

WEAVING TOGETHER A WORLD WITHOUT VIOLENCE:

A COLLECTION OF PRINCIPLES,
PRACTICES, AND RECIPES
FOR HEALING

FROM THE NETWORK WEAVER
LEARNING LAB

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INTRODUCTION & ORIGIN STORY

“We have to re-imagine revolution — and think not only about the change in our institutions, but the changes in ourselves.

—GRACE LEE BOGGS

IN THE BEGINNING...

Leaders working to end domestic and sexual violence in California began to transcend their organizational roles and ask questions of themselves and one another. Questions like:

- Q. What does it take to work in networked ways (mindsets, habits, practices) and what does it require of my leadership and that of others in our organizations and communities?
- Q. How can we transform conventional approaches to leadership development to better serve our networks, while still ensuring healthy organizations?
- Q. How can we become a networked domestic violence field that works across and at the intersection of issues?
- Q. What structure/infrastructure will be needed in order to support our network’s experiments and work going forward?

These questions led to expressed interest in deepening strategic conversations (that would lead to informed action) about intersectionality, culturally specific and trauma-informed care models, changing the narrative of what is needed to end intimate partner violence, funding for sustainability, and engaging men in the movement.

To support this evolution, CompassPoint – which had designed and run the Strong Field Leadership Development Program (SFP) for Domestic Violence leaders – and the Management Assistance Group – which had created and run the Network Leadership Innovation Lab (NLIL) to support the work of justice leaders building long term, collaborative, movement networks to achieve common goals – proposed a Network Weaver Learning Lab (NWLL) to work within and across networks and movements in order to address intimate partner violence in intersectional and systemic ways.

WE CAME TOGETHER...

From different types of movement work in different communities in California on several interconnected issues all related to intimate partner violence (racial and gender justice, immigrant rights, mental health advocacy, food and climate justice) to experiment with and evolve our leadership and ways of being and doing.

WE DISCOVERED THAT...

Drawing on network weaver mindsets – such as Multiple Ways of Knowing; Systems and Complexity Perspective; Balancing the “Being” and “Doing”; and Race, Class, Power and Privilege – we could build trust and deepen our sense of our mutual interdependence. As the program progressed, the mindsets evolved into the Five Elements of a Thriving Ecosystem – advancing deep equity, cultivating leaderful ecosystems, valuing multiple ways of knowing, influencing complex systems change, and creating space for inner work – which enabled us to create a sacred container for engaging in shared approaches to healing and transformation.

For our network weaving to be successful – and moving in the direction of our shared vision – we needed a liberatory approach to addressing systemic violence, one that engages with people who are addressing a number of related social ills, one that focuses on relationship, trust, and the individual and collective innerwork and healing. Such an approach is essential for enabling us to hold and engage productively and generatively with tension as we work within and attempt to create relationships that do not replicate the legacies of extraction, domination, and exploitation. For

these are the legacies that often create the conditions for, or exacerbate the prevalence of, intimate partner violence. And too, these are the legacies that make networked ways of working difficult.

There are a number of frameworks, theories and related tools designed to support the creation of networks, ones that outline various roles and structures. But in practice, actually figuring out which approaches are best aligned for a given network at a given point in time can be challenging. We found that an experimental approach – one that enabled us to apply, reflect, and adjust over time – provided the most agile and effective means to move into a networked way of working together.

Beyond the frameworks and structures, the most difficult and complex aspect of networked leadership is actually building the awareness, understandings, and relationships needed to actually be and do differently.

IN ORDER TO DO SO...

We focused our time and energy on:

- Deep hanging out through cooking food, storytelling, ceremony and ritual, movement, art, and music.
- Tending to and prioritizing relationships and community, healing and care.
- Truth-telling, to lean courageously into generative tension in order to emerge on the other side feeling unburdened and renewed, powerful, and able to connect to one another more authentically.
- Connecting to ancestral and blood knowing, which when not in regular practice, can be easily drowned out by the noise of modernity.
- Liberatory practices and working more actively to disrupt the mantle of expertise (which can be another form of dominance).

As a result of this focus we were able to develop some transformative approaches to holding and moving through generative tensions, deepen our connection to the land, develop a relationship to food as medicine,

and otherwise shift our perspectives, connections and relationships in ways that moved us closer toward shared liberation.

N O W ...

We are inviting you into this exploration, experiment, and movement toward healing, liberation and love so that you might learn from our approaches and recipes and create and contribute some of your own.

With love,
NWLL WEAVERS

HOW TO USE THIS HEALING COOKBOOK

This collection of principles, practices and recipes are intended to support others in creating healthier, more loving, and liberated relationships and communities.

This book is a companion to the medicine cards which offer medicine in the form of invocations, reflections, and liberatory practices. The book provides more context and scope while the deck provides an interactive approach to shared learning. There are shared stories of network learnings and tools that you can use to deepen your network leadership principles.

You can engage with this book in a linear fashion, reading it from cover to cover, or it can be used intuitively as a series of doorways to deep reflection, understanding and practice.

Both the healing medicine book and the medicine deck are meant as a humble offering from fellow travelers on the journey to creating a world free of scarcity, injustice, and violence.

We organized the sections as a possible map for collaboration and transformation. But there are many routes to our shared destination. We invite your playfulness and curiosity. We invite sampling, experimentation, and the creation of new combinations and approaches.

SETTING THE TABLE

HOW WE CAME TOGETHER

This work takes passion, commitment—a willingness to be vulnerable; to stretch and grow. We started with people hungry for another way to work across social justice issues, particularly those related to relationship-based violence (RBV). We started with leaders of color and their allies who wanted to work in intersectional ways.

The table was set with a group of 16 leaders, each of whom came from different backgrounds, brought different skills and experiences, and who worked in the movement to end intimate-partner violence or other intersectional issues such as reproductive justice, immigrant rights, and racial justice. We brought together black, latinx, indigenous leaders; leaders whose families immigrated from China, Vietnam, Ireland, and Mexico,

We set the table with our histories – our trauma and our triumphs – with our vision for a better world.

Set your table however you choose. In the process you may want to consider:

- Starting with those who are ready
- Situating your approaches in an intersectional and non-binary (either or) context
- Grounding in a shared vision
- Focusing on interrupting systems of oppression

We set the table with the hopes of building a network of leaders and weavers working at the intersections of social change. In the following pages, we will outline some approaches, practices, and learnings that may help you in building networked approaches to transformative social change as well.

INVOCATIONS

These invocations are meant to call you into this work, this way of working to end relationship-based violence (RBV) and other interconnected systems of oppression and dehumanization. The work can be challenging, even exhausting, and too filled with possibility and joy. These invocations are an invitation to a particular orientation to the work and to the world we are creating together.

*If I could fly
I would come in to your dreams
and hold you to sleep every night.
I'd bring the Moon to blanket you with kisses
and Stars to Shine your rest.
If I could fly I'd be your angel.
I'd smooth the ground before you.
I'd Light your every step
I would carry you
If I could fly.*

—SHARON BRIDGEFORTH-DEM
BLESSINGS #1



INVOCATION

THE CALL

Thank you for picking up this book... You didn't choose it, it chose you. It called out to you. Thank you for answering the call. Pulled together by a diverse group of organizers, healers, activists who work day in and day out to uproot violence, herein lies a bit of salve to ease the pain of Injustice. We created this with you in our hearts, minds, and breath. In it, we hope you will find yourself within us. We hope you see yourself reflected in the images spread across the pages. We hope you hear your voice written in the words. We hope you find recipes for your own healing, and if not, we hope you will create one and share it with the world.



—TRINA

INVOCATION

CREATING CONNECTION

The world is filled with injustices and too it is filled with beauty and wonder. This collection of practices, recipes, medicine is an invitation to practice creating connection, joy, and liberation in your life and work. To feed your heart and spirit, to be brave, and to be compassionate. We hope you find stories and approaches that challenge and inspire you. We hope you join us in co-creating a world in which belly-laughs are abundant, people are seen, and all beings are nourished and able to thrive. We live liberation.



—AJA

INVOCATION

LEGACY OF LOVE

As you proceed on this journey, please know you are now a part of a legacy of love. The teachings and experiments held within are blessings from the hearts of us all. Some of the offerings include experiential learnings which describe some of the values and practices that may propel us toward Collective Liberation. Other topics explore how we might engage art as a medium to tell our story. There are so many interesting nooks and original recipes that I have no doubt you will find something meaningful and beautiful. Smile and breathe.



—VINCENT

INVOCATION

FINDING THE MIDDLE

I want to share a middle place between work and rest, that place where we are able to focus and breath and feel all the shifts that are taking place. As you focus on the steps that move you forward, know that each one will be filled with joy and discomfort. Without discomfort, we can't grow! As we are each open to our own growth, we are able to shift the system together.



—DIA

We have been telling people that this is the Eleventh Hour, now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour. And there are things to be considered...

Q. Where are you living?

Q. What are you doing?

Q. What are your relationships?

Q. Are you in right relation?

Q. Where is your water?

Know your garden.

It is time to speak your truth.

Create your community.

Be good to each other.

And do not look outside yourself for your leader.

This could be a good time! There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.

Know the river has its destination.

Let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep your eyes open, and your heads above the water.

See who is in there with you and celebrate.

At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.

The time of the one wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word 'struggle' from your attitude and your vocabulary.

All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.

—HOPI ELDERS, JUNE 8, 2000

INVOCATION

WALKING BACKWARDS TO THE FUTURE

Someone recently shared an old proverb from the Pacific Islands: “Walk backwards into the future.” That doesn’t make sense, one might think. Or one might ask, what does it mean?

To me, this is a directive from the ancestors...

A North Star, that can always guide us, even on the darkest night...

For progress and change is constant, always on the horizon...

Hard fought and hard earned – with blood, sweat and tears – mine, yours and the many who came before us...

And it must also be hard celebrated, hard rejoiced – with laughter from deep in the belly that makes you snort uncontrollably, and makes it hard to breathe in all the joy, but you must take it all in...

Let us never forget where and who we came from...

Let all of that strength and wisdom and love fill us up...

So we can be with ourselves...

So we can be with our people...

So we can be with our planet...

Freedom is nigh.

–ADA



INVOCATION

COURAGE TO WAKE

My friends, in the words of the great poet Hafiz...

Laughter

What is this precious love and laughter

Budding in our hearts?

It is the glorious sound

Of a soul Waking Up!

From I Heard God Laughing: Poems of Hope and Joy

May the courage of being “awake” tickle your soul and heart until you’re
breathless from falling in love all over again.

—SHARON



INVOCATION

TAKE WHAT YOU
NEED, SHARE WHAT
YOU CAN

These pages are filled with radical love for you, for ourselves, for our community, for our world. We invite you to bring your whole self to this space, this community. Please take what you need and share what you can. We hope what you find here feels abundant and nourishes you. It is a place to play, try on, dance and live into practices for creating the world we want to live in.

—CRISTY



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF COOKING

As a justice-rooted network weaver, these are the basic principles of cooking up collaborative and transformative approaches to social change. This is how we cook together in ways that advance justice without recreating or exacerbating oppression and harm.

4 NETWORK MINDSETS

The four network mindsets are about different ways of thinking about and living into the work. We used these mindsets in the NWLL (and the five elements on the following page) to deepen and amplify effective adaptive network leadership among the Network Weavers. In this way, we focused on deepening individual capacity while bolstering collective efforts.

Multiple Ways of Knowing

- Recognizing, lifting up, and engaging wisdom in multiple forms (experiential knowledge, art and culturally-based forms of expression and meaning-making)
- Letting go of expert and embracing co-learner/co-creator
- Rooting into a values-based frame

Systems and Complexity Perspective

- Breaking silos – interconnectedness and interdependence
- Engaging and developing leadership at many points and levels of authority in the system
- Collaborative decentralization of power
- Shifting from scarcity to abundance
- Holding priorities of individual, organization, and network
- Balancing short and long-term goals
- Understanding systems implications for ending violence

Balancing the “Being” and “Doing”

- Spaciousness
- Head and heart
- Complexity of mind – whole person, mindfulness, levels of being
- Whole people/whole systems
- Space for relationship building

Race, Class, Power and Privilege

- Building a foundation of trust for courageous conversations
- Love, human dignity, compassion
- Unpacking levels of oppression (systemic, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized)

THE INTERDEPENDENT ELEMENTS OF A THRIVING JUSTICE ECOSYSTEM

The Five Elements of a Thriving Justice Ecosystem draws on MAG's work defining what is needed to create the necessary conditions for transformative social change. While not all elements require focused attention at the exact same time, they are interconnected and interdependent. Without attending to equity, systems change efforts reinforce the same inequities and imbalances of power. Without inner work, complex systems change is humanly unsustainable. Together these elements weave a thriving, liberating whole.

Advancing Deep Equity

Deep equity is being in the continuous and ongoing practices necessary for people and the planet to experience love, dignity, and justice. It is not a destination. Deep equity draws on recognizing and healing the negative impacts of our identities, stepping into the positive impacts of our identities, as well as the power of difference to access deeper understandings, approaches, and ways of being to transform people, institutions, and systems.

Centering Inner Work

Inner work is our individual and collective practice of nurturing health, vitality, clarity, and wholeness in ourselves as people and as a people. It is what keeps us connected to our ability to be our better selves.

Cultivating Leaderful Ecosystems

Leaderful ecosystems are mutually supportive and highly equitable. They are systems where power is continuously built, shared, and moving. They recognize and grow leadership that supports, complements, and supplements toward a desired future state.

Embedding Multiple Ways of Knowing

Multiple ways of knowing include the many ways we understand and engage with the world such as through our experiences, art, ancestral wisdom, learnings from the natural world as well as more rationalist approaches often overprivileged by U.S. dominant culture.

Influencing Complex Systems Change

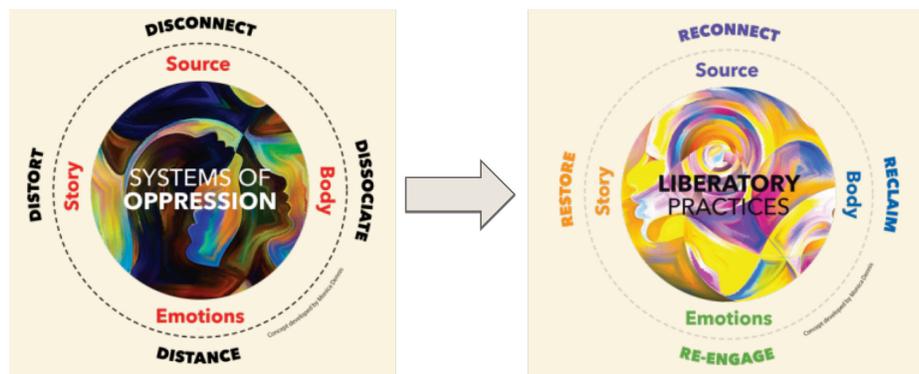
Complex systems change is change that is advanced when we are able to see both the whole system and its details, and embrace experimentation and emergence as principles of moving forward.

MOVING FROM OPPRESSION TO LIBERATION

When seeking to overcome the effects of oppression – both externally driven ones and those we recreate in ourselves and our families and communities – it is critical to attend to the 4 Disconnections (D's) of Oppression and the 4 Reconnections (R's) of Liberation.

In the lab, we did so by exploring the disconnection oppression causes from source, body, emotions, and story. And we continually explored and practiced ways to reconnect to spirit, ancestors, source; ground in and heal our bodies; explore and release our emotions, and rewrite our collective stories. Through the re-integration of our experiences, we are able to find interconnective and liberatory solutions.

The 4 Disconnections (D's) of Oppression and the 4 Reconnections (R's) of Liberation.



Based on the work of Monica Dennis

NETWORK COMPONENTS

Networks are a structure and approach for engaging in complex systems change. As such, there are a number of components or elements to attend to in order to ensure the network can function successfully.

These seven network components or elements are necessary for ensuring people are connected, can communicate, are working toward a shared vision, are able to share resources, develop role clarity (even as it shifts and changes), and engage in ongoing reflection and learning.

Building and reinforcing **social ties** among the people in the network, both online and in person. This creates trust among network participants, allowing them to collaborate and making it easier to overcome potential strategy disagreements.

Creating open **communication** channels where network participants can have conversations with one another. This could be as simple as a WhatsApp group or an email listserv.

Developing a **common language** that reinforces the identity of the network and works to resolve any conflict.

Working with network participants to define a **clear vision** will align people and help them understand the advantages of being a part of the network. This vision guides the network culture and helps participants focus their activities.

Creating **shared resources** that allow people to pool their skills, talents, experiences, expertise, services and funding streams. This strengthens social ties and also saves individual members of the network time and money.

Identifying **actors who drive the activities of the network**, including by monitoring resources, creating messaging, outlining participant responsibilities and receiving feedback.

Creating **mechanisms to provide feedback** on network activity, which helps leaders and other participants understand the trends, resources, and needs of the entire network.

Adapted by Elissa Sloan Perry from from Marty Kearns and NetCentric Campaigns

NETWORK ROLES

Networks exist outside of traditional organizational structures and thus do not have pre-existing roles. However, in order to affect transformative social change, networks need clarity about who is doing what. And too, because networks are constantly shifting as people move in and out of them, there are a number of principles regarding the 7 key roles that serve as useful guides.

Roles have to be flexible. Everyone gets opportunity to assume leadership and move between roles.

Roles should reflect the fluidity of networks.

Roles also need to be clear and understood by everyone.

Along with clarity around roles, we need clarity around decision making.

7 KEY NETWORK ROLES

DRIVERS move the work along.

PRINCIPLES hold the boundaries and protocols of the group and make high-level decisions.

WEAVERS connect the dots and make meaning, and facilitate the whole being more than the sum of the parts.

OPERATIONALISTS attend to logistics and infrastructure.

SUPPORTERS show and do what needs to be done, contribute to the work and its progress, and help make meaning without a formal role.

STORYTELLERS and **MEMORY KEEPERS** helps us document progress, holds the throughline, tells our story.

“**SPECIAL FORCES**” or “**SPECIAL OPS**” can be called into the work on an “as needed” basis to bring their speciality to the table.

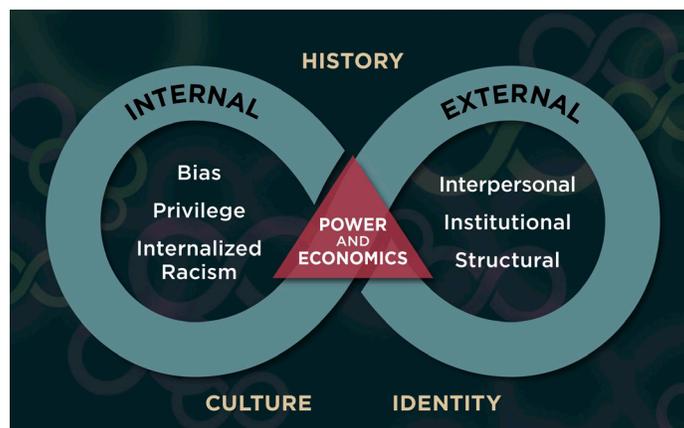
Adapted by Elissa Sloan Perry from from Marty Kearns and NetCentric Campaigns

SEEING SYSTEMS AND INTERSECTIONALITY

The NWLL program was born out of a desire to bring together social justice leaders from across a number of issue areas as we know that relationship-based violence does not occur in isolation. Rather, it is deeply connected to other systems of oppression such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, poverty, and nation-state borders.

Our work together was to make visible these interconnected systems and begin to work in intersectional ways to experiment with new and interconnected approaches toward a world of love and liberation.

This approach is complex and requires we attend to internal and external systems of oppression. It is a continuous practice. The following key ingredients provide some means of doing just that.



Systems Image from WorldTrust

KEY INGREDIENTS

Building a world that is free of violence requires drawing on many ingredients that can be used independently as well as together. We build foundations of trust; prioritize love, dignity, compassion; unpack oppression; and develop tools for seeing ourselves in interdependent relationship to the broader whole.

SACRED CONTAINER

Transformative work is sacred work. In it, we need to reclaim our ancestors and connect to spirit and the deep wisdom of land and sky. By creating sacred containers for the work through spiritual practices, such as altar building or talking circles, we are able to rebuild and reconnect. From this place, we are stronger individually and together.

DEEP HANGING OUT

In order to deal with complex systems of violence and oppression, we need to develop trust, intimacy, and deep connection. There is truly only one way of doing this: deep hanging out.

Deep hanging out takes time and care. It is the practice of trusting, being vulnerable, and loving those that you are doing this sacred work with.

Systems are made up of people. In order to create change we need to shift our relationships and, in so doing, we will transform systems.

In the words of NWLL weavers:

"I was able to develop genuine relationships with my new sisters by DEEP HANGING OUT. This happened through ceremony, movement, art and food."

–VINCENT

"Tending to and prioritizing relationships and community is what I needed to see/re-discover what I already knew."

–ADA

"I am incorporating the INNER WORK and DEEP HANGING OUT as part of my everyday routine and regular activity. I am focused on daily inner-self as I move into holding space as a new transformational coach with those who hold the heaviness of others in trauma and healing through direct service."

–CRISTY

"Building an intersectional, cross-movement network takes deep hanging out to build trust and the ability to collaborate and pivot toward new learnings, needs and opportunities. We have nothing without intentional and sacred relationships: being in right relation to one another."

–AJA

GENERATIVE TENSION

People working to create a new world without violence or other forms of oppression and people working to build a world of love, dignity, and justice, need to be able to name habits and behaviors that cause and maintain inequities.

The habits of White Dominant Culture (as outlined by Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones in their work “White Supremacy Culture”) are to avoid conflict and thus maintain the status quo. But creating transformative change requires we interrupt the status quo and thus we need to move into generative conflict.

Tension and conflict create possibility, opening the doors for new ways of being and working together.

In the words of one NWLL weaver, the process draws upon “the inner work of practicing to listen deeply to others and hold space and respond courageously...” and “holding space for others every day, carrying pains and traumas from stories and experience...[in order to] find a place to connect, look at issues differently and explore holistically solutions.”

–CRISTY

EXPERIMENTATION STANCE

Experimentation is an essential approach for leading in complexity (which is what all social justice leaders are doing) as it supports challenging assumptions, trying out new ideas, methods, and activities, and engaging in rigorous learning and reflection.

In the NWLL, we held an experimentation stance in order to develop individual and group experiments, learn from them, and design new iterations. This approach served as the bridge between inner work and complex systems change, enabling weavers to develop this muscle and thus increase their ability to advance change in complexity.

Experiments can be taken on for a week, month, or half a year (with ongoing learning and refinement); the intent is to practice new behavior and document what happens.

In the words of one NWLL weaver, "Somewhere I remembered the voice of one of my teachers when she encouraged me to be courageous in my actions towards social justice.

She would often toggle my thinking by saying... complete this sentence: Once Upon A Time There Will Be.... It was her way of asking the question, in this moment of time, how might we move forward towards freedom with our best ideas using all that we know, see, and experience. How might we risk? I learned that experimentation moves us towards our vision of a world without violence and collective liberation."

—SHARON

NON-BINARY THINKING

“When you are able to understand the parts and then see them as a finished cohesive whole, it makes the outcome that much more surprising and powerful.”

–DIA

Binary, or either or thinking, is another habit of white dominant culture. It comes from a mindset of dominance and competition. In order to interrupt this habit, we need to open up to, or re-remember, a more holistic way of seeing and engaging with the world. It is in this “both/and” place from which we will find the most transformative solutions.

In the words of one weaver, “this showed up as me stepping more fully into my own gifts, one of which is truth telling, to lean courageously into generative tension in order to emerge on the other side feeling unburdened and renewed, feeling powerful, and able to connect more authentically; leaning into complexity and simultaneity – trying to sit with and hold that many things can be true at the same time, even when they seem to be competing with each other – holding paradox. The inner work IS the work, the personal IS the political, the individual IS the collective.”

–ADA

RECIPES FOR HEALING

Hurt people hurt people. Healed people heal people. Healing in this time can be a privilege for those with the material, financial — including health insurance — and emotional means. I want to make healing more accessible to those with less access.”

—MARÍA

Drawing on the principles, we designed recipes in the forms of experiments to address healing and create new ways of working and being together that advanced transformative change. These experiments focused on disrupting and shifting some aspects of oppression (disconnection) and moving us toward liberation (reconnection).



R E C I P E

HEALING MASCULINITY

The experiment was to engage in a practice of:

- Calling men forth to hold accountability for other men (not always on the backs of women and women of color in particular). Asking the question: how do men honor, support, care for women in ways that don't replicate the "father with the shotgun" patriarchal, protection image?
- Naming the range of places that patriarchy and violence show up – beyond the overt, highly visible, and deeply harmful acts of domestic violence. Trauma and violence "roll downhill" and continue consciously and unconsciously for generations.

The recipe calls for men to call themselves and each other in when replicating the violence and oppression of toxic masculinity and to reclaim the strength and beauty of men. By recognizing and naming these behaviors, men – and cis and trans women as their allies – can radically transform much of the violence perpetrated in the world.

R E C I P E

HABIT DASHERY

The experiment grew out of our desire to explore and push into generative tension as a group with a liberatory stance. We tracked, observed, and journaled about replicating the habits of white dominant culture.

The experimentation design questions was:

- Q. How might liberated relationships with self and others de-center whiteness and interrupt white dominant culture habits?

From this, we developed and then tested the hypothesis:

“If we explore the tension between what we want to build and what we want to deconstruct then we will be able to move deeper into liberated practice in the ways that make sense for each of us.”

The “habit-dashery” practice that emerged was different for each of us, but some common elements were: moving bravely into generative tension and complexity; engaging in conversations that surfaced different points of view; showing up and staying present rather than shut down. We focused on honoring one’s felt experience and internal wisdom (heart) rather than intellectualizing or rationalizing (head). We named the habits that were present and discussed antidotes like sharing power and holding paradox.

Based on the work of Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones from “White Supremacy Culture”

R E C I P E

HEALING THE HEALERS

The experiment grew out of our recognition that our work was very, and necessarily, focused on healing others. But what about the interior quality of the intervener?

We decided to design an experiment around applying our own wisdom as healers – including how to draw on one another for support – in order to address our own experiences of exhaustion, burnout, or scarcity.

In making a disciplined effort to follow our own healing prescriptions, we found our best answers were often within. As we listened to this internal guidance, we were able to hold ourselves accountable to be the change we were seeking in the world. This opened up new pathways for healing. Being able to notice the difference between coping and healing was transformative. There was “beauty and tenderness” in being fully present for each other as we shared our healing practices with one another.

As one weaver observed, “when a story is shared, there can be tendency to turning inward instead of a turning towards others. Bringing your whole self forward can be powerful medicine in itself.”

R E C I P E

CONNECTION TO LAND

Spend 10 minutes (or more:) walking without speaking. Listen to the sounds of the land, the trees, the rocks, the birds. Reflect the quality of that sound. How does listening deeply provide access to deeper connection?

Sit somewhere and consciously breathe. After several moments ask yourself: how does your breathing shift when done consciously and in direct contact with mother earth? Every so often look at the sky for one full minute and then look at the ground. Reflect on:

How does holding the full expanse of sky and ground impact your sense of your own life, the lives of your family and community, the lives of people everywhere?

What might the impact be if we all held this full expanse in our lives and in our social justice work?

Find a stone. Ask it a question that you have been wrestling with. Turn the stone onto every side. What do the different fractals of mineral surface have to share with you? What perspectives or insights do they give? How can they help you hold complexity.

Pick a tree or plant. Touch the limbs, roots, stems, seeds. Breathe in its scents. Ask it what its medicine is. Reflect on the relationship between this medicine and what is needed in your life and our social justice work.

Nature communicates all the time, the tree roots interlock spreading their communication network wide and far. Listen to the land, plants and animals around you. What do you think/know is being communicated? Ask yourself, how do you find ways to communicate with your neighbors at home, at work? Is your communication interlocked in a symbiotic relationship?

INDIGENOUS PRACTICE

“The centuries-long history of the United States government sanctioning the taking of Native land and the forced relocation of American Indians, forbade many from farming, hunting, and practicing their culture in various ways. The result was a loss in cultural knowledge, as well as a degradation in nutrition as American Indians were forced to eat government-provided food rather than providing for themselves, issues that continue to affect Indian culture and communities today.”

Holding social justice conversations around indigenous foods... This is the important concept I've been experimenting with and following projects for over the past year. I shared my deeper thoughts around food sources, healing and violence prevention in our communities with my amazing cohort of learners last summer — they ran with it! It's amazing to see more and more pop up projects in progressive cities happening with similar concepts. I wanted to do this in our rural area but have been afraid of inviting the neighbor who waves his confederate flag. I'm still reconsidering.”



—MELISSA

In order to shift this, Native and non-Native people need to address the impact of this ongoing violence and degradation. And too, we all need to re-engage in a deep relationship with land, animals, and our food production and consumption.

Our experiment in the NWLL was to better honor the first — and still present — peoples and to all connect more deeply to our cultural heritage, its relationship to place and food, and to bring our ancestors — their trauma and perpetration of trauma — into our current healing and transformation work.

R E C I P E

FOOD AS MEDICINE

“Sharing stories around food is a highway to connection. There are opportunities to heal around food. Food can also be used as a punishment, as a need or hunger, it is not only positive. We stepped into it. And it was hard.”

–JENNIFER



With intentional relationship to food one can find: connection, mindfulness, community building, and allyship with the earth. Food can also be weaponized, a privilege, and used to disconnect us from the earth and our culture(s).

The experimental inquiry, and thus recipe, we played with in NWLL was “how might we make time to practice connection using food to explore our vulnerability and connect across difference?”

During our 18-month journey together, we gathered together around food, its source, preparation, and consumption as a recipe for connecting more broadly as human beings – one is dependent on food for subsistence and dependent on our shared transformation for our collective survival.

RECIPE

INTERCONNECTION & THE THREE SISTERS

“The gifts of each are more fully expressed when they are nurtured together than alone. In ripe ears and swelling fruit, they counsel us that all gifts are multiplied in relationship. This is how the world keeps going.”

—ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

According to the Iroquois (among others), corn, beans, and squash are three sisters who thrive when planted together. This tradition of planting corn, beans and squash in the same mounds, is a system that provides soil fertility and a healthy diet. The Three Sisters must grow in community with one another – they need the company and support of each crop to flourish.

We are like the three sisters. We need the support and nourishment of one another to thrive. In the NWLL, we focused on our interconnections – across ethnicity, gender identity, social justice issue – to identify ways to heal and shift systems of oppression in order to sow a more just, loving and dignity-filled garden for us all.

In deep gratitude to Robin Wall Kimmerer for her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants* in which a story of the Three Sisters is told.

R E C I P E

EMBODIMENT

Yin Yoga is the humbling practice of making decisions, sitting in sensations and discomfort, and adapting the circumstances as opportunities arise. When we examine sensation and discomfort, we explore the ways in which individual bodies store emotion and memory. This can lead to the understanding of how our collected history and personal trauma show up in our tissues. Paying attention to those sensations, the movement of energy and the thoughts that accompany it, is the practice of presence. Being present in the moment and to what is happening in our bodies—our habits of disassociation or over-thinking—allows us to build internal resources as well as our connections to others.

—DIA

CHILD'S POSE

Sit back on your heels from a kneeling position and lay forward toward the ground, bringing your forehead to the floor. Modify the width between the knees depending on what feels right for you and your body. Changing the tuck or tilt of the tail will shift how the front body feels, so keep moving and exploring until you feel it to be right. Add props under your chest to lift and raise the ground to meet you, or add props close to the backs of the knees to remove pressure or discomfort. Rest on your forehead or a cheek (changing half way through) on a pillow, block, blanket, or your stacked hands or floor. Find the most comfortable place for your arms, forward, back or under the body. (6 minutes)

S Q U A R E

Start in a cross legged seat. Add a cushion, pillow or block under your bottom to help tilt the pelvis forward a bit. Play with the distance between the knees and how it feels in the outer hips. Move your knees closer together and then further apart. Where do you feel a sensation you can sit with? Fold forward toward the ground. You can also add props under the knees, or thighs or the ankles. Pay attention and ensure that the knees and hips are not complaining or forced. *(3 min each side)*

L U N G E S

Start from hands and knees, step one foot forward. Make sure that your front foot and back knee are about outer hips distance apart. Place more weight on the upper part of the back knee, so you feel like you are pulling the tissues of that back thigh forward as you drop your pelvis. Place the front knee over top the front ankle as this will give you a good amount of stability. Consider adding props under your hands to lift your chest, or fold forward. *(4 minutes each side)*

S A V A S A N A

Lay on your back, legs apart, arms resting at sides with palms up. Rest. *(5–10 minutes)*

IN CLOSING

M E D I C I N E

NAVIGATION... HOME

On that night, the night I thought would be the last night of too many scotches, the old lady came to me again. She looked like my great-grandmother from the one photo we had had of her. She wore a heavy scent like the incense in the church back home.

You will take a strange journey, she said to me. You will not be alone and you will be the loneliest. Until you reweave your interior. There will be cold whiteness over everything and warm golds will curl themselves around you to protect you on the path. Draw the others into it. You will know them. Know two of them already. It will keep out the demons.

Only you can protect you from yourself. Not all white is bad. Not all gold is good.

On this journey taste everything. Some of it will make you sick. Swallow a bit anyway. Inoculate yourself from grand plummets. Explore all of the rooms in each house. Build your own home. Piece by piece, book by book, country by country, soul by soul. Don't be selective, but don't welcome everyone. You will know the difference.

Make your front porch sturdy. Able to withstand card parties, dancing, debates, men with shotguns, and neighbors with treats and suspicious intentions.

Your home once built will go with you wherever you go. Fold it up and put it in your breast pocket. Tuck it behind your ear like a gardenia and slip it into your deepest crevice when you must. Once you have built it, it cannot be un-built. You will always have a choice.

Excerpt from Ephemera by Elissa G. Sloan Perry



ABOUT THE NWLL AND THE NWLL WEAVERS

Launched in 2017, the Network Weaver Learning Lab (NWLL) was an 18-month program that created a space for leaders to develop their thinking and practice and to explore and experiment together on ways to advance the movement to end relationship-based violence. It has been a place of challenging, collaborative, fearless, alive, open and loving exchanges that get to root causes while maintaining a radical systems-perspective – one that embraces the past without being constrained by it, one that deepens and amplifies all the transformational work already taking place.

The program was created through a network partnership between Management Assistance Group (MAG), CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, Sharon Bridgforth, and Michelle Gislason and generously funded by Blue Shield of California Foundation.



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STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF

The NWLL program and this offering would not exist without the creativity and commitment of the NWLL planning grant and proposal process Design Team and Advisory Committee.

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