

Aisha (Ish) Al-Hurra

aka 'morena osha' (she/her)

[Intelligent Mischief](#)



What brings you to work at your current organization? What are the passions, interests and experiences that led you to where you are now?

I realized that as I engaged more consistently in embodied practice (Tai Chi, Somatics, Breath Work, Dance) my purpose became more clear, my intuition became stronger, my sense of self became more discernible.

I began to feel a strong and irresistible calling towards art, world-building, storytelling, beauty, imagination, dreamspace, and creativity as viable and important ways to contribute towards transforming our lives.

I woke up to the ways in which our movements, as a result of being overly professionalized in nonprofit organizations, were often embodying the habits and harms of the systems of oppression because we weren't giving ourselves time to understand what it means to return to lifeways that existed before capitalism consumed us all. *I now know that my path to my current work is one guided by ancestors and the Universe, whispered to me in the spaciousness of daily focus on breath, felt in the time space of art making where I learned to listen to my intuition, to live with an assumption of abundance.*

What, if anything, was the impact of having the Community of Practice as a space to share thoughts, experiences, and ideas?

The Community of Practice was a challenging space for me. I felt there was so much allegiance to the container of nonprofit organizations and to management. I see these containers as sometimes useful, but not in an absolute sense. To me, liberation exists outside of these containers too. I didn't always identify with the kinds of issues or challenges expressed by my peers, and often felt that our scale of thinking and imagining was too myopic for questions of liberation in some ways. If anything, it made me deeply grateful for the opportunity to find and embody new ways of being in my own collective, to let go of certain movement habits that cultivate a sense of self and value that are found in overwork, over-identifying with our organizations, self-annihilation etc. It made me more mindful of the language and ways of being that we unconsciously require of folks to feel valid within social movement spaces.

How have the funds (\$10,000 stipend) received through the LL Community of Practice supported your work?

The funds were instrumental in supporting my salary at Intelligent Mischief. We were able to

pay me full-time starting in November of last year. It allowed me to be able to focus solely on my art-making and cultural shift work as a result, and I no longer had to do freelance consulting and facilitation on the side.

Who are liberatory ancestors, teachers, guides, loved ones, and comrades that inspire your work and values?

My work is inspired by Paolo Freire, my great aunt Audrey Jeffers, Stuart Hall, Grace Lee Boggs, adrienne maree brown, Bayo Akomolafe, Black Arts Movement, Norma Wong, Those who jumped from the ships and those who did what it took to survive. The maroons and the petit maroons and the tricksters and those who straddle the boundaries and borders.

How do you hold yourself accountable to your values?

I'm not sure I understand this question. My values are a set of ideas or 'truths' that are important to me, informed by my beliefs and my experiences. I usually act in accordance with my values, implicitly or explicitly. Meaning, my actions are embodiments of my actual values regardless of what I say my values are. I understand that the vision of the world I desire is underpinned by a set of values, some of which are aspirational. I attempt to embody the values that I hold most important.

I hold myself accountable to whether I am embodying my desired values or whether I am embodying another set of values, and try to understand why there might be a gap between what my desired values and my embodied values might be and whether I need to re-assess my values prioritization.

How do you sustain yourself as you engage in your work? What are the resources, practices, and spaces that support your well-being?

By only doing things I enjoy, desire, feel juicy about and feel in alignment with my north star. Reducing the number of things I do out of obligation or because I think I 'should'.

Can you share examples of how your organization practices and embodies liberatory leadership?

I don't really understand what 'liberatory leadership' is exactly. It's jargon that isn't widely understood or accessible. I can say how we practice liberation or embodied freedom in our day to day. *We ensure that we're all working in alignment with our juiciest desires and sense of purpose. We pay ourselves as generously as we can while also stewarding the resources we need to do the work we are excited about. We consciously attempt to compost colonial and capitalistic ways of being while embracing indigenous and intuitive ways of being. We take care when we have to navigate the more colonial and capitalistic structures to maintain our integrity.* We do not work 9-5, 40-hour work weeks. We make art as an integral part of our work. We reject colonial borders and genres and classifications where possible. We make a way out of no way. We trust our boredom and our excitement, we integrate spirit and consciousness and self-allegiance in our day to day.

Are there any challenges that you have experienced as a result of embodying liberatory leadership in a non-profit organization?

I don't understand the term 'liberatory leadership'. It feels jargony and non-profit in a way that doesn't feel like freedom. It doesn't feel expansive but like a middle-class nonprofit way to co-opt the idea of liberation. I don't feel any challenges feeling free in my organization that happens to be using a nonprofit structure but does not identify as a 'nonprofit'.

What gives you hope? What keeps you motivated?

Earth, life, grass, water, indigenous people maintaining and growing sovereignty, children, collective and cooperative structures. Decolonial movements winning. Women of color creating and making life. Worldbuilding, space to dream and imagine.

What seeds of wisdom would you give to someone who is interested in liberatory leadership but does not know where to start?

Don't get confused by the jargon. Engage in embodied practice (dance, breath, meditation, somatics etc.), don't approach it as a heady thing or a framework or a definition. Frameworks and definitions are Cartesian, rationalistic, colonial apparatuses designed to create distinctions and fragmentation. Read poetry. Trust your intuition. *You know what liberation or freedom feels like for you.* Try to give name or movement to that freedom. Feel where your innate understanding of freedom feels conflicted with aspects of your work in an organization or otherwise. Move towards freedom. *With every decision, ask yourself, does this make me feel more free? Do others feel more free? Does it free the Earth? Does it free our minds and souls? Run, run, run, towards that freedom. Strengthen your sense of feeling free so that you recognize your yearning for it. Do something that makes you feel free everyday. Ask those around you what they need to feel free. Help them run towards that. Be curious about where your freedom and theirs converge and diverge.* Be willing to get messy. Breathe, deeply. Put your feet in water. Dig your hands into the soil. Imagine the structures fading away. Watch the animals and insects and trees. Observe their freedom. Discard what does not make you feel free even if it is the term 'liberatory leadership' or 'nonprofit' or 'organization'.

If you were to lean into your most radical imagination, what does your idea of liberation look and feel like? What future are you building towards?

Living in balance with the Earth and all other beings. Autonomous, interconnected communities living in balance. Freedom of movement, freedom to be and to reinvent ourselves as many times as we desire.