Welcome to the Beloved Community Lab! Thank you for joining us in testing out a party-themed series to practice the following principles of Beloved Community: Wholeness, Values, Truth Telling, Accountability, and Praxis. In this space, we invite you to invest in Beloved Community as an essential tool to build the authentic relationships that will sustain our movement-building efforts for the long haul, even in the face of the harsh realities of movement work. Through experiential party activities, folks will integrate relationship-building into their personal leadership and organizational practices. We hope that fostering deep relationships and struggling together while practicing relationship grace will support our collective liberation -- the liberation of our movements, communities, and families.

Created by: Trina Greene Brown
Art By: Amir Khadar
What is a Beloved Community?

Our understanding of Beloved Community is grounded in Martin Luther King’s vision for it. King’s vision of Beloved Community was not an unrealistic utopia, but rather a realistic achievable goal that could be accomplished with a critical mass of folks who practice principles of nonviolence.

As stated by The King Center, “Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.”

Why Beloved Community?

Building Beloved Community offers us the opportunity to know and care for one another as human beings and to build the trust needed to successfully leap into the unknown together – to dare, to imagine, to disagree, to take risks. From there, great change is possible. Many of us have experienced the limitations of transactional relationships which are based on our roles and structured to benefit our organizational interests. These collaborations tend to be fairly narrow in scope of impact, are often time-limited and unable to withstand significant change or pressure. If it is truly transformational change we’re after, we need to transform how we are together.
Reflection:

Thank you for accepting the invitation! Sometimes we show up for parties, events, workshops, with unspoken expectations and leave unfulfilled. What are you hoping to get out of this space?

Together we will explore five principles of practice: Wholeness, Values, Truth Telling, Accountability, and Praxis. Reflecting on the five, which principle is your strength and which principle is your growing edge (where you have room to grow)?

Build it, They Will Come

Using all of the creative materials that you have at your disposal, create one of the following:

1. A prototype of what Beloved Community means to you. What does it look, smell, sound, feel, and taste like?

2. A prototype of how you personally embody and practice Beloved Community. What does the practice look, smell, sound, feel, and taste like?

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The LOVE in Beloved is Radical Love

Often times we think of love as being soft and gentle, but the love in Beloved community is radical and bold. Here are some quotes from leaders who describe the radical nature of LOVE.

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”
—Martin Luther King Jr.

“The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others.”
—bell hooks

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”
—Martin Luther King Jr.

—Alicia Garza co-founder, Black Lives Matter

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”
—Assata Shakur, Assata: An Autobiography

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You are cordially invited to a Masquerade Ball

Most Masquerade Balls ask that you come in full mask and do not remove it during the party. But at this fabulous gathering, you are invited to remove the masks that you may wear daily--revealing your whole self. Here you may introduce pieces of yourself that you often leave behind in these types of spaces.

What to Bring: Your Whole Self

What to Expect: Removing masks

Theme Songs: Drop the Mask by Diana Ross / Pieces of Me by Ledisi

Party Quote:
“I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self.”
Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches

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Art By: Amir Khadar

WHOLENESS
Why Wholeness?

A key strategy of oppression is to break us down and split us apart -- and not only from one another as a collective, but also as individuals from our whole self. As a whole, we are powerful beings, but in pieces, we can be eaten alive and swallowed up.

"If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." —Audre Lorde

Racism, sexism, capitalism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism -- all these -isms intend to define us in limited and stereotypical ways. These -isms force us to compartmentalize and shrink -- showing up in spaces as fragments of ourselves, which can lead to code-switching for survival. The -isms require us to show up in spaces and hide pieces of ourselves that the space cannot hold. It feels dangerous in those spaces to reveal our whole selves. We begin to turn parts of ourselves on and off to maintain safety.

However, if we do not define ourselves wholly for ourselves, we will continue to be eaten alive. Showing up whole is a revolutionary act -- a radical act in the face of oppression.

In spaces that we are creating with our people and for our people -- liberated zones and brave spaces -- we must break the habits of withholding for protection purposes. We must commit to creating a beloved community and show up as our whole selves, not withholding or hiding; revealing who we authentically are without performing a particular type of identity. When we show up whole, the community is stronger because we give and receive the fullness of who we are as a people. We see the strengths, gifts, and magic of one another. We may also see the growing edges, and places where folks need support. It's when we create spaces where folks can show up fully that we can begin to be liberated and break through the chains of oppression that have kept us from one another all along.
Reflection:

“I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self.”

– Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches

What are the aspects and pieces of yourself that are plucked out and used to represent your whole self?

What are the aspects or pieces of yourself that are eclipsed or hidden in the shadows?

Game Time: A Conceal + Two Reveals

A Conceal + Two Reveals is a play on Two Truths and A Lie!

1. Conceal: Share how you typically introduce yourself in the spaces that you occupy. This should represent the pieces of yourself that you pluck out to present as whole.

2. Two Reveals: Now share two pieces of information about yourself that you typically hide in the shadows.

3. Share: How did it feel to show up whole?

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Wholeness is foundational to building Beloved Community

What becomes available to you/us/our collective when we drop the mask?

How does revealing your whole self help Deepen Beloved community?

What conditions need to be in place within our communities to invite folks to be their whole/authentic selves?

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LET'S GET CRAFTY

Are you ready to get your QUILT on?

Come out to contribute to a community quilt. Add your own unique style and flair. It's gonna be SEW much fun!

What to Bring: A value you hold deeply as it relates to your community.

What to Expect: Weaving and threading our collective values into one big community quilt.

Theme Song: Patchwork Quilt by Sweet Honey & the Rock / Member of the World Community by Sweet Honey & the Rock

"In a real sense all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...
This is the inter-related structure of reality." Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

Created by: Trina Greene Brown
Art By: Amir Khadar
Values and Agreements

In order to build any community, the group must come together and decide what are the communities’ “ways of being.” This includes asking questions such as: How will this group connect? What is our collective understanding and agreements about how we relate? Amongst roommates, this may look like house rules. In business settings, this may look like a code of conduct. In organizations, this may look like an employee manual. But what does it look like when we shift our frame to view our group as our community? Rather than creating a laundry list of rules and regulations about what folks can and cannot do -- in Beloved Community, we come to this from a place of identifying our individual values and how they align with our community’s collective values.

In order for folks to show up practicing the principle of Wholeness in our community, they must feel safe* to do so.

A note on the term “safe space” while it once was used to as a way to increase visibility and safety of most impacted communities, it has now been co-opted and used against oppressed communities when they speak out against injustice. Due to heightened “call out” culture, there is a shift towards “brave space” where folks sit with the discomfort of challenging conversations.

Created by: Trina Greene Brown Art By: Amir Khadar
Reflection:

What are the values you bring to this community?

How are the values you bring aligned with your Beloved Community's values? Are there any values in conflict?

What will it take to thread and weave these values together?

Values ReMix: Weave it all together now!

Create and share a chant, song, poem, rap, cheer, etc. that demonstrates your collective community values.

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Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

If the values are the quilt patches, the threads are the ways of beings and practices that keep our values in place. What are the ways of being that we need to practice to maintain our Beloved Community’s values?

What do you do when a member of the Beloved Community is out of alignment with the values of the collective?
RAISE YOUR GLASS!

At this celebration, we will toast to one another’s Wholeness. Join us in toasting to what we appreciate in our community and calling forth our individual and collective greatness! Cheers!

“My work is to be honest. My work is to try to think clearly, then have the courage to make sure that what I say is the truth.” - Maya Angelou

**What to Expect:** Reflection, truth-telling, and feedback

**What to Bring:** The willingness to hear and hold multiple perspectives and multiple truths.

**Theme Song:** “Cheers to the Weekend” by Rihanna / “Raise a Glass” by Pink

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TRUTH TELLING
**Threading Wholeness & Values**

During the Masquerade Ball, we invited folks to remove their mask(s). Sometimes, in removing our masks, we reveal things that we have not "polished." We bring rawness that may not be healed. Operating from the raw place may have unintended impacts on our community. Sometimes when people are showing up whole, they are bringing both their blessings and their bull.

During the Craft Party, we threaded together our values and made community agreements about how we want to be with one another. When our community members are not showing up in alignment with our collective values, we must engage in radical feedback and truth telling.

**Truth Telling:**

"the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community."

--- Martin Luther King Jr.

In Beloved Community, truth telling is not about calling someone out or throwing shade. It’s for the sake of building Beloved Community, which is rooted in reconciliation and redemption. When sharing the truths of your experience with your community members and naming the impact, the end goal is to rebuild and reconnect, not dispel or dispose. Truth telling is an investment in one another’s growth. When others are trying to share their truths with us about impacts we may have made on them, it’s important that we are ready and willing to hear and hold those truths.

Created by: Trina Greene Brown Art By: Amir Khadar
Reflection:

“Thank you for toasting to me. I appreciate your commitment to our collective Wholeness.”

How can you offer and receive Truth Telling grounded in love, compassion, and vulnerability?

How can you honor the Truth Teller (acknowledging that truth telling is a labor of love)

What is possible in your Beloved Community with a regular Truth Telling practice?

“What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?”

- Audre Lorde

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Cheers! Raise a Glass!

What if we engaged in truth telling as a celebration that acknowledges what folks do well and offers appreciation and gratitude, while also calling forth what is possible in them?

Self:

What do you want to celebrate within yourself?

I cheer/toast to myself...

What feedback do you want to give yourself? What do you want to call forth in yourself? Reflect on an area of growth for yourself in this Beloved Community. What is possible for you?

I call forth in myself...

Community:

What about your community member do you want to celebrate/cheers/toast? Reflect on what the ways in which your community member shows up in this community and how you appreciate and are grateful for it.

I cheer/toast you for...

What feedback do you want to give your community member? What do you want to call forth in your community member? Reflect on an area of growth for this community member; it could be a specific interaction or a general observation where you can call forth what’s possible in them.

I call forth in you...
TEAM UP TO CLEAN UP

Clean up, clean up! Everybody everywhere. Everybody do your share!

Come lend a helping hand to clean up our community. Regardless of who caused the mess, we all need to pitch in to keep our beloved community thriving.

What to Expect: Repair from rupture. Return to Wholeness.
What to Bring: Accountability
Theme Song: “Mercy Mercy Me” by Marvin Gaye

Created by: Trina Greene Brown
Art By: Amir Khadar
Truth Telling can be messy. With all the exposed truths lying around, we do the next step of cleaning up.

Truth Telling requires a lot of risk and vulnerability on behalf of the truth teller (assuming it’s done for the sake of love, compassion, Beloved Community). We see Truth Telling as a gift and offering, not only for the individual receiving it, but for the collective. The benefit for the collective is that once the truth is named, we can move toward repair and healing. Once we identify the impact, we can begin to repair. Far too often, harmful impacts and ruptures happen in community and they go unnamed and begin to fester. When they go unnamed, resentments begin to arise and entire communities are dismantled. We honor the truth teller for taking the bold risk of speaking the untold truth; however, to truly honor the truth teller, we must meet their labor of radical love with accountability.

Collective Responsibility:

It’s our responsibility as a Beloved Community to address the truth directly through accountability. We must be responsible for actions and inactions which contribute to the harm of the collective. Accountability involves honoring the intent but acknowledging the impact - both known and unknown to self. Beyond the acknowledgement, there is a commitment to new ways of being, which moves us towards transforming the conditions that allowed the rupture to happen. Moving beyond accounting to committing to new ways of being is what’s necessary for our Beloved Community to transform, heal, and rebuild.
Reflection

Reflect on the truth that you heard during the Truth Telling party. Reflect on the truth that you heard. What of this truth resonates for you that you want to account for?

How can you account in a way that upholds your community's values?

What will it take for you to account in a way that embodies your wholeness?

Created by: Trina Green | Brown Art by: Aarif Khadar
TRIPLE A: Acknowledge, Account, Agree

**Acknowledge Truth Telling**

“I appreciate you naming this truth of...

**Account for the impact**

“I account for the impact of...

**Agreement to new ways of being going forward in alignment with the Values of your Beloved Community**

“In alignment with our community value of ... I agree to ...

Created by: Trina Greene Brown Art By: Amir Khadar
TASTE OF COMMUNITY

Are you ready to enjoy a taste of Beloved Community? Each community member has a special recipe that contributes to our community.

🎵 **Theme Song:** Taste the Summer by Duran Duran

🔍 **What to Expect:** Cooking up Wholeness, Values, Truth Telling, and Accountability

🍴 **What to Bring:** Liberated ingredients to contribute to a Beloved Community dish

Created by: Trina Greene Brown Art By: Amir Khadar
Principles of Praxis

Non-linear
Beloved Community is not built in one day and is not a linear process. Instead, it is an ongoing practice of our collective values, offering radical feedback when community members are in misalignment with our collective agreements, being collectively accountable, and being willing to continuing to practice the principles.

Not one-size-fits all
Beloved Communities are not one-size-fit-all. Each community is unique. The collective practices and ways of being are informed by the uniqueness of the community.

Takes each of us
Beloved Community takes each of us offering our unique gifts to the community. We each contribute something to our community.

Committed practice
Beloved Community takes regular practice and deep commitment.

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What’s Your Recipe for Beloved Community?

Each of us contributes something unique to our Beloved community. What is your special sauce?

Utilizing the ingredients of Beloved Community -- Wholeness, Values, Truth Telling, Accountability (and feel free to add your own!) -- make a recipe to bring to our Beloved Community potluck.

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Reflection

- What are you learning about your Beloved Community?
- How will your community integrate these principles?
- What are additional principles you will add to your practice of Beloved Community?