

***HEALING JUSTICE:  
A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING  
AND COLLECTIVE STRATEGIZING FOR  
SAFER AND PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES***

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*We are ready for change*

*Let us link hands and hearts*

*Together find a path in the dark woods*

*step through the doorways between worlds*

*leaving huellas for others to follow*

*build bridges, cross them with grace, claim these puentes our  
'home'*

*Si sé puede, que así sea, so be it, estamos listas, vámanos.*

*Now let us shift.*

*-Gloria Anzaldúa*

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This guide is also dedicated to my dear friend, Vanessa Solis, who lost her partner in a violent attack on May 15, 2011. Vanessa, you inspire me in more ways than you know. Vince's memory will live on through your love for friends, family and community and your fierce dedication to making this world a just place for us all. I love you, girl.

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## **INTRODUCTION: MY JOURNEY THROUGH COLLECTIVE HEALING AND ACTION**

The first time I was introduced to Females United for Action, or FUFA, was through a YouTube video that featured their organizing efforts and specifically the work of Yuneun Rodriguez, a former FUFA member. I remember sitting at my computer at my office job at UC Santa Barbara two years ago, watching this video and learning about the media justice organizing FUFA was doing in Chicago. “Wow,” I thought to myself, “what a fierce and amazing women of color-led group!” I was inspired by the work FUFA was doing and found myself immediately invested in the way this group approached their organizing and their relationships to each other.

During this time, I had lived in Santa Barbara for almost three years and was engaged in anti-violence and youth organizing. I measured the success of my organizing and movement work by how busy my schedule was, how many emails I responded to, how many meetings I attended and how tired I was at the end of the day. Balancing crisis hotline calls at the local rape crisis center to leading 40-hour staff trainings through a youth social justice and leadership program along with my full-time job was overwhelming. But I believed that my exhaustion and busyness demonstrated my commitment to “the work.” Luckily, I had cultivated an amazing and supportive community in Santa Barbara that sustained me during this time – a community that I’m incredibly close to still. So as I was applying for graduate programs in Women’s and Gender Studies across the country, I was reluctant in moving away and leaving my community. Wherever I decided to go to school, it had better be worth it!

As I watched the YouTube video with FUFA, however, I realized that there was something about this group that was worth moving and being a part of. The voices and faces depicted in that video inspired me. And it made me want to be part of this group, to be part of their community too. I can firmly say that a huge part in my decision making for grad school, and choosing DePaul University specifically, was the opportunity to work and grow with FUFA.

Interestingly, as I made the decision to attend DePaul and move to Chicago, I had experienced several transitions that left me feeling vulnerable, lost and depressed. I was no longer with my loving Santa Barbara community, still recovering from burnout and exhaustion from organizing, and was coping with the end of a six-year-long relationship. When I got to Chicago, I was not doing well, to say the least. At the same time, FUFA was also going through some transitions. With internal shifts and conflicts within the organization where FUFA was housed, the group was also experiencing some organizational changes that resulted in emotional turmoil and difficult transitions. Given the tenuous situation at FUFA, the group had shifted their work from media justice to the healing practices that they, and I, so desperately needed.

In the midst of this difficult time, FUFA had crafted space for group members to reflect, process, read poetry, make art, and simply hang out. FUFA members held each other during this difficult time and fully embraced me as a new member as well. We were all going through personal troubles but were able to collectively support one another through our weekly get-togethers. And it was through this support, I believe, that sustained the group to continue their organizing efforts and raise awareness around the need for healing and self care within our movements for social change.

The healing process I experienced through FUFA has deeply shaped my life and the kind of organizing I want continue to do. Thanks to FUFA, I recognize the interconnection between personal and social transformation and that the sustainability of social justice movements

depends on the inseparability of healing and community organizing. Thanks to FUFA, I realized my passion for collective healing and liberation. And it's thanks to FUFA, that this guide has been envisioned and finally realized.

## **BUILDING COMMUNITIES, ENDING VIOLENCE**

The desire to create more spaces that honored healing within organizing and movement work was a vision I shared with Ann Russo. Ann is an Associate Professor at DePaul University and long time community organizer who has been involved in anti-violence movements for over 25 years. Our first conversations began on a road trip to Detroit for the US Social Forum in the summer of 2010. We were inspired by the Forum's thoughtful planning around healing spaces – and we were particularly moved by a small gathering hosted by the Seasons Fund where members from the Center for Transformative Change and other organizations spoke about implementing self care and healing practices in their workplaces, meetings and everyday interactions with people. From these experiences, Ann and I started to think more seriously about how we could incorporate this kind of healing work in the organizing we were doing in Chicago. These initial conversations and experiences served as the basis for our collaborative project - Building Communities, Ending Violence.

Building Communities, Ending Violence (BCEV) is a group of DePaul University students, staff, faculty, and community activists who are interested in everyday, community-based methods for ending oppression and violence in our communities. Through deep reflection, dialogue and storytelling, we create a foundation for relationship-building, mutual understanding and a collective commitment to social change and transformation. We use peacemaking circle and strategy sessions (which will be described later in the guide) as methods for collective healing, support, accountability, intervention, prevention and social transformation.

As we developed this project, Ann and I talked about the need to engage in this work differently – an approach that was driven by community, prioritized healing for ourselves and others and was geared towards the transformation of systems and institutions that perpetuate oppression and violence in our communities. Based on these conversations and our shared vision for community building and organizing, I'm writing this guide as a fundamental resource for BCEV and as a way of documenting our collaborative work over the past year. Therefore, when I reference “we” in this guide, I'm specifically referring to a number of conversations, planning meetings and strategy sessions with Ann Russo – my mentor, co-organizer and dear friend.

Together, Ann and I co-developed several of the exercises that are available in this guide. The actual exercises along with our reflections about the implementation of these activities at DePaul and throughout different parts of Chicago are included as well. Additionally, this guide is also grounded in my personal experience as a graduate student who has had the privilege of engaging in this work and being transformed by it. I can attribute my growing, intentional and loving communities through the work I have shared with Ann and others in BCEV. And for that I offer this guide along with my deepest gratitude and appreciation.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE**

The purpose of this guide is to offer possibilities for incorporating healing practices in the organizing and movement work we do; while simultaneously figuring out ways to transform our organizing and movement work into vehicles for collective healing. In other words, our work explores the connection between collective healing, community building and organizing. This guide will address the following questions:

- How can we incorporate collective healing practices in our organizing and movement work?
- How can our organizing and movement work be vehicles for collective healing?
- How can we make self care, healing and daily practice a priority in our everyday interactions, interpersonal relationships, organizations, workplaces, schools, and other institutions?
- How can we facilitate collective healing through our community organizing and collective strategizing for social transformation and liberation?

We offer this guide as a resource that highlights the interconnection between collective healing, social justice, organizing and community building. The exercises included promote deep listening, reflection, dialogue, storytelling, collective action and strategizing, and other interactive methods for building communities and ending violence and oppression. This work requires us to use our hearts, minds and actions to cultivate the change we wish to see in the world. In which case, these exercises give us the chance to bring our full selves to this work.

## **WHO IS THIS GUIDE GEARED TOWARDS? WHO SHOULD USE IT?**

This guide is a resource for anyone to use. We wanted to create a guide that is geared towards individuals, groups and communities who are interested in building intentional spaces for reflection, storytelling, community & alliance building and collective strategizing. Those who use this guide would also be interested in challenging relations of power, privilege and oppression and work towards building a deeper understanding about the impacts that these systems have on us personally and collectively.

The exercises included here are meant to provide examples of community building and collective strategizing but they are not strict blueprints or guidelines for community-based work or organizing. With that said, these exercises are not perfect and may not apply to every situation, community or context. We encourage people to take this guide as a flexible tool to either create their own exercises or implement them in ways that they seek fit.

## **HOW AND WHERE SHOULD THIS GUIDE BE USED?**

There are multiple ways this guide can be used. This project developed organically through various collaborative opportunities with classmates, friends and colleagues. The exercises were created outside of classroom settings and were developed in informal spaces and processes. For instance, some of the peace circles included in this guide were created through a Women's Group that I co-created with a dear friend, Jessica Havens. After a couple of hours of prep, silly discussion, cooking and hanging out, Jessica and I came up with several peace circles that we then kept with some of our closest friends. Since we were both interested in developing deep and intentional relationships with other women, creating these exercises became a labor of love. It took time and energy to create these exercises and shape the space we wanted to create – but it

was fun, collaborative and completely organic. This guide can provide a “starter” for any particular group or program that someone would like to start – and hopefully new and different exercises and activities will grow from there.

More concretely, this guide can be a resource for educators in high school and college settings. The peace circles and community-building exercises can be used as a vehicle for class discussion and strengthen relationships among students. School administrators can facilitate a Safety Lab among educators, staff and adult allies to develop collective responses to school fights, bullying, etc. Although we see this as a great resource for adults and youth workers, we also strongly recommend youth-led facilitation. We support the creativity, leadership and integrity of youth who have been engaged in building community, challenging systems of oppression and privilege (particularly adultism and other forms of oppression that specifically target youth) and other forms of community organizing. Therefore, we hope youth will use this guide in ways that speak to their experiences and weave their own thoughts, strategies, and activities with this work.

Whether it's a high school and/or college classroom, community center, church or someone's house, this guide is meant to be used in multiple spaces in order to cultivate healthy, sustainable and fulfilling relationships. Most importantly, we hope this guide will spark the imaginations of readers to create more possibilities for building community and creating social change.

## NAVIGATING THROUGH HEALING JUSTICE

Our approach is grounded in the assumption that community building, organizing and healing can be intertwined and overlapping practices – **an approach we call Healing Justice**. We define Healing Justice as the need for a cultural shift in the following areas:

- the way we engage with loved ones, neighbors, authorities, and bystanders.
- the way we organize and do movement work.
- the societal standards for delivering “justice”.

We will explore these areas in greater depth in Chapter 1 and explain the main Core Principles of Healing Justice in Chapter 2. This section helps us work through the theoretical foundations of Healing Justice and give voice to other perspectives such as Community Accountability, Restorative and Transformative Justice and Spiritual Activism. An overview of these theories make up **PART 1: Laying the Foundation**.

Since we believe that community building is based on intentional and critically conscious efforts for social change – we use the tools cultivated in the previous section to speak deeply about the beauty and possibility of building communities through peacemaking circles and creative expression. **PART 2: Community Building and Creative Expression**, which describes the peace circle process; peace circle keeper role; includes tips and check lists for peace circle keepers; and other community building exercises based on creative expression.

**PART 3: Collective Strategizing and Organizing** emphasizes the need for collective action. This section will explore the meaning and impacts of harm, conflict and violence and offer concrete exercises, called strategy sessions, to develop collective strategies for healing, support, accountability, intervention, prevention and social transformation. This section also includes tips and check lists for strategy session facilitators.

Finally, this guide would not be complete without an extensive conversation about the importance of collective self care and healing. **PART 4: Taking Care of Ourselves and Each Other** highlights practices that promote the wellness and healing for our personal wellness and collective liberation. A list of Chicago-based resources and national community organizations is also available for additional and continued support.

As you read through this guide, try to maintain an open heart to new ideas. More importantly, be gentle with yourself as you reflect on the meaning of these concepts and what they might look like in your own lived experiences. Our vision is centered on hope, healing, compassion, resilience and love which helps us counter the many challenging and difficult parts of living in this world. So we remind ourselves, and you as the reader, that we should engage in this work collectively and lovingly. Take what is offered here, along with your own wisdom and strength, to embark on this journey of Healing Justice from a place that is safe, loving and fulfilling.

## *PART 1: Laying the Foundation*

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### **CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING HEALING JUSTICE**

Before explaining the main tenets of what we call “Healing Justice,” we feel it’s important to share our standpoint on healing and justice. What does healing mean to us? What constitutes justice? After much reflection and several conversations with fellow community members, we’ve been able to explore the meaning of these two terms and what they represent in our work and in our own lives.

#### **What is Healing?**

Healing is an ongoing process that will vary from person to person, community to community. Healing means nurturing your higher self and prioritizing your emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellness. So what does healing look like? Healing can look like reaching out to a friend or loved one, eating food that comforts you, working out, laying in bed, engaging in spiritual practices, participating in a peace circle, organizing an event, being in nature, meditating, singing, storytelling, dancing and much more. Some people have intentional healing practices that they do on a daily basis. Other folks may have less formal practices that still bring them peace and healing. These practices can be done individually or with a group of friends, loved ones, co-workers, classmates, etc. Healing will look differently for everyone.

Additionally, healing is not only necessary in response to traumatic events or conditions but can be an ongoing and sustained process. We recognize that the pain we experience stems from generations of harm and trauma. Therefore, trauma can be connected to a single event as well as systemic and generational conditions of struggle and harm. Given our generations of trauma that are deeply ingrained in collective pain and struggle, we believe we need collective healing to respond to systematic and interpersonal harm.

For us, healing is connected to community. We believe that self-care and healing doesn’t have to be isolating or individualistic practices. By collectively healing, we feel connected with others and discover the interconnection of our joys, pains, accomplishments and fears. In community, we don’t have to carry the heavy and hard stuff by ourselves – we can support one another in difficult times and celebrate one another in joyous times. Furthermore, healing can be done in many spaces - in your classroom, staff meeting, trainings and orientations, daily commute, and more. The goal is to develop intentional practices that promote your overall wellness and awareness and stay invested in the process.

#### **What is Justice?**

For us, justice should be healing, transformative, anti-oppressive and ultimately makes each and every one of us feel safe and valued. We live in a society that values punishment and ‘eye-for-an-eye’ ideologies and practices. Rather than attending to the root causes and histories of pain, our judicial systems perpetuate the harm that has already been sustained over generations of time. Creating more harm through the prison industrial complex, policing and other punitive practices is not justice. We believe in a different way in bringing healing, transformation and justice to our communities. Justice holds individuals accountable for harmful behavior and relies our collective efforts as ordinary folks to support those who cause harm to transform their behavior. Furthermore, justice holds institutions accountable from perpetuating harm or violence through systematic oppression and power. We challenge the broader systems of oppression, power and privilege that support harmful behavior and reject the assumption that

individuals are inherently violent or harmful. We join movements that work towards dismantling racism, sexism, homophobia and heterosexism, ableism, classism, xenophobia, ageism and adultism, and other forms of oppression. Justice, then, means we can experience collective healing and liberation as our full selves,

### **What is Healing Justice?**

As previously mentioned, Healing Justice calls for a cultural shift in three main areas:

- the way we engage with loved ones, neighbors, authorities, and bystanders.
- the way we organize and do movement work.
- the societal standards for delivering “justice”.

By transforming these three areas, we can envision dramatic changes in our interpersonal relationships (e.g. family members, partners, classmates, bystanders, etc.); organizational dynamics (e.g. patterns in the workplace, non-profit industrial complex, church/places of faith, etc.); and institutional systems (criminal legal system, schools, media, etc).

### **Cultural Shift in Interpersonal Relationships**

Healing Justice is an approach that enables us to develop deep relationships with people in our communities in order to promote collective healing, support, and accountability. This means we talk to our neighbors, interact with people on the train or public transportation, turn to our loved ones and family for support rather than external authorities and engage bystanders in situations of conflict or harm. Living in an individualistic, Western society, we are discouraged from engaging with or relying on one another. A cultural shift in the way we engage people around us is necessary. This shift requires that Healing Justice promotes the self-determination of ordinary people to develop collective approaches to healing, support, intervention, accountability and transformation.

### **Cultural Shift in Organizational Dynamics**

Healing Justice also encourages more centered and mindful practices in our organizing and movement work. Rather than replicating the fast-paced and competitive nature of our capitalist, Western society into our social justice organizations and movements, a Healing Justice approach promotes creative and sustainable methods for social change. Taking breaks and vacations, eating well, incorporating art, creative expression and movement, creating spaces for reflection and storytelling, and more are all considered more sustainable practices that a Healing Justice perspective would support. To demonstrate this aspect of Healing Justice, we have cultivated a number of peace circle exercises in order to create more spaces for reflection, listening and growth. Most importantly, a Healing Justice approach encourages self care and healing practiced within a collective or group of people. The idea is that no one has to be alone while taking care of self and that healing and self care practices should be structurally implemented in our organizations, workplaces, schools and movements for social change.

### **Cultural Shift in Systemic Oppression and Institutions**

Finally, a Healing Justice perspective seeks to uproot the current criminal legal system and replace it with methods that facilitate collective healing, accountability, transparency and self-determination of communities. Practices that are punitive, alienating, inhumane or violent are not just responses to harm, conflict or violence in our communities. We do not believe that ‘an eye-for-an-eye’ is a transformative philosophy for real justice. We want to address the root causes of harm and violence and seek to transform the social conditions and institutions that

support and perpetuate violence in our communities. Using a Healing Justice approach, we seek to transform the current systems and institutions that have historically targeted and marginalized our communities – particularly poor, communities of color. Therefore, we believe that Healing Justice can provide an alternative lens that would allow us to re-imagine what real justice could look like and feel like.

### **A Key Play on Words**

Furthermore, we think of “Healing Justice” as a powerful and insightful play on words. We consider the possibilities of Healing as Justice and Justice as Healing. Specifically, we believe in the possibilities of achieving collective healing, equitable and accessible health care, and sustainable wellness for all communities – this is how we understand healing as justice. Given our current health care system in the United States, many communities - particularly disenfranchised, communities of color – have been denied access to affordable, culturally specific and anti-oppressive health care. The healing practices that many of our ancestors used over long periods of time are either minimized or prohibited from mainstream medical industries. For these reasons, a Healing Justice approach encourages the revival of these ancient healing practices such as acupuncture, massage, aromatherapy, herbal medicine, meditation, prayer, deep breathing, art-making and more. Using these “alternative” healing practices also heightens our emotional and spiritual understanding of ourselves and the world. Being in touch with our full range of emotions – happiness, joy, rage, fear, and more – we are more in tuned with our bodies and learn new ways to respond to conflict, celebrate victories and navigate the world. This holistic approach reveals a profound way of producing knowledge and our ability to privilege knowledge production that is not centered on Western medicine or science. Reviving these healing practices in affordable and accessible ways promotes a healing that is transformative and just.

Similarly, we also believe that our judicial and criminal legal systems can be sites for collective healing and social transformation for all – allowing us to conceptualize justice as healing. We firmly believe in holding people who cause harm accountable for their actions. We wish to work towards transforming harmful behavior and understanding the root causes of such behavior in order to restore safety and healing in our communities. In order to achieve this means we must transform the punitive practices currently employed by our criminal legal system. The prison industrial complex, police culture and other forms of repression and punishment are ineffective in protecting our communities and, in turn, perpetuate the violence and harm we experience. We need a new lens to understand and implement practices for “justice” – this requires that we transform harmful behavior versus demonizing and marginalizing individuals who cause harm; cultivate collective forms of support for those who are directly impacted by harm along with their loved ones and people they are close to; and work towards solutions that transform the oppressive conditions that sustain such violence and harm in the first place. Replacing punishment, repression and punitive practices with accountability, compassion, collective healing and support is the kind of justice we envision. This is how we understand the possibility of justice as a means for healing.

A cultural shift in the way we engage others, organize for social change and the transformation of our current legal systems is absolutely necessary in order to cultivate safer and more peaceful communities. The changes we wish to see require collective action and support from our loved ones, neighbors, co-workers, fellow classmates and other members of our communities. And we believe this change is possible through a Healing Justice approach.

## **CHAPTER 2: PRINCIPLES OF HEALING JUSTICE**

The underlying Core Principles of our approach to Healing Justice are as follows:

1. Collective Action, Strategizing and Healing
2. Process
3. Building Communities
4. Building Alliances and Coalitions
5. Self-Determination of Self and Communities
6. Holistic Approach – Awareness of the Interconnection of Body, Mind and Spirit Creative Expression and Storytelling as Libratory Practices for Social Change
7. Justice as Healing, Social Transformation as a Possibility

### **Collective Action, Strategizing and Healing**

The harm, pain and oppression that we experience on a daily basis has deep roots and historical legacies. In the United States, we have endured centuries of slavery, high rates of incarceration, violent immigration enforcement, and many other forms of structural violence. These social historical conditions have created layers of harm and struggle over the generations. The term “generational trauma” or “generational harm” signifies years of trauma and harm that have been collectively passed on and manifest in harmful ways today. Given the historical legacy of generational trauma in our country, we believe that we must work collectively to undo the systems of oppression that perpetuate violence in our communities. Also, we must work together to heal and transform ourselves. Rather than maintaining individualistic notions of self care, we are interested in creating opportunities for collective healing organizers, leaders, activists, students and everyday folks in our communities. We believe by integrating more collective healing practices in our work, we work towards building more holistic and sustainable organizations and movements for social change and transformation.

By transformation, we mean uprooting current systems of oppression, privilege and power and replacing those structures with mechanisms for healing, growth, and liberation. For us, it is not enough to simply restore or maintain systems that produce multiple forms of violence and harm in our communities. Nor is it possible for individuals to become transformed while still living in a world that upholds systematic oppression and unequal relations of power. In which case, we advocate for transformation that works at the personal and social level. Similar to \_\_\_\_\_, we understand personal and social transformation as deeply intertwined (Healing Justice Forum). We must work towards changing social conditions and transforming structures in order to generate new possibilities for our personal growth, liberation and peace.

### **Process**

We believe that in addition to including specific healing practices (e.g. journaling, deep breathing, acupuncture, art, movement, etc) in our organizing efforts, we must also engage in the work itself differently so that it can serve as a vehicle for healing. In other words, we are concerned with the process in which we create social change and want that process to feel liberating, sustainable and just. In order to ensure personal and social transformation, we should attend to our approaches and practices within movements for social change. In this way, the transformation of larger structures, institutions and communities is directly connected to the transformation of ourselves as leaders, activists, resisters, fighters, and lovers of liberation. We believe the process itself is what is healing. It's always important to have a vision or goal –

but if the process is not sustainable, healing or liberatory than our results will not meet the same ends

### **Building Communities**

We are invested in collective efforts for social change and transformation. Organizing and movement work can be challenging, difficult and triggering for many of us; therefore, we must rely on our communities for this collective work and support. We define community as a group of people who cultivate intentional relationships with others that share similar values, beliefs and interests. We believe it is possible for one person to belong to multiple communities at a time; whether that community is based on shared racial/ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and/or other social identifiers or categories or based on shared workplace, neighborhood, school, sports team, etc. Furthermore, it is our experience that communities are built over time and necessitate intentional effort in maintaining sustainable and healthy relationships among various people in a particular community or communities. Put simply, we do not romanticize the notion of community or render it as an assumed, preconceived or taken-for-granted entity. Being a part of community or communities can foster healing, supportive and beautiful experiences, but it requires efforts grounded in intentionality, process, compassion, respect and deep sense of belonging.

### **Coalitional Consciousness Building**

Along with forging relationships that are sustaining, supportive and healing, we are interested in building coalitions across lines of difference and relations of power. Systems of power such as race, gender, sexuality, immigration status, ability, age and more create hierarchies in our society that target and marginalize people based on these social identities. Because our differences are valued differently in society, we experience deep divides and barriers among and within various social groups and communities. For instance, because of the intersection of racism of classism, we've witnessed historical divisions within feminist movements in the United States. Women of color have fought to integrate anti-racist politics within feminist movements and have experienced resistance from those who wish to maintain white, middle class perspectives at the center. However, despite these different relations of power – where whiteness and middle class status is prioritized and the experiences of women of color are silenced or dismissed – we've also witnessed authentic alliances among women of color and white women who have collectively cultivated an anti-racist approach. Through storytelling, listening, sharing, critical analysis, and self-reflection, many alliances and coalitions among women of color and white women have been forged. These alliances highlight the opportunity to work across lines of difference and the ability to cultivate relationships that are grounded in support, accountability, allyship and transformation.

### **Self-Determination of Individuals and Communities**

It is our belief that ordinary people have their own best answers when it comes to resolving conflict and ending violence. Although we have been taught to rely on police, law enforcement or other external authorities, we believe that we can collectively create responses to harmful situations that generate collective healing, support, accountability, intervention and prevention. Reporting to the police is not effective, beneficial or healing for many communities; particularly communities that are socially and economically disenfranchised such as low-income communities of color. Therefore, we are committed to developing skills and strategies that enable community members to intervene in the face of conflict and violence. In situations where we find ourselves being a bystander to street harassment or being a supporter to a survivor of

violence, our goal is to cultivate collective approaches to respond to these situations and many more.

### **Holistic Approach – Awareness of the Interconnection of Body, Mind, and Spirit**

A deep sense of awareness of our emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellness is crucial in doing collective work for social change and liberation. We believe that developing a deep connection with our wide range of emotions helps us navigate the interconnection of healing and organizing. The more we're able to tap into our awareness and presence in any particular moment, the better we're able to navigate our next decisions and actions from a place of clarity and peace, rather than fear or anxiety. Furthermore, we honor a number of spiritual practices that helps us personally and collectively remain grounded in compassion, healing and love. Whether your spirituality is defined by denomination or open to your own personal interpretation, we believe that spirituality, and more specifically spiritual activism, can be a source for personal and social transformation. During difficult times, spiritual practices can help us see the bigger picture and understand how deeply connected we are with others and other elements of the planet.

### **Creative Expression and Storytelling as Libratory Practices for Social Change**

We believe that storytelling, art, performance and other forms of creative expression are powerful means for activism, community organizing and social transformation. Through creative expression and storytelling we are able to connect to a wide range of emotions and a deeper sense of knowing and understanding about ourselves, our communities and our visions for justice. We build knowledge through our unique expressions of self and community and challenge preconceived notions of what it means to be a woman, a person of color, queer, differently abled and more. Our songs, poems, artwork, and performances enable us to re-tell our stories in ways that reveal our truths, hopes, frustrations and dreams. In this way, we can think of creative expression and storytelling as a way of building knowledge. The ways we understand the world is radically different from our own points of view and our own methods of truth-seeking. We strongly encourage creative expression as a vehicle for knowledge production, community building, organizing, collective healing and celebration.

### **Justice as Healing, Social Transformation as a Possibility**

We believe in the possibility of re-imagining what justice can look and feel like in our communities. Through this work, we believe we are already imaging and creating new possibilities for justice. We join other movements for social change that are dedicated to creating the world in which we want to live. And we consider the skills and approaches in building community and collective strategizing as essential interventions to the status quo. Healing Justice is not a mainstream approach in cultivating healthy relationships or responding to violence, but we believe it's a much needed alternative to the current structures in place. With every peace circle and each strategy session, we believe we are initiating interpersonal opportunities for healing which will eventually manifest in the social and structural transformation of our social world. Healing Justice is contagious in the best way possible and we are inspired by the collective work that has generated a social movement based on possibilities and hope for a new world.

## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Healing Justice, as we've defined it, is a philosophy and practice that has been informed by several community organizations, activists, and scholars. Groups such as INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA), Community United Against Violence (CUAV), Generation 5, Community Justice for Youth Institute (CJYI), Project NIA, Gender JUST, among many, many others, have been instrumental in building community-based strategies that address violence in our communities. The strategies and analyses from these organizations have helped shape the work we do with Building Communities, Ending Violence – and for that, we are grateful and honored to stand in solidarity with these groups.

To offer a general overview of the people and organizations that inform our work at BCEV, we will explore four main theoretical perspectives and practices: Health and Healing Justice, Community Accountability, Restorative Justice and Transformative Justice.

### **Health and Healing Justice**

The first time I heard about the term “Healing Justice” was at the US Social Forum in Detroit in the summer of 2010. I was surprised to learn that several movements had been working for several years to achieve accessible and holistic practices in various communities across the country. I think the most surprising part about this organizing and movement work was the fact that I myself had not acknowledged the generational impact of burnout and trauma within our movements for social justice. But these healing justice organizers were making healing and self care a priority in the intentional spaces and conversations they generated at the Social Forum and in their communities. Organizations such as the Center for Transformative Change, Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective, Generation FIVE, and many others shared their strategies and dreams in building a healing justice movement.

From these conversations, we were able to learn more about health justice and healing justice and the distinctions and overlapping philosophies of these models. Health justice is an approach that challenges the privatization of health care and re-integrating holistic healing practices and ancient traditions in our communities. Whereas, Healing Justice is a perspective that addresses the ongoing and generational impacts of violence, trauma, and memory and highlights the interconnection between personal and social transformation.

Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective outlines five major needs for Healing Justice models. Those needs include:

1. Addressing the systematic burnout and illness among groups of activists, organizers, changemakers and leaders.
2. Challenging the privatization of health care and the emphasis on changing individuals behavior without attending to the social conditions that impact our health and wellbeing
3. Countering medical interventions that are not holistic and have historically marginalized women, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ communities, immigrants and refugees.
4. Transforming short-term crisis models into more sustainable practices that attend to the generational impacts of violence, trauma and harm.

Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective advocates for more intentional spaces that intentionally integrate healing and wellness practices inside and outside our political work. As stated on their website, Kindred contends: “We must hold spaces for healing, building accountable and authentic relationships, facing conflict and resolution, and transforming ways

we work together.” For more information about Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective, please visit their website at [www.kindredhealingjustice.org](http://www.kindredhealingjustice.org).

Given the urgent needs for transforming the ways we take care of ourselves and each other in our organizing and movement building work, Generative Somatics also calls upon a Healing Justice framework to address these collective needs. Specifically, they address the social conditions that create individual and collective suffering. From their website, Generative Somatics ([www.somaticsandtrauma.org](http://www.somaticsandtrauma.org)) defines the need for Healing Justice as the following:

Too often the work of personal transformation is held as distinct from social change and visa-versa. But, the experiences of very personal trauma, daily struggles, oppression and the state of our communities and world are not separate in our lives. When looking at positive or sustainable transformation various levels of change need to be considered—from the individual and intimate network to community standards, institutions and social norms. These levels are interdependent influencing our lives, possibilities, and futures daily.

The way Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective, Generative Somatics and many other organizations and groups have defined Healing Justice are frameworks that have informed our work through Building Communities, Ending Violence. We believe their attention to these issues of generational trauma, transformative and collective healing practices and the intersection of personal and social transformation are values that we promote through the exercises and conversations available in this guide.

### **Community Accountability**

We believe that collective responses to acts of violence, harm and conflict are powerful and transformative ways to promote community accountability and collective healing. We define community accountability as an approach that does not rely on police, prison system or external authorities to respond to situations of violence or harm. Community accountability emphasizes the collective efforts of ordinary people to hold themselves and others accountable for wrongdoing in order to develop collective methods for support, healing, intervention, prevention and transformation as a group or community. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, a national organization of radical feminists of color, define community accountability as:

a process in which a community – a group of friends, a family, a church, a workplace, an apartment complex, a neighborhood, etc – work together to develop sustainable strategies to address community members’ abusive behavior by creating a process for them to account for their actions and transform their behavior (INCITE!  
<http://www.incite-national.org/>)

INCITE! has developed a number of resources for community members to collectively address police brutality, domestic and sexual violence, alternative to non-profit systems and more (<http://www.incite-national.org>). All of these resources are grounded in the intention of holding communities accountable in order to transform abusive behavior while also “providing safety and support to community members who are violently targeted that respects their self-determination” (INCITE!).

In order to practice community accountability, organizations such as INCITE! and Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) have also acknowledged that no-one-size-fits-all model can apply to community-based strategies to violence. CARA states:

An accountability model must be creative and flexible enough to be a good fit for the uniqueness of each community's needs, while also being disciplined enough to incorporate some critical guidelines as the framework for its strategy (CARA 250).

The needs of every individual and community will vary and it's up to the communities themselves to decide what methods for support, healing and accountability would apply best. In which case, each community accountability model will look different but there are certain principles that can be shared across various communities in order to ensure thoughtful implementation and creative strategies. To see an extensive list of suggested principles and guidelines for community accountability, see the Resource Page for more information about INCITE! and CARA.

### **Restorative Justice**

Restorative Justice is a philosophy and practice that promotes the crucial shift from punitive practices to a needs-based and restorative approach. Restorative justice assesses what the needs of everyone who is involved in a situation of conflict. By shifting our definition of justice to notions of healing, compassion and accountability, restorative justice is concerned with three main questions:

- Who has been hurt?
- What are their needs?
- Who has the obligation to address the needs, to put right the harms, and re-store relationships?

Rather than assigning blame and punishment onto those who committed harm, a needs-based justice approach evaluates the needs of everyone involved in order to facilitate personal and collective healing. In this way, community members can recognize not only the expansive impacts of harm (or the ways in which people can be directly or indirectly impacted by harm) but also everyone's role in creating support and accountability of those who are directly involved. Therefore, this approach recognizes the needs of survivors to heal as well as the needs of aggressors to change their behavior and reduce recidivism.

When it comes to holding people accountable for abusive behavior, advocates for restorative justice acknowledge that this approach may be difficult, risky and even inappropriate for certain situations. Specifically, in cases where the person who has committed the harm is unwilling to acknowledge the impacts of their actions or does not express remorse, addressing their needs can feel emotionally challenging. In such cases, resolving to punitive measures can appear to be the best method in holding people accountable when they refuse to take responsibility for their actions or show genuine remorse for what they did. In a society where justice is often measured by vengeance and pursuing "an eye for an eye," punishment has become a normalized response for processing anger, pain and fear. In *Restorative Justice: Healing the Foundations of our Everyday Lives*, authors Sullivan and Tifft point out that punitive actions may help express these emotions but they will never repair or ameliorate the harm caused or facilitate actual healing. Rather, Sullivan and Tifft contend that punishment and blame "sedate our consciousness" (Sullivan and Tifft 9). More specifically, they assert that punitive actions:

...lock out any possibility of an alternative form of existence, one that takes into account the needs of others and which allow us to get out from beneath the weight of our burden. We imagine that we are

freeing ourselves, when in fact we are engaging in our own imprisonment and Tift 9)

(Sullivan

Furthermore, Sullivan and Tift are skeptical of police and the criminal legal system adopting restorative justice practices because “they promote themselves as healers when in fact they are ‘correctionalists’ whose focus, activities, and interests are undergirded by a philosophy of retribution and by an acceptance of our prevailing political economy and its existing arrangements” (Sullivan and Tift 33). In this way, Sullivan and Tift are helpful in explaining restorative justice not as a simple set of practices or tools that can be applied to any system or framework. Rather, restorative justice is a philosophy that intentionally focuses on the needs, resources and self-determination of communities.

Similarly, Andrea Smith shares concerns with restorative justice practices within the criminal legal system. As a major anti-violence, grassroots organizer, Andrea Smith advocates for community-based responses to interpersonal violence. Smith’s analysis of violence connects harm committed at the individual, interpersonal level to broader systems of oppression and state-sanctioned violence. Smith’s intersectional analysis of violence, and the oppressive mechanisms within the criminal justice system, frames her critique of restorative justice models; particularly those used within the criminal legal system. For any collective response to violence to be connected or tied to the state, is, for Smith, a dangerous and contradictory approach to ending violence. Specifically, the restorative justice models exercised within the legal system take away the autonomy of communities and minimize the self-determination of individuals and communities (160). Rather than engaging in collective, grassroots political organizing to create change, Smith asserts that the professionalization of restorative justice models have perpetuated harm.

In many ways, the aforementioned critiques of restorative justice are valid, thoughtful and crucial in building alternative justice models. Those that critique restorative justice do so from a deep commitment and strong intention of building peaceful communities, challenging punitive actions against those who cause harm and cultivating sustainable processes for personal and collective healing. Most importantly, many of these critics see both the risks and the possibilities that restorative justice offers to various communities. In this way, we see how restorative justice offers a useful starting point for other groups, organizers, and community members to develop principles, strategies and practices that uphold restorative justice philosophy while simultaneously addressing its shortcomings and oversights.

### **Transformative Justice**

At its core, transformative justice is concerned with transforming the relationships and conditions that sustain acts of violence, harm and conflict. Acknowledging that violence stems from hierarchical and unequal power relations within communities and other oppressive dynamics, transformative justice is critical of “restoring” relationships and communities to their original state. In other words, transformative justice advocates pose the question: What exactly are we restoring? How can we think of restoration of these power dynamics perpetuate, rather than end, violent situations and relationships? Generation FIVE contend:

...the emphasis on restoration assumes the conditions that existed prior to an individual incident of abuse are desirable and should be restored....As such, these models often focus on the restoration of the status quo and ignore the challenge of transforming the conditions of social, economic, and political injustice that are the context for, and cause of, violence (21).

Generation FIVE is an organization based in San Francisco, CA that uses a transformative justice framework in efforts to end child sexual abuse within five generations. To mend the intergenerational trauma of child sexual abuse, Generation FIVE assert that “meaningful community response is the key to effective prevention” (2). Based on their mission and transformative justice approach, Generation FIVE created a report, “Towards Transformative Justice,” which outlines the principles and offers thoughtful critiques of restorative justice as well. They state:

Our investigation began with a conversation about Restorative Justice because this was the framework with which we were most familiar. While this approach offered us a valuable starting point, we quickly rejected Restorative Justice models because of their co-optation by the State (4).

Rather writing a report that exclusively critiques restorative justice models, Generation FIVE has offered alternate principles that both complement and challenge restorative justice approaches.

Ruth Morris, another proponent of transformative justice states, “transformative justice sees crime as an opportunity to build a more caring, more inclusive, more just community. Safety doesn’t lie in bigger fences, harsher prisons, more police, or locking ourselves in till we ourselves are prisoners” (Morris 21). Morris helps us consider the power of community and our ability to feel safe is predicated on creating more caring and inclusive relationships. Furthermore, Morris re-frames traditional notions of “safety” and affirms that boundaries and barriers are false and ineffective attempts in creating peace and safety. In the face of a hostile or violent situation, transformative justice offers an opportunity for community members to turn to one another and practice community engagement based on care, compassion and intention to heal everyone impacted by the harm. Morris writes, “I saw the power of transformative justice in taking crime as an opportunity, as a symptom of deeper ills, and including all directly affected by the crime in building creative solutions. Transformative justice dealt with both distributive injustice and the injustice of being victimized by a crime” (Morris 19).

## ***PART 2: Creative Expression and Community Building***

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This section will explore various ways to build community and foster healthy relationships. As previously discussed, there are multiple ways to define communities and multiple communities that one person can belong to (i.e. school, social justice org/movement, neighborhood, sports team, musical group, etc). Therefore, these exercises will highlight the intentional efforts in forging deep and meaningful relationships with others. We can also think about community as a way to feel more connected to a group but also as a means of developing collective methods of prevention, support, intervention and accountability in situations of harm or conflict.

### **CHAPTER 4: BEAUTY IN BUILDING COMMUNITY: PEACEMAKING CIRCLES**

#### **Storytelling and Social Change: An Introduction to Peace Circles**

Peace circles originate from several indigenous practices from different parts of the world. From the Maori in Australia to First Nations people in North America, peacemaking circles are ancient, indigenous practices that were developed for relationship building, decision-making and conflict resolution. Kay Pranis, a national leader in restorative justice and peacemaking circle trainer, defines peacemaking circles as:

Peacemaking Circles bring together the ancient wisdom of community and contemporary value of respect for the individual in a process which honors the presence and dignity of every participant, values their contributions, emphasizes the connectedness of all things, supports emotional and spiritual expression, and gives equal voice to all (Pranis 20)

A peace circle is a process for people to get to know one another through storytelling and conversation. In a circle, we collectively create a space where everyone's voice can be heard and valued. Not only does each person get to speak but everyone is encouraged to actively listen to one another. In other words, we consider circles to be a unique opportunity for people to really hear each others' stories and learn from one another through the process. Our stories offer a unique and intimate view into one another's lives. Most importantly, our stories often challenge preconceived ideas that we may have about one another.

One way we are able to cultivate a safe and affirming space is by collectively developing a list of values and guidelines that the group can abide by. Rather than having the circle keeper or facilitator offer ground rules for communication, each person can contribute one or more values that they'd like to share with the space. Examples of values include respect, openness, compassion, listening, etc. Building a collective list of values and guidelines allows everyone to have ownership of the space and have their voices heard from the very beginning. Collective values and guidelines also sets the tone for the rest of the peace circle process - where each person can feel free to take part in the conversation in whatever way they feel comfortable.

Additionally, peace circles are great because we develop collective narratives based on our personal stories and experiences. We all have stories to tell – whether it's about our fears, hopes, disappointments or aspirations- our stories are reflections of our unique lived experiences. However, even with our unique stories, we often discover similarities and deep-rooted connections. For instance, in a peace circle about self care and healing, many participants

shared feelings around guilt when they try to take time for themselves. One person shared how she felt too self-indulgent and privileged when she takes a much needed break or says “no” to a friend who asks her for a favor. As this woman spoke, several people in the circle began to nod their heads in agreement and began sharing their own stories around guilt, shame and the connection to self care and healing. It became clear these personal narratives were deeply connected to one another. Afterwards, people left connected to one another knowing that they were not alone in feeling that way. Most importantly, participants encouraged one another to practice self care with less judgment or self criticism – and to even engage in healing activities together as a group! This particular group developed new relationships based on their shared stories and developed a connection that might not have been made had they not been part of the peace circle process.

### **What does a Peace Circle Look Like?**

The peace circle process ensures that everyone’s voice is heard and everyone has an opportunity to speak. In order to everyone to be emotionally present, it’s best if there is no furniture, objects or other obstructions in the middle of the circle. The circle formation allows for everyone’s body fully present which opens up the space and allows people to fully engage and be supported by the group.

The only thing that should stay in the center of the circle is the centerpiece and a number of talking pieces that belong to the circle keeper. The centerpiece is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

The talking piece is used to help guide conversation. When someone is holding the talking piece, they have the floor to speak and share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. They can do so knowing they will not be interrupted, because those who are not holding the talking piece can listen quietly and attentively. For those not holding the talking piece, think of this as a time to not be obligated to respond, offer advice or think of the next thing you want to say: simply listen and stay present with each story. People can choose to pass the talking piece if they don’t wish to share.

Passing a talking piece around the circle promotes active listening and discourages interruptions, cross-talk or side conversations. As people wait for the talking piece to make it around the circle, all members are encouraged to listen closely and then reflect on what other members have said. This method allows peoples’ full stories to be told, heard and hopefully understood by the entire group. Hucaluak writes, “By encouraging respectful listening, the circle process recognizes that everyone has something valuable to contribute. Everyone has an equal opportunity to speak, to be heard, and to have an influence in the decision” (Hucaluak 298).

### **What Does a Peace Circle Keeper Do?**

Rather than facilitate the conversation, a circle keeper takes the role of guiding the discussion along by asking specific questions to the group. The keeper helps maintain a safer space for people to share openly and honestly. Although the circle keeper is responsible for organizing the circle, preparing questions and activities and opening and closing the circle, the circle keeper is also a participant in the process. With every question that is posed to the group, the circle keeper also shares their stories and engages in the process like everyone else. The circle keeper’s full participation ensures that their role is not neutral or objective. We think of peace circles as

developing small communities through intentional storytelling – even with a group of people who might have met for the first time. A tip I got from Ora Schub, a peace circle trainer from Community Justice for Youth Institute (CJYI), is that the circle belongs to everyone. Everyone present essentially keeps and is responsible for the circle. In this way, we challenge hierarchy and power relations in the circle by recognizing that everyone has a part in taking care of the circle, not just the circle keeper.

## **CHAPTER 5: PEACE CIRCLE EXERCISES**

In this chapter, we offer a number of peace circles that we have kept at DePaul University and other locations in Chicago. Each circle template is complete with Openings, Closings and suggestions for circle keepers. Additionally, we have included our own post-circle reflections in order to offer a bigger picture about how these exercises actually went. Of course each circle will be experienced differently depending on the circle keeper, group, location and more, but you are welcome to take our experiences as more context and background on these exercises. We strongly suggest using these exercises in your communities or creating your very own! For more circle keeper tips and helpful check-lists, please refer to the Appendix for more info.

### **Peace Circle Templates**

**Take Back the Night – Speak Out  
-Support Circle-  
DePaul University  
facilitated on April 28, 2011**

As folks transition from the keynote speaker and film, initiate deep breathing exercise in order to get people centered before the peace circles begin. Remind folks that they can leave their eyes open if they wish and to just sit with their breath. Offer the instructions below to help with guided breathing.

#### **Meditation and Breathing Exercise:**

Sit comfortably and close your eyes if you wish. Imagine and feel that your body is a hollow tube and that as you inhale, the breath is drawn up through your feet and into your legs; up into your abdomen and stomach; up into your chest and back; and up in your shoulders, neck and head. Still inhaling, imagine and feel your breath wishing through the hollow tube of your body and carrying away any tension, stress, or uncomfortable feelings. When you get to the top of the inhalation, just relax and exhale normally. Let each exhalation be more relaxed than the one before.

#### **Welcome and Framing:**

Thank everyone for coming. Briefly explain that in years past, the Speak Out portion of Take Back the Night was in a very different format. Rather than asking individuals to come up in front to the room to tell their stories about abuse, we've collaborated with Feminist Front to incorporate peace circles as a method of storytelling and act of resilience and transformation. We wanted to centered the need for community, connection, healing, self & collective care, and support while sharing our stories and leaving this space a little more grounded. Briefly explain the peace circle process.

*--Additionally, remind folks that people are welcome to come in and out of the circles if they need a break or space to breath or reflect. No one needs to ask for permission to leave a circle – just quietly excuse yourself and return whenever it feels right.*

*--As circle keepers we are here to guide the conversation and also share our own stories. We are not counselors or therapists. If people need to process anything, we suggest going to a “safe person” or counselor who will sitting at the side of the room.*

### **Collective Values:**

In every peace circle, we cultivate a list of guided values for communication and mutual respect. Here are some values that we'd like the circles to go by and we'll give everyone a chance in their own circle to add to this list. The values we find important for tonight's Speak Out are:

- Compassion
- Listening
- Respect
- Confidentiality
- Speak from the heart
- Openness

--Break up into small groups of 12-15 people. Multiple and simultaneous circles begin at this time.

### **Opening:** Read a Poem

#### Turn to One Another

--Margaret Wheatley

There is no power greater than community  
Discovering what it cares about.  
Ask "What's Possible?" not "What's wrong?"  
Keep asking.  
Notice what you care about.  
Assume that many others share your dreams.  
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.  
Talk to people you know.  
Talk to people you don't know.  
Talk to people you never talk to.  
Be intrigued by the difference you hear.  
Expect to be surprised.  
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.  
Invite everybody who cares to work on what's possible.  
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.  
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.  
Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.  
Real listening always brings people closer together.  
Trust that meaningful conversation can change the work.  
Rely on human goodness.  
Stay together.

### **Explain Centerpiece and Talking Piece:**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

The **talking piece** is used to help guide conversation. When someone is holding the talking piece, they have the floor to speak and share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. They can do so knowing they will not be interrupted, because those who are not holding the talking piece

can listen quietly and attentively. For those not holding the talking piece, think of this as a time to not be obligated to respond, offer advice or think of the next thing you want to say: simply listen and stay present with each story. People can choose to pass the talking piece if they don't wish to share. We'll go in a clockwise rotation.

### **Why Are We Here?:**

Build strong relationships with one another as we share our stories about violence, trauma and harm. Through the circle process, we will practice listening to one another with compassion and respect and cultivate collective forms of support and healing. While we hear difficult stories about trauma, violence and abuse, we hope to walk away with a larger picture of who we are as survivors – stories that encapsulate our inspirations, hopes, and other beautiful moments.

### **Check In:**

Ask folks to share their name, a community they belong to, and how they're feeling. Keeper should go first to model. Then pass the talking piece clockwise.

### **Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- Who inspires you?
- Freewrite: Reflect on a time when you have experienced or witnessed sexual violence (or any form of violence or harm).
- Pass talking piece around and invite people to share what they wrote or whatever they want to talk about.
- How does it feel to share?
- What did you need at that time?
- What characteristics do you have best support you in your healing and resilience?

*--Ask people share stories about abuse or trauma, stay present with the process. After the first round, thank everyone for being brave in sharing their stories with the group. However, do not feel that you need to comment on each story or check in with people in the circle. You can do check-ins after the circle but emphasize that we're all sharing our stories as a moment of solidarity with one another.*

*--Depending on time, you may not have enough time to ask all of the above questions. Be mindful of time and feel free to make decisions in the moment. One suggestion is to definitely get to the last question – What characteristics do you have best support you in your healing and resilience? – in order to end a higher note.*

### **Check Out:**

Circles close and return to the larger group. As one large group, ask: What can we build from here? What are you going to do for self care when you get home?

**Closing:** Read a Poem

### **The World Has Changed**

--Alice Walker

The world has changed:  
Wake up & smell  
the possibility.  
The world

has changed:  
it did not  
change  
without  
your prayers  
without  
your faith  
without  
your determination  
to  
believe  
in liberation  
&  
Kindness;  
Without  
Your  
dancing  
through the years  
that had  
no  
beat.

The world has changed:  
It did not  
change  
without  
your  
numbers  
your  
fierce  
love  
of self  
&  
cosmos  
it did not  
change  
without

your  
strength.

The world has  
changed:  
Wake up!  
Give yourself  
the gift  
of a new  
day.

The world has changed:  
*This does not mean*

*you were never  
hurt.*

The world  
has changed;  
Rise!  
Yes  
&  
shine!  
Resist the siren  
call  
of  
disbelief.

The world has changed:  
Don't let  
yourself  
remain  
asleep  
to  
it.

--Thank everyone for coming and ask people to head to the Candlelight Vigil.

## **Reflection Circle for People of Color – Undoing Internalized Racism and Cultivating Spaces for Healing and Transformation**

**Welcome:** Take a sit, grab some food and we'll start shortly!

**Opening:** Play Song

Play "Mirror Dance" by Afeke Iku featuring Oveous Maximus.

### **Explain Centerpiece and Talking Piece:**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

The **talking piece** is used to help guide conversation. When someone is holding the talking piece, they have the floor to speak and share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. They can do so knowing they will not be interrupted, because those who are not holding the talking piece can listen quietly and attentively. For those not holding the talking piece, think of this as a time to not be obligated to respond, offer advice or think of the next thing you want to say: simply listen and stay present with each story. People can choose to pass the talking piece if they don't wish to share. We'll go in a clockwise rotation.

### **Why are We Here?:**

This circle generated after a conversation about race, racism and white supremacy at the peace circle keeper training at DePaul University. At that training, people of color and white folks grappled with issues of white privilege, race and class oppression and the historical and institutional racism that we all experience. From that experience, and feeling as if we needed a safe space to talk about the impacts of racism – specifically the ways in which we've internalized racism and white supremacy, we thought having another circle(s) around these issues would be helpful for our healing, growth and wellbeing. This circle is open to other people of color who did not participate in the training.

### **Storytelling:**

- What would be your dream getaway? It can be a vacation spot, a place where you to seek peace, or someplace imaginary and completely made up. Where would you go and why?
- Let's start off on a positive note! What gives you hope?
- What comes to mind when you hear 'internalized racism'? How has internalized racism played out in your life?
- What are the benefits of having people of color spaces? Especially when it comes to talking about internalized racism and white supremacy?
- What are the challenges of being in people of color spaces?
- How does it feel to talk about these issues with other people of color?

*--These are just suggested questions. You may not have time to ask them all but go with the group and see what folks want to explore. You can always schedule another circle if people would like to continue the conversation another time.*

### **Check out:**

How are you feeling? What are you taking away from this experience? What do you need as you leave this space?

**Closing:** Read introduction to Alice Walker's *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing*.

### **Learning to Dance**

"I am the youngest of eight siblings. Five of us have died. I share losses, health concerns, and other challenge common to the human condition, especially in the these times of war, poverty, environmental devastation, the greed that are quite beyond the most creative imagination. Sometimes it all feels a bit too much to bear. Once a person of periodic deep depressions, a sign of mental suffering in my family that affected each sibling differently, I have matured into someone I never dreamed I would become: an unbridled optimist who sees the glass as always full of something. It may be half full of water, precious in itself, but in the other half there's a rainbow that could exist only in the vacant space.

I have learned to dance.

It isn't that I didn't know how to dance before; everyone in my community know how to dance, even those with several left feet. I just didn't know how basic it is for maintaining balance. That Africans are always dancing (in their ceremonies and rituals) shows an awareness of this. It struck me one day, while dancing, that the marvelous moves African Americans are famous for on the dance floor came about because the dancers, especially in the old days, were contorting away various knots of stress. Some of the lower-back movements handed down to us that have seemed merely sensual were no doubt created after a day's work bending over a plow or hoe on a slave driver's plantation.

Wishing to honor the role of dance in the healing of families, communities, and nations, I hired a local hall and a local band and invited friends and family from near and far to come together, on Thanksgiving, to dance our sorrows away, or at least to integrate them more smoothly into our daily existence. The next generation of my family, mourning the recent death of a mother, my sister-in-law, created a spirited line dance that assured me that, though we have all encountered our share of grief and troubles, we can still hold the line of beauty, form, and beat – no small accomplishment in a world as challenging as this one.

Hard times require furious dancing. Each of us is the proof."

--Thank everyone for coming!

**Women's Reflection Circle**  
**What is Community?**  
**Created by Jess Havens and Michelle Emery**

**Welcome:** Greet people as they come in and encourage folks to get food as everyone settles down. We are here as an ongoing group of women who are interested in sharing intentional and sacred space together to talk about issues that are important to us. No one dictates the agenda. We as a group, as a collective, get to decide what we discuss. So welcome!

**Opening:** Read poem by Rumi

Dance, when you're broken open.  
Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.  
Dance in the middle of the fighting.  
Dance in your blood.  
Dance, when you're perfectly free.

**Explain the Centerpiece and Talking Piece:**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

The **talking piece** is used to help guide conversation. When someone is holding the talking piece, they have the floor to speak and share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. They can do so knowing they will not be interrupted, because those who are not holding the talking piece can listen quietly and attentively. For those not holding the talking piece, think of this as a time to not be obligated to respond, offer advice or think of the next thing you want to say: simply listen and stay present with each story. People can choose to pass the talking piece if they don't wish to share. We'll go in a clockwise rotation.

**Why are We Here?:**

We are interested in cultivating intentional community among women who share similar interests in building relationships of support, care, love and fun. Our first circle focused on our intentions for this year. We talked about our hopes, fears, anxieties, and dreams and supported one another in our various intentions and affirmations. We hope to continue the same momentum and energy from that circle for the circles to come. Additionally, we hope the same group of women will be interested in sharing space once a month so we can develop a deep sense of connection to one another over time.

**Check in:**

Ask people to say their name and how they're doing today. Keeper should go first to model.

**Values:**

- What values would enable you to participate in this space?
- Other people have questions?
- Confirmation

**Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- Take a second to reflect on a strength you have. It can be anything that you feel that you are good at – a skill, characteristic, personality trait, etc. We'll pass the talking piece around the circle to share.

*Set the talking piece down and introduce the free write exercise. Pass out pieces of paper, pens and questions to each person. Explain that we'll take 15-20 minutes to respond to the following questions:*

- What does community mean to you?
- I remember a time when I did not feel beautiful when...
- I feel beautiful when...
- I remember a time when I felt vulnerable/uncomfortable/not peaceful when...
- I feel at peace when...

*--Emphasize that people can respond to as many questions as they can. When it comes to the question about a time where they felt uncomfortable or vulnerable, encourage folks to be gentle with themselves and reflect on a time that was less threatening. If people need to spread out, take breaks or stop writing, that's completely fine. We can use the circle to discuss what folks need in terms of support from this particular group and open to suggestions as how the circle should close.*

Pass the talking piece around and have folks share, one question at a time. The last four questions are meant to be shared in a pair to balance first question, which is more challenging.

**Check Out:**

How are folks doing? Where are you at? How does it feel to leave this space? Needs, suggestions, requests?

**Closing:**

Based on what we shared tonight, reflect on what the person to your right shared and say one thing that touched you about their story.

--End with three collective breaths. Thank the group for coming.

## **Healing, Organizing, Spirituality and Self Care Circle**

Medicine Wheel: As people come in, pass out paper and art supplies and have people draw a circle divided into four equal parts. At the top of each section, folks should write: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Ask participants to put one or two words in each section to describe how they are doing today in each particular section. Be sure to have them leave room in each section – we'll be having them write more in these wheels later in the circle.

In the check-in round, invite participants to share the words in one or two sections. This will help people check in with themselves and be really present in their bodies, emotions and thoughts.

**Welcome:** Thank everyone for coming. Invite folks to be honest and open.

**Opening:** Breathing Exercise

Meditation and Breathing Exercise: Sit comfortably and close your eyes if you wish. Imagine and feel that your body is a hollow tube and that as you inhale, the breath is drawn up through your feet and into your legs; up into your abdomen and stomach; up into your chest and back; and up in your shoulders, neck and head. Still inhaling, imagine and feel your breath wishing through the hollow tube of your body and carrying away any tension, stress, or uncomfortable feelings. When you get to the top of the inhalation, just relax and exhale normally. Let each exhalation be more relaxed than the one before.

**Explain Centerpiece and Talking Piece:**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

The **talking piece** is used to help guide conversation. When someone is holding the talking piece, they have the floor to speak and share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. They can do so knowing they will not be interrupted, because those who are not holding the talking piece can listen quietly and attentively. For those not holding the talking piece, think of this as a time to not be obligated to respond, offer advice or think of the next thing you want to say: simply listen and stay present with each story. People can choose to pass the talking piece if they don't wish to share. We'll go in a clockwise rotation.

**Why Are We Here?:**

We will talk about what practices, hobbies, activities or rituals support our healing and self-care and the ways these rituals are connected to community organizing in Chicago.

**Check In:**

- Name, a community you belong to, and share something from your medicine wheel to describe how you're feeling today.

**Values:**

- What values would enable you to participate in this space?
- Other people have questions?

- Confirmation

### **Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- Recall a time, over the last couple of months, where you laughed really hard.
- Who inspires you?
- What does self care mean to you? What does it feel like?
- Is self care connected to spirituality? What does spirituality mean to you?
- How could self care be implemented better in your workplace, organization or daily life?

### **Stepping out of the circle, please answer the following questions and write your responses on your medicine wheels:** (Stacy)

- What practices, hobbies, activities or rituals help maintain self care in these four areas? Even if you don't practice them daily.
- Highlight one or more areas in which you would like to do more self-care.
- How can they be collective practices? With friends, loved ones, family, co-workers, etc.
- Name one goal for each section about how you'd like to improve self-care – for yourself and collectively?

### **Coming back to the circle...and Check-Out:**

- In doing that exercise, what stood out to you?
- What was it like talking about self-care?
- What can you take away? What can you put into practice?

### **Closing:**

**Toilet Paper exercise:** Bring a roll of toilet paper (or a bag of candy). Pass the roll around the circle and tell participants to take as much as they want. Have them separate the sheets and make a single pile. Going around the circle, each person should say one thing they are grateful for, per toilet paper sheet. Keeper should go first

And if time...

### ***Read Poem: Take Time:***

Pass poem around circle and have each person read a stanza out loud. Keeper can start.

Take time to live-  
It is what life is for;  
Take time for justice-  
It is the beginning of peace;

Take time to look afresh-  
It will fill you with surprises;  
Take time to search-  
It is the secret of perpetual youth;

Take time to laugh-

It is music to the soul;  
Take time to pray-  
It is the greatest power on earth;

Take time for solitude-  
It revives the spirit;  
Take time with the earth-  
It speaks of harmony and balance;

Take time at home-  
It renews the heart;  
Take time to sow-  
It gives perspective on life;

Take time to reap-  
It brings gratitude;  
Take time to heal-  
It is full of hope;

Take time to love-  
It is the reason for living.

-Unknown poet

## **Vision Circle for Social Justice DePaul Student Leaders**

Take 5 minutes to draw a picture that explains what you want people to know about you: favorite animal/color/food, a nickname, your dream career, etc.

**Welcome:** Thank everyone for coming. Invite folks to be honest and open.

**Opening:** Breathing Exercise

### **Explain Centerpiece and Talking Piece**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

The **talking piece** is used to help guide conversation. When someone is holding the talking piece, they have the floor to speak and share whatever they feel comfortable sharing. They can do so knowing they will not be interrupted, because those who are not holding the talking piece can listen quietly and attentively. For those not holding the talking piece, think of this as a time to not be obligated to respond, offer advice or think of the next thing you want to say: simply listen and stay present with each story. People can choose to pass the talking piece if they don't wish to share. We'll go in a clockwise rotation.

### **Why Are We Here?:**

To give ourselves space to reflect on what social justice means to us. As student leaders and activists, we will explore what brings us to this work – what inspirations, movements, community leaders and/or social issues inspire us to create social change on campus, in our communities and throughout Chicago?

### **Check In:**

- Name, student organization and their mission, why you got involved in this group.

### **Values:**

- On a piece of paper, write down something that you need from this space, or in communication more generally, to participate in this space.
- Other people have questions?
- Confirmation

### **Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- Share your picture
  - Who/what inspires you?
  - What moment inspired you to engage in movements for social change? What's your first social justice memory?
- ~~~~~

- How does that moment apply to your work at DePaul? What change would you like to see at DePaul?
- How do you see your work intersect with that of other student groups on campus?

~~~~~

**Exercise:** Take 10 minutes to talk to someone else from the circle that you don't know. Based on what you've heard, ask them one question. Each person will have 3-5 minutes to respond.

~~~~~

**Coming back to the circle...and Check-Out:**

- What was it like hearing from one another?
- What can you take away?
- One word feeling

**Closing:**

I Dream A World  
– Langston Hughes

I dream a world where man (folks)  
No other man (one) will scorn,  
Where love will bless the earth  
And peace its paths adorn.  
I dream a world where all  
Will know sweet freedom's way,  
Where greed no longer saps the soul  
Nor avarice blights our day.  
A world I dream where black or white,  
Whatever race you be,  
Will share the bounties of the earth  
And every man (person) is free,  
Where wretchedness will hang its head  
And joy, like a pearl,  
Attends the needs of all mankind (humankind)  
Of such I dream, my world!

## **Reflection Circle for Take Back the Night (TBTN) Feminist Front Student Leaders**

Take 5 minutes to draw a picture that explains what you want people to know about you: favorite animal/color/food, a nickname, your dream career, etc.

**Welcome:** Thank everyone for coming. Invite folks to be honest and open.

**Opening:** Breathing Exercise

### **Explain Centerpiece and Talking Piece**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

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### **State purpose:**

A space for members of Feminist Front and other student leaders to reflect on their experiences in social justice movements – specifically their involvement in organizing Take Back the Night.

### **Check In:**

- Name, major, why you got involved in Feminist Front.

### **Values:**

- On a piece of paper, write down something that you need from this space, or in communication more generally, to participate in this space.
- Other people have questions?
- Confirmation

### **Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- Share your picture
  - Who/what inspires you?
  - What is your first memory of TBTN, and how does that memory impact your work today?
  - For you, what is the goal of TBTN?
  - Name one thing you bring to TBTN that will help fulfill that goal.
  - If there was anything you could change about TBTN, either from last year or years past, what would it be and why? What can you do to make that change happen?
  - What do you hope people walk away with? What do you want people do to?
- ~~~~~

**Exercise:** Take 10 minutes to talk to someone else from the circle that you don't know. Based on what you've heard, ask them one question. Each person will have 3-5 minutes to respond.

---

**Coming back to the circle...and Check-Out:**

- What was it like hearing from one another?
- What can you take away?
- One word feeling

**Closing:** Read a Poem

**Going Out of Our Minds**

--Sonia Johnson

We don't need someone to show us the ropes.  
We are the ones we've been waiting for.  
Deep inside us we know the feelings we need to guide us.  
Our task is to learn to trust our inner knowing.

**Supporting Each Other While We Grieve**  
**-Grieving Circle-**

**Welcome:** Greet people as they come in and encourage folks to get food as everyone settles down. Feel free to play some soft and soothing music as people get settled down.

**Opening:** Read a Poem

**We Are Virginia Tech**

by Nikki Giovanni

We are Virginia Tech.

We are sad today, and we will be sad for quite a while. We are not moving on, we are embracing our mourning.

We are Virginia Tech.

We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly, we are brave enough to bend to cry, and we are sad enough to know that we must laugh again.

We are Virginia Tech.

We do not understand this tragedy. We know we did nothing to deserve it, but neither does a child in Africa dying of AIDS, neither do the invisible children walking the night away to avoid being captured by the rogue army, neither does the baby elephant watching his community being devastated for ivory, neither does the Mexican child looking for fresh water, neither does the Appalachian infant killed in the middle of the night in his crib in the home his father built with his own hands being run over by a boulder because the land was destabilized. No one deserves a tragedy.

We are Virginia Tech.

The Hokie Nation embraces our own and reaches out with open heart and hands to those who offer their hearts and minds. We are strong, and brave, and innocent, and unafraid. We are better than we think we are and not quite what we want to be. We are alive to the imaginations and the possibilities. We will continue to invent the future through our blood and tears and through all our sadness.

We are the Hokies.

We will prevail.

We will prevail.

We will prevail.

We are Virginia Tech

*--After the poem, ask the group to take three deep breaths together. Take a moment to then explain that this poem helps us think about our grieving as a collective process that is*

*interconnected with losses that we've experienced across different places and communities. We are not alone in our grief.*

### **Explain the Centerpiece and Talking Piece:**

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### **Why are We Here?:**

We are here to hold one another as we mourn, remember and grieve a member of our community. Coping with our feelings of sadness, frustration and anger should not be experienced in isolation. We are here for one another and validate each other's grieving process. We are also here to celebrate the life of the person(s) we've lost and keep their memory with us in this circle and thereafter.

### **Check in:**

Ask people to say their name and how they're doing today. Keeper should go first to model.

### **Values:**

- What do we need from this space?
- What values would enable you to participate in this space?
- Other people have questions?
- Confirmation

### **Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- What has the last few days been like for you?
- Recall a time when this person made you laugh. What happened? Please share with us.
- What impact did this person have on your life?

*--For this circle, its so important to stay present with the group. We offer very few suggested questions because we recognize that the group may need to talk about something very different. Be gentle with yourself as a circle keeper and remember that the circle will take care of itself. People in the circle will know what they need from this space.*

*--The circle will most likely feel open and ongoing. As a circle keeper, remain compassionate with peoples' grief, along with your own, but know that people might leave still feeling heavy and sad. That's totally fine and normal. This circle is one moment or one part of a long process of grieving and healing. End the circle when the time limit comes up (give or take 30 min) and feel free to suggest another circle if that is what feels right.*

**Check Out:**

How are folks doing? Where are you at? How does it feel to leave this space?

**Closing:** Read a passage

From *All About Love: New Visions*

By bell hooks

“Love knows no shame. To be loving is to be open to grief, to be touched by sorrow, even sorrow that is unending. The way we grieve is informed by whether we know love. Since loving lets us let go of so much fear, it also guides our grief. When we lose someone we love, we can grieve without shame. Given that commitment is an important aspect of love, we who love know we must sustain ties in life and death. Our mourning, our letting ourselves grieve over the loss of loved ones is an expression of our commitment, a form of communication and communion...

Love invites us to grieve for the dead as ritual of mourning and as celebration. As we speak our hearts in mourning we share our intimate knowledge of the dead, of who they were and how they lived. We honor their presence by naming the legacies they leave us. We need not contain grief when we use it as a means to intensify our love for the dead and dying, for those who remain alive.”

--Give a moment of silence. Ask everyone to take one deep breath together. Thank folks for coming and to be good to themselves as they leave.

## **Post-Strategy Session Reflection Circle Revisiting Collective Accountability**

**Welcome:** Invite everyone into the space. Thank them for coming back together to reflect on our experience on the strategy session. We'll get started in a bit!

**Opening:** Read poem

### **Turning to One Another – Margaret Wheatley**

There is no power greater than a community  
Discovering what it cares about.  
Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?”  
Keep asking.  
Notice what you care about.  
Assume that many others share your dreams.  
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.  
Talk to people you know.  
Talk to people you don’t know.  
Talk to people you never talk to.  
Be intrigued by the differences you hear.  
Expect to be surprised.  
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.  
Invite everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.  
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.  
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.  
Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.  
Real listening always brings people closer together.  
Trust that meaningful conversations can change the work.  
Rely on human goodness.  
Stay together.

### **Explain Centerpiece and Talking Piece**

The **centerpiece** is used as a foundation for our circle – a way to draw our attention to the center of the space and to each other. Once the circle begins, we can leave the stresses and distractions of the day outside, and bring our full attention to this room.

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### **Why Are We Here?:**

We are here to revisit some of the collective strategies we created in our last strategy session. Although we spent time creating collective definitions of accountability, support, intervention and prevention, we believe a reflection circle is useful to explore these definitions in greater

depth. By the end of this circle, we hope to walk away with a clear sense as to how these strategies could play out in our lives. Specifically, we hope to examine collective accountability in different parts of our lives, our feelings around holding ourselves and others accountable and the possibilities this work can engender.

**Check In:**

- Name, a fruit or vegetable that you are today and why, and one word feeling

**Values:**

- On a piece of paper, write down something that you need from this space, or in communication more generally, to participate in this space. We'll ask that you share these values in the circle.
- Other people have questions?
- Confirmation

**Storytelling Round and Exploring the Topic:**

- Recall an embarrassing moment in your life. It can be from your childhood or something that happened yesterday. Please share with us!
- What was something that you took away from the strategy session that you still think about today?
- What is accountability?
- What might accountability look like among your friends, loved ones and/or community/ities?
- What might accountability look like among people you don't know well (i.e. strangers, bystanders, etc.

If there is time...

- After your experience in the strategy session, what came up for you when you think about collective strategizing for support, healing, accountability, prevention and intervention?
  - What are some potential strengths to these exercises?
  - What are some concerns you may have about these exercises?

**Check Out:**

- How has your perception of the strategy session changed after participating in this circle? Or has it?
- What are you taking away?
- One word feeling

**Closing:**

"For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?" -bell hooks

Thank everyone for coming!

## CHAPTER 6: CREATIVE EXPRESSION EXERCISES

### ***Transformation of Space: Using Art and Visualization to Create Safe Space***

Have folks sit comfortably in a circle. People are welcome to sit on the floor or stay seated in chairs. Ask people to close their eyes (if they feel comfortable) and have them visualize a place where they feel the most comfortable. This can be a place they have visited frequently or just a single time. This place can be completely imaginary. Ask people to visualize any physical or imaginary space that they consider safe and keep the details of that space in mind. Make sure people are paying attention to how they are feeling while visualizing this place. After a few minutes of visualizing, ask members to open their eyes and return to the circle.

With art supplies, ask people to draw, sculpt or paint their safe space. Whatever image they held in their minds, ask that they re-create that space with supplies provided. Emphasize that artistic abilities are not required for this exercise – people can relax and have fun drawing whatever came up for them in the visualization! Explain that we will re-group in 15-20 minutes and share our drawings/creations in the full circle.

**\*\*** While people are drawing, feel free to play some music and encourage folks to grab food, use the restroom, move around the room or engage in conversation with others. Remind them that they have about 15-20 minutes to complete this exercise (say the specific time that people should be done)

When the 20 minutes is over, ask people to return to the circle. As the circle keeper, show your drawing first. Share any story that helps explain your safe space and place your drawing in the center of the circle. Once done, pass the talking piece around and ask others to share and do the same. People are free to pass.

**\*\***When the talking piece comes back to you, feel free to make connections among the different safe spaces shared in the circle. How many spaces were someone's home? In nature? An imaginary place? Drawing on connections will also illuminate some of the differences among safe spaces. Be sure to emphasize that this exercise shows us that "safety" or "safe space" looks, feels and means different things to different folks. However, by sharing our different safe spaces, we can then appreciate and respect the various ways we interpret safe space and incorporate everyone's version into the circle.

## ***Oral Histories and Family Timelines – borrowed from Sharon Bridgforth***

The purpose of this exercise is to reflect on a childhood memory and consider the outside factors that could have impacted that experience. Outside factors can include family relationships, school and education, friendships, uplifting or challenging situations, political climate and more. The point is to begin with a specific memory from a particular age and continue to contextualize that experience with broader social and historical conditions. For instance, when I was 10 years old...

By uncovering the outside factors of your experience growing up, you might discover the deep-rootedness of particular experiences. Consider the ways in which generational trauma and harm are rooted in unresolved pain and conflict experienced by our parents/guardians and ancestors, we may unearth root causes to their pain that was then inherited by us.

To fill in more information and context, consider the following questions to answer:

- What was happening in my town five years prior? 10 years? 20 years?
- What was happening in my country five years prior? 10 years? 20 years?
- What was happening in the world five years prior? 10 years? 20 years?
- Based on these events, how might that have shaped my experience at 10 years old? How might these events continue to impact me?

Begin this exercise using your own experiences growing up. After enough research and searching, feel free to use the same exercise on a family member or loved one. Maybe try describing your grandmother. What might she have looked like at age 10? Where did she live? What did her home look like? What was going on in her hometown when she was 10 years old? What was going on 5 years prior? And so on...

After creating your descriptions of self, and possibly a loved one, write in a journal about any lingering thoughts. What was it like to reflect on a childhood experience? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about the place you grew up in? What did you learn about others who were around you?

In a reflection circle, gather a few friends to talk about the process of gathering this information. Here are a few suggested questions to pose to the group:

- What was it like reflecting on your experience growing up?
- What fond memory or memories did you remember?
- What was challenging?
- What was the most interesting thing you learned about a particular public event?
- Were you able to examine a memory differently after researching historical stuff?

## ***Exploration of Self and Community through Movement and Dance*** **– borrowed from Sharon Bridgforth and Misty DeBerry**

In this exercise we will explore the power of movement and dance through personal and collective storytelling. We will consider the inner blocks that keep us from being our best selves. With a free writing exercise followed by storytelling and collective, group movement, we'll explore how those inner obstacles and fears can be embodied and later conquered, through dance.

Ask folks to pull out a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Explain how we are going to explore how fear creates inner blocks that inhibit us from living up to our full capacity. Provide the following questions and ask people to take 20 minutes to freewrite and respond:

- What is your biggest fear?
- What is part of your life story that no longer serves you, but is still part of your story?
- Where does this fear live in your body?
- How does this feeling affect your body? For instance, do you feel your heart race? Sweaty palms? Uneasy stomach? Increased appetite? Decreased appetite? Thinning hair?

*\*\*Ask people to write as much as they feel comfortable sharing. No editing or second guessing – we ask that people be as present, honest and open with this exercise.*

After 20 minutes of freewriting, ask people to re-read their writing to themselves. Ask folks what stands out to them and then have them highlight key words or phrases that jump out to them.

Once they've identified the key words or phrases, go around the circle and have people share their highlighted sections. Circle keeper should go first. Once a round is complete, have members divide into groups of three and engage in a small group discussion about their freewrite. Small groups should discuss how it felt to answer the questions.

- How did it feel to re-read and then highlight particular sections?
- How did it feel to say it out loud to the group?
- And finally, offer an example of how this particular theme manifests in your life today.

Once all group members have shared, call everyone's attention and offer these instructions:

Based on their key words and phrases, small groups will then create a collective movement piece based on the groups themes. The individual themes may be very different but we ask that the group come together to incorporate everyone's story into a collective piece that involves dance, stepping, walking, jumping, spinning – anything that involves movement. The only sound that members can make is calling out the key word or phrase from every person's freewrite. Folks can sing, scream, yell, or whisper the key words – but no other conversation or dialogue is allowed.

*\*\*Indicate that there are no strict rules around this exercise. People are encouraged to use their bodies in any way they seek fit – whether it's high risk or low.*

*\*\*Groups should perform their pieces one at a time. Let people know that they don't need to explain their piece beforehand – they can simply start moving and get started!*

Once all groups have performed gather in the large circle again. Do a quick check-out on how it felt to do the exercise. How did it feel to create a movement based on this particular fear? To

have other people do that movement? Or say that key word or phrase? What shifted for you?  
What remains the same?

Ask folks to say one word and do one gesture to describe how they're feeling for check-out.

### ***Self Care Poetry – Collective Style!***

In a reflection circle, ask folks to think about what self-care means to them. What does self-care look like in our lives? How often do we practice self-care? What gets in the way of practicing self care? What don't we like about self-care? How can we do self-care among a group of friends, family members, co-workers and loved ones?

After a couple of rounds of questions, ask people to write their top three self care practices on three small pieces of paper (one practice per paper). These can be practices that they do on a daily basis or activities they have never tried. Leave it open, so that people can begin to think about what they can possibly do for themselves that would promote self care and healing. Additionally, encourage to think of these practices, activities or rituals as something they can do in a large group.

When folks are done writing, ask them to place their three pieces of paper in a large, communal pot. Once all papers are collected, mix up the papers and pass the pot around again. Each person should then pick out three pieces of paper (hopefully not their own). One practice or paper at a time, each person in the circle will call out the practice written on the piece of paper. Do three rounds so that all three practices can be read aloud.

Once everyone's was read, start another round and ask folks how it felt to hear these practices. How did it feel to hear someone else read your practice? Did you learn about a new practice? Anything new that you heard that you're willing to try? Re-emphasize the collective – how might some, if not all, of these practices be done collectively? How might you implement these practices with your friends, co-workers, family members, sports team, etc?

## ***Let's Build: Palestinian Hip Hop, Cultural Production and Community Building***

The purpose of this exercise is to explore the ways that hip hop culture can be a vehicle for community building in a transnational context. I designed this exercise based on previous research I had done on Palestinian hip hop as a transnational movement that created new meanings around belonging, nationalism and Palestinian identity. My research revealed the possibilities of building coalitions, solidarities and communities across borders and how hip hop and art are creative, non-violent forms of resistance and liberation. Use this exercise to explore the historical and social implications of Israeli occupation and draw connections between the systematic marginalization of Palestinians with communities here in the U.S. Most importantly, this exercise will highlight the political impacts and possibilities that hip hop provides as a vehicle for social change.

Title	Description
Intro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask folks to name the “five” main elements of hip hop: deejaying, emcee, rap, break dancing and graffiti.</li> <li>• Spoken word as well – as an element connected to hip hop.</li> <li>• Hip hop as a culture and as a movement which started in South Bronx, NY.</li> <li>• 1970s: Bronx Expressway - Displacement in South Bronx leads to youth resistance. Hip hop emerged as a critical response to the oppression, marginalization and displacement they were experiencing. Speaking truth to power.</li> <li>• <b>Show pictures</b> of the South Bronx</li> <li>• <b>Show pictures:</b> DJ Cool Herc, Afrika Bambaata, Roxanne, Queen Latifah, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Show pictures</b> of Taki 183 and other graffiti</li> <li>• <b>Show pictures</b> of current day hip hop artists – many different genres, styles. A lot is fun – talking about fashion, “dating,” mostly STORIES. Not necessarily about resistance, but some.</li> </ul> <p>But now hip hop is <b>EVERYWHERE</b> – Brazil, South Africa, Japan, and Palestine/Israel...</p>
Hip hop as Global and a Political Tool	<p>A couple reasons why hip hop has gone global...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self Expression and Resistance:</b> Hip hop as a form of self expression among youth to organize and engage in activism in alternative, yet critical and creative ways.</li> <li>• <b>Articulate different subjectivities</b> – no matter if you’re in the U.S. (Lil Wayne, Talib Kweli, Nicki minaj, Lauryn Hill) or Palestine (Third World) there are various ways that people are articulating themselves – breaking down monolithic or static concepts.</li> <li>• <b>Transnational - Community Across Borders:</b> Most importantly, hip hop has become a critical vehicle through which young people can create community across borders in order to link seemingly disconnected struggles. What’s happening in the Westside of Chicago connected to what’s happening in the West Bank, Israel.</li> <li>• <b>Slide:</b> Simply put, hip hop provides a language and structure for resistance and protest among marginalized people around the <b>world.</b></li> </ul>

	<p>Although started in the U.S., hip hop doesn't belong to one particular national entity or territory, but actually exists between, within and across borders. Thus, blurring the lines between global and local.</p>
<p>Why Palestine?</p>	<p>I'm going to talk about the emergence of hip hop in Palestine and the transnational ties that artists have been able to sustain across separation walls (between different occupied territories) and across national borders (linking artists from Palestine/Israel with other artists from the UK, Canada, U.S. and other nations). But first a little historical context...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly talk about the history of Israeli occupation. Al-Nakba 1948 (reparations for Holocaust through Britian, expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians from increased Zionist Israeli immigration and land purchases), occupation of Gaza and West Bank 1967, expanding settlements, etc. Ethnic cleansing.</li> <li>• Zionism is a political movement geared towards the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. But not all Jewish people...</li> <li>• <b>Show picture:</b> Map.</li> <li>• Describe the everyday acts of marginalization. Obstruction of movement and checkpoints, erasure of Palestinian culture and Arabic language, separation walls, ID checks, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Show pictures:</b> checkpoints, separation walls, ID cards, olive trees.</li> <li>• <b>Show pictures</b> of current conditions of Gaza and the West Bank.</li> </ul> <p>Looking back at the historical roots of hip hop itself, we already see connections between South Bronx and occupied territories—forced relocation of communities of color through urban renewal projects and gentrification cultivated hip hop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Show picture:</b> comparing South Bronx and Gaza.</li> </ul>
<p>Slingshot Hip Hop and Palestinian Subjectivities</p>	<p>Let's check out some Palestinian artists – Slingshot Hip Hop</p> <p><b>Show clip</b> of DAM 1<sup>st</sup> hip hop group in Palestine/Lyd (blood in Hebrew and Arabic) rapping in Lyd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See how DAM was influenced by U.S. rap, but also cultivate their own style—not just imitating. Making it <b>transnational</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Different strategies and subjectivities:</b> Palestinian Rapperz (PR) in Gaza only raps in Arabic (more in English now that they're on tour) because of their location in Gaza. DAM raps in Hebrew, English, and Arabic to reach more audiences. All strategies that are reflective of their particular subjectivities and diverse experiences of the Israeli occupation.</li> <li>• <b>Crossing borders and building community:</b> Communicating through internet, these very different Palestinian hip hop groups have been able to maintain strong ties despite the strict regulation of their mobility – not being able to visit one another in their respective occupied territories.</li> <li>• Not only building communities across different occupied territories, but across other transnational lines.</li> </ul>

<p>Slingshot Hip Hop and Palestinian Subjectivities</p>	<p>Let's check out some Palestinian artists – Slingshot Hip Hop</p> <p><b>Show clip</b> of DAM 1<sup>st</sup> hip hop group in Palestine/Lyd (blood in Hebrew and Arabic) rapping in Lyd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See how DAM was influenced by U.S. rap, but also cultivate their own style—not just imitating. Making it <b><i>transnational</i></b>.</li> <li>• <b>Different strategies and subjectivities:</b> Palestinian Rapperz (PR) in Gaza only raps in Arabic (more in English now that they're on tour) because of their location in Gaza. DAM raps in Hebrew, English, and Arabic to reach more audiences. All strategies that are reflective of their particular subjectivities and diverse experiences of the Israeli occupation.</li> <li>• <b>Crossing borders and building community:</b> Communicating through internet, these very different Palestinian hip hop groups have been able to maintain strong ties despite the strict regulation of their mobility – not being able to visit one another in their respective occupied territories.</li> </ul>
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## ***PART 3: Collective Strategizing and Organizing***

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This section includes scenarios and exercises that facilitate group skill-building and developing of collective responses to violence and conflict. Participants are encouraged to collectively create an exhaustive list of all potential responses to a particular situation (i.e. street harassment, interpersonal violence, supporting survivors, etc). In some exercises, participants will list all allies, bystanders, impacted community members and more in order to include more people in their strategy. Other sessions will focus on mobilizing bystanders to respond to a particular situation. For this guide, these exercises will be called “Strategy Sessions” – a concept and exercise that is informed by the work by the community organization, Community United Against Violence (CUAV) in San Francisco, CA.

### **CHAPTER 7: UNDERSTANDING HARM, UNDERSTANDING IMPACTS: STRATEGY SESSIONS**

Poverty, housing foreclosures, immigration enforcement, environmental degradation and other forms of state and interpersonal violence are devastating social issues that require our immediate attention. The need for direct action efforts cannot be underestimated. Even with the urgency of these issues, however, we also acknowledge the need to maintain our collective awareness and presence, especially in times of crisis or trauma. Therefore, we are interested in developing responses that address these urgent issues from a centered, holistic and collective approach. We need collective responses that ensure our own safety, healing and support. We also need responses that work towards the transformation of harmful behavior without demonizing or marginalizing individuals who are responsible for harm. Furthermore, we believe reporting to the police does not contribute to the healing of those impacted by harm nor transform those who have caused harm. If anything, we believe police intervention exacerbates many instances of violence in our communities. If we are to achieve a world based on peace and collective liberation, we need measures for accountability that are humane and transformative, rather than repressive and punitive.

In specific regard to situations of violence or harm – such as street or public harassment, partner abuse, sexual violence, stalking, and other forms of interpersonal violence – we have developed a series of exercises that allows us to collectively develop skills, strategies and responses to these harmful situations. More specifically, these exercises – which we call “strategy sessions”- enable groups to cultivate an exhaustive list of possible responses that are collective and do not rely on police, law enforcement or external authorities.

#### **A Note about Language**

These exercises have been inspired by the work of a community organization based in San Francisco, CA called Community United Against Violence (CUAV). This organization has developed an exercise called “Safety Labs” which are workshops for people to collectively strategize and develop skills that promote communal healing, support, accountability, intervention and prevention. We appreciate their work because they advocate for less police intervention and they also address the ways in which the prison industrial complex is a site of violence. Our “strategy sessions” are versions of the work that CUAV does around community accountability. We are fortunate enough to have learned from CUAV and credit this amazing organization for their collective work towards collective liberation and anti-violence.

In addition from learning from groups like CUAV, we have also been fortunate to receive such compassionate and critical feedback about our work around community accountability and collective strategizing. Specifically, in a conversation with community member, Jen Curley, we were able to evaluate the impacts of the language around “Safety Labs” and the different memories and triggers this phrasing brings up for folks. In a one-on-one conversation with Jen, she highlighted a conversation she had with her partner who immediately thought of the historical medical experimentation on people of color, people with disabilities and other social groups in this country. Given this violent history of laboratory experimentation on socially marginalized communities, we’ve made the intentional decision to change the name of our strategizing workshops to simply “strategy sessions” to signify the general concept of collective strategizing and discontinue using “Safety Labs.” These are concerns that we are sure CUAV has also addressed and wrestled with and we encourage continued dialogue about the impacts this work has in various spaces and communities.

### **Assessing Needs and Wants in Times of Conflict**

When it comes to addressing situations of conflict or harm we are usually fueled by feelings of fear. For those of us who are directly or indirectly impacted by harm, we fear the people and institutions that are responsible for harm and typically navigate our actions and decisions based on this feeling. Although recognizing the fear, anger and confusion that arises in these situations, we must also be fully present in the wants, needs and desires of everyone involved in order to work towards collective solutions for healing and accountability. In other words, we acknowledge that people impacted by harm, as well as those who cause harm, have particular needs that should be addressed in order to repair the harm caused. This is also to say that we have all been harmed at one point and caused harm against others. In varying degrees and various situations, we have all found ourselves in both roles. Therefore, we should approach this work with compassion, understanding, listening and introspection. If we are geared towards cultivating peace and healing we must attend to the needs that each of us possess in situations of harm and conflict.

Organizations such as Generation FIVE and Generative Somatics have developed exercises that address the fight, flight and freeze responses we have as human beings. When we are confronted with a hostile situation, do we react by lashing out or fighting back? Do we feel immobilized and helpless? Or do we instinctively try to run away in order to feel safe? No judgment is involved when we figure out our instinctive reaction – it simply helps us assess how we’re feeling in these situations and hopefully figure out alternative ways to engage and respond to one another. Specifically, we understand that these responses are rooted in a deep sense of urgency, panic and crisis. Operating from a place of urgency does not necessarily generate clarity in decision-making. Therefore, we want to develop exercises to help us acknowledge these instinctive responses but develop more grounded and clear ways of reacting to situations of harm or conflict. Additionally, by being aware of these reactions allows us to re-train our bodies, minds and hearts to cultivate a different way of engaging with others – including those who inflict harm on us or our communities.

### **Root Causes and Feelings of Harm: An Exercise**

Below is an exercise that was developed by Community Justice for Youth Institute (CJYI). This exercise is typically used in their peace circle trainings to help participants examine conflicts of harm from a non-punitive perspective. By reminding participants that we have all been harmed and caused harm at some point in our lives, helps us engage collective strategizing, healing and

accountability from a centered and compassionate standpoint. Feel free to use this exercise at the beginning of your own strategy session in order to frame the discussion.

### **Exercise**

Have participants break up into pairs. Ask folks to reflect on a time when they experienced harm in their life. It can be a time a friend lied to them or when their bicycle was stolen. Remind participants that whatever incident they decide to reflect on, it should rest on a scale from 1-10. 1 being less harmful and 10 being very harmful. Participants should be gentle with themselves and be prepared to share their story with their partner. Give pairs 10 minutes total to talk about their experience (each person having five minutes to share).

Once the 10 minutes is up, ask folks to now reflect on a time when they caused harm to someone else. The same guidelines apply – please choose a situation that rests on the lower end of the 1-10 harm range. Each pair will have 10 minutes to talk about their experience with their partner.

Ask people to wrap up their stories after 10 minutes, and have them return to the large group. On a large piece of butcher paper, make two columns. One column should be labeled “Needs” and the second should read “Feelings”. The top of the butcher paper should be labeled, “Person who was Harmed.”

Ask people to share what they needed at the time when they were harmed.

*--Be sure to phrase this question as a “we” or “you” so that we ground our own personal experiences in this exercise.*

Folks can shout out their answers and the facilitator should write responses in the “Needs” column. Once you’ve gathered enough responses, move onto the “Feelings” column and ask for words from the group.

Thank everyone for sharing what they needed and how they felt at the time they experienced harm. Then transition to the second piece of butcher paper which should be labeled, “Person who caused Harm.” Again, with the two columns “Needs” and “Feelings” have folks shout out responses.

*--Be sure to phrase this question as a “we” or “you” so that we ground our own personal experiences in this exercise.*

Once the columns are filled up, ask for group responses and observations.

- What do you notice about these lists?
- What stands out to you?
- Do you see any overlapping needs or wants?
- Looking at these lists, how does it make you feel?

Depending on the conversation, facilitators should leave the group with a few closing comments. Specifically, we should reiterate that we have all been in position of experiencing and causing harm. In many cases, we are similar needs and feelings when we have caused or experienced harm. Whether it’s fear, confusion or anger, the same root feelings exist in times when we’ve experienced or caused harm. The goal, then, is to assess these feelings and needs in order to address conflict in a humane and compassionate way.

## CHAPTER 8: STRATEGY SESSION EXERCISES

This chapter includes four strategy sessions that we created and facilitated. The topics for these strategy sessions include:

- Everyday Responses to Everyday Harassment
- Collective Liberation and Healing
- Community Accountability in collaboration with the Beehive Collective
- Collective Responses to End Dating Violence

We strongly suggest using three full hours for each strategy session. Reviewing definitions and offering a clear framework for community accountability is extremely important in developing collective strategies to situations of conflict, harm and violence. We also suggest having a reflection circle as a follow-up to the strategy session so participants can have a space to talk through how they feel about this community-based approach. Although I have facilitated a number of strategy sessions, there are still times where I myself feel uneasy about implementing these practices in my everyday life. Having these kinds of reservations is totally fine – we live in a society where community-based responses to conflict are not normative practices. Therefore, we encourage creating additional spaces to process our hopes and reservations in doing this work. More reflection and discussion just makes the strategies and collective work much more rich.

Additionally, please visit the Appendix for supplemental material for each strategy session. Materials include a strategy worksheet for participants to record their collective responses, a sheet with community accountability definitions and principles, and an evaluation.

### 1. Everyday Responses to Everyday Harassment

- This strategy session focuses on public and street harassment and ways to mobilize bystanders and support those being harassed.

Objective:

- ✓ Define public and street harassment and how it impacts us
- ✓ Use principles of community accountability and transformative justice to guide our strategizing
- ✓ Create collective responses to public harassment
- ✓ Develop skills to interrupt public/street harassment, mobilize bystanders, and support those being harassed

Time	Title	Description
6-6:30	Introductions	Name, a community and an animal you would be and why
6:30-6:35	Framing and Project	Introduce the BCEV
6:35-	Objectives &	✓ <b>Material:</b> Pass out Principles

6:45	Principles	<p>Objectives &amp; Principles 1-3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask participants what a safety lab is. Gather responses and then offer our definition (flipchart): “Spaces for people to develop collective strategies that promote healing, support and accountability in situations of harm or conflict. Emphasize community-based alternatives to law enforcement and other external authorities. These practices developed and borrowed from Community United Against Violence (CUAV)</li> <li>• Go to Principles</li> </ul>
6:45-7:05	Freewrite and Reflections	<p>Break up into 4-5 groups.</p> <p>Offer instructions:</p> <p>Have each person freewrite for 5 minutes about an experience involving public harassment describe the scenario and how it made them feel.</p> <p>Each person should then take one minute to share what they wrote with their group.</p> <p>Come back to large group, ask participants to share their feeling words.</p> <p>➤ <i>Facilitator reminder:</i> Be sure to tell participants that they should explore situations that fall in the middle of a 1-10 scale – 1 being not threatening and 10 being really traumatic. We recognize that talking about public harassment can be challenging, so we want to ensure that people can stay present and participate fully.</p>
7:05-7:10	Group shares of Keywords	<p>✓ <b>Material:</b> Write feeling words on chalkboard/flipchart (Ann)</p> <p>Ask each group to share their keywords and feelings - write on the flipchart paper. Emphasize that the freewriting and keyword exercise is to help us think about what street/public harassment is, how it affects us, and what our collective knowledge is about this topic.</p>
7:10-7:20	Definitions	<p>✓ <b>Material:</b> Pass out Definitions</p> <p>Offer our definitions:</p>

7:10-7:20	Definitions	<p>✓ <b>Material:</b> Pass out Definitions</p> <p>Offer our definitions:</p> <p>Ask for volunteers to read the bold definition out loud and ask them to explain what it means to them or what sticks out in that particular definition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Public harassment</b> (flipchart): From INCITE! “An interaction in a public space that makes you feel sexualized, intimidated, embarrassed, objectified, violated, attacked, or unsafe” <b>Accountability, and Support</b></li> <li>○ <b>Intervention and Prevention</b></li> </ul>
7:20-7:30	Choosing a Scenario	<p>Have each group choose a story/scenario that was shared in the circle. Instruct participants to brainstorm potential allies, bystanders, persons directly involved, community members, etc.</p> <p>Encourage participants to think of particulars of the scenario as well – location, time, who is involved, who is around etc.</p> <p>➤ <i>Facilitator reminder:</i> Whichever scenario the group chooses, remind participants that we aren’t discussing what the person should or should not have done in this particular instance. Rather, we want to use a real life example of public harassment in order to develop collective strategies for support, intervention, accountability and prevention.</p>
7:30-8	Responses and Strategies	<p>✓ <b>Material:</b> Pass our Strategy Worksheet</p> <p>Tell each group that they will create collective responses to their chosen scenario. Responses should focus on two definitions – one that we “assign” and one of their choice. Responses will then be acted out in a Role Play for the large group.</p>

8-8:45	Role Plays	<p>Ask each group to role play one of their collective responses. Allow for time after each role play to reflect and discuss with large group.</p> <p>Here are some potential follow-up questions for role plays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What was it like coming up with responses as a group?</li> <li>○ If your scenario was chosen for the role play/strategy, how did it feel to think about who was involved and potential responses?</li> </ul>
8:45- 9	Closing and Check-Out	<p>Thank everyone for coming. Please stick around to fill out evaluation forms. One word feeling and one thing you learned.</p> <p>✓ <b>Material:</b> Pass our resource list and evaluation</p>

## 2. Collective Liberation and Healing

- This strategy session utilizes a scenario from the StoryTelling Organizing Project that involves a domestic dispute. STOP collects stories that involve community accountability strategies. Their documentation of these collective responses gives us a sense of the work that is already done around community-based responses to violence. For more information about STOP, visit their website: [www.stopviolenceeveryday.org](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org).

### Objective:

- ✓ Use principles of community accountability and transformative justice to guide our strategizing
- ✓ Create collective responses to interpersonal violence and partner abuse
- ✓ Develop skills to interrupt public/street harassment, mobilize bystanders, and support those being harassed

6:30- 7 (30 min)	Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Building Communities, Ending Violence</li> <li>• Community Accountability Principles</li> <li>• Definitions: Support, Intervention, Prevention and Accountability</li> </ul>
7- 7:15 (15 min)	Scenario	<p>Offer scenario from StoryTelling Organizing Project (play audio from website):</p> <p><i>Community Responds to Domestic Violence</i></p> <p>Create list of all community members who could be involved in collective strategy (e.g. church members, classmates, family, co-workers, teammates, etc.)</p>
7:15- 7:45 (30 min)	Small groups	<p>Divide into small groups and strategize around these principles. Assign each small group one principle to focus their strategizing around: Collective Support, Accountability,</p>

7:15- 7:45 (30 min)	Small groups	Divide into small groups and strategize around these principles. Assign each small group one principle to focus their strategizing around: Collective Support, Accountability, Prevention and Intervention.  <i>--Let folks know that they will perform role plays in front of the large group.</i>
7:45- 8:05 (20 min)	Role Plays	Ask each group to perform their role play. For those who are watching or witnessing the strategies, remind them to monitor how they're feeling – whether you feel good, uncomfortable, silly, etc.  <i>--What does it mean to put these ideas into practice?</i>  <i>--How does it feel to engage with others, in both the collective strategizing and acting it out?</i>
8:05- 8:20 (15 min)	Responses	After everyone has done their role play, open the floor for reactions, feedback and reflections.  <i>--What works well?</i>  <i>--What can you envision working well in your community?</i>  <i>--What are some challenges in doing some of these strategies?</i>
8:20- 8:35 (15 min)	STOP clip	Once people have shared some reflections, play the rest of the audio clip from this particular incident on STOP's website. Since this scenario is based on a real life story, it's nice to see how the folks in this situation collectively responded to this incident and how it may, or may not, fall in line with the collective strategies we developed together.
8:35- 9:00	Closing and	One word feeling and what you're going to do for self care

### 3. Community Accountability in collaboration with the Beehive Collective

- Building Communities, Ending Violence was graciously invited to work with the Beehive Collective on a strategy session that would serve as the basis for Beehive's mind-mapping exercise. The Beehive Collective is a collaborative, anti-copyright collective that uses graphical images as educational tools for social justice. Their mind-mapping exercise is a process they use to organize and envision their beautiful images. Project NIA, a community organization dedicated to juvenile justice and building consciousness about the prison industrial complex, was the group that connected BCEV with the Beehive Collective. For more information about both groups, please visit their websites - Beehive Collective: [www.beehivecollective.org](http://www.beehivecollective.org) and Project NIA: [www.project-nia.org](http://www.project-nia.org).

#### Objective:

- ✓ Use principles of community accountability and transformative justice to guide our strategizing
- ✓ Create collective responses to interpersonal violence and partner abuse
- ✓ Create new modes for visualizing collective strategizing through media imagery

Time	Title	Description
11- 11:10	Introductions	Intro to Safety Lab and offer definitions about collective support/healing, accountability, intervention and prevention. With each definition, we'll include an example for each
11:10-11:20	Scenario	Intro the Scenario and list all community members
11:20-11:35	Small group strategizing	Break up into small groups and create two collective strategies. Remind them again to think about all the community members who could be involved and strategies should be collective. They will role play one strategy and share the other.
11:35-11:50	Role Plays	Each group will have 5 min to role play one collective strategy
11:50-12	Reflections and Check Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask folks what it felt like to work together and build collective, not individual, strategies. What worked well, what didn't? How do you feel?</li> <li>• One word feeling</li> </ul>

#### 4. Collective Responses to End Dating Violence

- We had the pleasure to collaborate with Northeastern University on this strategy session on collective responses to partner abuse. Laurie Fuller, an Associate Professor at Northeastern and community organizer, invited BCEV to facilitate the session on their campus and was instrumental in the organizing of the event.

##### Objective:

- ✓ Define dating violence and impacts on people directly impacted and community members
- ✓ Assess needs and feelings of harm
- ✓ Use principles of community accountability and transformative justice to guide our strategizing
- ✓ Create collective responses to dating violence

Time	Title	Description

10- 10:30	Welcome, Check In and Intros	<p>Ask everyone to say their name and choose a color to describe how they're doing that day and why. Ann and Michelle talk briefly about the project and some guiding principles for BCEV and the safety lab. Some points or questions to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 1/9 people report to the police. Sometimes police do not respond to reported violence or actually perpetuate it.</li> <li>• This exercise will help us think about balancing compassion with accountability – how do we hold peoples' harmful behavior accountable and yet also consider the underlying structures and conditions that perpetuate such violence?</li> <li>• Emphasis on collective responses to violence</li> </ul>
10:30-10:50 a.m.	Victim Offender exercise	Break up into pairs and each person talk about a time in which they were harmed and a time when they caused harm. Discuss how it made you feel and what you needed in both incidents at the time...start with a time where you have been harmed.
10:50-11:20 a.m.	Definition Mash Up	Pass out cards to small groups and have them find their matching card/definition. Once pairs have found each other, have participants discuss what the definition means to them and have them present to the entire group.
11:20-12:05 p.m.	Scenario, Strategizing and Lunch	Share the scenario and instruct participants to develop collective strategies based on the definition group they are in. Everyone encouraged to eat lunch while they strategize.
12:05-1:05 p.m.	Role Plays, Feedback and Reflection	Each group will have 5 minutes for their role play and we will take 10 minutes after each strategy to discuss
1:05- 1:30 p.m.	Reflections and Check Out	Further reflections and sharing how you're feeling and one thing you learned or you would use or implement.

## ***PART 4: TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER***

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### **CHAPTER 9: HEALING PRACTICES – SELF AND COLLECTIVE**

#### **Ideas for Self Care**

Here is a list of ideas that you can practice for self care. You may already have your own practice, routine or ritual, but these are just more examples for you to try. Remember, practicing self care doesn't mean you have to be by yourself to do it. Ask a friend, loved one or whoever you trust to join you! Self care shouldn't feel isolating – make it fun and do it with company. Alternatively, if all you need is some “me” time, that's fine too. Do whatever it is that you need in the moment, free of judgment. Also, try to practice self care on a daily basis. You don't need to wait until you're completely burnt out to take care of yourself. The more you can maintain a routine or ritual that adds to your emotional, physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, the more centered you may feel. My daily ritual is to read a positive affirmation and write that message on my bathroom mirror. The affirmation sets an intention for the day and something I can focus on in case things get stressful or difficult to deal with. Here are some more examples of self care – try a few out!

Exercise	See a movie
Nutrition	Play a sport
Healthy food	Watch T.V.
Dance	Journal meditate
Bubble bath	Sing
Read a book	Deep breathing for five minutes
Visit an animal shelter	Play an instrument
Read poetry/fiction	Draw/paint/color
Go to a museum	Write a poem
Cook	Cuddle
Visit a friend/family member/co-worker	Go for a drive/walk
Take a class or workshop	Read positive affirmations
Pray	

## Self Care Check List

This useful tool is from a collaborative zine project and created by young women from Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health and Females United for Action from Chicago, IL. The zine's title is "Healing the Divide: Youth Self-Care Through Art, Love and Community." Take a moment and fill out this check list. You can always refer back to it as a gentle reminder to practice self-care and hopefully establish a steady routine!

### How are you going to practice self care in the following areas...

Physical: (exercise, nutrition, food, sleep, health care, stress reduction, etc)

Activity

When/How often:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Mental: (reading, taking a class, write, learn a hobby, art, visit museums, etc.)

Activity

When/How often:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual: (meditate, pray, enjoy nature, sing, journal, dance, etc.)

(Activity)

When/How often:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Social: (coffee with a friend, recreational events, poetry reading, seeing a movie, etc.)

(Activity)

When/How often:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

## **CONCLUSION: VISIONS FOR TOMORROW, HOPES FOR THIS MOMENT**

Healing Justice is way of being in this world that allows for deep connection with others and ourselves, challenges systems of power and oppression, opens space for collective healing and is ultimately transformative at the personal and social level. We offer this guide not simply as a collection of exercises, but as a calling to view the world through a different lens. To experience the healing and social change we wish to create, we must invest in the cultural shifts necessary to imagine new visions for tomorrow and beyond.

As we engage in reflective and intentional envisioning for a just world, we also emphasize the importance of staying present in the moment. In other words, we believe transformative social change is created from leaders and changemakers who are grounded in a deep sense of awareness. Being present in the ways this work impacts us emotionally, physically, emotionally and spiritually is essential to bringing our full selves to this work. So as we dream for a better tomorrow, we also embrace this current moment and the many things we have to be grateful for and the many things we'd like to change.

For us, Healing Justice offers infinite possibilities for growth, collective healing and social transformation. But this is not to say that the work isn't hard or challenging. Coming from a Healing Justice perspective, we are asked to re-work our everyday approaches to relationships. These patterns are results from generations of socialization, social messages and social control. Therefore, asking for these cultural shifts is uncomfortable and difficult work to do. But we believe that it's work worth doing and is much more sustainable and liberating for everyone across differences and relations to power.

Healing Justice is a framework that stresses the interconnection between personal and social transformation. And to do this kind of work, we must be clear and specific about what transformation can look like on the personal, social and institutional level. We are bombarded by negative stereotypes in the media, schools and other institutions. We each experience everyday forms of systematic oppression and power. We have identified several social issues that continue to impact our communities and have created collective strategies to dismantle the forms of power that marginalize and disenfranchise us. All to say, we know what we're up against. However, have we clearly stated what we live for? Have we articulated what makes our hearts sing? Do we think about what motivates us and keeps us going? These are the questions that we are particularly interested in when we think about creating social change – and doing it from an approach that is engrained in the principles and assumptions of Healing Justice.

So what does justice and liberation look like to me? Justice and liberation means that each of us is valued for who we are. Internal anxieties from being different no longer exist because we know that each of us is beautiful, brilliant and worthy. Specifically, justice and liberation can help sprout new communities that honor our differences in compassionate, gentle and radical ways.

Justice and liberation looks like queer families – groups of people who can choose one another and who want to belong to one another. Families that are based on shared principles, politics and dreams and who can demonstrate love in a million different ways. As I continue this kind of community work, I see my own family and communities growing and that is a sign of some amazing transformations and real justice.

And finally, Justice and liberation also looks like a huge dance celebration. Lots of moving, singing, hand-holding and cheering in honor of our collaborative work for social change and for each other. And not just dancing to work the stress, trauma and harm away, but dancing because it feels good to be alive in our own skins and be embraced for it.

## **APPENDIX:**

### ***Tips and Check Lists for Peace Circle Keepers***

There are many factors to consider while preparing to keep a peace circle. Although the circle keeper isn't necessarily "in charge" of the circle - as in directing or facilitating the conversation - it's still important that you feel comfortable in your role as a circle keeper. In this section, we'll explore several suggestions to prepare before, during and after a peace circle.

#### **Pre-Circle Preparation (Logistics)**

As far as logistics, there are several things to consider before keeping a peace circle. Here are a few things to consider when it comes to planning a circle.

##### **Time and Duration of Circle –**

- **DURATION:** Depending on the number of participants and topic of conversation, carefully consider how much time your peace circle will need.
- We recommend at least 2- 3 hours on reflection, celebration, vision and healing circles.
- For conflict or grieving circles, you might want to consider adding extra time or scheduling multiple circles.

##### **Confirm with Circle Members –**

- **PREFERRED FORMS OF CONTACT:** Contact members via email, phone, text, Facebook or whatever their preferred form of contact is to ensure who will attend.
- **NUMBER OF MEMBERS:** The number of participants may shape the exercises, questions and activities you include in the peace circle.
- Remember, a peace circle can be kept with anywhere from two to thirty participants – check in with yourself for the appropriate number of people.

##### **Food –**

- **LONGER CIRCLES:** If you're running a particularly long peace circle (anywhere from 3 – 8 hours), we strongly recommend you offer something for people to eat.
- **PREFERENCES AND ALLERGIES:** If you're providing food, make sure to contact members beforehand to check on food preferences and allergies.
- **COSTS:** Consider how you're purchasing the food. Will this come out of your pocket? Can you have food donated? Can you suggest a potluck to circle members?
- **TRANSPORTATION:** How will the food get to the location? – By car, public transportation, delivery?
- **LOCAL OPTIONS:** Are there food options nearby? If not, be sure to remind participants to bring their own if you're unable to provide food.

##### **Location –**

- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Is the building accessible for various physical abilities? Is there an elevator? Accessible restrooms?
- Is the building located in a somewhat central location for all participants? Be mindful of distance and access to public transportation for all folks.
- **PRIVACY:** If it's a public space, is there privacy?
- **TEMPERATURE:** How is the room temperature for folks?
- **EASILY LOCATED?** Will folks be able to easily find the location? Will extra signs with directions be needed/posted?

### **Room Set-Up –**

- **FURNITURE:** Make sure you reserve a room or space where the chairs can be moved easily. Its important that there is no furniture in the middle of the circle – so no sitting around large table to keep circles.
- **NATURAL LIGHT?** If the room has no windows, feel free to bring any artwork to hang on the walls. The brighter the space the more present and comfortable folks will feel.

### **Talking Pieces, Openings and Closings –**

- **ITEMS OF VALUE:** Find talking pieces that have some kind of value to it – and be prepared to tell that story.
- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Stay away from talking pieces that have certain fragrances or are fragile
- **CLOSINGS AND OPENINGS:** Think through the openings and closings you choose. Consider your intention in choosing a particular poem or breathing exercise.
- **SETTING THE TONE:** Is the circle going to be discussing a difficult issue that might produce tension or stress? If so, what would be a good poem, breathing exercise or activity that may soothe some of that anxiety?

### **Co –Keeping –**

- **TEAMWORK:** For co-keeping, talk to your co-keeper ahead of time. Figure out who is going to lead which parts of the circle. Who is doing the Opening? The Closing? Going over Values, etc?
- **TRANSITIONS:** Coordinate how the talking piece will be passed around, particularly when you transition between different activities or questions. For instance, will you two set the talking piece down and the other keeper pick up a different piece? Or have the talking piece be passed around? As a suggestion: It's best not to pass the talking piece across the circle.
- **SEATING:** Sit across from each other and rely on body language/signaling that you're both comfortable with.

### **Pre-Circle Preparation (Getting Centered)**

Feel free to incorporate your daily practice as a preparation tool to feel centered before keeping a peace circle. If you don't have a daily practice, you can implement any of the suggested practices below.

### **Bodywork –**

- **SLEEP:** Get lots of rest the night before
- **BREATH:** Deep breathing before you begin
- **STRETCH:** Do a quick 10 minute stretch – seated, standing, whatever feels most comfortable.

### **Mind Awareness and Reflection–**

- **VALUES:** Reflect on the values you want to bring to the circle. Why are they important? What is it about that particular circle that necessitates that values?
- **CHALLENGES:** What are some of your pet peeves when it comes to communication? Good to be aware of what makes you tick so that you're better able to respond to it.
- **INTENTIONS:** Set an intention – name a hope and a fear/anxiety you have. Naming these things will make the fear seem not so big and the hope is a reminder of your skills and capability as a keeper

### **Content Preparation –**

- **QUESTIONS:** Feel comfortable with your prepared questions. No need to memorize your questions, but don't feel attached to your piece of paper either. Go with the flow and feel out the group. Remember – the circle doesn't have to be perfect. Come into the circle knowing you're going to do the best you can and remember the intention you set earlier.
- **TRIGGERS:** Concerning circles about conflict or grief, do some journaling beforehand to center yourself and get in touch with how you feel about that topic at that particular time. Good to know what is hard for you, what might trigger you and how you hope to respond to those emotions while you're keeping.

## **During the Circle**

### **Keeping Time –**

- **TRACKING TIME:** Wear a watch or check your phone to keep track of time. If using your phone, make sure it's on silent and off vibrate.
- **MAKING SPACE:** To manage time with folks who speak for long periods of time, gently remind the entire group to be mindful of the amount of time they are using when sharing stories. Do this when the talking piece comes back to you. Or you can try pulling the person aside during a break.
- **SHORT ON TIME:** If you're running out of time, feel free to skip questions and in order to leave room for a closing and check out.
- **SHORTCUTS:** Feel free to use shortcut check-outs if you're running out of time: spotlight, one word feeling, movement or gesture.

## Handling Emotion or Disclosure –

- **USING BREAKS:** If you sense that someone is upset in the circle, you can always call a break and follow up with them then.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Contextualize confidentiality – it's not that we don't want to talk about our experiences at all, but it's best to get permission from someone if you want to share their story with others who were not part of the circle.
- **ONE-ON-ONES:** You can do one-on-one check ins with folks after a circle, if it feel inappropriate to address them in the large circle. Just remember: you're not a counselor or therapist. You can check in with the individual to see how they're doing and work together afterwards to find helpful resources.
- **GRATITUDE:** If someone discloses a painful experience, you can always thank them for sharing – even if you don't have the talking piece.
- **SAFETY:** If a circle ever feels unsafe or disrespectful, don't be afraid to close the circle. If you're feeling unsafe as a keeper, chances are that other people are feeling the same way.

## Questions and Rounds –

- **PURPOSE OF TALKING PIECE:** Talking about the importance of the talking piece and center pieces creates a sacred space of respect
- **GENDER PRONOUNS:** Go over gender pronouns in the circle. Ask which pronoun people prefer and when the talking piece gets back to you, explain why that is important.
- **CIRCLE KEEPER AND TALKING PIECE:** Circle keeper can talk without talking piece but remain reflective about the power dynamics involved with that.
- **MODELING VS. OPINION:** For questions concerning someone's opinion, the circle keeper will pass the talking piece first and respond last. If the question is connected to an ice breaker question or check in, the keeper should go first to model. That way people know they have the liberty to talk, rather than quick, one word responses.
- **INVITING VOICES:** If someone has passed, always pass the talking piece around once more to make sure they get a chance to speak
- **MULTI-SENSORY:** Incorporate movement, art making, music, etc whenever possible. It's a great way to stir up energy, especially for circles that last several hours.

## Breaks –

- **NOURISHMENT:** If it's a long circle, take lots of breaks for food, snacks and water.
- **BREATHING:** At any time during a circle, call for a break for a deep breath.

## Reading Body Language –

- **SILENCE:** Try not to judge peoples' body language or lack of participation – it may appear as though the person has checked out when really they are fully engaged and just need time to think before talking. Some people may never get a chance to share – and

that's fine- all you can do is pass the talking piece around as in invitation for them to speak if they choose to.

- **FIDGETING:** Also, don't judge fidgeting, drawing, etc – those are other ways that people may need to process.

### **Be Yourself –**

- **INTUITION:** Go with your gut and trust your intuition – if it feels like there needs to be another round, pass the talking piece around just in case. You can emphasize that people don't have to speak again, but are welcome to if there were any remaining lingering thoughts
- **AD LIB:** Feel free to go off script! It's good to come prepared with a list of questions – stay present with the conversation and try not to force any certain direction or topic. Remember: the circle belongs to everybody and will lead itself. So go with it!

### **Post-Circle**

- **REFLECTION:** After the circle, be sure to give yourself time to reflect. How did it feel to keep the circle? What are you taking away? What could have been done differently?
- **TREAT YOURSELF:** Do something nice for yourself after, if possible. Self care is important in doing this work, so treat yourself to something that will boost your wellness and emotional wellbeing.

### **Check List for Circle Keepers**

- ✓ Set a time (start/end time, consider work and school schedules, anticipate starting late, etc.)
- ✓ Room reservation (accessibility, privacy, location, etc.)
- ✓ Confirm with participants via email or phone
- ✓ Prepared questions
- ✓ Talking piece(s)
- ✓ Center piece
- ✓ Kleenex (if necessary)
- ✓ Art supplies (glue, construction paper, ribbon, scissors, tape, glitter, etc)
- ✓ Sign-in sheet
- ✓ Openings
- ✓ Closings
- ✓ Small pieces of paper or large paper for values
- ✓ Pens/pencils
- ✓ Candle (s)

## ***Tips and Check Lists for Strategy Session Facilitators***

### **Pre-Strategy Session Prep –**

- **REST:** Get plenty of rest the night before – strategy sessions take a lot of energy!
- **CENTERING:** Do some breathing exercises or journaling the night before or the day of.
- **CHECK LIST:** Make a check list of all the handouts you'll need (i.e. scenario, strategy sheet, evaluation sheet, principles, definitions, etc)

### **Time –**

- **LENGTH AND DEPTH:** Give yourselves at LEAST three hours to complete a lab. The framing and context are really important and take time – don't rush it.
- **TIME LIMITS:** Be mindful of time – coordinate a system with your co-coordinator to figure out who will keep time at particular parts of the lab.

### **Nourishment –**

- **BREAKS:** Allow plenty of breaks – a lot of info is processed at one time and space might be needed to use the bathroom, grab some water or take a walk.
- **FOOD:** Provide food! Again, consider costs, food preferences and allergies, potluck options, etc.
- **BREATHE:** Feel free to initiate a breathing exercise if it feels really heavy. Or call for a break.
- **SPACE:** Depending on the space, try to arrange chairs in a circle – make sure you have a chalkboard or flipchart to write things down.

### **Framing –**

- **DEFINITIONS:** Leave enough time for the definitions portion. We all have different definitions for some of these concepts and it's important to understand where we're all coming from before strategizing. Make the definitions, framing and principles as interactive as possible. Definition mash up.
- **GUIDELINES:** Set guidelines for communication. Go over them as a group and then ask if anyone has questions or something they'd like to add.
- **ASSESSING HARM EXERCISE:** Do the Assessing Needs and Feelings exercise in the beginning – it helps set the tone around what the wants and needs are for both the person who caused harm and the person who was harmed. Also, it shows people that we've all been in both roles (to varying degrees, of course) but centers them in a feeling space, rather than a head or intellectual space.
- **ROLE PLAYS:** Frame the role plays in a way that signifies interaction and participation, but also ways to embody these strategies so that we can become more familiar with them and actually do them.
- **COLLECTIVE SUPPORT:** When talking about support, emphasize that we mean the survivor, not necessarily the person who caused harm. There are ways that we can hold

these individuals accountable by being supportive of them changing their behavior and seeking their own healing.

- **COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY:** Accountability often becomes conflated with punishment, and usually individual. Be sure to ask open questions about what they think the difference between punishment and accountability is. Or what are the ways that we see accountability playing out, and not just targeted towards the person who caused harm.

### **Facilitation -**

- **FEEDBACK:** When giving feedback to the role plays, allow participants to respond to each other first. Always comment on something they did well, and then offer any gentle critique you may have. If you have a critique, always frame it as a question in order for people to think about it more deeply. For instance, “that’s interesting, I wonder what would happen...” (I wonder questions)
- **OPENNESS AND HONESTY:** Encourage people to be honest about the process. What concerns do you have? How would you feel if you encountered these situations and were faced with implementing this strategy? The more people can honestly respond to these questions, the more centered they will in whatever response they choose to do.
- **ASSESSING FEELINGS:** Asking people how they feel about these scenarios and strategies is really important in order to ground them fully in the work. It’s one thing to write strategies down on paper and role play them in a contained space, but it’s different when thinking about putting them into practice.
- **FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:** When facilitating, ask follow-up questions that can further people’s thinking. Wait a while before making a particular point. Examples: “that’s really interesting, what do others think of that?” or “you mentioned something about \_\_\_\_\_, can you speak more to that/tell us more about what you mean?” or “that’s a great point. And I want to make sure we can hear from everyone, so what else is there?”
- **HANDLING SILENCE:** Be okay with silence. If no one responds, just sit patiently and let someone speak. If you have a particularly quiet group, feel free to initiate a circle process. People can pass if they like, but some people just need an invite.
- **STRATEGY SHEETS:** Remind participants to write down their strategies and hand them in after the lab. Remind them to write legibly!

### **Reflection –**

- **SHARING STORIES:** When reflecting on stories of harm or violence, always remind participants that they can choose an incident that’s on the lower end of the range/scale.
- **REFLECTION CIRCLES:** Feel free to suggest a reflection circle as a follow-up to the safety lab. There’s always so much to process, and having a space to just talk about how we feel and the impact these situations have had can be helpful.

### **Check List for Strategy Session Facilitators**

- ✓ Set a time (start/end time, consider work and school schedules, anticipate starting late, etc.)
- ✓ Room reservation (accessibility, privacy, location, etc.)
- ✓ Confirm with participants via email or phone

- ✓ Printed copies of the Scenario
- ✓ Printed copies of Community Accountability Principles and Definitions
- ✓ Definition Cards for Definition mash-up
- ✓ Strategy Sheets
- ✓ Evaluations
- ✓ Sign-in Sheet
- ✓ Pens/pencils
- ✓ List of Resources
- ✓ BCEV Brochure
- ✓ Food and drinks, if necessary

## ***Freewrite Reflection Tools for Circle Keepers and Strategy Session Facilitators***

There are a number of ways that circle keepers and safety lab facilitators can center themselves before leading a circle or discussion. In addition to deep breathing and meditation, doing a quick freewrite or journaling can help you gauge how you're feeling in preparation for an event and also set intentions for what you'd like to happen. Use these exercises, both pre- and post-reflections, to gain more awareness, mindfulness and confidence as you do this work.

### **Pre-Circle/Pre-Strategy Session Reflection Prompts**

- How are you feeling in this moment? Where in your body are you feeling this?
- What hopes do you have for the circle/strategy session?
- What concerns? Fears?
- What values do you want to bring to this particular circle/session? Why are these important?
- Freewrite about a story you know you're going to share. How do you feel about sharing this story? Why do you think this story is important to share in the circle? Is this your first time telling this story? If so, what is coming up for you?
- Do some deep breathing for five minutes. Or stretch. Do you feel tension in your body? If so, where are you feeling it? Can you breathe into that space? Can you gently lean into that part of your body and stretch it out a bit? Are you able to breathe fully and deeply?

### **Post-Circle/Evaluation Prompts**

- Name one thing you think you did well as a circle keeper/session facilitator today?
- What's one thing that you could have done differently?
- How do you feel after the circle different than when it began?
- What are you taking away with you?
- What do you want to leave behind?
- What are you going to do for self care?

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## **RESOURCES FOR COLLECTIVE HEALING AND STRATEGIZING**

### **Chicago-based Organizations**

#### **Community Justice for Youth Institute**

**<http://communityjustice4youth.org/>**

Offers trainings in Peacemaking Circles and Restorative Justice practices for communities, schools, and other institutions.

#### **Project NIA**

**<http://www.project-nia.org/>**

Through participatory action research, community engagement, education, and capacity-building, Project NIA facilitates community-focused responses to youth violence and crime.

#### **Sage Community Health Collective**

**<http://www.sagecommunityhealth.org/>**

Their mission is to “challenge systemic health disparities and the traditional patient/practitioner dynamic and provide affordable, accessible, trauma-informed and harm-reductionist healing services including acupuncture, herbs, bodywork, and nutritional counseling.”

#### **Young Women’s Empowerment Project**

**<http://youarepriceless.org/>**

Offers safe, respectful, free-of-judgment spaces for girls and young women impacted by the sex trade and street economies to recognize their goals, dreams and desires.

### **National Organizations**

#### **Center for Transformative Change (CXC) – Berkeley, CA**

**<http://transformativechange.org/article.php?story=centernamechange>**

“CXC is the first national center entirely dedicated to bridging the inner and outer lives of social change agents, activists and allies to support a more effective, sustainable social justice movement.”

#### **Generation FIVE – Oakland, CA**

**<http://www.generationfive.org/>**

Through survivor leadership, community organizing, and public action, Generation FIVE believes meaningful community response is the key to effective prevention.

#### **Generative Somatics – San Francisco, CA**

**<http://www.somaticsandtrauma.org/>**

Somatic practices, combined with somatic awareness and somatic bodywork allow for holistic, sustainable transformation.

## **INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence**

**<http://www.incite-national.org>**

A leading national activist organization of radical feminists of color advancing a movement to end violence against women of color and our communities through direct action, critical dialogue, and grassroots organizing.

## **Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective** – various parts of U.S. South

**[http://kindredhealingjustice.org/needs\\_strategies.html](http://kindredhealingjustice.org/needs_strategies.html)**

Part of their mission is to “manifest and sustain the physical, environmental, spiritual and emotional well being of our movements and communities by resourcing and/or creating healing models that intervene and transform trauma, violence and abuse in our lives to have collective healing responses for sustaining organizers.”

## **Social Justice Leadership** – New York, New York

**<http://sojustlead.org/>**

**<http://sojustlead.org/sites/default/files/docs/Transformative%20Power%20of%20Practice.pdf>**

“We aspire to assemble the elements for a new model of social justice organization: a values-driven and skillful leadership that understands the significance of reflective practice, a culture of organizational performance that is uncompromising on results, and a perspective toward movement-building that is strategic and long-term in its outlook”

## **stone circles** – Mebane, NC

**<http://stonecircles.org/>**

“Our mission is to sustain activists and strengthen the work of justice through spiritual practice and principles... We believe that practices and communities of transformation are necessary for us to realize the individual liberation that is our birthright and the collective liberation that is our responsibility.”

## **StoryTelling and Organizing Project of Creative Interventions** – Oakland, CA

**<http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org/>**

A community project that shares stories of community-based actions — involving family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, community members -- to stop, address or prevent interpersonal violence