mindfulness practices
- Engage in political analysis in 2-3 hour blocks
- Have healthy refreshment, movement & pause breaks
- Close with reflection & offerings of appreciation
- Meet as a team to make sure each of us has what we need, for real time reflection on gathering POP and our design guide plan, and to formally debrief (using Like, Wish, Wonder)

BRIDGE = Grounding & Centering & Healthy Breaks

Grounding and centering invited the women to practice authenticity and live into their purpose to incorporate transformative ways of being into their leadership and daily lives. It set them up deep learning or slowed them down to breathe together and strengthen our container. After the first day of each gathering, this reflective space opened them to share emergent thinking. Pairing women up to do embodiment practices also elevated grounding and centering.

Healthy breaks emphasized that rest is reparation from and resistance to the white dominant norms of perpetual production or busyness. We did not want to overwork the women or ourselves, leaving us with limited energy to take in information or be fully present. Throughout the day we built in several mini breaks for pause and processing and scheduled a 2-hour lunch. The breaks included healthy meals and snacks, outdoor time, movement, a place to nap, and dance parties. They provided us with hard laughs and mental, physical and spiritual restoration.

OUTRO = Closing

Closings are very important because they “seal” the container after each day or gathering, helping participants shift to meaning making about what they learned and been challenged by and about how they are feeling. It transitions them out of a full day of engagement into the evening’s activities, or out of a multiple day gathering to their return home. We used closings to remind the women of the agenda or any tasks before facilitating a cultural or reflective moment (see **WoC Centering & Healing Practices**) — offerings of inspiration, forgiveness or affirmation through poetry reading, chanting, singing. We frequently incorporated journaling or a debriefing. On the last day of a gathering we facilitated the **Packing Our Medicine Bag** activity to remind the women of the grounding practices they carry with them outside of our liberated zone.



Telling ancestor stories



Session Matrix

The Session Matrix (on page 62-63) displays our program curriculum by the outcomes outlined in Section 4: Envisioning & Design.

- **Transformation of Self** (Grounded in Purpose, Grounded in Strength, Grounded in Centering & Resilience Practices)
- **Transformation of Organization & Community** (Interdependence, Reflective/Reflexive Practice, Shared Political Analysis, Development of Vision & Strategies)

You will notice that some sessions were specifically designed for Power 50 or the women's fellowship. This information is noted to acknowledge the history of our work but does not mean the session is only relevant for a specific group of WoC. For example, although the women's fellowship works with formerly incarcerated and/or immigrant WoC (or those directly impacted by these systems) other WoC can benefit from the content or experience. Hoping our pedagogy inspires the development of new sessions, we have included a **session template** to support your curriculum development.

SECTION RESOURCE

Decolonization is Not a Metaphor
by Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang
in *Decolonization: Indigeneity,
Education & Society* (2012)

POP, Leslie Sholl Jaffe & Randy
Alford, *Tools for Transformation*

WIREFRAME COMPONENTS WITH EXAMPLE CONTENT

1. POP

Purpose:

- To re-root the Power 50 cohort in their authentic leadership and explore the concept of transformation of systems

Outcomes:

- Participants experience ABQ culture and legacy of leadership
- They are recommitted to each other and the program.
- They learn about transformation of systems by and from WoC leaders.
- They complete the systems change section of their leadership plan and recommit to their personal leadership plans.
- They learn/re-root in centering practices.

Process: Our pedagogical approach of Vertical Development (Section 2) and our creation of a liberated zone (Section 6).

2. Big Picture Flow is a streamlined version of the agenda with dates, location, time, activity and facilitator, that is shared with the participants in advance:

Wednesday: January 15th: Welcome & Land

5PM	ARRIVE/CHECK IN - Holiday Inn
6PM	DINNER - Holiday Inn Conference Room Logistics & Housekeeping
6:45PM	Welcome and Land Centering practice to arrive fully Connecting with land & the legacy of Leadership of this place (led by a local indigenous leader) Recommitting to our liberated zone
7:30PM	Welcome to Program Revisit arc of the program Overview of the retreat Connecting with each other as a cohort
8:30PM	Closing

3. Important team FYIs such as participant birthdays and critical current events (start of legislative sessions, presidential debate, Juneteenth)

4. Who is leading what? A list of helpers that can assist with finding local restaurants, attractions, vendors, etc.; contributing to the container (e.g., a playlist); facilitating a component of the gathering; and other needs

5. Pre-communication details (emailing advance readings, reminders or updates)

6. Wireframe agenda that plots out the daily details of the gathering (see pages 59-60 for excerpted example)

Excerpted Wireframe Agenda

Time	Component & process overview	Owner & team roles	POP	Materials /Notes
5pm	Arrive & Check-in	Core team member	Core team members welcome, greet, and assist participants with checking in and any questions they have.	
6:00pm	Dinner Housekeeping	Logistics person & Facilitator	Food & beverages are available before we start to meet participants' basic needs. Housekeeping: logistical details, location of bathrooms, important notices or handouts, distribution of materials, etc.)	
6:45pm	Welcome & Land	Facilitator & program participant	<p>Purpose: Participants feel welcomed in all their identities and wholeness and feel taken care of.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participants land and transition from where they came from into the collective space. <input type="checkbox"/> The group begins to build (or deepen) their connection. <input type="checkbox"/> They learn about the next day's focus on grounding the group in purpose and how it will be done. <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Centering practice to arrive fully (4 deep breathes inhaled through your nose, pause, exhaled out of your mouth) <input type="checkbox"/> Connecting with land & the legacy of leadership of the place - A welcome is offered by an indigenous comrade along with an overview of the area's political ancestral history. 	<p>Materials</p> <p>Speaker, rosemary and sage, cloths, markers</p>
7:30pm	Welcome to the Program	Facilitator	<p>Purpose: To reground participants in the arc of the program and reflect on what they have learned and what is still to be done together.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participants have clarity about how our time together will be used. <input type="checkbox"/> They feel connected to each other and resonate with the program arc. <p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome to our retreat - facilitator sets the tone by describing where we are in the arc of the program, why we are gathering in this location and how the design was informed by the women's feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> Check-in circle - <i>What are you personally practicing this time in the liberated zone?</i> 	<p>Flip chart prep_ POP for the session</p> <p>Supplies_ Butcher paper, markers</p> <p>Handouts Printed agendas, program arc</p>

Excerpted Wireframe Agenda continued

Time	Component & process overview	Owner & team roles	POP	Materials /Notes
7:50pm	Recommitting to our liberated zone	Facilitator & participant	<p>Purpose: To re-root the women in our commitment to each other and to the space</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Women have reflected on what we committed to, why, and what that commitment looks like <input type="checkbox"/> They are able to identify & celebrate where we lived into our commitments <input type="checkbox"/> They are able to identify & recommit to where we want to lean in <p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Centering breath or Poem or recording (facilitator) <input type="checkbox"/> Reminder of how we got to the commitments (facilitator) <input type="checkbox"/> Gallery walk of commitments (Guided by participant) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Where did you see these commitments show up?</i> o <i>Where do you think we need to deepen our commitment?</i> o <i>What's going to take us out of our liberated zone?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Homegirl time (20 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>What are you holding?</i> o <i>What's bringing you back to this space?</i> o <i>What do you want to get out of it?</i> o Reminder of Maximize/Minimize o Share out (30 minutes) 	<p>Flip chart prep POP for the session</p> <p>Supplies_ Butcher paper, markers</p> <p>Handouts_ Printed commitment to the liberated zone</p>
8:30pm	Closing	Facilitator or participant	<p>Purpose: To create a meaningful sense of completion to the day</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participants identify what wa meaningful about the day to them. <input type="checkbox"/> They see the value in “ways of knowing” that are rooted in art and culture. <input type="checkbox"/> They feel a sense of power and pride for using their talents to add beauty to the experience of their peers. <input type="checkbox"/> They feel connected and in their power. <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Journaling - <i>What is clearer now?</i> (5 mins) <input type="checkbox"/> Closing song from participant (10 mins) 	

Snapshot of a Week-long Gathering

Day 1 (half day)	Day 2 (full day)	Day 3 (full day)	Day 4 (full day)	Day 5 (half day)
Welcome & land	Creating a liberated zone	Challenging ourselves/ Leaning into interdependence	Imagining what's possible when grounded in purpose & interdependence	Easing out of our liberated zone
<p>Activities include:</p> <p>Introducing ourselves through I Am poems</p> <p><i>Building an altar</i> together in WoC Centering & Healing Practices</p> <p>Honoring the lineage of our ancestors (see Diversity Welcome and <i>Edge of the Woods</i> in WoC Centering & Healing Practices)</p> <p>Reviewing the goals for the gathering</p> <p>Maximize/Minimize to personally reflect on what intentions you bring to the program and your own growth</p>	<p>Activities include:</p> <p>Co-creating or recommitting to our liberated zone (see Section 5) and Creating the Conditions with the activities <i>Creating Our Agreements, How They Disorganize Us & Embodying Our Community Commitments</i></p> <p>Connecting women to their <i>home girls</i> (see Section 8: Tools & Spaces for Embodying New Habits).</p>	<p>Activities include introduction to heat sessions such as:</p> <p>Building Power & Transformative Organizing</p> <p>How Peer Coaching Circles Work</p>	<p>The fundamental question we explore is: <i>What does the work, our lives and our communities look like when we are centered in our purpose?</i> Through centering activities and reflecting on leadership, the women discern and put into action their leadership approach that counters societal norms and the multiple isms shaping how they perceive themselves as leaders. The day opens them to new visions of what is possible and pushes them to look for opportunities to lift up what they are learning. Activities include:</p> <p>Yes Girl Yes! Practicing Strategic Imagination</p> <p>Leadership Cultivation Plan (parts 1 & 2)</p>	<p>Knowing the space we co-created is unlike those we generally inhabit, we took time to gently, lovingly transition the women out using centering and healing practices. As our group cohered, women stepped up to lead closings and appreciations. Activities included:</p> <p>WoC Centering & Healing Practices</p> <p>Housekeeping</p> <p>Evaluation (surveys, interviews)</p> <p>Packing Our Power 50 Medicine Bag & worksheet</p> <p>Also see Section 8: Tools & Spaces for Embodying New Habits and Practices</p>

Session Matrix

Goals >	Transformation of Self			Transformation of Organization & Community				Level 2
Sessions	Grounded in Purpose	Grounded in Strength	Grounded in Centering & Resilience Practices	Interdependence	Reflective/ Reflective Practice	Shared Political Analysis	Development of Vision & Strategies	Heat Experience (use only when trust is built)
POP Model	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Diversity Welcome	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
I Am poem	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Creating the Container	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Creating the Conditions for WoC to Thrive	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
How Structural Racism is Internalized & Disorganizes Us	◎	◎	◎		◎		◎	◎
Ancestors Stories		◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Building Power & Transformative Leadership	◎		◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎
Like, Wish, Wonder [template]	◎	◎			◎		◎	
Grounding in Purpose and Worksheet	◎		◎	◎	◎			

Session Matrix

Goals >	Transformation of Self			Transformation of Organization & Community				Level 2
Sessions	Grounded in Purpose	Grounded in Strength	Grounded in Centering & Resilience Practices	Interdependence	Reflective/ Reflective Practice	Shared Political Analysis	Development of Vision & Strategies	Heat Experience (use only when trust is built)
Yes Girl Yes! Practicing Strategic Imagination	◎		◎	◎	◎			
Immunity to Change exercise	◎	◎	◎		◎		◎	
Boss Moves Everywhere	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
What Happens When WE Become the “Man”?	◎	◎		◎	◎		◎	
WoC Centering & Healing Practices	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Leadership Cultivation Plan	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Power & Purpose	◎	◎	◎		◎		◎	
How Peer Coaching Circles Work	◎		◎	◎	◎	◎	◎	
Packing Our Medicine Bag	◎	◎	◎		◎			



Adinkrahene, the Adinkra symbol of the Akan (Ghana) meaning greatness, charisma and leadership



Sketch! *Create a symbol or image that represents the power of Women of Color in leadership.*

6: Creating a Liberated Zone

liberation [līb'ə-rā'shən]

n. the act or state of being (getting) freed or unbound by traditional social roles

sacred (sey-krid)

n. reverently dedicated to some person, purpose, or object; regarded with reverence; a sense of right

love ('læv)

n. strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties, a beloved person

v. to like or desire actively, to take pleasure in, to thrive in

Often in training and leadership development spaces, our primary focus is on content and curriculum. Transformative organizing focuses on long-term vision, self-awareness, naming and addressing the oppression that is replicated in our strategies, and the healing of personal suffering. In order for this deep personal work to happen within our organizing, particularly with impacted leaders, we need to co-create the conditions for individuals to bring their full selves into the room and for the group to try on new, more affirming ways of being together.

We do this by co-creating a “Liberated Zone,” a concept inspired by so many revered teachers and organizers from Ella Baker to Paulo Freire to Octavia Butler to Ed Whitfield and George Lakey. But it is the women of Community Change’s women’s fellowship and Power 50 programs who are really teaching us what goes into co-creating a liberated zone and what this can mean for our movements. These are the pieces of our practice that they have highlighted for us.

Deep time spent creating and reengaging with community commitments

Community commitments are often bullet points we gather from the group at the beginning of a meeting or retreat and paste up on a wall, hoping that they will keep us safe from conflict. When we’re co-creating a liberated zone, we develop community commitments through a process adapted from BYP100 that asks participants to really consider and name what safety, transparency, trust, validation, affirmation, accountability, and joy feel

Speak by Nkenge Browner

(For Joleen who said “no this is how it goes”)

*You filled the space with words
Other than English
Feed us words
That didn't taste like
Hundreds of years of oppression*

*A song that an almond skinned
grandmother
Would sing and sway her hips
too*

*You filled this space with a
language
That hadn't been beat into the
backs of brown people
A tongue that outran colonialism
White assimilation
And the American watering-
down of
Every damn thing*

*You made us speak
Survival
Celebration
Brown skin
Ezperanza*

*Healing is not a certification,
it is our inheritance.*

- Jonel Beauvais
women's fellowship

*Creating community is an intentional
act. But before we start thinking of
what community is for us collectively
it is important that we have a clear
understanding of what that looks like
for us individually.*

- Aida Cuadrado Bozzo

like and look like in action. These descriptions form the basis for our community commitments. We began each day by assessing our fidelity to our commitments the previous day and repeated this check-in practice at each reconvening. (See *Creating the Container*.)

Shared analysis about what disorganizes us

As we built our commitments we learned together about the culture and systems harming us, disorganizing us, and keeping us from living into our commitments. Namely we talked about the impact of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism on our lives and our work. We also discussed the ways that we have internalized the culture stemming from these systems and how this can show up in our space even if white people, men, and money are not physically present.

Spiritual & Cultural Practices

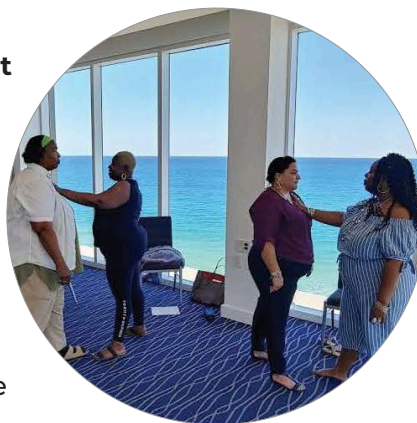
Frequently, we are asked to show up fully prepared to think and strategize about a more just world while our cultural knowledge and spiritual practices based in love and justice are left outside. We adorned our spaces with fabrics, images, music, plants, books, art, and activities to remind us to draw on the many forms of wisdom available to us.

Somatic practices that bring us back to our bodies

We recognize that there are multiple ways of knowing and that many of us have learned to disassociate from the wisdom in our bodies. Under the leadership of healing justice practitioners like Viveka Chen (who works with Power 50) and Holiday Simmons (who works closely with the women's fellowship) we tapped into practices rooted in Generative Somatics, Tai Chi, yoga and other ancient teachings to learn how to both physically and mentally return to center. Some of these practices is in *Cultural Work Resources*.

We commit to the process/not to the agenda

Tammy Alsada of the women's fellowship reminded us how often time is used as a form of social control, particularly in our incarceration system and in spaces where poor people and people of color are at the margins. While we respect the labor of those who have come prepared to lead conversations and



DECOLONIZING THE SPACE

There are visual cues associated with co-creating a liberated zone, particularly the element of inviting in spiritual and cultural practices. When we gather in-person, we create a large circle to signal our responsibility to each other and demonstrate we are all both teacher and learner. We decorate the room with fabrics, images, music, plants, books, art, and draw activities from facilitators' cultures and those of the people in the room to remind us that we have many forms of wisdom available.

CHOOSING A PHYSICAL LOCATION

Every location in which we gather is carefully chosen. We look for spaces that feel intimate and are close to nature. While we seek spaces that feel like a step away from most of the women's day-to-day environment, we also try to retreat close to a local WoC-led organization (often the workplace of one of the program participants) to connect with and learn from.

VIRTUAL SPACE

Our WoC programs have always included virtual gatherings between physical retreats, but virtual gatherings are currently the only spaces available for building community during the global pandemic. The facilitation team adheres to the same principles of incorporating culturally-rooted music, images, activities and art into our agendas, and whenever possible, we mail items to participants to recreate some of the sensory experiences they might have if we were meeting in-person, such as lavender so that we are all smelling something in common or shea butter so we are all experiencing a similar touch.

give space for all to participate, our first commitment was always to “the conversation that only these people in this room can have.” For the facilitation team, that meant being very clear about essential outcomes for the day and the overall retreat and conveying that clearly to the cohort to engage them as partners in adjusting the agenda to meet our shared goals. (See “Heart of the Heart” in *Program Reflection & Reimagination*.)

At its best, a Liberated Zone creates an opening, a wholly inclusive space to test ideas and solidarity, not to constrain relationship building through othering or canceling folks. In many ways, it functions as a co-created initiation of the women into shared purpose and healing. In a Liberated Zone, grace and love are abundant and available to all.

How to know if participants are embracing our liberated zone

In their writings about the five elements of building a “thriving justice ecosystem,” Change Elemental talks about embracing “multiple ways of knowing.” By the time many of our participants enter into our program spaces, years of schooling and “professional development” have cut them off from some of their most essential tools for making meaning of the world around them - art, cultural practices, and hidden talents, even cooking. As facilitators, the re-emergence of these tools is one of our clearest indicators that participants are embracing and co-creating the Liberated Zone:

Poetry: Some of the most powerful program moments come when participants request space to share a poem they wrote the night prior as they reflected on the sessions of the day. These pieces tend to add nuance and complexity to the conversations that deepen the thinking of everyone in the room. One Power 50 participant, Nkenge Browner of Mothering Justice, even went as far as to write a poem honoring what she had learned from each participant in the program. These poems allowed her fellow cohort members to be fully seen and deeply appreciated in a way that the wider world often misses (see sidebar p. 67).

REAL TIME LIBERATION

Now I have 9 women that I can call and I know they're going to pick up and they're going to do whatever they can do for me. I mean I just hit Jonel up the other day and she gave me some sage. The first time at the Women's Gathering, she saged me. And I told her, I felt like-- I said, after I left, I went to another level. And so when we were in Florida, I told her, I said "Jonel, I had a vision." And she was like, "What?" And I said, "I need you to sage me and it has to be at sunset or sunrise," because that's how I saw it in my head. I said, "Because I'm at the point now, it's time for me to go to another level and you took me to my last level and so I need you to do it for me again so I can go again." And so we did it at Fort Lauderdale and I recorded it, it was so beautiful. So when we got ready to leave, she said, "I got a gift for you." She had bought me some sage and she was telling me about this ceremony that they have to do where she'd have to give flesh and she showed me where they cut her arms. On each side of her arms, she has a scar where they cut a piece of meat to sacrifice her skin. And she was like, "We did all that over this sage," so this is some serious sage that she prayed over and gave part of her flesh for it and she gave it to me. I got a shell to put it in, the whole thing for me to be able to use it whenever I need it. And so the other day, when I saw all of that [previous stressful incident], I felt like I needed to do it so I called her and she was with me. She answered and she was with me. And that's not something I'm used to. I'm used to being alone.
- women's fellowship evaluation comment

WOMEN OF COLOR CENTERING & HEALING PRACTICES

Welcoming & Grounding in Place

- Power 50 Diversity Welcome
- Edge of the Woods Ritual
- Creating an Altar
- Altar water pouring ritual
- Shanae Holman's altar reflection

Centering & Mindfulness

- Centering in three breaths
- Rooting guided meditation and breathing exercise (recording led by Viveka Chen)
- LovingKindness ("Metta") Guided Meditation (recording led by Trish Tchume)
- Centering in width, breadth, length, depth
(recording led by Marilyn Winn, Women on the Rise)

Journaling & Reflection

- Centering in three breaths

Storytelling

- What our ancestors taught us about leadership
- Centering on the theme: *We are our ancestors wildest dreams*

Poetry

- I Am adapted by Aida Cuadrado Bozzo
- *Medicine: new and selected poems* by Aneb Kgositsile
(available from Detroit Mercy Bookstore)
- *Radical Gratitude Spell* by adrienne maree brown
- *Replenish*
- *Imagine the Angels of Bread* by Martin Espada

Body & Movement

- Tai Chi: sifting, pulling in, pushing out
- Tai Chi: traveling to the mountain top

Song/Call & Response

- *Woke Up This Morning (with My Mind Stayed On Freedom)*
video with Janay Reliford leading
- Tibetan chant on liberating energy of body, speech, mind & dispelling obstacles
(calling on 11th century fully awake Tibetan woman teacher/ancestor Machig Labdrön - audio recording of Viveka Chen)
- *I have what I need, You have what you need, We have what you need*
by Aida Cuadrado Bozzo

Readings

- *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* by Audre Lorde
- *Borderlands:/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldua
- *Emergent Strategy, Shaping Change Changing Worlds* by adrienne maree brown
- *Parable of the Talents & Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler





Take a look again at the practices (starting on page 67) that go into creating a liberated zone. *Which of these do you feel most comfortable building into the workshop or program you are developing? Where might you need some help?*

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7: Leaning Into Generative Conflict

generative [jen-er-uh-tiv, -uh-rey-tiv]

adj. capable of reproducing or creating; having the power or function of originating

Author and activist adrienne maree brown names how we create more possibilities for what we can do together in the world when we perceive conflict and difference as an opportunity, a gift, to expand our capacity to be in solidarity. In our work with women of color we leaned into conflict because 1) we fully expected it to arise as we convened leaders engaged in complex, deeply personal work; and 2) we believe that whatever conflict harvests is more valuable than what currently exists.

Even after making a commitment to lean into conflict, the practice of it can be easier-said-than-done. After putting much time and labor into designing a transformational teaching and learning experience, conflict that threatens to derail the process can be disappointing and even feel personal for both the facilitation team and participants. But when perceived as an opportunity we can take solace in knowing that conflict is not an indication of failure. Leaning into generative conflict challenges “othering” behaviors in exchange for sustaining opportunities of belonging. It asks us to consider: What is made possible by showing up differently?

We offer these three core practices for creating the conditions that allow for conflict to be received as a gift to the space:

1. We drew on our purpose and pedagogy of Vertical Development (see **Section 2: Our Pedagogy**) AND got to know our strengths, challenges, and triggers as a facilitator and as a team (see **Section 3: Assembling Your Ride or Die**).

Combining our pedagogy and team superpowers, we acted as *witnesses* to group dynamics and recognized that “the heat” that emerged was awakening the women’s thinking. As *facilitators*, we attempted to shepherd them through difficult conversations to unlearn calcified ideas and discern new ones from

We speak today about a crisis in contemporary social movements. This crisis has been produced in part by our failure to develop a meaningful and collective historical consciousness. Such a consciousness would entail a recognition that our victories attained by freedom movements are never etched in stone. What we often perceive under one set of historical conditions as glorious triumphs of mass struggle can later ricochet against us if we do not continually reconfigure the terms and transform the terrain of our struggle. The struggle must go on. Transformed circumstances require new theories and practices.

- **Angela Davis**

The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues

hearing diverse voices. As weavers, we helped the women test the possibilities of being in unity.

2. We co-created a learning container strong enough to hold purpose yet flexible enough to accommodate necessary shifts (see **Section 5: Wireframes & Sessions**).
3. We became familiar with (and appreciated) the many ways conflict shows up in a space as discussed below.

Why Conflict Shows Up

By regularly debriefing what we were observing and learning, our team noticed that conflict appears in many forms yet the reasons *why* it shows up are fairly consistent. Conflict comes forth as an intentional or unconscious disruption. We believe a woman may want her actions to impact the group in a particular way or may be acting out of learned embodied behavior, in which case the disruption is a visceral response to what is taking place. Disruption generally occurs because women (human beings in general) are uncomfortable with vulnerability, such as by:

- Having less confidence or knowledge than they project - Feeling unworthy or unable to meet real or perceived expectations
- Fearing too much intimacy - Having to reveal something of themselves that causes feelings of shame or exposure
- Having to admit disinterest in what is being asked of the group - thinking there is nothing new to learn, and not wanting to learn from or engage with specific people

Regarding the last point, we noticed some women ascribed characteristics to facilitators, guest speakers or other women in the group because they triggered recollection of unpleasant or painful experiences (e.g., “the white person in the room” or a parole officer as noted in **Section 3: Assembling Your Ride or Die**). It is also real that in creating a liberated space—something that does not presently exist in society—any of us might operate from a place of scarcity (believing there is but so much generosity of spirit or opportunity to shine), or from desiring a familiar place of comfort even if it is antithetical to our own liberation (i.e., using crisis as a mode of engagement).

MAXIMIZE/MINIMIZE

This activity is used to reflect on three questions:

1. *How, in your experience, do you tend to maximize the value of a learning experience? (i.e., “I take great notes and jot down highlights right after a session.”)*

2. *How, in your experience, do you minimize the value of your learning experience? (i.e., “I’ll start checking email on my phone or making a mental list of other to-dos.”)*

3. *How will someone else know if this shows up? And what support will you need?*

Examples of How Conflict Shows Up

A disruption might center on one woman who mentally or physically removes herself from the space or is broadened to include multiple women aligned around a shared issue. One woman might also influence others to take on her concern and together they direct their disapproval at a facilitator, guest speaker or another woman in the group.

How conflict shows up can be quite nuanced but the approach to addressing it is clearer. It begins with creating a container for constructive engaged learning and exchange and is sharpened by self-aware facilitators' stepping in at critical moments to gently call women in and up.

Anticipating disruption, we implement preemptory strategies by facilitating Maximize/Minimize (see sidebar on page 74) on the opening day of a gathering used to help women identify how and under what circumstances they check out and to lift up their commitment to our created community (see **Section 6: Creating a Liberated Zone**). During in-person gatherings we regularly pause a discussion for reflective journaling, inviting the “disruptor” and all to recognize and resist the temptation to be distracted by tendencies that have not served them well in the past. In virtual gatherings we might break participants into individual breakout rooms so they have the opportunity to reflect alone. In both settings journaling is an offering of time to help the women process their feelings and thoughts, and when we reconvene they inevitably express appreciation for the pause. Journaling and discussion also helps them move from a space of vulnerability to making intentional choices in sync with their visions for transformational change.

We now share three ways conflict tends to arise in the sacred space we create with and for women: the Mental Escapist, the Radical Edge, the Chaos Maker. None of us wishes to be defined by our worst days and by bad moments, likewise, the examples are offered as nonjudgmental illustrations of how any of us can show up when we feel out of place, out of our bodies, overwhelmed, or under-prepared for the work of creating and living into justice.

THE 6 PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is grounded in the belief that healing justice is not only a vital part of our social movements, but a necessary component to interrupting intergenerational trauma, practicing principled struggle, and maintaining our sustainability. The TIC six principles are:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness & transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration & mutuality
5. Empowerment & choice
6. Cultural, historical & gender issues

Community Change Women's Fellowship Program (2019-2020), Trauma-Informed Care Report by Holiday Simmons, MSW

The Dis-associator

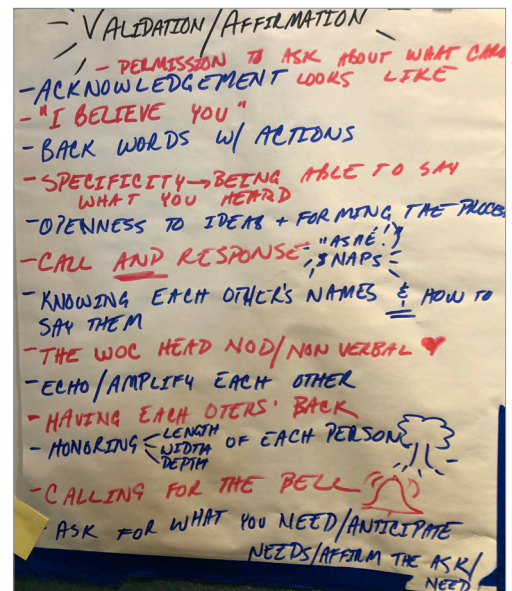
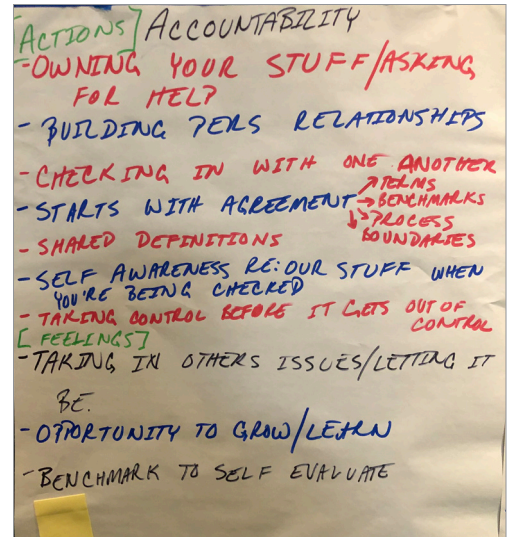
When she shows up - At a moment when we are getting to the heart of the heart, the difficult part of a conversation that is awakening the women to dissonant ideas, the Dis-associator will almost unconsciously get up to straighten the space, get a snack, scroll on her phone or otherwise mentally disengage.

How the disruption impacts the space - It is a subtle distraction and reminder of the world outside of the intimacy being manifested within the circle.

Why she disrupts - The Dis-associator's actions are a release valve from the intensity of ideas and emotions being lifted. While adhering to Community Commitments that include taking care of yourself, her actions break the spirit of the commitment by not staying present to the process through difficult moments.

How to call her in & up - First, as a group we name this tendency that we all engage in, make a commitment to remain present, and identify triggers for disengagement through the Maximize/Minimize. When a Dis-associator shows up anyway, either the facilitators or her "homegirl" (see **Section 8: Tools & Spaces for Embodying New Habits**) will for example, ask her to put down her phone (e.g., Is it really important for you to be on it now?) or to return to the circle rather than clean.

What is the gift? - Calling the Dis-associator reminds her that her presence in the space matters and that this space is part of her self-commitment. It helps her develop a sense of personal responsibility and self-reliance, gives her insight into habits that are self-sabotaging (conscious or not), pushes her toward greater integrity (what we do when not being watched), and offers an opportunity to share her brilliance with her sisters.



Group reflections on liberated zone accountability & affirmations

The Radical Edge

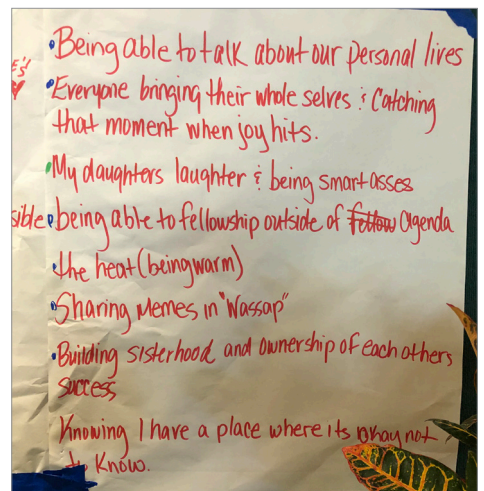
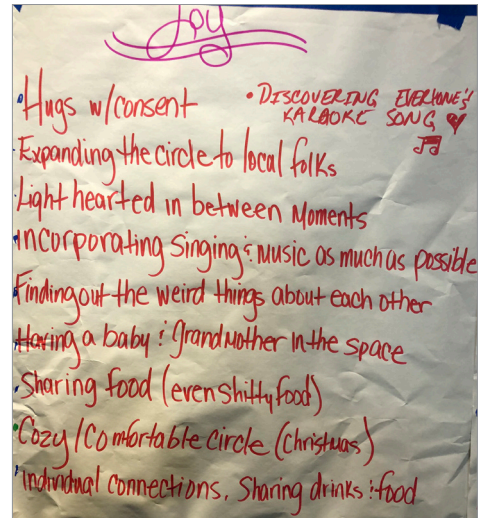
When she shows up - During a discussion of a complex issue the Radical Edge will quickly analyze the issue as a black/white, either/or dichotomy that leaves little room for others to reflect. For example, in a conversation on how structural racism has influenced the actions of another woman of color leader of a political organization, the Radical Edge might highlight the cause as internalized racism and present their behaviors as a simple choice to be complicit. While this may be accurate it offers a conclusion rather than an opening for interrogating more complex realities.

Why she disrupts - The Radical Edge has established her identity within the group as the most progressive and as someone who is braver than others to step over this political line. When confronted with new information or pushed to go deeper, she becomes worried about that identity and uncomfortable with self-reflection.

How the disruption impacts the space - It can shut other women down, curtail deep reflection and nuanced thinking, and consequently keep the discussion at a broad or general level.

How to call her in & up - Facilitators and other participants can ask the Radical Edge pointed questions to invite her into deepen her analysis. For example, we might ask how she came to her conclusion. What informed her thinking and if there are other perspectives she thinks we should draw on? What does (a situation or experience) look like for you? How did you navigate it? How could you be a sister to a person in a similar situation? Calling her in, questions are posed to the Radical Edge but are an invitation to the entire group for reflection.

What is the gift? - Critical questioning leads all of the women to higher thinking, but specific to the Radical Edge, calls her into a collective journey of liberation in which everyone is always progressing and where no one is left behind. The Radical Edge is encouraged to bring both her knowledge and her humility.



Group reflection on joy

The Chaos Maker

When she shows up - Typically, when a gathering is moving toward its conclusion or venturing into next steps and accountability, the Chaos Maker will bring a personal or group problem to the fore—whether real or manufactured—magnify its significance and/or downplay attempts by facilitators to remedy it. She may also play the role of martyr, conveying that she is being put out, ignored or otherwise not being cared for by the facilitators/program.

Why she disrupts - The familiar personal setting of the Chaos Maker is one of crisis. It is an emotion in which she apparently feels comfortable and which also brings her attention. It is often also an effort to avoid what she perceives as pending responsibility that arrives with the setting of “next steps.”

How the disruption impacts the space - The Chaos Maker inevitably draws the group into the “crisis” without providing full detail or explanation, often at an inopportune moment, hence chaos ensues. She pulls a metaphorical fire alarm that prevents the group from a crucial discussion or experience. Fomenting chaos can be divisive, splitting the group between those in the corner of the Chaos Maker and everyone else. It can also distance the facilitators from the group, presenting them as more committed to the agenda than the care of a participant.

How to call her in & up - Because chaos conveys urgency it can keep us running in circles, never accomplishing what we set out to achieve. The response to chaos is to address both the Chaos Maker (often in front of the group) and the group. The Chaos Maker is reminded that 1) her needs will be met in this space/program that supports her to achieve her goals and 2) the concern she raised will or is being addressed by facilitators. To the group it is important to let them know that 1) there are behind the scene conversations they may not be privy to that are working on the issue and 2) that they are gathered in this sacred space committed to something larger and more collective (advancing transformational leadership) than the urgent crises that often consume us as Women of Color.

What is the gift? - Calling the Chaos Maker in, reminds the group of its shared purpose (resulting in greater fidelity to the community commitments) and the program's core principles (assuring that individual support is available to each of them). The women are given the opportunity to reflect on and observe what it means to invest beyond the immediate toward realizing bigger objectives and can experience how it feels not having to be the caregiver knowing facilitators have the women's back.

SECTION SOURCE

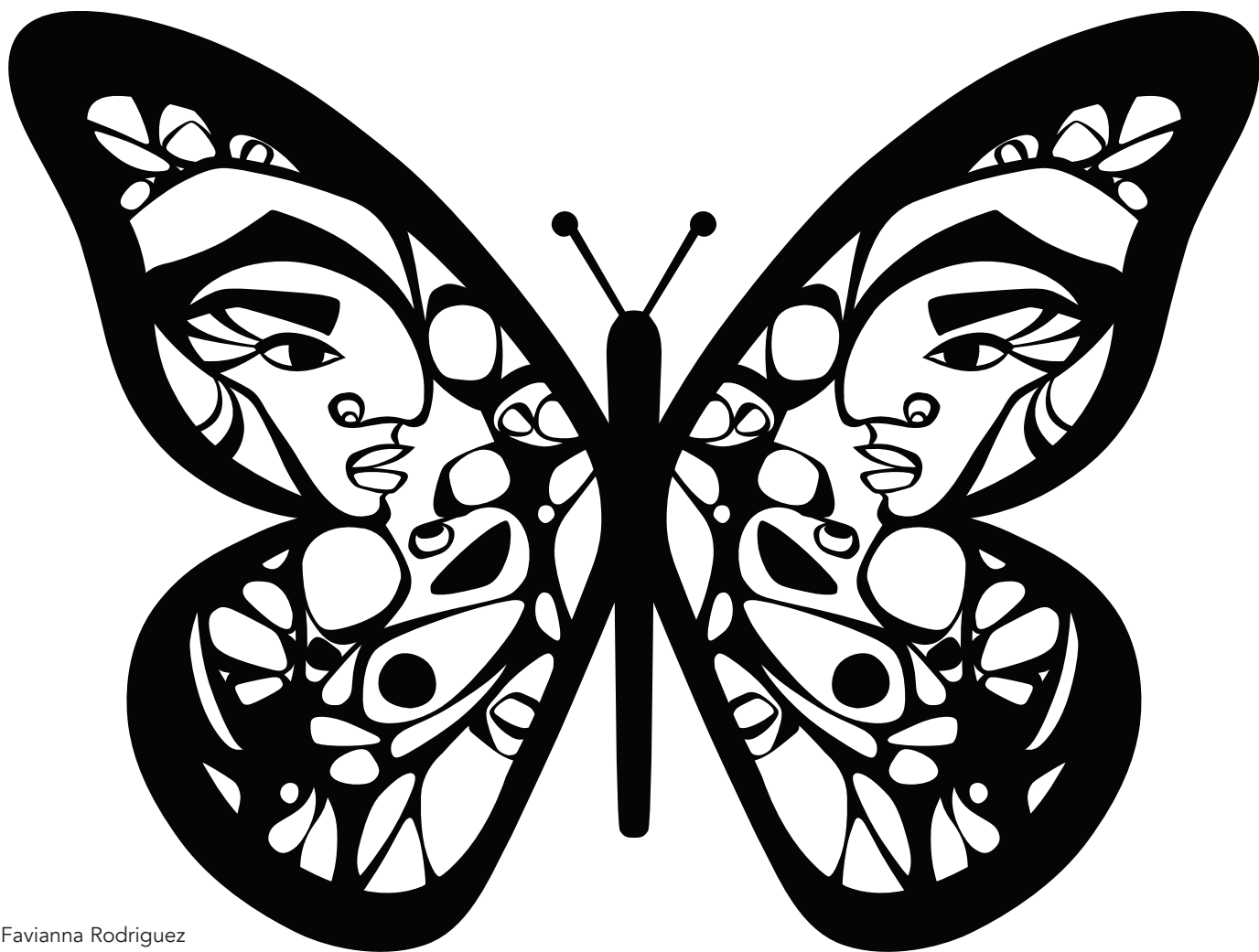
A Call to Attention Liberation: To Build Abundant Justice, Let's Focus on What Matters

- **adrienne marie brown** in Truthout
(March 16, 2018)



Create a playlist that speaks to your relationship with conflict (such as *Collide* by Tiana Major9 & EARTHGANG, *Stand Up for Something* by Andra Day feat. Common)

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Favianna Rodriguez

Reflect on a time when you found yourself engaging with participants who were showing up in some of the ways we describe in this section. *How did you approach the situation? What new learnings came from the framing of conflict offered here?*

A series of horizontal lines for writing, with a vertical dotted line on the left side.

8: Tools & Spaces for Embodying New Habits

practice [prak-tis]

n. an acquired behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary

embody [em-bod-ee]

v. to provide with a body; incarnate; make corporeal; to collect into or include in a body; incorporate

It is not enough to learn new leadership approaches or to be exposed to different methods for strengthening one's resilience, developing a shared political analysis, and cultivating interdependence. For these skills to take seed and become natural impulses, it is necessary they be embodied through regular practice.

Our in-person retreats and mini-intensives were where the women were first introduced to content and techniques. Between gatherings, we offered critical tools and check-in spaces to reground the women in this new knowledge and support them as they built their own leadership practices.

1:1 Supports

Individual Coaching: A partnership with a woman of color trained in thought-provoking and creative coaching processes meant to inspire you to maximize your personal and professional potential. (Six 1-hour long sessions.)

"Homegirls": In the early part of the program, participants are paired with one other participant who works with them to stay present and engaged during the longer retreats (see *Maximize/Minimize*), and provides additional space for processing, accountability, and support throughout the rest of the program. This relationship is largely self-facilitated and can be sustained via regular check ins or occasional texts.

DURING A WISE COUNSEL SESSION,

one of the women talked about a time when she felt really empowered when speaking to the governor of her state. She knew that her tendency in similar situations was to take on the posture of other people, which tripped her up and took her from her authentic self. On this occasion with the governor, she used the few minutes before the formal talk to exchange a joke and this immediately changed the tenor of the exchange that followed, making it feel more like a conversation. During the coaching session, the questions from her peers encouraged her to turn this spontaneous choice into a practice.

1:1s with Program Leads/Staff Facilitators: During the group retreats, it can be difficult for program leads or facilitators responsible for “holding the whole” to get a sense of how individual participants are faring. 1:1s between retreats can give participants space to ask questions, share critical insights and reflections about themselves and the program, and build relationships with the program leads.

Group Check-Ins

Digital Communication Group: Participants join a WhatsApp or Slack group that provides space for maintaining ongoing emotional support and connection as well as a place to share or request resources.

Regular Virtual Political Education or Professional Development Training (90 minutes/4-6x during the program year): These sessions (which can be requested and/or led by participants themselves) revisit topics from retreats or dive into skills that are more standalone and can be covered outside of a retreat setting.

(Standing) Peer Coaching Circles: Peer coaching is an action learning process in which a standing circle of peers support each other to hold one another accountable to their goals and address current problems and challenges.

(Ad Hoc) Wise Counsel: Organized process for calling together a group of peers to offer advice on a strategic question. The group is not necessarily a standing group. You can pull together any configuration you desire.



TOOLS

Recorded Purpose Statements:

During the opening retreat, participants develop their own purpose statements and share it in front of the group in a way that is powerful and energizing. These purpose statements are recorded and shared with the women so they can refer back to them whenever necessary and can be incorporated into future sessions by the facilitators as a way of regrounding the group.

Leadership Cultivation Plan:

Personalized map of goals, strategies, and steps to take to transform yourself as a leader, your organization and your wider community.

Strengthsfinder Assessment:

A personal development tool developed by Gallup Education that identifies your “top 5” strengths. There are 34 different strength themes divided into four domains: 1) Strategic Thinking, 2) Relationship Building, 3) Influencing and 4) Executing. Focusing on your strengths on a daily basis has been shown to profound positive effects on your personal and professional well-being.

Suggested readings & books:

Articles, videos and books are some of the many tools we use to strengthen our shared political analysis of the importance to stand in our authentic leadership and of the obstacles that can get in the way.

SECTION SOURCE

Peer Coaching: How We Use It and Why We Like It
- Compass Point



From Sisters at AARP

Community Change envisions a country where all people and communities thrive as low-income people of color, immigrants, and women wield power to reshape our democracy and our economy to be just equitable and inclusive.

Throughout the past five decades, Community Change has focused our work on strengthening the field of community organizing. We have incubated hundreds of grassroots community groups and trained thousands of grassroots leaders. We have pioneered new methods to bring grassroots leaders into civic life by nurturing emerging social movements, bringing community organizing into large-scale voter turnout programs, and launching national issue campaigns led by the grassroots.

Community Change's Approach to Leadership Development

At Community Change, we believe that centering the leadership of those impacted by injustice is the surest path to building a world where everyone can thrive. We also understand that white supremacy, xenophobia, patriarchy, and classism serve as barriers (even within our own movements) to centering the leadership of those impacted by injustice. So we incorporate leadership development into every aspect of our campaign work, and we provide opportunities for deep, ongoing support to groups who are critical to advancing key issue areas. Intensive leadership development programs like the ones referenced in this resource, allow impacted individuals from these groups to deepen their skills and practices while intentionally recognizing and addressing the cultural contexts which challenge their leadership.



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