
Healing Justice

is more than just words on a page

a report by Susan Raffo

Before you open and begin to read, take a minute to notice yourself. Notice how you are sitting. Are you comfortable? Do you have the right amount of light? Are you warm or cold? Go ahead and make yourself more comfortable. Slow yourself down, right now, and just settle.

Once that is done, scan the inside of you. How are you? What is something true you could say about yourself right now? Are you tired? Overwhelmed? Excited? Are you thinking about something other than what you are reading? Take a moment to notice.

It is not possible to read something about healing or trauma without having a reaction. You might not be aware of your reaction, even when you stop and pay attention. That's ok. There's plenty of time. We are going to pause while you are reading and just remind you to stop. Look around. Even stretch your body. Maybe even hum a little or just close your eyes.

And we will also take a moment to notice this: spending time being fierce about self care or about individual or collective healing does not shift attention and responsibility from the histories and systems that have created and sustained the disconnection and violence that creates trauma. We know this which is why healing and justice go together. And for the space of this writing, we focus on the strand of healing that is part of the work of liberation.

Everything written in these pages is about real people. Real people with complex lives and complex histories. They are talking about how histories and the present day have impacted themselves and their people. They are talking about what it means to change those histories so that the present day and therefore the future are both bigger, with more room to grow.

Nexus has been in conversation for a number of years with many local healers and elders about the work of healing ourselves and healing our communities. This conversation turned into the need for some kind of action when we realized that, while we had been talking about this for years, many of us were struggling with how to set this up. We knew that we wanted to hear from those who are already doing healing work. And so we hired someone with a background in healing justice work, Susan Raffo, and asked her to interview POCI healers in our community about what it means to build healing work as part of our organizational infrastructure. This report is the result of those conversations.

None of this is objective information. Likely you share some of these histories. This is why we want you to stop sometimes. To breathe or to get up and stretch and even dream. We don't want to talk about the importance of healing and transformation and then not practice the very thing we are talking about while we do it.

There is a big difference between learning about trauma and learning a practice. There is a big difference between learning a practice and actually making that practice become a practice. I've been doing this kind of work for years and years and I am only now having a daily practice. What would it look like if we shifted organizational culture so that people were supported to engage in daily practice, to take it seriously within the place where they spend so many hours every day?

—**Autumn Brown**

We've been holding a series on healing trauma for the past few years. What we heard again and again is that people are seeking actual healing. Not just talking about what happened to them or their communities, an activity that sometimes just feels like keeping the wound raw and fresh. No people want to have actual healing so they can scab over the wound and integrate it into their bodies as memory. Healing is a practice. It's not a one time thing or an idea. If I get up and do a bunch of exercises and repeat them, over time my muscles will get stronger. Healing is a practice just like that. —**Marnita Schroedl**

Go ahead. Put this writing down and for three minutes, just notice your breath, your inhale and your exhale. Notice your thoughts without feeling like you have to quiet them or control them. Just observe them as though they are passing clouds. Stretch. Turn your face to the sun. Do it. Right now.



Healing infrastructure is tied to how we conceptualize or approach organizing or really any of our work. Whether it's organizing, social service work, nonprofit work, or policy work; healing work starts with that moment of getting woke, of realizing that these are systems that have histories and those systems and histories impact me and my people. That's the first stage and usually, that stage is all about anger. If that anger has no place to go it turns into hopelessness and then that hopelessness drives us to want to become engaged. We find work that is paid or unpaid and we start pouring all of that anger and hopelessness into the work. This is not always about healing. It is about finding ways to express and channel our anger. In this place, we want to act and react and push against power and that all feels good or better in the short term but it does not facilitate any healing. I struggle with the idea that even at this moment in time, we are in a battle, or that this is a war. I resist using that language because I believe that we have to think of this differently. We have to find a way to go beyond using the language of war to describe resistance, or we are just going to continue fighting until we are all dead. This is what they want. This is the strategy—to tire us out every single day. —Bruce Thao

There is nothing new written on these pages. No new discoveries. Everything written and learned here has existed across multiple traditions and for multiple generations. We want to start by lifting up you and your life. And we want to start by lifting up the many ancestors and traditions that exist in your—and our—family lines. We take another moment of shared quiet with you to remember that many of those traditions and ways of healing have been lost due to the impact of generational violence, colonization and assimilation.

And that you and your people have survived.
And that you are beautiful.

Where this report comes from

In 2014, a group of 5 Twin Cities based nonprofit organizations representing and led by indigenous people and people of color (the Coalition of Asian American Leaders, Hope Community, Native American Community Development Institute, Nexus Community Partners, and Voices for Racial Justice) formed the Leaders of Color Collaborative (LOCC). These organizations came together to talk about how we and why we train leaders of color. LOCC started by first building relationships with each other, noticing where their work had alignment and where it did not. They spent a year doing self study, looking at how they experience leadership at both the individual and the systemic level. As they talked, they noticed the qualities of leadership that they valued. They started to notice some of the specific qualities that they, as leaders of color, embodied, like leading with com-

munity support and operating out of multiple types of collective leadership. They saw that they were offering something different from mainstream leadership styles; something that wasn't about individual leaders as gatekeepers, something broader than the narrative of exceptionalism.

After that first year, the group began asking each other what healing looks like. They knew that their community's leaders were showing up in toxic spaces and the group wondered, how do we care for our own as they do this work? As they asked these questions, and started asking them of more people, they saw that there was something bigger to listen to. And so they started by listening to elders. They brought in elders from multiple communities and asked them what leadership looks like, what directions their work should take, and what to do about trauma and healing. They reminded us that we are each drawn to different forms of healing work because we have healing to do ourselves. They talked about how, when they are in this work of community change and struggle, they hurt people and they hurt themselves because of where they are still healing. They have not always learned how to heal while they are doing this work, instead getting caught up in the fast pace, the sense of urgency, and the voices in our heads telling us we can't slow down, we can't trust our own intuition, we can't trust the people around us. And so they ended here, deciding that they should ask healers to help us think about what they want to do.

Their idea at first was to hold some kind of forum and invite healers to do a bit of healing on the side and a bit of direct services over there and then

there would be a conversation but then it became clearer that healing is not something any of us can do in a day or through giving the right kind of direct service.

These pages represent a conversation with 23 healers representing multiple communities, generations and approaches to healing. We asked them what we need to do to support collective healing. We asked them about infrastructure. We asked them about culture. And we asked them to give us concrete steps for change.

Before you read what others have said, what do you think about what you just read? What questions do you have? What do you already know? What do you want to create? What have you already created? What else do you want to say?

What we mean by healing

We are talking about healers as people who intentionally shift the ways in which histories are impacting the present moment so that disconnection becomes connection. This is a conversation about healing but it is really about what happens because of that healing. It is a conversation about transformation; about what will emerge because of how we have healed.. The people we talked with are healing practitioners (bodyworkers, acupuncturists), artists, community organizers and group facilitators. Not all of them see themselves as healers.

The fact of collective and historical trauma and the fact of legacies of healing and resilience

Western science is just now discovering what indigenous traditions have always known: history is not over. It shifts and impacts the individual body and collective culture and is then handed down, from one generation to the next. This means that systems like the colonization of these lands, the institution of slavery, and various economic and gender prac-

tices that cause suffering and disconnection are not over, even if the laws regulating them change. This is what we mean by collective or generational or historical trauma. These rest on top of and alongside the histories that came with those who settled on these lands. At the same time, we, their descendants, are still here. We are here and we are loving, connecting, fighting, singing, cooking, struggling, building, and we are birthing children and new traditions. Oppression and colonization demand the separation of the self from the self, from community and from the land and spirit. We all carry stories of where that separation never happened. We all carry stories of where this separation or disconnection still exists. And we are here.

Individual and collective healing, one doesn't happen without the other in any sustainable way but it all starts with individual healing. I see lots of organizations being run by wounded people who are doing their best to do good work. They are creating organizational habits that are wounded; they are asking people to work too many hours for too little pay because that is what their sector does. Conflict avoidance and passive aggressive behavior show up when historical trauma starts to show up in the room. Individual habits maintain these practices even as they are experienced collectively. It takes time to break old habits and embed new habits. It's a long term commitment, a discipline, and it doesn't happen without the individuals within the collective or the organization understanding their place within it. —Suzanne Koeplinger

Young people, old people can heal themselves. We need permission to trust ourselves again and we need to know that there are others dealing with the same shit. We are going to do this a different way. We're going to create those spaces. We are going to talk with each other and we are going to listen. —Amoke Kubat

What we learned

We are each born with the capacity to laugh, to cry, to grieve, to rage. We are born with the ability to turn, innocently, towards the sound of someone we like and to reach for them, out of hunger, out of the desire for physical contact, out of the need to not be alone. Our bodies have the capacity to feel great pleasure and to survive great pain. There is no such thing as a “normal” body. Instead, there are many different shapes, forms and ways of experiencing life that different bodies will have. Together we have the capacity to get through unexpected tragedy and to arrive in the place of wisdom and connection. Many of us come from known cultures which, for generations, have created stories and teachings, practices and ceremony, that remind us of who we are, how we are beautiful and wise, how we have been hurt and how we have survived.

Trauma is a disconnection. It’s a state of overwhelming that the body can’t process and so, instead, the body tucks it away to deal with later. When we are safer. When there is more space. Sadly, sometimes “later” never happens. Sometimes we get too full of these stressors and we have no more space inside for more. Maybe this happens because we believe that we aren’t worth the time needed to process and shift the pain or confusion we are holding. Maybe because we have learned that the only way to survive is to keep going, keep pushing, never stop. And maybe it’s because the things that hurt us never ended whether they are systems of oppression, poverty, family dynamics, environmental toxins and stress, or other forms of chronic stress and pain.

Every time these unfinished places, this held trauma, is poked at or feels visible, we experience a “trigger.” Triggers are like signposts that say, something isn’t finished here. Through the body’s design, triggers are a daily form of time travel. When a trigger happens, the body believes that we are literally living in the time of the original hurt. It doesn’t matter if we are now adults or if what is happening is only slightly similar to the original hurt. When we are triggered, our body goes into alarm, pulling up its defense system so that it can keep us safe. While it is doing this, we are not living in present time. This

means we do not have access to the full potential of our liberation in this present moment. Instead, we are living with and acting from our past. This is true for us individually and sometimes, it is true in what we hold collectively.

The hard thing in our communities is that the trauma we have experienced also makes us turn on our own. We have to deal with intense competition and lateral violence. This is real. It is happening. Let’s start in our work by naming this. By not letting it take us over but instead, getting in front of it. It is going to impact our healing together. Let’s not pretend it isn’t. —Lenny Hayes

Many people get involved in change work because this is how they begin to heal. They see their work as shifting the systems and patterns that cause harm to themselves and their people. And this kind of work is deeply important. But it isn’t always healing.

What does healing look like when we are often living in the belly of the beast even as we try and change it?

Healers practice within a larger community ecosystem, not as isolated individuals. It allows us to address the sources of the harm and the deep roots of resilience, not just help people adjust to oppressive conditions. It’s multi-leveled. It’s like the difference between horticulture—which is about nurturing individual plants—and agriculture, where we take care of the soil so that plants can thrive. We are healing ourselves under toxic conditions, so the healing must also transform our environment, which, in turn, will create room for more empowerment (which is another term for healing). Trauma imposes isolation; healing requires re-connection. We need to support individuals, reconnect the social ecosystem in which they are nested and help people to name and address the sources of toxicity and oppression so that a new ecology—one that restores us instead of depleting us—can kick in. —Ricardo Levins Morales

First, we deal with what is in front of us. What is happening right this second. Always. The more we can change in real time, the less that accumulates for the future. This is also why self-care is so important. Self-care is the constant practice of not letting more pain accumulate. It is about continually remembering that our lives are of value. It is the active process of settling our nervous systems so that we have more access to the present moment.

And at the same time as doing these things, we ask ourselves: what is the original wound? What is the original wound within you and your life? What is the original wound for you and your people? And what is the original wound for this land that together we live upon? Healing isn't just about settling so that we can better live with the present moment. Healing is also about changing those histories which disconnect and oppress and which are then held in our bodies, our communities, our cultures and in the land and communities around us.

Here is what we learned from our conversations:

- Healing is a practice that is strongest if built into the everyday of where and how we work and live. There is no single way to do this or special workshop to buy. We start from where we are. We start from where our community is. And we remember that we were each hurt and have survived and that something different is possible.
- Healing isn't something you have to take a class in or pay lots of money for. Healing is about taking the time to notice what gets in the way of feeling connected to your life, your community and your sense of possibility. Healing, at its core, is about slowing down so that we can better listen, to ourselves and each other. There is nothing easy about slowing down. Sometimes slowing down means feeling something we were trying to avoid. There is a lot that is going to show up to say we shouldn't slow down, that we have to fight and work harder, faster, better or else we will not make it. This is not always true. Slowing down doesn't mean giving up. It means taking a breath. It means stopping and having a conversation that isn't according to an agenda.

It means taking the time to enjoy and experience our cultural practices rather than just going through the motions. It means savoring the connections we feel with community, and the feelings and insight that make us powerful.

Everyone is a healer, everyone in the whole flipping world. If you have lived for a certain amount of time then shit has definitely gone down and you made your way through it somehow. Maybe you aren't a healer who is going to be drawn towards healing others but still, even if you have it rough and started to believe the lies about your power and your life, still, I tell my clients, my work is to help you be and feel in charge of your own life. I will say to them, listen, you have been in your body for how many years? I have only studied for fifteen years and you have been in your body for much longer than that. You are the expert on your own body. I am here to support you. Part of our disease is that we have been taught lies about ourselves and we have believed them. As a healer, the biggest thing I want people to understand is that they are loved and that they are healers. They can heal themselves. They have healed themselves, already. I say all of the time, listen, miracles happen, but you need to know that you are capable of making miracles in order for them to happen. —Joi Thomas

- Healing isn't fully healing if it doesn't in some way connect the individual to the community. We heal to reintegrate people into communities. We heal so that communities can take on healing as part of their everyday ways of being.
- Held trauma brings about a feeling of isolation, of separateness from the communities around us. Systems of dominance depend on this feeling of disconnection because disconnection gets in the way of us joining together to heal, to resist, and to make change. This is why colonization, for example, first goes after a people's language and culture, punishing those who still practice their traditional or cultural ways. Healing, even when it is in support of a single person, must work to

reconnect the individual to a wider community. This reconnection is about regrounding in culture, in the experience of being in conflict and staying together, of claiming our own ancestral lines and family ways. Together we are stronger. Healing is not just about stopping oppression or shifting power. It is definitely not about feeling better, although sometimes that happens. Healing is about doing the internal work—within our selves and within our communities—that prevents our ability to live joyfully—rather than just survive. And healing is also about changing power and shifting the systems that prevent our communities from thriving.

It helps to be in a community of people who practice. Just like if you go to Church every Sunday. You are in community with people who believe the way you do and then you do those practices where you are and wherever you go. You might not get down on your knees and pray all of the time but you might just be praying standing in line waiting for the bus or to buy your groceries. To make this not just what you do but who you are, you need that community of practice. I need every month to get back to the community I practice with so that I can continue to understand and deepen my awareness. Now, the minute I enter this community space, my body just starts letting go of the things I've been holding. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if I lived in this kind of a community all of the time. If everyone around me had somatic awareness and practiced all the time in their own way. I think this is what we mean when we say that the circle is broken—we are not living in our full capacity and awareness. This is why we have to have an intentional practice of coming back to ourselves and each other in life-giving ways.
—Marie Michael

- Healing is not just about what we experience in the present, it's also about how we understand the past, how we name our histories and frame the times in which we live. It's about naming systems as well as naming individual lives. Which

also means remembering that none of this is new. We come from people who knew how to do this everyday. We remember our ancestors and our elders when we do this work.

- Storytelling is a form of healing. Sharing the story of who we are, how we got here, what we struggle with and what we celebrate is about reminding ourselves of what we know in the face of much that wants to prevent our full humanities. This is about more than framing an issue or situation. This is about story as ritual. This is how we slow down before we jump immediately into action, slowing down to look at each other and to say, we know who we are, we know how we are powerful, we know how we have suffered or we know how we have been lost or we know how we are found, and what that means for our today is this. Historical revision and evasion are tools of supremacy. They are one of the ways that oppression gets inside of us. Telling our stories again and again, listening to our elders and respecting our elders as we build towards the future, as though our story is new each time we hear it, this is a form of resistance that says, we won't forget and our actions will come out of this memory.

Action: what do we need to do?

In order to bring healing into an organization, framing the work of healing and assessing readiness are very important. Being clear about what we want to do—and what we don't want to do—is part of readiness.

Readiness is about understanding why you are doing this work and telling that story again and again. It's about being willing to deal with whatever happens. It's about really being willing to change rather than just performing it. It's about taking seriously that healing is hard because it demands that we turn and face how we have been hurt or how we have hurt others.

The idea that healing could happen, in front of and with your coworkers, is really hard. People want to be vulnerable but they don't actually want to be vulnerable, both at the same time, and so then they get angry about having to be vulnerable. I am still struggling with this myself. How do I help people move into the direction that I think is necessary in this work even knowing that there might be resistance. How do I support people to truly be ready? Readiness has to be there—for yourself and your organization. Without readiness no amount of tools and practices are going to make any difference. As a facilitator, I have enough tools and practices. What is more important is presence even if I am not fully prepared for everything that might happen. It's not magic. I just have to trust that I know what to use when. This is a big deal for people of color. It makes it hard for us to trust our intuition when we KNOW what is happening but it keeps getting explained away as being anything BUT racism. Our intuition has to be centered in this moment and supported to grow and create. That's where healing comes from, this place of being in the present moment and trusting that you know what to do. That's a form of readiness.

—**Autumn Brown**

We don't just talk about this but we need to share concrete examples of how healing work can make a difference for organizations and communities. Healing is not a theory or an analysis, it's a practice.

Healing has to be accessible. Accessibility is about where the healing work happens, how much it costs or if it costs at all, the language and cultural practice of the work, what accommodations people might need so that they can physically, mentally and emotionally participate, having multiple access points so that people can truly show up from where they are, and having the work be understandable within the context that it is offered.

Healing work can be integrated in small and regular ways throughout the day. It doesn't have to be something big and dramatic that pulls people away from their regular lives or activities. Instead, it's woven into what you already do. Having everyone eat

together. Agreeing to take a midday walk if walking is accessible to everyone. Taking five minutes in the morning to breathe or laugh or move to loud music together. Starting every meeting with a practice that is culturally-relevant to you. Setting up open times for people just to listen to each other, and not only to listen about work but also about their lives, about what is most real for them today. And starting, always, with noticing, remembering yourself. Even if only for the space of three breaths. Noticing what is true inside. Noticing where you are. Noticing the present moment, as much as you can.

What I find amazing is just how easy it is when people actually try it. If people actually sit down and just do a session, they end up listening to the wisdom of their body. Just like that. Their body doesn't NOT say anything. It isn't about what I do for them. It's about letting that person figure out what they need and supporting them to articulate it for themselves. Doing this is just about creating the space to learn and practice it. You don't have to go to someone else. All of this is about aligning your actions with your values. Are you being congruent with your own values, about who you want to show up as in the world? That is what the practice of somatics does. This isn't about just healing yourself. This is about all of us. —Marie Michael

There are lots of ways to do this. Maybe some organizations have someone come in and provide healing or train staff to integrate healing practices into their everyday. Maybe staff are given a bonus at the end of the year that can be used for a range of different wellness practices or the organization agrees to pay half the cost of some kind of support. Or maybe we say that in order to advance in your career, we require professional development like conferences and trainings but we also support your own healing, the development and integration of your whole self. —Jessica Lopez Lyman

We have to support healers and other practitioners who have the skills and experience we need. They

can teach us and teach others. We also have to commit to increase of the number of healers of color and indigenous healers.

Healing work has to be valued and included in how we do our work. If we know that the impact of trauma is embedded in how we create our organizations and even in how some of our cultural practices have evolved, then it is important to bring healers to the table when we are talking about kind of large scale change or strategy. Without doing this, we run the very high risk of unintentionally repeating our survival patterns that come out of our trauma rather than our liberation. We also have to stop the cycle of undervaluing our own healing by undervaluing healers. Too often we are asking healers to show up for free, to share their breathing techniques or ritual practices or group facilitation skills without any kind of compensation other than our deep gratitude. We have to find ways to build interdependent sustainable communities which includes being mindful or how healers are supported in their work.

People need to ask healers to come and sit with them and help them think through their work. And they need to be paid. I keep seeing healers and people with these kinds of skills being asked to show up and hold space without any compensation. Because there is such a split, organizations often don't even realize when they have already people who have some of these skills. Instead, if they do anything at all, they bring in outsiders rather than lifting up those people already on site who might have a regular practice or a skillset that could facilitate healing in the workplace. —Bruce Thao

We have to support healing networks, mentorships and skills shares. This is the infrastructure that supports long term change.

This is not just about creating an infrastructure for now. This is about creating an infrastructure for future generations. This is about lifting up and supporting cultural healing traditions and making the space for the emergence of new traditions. It's about supporting the ongoing learning of skills, spaces for healers to learn from each other and to together

witness patterns of struggle or resilience in their communities, and to provide support for younger and new healers as they enter their practices.

As healers, we also need spaces to skill share. This is big. As practitioners we need to share skills together and to develop training and apprenticeship programs. The People's Movement Center and each of the practitioners individually are getting more and more phone calls from people wanting to apprentice or just ask questions and we need to have support and infrastructure in order to do that. —Ayo Clemons

There are so many things we need that would make our work stronger: economic support for elders/retired practitioners, social support for elders who are practitioners, mentoring relationships, marketing and communications to help create understanding of our work in the mainstream, a mid-west think tank, a provider's practitioner lab, a local journal or blog where we can discuss our work, economic support for research and development, fellowships and scholarships for emerging and mid-level practitioners, practitioner retreats and continuing education support, a database of providers, a wellness lending library, common supplies sharing of space and materials, and economic support for start up groups and midlevel practitioners.

And while this is happening, we still have to make sure that the healers themselves are getting the support they need to sustain themselves.

When the human heart receives oxygenated blood from the lungs, it takes that blood and moves it through arteries to feed every cell in the body. The first thing this feeding system does after leaving the heart is to send a small branch back so that, before feeding anything else, the heart feeds itself.

We know that secondary trauma is what happens when you support someone through trauma. It leaves a scar, leaves a mark. Here at the Table we have built infrastructure. Before we start talking to other people about what they should do, we try it out ourselves. For instance, we have three months of intensity at work and then we have a

day where we steam or soak or have massages together. We build that into our budget. We do this at least a few times a year. It's what helps us to serve. And as the boss, I have to take time out for myself. If I don't take time out for myself then I am signaling to staff that they can't take time out for themselves. We are often so busy serving people that we forget to put our own oxygen masks on. —**Marnita Schroedel**

As we do all of this, we still remember there are things to watch for.

We live under a system of capitalism in which there is pressure to turn everything into a commodity to buy or sell. As awareness of historical and generational trauma and the need for healing continues to grow, individuals and organizations will step in to compete for the money that might come available to support practices. It is our work to watch for and discern practices that are in service to community and healing as opposed to individual gain. It is also our work to remember that even among people of color and indigenous people, we can appropriate the traditions of communities we don't come from. There is no single path to healing. Healers themselves have to be deeply involved in their own healing in order to hold their integrity. And finally, we don't have to change our traditional or cultural ways in order to fit into a grant proposal. Our work is to demand that systems recognize healers within communities to do their work within communities and on their own terms.

Conclusion

Our work is to sit with one another in circles, speak from the heart and deeply listen. People say they don't want to waste time with ego-driven chatter that goes nowhere. I appreciate the desire to take action but taking action in an uninformed way creates more chaos. Listen to others. Open your hearts to where there is resonance, even if it surprises you, and let your identity emerge from there. Our work depends on each one of us stepping aside from our comfort

zones, our conditioning, our programming, and the parts of ourselves we are aware of. We need to be with others who can also see our blind spots and shine some light on them so that we can become more powerful and honest, awake and effective. Finding out what is true and alive is an awakening for all perspectives in a community.
—**Louis Alemayehu**

Every person interviewed said, at one point, that there is no single answer to the kind of infrastructure needed to support individuals and communities to heal from the histories and present time systems that get in the way of life. This work is about lifting up cultural practices that we already have, savoring those practices, and when we don't have them, finding new ones that feel right who we are as a community. This work is about transformational change, about claiming and reclaiming our bodies, our individual bodies, the bodies of our communities and the bodies of our cultures.

This is about not being afraid to learn new skills and practices that, because of oppressive social conditions, it has been hard to embody. This is about recognizing that the very ways we have fought to survive are sometimes also the things that get in the way of our thriving. Oppression forms survival habits that feel like the way we have always done things. Healing is about getting enough space to notice when those survival habits don't serve us any longer. Any of us working towards collective healing are working to change the social conditions that allowed oppression to exist in the first place. Any of us working towards systems change are working to free the space needed to allow collective healing. Each is part of the other.

And healing doesn't rest on the bodies of indigenous people or people of color alone. A number of people reflected on the truth that white people also have to change, that we are all connected to each other and that our full liberation also needs white people to deal with their own histories of trauma and pain and misuse of power.

Bring healing practitioners into your work in more places, to observe and offer reflections, to teach new practices, to be in the work with you. The

artificial gap between healing or healers and our everyday lives is itself an outcome of colonization and other forms of oppression. The ending is simple, we won't allow that separation any more.

We have been very good at supporting and helping people activate, get ramped up and energized, but not so good at helping people settle. There is an urgency to our change work but urgency can not be the only thing. That is what we do sometimes. As healers we know that yes, people are dying all of the time and still, while that is happening, there is peace. When a Black body or white body gets gunned down on the street by police, I want to be activated, I want people to be active. But when we walk away, I want us to settle and hold each other. The violence is urgent but we have to build flow into it, we have to build ways of saying, come on, come on, I've got this, put your back up against mine and let's just hum for a minute. Let's do this for a minute or two and then go back and be activists. As healers, we are the holders of the flow. It is our job to watch for the flow. We can find out what activists need in order to just take a minute, to not hold the full weight of this thing they are fighting and trying to change. —Resmaa Menakem

Reflection or how do I use this report?

Almost every person interviewed said a version of the same thing: healing is about creating the conditions that allow transformation to happen. Each practical suggestion and each larger reflection in some way focuses on the same things: slowing down, creating space for something to emerge, telling the truth about what is here, giving support to that space and the person or community, and then waiting or listening for what happens next. So what does that mean for you in the day to day of bringing this work into your organization? Here are a few things to do after reading these pages.

- First, before anything else, remember your purpose. Why are you here, doing this work? Not the organization's mission statement, but something deeper than that. Why are you on this planet to make change? What have your ancestors led you to? What is the world you wish to create for your descendants and what is your concrete part in making that happen? Why are you here? This is your ground to return to again and again. It is spiritual. It is political. It is about the way that your life connects into the past and the future, into all directions, and alongside all life.
- Then read the report again—alone or with others—and notice what stands out for you. Take notes. Circle things. Stop and think about what is coming up for you when you read it.. Notice where you get angry or hungry. Just notice your own relationship to the words. Notice ideas that start sparking. Notice who or what place or what kind of moment you are remembering or dreaming of. If you are with others in an organization, share what comes up with each other. What in this report touches on your purpose, on why you are here?
- Then ask yourself, what am I or is my organization already doing? What practices do we have, even if we only do them once in awhile? What is working and what isn't? Who is here who does these things for themselves already or who is here who just makes people feel better by how they interact? This is the assessment, the straight up questioning, celebrating or grieving what you are or aren't already doing. Do this alone or do this with others in your organization, kin network or community.
- Next ask yourself—how far do I/we really want to go with this? Is what we are doing already enough? This is important. Readiness for change is sometimes more important than the strategy for making the change happen. When real change happens, your current ways of doing things show up to fight back, even when

what you are already doing isn't good for you in the first place. At one point or at multiple points, you will think that nothing is happening, that whatever is happening is too hard. Your mind will create a hundred and one excuses for why you have to stop. This is where remembering your purpose matters. What is your purpose? What will get you closer to meeting it? Just like any relationship, our relationship to change asks for commitment and clarity from the beginning. Set a time span—we are going to do this for three months, six months, a year and at the end of that time period, we will look at what has happened and decide if we will continue for another span of time. Just like taking care of a toddler, it's good to plan for bite-sized chunks.

- Bite-sized chunks in this work mean asking—what is the next most elegant step we can take to get closer to bringing healing into our work?*
- You have read the report. You have talked. You have looked at what you are already doing. You have noticed what you want to continue doing and maybe lift up so that everyone is doing it. You have noticed practices from your own culture, something written in this report has grabbed you, something you heard about five years ago is coming up and you want to try it. You are looking for that funny sticky click feeling we get when we know the right thing to say or do next. Or maybe you sit here and still draw a blank when you think about what might come next. Then you notice who drew your attention in this report and you reach out to them and ask them to come sit with you for a few hours and help you think (pay them!). You are just looking for the next most elegant step, something completely concrete that you can set into place and do right now and for awhile.

**with gratitude to Adrienne Maree Brown for the concept of “the next most elegant step.” She talks about this in her new book, Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. (AK Press).*

- After you have taken this step and done it for a month, two months, then you get together again and you ask: what happened as a result of this? What didn't happen? Are we doing what we said we would do? Why or why not? What is getting in the way? Can it be changed? Cultures of dominance and the tools they created, including nonprofit culture, demand that you create the strategy and outcomes before you even do the work. That's how work is funded. Leadership is understood to be the discipline you have to keep your team on the task that you defined before you even started doing the work. And for now, that is still what we often need to do when taking into consideration how we can pay our people to do the work that keeps people alive, changes policies, or fights back against those systems and people who would disappear us. But that front-planned tight strategy isn't how we create something different from what we can imagine today. It isn't how transformation happens. That isn't how life happens. That is definitely not how healing happens.
- And so, within the truth of deadlines and strategies and all of the things that we have planned for and all of the voices demanding attention, as you practice your next most elegant step, sometimes you are going to be with your team or by yourself and you are going to notice it, one of those moments where what is happening feels good and important and real but it is not on the agenda. As often as you can, put the agenda to the side and just let life surprise you. And after that, ask again, what is the next most elegant step.
- Along the way, your people will get lost, they will hurt, they will have very real intense things that get in the way of even believing that transformation is possible. We must take care of each other. For all of the words and ideas in this report, the practices here are specific and concrete. Who have you chosen? Who is your kin in this work? Who are you moving along with? What do they need? What do you need that will

help you get from this moment to the next? There are times when all of the possibility just stops in order to deal with what is loud and hard and right in front of you. This, too, is part of the work of transformation.

Conflict and struggle will happen. The minute a body that has been under attack begins to rest, all of the pain it has been holding demands attention. That is true for individual bodies and it is true for communities. Conflict and struggle are part of the work. Name this as true from the beginning. Conflict and struggle are the sign that something needs to shift for the new to emerge. What do we need to do in this moment to stay grounded to our greater purpose, our sense of what is possible? What in this moment is taking us closer and what is moving us farther away? One of you might need to step aside and get extra support. The history that is coming up might be more than what the present time can hold.

This is real. This is real. This is real. And it is happening now. Know what you can hold. And know what you can't hold. If you can't hold it, help find help so that this person can shift how their own histories are showing up in their present time. Right now. If you are right in the middle of the conflict and struggle, assume that you can't see what needs to happen clearly. Ask for help.

Finally, don't rush through this. Commit to a year of practice and learning where a core group of people will track what your organization is doing, reminding everyone to practice, taking on the task of listening to what is happening while you do this work. Let that be enough. Let the practice teach you rather than the strategies you plan ahead of time. Remember, the change we are moving towards is the work of generations rather than the lifetime of a single organization.

Biographies of interviewees

Alejandra C. (Tobar Alatriz) is a queer, Chilena-Mexi-mix immigrant artist and healing justice practitioner from Santiago, Chile. She grew up in the theater during the aftershock of a dictatorship that was overthrown by an arts-infused, nonviolent revolution. She has been a community organizer for the last 20 years around the issues of human rights, sexual assault and domestic violence, immigration, environmental justice, and now in community development and creative place-making. Alejandra, alongside her partner Saby Labor, founded the People's Movement Center in 2014 where she is a healing justice practitioner and Global Somatics Process bodyworker, teacher and popular education facilitator. Alejandra's practice is grounded in the Global Somatics Process (GSP), focusing on liberation through embodiment of the Natural Body—the interplay of the energetic and physical body. She is thrilled to be leading Pangea World Theater's work in community as Arts Orga-

nizing and Community Engagement Director, and to be a member of Pangea's Performance Ensemble.

Amoke Kubat is a retired special education teacher, mother, grandmother, spiritual elder, and community activist. Mindful, not forever young she remains forever and curious about self, (as an older African American woman), the natural world, and the Sacred. Self taught, Amoke uses writing, thus far, centered around healing – personal, historical and intergenerational trauma, to continue to define herself and hold a position of wellness in an America sick with inequalities and inequities. Amoke is a student at United Theological Seminary. She is getting a Masters of Religious Leadership. She is interested in bringing her knowledge base and work as a Yoruba priestess (Indigenous West African Spirituality) to Inter-faith conversations. Amoke does art making in a variety of ways; prose, creative non-fiction, public performance and com-

munity events, and YO MAMA: The Art of Mothering Workshops and Arts Residencies. Amoke recently added playwright to her resume. She wrote, produced and acted in 2 sold out performances of “Angry Black Woman and Well Intentioned White Girl” in 2016 at Intermedia Arts.

Autumn Brown is a mother, organizer, science fiction author, singer, and facilitator who grounds her work in healing from the trauma of oppression. Autumn formerly served as the Interim Executive Director of RECLAIM!, and the Executive Director of the Central Minnesota Sustainability Project. She is now a worker-owner of the Anti-Oppression Resource & Training Alliance (AORTA).

Ayan Hassan is a Family Nurse Practitioner and Wellness Coach with the Gargar Clinic, Minneapolis. She is also a volunteer with the World Health Organization and Doctors without Borders in Somalia. She also teaches yoga and enjoys spending time with her family.

Ayo Clemons holds space for individual and community healing in her birthplace of Minneapolis, MN. She’s member of the Healing Justice Collective and the People’s Movement Center, whose focus is supporting Healing Justice for the black, brown, Indigenous, queer, trans and gender nonconforming communities in Mpls.

Bruce Thao wears many hats. One of them is as a healer, leadership & wellness coach, and consultant through his company LIT Consulting—Lead. Inspire. Transform. Bruce grounds his practice through the integration of mindfulness, meditation, holistic health and wellness, and the ancient wisdom and resilience of our ancestors.

Jessica Lopez Lyman, Ph.D. is an interdisciplinary performance artist and scholar interested in how People of Color create alternative spaces to heal and imagine new worlds. She received her Ph.D. in Chicana and Chicano Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Jessica is a member of Electric Machete Studios, a Chicana/Latina/

Indigenous art collective on St. Paul’s West Side. She teaches at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Chicano and Latino Studies.

Joi Thomas received her B.A. in psychology from Georgetown University and her Masters of Science from the American Academy of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine in Roseville, Minnesota. She is a licensed Acupuncturist with additional certification in Chinese herbal healing.

She is passionate about translating the ancient healing properties of Traditional Chinese Medicine into knowledge that her patients can use to maintain their physical, emotional and spiritual health everyday. Joi is an avid gardener, reader, and cook, who loves singing in her choir and spending time with her family.

Joo Hee Pomplun has over a 20 year history as a community organizer in the Twin Cities, advocating for social justice and addressing systemic factors that perpetuate inequities in health and wealth among communities of color, American Indian, and LGBTQ communities. During a trying time of spiritual depletion, she discovered she had a talent for massage and decided to pursue a career in massage therapy. This grew within her a clearer understanding the impact touch and massage has in shifting the energy of an individual and community. She talks about this palpable energy as “spiritual health”, and within the healing justice movement she promotes bodywork as a means of spiritual healing.

Lenny Hayes, MA, is an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton-Oyate of the northeast corner of South Dakota. Lenny is also owner and operator of Tate Topa Consulting, LLC. He has extensive training in mental health issues that impact the Two-Spirit/LGBTQ community. Lenny has always worked within the Native American community which includes the American Indian Family Center, St. Paul, MN, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. His lived experience and training have made him a sought

after workshop presenter on Native American Historical and Intergenerational Trauma and how it impacts the Native American community. Lenny travels locally and nationally presenting on issues that impacts the Two-Spirit/Native LGBTQ community as well as the Native American community. Lenny is currently in private practice with an emphasis in working with individuals who identify as Two-Spirit/Native LGBTQ as well as the general population.

Louis Alemayehu is a writer, educator, activist, poet, father, grandfather of African and Native American heritage. He facilitates workshops on racism, culture, environmental justice and community building. Louis is a cofounder of the Native Arts Circle, the oldest Native American artists organization in the Upper Midwest. Alemayehu was a founding member of the poetry/jazz ensemble, Ancestor Energy. Louis works deeply across multiple cultural communities with the North American Water Office, whose mission is to phase in modern renewable energy and energy efficient systems and technologies, and phase out abusive energy practices; with Ce Tempoxcalli for Chicano cultural arts and environmental justice; with AfroEco for food security and reclamation of African/African American environmental wisdom and connection to the land; with Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota for urban agriculture, youth development, green economics and health disparities; with Multicultural Indigenous Academy for intercultural education; with the Women's Environmental Institute on health disparities and food justice.

Malia Araki Burkhart is an artist, educator, and healer in the Twin Cities area. She coordinates community arts projects, and teaches arts residencies grades K-12 in schools across the metro area and beyond. Malia has a Somatic Massage Practice and teaches Eternal Spring Chi Kung weekly at the People's Movement Center in South Minneapolis.

Marie Michael is PK-12 Chair of Equity & Instruction at the Blake School where she provides visioning, strategic planning, and action steps to

support the school in living its mission of equity and inclusion. She leads professional development, coaches faculty and administrators, develops and revises curriculum, and directs PK-12 Cornerstone: An Alliance for Students and Families of Color. She is also a member of Hackman Consulting Group (HCG) where she trains and coaches educators, leaders, community activists, and others committed to embodying racial equity and social justice in their lives and work. In all she does, Marie shares strategies to counteract the physiological effects of bias and oppression, so we can creatively embody the liberatory actions we need to individually and collectively transform ourselves, our systems and our communities.

Marnita Schroedl is the founder of Marnita's Table and the inventor of the successful experience engineering model called "Intentional Social Interaction" or fondly called "IZI" for short. Marnita is a Social Capitalist and social entrepreneur who has invented a replicable way to catalyze strong relationships between disparate organizations and individuals in order to deliver stronger, more engaged communities for the benefit of all. It is her personal mission to decrease disparities and increase equality so that marginalized communities and individuals are afforded their rightful seats at the resource sharing and policy making table.

Resmaa Menakem is a licensed social worker specializing in trauma, high conflict couples therapy and domestic violence prevention. Resmaa is also the author of two books: *Rock the Boat: Using conflict to heal and deepen relationships*; and his latest, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. His website is: resmaa.com.

Ricardo Levins Morales is an artist and activists who uses art as a medicinal practice to awaken and sustain people's inherent power and an instrument to help dismantle and heal from oppression.

Sharon Day, Ojibwe, is executive director of the Indigenous People's Task Force. Sharon is 2nd de-

gree Midewin and follows the spiritual path of the Anishinaabe people; part of her spiritual practice is to care for water. In 2003, Josephine Madamin and other Anishinaabe women began Mother Earth Water Walks to bring awareness about water issues. By walking long distances with water and praying for it with each step, the women raise awareness about how water is connected to our lives. In spring Sharon Day began the Nibi Walks to walk the rivers. In 2013 she led a group of Ojibwe women on a two-month walk from the headwaters to the mouth of the Mississippi River to raise awareness about the water's diminishing quality. She is an editor of the anthology *Sing! Whisper! Shout! Pray! Feminist Visions for a Just World* (Edgework Books, 2000).

Susan Raffo, of Italian, German, French and Anishinabeg descent, had been studying bodywork for two years when, in 2007, she walked into the Healing Justice tent at the US Social Forum in Atlanta and everything changed. Since then she has been looking for ways to weave together healing and justice work that lifts up culture and tradition at its center. Currently a member of the People's Movement Center, Susan does work with individual and collective bodies, looking for opportunities to support nothing less than liberation.

Suzanne Koeplinger is the director of the Catalyst Initiative at the George Family Foundation in Minneapolis. Catalyst is designed to build integrative health and healing for enhanced wellbeing for all Minnesotans. Previously she served for ten years as the executive director of the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, where she led the first research, community response, and program implementation in the country to address sex trafficking of American Indian women and girls.

T. Zea Leguizamon is a co-convenor of a national somatic research and practice circle. She has spoken on Somatics and Social Change, & on Embodied Liberation since 2003. Zea's works have been published and referenced in *The Phoenix Spirit*, on SPNN, and *The US Social Forum* book (2010). Her

work "Key Principles on Social Somatics" is nationally recognized as the framework for social applications of somatic science, and is commonly used by leading practitioners on both the East and West coasts. On August 23, 2017, Zea, in cooperation with the California Institute of Integral Studies Transformative Inquiry Department, will host the first conference on Social Somatics. It will be in honor of socio-somatics movement innovator, Dr. Ian Grand. More locally, Zea applies process-oriented psychology and social somatics towards improved intercultural relations at Embody Deep Democracy; through leadership development, and facilitation/mediation. EDD primarily consults with nonprofits, the state/county, and the foundation community. However in specific cases, EDD does do individual consulting and coaching.

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A longer version of this report is available at <http://nexuscp.org/story/locc-healing-report/>

