

Malaika Parker (she/her)

Black Organizing Project



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 came to Black Organizing Project out of a strong desire to support the incredible work toward abolition that the organization was engaged in. I also wanted to support the creation of a culture where organizers specifically, and movement workers generally, had access to balance and sustainability. I have worked in the nonprofit sector for my entire adult career. I have a deep passion for creating a future where our communities, especially our children, have access to joy, connection and care. I am deeply moved by the failures and the potential of our educational system, and have worked from different vantage points to impact the creation of something different.

What, if anything, was the impact of having the Community of Practice as a space/container to share thoughts, experiences, and ideas? Did participating in the Community of Practice inspire any new thoughts, dreams, or visions for you?

It has been an incredibly healing space. Having space to dream and interrogate what is coming up for myself and other leaders has been so important. The spaciousness and the ease of being has been a beautiful respite for me.

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

We used the funds to support bringing transformative justice practitioners to help us navigate difficult conversations and conflict.

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

I am inspired by bell hooks, Audre Lorde, my mom and my grandmother. My values are centered in participating in the co-creation of a world that I want my children to inherit.

How do you hold yourself accountable to your values?

I try to acknowledge that I am not perfect and that this is hard. I work to be reflective and attempt to make amends when I am not living into my values and learn the lessons that are available to me.

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

A balanced work week, time with family, gardening, and movement. Being in spaces like the

Community of Practice where other folks are struggling/working to move this work forward has helped tremendously.

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

We are trying to move into Transformative Justice as a way to address community cohesion and conflict. We are working to build a shared leadership model. We are working to create transparency in how things move and why.

What gives you hope? What keeps you motivated?

I believe that we are on a path to creating new spaces within organizations and in the movement. I am inspired by the work that so many are doing to make big shifts in how we move collectively.

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

Don't go it alone, have other folks on your team who are bought in and really believe in the possibility. Have other folks who will defend the practice of liberatory leadership just as much as you. Start with small inquiries about why things are the way they are, and how we can make them more centered on the humanity of everyone involved; the people who are impacted by the work, but also those doing the work. What are the practices, policies and ways of being that move us toward our liberation or further away? Start with small practices and move from there. One big lesson for me is to do a lot of research and political education with the team about this work, so that organizationally folks have a shared understanding of what it is and why it is important.

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

Liberation ultimately looks like many of the organizations that we work for not needing to exist because we are not fighting for our humanity – it is valued and centered. Liberation feels like people seeing themselves as part of a connected fabric where care and connection are seamless, where we are not asked to choose between family and meaningful work in the world, where we have ready access to joy because we are not mired by the constant struggle for getting our basic needs met.