

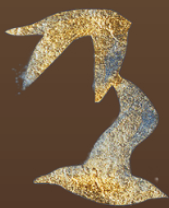


Leadership & Race

A Call to Each Other



Exploration of the Current Racial Justice
Landscape & Recommendations for Action



Leadership & Race: A Call to Each Other

*Exploration of the Current Racial Justice Landscape and
Recommendations for Action*
2024

Written By:

Ericka Stallings
Iman Mills Gordon
Leadership Learning Community

Project Management and Edits By:

Nikki Dinh
Alexandra Urdaneta
Bella Celnik

Published By:

Leadership Learning Community
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Carla Jay Harris (<https://www.carlajayharris.com/>)

Advisory Group:

Elissa Sloan Perry, Change Elemental
Frances Kunreuther, Building Movement Project
Monica Dennis, Co-lab Collective
Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, Building Movement Project
Trish Adobea Tchume, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation

Research Consultants:

Shiree Teng and Venus Mejia

Funders:

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
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Readers:

Beth Kanter
Daniel Lim
Krystal Portalatin-Gauthier

Creative Design:

Michelle Loo

Field Leaders:

Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Community Change
Amanda Lanceplaine, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Brooke Treadwell, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Carolyn Wang Kong, Asian Pacific Fund
Darlene Nipper, Rockwood Leadership Institute
Dax-Devlon Ross, Dax-Dev, Inc
Holly Delany Cole, LeadersTrust
Huong Nguyen-Yap, Northern California Grantmakers
Karla Monterroso, Brava Leaders
LaShawn Routé Chatmon, National Equity Project
Michelle Molitor, Equity Lab
Morning Star Gali, Indigenous Justice
Sayu Bhojwani, Speaker, Writer, TED Speaker
Karla Monterroso, Brava Leaders
Mattice Haynes, Embodied Leadership Coach
Taij Kumarie Moteelall, Standing in Our Power and Media Sutra, Inc.
Thato Ramaobi, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

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Land Acknowledgement:

The land many of us are on was, and is, tended by indigenous communities. This practice of acknowledging our past and present invites solidarity with indigenous sovereignty movements. We also want to recognize that Indigenous leadership has been purposely excluded in America and beyond, and there is a need to restore our contract with the land itself. With that, we acknowledge that this report and the partners we've been so lucky to work with spanned the following lands: Aburi, Anacostans, Cape Coast, Ghana, Lenapehoking, Lenape/Canarsie, Munsee Lenape, Muscogee/Creek Ohlone, Potawatomi, Ramaytush Ohlone, Taino, and Tongva.

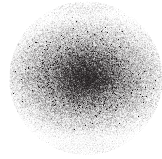
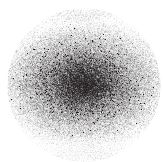


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About the Report

Background Context

Leadership Learning Community (LLC) believes that leadership is a site of transformation. For over 20 years, we have gathered leaders, researched leadership, and learned with leaders through collaboration, networks, and race equity. In 2019, as we shifted to a women of color-led organization, we began focusing on inviting leaders, particularly those from historically excluded communities such as Black, Indigenous, immigrant, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities, to live out the compelling vision of liberation - one which seeks power, joy, and thriving for all people.

As a field builder, we facilitate and encourage thousands of leaders in the social good sector each year to unlearn oppressive structures, engage in communities of practice that create new cultural norms, and develop tools and frameworks that allow us to align our values and actions.

In 2010, as part of our Leadership for a New Era research initiative, LLC worked in collaboration with a group of individuals in the racial justice and leadership development field to produce “Leadership & Race: How to Develop and Support Leadership that Contributes to Racial Justice”. The 2010 Leadership and Race publication was written by Terry Keleher,

Applied Research Center (ARC), Sally Leiderman, Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD), Deborah Meehan, Leadership Learning Community (LLC), Elissa Perry, Think. Do. Repeat, Maggie Potapchuk, MP Associates, Professor John A. Powell, The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Hanh Cao Yu, Ph.D., Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA), and Lori Villarosa, Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE), participated as a reviewer.

This project continues the work of the 2010 Leadership & Race report. The 2010 piece was an introductory document on racism’s prevalence within systems, provided the reader language to articulate the role of race within the leadership field, and offered how the leadership sector could organize itself to align leadership development efforts with the advancement of racial justice.

The original document offered the reader concepts they could use to frame the conversation around leadership and race. It offered provocative and cutting-edge thinking of the day, and the power dynamics of the time period. It was also a successful experiment in collaboration as many people within the LLC ecosystem partnered to create a report that the field was hungry for. The document created in 2010 is an enduring piece, over a decade later it is still referenced and considered useful. We appreciate

that the creators of the 2010 document gave us such fertile fodder for new work.

A lot has changed since 2010. The work of updating this Leadership and Race publication began at the same time of our organizational leadership transition, our deepened study of liberatory leadership practices, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and racial reckoning when organizations and institutions of all kinds were loudly proclaiming their commitment to racial justice. Much of our work during this time was rooted in our collaboration with other Black women and women of color as we dreamed forward.

As our research continued into 2023, the pendulum swung away from supporting diversity, equity and inclusion, and racial justice work amidst an increasingly polarized funding and legal context hostile to racial justice and other equity-centered work. In the following months, leaders murmured and whispered about sharp and troubling declines in investment in racial justice efforts. Black women and women of color with a national platform and within our social good sector resigned or were replaced one by one. It was our community and our work around liberatory leadership that allowed us to experience hope in these times.

Finally, as we wrote this text in the summer of 2024, we observed a glimmer of renewed energy as the national political stage and public discourse revolved around leadership and race once more.

Data

Ethnic and racial diversity in the United States is growing. Although whites remain the largest single group, “[c]urrent population demographics by race/ethnicity and age support projections that people of color will become the collective majority by 2045.” Economic Policy Institute (<https://www.epi.org/publication/disparities-chartbook/>)



Population of the United States

Then (2010)	Now (~2024)
308,745,538	331,449,281 (2020) 335,893,238 (2024 projection)

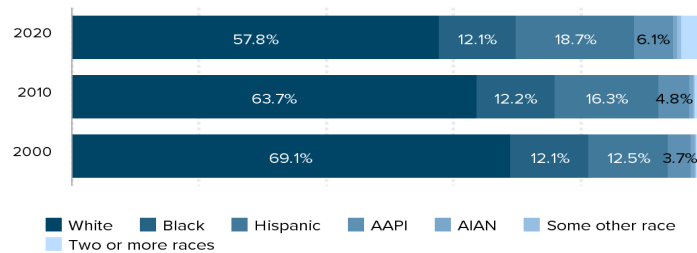
Population by Race: 2010 and 2020

Race	2010			2020			Numeric difference		
	Alone	In combination	Alone or in combination	Alone	In combination	Alone or in combination	Alone	In combination	Alone or in combination
White	223,553,265	7,487,133	231,040,398	204,277,273	31,134,234	235,411,507	-19,275,992	23,647,101	4,371,109
Black or African American	38,929,319	3,091,424	42,020,743	41,104,200	5,832,533	46,936,733	2,174,881	2,741,109	4,915,990
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,932,248	2,288,331	5,220,579	3,727,135	5,938,923	9,666,058	794,887	3,650,592	4,445,479
Asian	14,674,252	2,646,604	17,320,856	19,886,049	4,114,949	24,000,998	5,211,797	1,468,345	6,680,142
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	540,013	685,182	1,225,195	689,966	896,497	1,586,463	149,953	211,315	361,268
Some Other Race	19,107,368	2,640,716	21,748,084	27,915,715	21,986,821	49,902,536	8,808,347	19,346,105	28,154,452
Two or More Races	9,009,073	X	X	33,848,943	X	X	24,839,870	X	X

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File. (<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/redistricting-supplementary-tables/redistricting-supplementary-table-01.pdf>)

The U.S. has become more racially and ethnically diverse over the last two decades

Share of U.S. population by race and ethnicity, 2000, 2010, and 2020



Sources: Economic Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census Summary File 2, Table DP1, for 2000, and Decennial Census Redistricting Data, Table P2, for 2010 and 2020. (<https://www.epi.org/publication/disparities-chartbook>)

“I’ve recently been struggling with how to hold this idea that our organizations are imperfect vehicles for movement goals.”

-Trish Adobea Tchume

For organizations that retained their commitment to racial justice, the difficult work of doing transformative work coupled with inconsistent support and resources resulted in challenging conditions particularly for Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) leaders. These conditions were the backdrop for other major shifts in the non-profit and social good sector such as a growing resistance to standard organizational hierarchy, a move toward more distributed leadership models, and a significant increase of leadership transitions at all levels. It seems as though all actors in the social good sector have been asked to and have endeavored to align their values with organizational practice again and again. Among many things, it raises a question of possibility and viability of our current strategies. In short, we are overly stretched and perhaps set up to fail.

Seeing the limitations of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives as we’ve known it, social good actors are exploring new language orientations and ways of thinking about the relationship between leadership and racial justice. LLC, in particular, seeks to offer the field updated thinking and a different approach to move us beyond what we already know by using space and time travel as a frame for the current exploration of leadership and race (See more in the List of Interviewees Addendum).

“BIPOC leaders are being asked to simultaneously dismantle the past, survive in the present, and create an alternative future.”

- Neha Mahajan and Felicia Griffin, The Call Syndemic Era (April 20, 2023)



“How do we take care of ourselves and our communities? We need an ecosystem approach that allows each of us to play our role, rather than expecting one or a few of us to lead the work. This starts with being fully grounded in ourselves.”

-Ericka Stallings



Take Your Time Arriving

We are experiencing much of what we will discuss in this report - they are not just words on a page. Though there are moments of celebration and hope here, much of the content is weighty, and you may experience that weight in your body and spirit.

While most of us have acclimated to existence in these muddied waters, we want to acknowledge that much of what you will read here may feel like scratching at a deep wound. Rumi stated, “The wound is the place where the Light enters you.” Transforming wound to Light requires care, intention, spaciousness, and love.

Before you move further into this report, we invite you to **take your time arriving**. At LLC, we include this disclaimer at the start of each of our Zoom meetings with an invitation to take a deep breath in and exhale. We also want to extend that invitation here, and ask you to do the things that take care of you as you engage in this space. Just as we held intentions for the processes of collaborating with our advisory group and research team as we created this report (See Behind the Scenes Addendum), we are also keeping in mind that we want your engagement with this report to feel as easeful as possible.

As you engage here, take moments to breathe, pause, reflect, and act as needed. Leaning on the wisdom of LLC's friend Marquita James, of Lagniappe Consulting, and ask yourself: "What can I do to get 1% more comfortable at this moment?" That may mean pausing and tending to yourself with breath work or movement, connecting with a colleague or friend, or listening to a song on our Leadership and Race Playlist. We will make other offerings for pausing and reflection throughout the report.



THINGS WE
TALK ABOUT



THINGS WE
DON'T

Image courtesy of Britchida.
"Things We Talk About" by Britchida
([www.https://britchida.com](https://britchida.com))

Our Collective Hopes For This Report

Song Suggestions



This collaborative research project was initiated by research with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and sparked by a vibrant conversation between Elissa Sloan Perry, Ericka Stallings, and Frances Kunreuther on a train ride home from a leaderful retreat hosted by the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation. Moving forward, we developed the project by engaging our network of trusted people committed to racial justice leadership; these people became our Advisory Group: Sean Thomas Breinfeld, Trish Adobea Tchume, Elissa Sloan Perry, Frances Kunreuther, and Monica Dennis. We later engaged research partners Shiree Teng and Venus Mejia. Our learning partners’ identities included Black, multiracial, East Asian, Indigenous, Latine, Southeast Asian, white, refugee, immigrant, nonbinary, queer, and more. In co-creating this project, we endeavored to use our platform to honor our identities and communities.

Our collective hope is for this report to be grounded in relationships, to inspire new relationships, and to deepen pre-existing relationships. In short, we hope you felt seen somewhere in here. This report is meant to be space for us and each other.

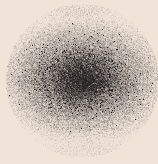
What to Expect in This Report

Social good leaders (LLC included) often read reports of this kind hoping for a neat list of recommendations and a tick list of action items. There are good reasons for this, including limited time, bandwidth, and resources. The advisory group decided that while we do want to offer an updated white paper that included recommendations, our unique purpose was not to oversimplify or trivialize the complex nuance of this issue. Instead, we hope to lift up the textures, brightness, and even shadows of leadership and race.

In writing this report, we reviewed literature at the intersections of leadership and race and racial justice leadership. We also interviewed individuals in our sector who are leading toward racial justice, as well as field builders and those in philanthropy who are supporting and resourcing racial justice leadership. Finally, we tapped the experience of the LLC staff, and the advisory group by incorporating our experiences and observations researching, engaging and holding space for BIPOC, racial justice, and liberatory leaders.

This information explores leadership and race beyond structural racism and offers guidance to leaders, intermediaries, and those in philanthropy seeking progress towards racial justice. We hope that this work honors and offers an authentic illustration of the story of BIPOC leaders who are currently leading toward justice in these times, and invites us all to hold space for deepened connection and relationships.

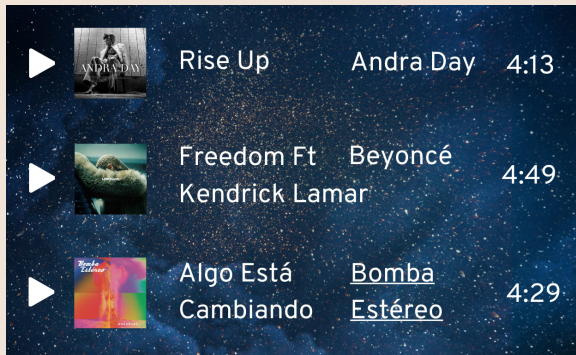
Lastly, you should also know that this project lives beyond this report. We will continue creating and holding space for collaborative learning with you. For us, the knowledge gathered for this report sits at the crossroads of many leadership explorations, and we could not cover it all. For example, it moves beyond DEI and overlaps with leadership frames such as liberatory leadership and leadership for sovereignty. We hope that our continued work will offer support to leaders seeking ways to flow forward in equity, justice and collective liberation.



In Our Words

Definitions of Leadership

Song Suggestions



Today, we explore leadership more fully and in our own words. The following are definitions of leadership from conversations with sixteen leaders about how they define leadership, what it requires in the current context, and how they see it beginning to shift—or needing to shift—as we collectively dream forward.

While the leaders we interviewed used different language to define leadership, they consistently described the core of leadership as a collective process rather than rooted in just one person. In addition, several leaders agreed that core to leadership is engaging in the inner work that enables a leader to increase their courage, vulnerability, interdependence, and understanding of purpose.

All leaders agreed that leadership requires taking responsibility for collective and courageous vision-driven action. Below, direct quotes are used alongside paraphrased summaries to honor their authentic voices while necessarily condensing what were rich conversations that were each unique yet harmonized to converge on key themes.

Together, we begin to see that leadership for racial justice must be defined beyond representation. Leadership is a verb—it is an action, rooted in love, and requires us to hold a vision of our collective well-being, regardless of the domain, field, or discipline.



Reflection Question

What does being a leader mean to you?

What does leadership mean to you?

- **Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Community Change:** Asserts that leadership is the ability to inspire vision that is rooted in a shared political analysis and strategically move toward that vision through deep, full and rich interdependent relationships.
- **Amanda Lanceplaine, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation:** “Being a leader is being courageous. It’s putting yourself out there and it’s trying your hardest. If you have an idea, be courageous enough to say it and stand by it.”
- **Brooke Treadwell, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation:** “Holding space to lead collectively. Holding space for your own humanity and the humanity of everyone else that’s with you - co-leading.”
- **Carolyn Wang Kong, Asian Pacific Fund:** “Leadership is being a collaborative visionary. Having an ability to kind of bring different people together and tap into what their strengths and passions are and then you knit that together towards a shared goal.”
- **Darlene Nipper, Rockwood Leadership Institute:** “Leadership is courage, vision, action and taking responsibility.”
- **Dax-Devlon Ross, Dax-Dev, Inc:** “Leadership requires holding a complex analysis of hxstory (personal and social) and systemic failures of structures that got us to where we are.”
- **Holly Delany Cole, LeadersTrust:** “Leadership makes way for collective vision making.”

- **Huong Nguyen-Yap, Northern California Grantmakers:** Reminds us that leadership is still a loaded word that can uphold traditional and sometimes harmful positional power where access and ability is exclusive. Given this context, leadership can show up as proactively offering grace to ourselves as BIPOC leaders, and offering grace to each other in the work that we're doing.
- **Karla Monterroso, Brava Leaders:** "Leadership means holding power and friction to recognize, honor, and lift up the full diversity of our people."
- **LaShawn Routé Chatmon, National Equity Project:** Says that leadership is a verb, an action rooted in love and a vision of our collective well being.
- **Michelle Molitor, Equity Lab:** Emphasizes the importance of leaders having a deep understanding of themselves and their purpose, and being able to articulate that purpose to others.
- **Morning Star Gali, Indigenous Justice:** "Leadership is not just one person; it requires collective responsibility."
- **Sayu Bhojwani, Speaker, Writer, TED Speaker:** Highlights the need for leaders to build trust and relationships, and to create a shared vision that others can believe in.
- **Mattice Haynes, Embodied Leadership Coach:** "Being a leader in these times requires vulnerability and a commitment to transforming colonial, racialized structures by being deeply interdependent."
- **Taij Kumarie Moteelall, Standing in Our Power and Media Sutra, Inc.:** "Oftentimes what I've witnessed firsthand is in racial justice movement building, strategic consulting, and resource mobilization is that we put ourselves at risk of being harmed. We burn the candles at both ends, which hinders our overall wellness and limits our long term impact."
- **Thato Ramaobi, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative:** "Being a leader to me, essentially means, supporting the people around me - supporting their vision, their execution, giving the resources they might need, clarity they might need, frameworks they might need, and supporting sense making they might need. A leader provides context and clarity to the environment in which we strive to make an impact."



Image courtesy of Britchida.
“Permission to Change” by Britchida
([www.https://britchida.com](https://britchida.com))

Additional Definitions

Racial justice is a vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self-determination to fully thrive.

Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

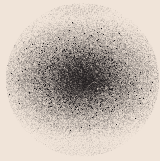
Distinction between racial equity & racial justice: Racial equity is the process for moving towards the vision of racial justice. Racial equity seeks measurable milestones and outcomes that can be achieved on the road to racial justice. Racial equity is necessary, but not sufficient, for racial justice.

From Race Forward

At LLC, we believe that **liberatory leadership** means taking responsibility for collectively transforming our freedom dreams into reality by freeing ourselves from oppressive and limiting self-beliefs, harmful interpersonal practices, and divesting from and changing systems of harm that rely on domination and extraction. For those of us leading from within movements and organizations, this means creating, refining, and uplifting life-giving policies, structures, and practices that combat oppression in our organizations and our communities.

This understanding is inspired by the work of the National Equity Project¹ and our work with the Liberatory Leadership Partnership. See more through our Liberatory Leadership Framework at www.leadershiplearning.org.

¹ Chatmon, LaShawn Routé, Wade in the Water: Leadership Imperatives for Turbulent Times



Naming Our Questions The Curiosities We Raised Together

Our exploration is predicated on the following assumptions:

1. Leadership is a critical site of transformation.
2. Racial justice-focused leadership within the non-profit, and social good sector in particular, is essential for advancing racial justice.
3. In order for the non-profit and social good sector organizations to conduct work that advances racial justice, they must internally have racial justice-centered leadership practices.
4. While BIPOC representation is a good indicator of racial justice it cannot be treated as a proxy for racial justice.

Based on these assumptions, this project's primary questions are:

In *addition* to increasing BIPOC representation in leadership:

1. How can we make the sector's leadership approaches more racially just by supporting the development of racial justice leaders?
2. How can leadership in the sector advance actual racial justice in the United States?

These large questions are broken down into several smaller questions that serve as the framing for our continued exploration.



- I. What is Racial Justice Leadership? Here we examine what racial justice leadership is, what it requires, and the conditions that make it possible.
- II. How can we make the sector’s leadership approaches more racially just by appropriately tailoring support of racial justice leaders to meet current needs? Here we detail the skills, capacities, and mindsets leaders require to advance racial justice.
- III. How can leadership in the sector advance actual racial justice in the United States? Here we share our call to each other on how the various stakeholders in racial justice work can advance racial justice leadership, this includes intermediaries and field builders, philanthropy and leaders themselves.



Image courtesy of Jesse Littlebird.
“Red Sawblade Sun During Monsoon” by Jesse Littlebird
(www.jesselittlebird.com)

Leadership and Race In 2024

“I’ve watched a lot of Black women lose their jobs in the last few years, in part because they stepped into a gap that was there post-George Floyd during a pandemic that, had it not been filled, would have devastated a lot of communities. But now that we’re past it, folks are like, ‘And you didn’t do enough.’”

- Karla Monterroso



Song Suggestions

		Thus Sayeth the Lorde	Meshell Ndegeocello	5:40
		Rebelión	Joe Arroyo	4:47
		Alright	Kendrick Lamar	3:39

Context of Racial Justice Work in 2024

The response to the 2020 racial reckoning promised more than it delivered. Over the last four years, racial justice leaders have had to work through significant challenges while managing the effects of a global pandemic, growing political polarization, and a widening gap in income inequality. These challenges were compounded by a backlash to racial justice efforts, often referred to as “Whitelash,” and fueled by the perceived threat of a shift in power dynamics. This has led to decreased investment in racial justice initiatives, increased chilling effects of legal action, public condemnation of these efforts, and attempts to undermine the credibility and safety of racial justice leaders. And, it is important to remember that these strategies to keep power in place are integral to white supremacy and have been part of the fabric of America since its founding.

The 2010 *Leadership and Race* report was written after the 2008 election of President Barack Obama. As we write this updated report in 2024, we are at the start of an unprecedented U.S. presidential election, the outcome of which promises to be a defining moment in American history with Vice President Kamala Harris campaigning against

former President Donald Trump. Former President Trump, the conservative right, and mainstream media have already begun hurling racist and misogynist insults at Vice President Harris including questioning her experience, questioning her race, and labeling her a “DEI hire” as a pejorative insult. Unfortunately, what we are witnessing in this presidential campaign is an illustration on the grand scale of what many BIPOC leaders experience in overt and covert ways in their interactions in their own professional dealings.

At the same time, DEI efforts are being framed as a negative or dispensable for business in conservative circles and large multinational corporations. It is notable that in 2023, both Meta and Alphabet reduced their DEI programs significantly during restructures and layoffs. In contrast, the 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Business and Racial Justice, shows that based on their survey of over 3,000 respondents, demand from employees for DEI initiatives is as high as it was in 2020, reported incidents of racism have increased since 2020, and overall concern for systemic racism and racial injustice has decreased since 2020.² The findings reveal that our communities are seeking more. The greater workforce still sees value in these efforts. These findings reinforce the need for the social good sector to lead in ongoing dialogue and nuanced understanding to address challenges to racial equity and racial justice.

2 Edleman Trust Institute, Special Report: Business and Racial Justice

In “The Push and Pull: Declining Interest in Nonprofit Leadership,” Building Movement Project writes:

“White leaders talked about their commitment to (and challenges with) addressing race/racism in their organizations. Several were also struggling with the need or desire for the organization to maintain neutrality in the post-2020 environment. The energy felt by BIPOC leaders to have an opening where they can make a difference continues to be challenged by the attacks and backlash especially on issues of race including the U.S. Supreme Court affirmative action decision and the funding cliff they now face as foundations and government pull back on their support.”³

3 Kunreuther and Thomas, The Push and Pull: Declining Interest in Nonprofit Leadership

Challenges Racial Justice Leaders Are Facing in 2024

In this section, we explore how the challenges of the current landscape have impacted leaders and work towards racial justice. The conditions named below have contributed to the notion that leaders of color, and particularly Black women, are currently set up to fail.

Limited Resources

Leaders in the racial justice sector are under-resourced and overstretched, lacking critical space and the deep visioning and relationship building that a transformation requires. “We don’t actually have the resourcing that leaders of color need right now.”— Karla Monterroso. Many leaders experienced difficulty in deepening racial justice work because of the extraordinary weight of their responsibilities which, in addition to externally focused mission work, also entails managing personal issues and traumas of their organizations at all levels. Many of which are related to racial inequity within the organization and field⁴. Moreover, a recent finding shared in the Power to Win report states that “Eighty-five percent of respondents—the overwhelming majority—agreed that Left-wing organizations have become more accountable to our funders than to our bases and

4 Flores, Michelle and Elena Conte, Brilliant Transformations: Toward Full Flourishing in BIPOC Leadership Transitions

constituencies.”⁵ Consequently, some researchers are observing a declining interest in traditional non-profit leadership: Nonprofit actors are increasingly acknowledging the difficulty of leadership, and many are deciding that leadership as is, is not desirable or sustainable.⁶

Stretch to Transform

With these limited resources, leaders are expected to facilitate transformative action in a context where leadership roles and expectations are changing as sector wide organizational cultural norms rapidly evolve. Organizations are experimenting with their governance models, and are adopting new leadership and decision-making models (e.g. growth of distributed leadership structures and adoption of consent-based decision-making approaches). Leaders and members of organizations and networks are reimagining what it means to lead. For example, organizational leaders are more frequently finding that caring for staff is no longer a nice to have capacity, instead, increasingly building a culture of care stands alongside fundraising ability, content knowledge, and administrative acumen as a core leadership capacity.

Pressure to Try on New Models

As old models of leadership are critiqued and refined, current leaders are experiencing both a push and pull toward new models of leadership.

5 The Action Lab et. al., Power to Win: Report on Progressive Power and Organizing

6 Race to Lead and Building Movement Project, Trading Glass Ceiling for Glass Cliffs: A Race to Lead Report on Executives of Color

The internal turmoil and external reputational risk older approaches have engendered have had a repellent effect, and the promise of new models has an attraction effect.

This shift away from well-established models and toward new models requires that more leaders navigate through unknown and less illuminated paths. The field changes are adaptive challenges as opposed to technical challenges and with the most adverse impact on and at the greatest risk to Black womxn and leaders of color; “...leaders of color are grappling with organizational challenges as staff advocate for more equitable decision-making and pay, including efforts to unionize nonprofits,” says

Sayu Bhojwani.⁷ Many BIPOC leaders report “[h]eightened scrutiny and expectations—particularly from staff of color—to quickly advance racial equity in their organizations.”⁸

To further compound these challenging conditions, BIPOC leaders take on these added responsibilities without corresponding support or compensation.⁹

7 Bhojwani, Sayu, Women Leaders of Color Are Exhausted. Philanthropy Needs to Step Up. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*

8 Wong, Nate et. al., Nonprofit Leadership Transitions: Four Ways Funders Can Support Leaders of Color

9 Race to Lead and Building Movement Project, Trading Glass Ceiling for Glass Cliffs: A Race to Lead Report on Executives of Color



Image courtesy of Maria Blanco.
Borders and Walls #2 by Maria Blanco
(www.mariablancoart.com)

Burn-out

The risks to leaders are multifold: they are physical, emotional, financial, and reputational. Leaders are asked to do multiple things at the same time like holding the past, present and future without the resources needed to slow down.

“Oftentimes what I’ve witnessed firsthand is in racial justice movement building, strategic consulting, and resource mobilization is that we put ourselves at risk of being harmed. We burn the candles at both ends, which hinders our overall wellness and limits our long term impact.” - Taij Kumarie Moteelall

Attempting To Heal While Continuing To Be Harmed

What often doesn’t receive enough attention is the fact that BIPOC leaders aren’t simply living the fight for racial justice, they are living the reality of racial injustice every moment of their lives, “I want to not have to send my young men, my Black boys, out of this door every day with a prayer on my lips.” –LaShawn Routé Chatmon

Isolation and Lack of Coordination

Too often racial justice leaders are navigating these challenges in isolation. Although interdependence is a cornerstone of racial justice work, and building solidarity across BIPOC communities and identities is an essential component of the work of advancing racial justice, the lack of support for connection and reflection makes it more difficult and burdensome for racial justice leaders to coordinate. “There’s an organized fascist playbook

that is being used to undermine the authority of people of color, and the voice of people of color. So like, you know, if you look at like, books are being banned, which is really, our voices being banned. And then voting rights are being suppressed and our bodies are being controlled. It’s all about the same thing, right? It’s all about control and who has, who has agency and who doesn’t...On the racial justice side, you have these wonderful efforts, but they’re very disparate. They’re not well resourced, they’re not well coordinated.” – Sayu Bhojwani

Competition and Scarcity

Further complicating these conditions is the fact that historically, BIPOC communities have been pitted against each other. Racial justice leaders have found that there is a common tendency within philanthropy, including institutions working toward racial justice, to adopt a scarcity mindset fueling conflicts within our communities. “We must be in solidarity with each other to see through these consequences.” ...“I’ve had a couple of our nonprofits say funders have said ‘We’re funding Black and Brown communities that don’t include Asian or Pacific Islander communities.’ They’ve been told point blank, but then I also wonder and I’m watching those funders. Are [they] actually funding Black and Brown communities? Because I’m not actually sure...[And this] pits our communities against each other or creates a scarcity complex even worse than before.” - Carolyn Wang Kong

Vignette: Emerging and evolving demands of leadership

The efforts to hold onto multiple leadership strands can often feel contradictory to leaders. For leaders this was exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic and the need many staff members felt for top-down assurances that many leaders couldn't provide. One leader said, "Staff are calling on us to step into traditional models of leadership-setting direction and answer questions- 'what are we going to do?' for example 'when are we going to be returning to the office?'...If I knew when it would be safe to do that I'd be running the CDC! People are looking for answers so they are turning to people in traditional positions of leadership - so I have to find compassion and understanding for this need. I know it's not a failure but it feels like a failure." (New York City Based Non-profit Executive Director)



"The deep meaning is not transformation for anything. It is actually transformation for something very specific, so that we can disrupt the settler, colonial, capitalist racist structures, white supremacist structures, structures that are making our world, frankly, dangerous for people like us to live in. So that's the transformation that we're talking about, and it means relationship and community and connection."
- Darlene Nipper

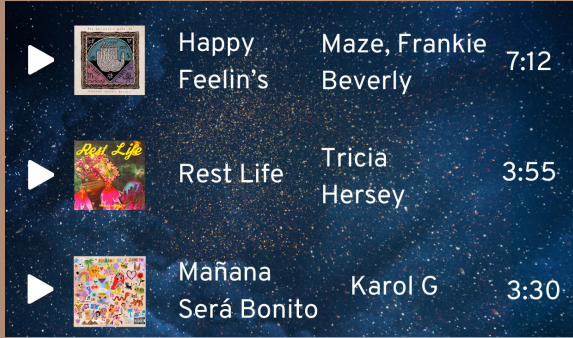


Mindfulness Break

A reminder to breathe. Reground. Check in with your bodies and feelings. What kind of clues are they giving you about your needs right now? What are ways you honor your now?

Visioning and Practicing A Path Forward

Song Suggestions



Despite these significant challenges, racial justice leaders are engaging in work to create new visions for racial justice. In fact, some of the challenges leaders are experiencing are also opportunities to experiment with organizational practices that better align with racial justice goals.

We celebrate that there has been an increase in BIPOC representation.¹⁰ While we know this doesn't account for all that is needed, it is the bare minimum for how we begin to realize racial justice, and the increase in numbers signals an important step in the movement.

We believe it is possible for us to achieve repair and regeneration by surfacing challenges that BIPOC leaders have long experienced, demanding responses, and living into transformation within ourselves. We are also telling our stories,

surfacing courageous visions, and even reclaiming play in our work. Leaders are increasingly willing to name love as a goal, they are centering healing and care, taking part in radical sabbaticals,¹¹ and bringing in ancestral and indigenous knowledge. In short, we are reconnecting with each other and ourselves with the care that the system has seldom offered us.

And there are even more bright spots from deep liberatory leadership being practiced throughout the nation. There are more spaces where leaders are coming together to share their learnings and resources, and identifying ways to collaborate to increase impact going forward. “[BIPOC leaders] have a lot of resources, expertise and wisdom... gathering reminds us of how much there is.”- Monica Dennis

¹⁰ Daniels, Alex, *New Nonprofit Leaders of Color Bring Change but Also Face Hurdles*

¹¹ Co-Lab Collective, *Radical Sabbatical*



“During the pandemic, I found myself coaching many Black, Indigenous and immigrant female leaders stepping into executive roles who felt alone. These experiences sent me back in time reaching for the many afro-indigenous practices I grew up with that offered us care. It also catapulted me to look at the Mayan practices in southern Mexico. This helped me confidently bring the spirit of our indigenous rituals, ceremonies and daily practices into reframing the kind of coaching and culture change leaders and organizations need. While indigenous practices have been lost in every corner of this planet, many tribes, pueblos, comunidades and elders have retained some of them, waiting for this moment in time. Generations who were cast out of their homelands are returning to family systems or countries to remember what was lost, so that we may relocate leadership and reclaim the role of power, joy, play, pleasure and rest as an important gift to be passed down across our collective ancestral tree. This is a key improvement of the practice of leadership because it will offer future generations of leaders and organizations fighting for racial justice an option to be rooted in something more than generational trauma.”

- Ana Polanco



In our conversations with the interviewees, we asked them to travel to the past and name the leaders they call on in this work. As we honor our past, we call in our ancestors and living leaders to highlight their unique contributions and seek their wisdom as we shape our future.

My mother

My father

My parents

My grandma

Winnie Mandela

Audrey Lorde

Johnny Tillman

Grace Lee Boggs

Joyce Boyd

Megan Mclaughlin

Vincent Harding

Peggy Saika



Reflection Question

Do you have ancestors or other leaders you call on within this work?

Are there ancestral practices that inform your work?



Dreamspace: A Glimpse Into Bright Futures

“I might be planting the seeds of an oak tree whose shade I may never sit under... I want my nieces and nephews to feel less struggle.”

– Michelle Molitor

An integral part of this work is slowing down to allow space to dream into the future, imagine a world where justice is realized, and name the components that let us know it is so. As we traveled to this future in our interviews, several leaders spoke about abundance, spaciousness, authentic collaboration, and connection—to each other, to the earth, and to our ancestral wisdom.

- For a long time, my mind often asked, “Are we trying to get to utopia or what exactly are we trying to build moving forward?” And now, I imagine it feels like a place where the land is lush and beautiful. You know there’s just nature kind of doing its thing... and then there are communities. We’re living in villages. There’s a lot of support for one another. I think the big thing for me is that we’ve now got to a place where everyone has the tools to

manage and navigate through conflicts and crises. I think we’ve started to build towards knowing that crisis will always exist. - Huong Nguyen-Yap

- I’m in a big city somewhere. Things feel abundant. There’s enough housing, there’s enough access to food and medicine, but like the joy that I’m feeling feels good. Not everything is perfect, but folks have what they need. And now they can think about other things. Leaders are all different ages, they all look different ways. And they know everyone. It feels like when you go to a family function and you’re genuinely excited to see everyone. Folks are feeling connected to each other in a real way. We know what other people need, we know how they can support us. We’re connected in our joy and in their sadness, right? So it feels deeply interdependent in a really cool way. - Aida Cuadrado Bozzo
- I imagine my four-year-old boys at 30. Some of these things that we are finding we have to imagine, because they’re not in practice yet, become the water that we swim in. By that time, having a Black woman President is commonplace. We’ve had like four already. My boys can truly do whatever they want, and not worry about some of these systems that are keeping us out, keeping us down. I see abundance.

I imagine myself as an elder,
and I'm not doing a nine to five.
But I am enjoying, engaging,
and advising people who want
to be advised. I am spending
most of my time as I did during
my recent time off - swimming,
eating ice cream, and walking.
And then I feel like there's a
spiritual element for me. I am
in practice, and I am feeling
even closer to God, closer to my
ancestors. - Thato Ramaobi

- And when you asked us how
we felt in this new world, I felt a
clear decrease in my own anxiety
because I felt connected to all
my neighbors. I felt connected
and loved by them and that
I loved them back. - Brooke
Treadwell



Reflection Question




When we are collectively brave and courageous, what do you dream of us doing?
Being? Saying out loud?
What does it feel like?



Image courtesy of Jesse Littlebird.
“Lightning People Dancing in the Canyon” by Jesse Littlebird (www.jesselittlebird.com)

What Racial Justice Leadership Requires

Song Suggestions

	Love Is The Way	Three Sacred Souls	2:59
	Freedom Song	Monica McIntyre	3:45
	Love Theme From Spartacus	Yusuf Lateef	4:15

Key Conditions That Supports Racial Justice Leadership

Racial justice leaders in the current moment are creating a new path to a multiracial society and institutions. The following are three key conditions or circumstances that support racial justice leadership.

Resources. Mattice Haynes described this work of remembering interdependent models, structures, relationships, and ways of leading as a kind of “world building.” These efforts can’t happen without intentional and significant investments.

Love and Connection. Love and practices steeped in care and concern are required to advance racial justice leadership. What makes it possible for love to show up? As bell hooks says, “the moment we choose to love, we begin to move against domination, against oppression.


The moment we choose love, we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others.”¹²

Time and Space. Mostly, racial justice leaders require time and space dedicated for relationship building. Morning Star Gali tells us that the key to this is “taking the time to just be with one another and be in community with one another.” In these spaces leaders will be free to engage in the collective dreaming and visioning that can direct and spark action that directly results in racial justice outcomes.

¹² hooks, bell. “Love as the Practice of Freedom.” In *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representation*, 243-250


“I am most proud that when I have had the ability to control resources and tables and spaces, that they have been wide open. And they have been places where whoever you are, you are listened to deeply ...I can actually think, in my head, of the times when I didn’t treat someone well. I mean, those stay with me and I try to remember them and learn from them and not repeat them. I’ve always had a consciousness about how what you make room for affects things, and because I’ve made room for others’ agency and success, wonderful things have happened.”

- Holly Delany Cole



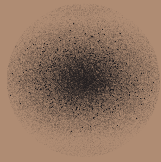
“Don’t just tell me that you love me. Show me how you love me.”

**- Darlene
Nipper**



“I’ve also been thinking more about how love, at the core, is an antidote to so much of what we see in our current systems.”

**- Iman Mills
Gordon**



Core Leadership Skills, Capacities and Mindsets

Exploring this component of leadership requires us to move beyond representation. Leadership to advance racial justice is not merely a function of inviting BIPOC leaders into leadership positions. While supporting and removing obstacles to BIPOC leadership is a key part of racial justice leadership, it's not an end in and of itself. Not all BIPOC leaders are justice-centered leaders, and those that are cannot succeed without support structures. We are particularly interested in surfacing ways the full humanity of BIPOC leaders can be present and accounted for, and to recognize the challenging and rapidly changing condition in which racial justice leaders are operating.

Leaders are managing the process of reimagining what it means to be responsible, and from a place of full connection and vulnerability. They must manage trade-offs between impact, culture, and financial sustainability. Core racial justice leadership skills, capacities and mindsets that support navigating this work includes:

1. Inner work and Collective Healing
2. Collective Action
3. Community and Solidarity Building
4. Communication and Dialogue
5. Embracing Diversity
6. Vision and Imagination
7. Navigating Conflict
8. Historical, Systems, and Structural Analysis
9. Experimentation and Innovation
10. Power and Accountability



Image courtesy of Aisha Shillingford, Artistic Director of Intelligent Mischief.
“Untitled” by Aisha Shillingford (www.intelligentmischief.com)

10 Core Leadership Skills, Capacities and Mindsets

1. Inner Work and Collective

Healing: Racial justice leaders, especially BIPOC women leaders, have repeatedly described the work of leading at this moment as exhausting. These leaders need the ability to rest and reflect. Leaders must lean into compassion and prioritize inner work, healing, and the well-being of themselves and their teams. The realities of living and leading in our current systems mean we have experienced trauma. The path to realizing racial justice must begin with recognizing and taking steps to heal from the effects of that trauma. Racial justice leaders embrace vulnerability and honesty while also doing the emotional labor of holding staff and the inner work of learning to ask for and receive support themselves. Navigating these changing leadership patterns can be emotionally laborious for leaders.¹³

2. Collective Action: Leadership for racial justice requires us to collectively take action to change the conversations, structures, and paradigms which have been defined by, and engineered to uphold racial capitalism.

Leaders must take action on two fronts: externally, to influence substantive societal shifts so that material and systems impact becomes woven into the fabric of this nation, and internally related to how they and their organizations lead. This transformation work is laborious, and calls for time and authentic relationships to do because we cannot do it alone as a leader, as an organization, or even as the social good sector alone.

3. Community and Solidarity

Building: Leaders working to achieve racial justice have the ability to build community and solidarity. Recognizing interconnected fates, racial justice leaders foster strong relationships across diverse identities. This capacity lends itself to interdependence. By doing so, leaders may resist past racist ways of being and invent new liberatory ways of being.

4. Communication and Dialogue:

Leaders need new language to correspond to the emergence of new ideas. We must create more words to talk to each other because too much of the common lexicon is built on an adversarial model of domination. Racial justice leaders engage in and create meaningful space for dialogue, and to tell the story of how racial justice and injustice impact various communities.

¹³ Couchois Duncan, Aja, and Elissa Sloan Perry, *People Stitching Earth: Oppression, Healing, Liberation, and Navigating the Terrain in Between*

“This is difficult work. It demands experimentation, patience, and a tolerance for prolonged ambiguity—even for repeated failure.”¹⁴

***- Dax-Devlon
Ross***

5. Embracing Diversity: Rather than treating BIPOC voices as monolithic, racial justice leaders have both an appreciation for and the ability to navigate diversity. Embracing different voices, identities, and experiences within and between our organizations and communities.¹⁵¹⁶

6. Vision and Imagination: Racial justice leadership requires leaders to adopt a prefigurative stance as they must have the hope and imagination to envision a world defined by racial justice rather than the world of inequity we currently live in. Racial justice leaders create new approaches rather than replicating problematic pre-existing models.

¹⁴ Ross, Dax-Devlon, The Challenge to Power - Non-Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly

¹⁵ The National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum, The Wage Gap for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Women

¹⁶ Pew Research Center, Black and Hispanic Women Experience the Largest Gender Wage Gap

7. Navigating Conflict: Racial justice leaders establish new ways of navigating conflict, have the opportunity to practice generative conflict¹⁷, where conflict becomes an opportunity for learning, growth, and reconnection. Leaders need chances to learn how differing voices can still be harmonious (See LLC’s 2024 Virtual Series on conflict titled “Mending”).

8. Historical, Systems, and Structural Analysis: Racial justice leaders are able to engage in historical, systemic, and structural analyses of racial inequity (anti-blackness, ableism, etc.) and articulate the connections between the structural and the personal, and between policies and personal identities.

“[W]e don’t have enough architects in these roles. Generally, we have property managers... we need help training people to be architects.”

***- Karla
Monterroso***

¹⁷ Tchume, Trish Adobea, and Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Calling in & up - 7: Leaning into Generative Conflict

9. Experimentation and Innovation:

Racial justice leaders utilize expansive vision to experiment with new structures, approaches, and resourcing models to create new possibilities. They do so by embracing failure and not knowing.

10. Power and Accountability: Racial justice leaders are redefining leadership in this age, and focusing on accountability rather than punishment.¹⁸ How can we revisit the common leadership modalities and align them to racial justice values? “I think of it as responsibility. I think of it as accountability. I think of it as obligations to our ancestors, obligations to our future generations, obligations to our present generation, and obligation in our relationship and connection to Mother Earth and to the land...I get that that’s not Western thinking... And so it’s just a deep commitment and responsibility to the land, to our people, to our sacred waters... to really live by our teachings, our values, and the ceremonial commitments and understanding that, that it is a way of life for us, and that in order for us to continue, we must adhere to that responsibility and that commitment.” – Morning Star Gali. To both conceive and midwife these multiple transformations requires patience and a deep understanding of and use of power all around.

“Remembering that the current dominant logics don’t have to be the reference point. [That clarity] unleashes a wealth of creativity, right? Invites in spirit and a deeper connection with the land. Invites people to express themselves authentically through their stories, bodies, and art making. We can be bold about what we want to experience and practice it now.”

- Mattice Haynes



18 Hayes, Kelly, To Transform Conflict in Movements, We Must Learn How to Stay in It Together



“If we are not feeling seen, heard, loved, and validated, we carry core ancestral and generational wounds into all of our work, including our racial justice work. And sometimes, unintentionally, when that core wound is not tended to, it can show up as ego, right? It shows up as needing to be the best to prove ourselves, over delivering, and constantly being over capacity. Then we start embodying some of the same dominant, unhealthy and unjust ways of being that we’re trying to undo. I believe that when we release and surrender ego and our attachment to dominant cultural norms rooted in white supremacy and patriarchy, we are increasingly able to center our healing and wellness personally, relationally and organizationally and be in practice of more liberatory norms aligned with our ancestral lineages and future visions as BIPOC changemakers.”

- Taij Kumarie Moteelall

Reflection Questions

How do these capacities land?

Do they speak to your experience in 2024?

What resonates?

Where is there room to stretch or refine?






Calls to Action Calls to Each Other

We offer two ways of thinking about the following recommendations. In one way, they are a call to action because racial justice work is about action, not merely rhetorical exercises. In addition to calling on you to action, we offer recommendations in the spirit of interdependence and reconnection with one another. In other words, this is a call to each other and a call to our humanity, love, and collective liberation.



Image courtesy of Aisha Shillingford, Artistic Director of Intelligent Mischief.
“Untitled” by Aisha Shillingford (www.intelligentmischief.com)

Song Suggestions

▶		Colors	Black Pumas	4:06
▶		It's A Good Day	Shungudzo	3:17
▶		Magia	Monogem	3:19

Leaders

We name the core skills, capacities, and mindsets for racial justice leaders above. Below our interviewees, advisory group, and team have prioritized current individual and collective actions:

- A. Take bold collective action:**
Racial justice leadership requires leaders to imagine new ways of being, voice demands for structural change, and build the collective power needed to dismantle systems of racial injustice and establish liberatory systems.
- B. Engage in the inner work and capacity building that the current context calls for:**
Healing and trauma are themes that have come up repeatedly in this report. As Elissa Sloan Perry tells us, to do this, we need to build change management skills and competencies at multiple levels and we need to learn how to hold individual, organizational, and movement interests at the same time. (See Core Racial Justice Skills, Capacities, and Mindsets)
- C. Lineage work:** We envision racial justice work as part of a liberatory lineage. Lineage work asks us to pay closer attention - to hold onto efforts of the past, advance incremental gains, and also plan for an even more liberated future. We honor lineage by holding a shared direction and celebrating the incremental wins on the way to the monumental wins.
- D. Leaders must work together to write our own manifestos:**
Racial justice leaders are hungry for new language, concepts, and visions. Leaders can create a “manifesto” or several that come from and honor our stories. We can gift ourselves language, ideas, and practices to try on that do not replicate racist models.
- E. Build different leadership models and more robust leadership teams within our organizations:** In adopting new leadership concepts that center racial justice and liberatory values, we call on ourselves to be in practice within our own spaces. Can we set up more - and different - structures such as shared and distributed leadership? What can we glean from networked leadership and cooperatives?
- F. Create space to claim our power and build relationships in multiple ways:** We are required to lean into interdependence, to turn to rather than against each other by building deep and authentic relationships. The change we seek “requires deeper collaboration, trust, relationships and community.”¹⁹

19 Zoila Pérez, Miriam et.al., The Productivity Paradox Is the New Normal

Field Builders, Free Radicals, and Intermediaries

Field builders, free radicals/consultants, and intermediaries can encourage the conditions needed to support those leading in these critical and difficult times by prioritizing the following actions:

A. Support healing spaces.

- 1. Build spaces for caring connections, collaboration, and supportive learning communities.** This requires investments in building strong relationship ties, which are often slow to form and may not have an immediate “output” or purpose. (See Vignette Below)
- 2. Create space for joy, healing, restoration, and play.** Leadership for equity, justice, and liberatory transformation. Leaders need **time and space for imagination** and innovation. “If you’re an architect or a designer or a creative, so much of your job is imagining, ideating, daydreaming. You need space and time to do that,” Rahaf Harfoush, author of *Humane Productivity*. As architects of a new world, and designers of new ways of being together, liberatory leaders need the described creative time and space.²⁰

B. Responsive not prescriptive capacity building- Leaders for racial justice frequently named the following areas as key capacity building needs.

- 1. Support easeful leadership & governance transitions.** Shifting from individual leaders or models of leadership in organizations and networks takes resources, care, and support. In the case of leadership transitions, LLC has found that leaders and organizations need to make time and space for emotional work. Excerpt from the Hewlett Education Cohort Transitions Cohort Memos, “Grief, loss, anxiety, fear, anger, and insecurity—if not given space—will continue to pop up like speed bumps that impede progress and may cause damage if you don’t slow down.”²¹

20 Dinh, Nikki and Ericka Stallings, 6 Reasons Why Liberatory Leaders Need to Take Play Seriously

21 Bendet, Bess, et. al. Hewlett Foundation Education Cohort on Leadership Transitions: Learning Memo

2. Leaders need resources and support to learn about emerging leadership models, particularly distributive models, and how to implement them in their respective contexts.

Leaders need guidance to figure out how to distribute leadership responsibilities while also offering clarity about power and authority.²²

3. Encourage generative conflict. Leadership models that suppress dissenting voices are often seen as ripe for conflict. Models that invite in diverse voices aren't immune to conflict, but they do have the opportunity to practice generative conflict, where conflict becomes an opportunity for learning, growth, and reconnection.^{23,24} Leaders need chances to learn how differing voices can still be harmonious.

4. Board training. BIPOC

Leaders frequently name boards as a source of stress.²⁵ Offer trainings that engage board members in understanding the current context of racial justice work, and the best way to support BIPOC racial justice leaders to successfully steward their organizations.

C. Invite mindsets from across BIPOC communities. Bring some of the mindsets and approaches that Black feminist thinkers bring to the work, that Indigenous thinkers bring to the work, and that immigrants, refugees and people of color offer. This is a cornerstone rationale of inviting those historically excluded to lead. Their other ways of doing and being need to be considered as the fundamental building blocks of successful movement, too.

22 Ross, Dax-Devlon, The Challenge to Power - Non-Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly

23 Tchume, Trish Adobea, and Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Calling in & up - 7: Leaning into Generative Conflict

24 Dinh, Nikki et. al. Mending the Fabric of Leadership: Navigating Conflict, Healing, and Liberation

25 Nonprofit Quarterly. Stop Drowning Us and Stop Making Us Disappear: A Critical Report on the State of Black Woman Leadership



“I would love to see a world where people don’t feel like they need to prove all the time how important they are or how smart they are or why they know something that you don’t. And that’s why they get paid more and that’s why their time is worth more. That’s why they get to treat you poorly. I’m sick of that system...I would love to see a world where people can just be themselves.”

-Amanda Lanceplaine



Vignette: Power of spaces to collaborate with other racial justice leaders

“The Liberatory Leadership Community of Practice was a space where I got the opportunity to confirm I was on the right path. It confirmed I was not alone and there were other people not coloring in the lines who wanted to transform how we do social justice work. It felt like sweet music to my ears to feel supported in dreams I was having of new ways to move forward. Collective understanding that our struggle remains real -- it remains in front of us...but we can do it differently.” - Felicia Griffin, Transformative Leadership for Change

In the Fall of 2023, LLC began convening a group of eight powerful and inspiring women racial justice leaders in our Liberatory Leadership Community of Practice. This mostly virtual gathering space has been a place to explore the tools, practices, and capacities needed to practice liberatory leadership and support liberatory leaders. Our conversations include liberatory operations, rest and distributed leadership, generative conflict, leadership transitions, and the intricacies of trust and relationship building as core to healthy and dynamic leadership practices.

As our conversations have deepened, what has also emerged is a significant reckoning with the layers of dominant habits in nonprofits. The Community of Practice participants have also

surfaced the nuanced ways that philanthropy could increase capacity by being more equitable as well as more risk-tolerant by investing in smaller organizations that are doing the heart-forward work of organizing and orienting the movement towards a more whole, more just, and more loving future.

One critical benefit of the Community of Practice has been its ability to serve as a container, bridging leaders working towards racial and gender equity. One clear example of the power of connection happened during our July gathering in which Executive Director, Darakshan Raja shared Muslims for Just Future's Theory of Change, inspired by Black Abolitionists and Divest/Invest strategies meant to combat criminalization in Muslim communities. Ditra Edwards, Executive Director of Sista Fire RI, shared how Muslims for Just Future's framework, which includes formulating policy demands, replenishing mutual aid funds, and collecting oral histories, mirrored Sista Fire RI's framework in that it addresses "government abandonment and the implication for our communities." Ditra continued sharing, "We are the social emergency. If we don't band together to fight for our own liberation and freedom, we will not survive this."²⁶

Conversations such as these between the leaders of Black and Muslim racial equity and gender justice organizations have deepened participants' learnings on the work each organization is moving forward and the principles, frameworks, value systems, and organizational structures necessary

²⁶ Inspired by the work of Design Studio for Social Intervention <https://www.ds4si.org/>.

to operationalize liberatory leadership. It has also been a space to surface trends in the larger ecosystem that directly impact their organizations and the organizations they partner with and support. As one of our participants offered, the Community of Practice has been a space where participants could "lead with values and vision rather than crisis, to move towards identifying solutions."

"It was refreshing and also invigorating to be part of a group/cohort of folks who didn't make me/us feel alone in our pursuit of understanding liberatory leadership and also finding ways to implement/execute. It was so so necessary to not only bond, but also exchange wisdom, strategies, recommendations, and advice on so many different aspects of our work, org culture, and programming."
- Navila Rashid, HEART

2023-24 LLC's Liberatory Leadership Community of Practice Participants:

- Nadiah Mohajir and Navila Rashid, HEART
- Malaika Parker, Black Organizing Project
- Felicia Griffin and Neha Mahajan, Transformative Leadership for Change
- Ditra Edwards, Sista Fire RI
- Aisha Shillingford, Intelligent Mischief
- Darakshan Raja, Muslims for Just Futures



Image courtesy of Aisha Shillingford, Artistic Director of Intelligent Mischief.
"Untitled" by Aisha Shillingford (www.intelligentmischief.com)

Funders (Donors, Philanthropy, Government)

A. Actors working in funding spaces must see themselves as racial justice and liberatory leaders (e.g. donors, board members, and staff).

1. **First and most importantly, see yourself as a racial justice/ liberatory leader and, in doing so, consider the skills, capacities, and mindsets needed in the context of today's landscape, and join other racial justice leaders in the call to actions listed above.** We recognize that much of the system's harms play out in funding spaces and philanthropy as well, and encouraging individuals to find space for healing, inner work and lineage work is an important first step in deepening racial justice leadership capacities.
2. **Assess differently.** If racial justice does not fit neatly into your foundation's metrics, reach for models "open-ended enough to support opportunities to digest learning and engage in intentional action, through which we can engage in cycles of feedback and reflection to support unlearning white supremacy and remembering our practices of interdependence, mutuality, and stewardship."²⁷

27 Couchois Duncan, Aja, and Elissa Sloan Perry, *People Stitching Earth: Oppression, Healing, Liberation, and Navigating the Terrain in Between*

B. Invest in the well-being of racial justice leaders.

1. **Leaders need space to slow down to pay attention to racial justice and liberatory leadership as an essential and liberatory act.** If we are busy upholding the systems that do not serve us and replicate the harms of oppressive systems, we will not be able to shift it.
2. **Fellowships.** Investment in leadership can also look like fellowship opportunities for emerging, mid-career, and senior leaders. Fellowships can create a rich environment for sharing best practices, innovative approaches, and learnings. When spacious exploration is prioritized, fellowships can also provide a safe space for innovation to blossom through experimentation and opportunities for connection and collaboration.
3. **Fund sabbaticals.** "Support peer exchange, mentorship, executive coaching, and well-being activities"²⁸

28 Jones, Dorothy, *Nonprofit Leadership Transitions: Four Ways Funders Can Support Leaders of Color*

4. **Fund space for joy, healing, restoration, and play.** Racial Justice Leaders need time and space for imagination and innovation. See LLC's blog on the importance of Play for leaders.

C. Fund powerful risk-taking. The work of undoing the practices and structures of racial injustice is inherently risky. The systems and actors who uphold racial inequity actively resist transformative efforts and frequently target those change-makers working to build and utilize power for justice. If support for racial justice is abandoned whenever there is pushback or challenge, the transformation we seek will be considerably harder to achieve.

D. Invest in experimentation. Racial justice leaders need space to “fail.” While there is a demand for emergence and innovation, there is also low tolerance for “failure”, a natural byproduct of experimentation which helps us get to solutions. “Advancing racial equity is complex systems change, and while working in complexity, there are very, very few, if ever, ‘best practices.’” There are more good practices, and most situations require emergent and adaptive practices.²⁹

Vignette: Need for Dream Spaces

Ayesha Williams, a BIPOC leader of an arts based organization talked about the need for collaborative dream spaces. When asked what allowed her to dream she said: “A number of things, I am the beneficiary of incredible leaders before me who I watched dream about things that did not exist. Our founder had crazy ideas about opening up an organization doing art in a laundromat! We are positioned as a listening and learning organization, we are an extremely collaborative organization. We see the artists as our north star, barometer, they guide the dreaming. To dream and envision spaces that don't exist. You can't attain what you are trying to achieve without a vision for what you are trying to create. [I am with a] staff of all artists, around dreamers who challenge me to think beyond the practical. [We have] Board members who also say ‘who says it's not possible?’, allowing the organizations ‘to think more creatively about how to breathe the system and recreate it.’” Ayesha Williams, Executive Director, The Laundromat Project

29 Couchois Duncan, Aja, and Elissa Sloan Perry, *People Stitching Earth: Oppression, Healing, Liberation, and Navigating the Terrain in Between*

E. Invest in relationship building and collective leadership. Fund spaces for caring connections, collaboration, and supportive learning communities. This requires investments in building strong ties, which are often slow to form and may not have an immediate “output”. Sayu Bhojwani names the need for deep relationships rather than just transactional connections, putting out a call for philanthropy to “[p]rovide opportunities [for leaders] to gather with peers. For women of color, meeting with peers and sharing how we feel often seems less urgent than the work at hand, especially since many of us already see each other at community events, legislative hearings, and conferences. But these work gatherings are no substitute for retreats specifically designed to nourish our bodies and souls with rest, reflection, and relationship building.”

F. Offer general operating support/unrestricted grants. A clear strategy for centering the wisdom of the people closest to the issues, general operating support allows racial justice leaders to deepen their creativity, experimentation, risk-taking, and bold action. General operating support makes it possible for the other actions listed here to take place. General operating support allows leaders to redirect resources using their judgment, support staff well-being through generous paid PTO, and spaciousness to reflect, dream, experiment, etc.

G. Lead to new ways of redistributing wealth and resources like generational commitments. Make long-term funding commitments that allow leaders to take risks. Make significant investments, not just legal minimums. We must try new ways to share resources, and ultimately, as Taij Moteelall shares, “[w]e have to push philanthropy and wealth holders towards the radical redistribution of land, wealth, and power versus just better philanthropy. I’d like to see a shift from “trust-based philanthropy” to “give-it-back philanthropy.”

H. Align capacity-building funding with the articulated needs of leaders, examples include:

- 1. Leadership infrastructure building. Leaders need resources and support to learn both about emerging leadership models and how to implement them.** Leaders need guidance to figure out how to distribute leadership responsibilities while also offering clarity about power and authority.³⁰ Leaders need spaces to help them “shed white supremacy thinking about leadership.”³¹

30 Ross, Dax-Devlon, The Challenge to Power - Non-Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly

31 Ríos, Elsa A. , and Surei Quintana, Love Notes to Our Social Justice Leaders: A Workbook to Support Your Reflective Leadership Practice.

Vignette: Investing in Joyful Transitions

A BIPOC leader described her exit from her Executive Director (ED) position. For her it was important that both she and her BIPOC woman successor were treated with care. In her last year in the Executive Director role she knew she was ready to transition out of leadership and she knew how she wanted to exit. She wanted to have a party, and she wanted to personally turn the leadership over to her successor rather than handing the responsibility over wholesale to a search firm or external interim ED. Together, she and the Board worked to make sure the transition was gentle on everyone. Following the advice of a respected peer, she made sure the message to her successor didn't start with "you'll make my life easier by taking the job." Instead, the organization "lean[ed] into humanness" because "[s]paciouness felt important." Knowing that her successor and the organization would be taken care of made the ED feel taken care of as well.

A generous severance package was a key part of taking care of the outgoing ED, and made it possible for her to exit in a way that was restorative. She dreamed up a multicountry "gap year" of travel which gave her something

to look forward to and was made possible by a severance package of a year's salary. "I was underpaid the whole time," and because they had such a deeply trusting relationship and because for the organization practicing love and abundance were foundational values, the Board approved more than the outgoing leader expected. These same values of abundance pushed the outgoing ED to advocate and ensure that the incoming ED received a higher salary. The ability to act on the values of abundance was only possible because the organization has a very large reserve of unrestricted funds (including a MacKenzie Scott award). Even still, the ED reported that asking for severance was hard to do. According to one nonprofit capacity builder, "We need to educate boards on exit packages. So many CBO leaders get nothing because their boards didn't know it was okay."

This focus on restoration was reciprocal, not only did the outgoing ED advocate for herself, she also advocated for the incoming ED, an internal hire, to take a sabbatical prior to taking on the ED position. As a consequence, the exiting ED was able to exit with peace and grace, and the incoming ED was able to transition in with more ease.

2. Generative conflict and mending. Conflict is inevitable, therefore leaders need support to practice generative conflict,³² where conflict becomes an opportunity for learning, growth, and reconnection. Leaders need chances to learn how differing voices can still be harmonious. (See LLC’s 2024 Virtual Series on conflict titled “Mending”)

3. Fund easeful leadership and governance transitions. Too frequently when organizations experience a leadership change, funders can undermine the new leadership by taking a “wait and see” approach. Funders look to “see” if a new leader(s) will be successful while simultaneously withholding the key resources needed for success. The impact of this approach is especially harmful to BIPOC leaders. In terms of supporting leaders and organizations in transition, “Double down don’t wait and see.”³³

4. Fund administrative support to operationalize liberatory work. The back-end administrative and human resources infrastructure needed to hire, retain, and support staff doing the work.³⁴

34 Washington Area Women’s Foundation, Advancing the Infrastructure to Support Black Women Leaders in the D.C. Metro Area Nonprofit Sector

32 Tchume, Trish Adobea, and Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Calling in & up - 7: Leaning into Generative Conflict

33 Race to Lead and Building Movement Project, Trading Glass Ceiling for Glass Cliffs: A Race to Lead Report on Executives of Color

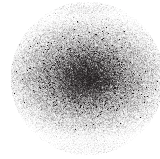
Reflection Question

Take a deep breath in and exhale.

What will your next step be toward courageous vision-driven action?



Image courtesy of Carla Jay Harris.
"Flight" by Carla Jay Harris (www.carlajayharris.com)



Conclusion

We created this document to explicitly name the experience of BIPOC leaders working towards racial justice in 2024, to further define what racial justice leadership requires in current conditions, and to provide immediate action steps that social good stakeholders could prioritize to move us closer to our collective liberation. In partnership with many brilliant and incredible leaders, we are grateful to have found that promising practices and emerging pockets of hope continue to illuminate a hopeful path forward. This report is one essential layer to an ongoing conversation. We invite you to continue in conversation and share your learnings and experiences. Please visit www.leadershiplearning.org to learn about future opportunities to contribute your voice and wisdom.

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Addendum: Behind the Scenes with Leadership Learning Community

On the Joy of Relationship-Centered Collaboration

In co-creating this project with our advisory group, it was crucial to all of us that the work we produced was an authentic representation of the experiences of BIPOC leaders - a document that was truly for us and by us. Moreover, we sought to produce something different and for the production process to differ from our previous experiences within oppressive systems. We wanted this piece to be relational, grounded in relationships, establish new relationships, and strengthen pre-existing ones. We knew from the outset that we wanted the co-creating space to feel very different from the traditional ways most of us have encountered collaboratively building a research document. As we planned our interactions with our project team, we intentionally centered our goal of adequately balancing relationship building, play, and rigor. Because this is a different approach, we were not always certain that our invitation to play would be accepted, and each time, we found that the leaders we engaged with (from the advisory group to our interviewees) welcomed play and joyfully joined us in using it as a means to dive into our joint explorations authentically. In discussing the experience of the way we approached this work, one advisory group member, Elissa Sloan Perry, said they found “rigor of asking hard questions and interrogating things - but there is also a sense of play and fun, there is a wholeness, a liveliness to this.”

We set this tone with our in-person gathering. Our advisory group kick-off event occurred over two spring days in an airy and bright conference room in New York, with good food, trusted ecosystem partners, and tools to support our grounding, creativity, and imagination. In this space, we started with storytelling. Together, we built the story of the origins of our work, the context of the 2010 report, and all that has evolved in terms of the larger racial justice landscape between 2010 and the present. From there, we collaboratively mapped our work intersections, built a container for our partnership, brainstormed curiosities and potential partners, imagined the possible shapes these final products could take, and imagined how we could produce something of value to those concerned with racial equity and liberation. At this gathering, we named curiosity, connection, story, creativity, honesty, collaboration, movement, joy, play, care, and gratitude as key values to hold. Together, we attended to relationships as much as we attended to work products while collectively creating a workplan and research protocol.

Over the next year, we had 1:1 meetings, met bi-monthly as a full group, and communicated over email in between meetings. Each time we interacted, we prioritized our connection (through personal check-ins and sharing gratitudes) and cross-collaboration, and even with all of the knowledge/expertise in the room, we all

entered the conversation with a spirit of curiosity instead of relying on our current understanding of the issues. As advisory group member, Frances Kunreuther said: “[This process] created openings to other thinkings and ideas, whether in play or in conversations... [I found] the space provocative and stretched my thinking.” Ericka Stallings agreed, adding, “Folks are grounded in aligned values, but don’t have the same exact perspective. These conversations have expanded, grounded, and challenged my thinking.”

With our advisory group and research partners, we identified the powerful and knowledgeable racial justice leaders we wanted to bring into our conversation through interviews. We refined a space travel interview protocol that served as a playful container for explicitly describing the current racial justice landscape, calling in our ancestors, spaciouly envisioning our future, and naming the actions required to realize racial justice (See Interviewee List and Interview Protocol). We pushed each other to think about the corners and complexities of the findings of our literature review and interviews - learning from and alongside each other. Ultimately, we deepened relationships, expanded our understanding, and experienced pleasure as we practiced new means of engaging with the complexities of racial justice work in joyous ways.

More Details

In- person Meeting Activity Prompts:

- Distributed physical keys. Ask the question: What opportunity does your key open?
- What’s hot or ripe for you right now about leadership and race? What are you anticipating will soon ripen? Is there anything that is overripe?
- Distributed Seed Paper. Ask the question: What are we all dreaming of next? For this work or the intersection of race and leadership?

Addendum: List of Interviewees and Our Interview Protocol

We are grateful to the courageous leaders who joined us in conversation. Thank you for sharing your experience and wisdom.

Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Community Change
Amanda Lanceplaine, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Brooke Treadwell, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Carolyn Wang Kong, Asian Pacific Fund
Darlene Nipper, Rockwood Leadership Institute
Dax-Devlon Ross, Dax-Dev, Inc.
Holly Delany Cole, LeadersTrust
Huong Nguyen-Yap, Northern California Grantmakers
Karla Monterroso, Brava Leaders
LaShawn Routé Chatmon, National Equity Project
Mattice Haynes, Embodied Leadership Coach
Michelle Molitor, Equity Lab
Morning Star Galli, Indigenous Justice
Sayu Bhojwani, Speaker, Writer, TED Speaker
Taij Kumarie Moteelall, Standing in Our Power and Media Sutra, Inc.
Thato Ramaobi, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

Leadership and Race Interview Protocol Time travel with us.

I. **Check-in:** Name, pronouns, native land, anything else you'd like to share about how you identify, and how are you? **(3-5 minutes)**

II. **Welcome (5 min)**

LLC to share the Origins of this work.

Time travel with us - an invitation for immersive and imaginative thinking.

III. **Group agreements:** Have you ever time-traveled before? What might be necessary for us to time travel today? **(5-7 minutes)**

LLC's needs:

Curiosity - we don't have a great map, so we'll need to lean into curiosity and our senses. Because of that, there are no wrong answers.

Protection - there's a risk to time traveling as there is to starting a new

project with new partners. For these interviews, we're not approaching it like researchers, but as learners, and we may iterate on each interview we conduct. We're mitigating unknown risks by taking a phased approach to this work, keeping an open stance, and remembering to have fun. That's our PPE.

Tempo - Slow down for purpose - warp speed can be too much - a reminder to slow down or pause when needed.

Interviewee's needs:

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IV. Questions:

Where we are today: (10 minutes)

What does being a leader mean to you? What does leadership mean to you?

To successfully lead for racial justice, what would you say are the key ingredients?

What is something you've been observing/witnessing in leaders and/or leadership in the social sector that you've wanted to name? Shifts you've wanted to suggest or say?

What supports the leadership of PoC?

What supports do POC need and lack for their staff?

What is different now than in 2010/previously because we are leading in this way?

What are new things we are seeing? Not just old patterns.

V. Let's time travel to the past: (5 minutes)

Do you have ancestors or other leaders you call on within this work?

What's something from your past work that you're proud of? Why was it compelling for you?

VI. And now it's warp speed to a future time....(tell us how far in the future you went): (10 min)

What do you feel? What do you see?

What do you see here as it relates to leaders? (Do you have a vision or aspiration of leadership that you are working to build and/or become?)

How do leaders act and what do they practice now? (Do you have a vision of a practice for what supported and full POC leadership looks like? Maybe a feeling if not a visual.)

How do you want others to engage with this work?

How do you invite others into this visioning space with you?

What are the brave and courageous ones saying in this future? (When we are collectively brave and courageous, what do you dream of us doing? Being? Saying out loud?)

What's possible, then?

VII. With an overlay of all we've seen while time traveling (and your experience), what is the call to action?: (5 minutes)

What is a call to action that you'd like to make?

What hasn't been said before?

VIII. Close and thank you!: (5 minutes)

Addendum: AI Definitions of Leadership

By 2024, multiple artificial intelligence (AI) programs have become accessible to the public with underwhelming oversight and regulation. AI assistance is now offered and is growing in almost every program and application that the social good sector uses including, but not limited to, Google, Microsoft, Salesforce, Zoom, Miro, Padlet, and Canva. They offer both large language models (LLMs) and image generators. In addition to supporting efficiencies at work, they are also capable of generating harmful racial content among many concerning possibilities.

In 2009, Dr. Safiya Nobel began collecting search engine results for Black girls, Asian girls, and Latina girls, and would find an overwhelming number of pornography or hypersexualized content. She would go on to make a case for, among many things, that search engines willfully misrepresent women and girls of color and the extent that supremacy culture persists in our algorithms. Search engine companies, like Google, profit from these types of algorithms. In 2024, these specific searches will no longer generate the same result after years of advocacy and pressure on major multinational companies to choose to make changes to their technology.

Algorithms are a component of AI. It is now widely understood that it is not just the data that is the problem. Dr. Alex Hanna shares that “AI bias also occurs because of who is in the room formulating and framing the problem.” Dr. Hanna illustrates this with a study conducted by Ziad Obermeyer which found that AI created bias against Black patients because it considered early spending indicators to determine funding disbursement. She explains, “The basic issue is that the problem and variables were framed incorrectly, and the algorithm didn’t know how spending was dispersed nor what kind of institutions surrounded the issue.”

LLC holds deep concerns about the ethics of these tools related to whose information they are learning from, where oversight is coming from, who can access it, accuracy of its data, and misinformation about how it works. Without intentional systemic intervention and monitoring, people will believe information shared by AI, and AI systems will exacerbate racial inequities at unprecedented scale.

“One thing I try to do every time I use LLMs and notice a bias response is to push back and give it feedback - which is used to further train the model.”

- Beth Kanter

While we are not able to ignore AI tools in our private or work life, Beth Kanter, Allison Fine, and Philip Deng share eight steps nonprofits can take in considering AI usage. Among their offerings are to (1) stay human-centered, and (2) actively mitigate risks and biases.

In researching Leadership and Race, and to memorialize the moment we are in, LLC posed these two questions to four different AI programs: OpenAI ChatGBT, Microsoft Bing CoPilot, Google Gemini, and Anthropic Claude.ai. First we asked, “What is the definition of leadership?” Next we asked, “What is important to know about leadership and race?”

We found that the responses to these basic questions were not overtly offensive or biased. They were, however, quite vanilla and that IS part of the problem. The responses do not represent the experiences of BIPOC leaders who have direct experience with leadership and race by the sheer depth it omits. It certainly does not match the voices, texture and beauty of BIPOC leaders’ wisdom and stories, either. For now (and as far into the future as we can see), LLC will stick to human-based wisdom on the topic of Leadership and Race.

OpenAI ChatGBT (Pulled July 19, 2024)

Leadership is the act of guiding and directing a group of people or an organization to achieve a common goal. It involves influencing and motivating others, making strategic decisions, and providing direction and support. Effective leadership requires a combination of skills, including communication, vision, empathy, integrity, and the ability to inspire and empower others. A leader is often seen as someone who can navigate challenges, create a positive culture, and drive progress and innovation within their team or organization.

Microsoft Bing’s Copilot (Pulled July 19, 2024)

Leadership is the action of guiding or directing a group of people or an organization. It involves setting a vision, inspiring others, and making decisions to achieve common goals¹². Leadership can also refer to the state or position of being a leader¹. In essence, leadership is about influencing and motivating others to work together towards a shared objective. It’s not just about holding a position of authority but also about the ability to inspire and bring out the best in others².

Google Gemini (Pulled July 19, 2024)

Leadership is a multifaceted concept with numerous definitions, but here’s a comprehensive way to understand it:

Leadership is the ability to influence, motivate, and enable individuals or groups to work together towards achieving a common goal.

This involves:

- **Establishing a vision:** A leader articulates a clear and inspiring vision of the future, setting the direction for others to follow.
- **Motivating and inspiring:** A leader inspires and motivates others to commit to the vision, fostering enthusiasm and a sense of purpose.
- **Building relationships:** A leader cultivates trust, respect, and rapport with team members, creating a positive and collaborative work environment.
- **Empowering others:** A leader delegates tasks, provides resources, and empowers team members to take ownership and contribute their best.
- **Decision-making:** A leader makes informed and timely decisions, considering the needs of the team and the organization.
- **Problem-solving:** A leader identifies challenges, develops solutions, and guides the team through obstacles.
- **Communication:** A leader communicates effectively, conveying information clearly and listening to feedback.
- **Adaptability:** A leader is flexible and adaptable, adjusting strategies as needed to meet changing circumstances.
- **Leading by example:** A leader sets high standards, demonstrates integrity, and inspires others through their actions.

It's important to note that leadership is not limited to formal positions of authority. Anyone can demonstrate leadership qualities and make a positive impact within their sphere of influence.

Anthropic Claude.ai (Pulled August 15, 2024)

Leadership is the ability to guide, influence, and inspire others towards achieving a common goal or vision. It involves:

1. Setting clear objectives and direction
2. Motivating and empowering team members
3. Making decisions and taking responsibility
4. Communicating effectively
5. Adapting to challenges and changes

6. Developing others' skills and potential
7. Demonstrating integrity and ethical behavior

Leadership can be exhibited in various contexts, from organizational management to community initiatives. Effective leaders often possess qualities such as vision, empathy, resilience, and the ability to build trust.

OpenAI ChatGBT (Pulled July 19, 2024)

Understanding the intersection of leadership and race is crucial for fostering inclusive, equitable, and effective leadership. Key points to consider include:

- **Representation and Diversity:** Diverse leadership teams that reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of their communities and organizations tend to be more innovative and effective. Representation matters because it brings different perspectives and experiences to decision-making processes.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Leaders from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups often face systemic barriers, including discrimination, bias, and unequal access to opportunities and resources. Recognizing and addressing these barriers is essential for creating equitable leadership pathways.
- **Cultural Competence:** Effective leaders need to be culturally competent, understanding and valuing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their team members. This includes being aware of cultural nuances and avoiding stereotypes.
- **Inclusive Leadership:** Inclusive leadership involves actively promoting a culture of inclusion where all team members feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute. This requires intentional efforts to create an environment where diverse voices are heard and included in decision-making.
- **Role Models and Mentorship:** Having role models and mentors from diverse racial backgrounds can significantly impact the development of future leaders. Mentorship programs that support underrepresented groups can help bridge gaps and provide guidance and support.
- **Impact of Bias:** Unconscious bias can influence leadership decisions, including hiring, promotions, and performance evaluations. Leaders must be aware of their own biases and take steps to mitigate their impact, such as implementing fair and transparent processes.
- **Social Responsibility:** Leaders have a responsibility to advocate for social justice and equity within their organizations and communities. This includes addressing racial disparities and championing policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion.
- **Building Allyship:** Allies in leadership positions can play a crucial role in

supporting racial equity by using their influence to challenge discriminatory practices and advocate for change.

Understanding these aspects is essential for creating leadership that is not only effective but also fair and just, contributing to a more inclusive society.

Microsoft Bing Copilot (Pulled July 19, 2024)

Leadership and race intersect in many significant ways, and understanding this intersection is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective leadership. Here are some key points to consider:

1. Diversity and Representation

Inclusive Leadership: Leaders who value diversity and inclusion can create environments where all team members feel valued and respected, regardless of their race.

Representation Matters: Having leaders from diverse racial backgrounds can inspire and empower individuals from underrepresented groups.

2. Cultural Competence

Understanding Different Perspectives: Effective leaders need to be culturally competent, understanding and appreciating the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their team members.

Avoiding Bias: Leaders must be aware of their own biases and work actively to mitigate them to ensure fair treatment of all team members.

3. Equity and Fairness

Addressing Inequities: Leaders should recognize and address systemic inequities that may affect team members of different races.

Promoting Fair Opportunities: Ensuring that all team members have equal access to opportunities for growth and advancement is crucial.

4. Building Trust

Open Communication: Leaders should foster an environment where open and honest communication about race and related issues is encouraged.

Listening and Learning: Being willing to listen to and learn from the experiences of team members from different racial backgrounds builds trust

and strengthens the team.

5. Role Modeling

Setting an Example: Leaders who demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion set a positive example for others to follow.

Mentorship and Support: Providing mentorship and support to emerging leaders from diverse racial backgrounds helps build a more inclusive leadership pipeline

Understanding these aspects can help leaders create more inclusive, equitable, and effective teams. Is there a specific aspect of leadership and race you would like to explore further?

Google Gemini (Pulled July 19, 2024)

Understanding the intersection of leadership and race is crucial for creating inclusive and equitable workplaces and societies. Here are some key points to consider:

1. Historical and Systemic Barriers:

People of color have historically faced systemic barriers to leadership positions due to racism, discrimination, and lack of access to opportunities.

These barriers can manifest in various ways, such as implicit bias in hiring and promotion decisions, lack of representation in leadership roles, and microaggressions in the workplace.

2. Diverse Perspectives and Leadership Styles:

Leaders from different racial backgrounds bring unique perspectives, experiences, and leadership styles to the table.

Embracing diversity in leadership can lead to more innovative solutions, better decision-making, and a more inclusive organizational culture.

3. Implicit Bias and Stereotypes:

Implicit biases and stereotypes about race can unconsciously influence how people perceive and evaluate leaders.

These biases can lead to underestimating the potential of leaders of color or holding them to different standards.

4. Cultural Competence and Inclusive Leadership:

Culturally competent leadership involves understanding and valuing diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Inclusive leaders create environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their best.

5. Advocacy and Allyship:

Leaders have a responsibility to advocate for equity and inclusion in their organizations and communities.

Being an ally to underrepresented groups involves actively supporting their advancement and challenging discriminatory practices.

6. Leadership Development and Mentorship:

Providing mentorship and leadership development opportunities to people of color is essential for creating a pipeline of diverse leaders.

Investing in the development of underrepresented leaders can help to break down barriers and promote equity in leadership.

7. Intersectionality:

Race intersects with other social identities like gender, class, and sexual orientation, creating unique experiences and challenges for leaders.

Understanding the complexities of intersectionality is crucial for creating truly inclusive leadership practices.

By acknowledging the historical context, addressing systemic barriers, and embracing diversity, we can create more equitable leadership landscapes where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute their talents.

Anthropic Claude.AI (Pulled Aug 15, 2024)

Leadership and race intersect in several important ways:

- 1. Representation:** Many industries and leadership positions have historically lacked racial diversity, particularly at higher levels. This underrepresentation can perpetuate systemic inequalities.
- 2. Bias and discrimination:** Racial biases, both conscious and unconscious, can affect how leaders are perceived and selected, potentially disadvantaging people of color.

- 3. Cultural competence:** Effective leaders in diverse environments need to understand and navigate different cultural contexts and experiences.
- 4. Addressing systemic racism:** Leaders play a crucial role in recognizing and addressing racial inequities within their organizations and broader society.
- 5. Different leadership styles:** Cultural backgrounds can influence leadership approaches, challenging the notion of a single “ideal” leadership style.
- 6. Mentorship and sponsorship:** The lack of diverse leadership can make it harder for people of color to find mentors and sponsors in their career development.
- 7. Stereotype threat:** Awareness of racial stereotypes can create additional pressure for leaders of color.
- 8. Intersectionality:** Race often intersects with other aspects of identity (gender, class, etc.), creating complex dynamics in leadership contexts.
- 9. Historical context:** Understanding the historical impact of racism on leadership opportunities and perceptions is crucial.
- 10. Inclusive leadership:** There’s an increasing emphasis on developing leadership skills that promote inclusivity and equity.

Addendum: List of Songs in Our Playlist



Our playlist is sourced from the Leadership and Race advisory group, research team, and LLC staff—these are our songs of lineage, liberation, and rebellion.

Song Name	Artist	Release Year
Algo Está Cambiando	Bomba Estéreo	2015
Alright	Kendrick Lamar	2015
Bat (For You)	MMYYKK	2019
BLACK PARADE	Beyoncé	2020
Body Breathe	LP Giobbi, Monogem	2023
Chariot	Mega	2018
Colors	Black Pumas	2019
Come Live With Me	Dorothy Ashby	1968
Crow Hop	Black Lodge Singers	1995
Everybody is a Star - Single Version	Sly & The Family Stone	1970
Evolution Revolution	Indigenous	2000
Freedom (feat. Kendrick Lamar)	Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar	2016
Freedom Song	Monica McIntyre	2013
Happy Feelin's	Maze, Frankie Beverly	1989
Higher Ground	Stevie Wonder	1973
Home	Kokoroko	2022
I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free	Nina Simone	1967
It's a good day (to fight the system)	Shungudzo	2021
List of Demands (Reparations)	Saul Williams	2004
Love Is The Key	Tuck & Patti	1988
Love Is The Way	Three Sacred Souls	2022
Love Theme From Spartacus	Yusef Lateef	1961
Magia	Monogem	2021
MAÑANA SERÁ BONITO	KAROL G, Carla Morrison	2023
Oye	La Sonora Dinamita, Margarita	2015
Pachamama	Beautiful Chorus	2015

Song Name	Artist	Release Year
Phenom	Thao, Thao & The Get Down Stay Down	2020
Rebelión	Joe Arroyo, La Verdad	2015
Rest Life	Tricia Hersey	2021
Rise Up	Andra Day	2015
Soy Lo Que Soy	Monogem	2021
That's Love for You	Fawn Wood, Raven Wood, Nathan 'Rikishi' Pelly, Dallas Waskahat	2012
Thus Sayeth The Lorde	Meshell Ndegeocello	2024
Toast	Koffee	2019





Leadership Learning Community's Liberatory Leadership Framework

Introduction to Our Sneak Peek

After decades of study and practice of leadership and race, LLC has come to believe in the importance of layering on another focal point: liberatory leadership. We could not end this report without giving you a sneak peek of our upcoming Liberatory Leadership Framework, which we will share more broadly in early 2025. Below, we invite you to explore, unpack, and connect with this short excerpt, which contains a high-level definition of what we mean when we say “Liberatory Leadership” and some resources related to our learnings as a companion to our Leadership and Race report. This sneak peek builds on our insight into the current leadership and racial justice landscape and the pockets of great work happening in all corners of the social justice ecosystem.

We intend for this framework to provide practical guidance for applying Liberatory Leadership within your organization and yourself. It was written to inspire, inform, and equip you with perspective, wisdom, and tools to lead in just and joyous ways. Finally and mostly, we hope this framework serves as a mirror and diving board for your most liberatory visions and possibilities.

Stay tuned! We are excited to explore more with you! Share your thoughts with us on Instagram @leadershiplearningcommunity.

Cover Image courtesy of Aisha Shillingford, Artistic Director of Intelligent Mischief.
“Untitled” by Aisha Shillingford (www.intelligentmischief.com)

PART 1: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LIBERATORY LEADERSHIP?

Context:

Leadership Learning Community (“LLC”) is a national organization focused on leadership field building for equity, justice, and collective liberation. We work with changemakers worldwide by inviting leaders, particularly those from historically excluded communities such as Black, Indigenous, immigrant, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities, to live out the compelling vision of liberation - one which seeks power, joy, and thriving for all people. To do this, we facilitate and encourage the unlearning of oppressive structures, the engagement of communities of practice that create new cultural norms, and the development of tools and frameworks that allow us to align our values and actions. Together, we create spaces for leaders to run, fund, and study practices that are rooted in collective liberation (rather than systemic oppression). We call this liberatory leadership.

In 2021, in collaboration with our sister organizations in the Liberatory Leadership Partnership (“the Partnership”), we embarked upon an iterative process of writing a working definition of liberatory leadership. In conversation with and drawing from the work of several liberatory practitioners who have been leading this work for many years, the Partnership articulated

a definition of liberatory leadership. It also included an explanation of what it feels like to embody liberatory leadership.

The partnership’s high-level definition reads as follows:

“Liberatory leadership theory and practice invite us to lead from a place of love, wholeness, and interdependence. By valuing celebration over competition, we are able to access possibilities that can only emerge in community. The practice of liberatory leadership flourishes when we create space for rest, when we address power differentials in service of justice, and when we center those at the margins within our organizations and our work.”

Our own Liberatory Leadership Framework builds upon the Liberatory Leadership Partnership’s definition and it also roots the definition in the soil, flora, and waterways of LLC’s work. The guiding principles of Liberatory Leadership explored in our framework are informed by our values – *Love & Joy, Healing & Inner Work, Collaboration & Interdependence, Learning & Experimentation, Abundance & Generosity, and Liberation & Freedom*. To us, these values feel embodied and core to how we experience liberatory leadership, not just as a leadership development practice but

as a relational practice that is part of a larger story of transforming ourselves to be able to transform systems. Our framework is also informed by our experiences learning from and alongside liberatory practitioners, funders, network members, as well as the nonprofit leaders in our communities of practice and affinity groups, our internal organizational experiments, policies, practices, our conversations in conferences, trainings, webinars and through exploring facets of liberatory leadership in our annual virtual learning series on Liberatory Leadership, Play, and Mending.



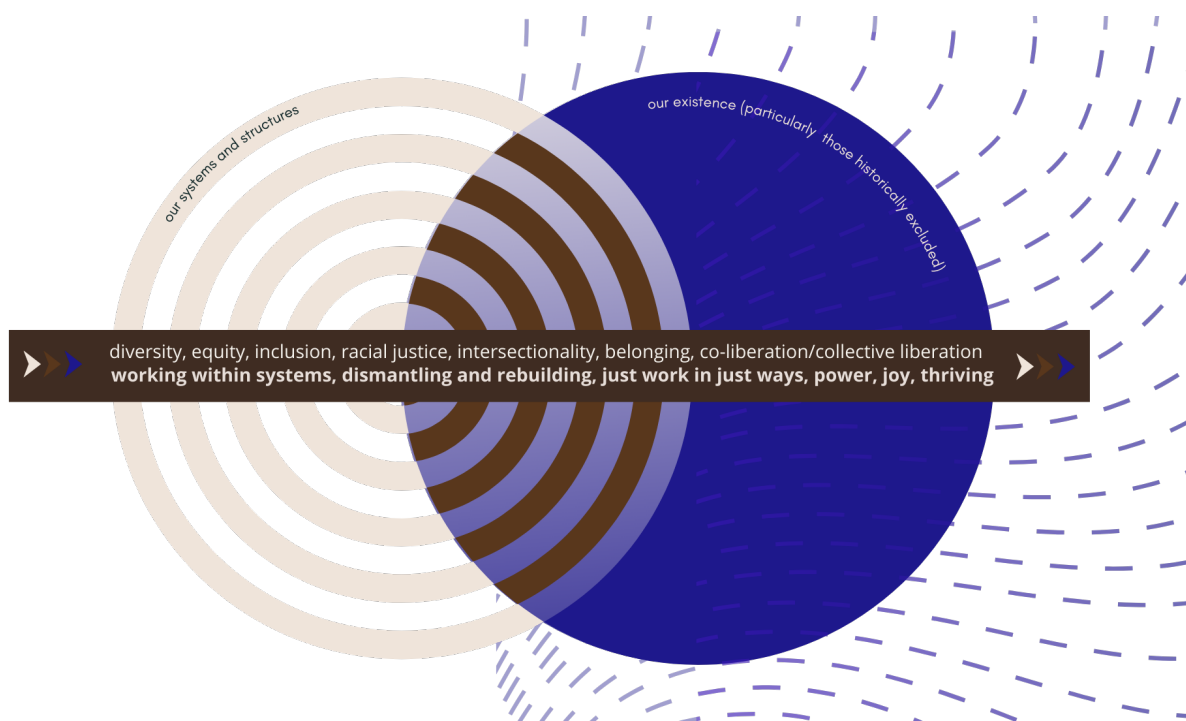
Visit our website to explore some of our other resources related to our liberatory leadership learnings:

- Leading with Love: On the Culture of Care at LLC
- Our Mending Padlet
- Our Funders Briefing Padlet
- On Rest
- Meet Me On the Desert
- Spell for Conscious Executive Director Relationship Building
- Play as a Liberatory Practice

www.leadershiplearning.org

By studying alongside all of you through experimentation and play, we have experienced the magic of living in liberatory leadership from many places. Practicing liberatory leadership is delicate. It can be hard to define and sometimes feels elusive, but when it is experienced, it is undeniable. We've celebrated when things go as we imagined and have taken opportunities to reflect, regroup, and replan after trying something new that didn't go quite as planned. These learnings have enabled us to articulate tools and practices that make liberatory leadership more concrete. We hope this framework offers a definition and practical application of liberatory leadership steeped in an understanding of our work and our engagements with the broader field. We hope you see yourself, hear your voice, read your experience here, and use this framework as a tool to continue the conversation as we work towards actualizing our collective freedom through liberatory leadership.

Definition from Leadership Learning Community, inspired by the Liberatory Leadership Partnership



LLC's definition:

We believe that liberatory leadership means taking responsibility for collectively transforming our freedom dreams into reality by freeing ourselves from oppressive and limiting self-beliefs, harmful interpersonal practices, and divesting from and changing systems of harm that rely on domination and extraction. For those of us leading from within movements and organizations, this means creating, refining, and uplifting life-giving policies, structures, and practices that combat oppression in our organizations and our communities.

This understanding is inspired by the work of the National Equity Project¹ and our work with the Liberatory Leadership Partnership.

¹ Chatmon, LaShawn Routé, Wade in the Water: Leadership Imperatives for Turbulent Times

Why:

Rather than holding up liberatory leadership in comparison to or against equity-centered leadership, we think of liberatory leadership as a means of re-envisioning existing equity-centered policies while innovating new liberatory practices. We believe liberatory leadership offers the field a different orientation toward social justice leadership. This orientation shifts our attention towards the iterative, prefigurative, and (im)possible in order to build power for transformation while addressing power asymmetries. Where the language of equity describes the experiences of those moving toward transformation within a system, the framing of liberatory leadership shifts our attention away from existing systems toward the iterative creation of new systems alongside the ones we have and the ones we have yet to build. That is to say: we need equity-focused practices that address current conditions AND, through liberatory leadership, we believe we can shift systems so radically that something completely new emerges. Our hope here, then, is to offer a framework of sorts for how we, as leaders, can live into the prefigurative values a liberatory future demands by practicing daily a leadership ethos that is just, life-giving, sustainable, and iterative.

In order to create a more just and equitable society, liberatory leadership invites leaders to prioritize the power of historically excluded communities, challenge traditional power dynamics, and operate with the values of love, wholeness, and interdependence in our communities, organizations, and

movements rather than grounding in mainstream leadership practices that rely on systems of domination and labor extraction. Without offering a prescriptive leadership development model, liberatory leadership invites leaders to adopt a learning stance to operationalize a vision of collective liberation.

What:

Liberatory leadership is an invitation to live out the compelling vision of collective liberation through the transformation of ourselves, our communities, and our institutions. It draws on numerous personal, organizational, and community practices that invite us to assess, reflect on, unlearn, and discard relationships that center power based on supremacy, division, and dominance by inviting in models based on equity, community, and self-determination. As a practice rooted in self-love and right-relationship with others, liberatory leadership facilitates the power, joy, and thriving of all people by maintaining that we must do just work in just and joyous ways.

How:

Liberatory leadership empowers leaders to:

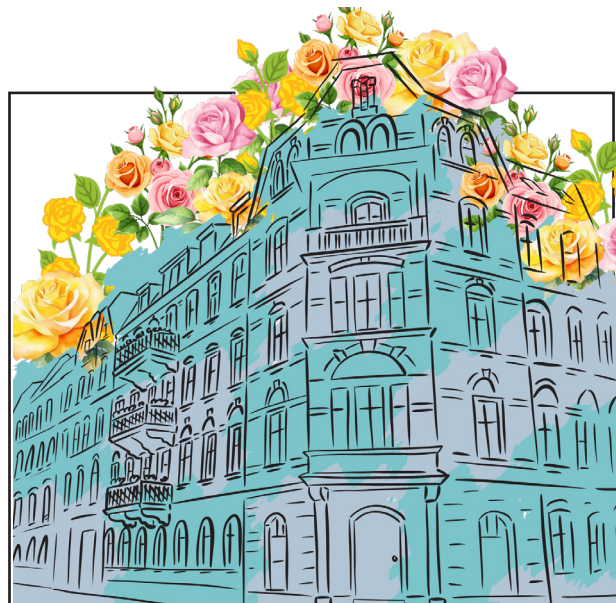
- Center those at the margins of our organizations and our work.
- Challenge traditional power dynamics by emphasizing the importance of love, wholeness, and interdependence.
- Commit to ongoing learning and self-reflection.
- Build community and develop relationships of trust and respect so that you and others can model vulnerability, make mistakes, and reciprocate grace.
- Create space for healing and rest.
- Establish and invest in spaces for dreaming and imagination that honor multiple ways of knowing, learning, and perceiving.
- Interrogate how race and power interact with our work.
- Empower individuals and communities to take collective ownership of their struggles by working together to create solutions that address the root causes of injustice.
- Remain responsive to changing conditions by naming dynamic tensions and acting cooperatively, especially in the face of conflict.
- Identify and create room to practice new, values-aligned, constructive ways to navigate conflict.
- Continuously align and re-align our words with our practices by treating staff and partners in ways that reflect the image of justice we strive to create in the world.
- Cultivate a work culture that encourages inner healing, modeling integrity, and remaining accountable for your words, intentions, and actions.

What's Next?

In the following sections, we will dive deeper into the “How” of Liberatory Leadership by unpacking what it means to live in a liberatory leadership practice. Section 2 will explore the benefits of adopting a learning stance that allows you to lead from a heart-centered place, continually take risks, and re-evaluate your growth. In Section 3, we will highlight key principles of liberatory leadership and explore what it looks like to operationalize your liberatory values by naming your intentions, anchoring in language that feels personal to you, and returning to your core values consistently. Section 4 will tie the key liberatory principles to organizational strategies and practices of liberatory leadership. Section 5 will further illuminate strategies and practices by mapping them to leadership stories and sharing actionable tools. Finally, we will share recommendations and calls to action for the broader ecosystem in service of comprehensive support for liberatory leaders. Throughout the subsequent sections, we'll include interactive worksheets and reflective questions to facilitate opportunities for you to go deeper into operationalizing liberatory practices.

Our Liberatory Leadership Framework reflects Leadership Learning Community's organizational learnings and our organizational language, which pulls from metaphors and images that reflect our connection to and inspiration from the natural world.

We often refer to natural networks, pollinators, waterways, roots, and flowers. We offer you language that has helped us connect our organizational practices to what we feel is regenerative, grounded in wisdom, and playful. We hope these offerings bring you as much joy as they have brought us!

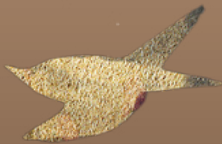


The following sections of our Liberatory Leadership Framework will be released in phases over the next year. Subscribe to LLC's newsletter at www.leadershiplearning.org to hear more!



Leadership Learning Community

LeadershipLearning.org



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