

Leading with **100 YEAR VISION**

TRANSFORMING OURSELVES,
TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE





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Transitions Gatherings: Past, Present, Future

Six years ago Movement Strategy Center took a bold leap and gathered movement leaders to explore the ways that embodied wisdom could generate untapped possibility, potential, and power in the work toward social, economic, and ecological justice. In the six years since then, over 200 movement leaders from across the country have taken part in these gatherings, with experiences that have rippled out into innovation far beyond our wildest dreams. This booklet offers the first-person stories of 13 of those leaders reflecting on what they discovered (and re-discovered) in the gatherings, and how their experience shaped the powerful work they are doing today. Echoing across all of these stories is the presence, practice, and wisdom of Norma Wong, Zen teacher and strategy practitioner, who inspired, enlightened, and emboldened MSC throughout this journey.

Today, in 2020, the guiding question of Transitions Initiative continues to serve as a powerful compass:

How do we transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence?



"Practices of Transitions" - mural by Kristen Zimmerman

This question has shaped everything about the Transitions Initiative, turning the gatherings into “labs” where leaders could try out audacious vision, embodiment, radical connection, and strategic navigation, then go back out into movements to test them, and stay in a learning community with people across the country who are innovating too. Labs are not the only part of the Transitions Initiative, but they are a key component along with strategic collaborations, projects, and ideas unfolding across places and networks. In multiple ways the Transitions initiative has made a valuable and lasting contribution to an era of transformative movement building, a growing wave of leaders shifting culture and systems with the extraordinary depth, boldness, vision, and strategy this moment in human history so urgently needs.

The Transitions Initiative created space for movement leaders to listen to the wisdom in their bodies, to practice, and to embrace the reminder from Norma Wong that any strategy we engage in today has been shaped by (at least) the 100 years before us, and must be accountable to those who will be here (at least) 100 years from now. Within our 100 year vision we understand that 2020 is a pivotal cultural moment that will significantly shape how children, families, and communities see themselves and the meaning of the future. The story of how we see ourselves shapes how we feel about and engage with present day democratic processes, how and whether we engage in the deeper project of collective self-determination, and how we understand ourselves in relationship to generations to come.

We are honored to offer these stories as glimpses of the Transitions Initiative past, present, and future.



"100 Year Arc: Visions for Transitions" - mural by Kristen Zimmerman



Judith Le Blanc

NATIVE ORGANIZERS ALLIANCE

I've appreciated having a place to exhale, to connect with the power of spirit and shared values. It is comforting to be with peoples who see their community in relationship to the past, present, and future. In this space I brought traditional framework as a contribution. Indigenous peoples have always lived in relationship with the natural world. Today the balance and harmony of relationships, be it in the natural or the human world, are out of balance. The centerpiece of an Indigenous

framework is an understanding of relationality, of being in relationship with all of humanity and the natural world. When we are open to understanding that the past and future come together in the present, by the way we walk in the present, it opens up creativity for everyone. It helps everyone to become 360 degrees aware of our roles in preparing for our descendants. Native people have lived on collectively owned land, self governed since the beginning of time.



"It's felt powerful to be with other movement leaders developing strategy based on a 100 year vision, which is a very Indigenous way of seeing and working."

We have the possibility of braiding science with spiritual values to create the capacity to fulfill our inherent and legal role as caretakers of the land and water. We have traditions of living in harmony with the natural world which have been interrupted by corporate plunder. Now tribal and spiritual leaders are working towards resuming that role not simply for Native communities, but for all who live on Mother Earth. This is one of the unique ways that Native communities are leading for the whole. When alliances with non-Natives are grown upon the understanding of our sovereign right to be caretakers of the natural world those alliances will be healthy, authentic and politically empowered.

As Indigenous people we know that our present roles can only be understood from seeing 100 years before and after today. We need to know where we came from to know where we should go. As community builders we need to see our plans for the next five years as part of a 100 year path. We need to know that how we walk in the present is what will sustain us in the future because it is guided by the past experiences. It's felt powerful to be with other movement leaders developing strategy based on a 100 year vision. In many ways, science and society are catching up with Indigenous wisdom.

Maria Ibarra-Frayre

WE THE PEOPLE MICHIGAN



My most vivid memory of a lab was sitting outside on a deck laughing and talking about how we can learn to see and value the quality of people's presence, the way we show up as human beings, not just what we "do." I remember looking out at the rolling hills and feeling a new sense of possibility about the world we could create if we centered and nurtured human qualities like groundedness, creativity, ease, love, kindness. I could feel how much more depth and impact we could achieve.



The lab was the first time I felt permission to really listen to my body and not just my brain. We focused a lot on breathing which got me more attuned to my body and was an opening for me to listen to my instincts. I always had good intuition but I didn't value it or give myself permission to listen to it. So the biggest change was me trusting myself to value what I learned in my Mexican community as a little kid. I grew up among immigrant families who always took care of each other. My parents would often leave us in the care of another family, and there was total trust that we would be safe and loved. Listening to my body reminded me how community felt, and made me want to create that kind of love and trust in our work.

Now as a leader in Michigan I always focus on how we embody what we want in the world. If our vision is that families have rest and joy and time off, then how are we embodying these principles?

I believe that practicing embodying our vision has made us less reactive. When we feel aligned with our breath and grounded it's much easier to be proactive and creative, not just backed into a corner in defense mode. Even simple breathing exercises make us more clear headed. In organizing so much of our time is spent in rapid response, just keeping people alive. We have few opportunities to be more proactive, so we need to be ready when they do come.

"Practicing embodying our vision has made us less reactive. When we feel aligned with our breath and grounded in our bodies it's much easier to be proactive and creative, not just backed into a corner in defense mode."

Alexis Flanagan

RESONANCE NETWORK



One of the most important Transitions Initiative moments for me was during a lab where we broke into small groups where people could talk and work across organizational containers. That group had a huge impact on me because it was the first time I really saw my work as spirit based organizing. Our group even named ourselves “The Translocal Spirit Squad”!

That moment was a catalyst for me and my work with Resonance Network where we really lead with spirit. We do that by creating space for people to engage with spirit whether it’s developing their own spiritual practice or learning how to hold and cultivate spiritual space in movement work.

I was also profoundly moved by the Transitions lab held at the Franklinton Center at Bricks, a former plantation. In that space I felt like we were moving through conflict across generations.

I felt like our ancestors were there with us, that we all sensed that there was a bigger thing happening in that space, with so many people from different backgrounds open to it and leaning in to struggle together. It was very meaningful and really shaped possibilities.

I come away from spaces like that thinking yes, this is the time for this depth of healing – and we are the ones to do it. I feel these connections across a spirit led ecosystem that we're all in together. That's the best part of waking up: knowing that my work is connected to what my ancestors are wanting and needing me to do right now. It feels amazing.

In centering spirit I've expected push back and resistance and critique, but instead the response has been an overwhelming affirmation of how much this is wanted and needed. People want to think about what it means to connect to something bigger, to make visible the way that movement work, ancestrally and currently, has always been spirit led. I saw this in a recent statewide conference in Idaho where there was a plenary on how we engage spirit and ancestors in movement work – and 150 people went to the break out session afterward. In all this I see the roots of what I experienced in the Transitions lab.



"Yes, this is the time for this depth of healing—and we are the ones to do it."



Abby Reyes

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECTS,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - IRVINE

"I now stand with more ease in foregrounding radical connection as a key guidepost and practice for getting things done. It's a liberatory practice because it increases discernment about where to put our energy."

I've been emboldened by being in community with people asking how we transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world of resilience, regeneration, and interdependence. The first time I saw this transition question drawn visually as a beautiful tree I felt like someone was holding up a mirror to me. I felt like I had permission to daylight the larger purpose and vision of my work. This shift has been very joyful. Now I'm integrating my inner and outer leadership work and calling in others who feel alive with this powerful question.

The Transitions Initiative gave us language that formed key architecture of our Community Resilience Projects at the Irvine campus of the University of California. The words and ideas were a portal, a door opening for me to inhabit more fully my own belief in radical human connection, and connection with the earth. I now stand with more ease in foregrounding radical connection as a key guidepost and practice for getting things done. When it's there, being cultivated, we can move. When it's not, we know to let it rest and listen for what's needed. It's how we practice moving at the speed of trust. It's a liberatory practice because it increases discernment about where to put our energy.

Over the past few years, I have supported the development of *encuentro*, or exchange, between two sets of community rebuilders, one from within the Indigenous Menominee Nation in Wisconsin and one from within the Latinx immigrant communities of Santa Ana, California. It's a relationship that grew in part from the Transitions community. I approach the *encuentro* as a supporter and weaver, quietly cultivating the radical connection that makes all work possible that is worth doing.



Cecilia Martinez

CENTER FOR EARTH, ENERGY, & DEMOCRACY
(MINNEAPOLIS)

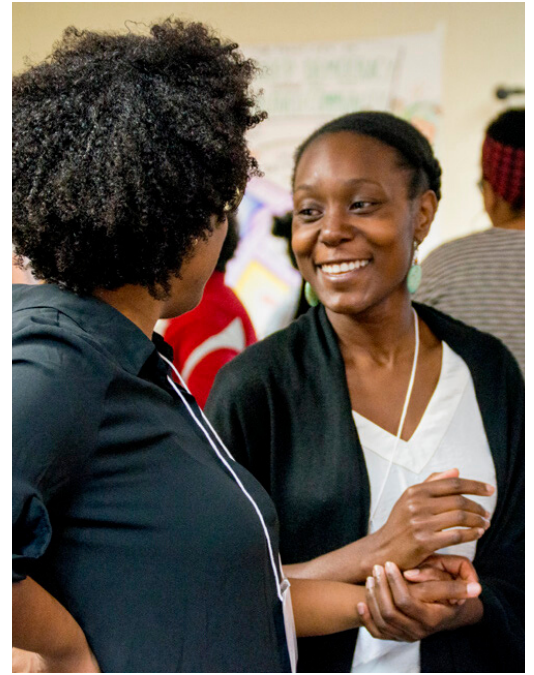


"We've deeply valued being in community with groups working on climate resilience at a structural level, which has helped us to strengthen our strategy toward a climate justice vision."

We've deeply valued being in community with groups working on climate resilience at a structural level, which has helped us to strengthen our strategy toward a climate justice vision. These experiences have strengthened our ability to move communities from visioning climate justice to implementing that vision. They've helped us see what others around the country are doing, where the gaps are, and what is most needed as we continue to provide support and tools for communities to navigate and lead. Having our story highlighted in MSC's Community-Driven Climate Resilience Planning report really elevated the innovation of our local work, even to our own city government.

Working with other groups at a workshop at a national forum gave local groups like ours a platform for naming our challenges with the ways cities are approaching racial equity and climate resilience. Many cities' work on race has been incomplete, with city staff going through racial equity training with no requirement of community accountability.

It was very important to talk together with local organizations from across the country who are all moving their cities toward climate resilience grounded in racial equity. These conversations validated our local experience and led us to develop tools for communities facing the same struggles.



Aparna Shah

RESET PROJECT AT POWER CALIFORNIA



Photo credit: Joshua Ham

"Physically feeling our connection to our ancestors allowed us to understand deeply that our work is not only about urgency or fear or pain. It's not only about still being here, but about creating and building what will be from what has always been."

The deepest moment I had at the labs was a physical exercise where we imagined ourselves pulling on giant ropes that connected us to someone from the past, whether we knew them or not. In that moment we collectively embodied our connection to our ancestors. We whispered their names louder and louder. We could feel ourselves standing on their shoulders, continuing their legacy. We understood with and in our bodies that future people will continue what we are doing in this moment.

Physically feeling our connection to our ancestors allowed us to understand deeply that our work is not only about urgency or fear or pain. It's not only about still being here, but about creating and building what will be from what has always been.

This experience led me to think differently about what it means for me to hold and move in my power and in our collective power. The way we hold leadership and power in movements can often feel really uncomfortable. I believe we can hold and move in our power in ways that are grounded in our larger purpose, in beloved community and liberation.

The labs encourage mind, body and spirit work that allows us to cultivate and bring forth the kind of power through which we can love each other as expansively as possible, to be truly free.

The labs also helped me see our individual, community and structural work as part of an ecosystem where each of us is doing our work connected to everyone else, past, present, and future. I approach my work through this lens where our role is to co-create and support ecosystems, where everything impacts our shared future.



Jacqueline Patterson

NAACP ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE PROGRAM



The Transitions Initiative labs provided space and time for dedicated contemplation on how to navigate the day to day while maintaining a vision of the North Star as a compass of purpose.

Navigating by understanding my own purpose has helped me practice and maintain vision even when that vision feels very far away. It's helped me to find ways to stay grounded in the present moment, while still seeing the next moment.

The labs took place in a backdrop of nature, which was so important for bringing out my deepest level of reflection and healing. I was also gratified by the silence and spaciousness the labs gave us, especially compared to the frenetic pace of life and human interaction. In the labs, contemplative space was deeply valued and people didn't feel compelled to fill the silences. In my daily existence, I get a lot of time on my own, but I rarely get to be in reflective space with others.

As a public speaker who is often called upon to share a vision, I constantly articulate the transformational aim of shifting from a culture of domination and extraction to one of resilience, regeneration, and love. Through the Transitions labs, I have been deeply impacted by being in a space of dedicated exploration of the question of how to actually affect the changes we need to make to achieve this vision. This has been extremely helpful as I am always seeking to bring both heart and pragmatic movement towards fulfillment of this vision embodied in our strategy.

I treasured the people and the culture of the Transitions labs. As someone who tends towards absorbing what's going on around me, I often find myself bracing to navigate the many undercurrents, fault lines, and trauma-born hurtfulness that occurs in movement settings. At the same time, in those spaces I am constantly seeking ways to facilitate restoration and healing. In the labs, I was able relax my guard because they felt like truly safe spaces housing a community of comrades with whom I can co-strategize on how to incorporate explicit restorative, healing practices into movement organizing towards our collective vision of liberation.



"As a public speaker who is often called upon to share a vision, I constantly articulate the transformational aim of shifting from a culture of domination and extraction to one of resilience, regeneration, and love. I always seek to bring both heart and pragmatic movement towards fulfillment of this vision embodied in our strategy."

Byron Gudiel

SIERRA CLUB - ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE PROGRAM



"The labs highlighted and brought to life the value of self-transformation... starting with embodying the change we need to see in the world."



I came into the Transitions community with the core Just Transition frameworks from my work in environmental justice groups. My biggest lesson in the Transitions labs was in how to embody the values of transition both personally and professionally. The labs highlighted and brought to life the value of self-transformation. Before participating in the Labs I focused externally, rather than starting with embodying the change we need to see in the world. Now I feel part of a bigger ecosystem that's both politically aligned and connected by personal growth.

The Transitions labs really impacted how I think about strategy. I've always thought in a pretty linear way, so it was really helpful to be challenged to look at strategy not solely as moving from point A to point B, but as a much deeper process of power building. I approach strategy with a longer term trajectory that extends beyond the immediate political context.

Dana Kawaoka-Chen

JUSTICE FUNDERS

The labs illuminated for me how we much we are conditioned to be competitive and extractive, how that conditioning forms our unconscious habits. In the labs we saw this show up in the simplest ways, like how we tossed a ball around in a group. In very physical ways we explored what values we actually want to live by. We re-learned how to live our values, and how to create practices that reflect those values. It was so beautiful and visionary to ground ourselves that way. It brought an embodied dimension to my understanding of what a Just Transition looks and feels like in multiple dimensions.

The practice of embodying values for a Just Transition has shaped how I approach my

work in philanthropy. It led me to name and engage others in asking ourselves what is philanthropy's role in the moment? How can we re-imagine our role? What would we do differently? What does it mean for philanthropy to transform, to be accountable to movements? For Justice Funders, our vision is to end the accumulation of wealth and power so that all can thrive. Some of the embodied practice that we need to cultivate begins with being in right relationship with each other – acknowledging harm, ending exploitative practices, delivering extracted wealth back to communities, and nurturing movements who are truly supported by their community and not reliant on big philanthropy.



"The practice of embodying values has shaped how I approach my work in philanthropy."



Trina Greene Brown

PARENTING FOR LIBERATION

I remember being at a lab when a forest fire was burning, and we could see the smoke. As a group, we talked about the impact of that smoke on our breath, about how intentional we needed to be with our breathing. Collectively, we needed to practice moving slowly, to practice not being panicked, to stay grounded and on purpose while the world is on fire. In that experience, we understood profoundly how breath helps us stay grounded when the world is burning.

The intimate conversations at the lab gave me space to ask myself, what does it mean to raise my Black son in a liberatory way? How is that liberatory way shaped by reclaiming the roots that have been severed between Black people in the US and Africa? These questions led me to create Parenting for Liberation which I see as a path to return to the strength of our roots, to build intergenerational cultural resilience, pride, and strength, not just intergenerational trauma.



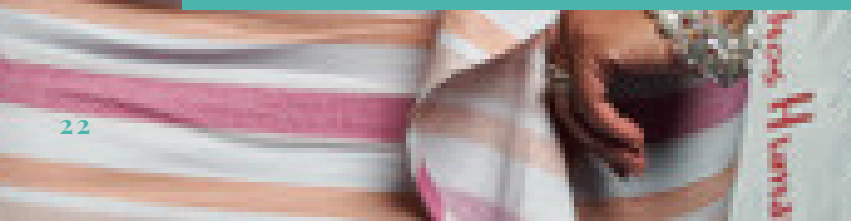


In the lab we focused on shifting to what we are saying yes to. How to move from no to yes has been a fundamental question for me. I realized that as I parent I was not yet practicing the value of yes. What possibilities would open if I practiced the value of yes with my son?

The labs are important spaces that aren't about creating some utopian ideal. They are about living something right now, with each other, while we are fighting for it.

The labs ask us to imagine: How do we be in liberated relationships? How do we operationalize liberation? The labs are part of a wave that is shaping me and our movements. I am weaving powerful experiences from the labs and the gatherings of Move to End Violence, Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity, and others.

"In the lab we focused on shifting to what we are saying yes to. How to move from no to yes has been a fundamental question for me."



Erin Dale Byrd

THE PARTNERSHIP FUND

Former Director, Blueprint North Carolina

The first time the Transitions Initiative held a lab in the South it was at a very important place to me and many people—the Franklin Center at Bricks in eastern North Carolina. The Franklinton Center is a former plantation that had been reclaimed and turned into one of the first Black colleges and then a training school. Now it is a social justice retreat and training center. The Lab allowed me to connect with cultural organizers and strategists from the South, especially Black women who are leading the most important culture shift work. We had space to dream together, which was very powerful and very healing. The lab also came after the devastation of Hurricane Florence. The date of the lab actually had to be pushed back when the hurricane hit. When the lab finally did happen a few months later, it was deeply significant for those of us who had just experienced the direct impact of climate crisis space to dream.

Calling on our ancestral legacies and wisdom—our culture—to guide us into the future has been a theme in all the labs, through embodied practice and in creating beautiful offering spaces where we place objects of deep meaning to us. I facilitated this offering space in a North Carolina gathering which was the first time I bought in my own practice of working with Four Directions. In that practice we honor the qualities of each direction and the ways that these qualities can guide our work.



"The labs invited me to think in terms of 100 years, to reflect on what I want my descendents to say about my work in 75 years. I think a lot about how we can develop the systems we need to feed, clothe, house, educate ourselves—to become self sufficient—while simultaneously trying to impact electoral debate and hold electeds accountable."

I had never before paired that practice with political strategizing and visioning. After that I created a Four Directions strategy chart that I use in trainings with electoral organizations and funders, both locally and nationally. Working this way has opened up powerful conversations about the embodied wisdom, grounding, and healing we need to be able to dismantle white supremacy. We need to reconnect to our full selves because the current system of extraction has us dominating the planet, extracting all its resources. The question of how to transition from a world of domination and extraction to one of regeneration speaks a truth that we need to hear. It is a journey each of us make take on individually and collectively.

My experiences at labs gave me the courage to shift something in my work. I now integrate nature—specifically the four directions—into my strategic planning approach. This helps organizations think creatively about the practical ways they could shift their work to become more equitable as part of their daily practice. We do this by getting clear about our North Star, determining what we need to learn and unlearn together, name our values and shift our structures to hold us through the transformation. Our work is relational. These strategies make space for folks to come together in truly transformative ways.

The labs invited me to think in terms of 100 years, to reflect on what I want my descendents to say about my work in 75 years. This question flowed from Norma Wong, the Hawaiian political strategist and Zen teacher who was a core influence in the labs. I think a lot about how we can develop the systems we need to feed, clothe, house, educate ourselves—to become self sufficient—while simultaneously trying to impact electoral debate and hold electeds accountable.

I still have a lot to learn. I want to better understand how to integrate nature and the elements in our work as I know it allows our work to become more visionary, expansive, rigorous and impactful. It's also sound strategy, and I want to win.



Kelly Miller

IDAHO COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL
& DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



What I remember most is being in a joyful, loving space with so many amazing movement leaders. It's hard to put into words how it felt, the way we were together that felt so rare. What I took away was a visceral sense of what it means to build beloved community.

Creating a 100 year vision together was incredibly powerful and impactful. In movement spaces, we never talk about 100 years, but 100 years is when our children's children will be alive, which is not far away. I remember we were invited to think about our 100 vision in terms of human needs and aspirations, not issues. How and what will children be learning? How will communities be places where everyone is safe and cared for? How will collective public decisions be made? How will water be clean and plentiful?

"Creating a 100 year vision together was incredibly powerful and impactful. In movement spaces, we never talk about 100 years, but 100 years is when our children's children will be alive, which is not far away."

We clustered into the questions that were calling us and imagined what we wanted for our children's children. I remember that the group working on water changed the question to "How will we be in sacred relationship to water?" which made clear that in all of these areas it's culture shift, human ways of being, that are at the core.

After we visioned out 100 years we named what would need to be true and happening in 50 years in order for us to reach our 100 year vision. Then we named what would need to be true and happening in 25 years, then in 12 years, then in 6 years. We came all the way to the present, and we could feel in our bodies the connection between our ways of being and actions today, and what that will mean for the lives of our children's children.

The experience of creating a 100 year vision really shaped our work in Idaho. We approach everything in terms of cultural transformation, belonging to beloved community, creating deep practices of democracy. We are shifting how things are done here.

For example, in Boise for the first time ever, one of our local city council candidates, who is white, created an advisory committee made up of historically marginalized community members who guided his successful campaign. There are real and specific ways that things are shifting as people begin to see ourselves in beloved community for the long haul.





Mia Birdsong

ACTIVIST, AUTHOR OF *HOW WE SHOW UP*

The labs created an opportunity to think both big picture about the world we want to live in and more personally and relationally about how we want to live in that world. It was during the lab that another Black woman and I took time to walk around the lake and talk about what we really need. We talked about how so many Black women in our orbit were dying, were dealing with chronic illness and pain. We were clear that all that pain and death were largely caused by white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.

Even if those things went away tomorrow, we'd still have to contend with the way they exist inside of us. We talked about how we as Black women need regular space to talk about and identify what freedom is and hold each other in the healing we need to do to get there – excavating those internalized systems of oppression. That's how we started the Black Women's Freedom Circle, which has been going on since 2016. These are gatherings where we are there for ourselves, not on behalf of someone else. Like the labs, these are spaces where we practice and talk about the future, we practice what liberation looks like, what culture we need to create.

The labs invited us to name and explore our superpowers. I am someone who lives on the borders of multiple identities and communities. In the lab I articulated my “border dwelling” as a talent. I used to feel like parts of me belonged in different places. Something about the experience of talking to my group at the lab showed me that all of me belongs everywhere. I see myself in genuine connection, even with the people we are seeking to change. Embracing my superpower has helped me to see and be seen, to recognize my wholeness in all the spaces I traverse. That allows me to recognize other's wholeness as well, which ultimately generates so much more opportunity for shifting the world.

"The labs invited us to name and explore our superpowers. I am someone who lives on the borders of multiple identities and communities. In the lab I articulated my 'border dwelling' as a talent."



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Acknowledgments

MSC extends our deepest gratitude to **Norma Wong** for her inspiration and wisdom on this journey.

Norma Wong is a Zen teacher and strategy practitioner. In earlier years, Wong served as a Hawai'i state legislator, on the policy and strategy team for Governor John Waihee with federal and Native Hawaiian portfolios, and community organizing and policy work in the Native Hawaiian (Indigenous) community. She was active in electoral politics for over thirty years. Current and recent work include: strategic thinking and transformational development. Wong is a teacher at the Institute of Zen Studies and Daihonzan Choen-jji, having trained in Zen for nearly 40 years. She serves practice communities in Hawai'i, across the continental U.S., and in Toronto, Canada. Among her areas of teaching: the Zen perspective of strategy and The Art of War; leadership and strategy in the 7 generations context; and mind-body practice in secular and organizational settings. She received her inka shomei (Mind Stamp) as an 86th generation Zen Master of Choen-jji.

MSC would also like to thank **Rosie Abriam**, CXO of The Leader Project and teacher with the Institute of Zen Studies, who has generously provided thought leadership and facilitation with the Transitions Initiative.

Finally, MSC offers our deepest thanks to all the movement leaders who are the heart of the Transitions Initiative and who together have deepened our inquiry, strengthened our purpose, and invited in the love and wisdom of all our ancestors and all our descendants.

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Founding Transitions Initiative MSC Staff (past and present): Mimi Ho, Taj James, Julie Quiroz, Jovida Ross, Kristen Zimmerman

MSC Staff Who Led & Shaped Transitions Initiative Gatherings (past and present): Victoria Benson, Vicente Garcia, Weyam Ghadbian, Rosa Gonzalez, Lily Hayes-Wong, Leila McCabe Williams, Shiva Patel, Sarah Quiroga, Aisha Shillingford, Pandora Thomas, Corinne Van Hook-Turner, Lem White, Calvin Williams