Reimagining Our Futures:
Transitions Culture Lab
The Franklinton Center at Bricks, Whitakers, North Carolina
December 8-11, 2018
Gathering for Purpose

In December 2018 15 cultural strategy teams from across the country gathered as part of the Transitions Initiative network. The purpose of the gathering was to elevate and generate cultural strategies that accelerate the transition from a world of domination, extraction, and violence to a world of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence. Each of these teams are experimenting with world building -- ways to collectively embody our future vision and values in the present moment.

Among the teams were some who have been part of MSC’s Transitions Labs in the past and have a particular focus on transformative culture shift and cultural strategy, as well as teams with connection and resonance to the Transitions network.

Transformative Cultural Strategy turns the present into the embodiment of our vision and values of love, generative power, and interdependence.

The lab was a space for teams to:

- Share & build relationship across cultural strategy teams who are crucial to the Transitions culture shift needed in the world.
- Reflect on and strengthen our practices of transformative cultural strategy towards Transition.
- Generate possibilities for future collaboration and collective strategy.
When we stand anywhere in the US we stand on a history of people resisting white supremacist violence and genocide. In our gathering we deeply felt the truth, pain, and transformation of this history.

The Franklinton Center at Bricks reverberates with its horrific past as a breaking plantation where white slave owners tortured Black men and women who dared to resist or escape enslavement. Beyond physical brutality the Franklinton Center unearths the grotesquely dehumanizing white supremacist narrative that categorized people’s yearning for freedom as a psychological disorder. Today Black Southerners have reclaimed the land as a place where the communal values and economics of their ancestors can be honored and nurtured, transcending but never forgetting the past.

The Franklinton Center is located where the Tuscarora people (their name means “hemp gatherers”) lived for thousands of years before white colonial settlers began raiding their land and kidnapping women and children to sell into slavery. In 1711 the Tuscarora people fought back and killed white settlers. An army of white settlers then launched total war on the Tuscarora people, killing and capturing over a thousand Tuscaroras and forcing the remaining people to escape to the North. Within 100 years the Tuscaroras had lost all of their land, making them the first native people in the US to be completely dispossessed from their ancestral home. Today hundreds of people in Nash County identify as Native American and in 2017 Young Native Voices reclaimed truth in their video on the “Tuscarora War”.

In our gathering the violent pain in the land demanded our attention, calling our hearts and bodies to feel and our minds to remember. Ancestral echoes in place guide us to what we must understand to create the future, calling us to insight, vision, and courage.
Our re-imagined future will be born of relationships -- to ourselves, our ancestors, and each other. In this spirit the gathering began with shared reflections, with each of us pairing to talk with someone we did not yet know. The reflection questions invited us to personally trace and elevate the roots of our creativity and the glimpses of past and future culture our creativity brings alive.
“What gifts of creativity have you received from your ancestors?”

“How do you bring this ancestral creativity into your work?”
Each team at the gathering shared what culture shift and cultural strategy looks like and means in their work. Core elements included:

- Reclaiming cultural wisdom that disrupts domination, extraction, and violence and nurtures regeneration, resilience, and interdependence.
- Centering creativity and art to shape and implement community vision, community organizing, and community-governed economic formations.
- Reshaping and revitalizing movement sectors around shared transformative values and vision and short and long term goals.
- Offering movement facilitation and coaching that weaves healing, culture, and strategy.
- Creating communities of purpose around ancestral wisdom, creativity, and healing.

**Da tu lé: Tufarra Waller Muhammad**

*Introducing Power California!*
- Born in 2017 from the union of Mobilize the Immigrant Vote and YVote
- Empowering and engaging young voters of color
- Training leaders
- Building a movement
- Changing culture

**Leading with Culture in Electoral Organizing**

Lifting young people of color up as a voting bloc that is capable, wise and brilliant when given opportunities to lead and make decisions for themselves.
Navajo Youth Initiatives: Rose Elizondo

Navajo Youth Initiatives with mutual mentoring between youth and elders.

Resonance Network: Alexis Flanagan, Ariel Jacobson, Emmanuelle Klossou Colm, LaToya Wesley-Colm

We are movement-builders, network-weavers, students, organizers, teachers, storytellers, engineers, healers, advocates, artists, and all those who are committed to working toward the thriving of future generations.

WITH SHARED PURPOSE to reimagine and practice what is possible and necessary to transform society from a culture of violence to one of interdependent worthiness and thriving.
Untold Stories of Liberation & Love: Catalina Rios, Julie Quiroz

What We’re Doing
creating space for soul-nourishing and liberatory community building
expanding community driven imagination and power
transforming “problem” narrative toward liberation & love
naming and centering transformative community leadership

NC Climate Justice Collective: Connie Leeper, Jodi Lasseter

NC Climate Justice Collective

Clayborn Reborn, Memphis:
Anasa Troutman, Art Hooker, Justin Merrick
Blueprint NC: Erin Dale Byrd, Ivanna Gonzalez, Emelia Cowans-Taylor

Another Gulf Is Possible: Fernando Lopez, Jayeesha Dutta, Noel Didla

Transformative Facilitators of Color: Ejeris Dixon, Yalini Dream
Alliance for Climate Education:
Kathryn Kevin, Maayan Cohen, Melinda Lily

Alliance for Climate Education
ACE educates young people about climate change and empowers them to take action within a frame of justice and optimism.

- We engage over 300,000 young people through our youth network from all 50 states and Puerto Rico
- We engage nearly 15,000 educators through our Teacher Network

Who are we?
We work with many partners, coalitions & networks including: Blueprint NC, NC WARN, NC Climate Justice Collective, YES!, and nationally: Power Shift Network, USCAN, Peoples Climate Movement, Climate Advocacy Lab, Sunrise Movement, CLEAN

Intelligent Mischief: Aisha Shillingford & Terry Marshall

intelligence mischief
noun, verb, adjective

inˈtel-i-gənt misˈchif
ˈmis-chəf

1/ a creative action design lab with a mission to boost invention & imagination, realign action logic, and experiment with new forms of civil society to create atmospheres of change.

2/ artists, pop culture junkies, cultural strategist

3/ third culture tricksters
Embodied Wisdom Workshop with YaliniDream

YaliniDream facilitated an Embodied Wisdom Workshop co-designed by YaliniDream and Adaku Utah and informed by conversations with Gera Marin. Through reflection, dialogue, movement, writing, cultivating creative seeds, and collective collaboration, participants experimented with embodying their wisdom and exploring their creative potential. Collective collaboration served as a vehicle to practice sovereignty and interdependence as one. The process was informed by insights from June Jordan, Eve Tuck and Norma Wong. We remembered that reparations and amends were not the final destination, but a step towards the greater goal of sovereignty, self-determination, liberation, care, creativity, and governance for all.

In a damage-centered framework, pain and loss are documented in order to obtain particular political or material gains....Desire, yes, accounts for the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities. Desire is involved with the not yet and, at times, the not anymore.

- Eve Tuck
Creative Worldbuilding

Immersive experiences transport us to visionary cultures, worlds of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence. Creating immersive experiences is a core practice of transformative cultural strategy, affirming and generating the embodied vision and possibility needed to build the world we need.

In the gathering groups formed to work together to respond creatively to what is most breaking our hearts and what we are most yearning for. Each team created a prototype of a creative immersive experience that they felt energized to make real in their work and to share learnings from with others in the gathering.
Creative World Building

Prototype: 7 Generations Labyrinth

Tell our children
There's direction
in the river
in the land

Fire whispers
tells our story
touching hearts
and moving hands
seven generations
we're resilient
fueled by love and
sowing seeds

We'll dismantle
all injustice
for our people
we'll be free

-Song by Tufara Muhammad & Calvin Williams
Creative World Building

Prototype: Strangers in Our Own Experience

STRANGERS IN OUR OWN EXPERIENCE

- Feelings of disconnect
- Why are we disconnected?
  - Violence: seeing this in media, in our streets in our history. Perpetuate violence into our psyche. Ownership -> war breeds violence.
  - Cut off from dreaming: literally cut off. Dreaming is a really important way of understanding the world instead of our own healing and imagination. Also dreaming less.
  - Trauma -> individual and collective. People disconnected because they were told to disconnect to access the benefits of whiteness.
  - Not wanting to feel, overhyped, intentional disconnection.
  - Feeling for other people, avoidance, unavowable. Feel only if someone else gained permission or it feels the same thing, safety, resource, mutually destabilized.
  - Feel like you don’t know what to feel. Whole feeling all over.
  - Fake connection, connect but not deeply.

Needs
- Sacred, safe spaces where we can mutually feel together - builds closeness + connection
- Rituals that remind us to connect
- Shifting the culture of disconnection
- Cultural examples of people grappling with this question - Drake: In My Feelings, Banne Early.
- What do we do before bed?

Prototype Ideas
- Feeling your feelings: playlist and prompts
- The Feeling Way (a guide using cultural exercises)
- Safe spaces, be + feel (stuff we will come up with in the hub)
- Decentralized, guide + activities/Co-host
- Dreamwork - guided using
- Dream apps/videos that submits how violence produces
- Cleansing/healthy dream +
- Something that keeps you in check about what you really need (feelings hub, playlist, connecting in person w/ someone)

In your feelings playlist + feeling's prompts
- Crowdsourcing - thematic

Cleaning + Healing
- Dream work + night
- Alarm reduction, mindfulness
- Host a feelings/hub ritual/sound

The Feelings Way (a guide using cultural exercises)
Creative World Building

Prototype: You are held in Sacred Space
Creative World Building

Prototype: Multimedia Encyclopedia of Rituals
Generating Collaboration & Strategy

Juicy Questions

The gathering offered space across cultural strategy experiments to name and co-create answers to burning questions. For example: How do we generate both depth and scale? How do we strengthen cultural work and support cultural workers? How do we center the wisdom and history that is crucial to a transformative future?

In the gathering four areas of “juicy questions” emerged that can be the focus of continued inquiry and collaboration across the network:

- **Distribution Strategy** What are the cultural strategies for distribution of creative products that we have not tried, invented or underutilized?
- **Reclaiming Creativity** How can we as creative people balance our own needs for creative practice with what the movement needs and requires of us?
- **Collective Leadership v. Hierarchy** How can collective structures navigate power dynamics?
- **Healed in the Field** How do we return to authentic (non big city) relationships that honor Black and Indigenous ancestral ways of being?
Juicy Questions

Reclaiming Our Creativity

Productivity

Loving Accountability

Facilitating Creativity

Connected to Divine Energy

Responsibility

Soy Field

Authentic, Abundant Relationships

How do we return to authentic, abundant relationships that honor our ancestral ways of being?

Inside v. Outside Movement Language

Can we bring individual creativity into movement? Creativity

Sacred Community Practice

Hearing guilt, set it away. Don't worry about it. Sacrifice

It's exhausting to navigate when you're not used to it.

Juicy Qs:

What are the cultural strategies for distribution of creative products that we have not tried, invested, or underutilised?

Sharing stories

sharing

sharing

Sharing our stories

Texting
Participants

Alliance for Climate Education (NC)
Kathryn Kevin
Maayan Cohen
Melinda Lily

Another Gulf Is Possible
Fernando Lopez
Jayeesha Dutta
Noel Didla

Bilad El Sham 7 Generations
Healing Collective
Weyam Ghadbian

Blueprint NC
Erin Dale Byrd
Ivanna Gonzalez
Emelia Cowans-Taylor

Datule’ Artist Collective
Tufara Waller Muhammad

Intelligent Mischief
Terry Marshall
Aisha Shillingford

Clayborn Reborn Memphis
Anasa Troutman
Art Hooker
Justin Merrick

Navajo Youth Initiative
Rose Elizondo

NC Climate Justice Collective
Connie Leeper
Jodi Lasseter

Partnership for the Future of Learning
Jenni Kotting
Manauvaskar Kublall

Power CA
Pacita Rudder

Resonance Network
Alexis Flanagan
Ariel Jacobson
Emmanuelle Klossou Colm
LaToya Wesley-Colm

Arriba NM! & SouthWest Organizing Project
Joseph Stacey

Transformative Facilitators of Color
Ejeris Dixon
Yalini Dream

Untold Stories of Liberation & Love
Catalina Rios
Julie Quiroz

MSC Culture Lab Team
(MSC + Friends)
Aisha Shillingford
Calvin Williams
Jovida Ross
Julie Quiroz
Sarah Quiroz
Weyam Ghadbian
Yalini Dream
Invitation to Worldbuilding

These are the times to grow our souls. Each of us is called upon to embrace the conviction that despite the powers and principalities bent on commodifying all our human relationships, we have the power within us to create the world anew.

— Grace Lee Boggs

Now is a time of extraordinary upheaval in our country and in our world, a time when the failures of our economic and political systems have become clear and the harm is deeply and widely felt. We are living in a moment of great fear, anger and uncertainty.

Now is also a time of great opportunity. Everywhere we turn, in our communities and in our lives, we find people coming together to care for each other in diverse ways — to nurture healthy and just food systems, to honor and support families of all kinds, to keep fossil fuels in the ground, to build our next economy.

In this moment the purpose of MSC Transitions Initiative is bold and crucial:

To nurture whole people and whole communities to transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence.

17 years ago, MSC set out to build movements that transform culture. As wrote in 2016:

The movements of today are calling us to make a courageous commitment to love, generative power, and our undeniable interdependence. Leading with bold vision and purpose, they are moving beyond the question of ‘what do we need to do?’ to ‘who do we need to be to bring forth the transformation we seek?’ In this way, movements are learning the art of time travel — starting at the end of the story, they are accelerating change by embodying and manifesting the values they seek in the world right here and now. They are not asking people to believe another world is possible, they are asking us to generate and experience it through transformative practice and strategy.

— Love With Power, Movement Strategy Center
Through cultural strategy we seek to activate the courageous responsibility that is innate in each of us individually, and all of us collectively. We believe in the capacity of each of us to experience freedom in the present moment, regardless of what is occurring in the world. We are dedicated to creating within ourselves the freedom to make a shift toward possibility, however imperceptibly small, within the painfully brutal reality of human existence. It is from those imperceptibly small internal shifts that transformative trajectories are born to us and to the world.

Through cultural strategy we seek to transform the story in which we see our lives. When we see our lives in a story of isolation, competition, and scarcity, our actions—and the very quality of our presence—will breed isolation, competition, and scarcity, and unleash a poisonous narrative of isolation, competition, and scarcity that chokes possibility and kills imagination. When we see our lives in a story of resilience, regeneration, and interdependence—backward and forward across generations—we bring the possibility and imagination of those values to life.

Through cultural strategy we seek to see our lives in possibility and imagination within the world’s reality we move from despair to creation. We grow the muscles that allow us to hold the duality of internal freedom alongside external constraint, which gives us wisdom, insight, and tools in navigating the world from a system of unlimited growth rooted in the fear of scarcity to systems of regenerative growth that accesses abundance within limits.

Join us in creating the conditions for massive numbers of people to discover and rediscover their radical hope. Join us in taking courageous responsibility to scale.
Transformative Cultural Strategy is made up of core elements that take different forms and sequence in different places and contexts. Transformative Cultural Strategy is a spiral in which elements are returned to over and over in generative path.

**Community Building**
that centers culture, healing, creativity, vision, transformed governance

**Creative World Building**
through immersive community experience of values & 100 year vision

**Catalyzing Cultural Spores**
awakening deep values and courageous action that is ready to come alive beyond the people and places we know

**Courageous Commitment**
to 100 year vision and values of love, generative power, and interdependence.

**Community-Governed Solutions**
that centers culture, healing, creativity, vision, transformed governance

**Cultivating 100 Year Vision**
the world our ancestors envisioned for us and what we want for our descendants

**Culling Wisdom**
and experience as insight and direction
In this circle we support each other’s learning by giving and receiving hospitality, reconnecting to abundance, & remembering there is more than enough for all to thrive.

Be here with your purpose, gifts, and strengths, as well as your doubts, fears and failings, your listening as well as your speaking, your full humanity.

Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows what you need.

With such questions, we help “hear each other into deeper speech.”

Our very presence and our interactions mutually shape this environment and process. This circle is an opportunity to give our attention and care to this collective action, and to the resonance between us.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one’s truth in this circle does not mean correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using “I” statements that speak from your own experience, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself, “I wonder what brought her to this belief?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?” Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply. Get curious and make space.

We learn from others, of course. And, as we explore in our circle, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. We invite you to listen to your intuition; your inner wisdom is your most important teacher.

Adapted by Movement Strategy Center (www.movementstrategy.org) from Circle of Trust® Touchstones, developed by Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal - www.couragerenewal.org