



## Lorena Estrella

MOVE TO END VIOLENCE MOVEMENT MAKER

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Lorena is a Jersey girl born to Dominican immigrants. She is deeply committed to social justice work in communities of color, and to elevating the voices of young women of color. She first joined Sadie Nash in 2009 as a college Dean during the Summer Institute in Newark, NJ, and has played a crucial role in the program development and growth of Sadie Nash in the city of Newark.

Lorena is a Wesleyan University graduate where she studied Printmaking and Latin American Studies. Currently, she is an active member of the NJSEEDS Alumni Alliance, which prepares high-achieving, low-income youth in New Jersey gain admission to private schools and colleges across the country.

Lorena is also a printmaker working in various media. She is passionate about the arts as a means for social change and is currently learning the many ways to print without a press, and to dance without music.

## MOVEMENT BUILDING TOOLS

### Young Women Envisioning Liberation

Going to South Africa was a personally profound experience for me on many levels. Any free moment I had I would run outside to soak up the sun, to breathe the air, to touch the nature around me. I contemplated on topics of ancestral home, land, legacy, connection, humanity and loss. While I am still processing all the love and struggle I encountered, it was incredibly grounding and humbling to meet and engage with young people and youth activists doing the work. I was reminded of home, of being “scrappy”, of being creative, of using art as a tool for community-building, and her liberation and survival.

I was moved by the youth leadership I saw at Surplus People’s Project in Capetown. These youth leaders were not only reclaiming their land and bodies by starting community farms (at an elementary school and another at an abandoned lot) but also by growing healthy foods that connected them to their history and soil. They walked us through their mission and vision of creating wholeness and healing for their communities. Our site visit to Tyisa Nabanye taught me how farming and healing are interconnected practices. Using the ethics of permaculture - care of earth, care of people, and sharing of surplus, the youth leaders of Tyisa Nabanye truly embodied the spirit of the change they want to see in the world. They spontaneously and lovingly shared their music, dance, and song with us and showed how vulnerability, movement, and joy are liberatory practices.

When we reached Johannesburg, I finally had the privilege of meeting with Talent Jumo of Katwe Sisterhood. I signed up to present a “gift” to Talent and had been anxiously awaiting our encounter. My girls at Sadie Nash Leadership Project created a scrapbook of love notes including poetry, drawings, encouragement to share with our sisters in Zimbabwe. Talent was everything I imagined and more! In true youth-worker fashion, she got a group of adults on our feet for some call & response songs that she uses with her girls. The work of Katswe Sisterhood is similar to the

work we do at Sadie Nash Leadership Project. We are both committed to providing safer spaces for young women and girls to tell their stories, to see themselves as leaders and to take action. As Talent shared with the group, “We build a platform for women to speak for themselves. We need to tell our own stories and develop our own strategies. We need to be the ones to define what justice means to us.”

“  
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#### MOVEMENT BUILDING TOOLS

My time in South Africa witnessing and experiencing powerful youth leadership was everything! Particularly, I was inspired by the depth of the conversations young women led around personal and collective power, freedom, and liberation. Often times, youth because of their age and lack of “rights” feel powerless to affect change. However, the work we do at Sadie Nash is about inspiring and motivating young women to be leaders and change agents.

Below is a discussion activity I developed to engage my youth at Sadie Nash in a conversation about liberation. I honestly had not thought about liberation until I attended MEV’s first convening last June and it shifted the way I saw and valued myself and my work with young women. I am sharing this tool so that other folks within the violence against women’s movement can begin to talk to their young people about liberation. I found that many young women had not thought about liberation before because it didn’t even occur to them that it was an option or goal. For many women of color living in a state of constant vigilance and fear around our bodies and minds, the process of liberation requires a lot of unlearning and a reclaiming of ourselves as enough. We need to continue to do both personal and community work that centers healing and liberation so that we can create a world that fully recognizes the humanity of all peoples.



## Tool to Engage Youth in Discussions About Liberation

**Opener:** Begin the session with an ice-breaker or other opener. The purpose of the opener is to invite youth to become fully present to the group. A suggested opening to begin the conversation about liberation is to set a dedication,

- Distribute a blank note or index card to each student
- Ask each participant to write on the card, “The name of one person who loves you”
- Each participant is given 2 minutes to share
- Remember to thank youth for sharing that loved person with the group and that to hold that person as we move through the workshop.
- Connect love to today’s conversation on liberation.

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**And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.**

— NELSON MANDELA, LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

**Introduction:** Introduce current events in media around current movement work. You can use #blacklivesmatter and #sayhername hastags to begin reflecting on the social-political climate for oppressed peoples in the the US. From there, shift to discussion on liberation. Begin by developing a collective definition of liberation.

- “Today we will discuss liberation, who has an idea of what liberation means?” “What does it sound like?”
- What does it mean to be “liberated”? What does it feel like? What does it look like?
- Have you ever experienced liberation? Can you give an example?

Engage young people in an discussion about **Liberation vs. Oppression** and create a collective definition based on the knowledge that’s in the room. See suggested language below.

- Liberation (define) - a state of being in which one is free from all forms of oppression; liberation can be personal and/or communal; a deep connection to self, body, mind and spirit.
- Oppression (define) - a state of being subject to unjust rules, practices, and systems that dehumanize and make people inferior to those in power; can have generational impacts on self and communities; can be sustained by institutional practices.

### Graffiti Wall:

- Large pieces of chart paper are posted around the room with the questions below.
- Ask participants to write their responses to each of the questions as they walk around the room.
- Have volunteers read aloud to share with the larger group and discuss.

### Big questions:

- *What makes you **feel free**?*
- *What is **liberation**?*
- *What makes you **fearful**?*
- *What gives you **hope**?*

**Discussion Questions:** Which question was easiest or hardest for you to answer? Why do you think that is? What did you learn about yourself from this activity? What surprised you? What commonalities are we seeing in the responses? What stories are coming up for folks?

**Gallery Walk:**

- Post quotes around the room on topics of love, freedom, justice, and ending oppression. Here are some quotes you can use compiled from various online sources.

“

**Freedom**

Is the right to grow,  
It's the right to blossom,  
Freedom is the right  
to be  
yourself.

—ASSATA SHAKUR

“

Being oppressed  
means the absence  
of choices.

—BELL HOOKS

“

Love heals.  
Heals and liberates.

—DR. MAYA ANGELOU

“

Darkness cannot drive out  
darkness; only light can do  
that. Hate cannot drive out  
hate; only love can do that.

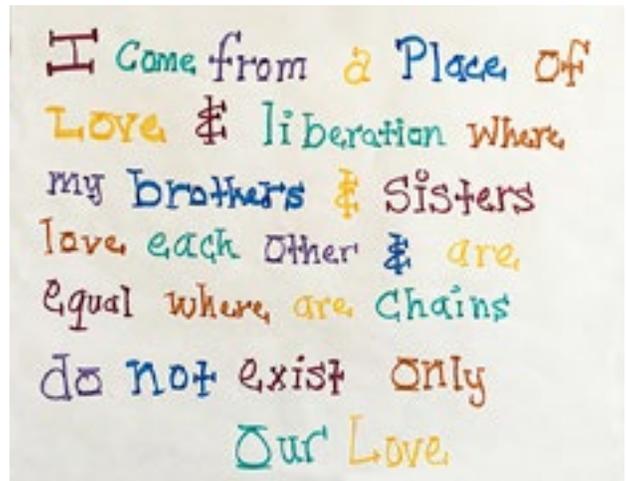
—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

- Ask participants to walk around the room and stand next to the quote that most resonated with them.
- Ask participants to share out why they chose that quote.

**Art Response:** Consider what liberation means to you and for you to practice liberation. Using the Prompt: **“I come from a place of light and liberation”,** complete the sentence using words and/or images.

I come from a place of light and liberation  
A place where he and she are left to be  
A place where no one is concerned  
A place of light and creation  
Filled with love and laughter  
Somewhere you can see everyone growing  
Like sunflowers from soil reaching for the sun  
A place that is home to all that inhabit it  
Where hate is nonexistent  
Where is this place? It is my heart  
Unfortunately the place I come from is nothing like this.  
It is exactly the opposite.

**Youth participant poem**



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**I come from a Place of Love & Liberation where my brothers & sisters love each other & are equal where our chains do not exist only our Love.**

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT