Cultivating Sacred Spaces: Organizing to Heal and Healing to Organize

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Breathe.
Healing is not linear.
“Depression is useful. It signals that you need to make changes in your life, it challenges your tendency to withdraw, it reminds you to take action.” - Gloria Anzaldúa
The Ocean of a Wounded Warrior
by Farima Pour-Khorshid
Breathe.
the struggle is real
...and so is healing.
understanding our struggle(s)
The goals of the boarding schools were to “Kill the Indian and save the man” – to assimilate American Indians into white, Euro-American society.

Unhealed trauma of prior generations being expressed in current generations, which can continue to be passed down for thousand of years.

Breathe.
The 4 I’s of Oppression as Trauma

**Ideological**
A system of beliefs or ideas that uphold one group as being better and more valuable than another.

**Internalized**
When oppression is so deeply ingrained within one’s psyche that they perpetuate harm and toxicity onto themselves and others.

**Interpersonal**
The idea that one group is better than another and has the right to dominate/control the other.

**Institutional**
The ways Institutions maintain and perpetuate oppression through their practices, policies and values which privilege some and harm others.
Social Toxicity


The extent to which a social environment in which people develop and operate is poisonous, in that it contains serious threats to the development of identity, competence, moral reasoning, trust, hope, and the other features of personality and ideology that impact wellness in school, family, work, and the community.
Breathe.
“Trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present. Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions.

— Bessel A. van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LET CHRONIC STRESS & NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AFFECT YOUR BODY

1. BRAIN
Chronic stress can lead to poor concentration, low mood, personality changes and may even damage brain cells.

2. MOUTH
Mouth ulcers, dryness and even speech impediments can be affected by chronic stress.

3. REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS
Recurrent vaginal infections, problems with getting pregnant and giving birth and disrupted menstrual cycles are issues in women. Impotence and premature ejaculation can result in men.

4. MUSCLES
Negative emotions are stored as tension in muscles and can lead to muscle spasms, chronic pain, fatigue, even tics and tremors.

5. SKIN & HAIR
Eczema, acne and psoriasis can be triggered by negative emotions and periods of chronic stress. High stress levels can cause hair loss and even baldness.

6. LUNGS
Chronic stress can trigger asthmatic symptoms like wheezing and bronchodilation.

7. HEART
Excessive adrenaline and cortisol production from negative emotions and stress can lead to hypertension, cardiovascular disease putting a strain on your heart.

8. DIGESTIVE TRACT
Negative emotions keeps the body in stress mode directing blood flow away from digestion. This can lead to digestive disorders like indigestion, IBS and excess acid causing heart burn and even ulcers.

POSITIVE EMOTIONS
Relaxing Serotonin, Dopamine and improved Vasodilation helps with lower blood pressure, better digestion, easier life and better ability to deal with periods of stress.

EMOTIONAL ENERGY SCALE
PEACE
JOY
COURAGE
ACCEPTANCE
LUST
ANGER
FEAR
GRIEF
APATHY

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS
Constant negative emotions leads to chronic stress - high blood pressure, vasoconstriction, heart disease, metabolic diseases, emotional eating disorders, autoimmune diseases.
“Radical” Healing

“Radical simply means grasping things at the root.”

-Dr. Angela Davis
Radical Healing Involves:

1) Healing individual harm
2) Healing interpersonal relationships and community based harm
3) Healing institutions, policies, and systems

The Toxic Cycle of Oppression

Social Toxins
- Racism
- Sexism
- ableism

Iatricalized
- fear
- stress
- shame
- grief

Interpersonal

Institutional

Values

Policies

Practices
Think about a time when you either experienced, perpetuated or witnessed one of these forms of oppression in school. What happened? How did you feel?
“African-American and Latino elementary school students are being victimized by teachers and staff members at schools in the Hayward Unified School District, parents and their children said for a second straight school board meeting in February.”

“Similar frustrations regarding bullying and racism toward students by teachers has been voiced at the Hayward school board for several years.”

“A Hayward parent said inaction from school administrators to the abusive treatment her daughter has faced in Hayward schools has left the girl contemplating dropping out of school.”

"My family is in an educational abusive relationship with the Hayward Unified School District," she told the school board last month. "What is happening is not okay and I will not stop until it is okay for all children to go to school in this district and be safe and feel loved."
Breathe.
Personal, psychological, and spiritual injuries inflicted onto marginalized people due to fixed, yet fluid and moldable structures of racism, privilege, and power. Spirit murdering denies inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance—all things that a person needs to be human and to be educated.
What we know from research:

82% U.S. Teachers are White
(Hrabowski & Sanders, 2015)

Teacher Diversity Gap in Every State
(Boser, 2014)

Teacher of Color Attrition is Higher than White Teachers
(Ingersoll & May, 2011)

Teacher Professional Development

Upholds the Status Quo
(Corcoran, 1995)

Ahistorical, Apolitical and Antidialogical
(Kohli, Picower, Martinez & Ortiz, 2015; Ziechner, 1993)

Neoliberal
(Lipman, 2013; Stovall, 2016)

Normalizes Whiteness
(Baszile, 2008; Kohli, 2009)

Racially Hostile School Climates
(Kohli, 2018; Martinez, Valdez & Cariaga, 2016)

Change(d) Agents
(Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011)

Social/Racial Trauma
(Ginwright, 2016; Kohli, 2008)

ToC Push-Out
(Ladson-Billings, 2004; Lincove, Barrett, & Strunk, 2018)

Teachers of Color Committed to Social Justice
Organizing to Heal and Healing to Organize

The word *hella* has its roots deep in the soul of California’s Bay Area. It means something along the lines of "very" or "really" but more importantly, it is a statement of cultural identification with the Bay Area. Hella is more than just a word. It’s a symbol. It’s a way of life. (Urban Dictionary, n.d.).
Situated within Social Justice Org in Bay Area
14 members, closed “study group”
Monthly Meetings [5:30 pm-8:00 pm]
9 Self-Identified Women, 5 Self-Identified Men
All Members Applied to Join
Racial and Professional Diversity
Range of Experience: 3 – 21 years
Ethnographic Study [Currently in Year 5]
*Praxis means reflection and action toward transformation and liberation from oppression.

Critical Healing Centered Racial Affinity Space

(Pour-Khorshid, 2018)
Pedagogical Framework

Critical Professional Development
(Kohli, Picower, Martinez & Ortiz, 2015)

Healing Centered Engagement
(Ginwright, 2016; 2018)

Community Cultural Wealth
(Yosso, 2005)

- aspirational
- linguistic
- familial
- social
- navigational
- resistance

- critical praxis
- dialogical
- non-hierarchal

Professional Humanizing Development for Critical Educators of Color

- Restoration of Culture, Agency, Relationships, Meaning and Aspirations [CARMA]
- Healing at the Individual, Interpersonal and Institutional levels
Typical Meeting Agenda

5:30-6:00: Dinner/Community Building
6:00-6:30: Connections
6:30-7:45: Theoretically Grounded Reflective/ Interactive/Writing/Art Activity and Group Sharing
7:45-7:50: Announcements
7:50-8:00: Appreciations Circle
Examples of H.E.L.L.A. Activities

- Racial Life Maps
- Healing Centered Vision Boards
- H.E.L.L.A. Affirmation Cards
- H.E.L.L.A. Letters to Self
- H.E.L.L.A. Zine
- Mindful Journaling
- Intersectional Lenses of Oppression
- Who Are You Activity
- Testimonio
- Gratitude Circles
“My thinking grew directly out of listening to my own discomforts, finding out who shared them, who validated them, and in exchanging stories about common experiences, finding patterns, systems, explanations of how and why things happened. This is the central process of consciousness raising, of collective testimonio.”

Collective *Testimonio*

(Aurora Levins Morales in Telling to live: Latina feminist *testimonios*, p. 87, 2001)
The process of bringing to mind a particular event, feeling, or action from one’s past experiences and the process of actually putting those memories back together in the present (re-membering) in order to gain new power from racial/cultural memories that marginalized people learned to forget.
All social movements are birthed in pain, validated through our stories, matured through struggle, and empowered through solidarity.
cultivating space for yourself and others to metabolize pain and experience joy is activism.
“In today’s America, we tend to think of healing as something binary: either we’re broken or we’re healed from that brokenness. But that’s not how healing operates, and it’s almost never how human growth works. More often, healing and growth take place on a continuum, with innumerable points between utter brokenness and total health.”
“Clean pain mends and can build your capacity for growth. It’s the pain you experience when you step forward into the unknown, with honesty and vulnerability. Paradoxically, only by walking into our pain or discomfort—experiencing it, moving through it, and metabolizing it—can we grow. It’s how the human body works.”
“Dirty pain is the pain of avoidance, blame, and denial. When people respond from their most wounded parts, become cruel or violent, or physically or emotionally run away, they experience dirty pain. They also create more of it for themselves and others.”
Breathe.
healing requires care
"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

-Audre Lorde

This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from “Self-Care Assessment Worksheet”
Self care IS ALSO: addressing your own problematic thoughts & behaviors; removing toxic situations from your life; holding yourself and others accountable with love; apologizing authentically; doing your own self work to be spiritually, emotionally and physically well.

We deserve to break cycles. We deserve longevity. We deserve to leave a legacy of healing for our future.
Resistance is imagining a new way. We don't have to exist in exhaustion. We have a right to rest. We have a right to thrive. Rest is a healing portal into the future. A liberated, connected and justice-filled future.

The Nap Ministry
@thenapministry
San Quentin Warriors celebrate victory over Golden State

October 1, 2017 By Rahsaan Thomas

The Golden State (GS) Warriors are national champions, but after their sixth annual road game behind the walls of San Quentin State Prison. They lost 103-102 despite Bob Myers' 32 points and 31 rebounds performance. The "home team" celebrated the victory by poses with the 2017 NBA Championship trophy.
we must heal ourselves as we try to heal systems
“How do I hold a systemic analysis and approach when each system I am critical of is peopled, in part, by the same flawed and complex individuals that I love? This question always leads to self reflection. If I can see the ways I am perpetuating systemic oppressions, if I can see where I learned the behavior and how hard it is to unlearn it, I start to have more humility as I see the messiness of the communities I am a part of and the world I live in.”

- Adrienne Maree Brown
“You were given that pain and that vision because you have something to do with it.”
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