

# International Learning Exchange Brings Anti-Violence Advocates Together

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It's an exciting time for Move to End Violence, a program of the [NoVo Foundation](#). 2016 marks the halfway point on our ten-year journey to support and sustain a strong, healthy anti-violence movement in the US. There is work yet to be done in the US and globally to end violence against women and girls, but NoVo believes that girls and women everywhere have the right to live free from violence and we are committed to contributing to the movement that will create this reality in the world.

That's why Move to End Violence's current group of inspirational [Movement Makers](#) are preparing to fly to South Africa for a ten-day learning exchange, ready to learn and engage in dialogue with activists in South Africa, and continue to build and support a global anti-violence movement. Move to End Violence recognizes the power of transnational movement building to address the root causes of violence against girls and women.

The trip runs from January 31 – February 12. It's our third International Learning Exchange, our first to South Africa, and we couldn't be more excited.

It is hard to imagine a more powerful place than South Africa to learn firsthand about the power of movements to confront racism, sexism and other overlapping forms of oppression. South Africa has inspired the world with a truly vibrant movement to address violence and injustice—a movement that is deeply grounded in the connections between race and gender. And as this work continues, Movement Makers have a tremendous opportunity to listen and learn, and to make transnational connections that can offer new pathways to advance a common, global movement together.

We are extremely lucky to be working in partnership with [IDEX](#) on this trip. IDEX, a long-term partner of NoVo Foundation, supports grassroots, community-led projects in the Global South and invests in local leaders to shape solutions to urgent, global problems including violence against girls and women. They are an ideal partner for the NoVo Foundation in our effort to end violence against girls and women globally because they understand the importance of working alongside those who are most impacted by these pressing problems to create long-term, lasting solutions. IDEX will be coordinating the trip on the ground in South Africa, and have been working closely with partners like the [Whole World Women's Association](#) and [ISLA](#), organizations with which the Movement Makers will meet.

Violence against girls and women takes many forms throughout the world but affects all communities. Creating conditions for massive social change to happen on a global scale requires hard work from dedicated advocates around the world. If we are to address the widespread epidemic of violence in our own country, on our streets, in our schools, and in our homes we need to work in solidarity with the global anti-violence community.

Move to End Violence is invested in creating transnational opportunities to build this solidarity in person. It is in the collaboration where we find the space to learn from each other, to combat the isolation too easy to fall into within the US movement, and to leverage our collective power. This learning exchange will give advocates a chance to not just hear about the critical work being done in South Africa, but to be in beloved community with the activists on the ground creating change. I am hopeful that the learning exchange will also allow advocates to re-energize, to ignite hope in one another, and to motivate movement leaders with ideas to realize social change they may never have thought possible.

The underlying causes of violence against girls and women are the same everywhere: inequality, discrimination and systemic oppression. But there are, of course, differences in what this work looks like, around the world. Advocates will have the chance, for example, to discuss critical intersectional approaches to ending violence, and how multiple oppressions are similar and different for women and girls in other parts of the world.

This International Learning Exchange to South Africa offers the chance to ensure there is synchronicity in our efforts to realize social change, in our knowledge of how to get there, and in the inspiration it requires to keep going. When we work together to realize our responsibility and power to end violence against girls and women, we are infinitely more powerful.

The Move to End Violence team will be blogging regularly from the ground to offer you the chance to be as close to the conversations and on-the-ground experiences as possible. We hope you'll join us on this trip by following along on the blog.

# Day 1: Cape Town, South Africa—A Glimpse into the Anti-Apartheid Struggle and Meeting Local Women Leaders

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 2, 2016 Share:

**Day 1: Cape Town, South Africa—A Glimpse into the Anti-Apartheid Struggle and Meeting Local Women Leaders**

## Our Day's Itinerary:

- Grounding together
- Meeting with [Mmatshilo Motsei](#)
- Visit to Robben Island



*Aerial View of Cape Town, South Africa*

It was a beautiful day in Cape Town, South Africa, as 18 Movement Makers along with Move to End Violence faculty and staff, gathered together in Cape Town after long journeys from their home bases in the United States.



*Movement Makers gather for Day 1 of International Learning Exchange*

We started by re-connecting and grounding ourselves in our purpose and who we do this work for.

*Our purpose: We are in South Africa to learn from and with allied activists and sister movements on how we can build global movements for liberation and social change.*

We had the privilege of being joined in our opening by [Herschelle Milford of Surplus People Project](#) and [Mary Tal of Whole World Women Association](#), who will be hosting community visits for us in the coming days.

Afterward, we met with [Mmatshilo Motsei](#), spiritual healer, author of *The Kanga and The Kangaroo Court: Reflections on the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma*, and extraordinary leader with decades of experience working to end gender-based violence in South Africa.

Originally, Mmatshilo had prepared a formal presentation to help set the stage for the learning, experiencing, and exchanging we'll be doing here in South Africa. But when she joined in our grounding circle and understood that we are here to connect personal transformation with systemic change, she quickly changed tack. She sat on the floor with us and shared her own story of personal and spiritual liberation. She led a provocative discussion about the healing role of forgiveness in justice, especially in the complex arena of gender-based violence. She shared how defeating a common enemy (in their case, apartheid) is actually just the first step in transformation, and that dealing with the complexities of governance is an essential part of the struggle.



*Sitting in Circle with Mmatshilo Motsei*

Ultimately, she spoke to how love enabled her to be resilient when she lost everything and had to piece together a new path. She spoke from the heart, reminding us that “all of us have an innate sense of knowing, all of us are guided, and all of us are loved.”

The opportunity to sit in circle with Mmatshilo whose history of fighting gender-based violence is rooted in spirituality, transformation, and storytelling was a perfect opening to help us all connect to our own struggles for liberation.



*Robben Island.*

*Photo courtesy  
of Movement Maker  
Patina Park*

To further help us ground ourselves in the rich history of South Africa’s fight for liberation from oppression, we set out, by ferry, to tour Robben Island. Robben Island was used between the 17th and 20th centuries as a prison, a hospital for “socially unacceptable groups”, and a military base. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned there for 18 years, along with several other leaders of the African

National Congress. Today, it is a symbol of triumph of the human spirit over adversity and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



*Robben Island Prison. Photo courtesy of Movement Maker Alexis Flanagan.*

After a bus tour of the Island's impressive natural beauty and historical buildings, we were met by Sparks Mlilwana, a former political prisoner who now leads tours of the maximum security prison. While we gathered in the spartan facilities, Sparks painted a sobering picture of the daily injustices, hardships, and discrimination faced by the prisoners. But, we also saw signs of hope – the small garden in the prison courtyard where Mandela buried the manuscript for his memoirs, *Long Walk to Freedom*; the monument of stones built by former prisoners after returning to Robben Island for a healing ceremony; and Sparks himself, devoting his time to educating visitors and new generations of South Africans.



*Former political prisoner Sparks Mlilwana leading Movement Makers  
on a tour of the maximum security prison on Robben Island.*

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Many of us left feeling overwhelmed by emotion and with gratitude for all of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Many of us also left wondering whether we are willing to make the same sacrifices – and, if so, what possibilities then open up for us in our own movements for change.

Tonight, full of positive energy and new seeds of thought, we all retire to our rooms to rest up for what promises to be another full day of learning visits.

# Building Connections Between Movements, Immigrant Rights and Ending Violence Against Girls and Women

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 3, 2016 Share:

## Day 2: Cape Town, South Africa—Refugees, Migrant Women & Xenophobia

*Our purpose: We are in South Africa to learn from and with allied activists and sister movements on how we can build global movements for liberation and social change.*

### Our Day's Itinerary:

- Tour Salt River Community House
- Meet with Mary Tal of the Whole World Women Association (WWWA) to talk about migrant women and xenophobic violence
- WWWA Poetry Exchange
- Choice of Visiting Local Craft Market or Cape Town coastline

Eager for another day of learning and exchanging with activists in Cape Town, we began our day with a short drive to the Community House at Salt River which has been an important site of activism starting with anti-apartheid struggles and lasting through to the present day. It is a stable home and meeting place for several organizations and trade unions and represents an important piece of infrastructure for ongoing struggles for liberation. Rita Demorney, manager of the Community House, gave us a tour and shared that she sees the building's purpose as keeping *ubuntu* alive and making sure that future generations are educated about the history of apartheid so it is never repeated. Every area of the building is dedicated to a fallen activist, with images of them and their stories adorning all of the walls.



*Our guide, Rita Demoroney, the manager of Salt River Community House: “as long as there’s a need, we will be here”*

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While at the Community House, we were hosted by Mary Magdalene Tal for an all-day program. As a Cameroonian refugee, Mary knows first-hand how difficult it is to get any support in South Africa. Like Mary, thousands of women flee their home countries for South Africa to escape persecution, war, political conflict, and gender and/or cultural forms of violence such as genital mutilation or forced marriage. In their adopted country of South Africa, refugees face additional challenges including homelessness, poverty, and trauma. In addition, they are vulnerable to acts of violence and xenophobia. This experience led her to start the Whole World Women Association (WWWA), an organization that supports refugee women.



*Vini Bhansali, executive director of IDEX and faculty for this trip, introducing Mary Tal of Whole World Women Association*

The Whole World Women Association works with refugee women to foster healing by fighting for their rights, providing counseling and health services, and offering life skills training. By building solidarity between refugee and local women, WWWA also helps to minimize xenophobia. The organization's success is largely due to the way Mary leads the work. When introducing Mary to us, Rajasvini Bhansali, executive director of International Development Exchange (IDEX) and faculty for this trip, said that Mary demonstrates what it really means to lead from the heart.

Her way of heart-centered leadership was evident in the agenda for the day. We started by doing group meditation to help manage any trauma that might be triggered when hearing stories of the violence experienced by migrant women. It was followed by popular education theater to illustrate the types of challenges they face in South Africa. We then heard a heart-wrenching story told by a member of WWWA to help personalize the challenges faced by both the migrant women and the organization in trying to assist them, accompanied by a group discussion. During lunch, we had the opportunity to converse with and get to know more of the members of WWWA. We closed out with a powerful exchange of poetry and song.



*A Member of WWWA Leads Movement Makers in  
Song*



*WWWA hosted a poetry exchange and several Movement  
Makers and faculty joined in*

Move to End Violence has intentionally focused on building connections between the U.S. immigrant rights movement and the movement to end violence against girls and women as part of a strategy to strengthen intersectionality and inclusivity. Similarly, WWWA brings together these two movements in South Africa, which led to a rich dialogue. *How do you help women reclaim their agency and power when they are continuously being re-victimized? How do you work in a country like South Africa, that is still reeling and healing from apartheid, and ask them to take on the problems of refugees when there is no political will? How do you incorporate politicization as part of a collective healing process when people are solely focused on survival?*

We didn't develop any solutions during our time there, but perhaps the power of the exchange is best expressed by one of the Movement Makers: "*Sometimes I get tired of fighting. And I don't have the answers either. But hearing your story makes me want to keep fighting.*"

To help close out an intense program, some members of our group visited a local craft market and others went to relax by the coast. We all used this time to reflect on the day and refresh for another powerful day tomorrow.

# Community Transformation Through Land, Water, and Agricultural Reform

## Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 4, 2016 Share:

### Day 3: Cape Town, South Africa—Access to Land, Agrarian Reform, Women & Farmworker Rights

*Our purpose: We are in South Africa to learn from and with allied activists and sister movements on how we can build global movements for liberation and social change.*

Our Day's Itinerary:

- Community Site Visits with Surplus People Project

One of the key ways apartheid perpetuated violence in South Africa was by forcing black communities off their land and prohibiting them from owning land. Since apartheid ended, South Africa has struggled to rectify this, with rural women farmers suffering the most. Today was all about gaining a greater understanding of this oppression, and to see the work being done by these communities to change conditions for the long-term.

Our community visits were organized by the [Surplus People Project](#), a partner of the [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#), which works to support the struggles of impoverished rural communities. In the 1980s, the Surplus People Project supported South Africa's black communities to resist forced removals, evictions, and the privatization of land. Today, the Surplus People Project focuses on helping these communities transform through land, water, and agricultural reform.

We split into two groups – one group met with farmworkers in rural townships; the other with young people creating urban gardens. Both experiences were incredible and inspiring and changed the way many of us think about this work.

The rural group went to Riebeeck West and Malmesbury townships to visit with local farmers associations, about 90 km outside of Cape Town. We were met by 25 local leaders and community members who explained how forced displacement due to government selling of land to white commercial farmers propelled the different associations to come together and launch the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign. It's a sophisticated, multi-faceted effort that includes negotiating with an unresponsive government for land ownership, instituting agro-ecology principles and organic farming methods, supporting emerging farmers with seedlings and training, and fighting multinational companies like Monsanto on GMO labeling and seed sovereignty.



*Heading to Riebeeck West, a township outside of Cape Town, to see the connections between agrarian reform and violence. Western Cape is home to many wineries.*

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*Gathering together with the community for a lively discussion on agro-ecology and violence against landless peoples.*

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Movement Makers were deeply impressed by the clarity of how they link agrarian reform with gender justice, youth leadership, climate justice, migrant rights, and environmental sustainability. One woman leader shared how participating in the campaign helps women in the community believe that they can speak up, which also helps them break the silence around violence they may be experiencing. She helped organize 900 women to march 45 km from Johannesburg to Pretoria to present President Zuma with their demands for each woman to receive a hectare of land. "My parents and their parents worked the land," she declared. "We are here to protect our legacy. If the President can't make up his mind, we are not going back to him again. We are taking the land!"

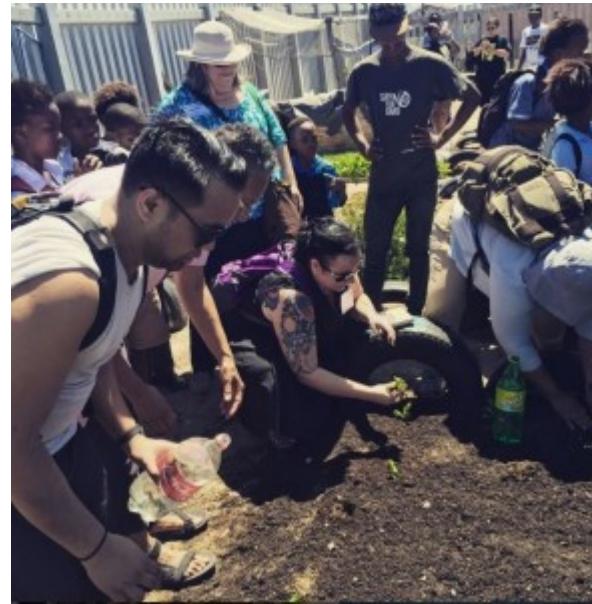


*Shireen Demas, an organizer with Surplus People's Project talking about their march of 900 women who walked 45km to Pretoria to present their demand of 1 hectare of land for each woman.*

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We also had a sobering discussion on the challenges of maintaining membership and morale after years of work have yet to result in positive changes in the farmworkers' day-to-day lives. Their challenges mirror many of our own in the United States: intimidation of workers by owners, little recourse through the courts or police, lack of resources to support workers going on strike, and more. But one of the leaders perhaps said it best: "You can work toward building mass support, but you can't force revolution on them. It's like the citrus fruit. We cannot make them ripen. All we can do is feed the soil and wait."

The urban group visited two urban permaculture gardens that are being led by young people. In densely-populated Khayelitsha township, the Movement Makers got to help plant lettuce in a garden behind the school, which was started to teach other young people how to sustain themselves without having their own land. The second garden is just blocks away from our hotel in Cape Town and is “squatting” on unused government land. This garden is so abundant that it produces enough food to sustain the six people who maintain it as well as to hold a weekly farmer’s market that caters to nearby residents.



*Movement Makers helping to plant in the youth-led community garden in Khayelitsha township.*

Movement Makers were deeply impressed with their approach to land access as liberation. As explained by one young leader: There are three kinds of poverty – of the mind, the spirit, and the belly – and gardening feeds them all. Food from the garden feeds the belly, learning about plants feeds the mind, and being able to grow something from the earth feeds the spirit. They emphasized the idea that the energy you put into growing something comes back to you when you eat the plant you grow – the ultimate kind of sustainability.

The vibrant energy of the young people means that arts and culture are closely interwoven into their fight for access to land. Drum circles and open mics regularly take place around the gardens, and is another way to invite in more participants and supporters. This energy is palpable when discussing the eviction notice the second garden recently received: “While we wait to hear from the courts, we will create paradise.”

*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#).*

# Storytelling Helps Tell Complex Story of Gender-Based Violence and LGBTQ Rights in South Africa

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 5, 2016 Share:

## Day 4: Cape Town, South Africa—Gender-Based Violence & Trafficking; Cultural Resistance; LGBTQ Rights



*Photo credit: Movement Maker Quentin Walcott*

### Our Day's Itinerary:

- Meeting with Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge and Embrace Dignity
- Meeting with Fatima Dike
- Meeting with Beverly Soldaat
- Visit to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden

Our day began with meeting Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge—a South African leader with a long and distinguished history of campaigning for human rights and the founder of Embrace Dignity. She brought with her two survivors: Grizelda as a main speaker and Monica as support for Grizelda. We sat in circle with them to learn about the work being done to end commercial and sexual exploitation in South Africa.



*Grizelda, a courageous survivor working with Embrace Dignity, telling her story and sharing a song.*

Grizelda started off powerfully by sharing her story to help us better understand the South African context and to show that survivors should have control over their own stories. She explained how being displaced in the aftermath of apartheid increased her vulnerability to exploitation and how it overlaps with the HIV/AIDS crisis. She described discrimination from the community as a survivor, ongoing PTSD, and the struggle to find her identity anew. She criticized the narrow and judgmental programs available to her: *"I don't need people to tell me what to do to be a survivor. I need them to support me in what I want to do."*

We followed with a robust discussion on various aspects of this complex issue. How sexual exploitation is a continuation of the violence of colonization, slavery, apartheid, and capitalism – passed down from generation to generation. How to enforce criminalization of buying sex and how that would impact prostituted women. The need for parallel safety nets and economic policies so women truly have other viable options for how to support themselves financially. The need to make sure LGBTQ who engage in prostitution are included in policy decisions. These complexities fired up the Movement Makers and they continued to have conversations throughout lunch.



*Sharing about clan songs and praise poems with Fatima Dike, the Mother of South African theatre.*

After lunch, we had the honor of meeting with the “Mother of South African Drama”, Fatima Dike. Arts, culture, storytelling, and performance are critical mediums for helping oppressed communities make sense of and share their experiences and perspectives. In her work as Director of [Siyasanga Cape Town Theatre Company](#), Fatima helps South African women tell their stories – and either perform or publish them. Her own plays weave together the realities of black African culture, customs and rituals as well as violence against women and the LGBT community.

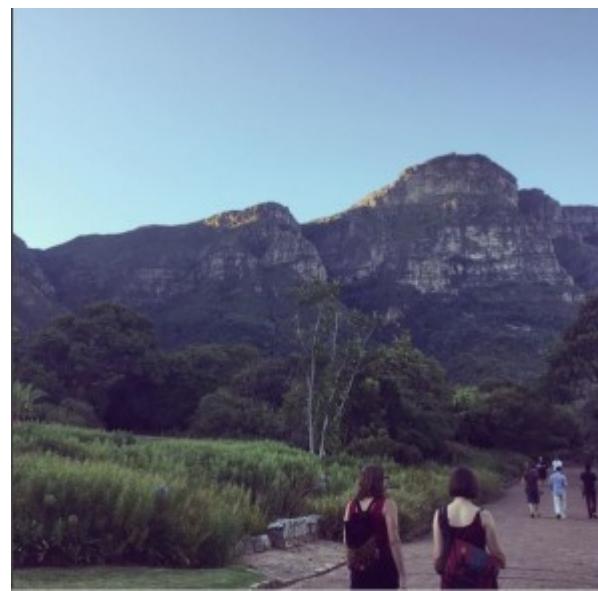
Fatima told us about clan songs as a way to remember history and establish relationship. She explained parts of the Xhosa language. She reflected on how modernization and individualism were breaking down ubuntu and commodifying rituals of marriage and manhood, and making us forget how to properly honor our ancestors. She recited heartbreakingly beautiful poems on the injustices of apartheid and the killing of children in the Soweto Uprising. And interwoven throughout, she danced with us, played jazz music from Sibongile Khumalo, gave us blessings, and brought joy and hope into our hearts. She demonstrated – in her simple and powerful way – how we can use the arts to collectively grieve, fight for justice, and bring lightness and love to our work.

Beverly Soldaat, an LGBTI rights activist, accompanied Fatima to open a discussion on the intense discrimination experienced by the LGBTI community. Even though South Africa legalized same-sex marriage almost 10 years ago and there are constitutional protections for LGBT people, the day-to-day reality of most poor, black LGBT South Africans is marked by harassment, fear, lack of safety, and family rejection. There is little recourse from the police or the courts if they are victims of violence or other violations. It was a sobering picture and many Movement Makers offered ideas, referrals to other organizations, and heartfelt messages of solidarity.



*Movement Maker Farah Tanis leading us in a beautiful call-and-response hymn to close out the session.*

Building off our experience with Fatima, being in South Africa has special meaning for the members of the cohort with African heritage, with this being the first time on the continent for many of them. The experience of feeling rooted on the land of their ancestors, while living with the legacy of slavery that has violently erased their pasts, has been powerful. To give them an opportunity to connect with the land once more, as well as a way to celebrate our last night in Cape Town, we spent the evening at [Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden](#). It is 528 hectares (1300 acres) and the first botanical garden in the world focused on preserving a country's unique flora. To make it even more special, Mary Tal, Herschelle Milford, Fatima, Beverly, and a few other guests joined us for dinner and we ended the night with dance and song.



*Spending our last evening in Cape Town at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens.*



*Movement Makers and faculty enjoying the botanical gardens.*

This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#).

# Learning the Power of Oral Histories in Advancing Human Rights

## Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 6, 2016 Share:

### Day 5: Cape Town, South Africa—Truth and Reconciliation



*Photo credit: Movement Maker Quentin Walcott*

#### Our Day's Itinerary:

- Truth and Reconciliation at the Human Rights Media Centre
- Travel to Johannesburg

In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a court-like restorative justice body assembled after the abolition of apartheid in the hope of starting the country on a path of healing. The TRC was tasked with discovering and revealing the wrongs perpetrated under apartheid and providing amnesty when appropriate, and with identifying victims of gross human rights violations who could then be eligible for reparations. People were invited to submit written statements about their experiences and some were selected for public hearings. The TRC, though not without its flaws, was seen by many as a crucial component of the transition to a full and free democracy in South Africa.



*Shirley Gunn, formerly of the ANC and now with the Human Rights Media Centre, talking to Movement Makers about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process.*

We had the honor today of meeting with Shirley Gunn of the [Human Rights Media Centre](#), a dedicated organizer for the African National Congress during apartheid, and a key member of its military wing. She publicly testified to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and that experience has helped inform her current work documenting and disseminating oral histories. As a movement interested in restorative justice, alternatives to criminalization, and public hearings, we were so eager to have the chance to learn more about the Truth and Reconciliation process from Shirley.

She outlined the structure of the TRC and pointed out its major flaws: the thousands of people left out of the process, the accommodations made for perpetrators to receive amnesty through the process rather than be prosecuted for their crimes, and the lack of accessibility of the final report and the sanitization of the victim statements. Perhaps most importantly, to her, the process and being labeled as a “victim” felt like a re-victimization: *“I’m much more than the sum of their torture and abuse. The TRC smothered us in the victim mentality.”*

She had us riveted when telling the story of her path of politicization, her work as a trade union organizer and leading member of the ANC, the decision to go underground to be part of its military wing and receive military training, and her eventual capture. Even while being a respected member, she still had to endure sexism and defend against sexual violence. Her story sparked questions and

discussion about what it meant to be a white ally or comrade during those times, moving from an anti-authoritarian stance to a role in civil society rather than governance, and what healing really looks like.

This connects to the incredible work Shirley does at the Human Rights Media Centre, which advances human rights through oral histories. Her experience with the TRC showed her that so many important stories were not being told. In her current work, she goes deep, gathering hours and hours of narrative, to capture excluded stories – such as those of single mothers, refugees, and former combatants – and she shares them in intergenerational settings to help bridge understanding. When asked how she keeps going, she responded, *“I have a voice and I will use it. That and my history are my weapons.”*



*Movement Maker Farah Tanis presenting Shirley Gunn with a beautiful handmade cloth from a survivor in the name of solidarity.*

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This was a fiery and inspiring close to our time in Cape Town. After lunch, we boarded a plane to Johannesburg for the second part of our learning exchange.

*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#).*

# Movement Makers Explore Pilanesberg National Park, Johannesburg

**Move to End Violence**

Originally Posted February 7, 2016 Share:

## *Day 6: Johannesburg –Day Outing*



*Photo credit: Movement Maker Quentin Walcott*

A learning exchange in South Africa would not be complete without an opportunity to see the country's rich wildlife, which plays a huge part in the local and national economies of South Africa and has a complicated relationship with the local tribes. Given that, our first day in Johannesburg was spent on a game reserve in Pilanesberg National Park. Much of the park sits on land re-settled by the Bakubung tribe during apartheid and then sold to a Tswana tribe bantustan who wanted to convert the land into the game reserve. The park is named after the Tswana Chief Pilane.



*Movement Makers on safari. Photo credit: Jamia Wilson*

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Not the kind of group to waste any time, we spent our lunch break at the reserve discussing neoliberalism and its impact on South Africa's economy and crushing rates of poverty and unemployment. Trishala Deb of IDEX led a teach-in using materials developed by Mazibuko Jara, a leader of United Front, which is a new leftist coalition in South Africa seen as the next iteration of large-scale organizing post-Apartheid. We thought about how this economic context influences their organizing in South Africa and what we can take back to our own organizing at home in the United States. Movement Makers shared that they see many parallels with the challenges we face at home and it increases our own urgency to build broader coalitions that connect gender-based violence with economic injustice.



*Over lunch, Trishala Deb of International Development Exchange (IDEX) leading Movement Makers through a teach-in on neoliberalism and how its economic policies have impacted South Africa.*

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The rest of the day was spent joyfully spotting animals in the wild, including giraffes, herds of wildebeest, kudu, many zebras, a herd of impala, a family of warthogs, elephants, a white rhino, a community of baboons, and several beautiful birds. We were also blessed with a rare sighting of a black rhino and a glimpse of a hippo.



*Zebra. Photo credit: Quentin Walcott*



*Black Rhino. Photo credit: Quentin Walcott*

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*Wildebeest. Photo credit: Quentin Walcott*

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But perhaps the animal sighting that got us the most fired up was the humble dung beetle. We spotted it on the ground, working hard to roll a ball of dung up a small incline, while another dung beetle got a free ride by latching himself onto it. Our guide shared that the freeloading dung beetle would wait until the other dung beetle was exhausted from the work, and then attack him and steal the ball for himself. That was enough to get us cheering and on our feet to encourage the one pushing the ball to succeed. Clearly, some of us could relate.



*A dung beetle working hard, while another latches on.*

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We were glad to see Movement Makers and fellow faculty and staff take a little time to rest and enjoy the rich natural beauty of South Africa. We expect this break will also help us be alert and ready for the busy days ahead.

*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#).*

# Exploring Violence Against Girls and Women with Katswe Sistahood and the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 8, 2016 Share:

## Day 7: Johannesburg – Violence Against Girls and Women



### Day's Itinerary:

- Meet with Sibongile Ndashe, Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa
- Processing and Reflections
- Meet with Talent Jumo, Katswe Sistahood

We began our first day of programming in Johannesburg with Sibongile Ndashe of the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA). Sibongile is a feminist lawyer who uses strategic litigation to hold the state accountable and develop laws and legal precedent for upholding women's human rights and sexual rights on the continent and for prosecuting violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expressions. Sibongile had much insight to offer our many Movement Makers who are interested in

legal and policy strategies as a means to fight gender-based violence.



*Sibongile Ndashe of Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa shares ideas and experiences about using legal tools to advance women's rights in Africa.*

Sibongile shared that there is much distrust of the legal system throughout Africa and the process often makes people feel re-victimized and without restitution in the end, but she believes that it is a useful tool and that efforts should be made to make sure the system works. She explained the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women, which says the State will ensure the elimination of discrimination against women and ensure the protection of women's rights. ISLA's goal is to use strategic litigation to ensure that the government takes this responsibility seriously and can be prosecuted if it is found negligent.

Her incisive analysis on the barriers in this work, and how NGOs play into them, sparked a robust discussion on the role of NGOs in civil society. Is it our job to hold the State accountable for its responsibilities? Or is it our job to step in and take over some of the responsibilities to ensure they happen? If we step in, are we simply propping up failing systems? By pursuing alternative strategies outside of the State, are we allowing the State to abdicate responsibility?



*Movement Maker Farah Tanis sparking discussion  
on the role of NGOs in doing the work ourselves  
rather than holding the state accountable.*

Sibongile argued that a focus on being “helpful” often pits organizations against each other to fight out who is most helpful, and that those who are seen as most compliant with the system are often the ones given access to decision-makers. She also shared how a false division between mass mobilization and legal strategies has caused fissures in the women’s movement, often along race lines. Rather than NGOs raising money to cover services that should actually be provided by the State, she challenged us to instead focus on telling lawmakers what it costs for them to not rectify the problems we are trying to solve.

Sibongile gave us much food for thought. To help us process what we learned from her, and throughout the learning exchange so far, we spent time on our own reflecting on questions like:

- *What am I learning about myself, my own story, my leadership journey?*
- *What am I learning about my organization, my community, Move to End Violence?*
- *What am I learning about movement building?*

We then took our reflections to share out what we as individuals, we as organizations, and we as movements could do if we were willing to be as bold as our South African comrades. Common themes focused on stepping into stronger, more focused, and more fulfilling leadership; not being beholden to funders and funding; creating the organizations we want to have; using our collective power to demand social justice; integrating art and creativity all the time; and supporting the leadership of those most impacted.

Taking the time to reflect as a group allowed us to be more attentive when joined by our afternoon speaker, Talent Jumo of [Katswe Sistahood](#) in Zimbabwe. Talent organizes young women to learn about and fight for their sexual and reproductive rights in the face of repression and widespread poverty. Katswe Sistahood is a partner of International Development Exchange (IDEX) and recently won an international award for its work.



*Talent Jumo of Katswe Sistahood explains how they build a platform for young women to tell their own stories, develop their own strategies, and define justice for themselves.*

Talent helped us understand the Zimbabwean context she is working in, including the high level of sexual violence, the prevalence of child marriage, lack of education and access to information and services related to health and rights, and overall policing and control over women and their bodies. To combat this, Katswe creates safe spaces for women to have honest conversations and ask questions. They lead and participate in campaigns to encourage education rather than marriage. They organize marches and push collective agendas to show the community they will not be silent, even in the face of great physical risk. Said Talent, “*We are called bad women – and we are okay with that!*”

Katswe Sistahood also uses music, dance, art, culture, popular education, and physical movement to engage the women and help build connections among them. We had a lot of fun trying out some of the energizers Talent uses with the women she works with, and <sup>1</sup> were so impressed with her approach. “We build a platform for women to speak for themselves,” said Talent. “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."



*Talent of Katswe Sistahood sharing some of the energizers she uses with the young women she works with.*

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*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#).*

# Celebrating Positive Women's Network

## Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 9, 2016 Share:

On this last day of site visits in Johannesburg, over half of our group had the honor of being guests at Positive Women's Network (PWN) 20th Anniversary celebration in Wattville in Ekurhuleni township outside of Johannesburg, ([while the others explored Constitution Hill](#)). PWN empowers women and girls living with HIV/AIDS by providing access to vital support and services while also promoting gender equity and human rights. It was founded by Prudence Mabele, one of the first black South African women to speak freely about her HIV status and PWN has thrived under her courageous leadership.



*Positive Women's Network is a longtime partner of #IDEX doing fierce work in the face of the highest rates of infection in the world.*



*Move to End Violence was welcomed by song and  
dance at our visit to Wattville in Ekurhuleni township  
outside of Johannesburg to celebrate the 20th  
anniversary of Positive Women's Network.*

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We were welcomed by song, dance, and prayer with PWN staff and community members, which continued throughout the celebration. PWN prioritizes working in partnership and some of their key partners were invited to the front of the room to share more about their work, including Traditional Healers Organization, Lethabong Clinic, Lithanza Community Development and Training, and the Methodist Church. As long-term funding partners, International Development Exchange (IDEX) gave a moving tribute to PWN for the way they hold community with love and tirelessly fight a fight that feels like it may never end.



*Yeshica and Vini of #IDEX sharing how much they have learned from Positive Women's Network and how they hold community.*

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Another PWN partner is Lesabe Higher Primary School, where the students are given many opportunities for after school activities. PWN has an office on their campus where they provide information and counseling and hold women's groups. One of our top highlights for the day was when 25 children performed song and dance for the anniversary celebration, reminding us that part of our work is to sustain the bright energy of the next generation.



*Lesabe Higher Primary School has a partnership with Positive Women's Network and their students*

The celebration was held at the OR Tambo Cultural Precinct, which houses an auditorium, a theatre, and a museum honoring the life of two of Wattville's beloved leaders Oliver Reginald Tambo, former president of the ANC, and his wife, Adelaide. We visited the museum exhibit and the beautiful grounds. We were also able to visit their gravesite, which has been declared a National Heritage Site. The community takes seriously the responsibility of honoring those who have come before them.

PWN's chairperson, Susan Nkomo, spoke of the great pain experienced daily in the community that is not acknowledged by those in power and how allies in government seem to have forgotten about those who are suffering – from losing many loved ones to HIV/AIDS, from having their daughters and sisters raped and assaulted, and from being controlled and restricted by those who pretend to help. And she also spoke of the hope provided by solidarity. Through solidarity, she shared, "We can build a place where all of us are affirmed as human beings and are loved. That act of loving is the most radical thing we can do."



*Positive Women Network's chairperson Susan Nkomo acknowledging the pain in the community during this time of celebration and hoping we hold hands together in solidarity*

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*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(INDEX\)](#).*

# Movement Makers Explore Ending Prison Rape

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 9, 2016 Share:

On this final day of site visits in South Africa, [one half of our group met with the Positive Women's Network](#), while the other half of our group spent the day at [Constitution Hill](#), the site of a former prison which has become home to the Constitutional Court. The Court happened to be in session on a contentious topic today and we were fortunate to witness a 2000-people strong protest for economic justice.





*Movement Makers meet with JDI South Africa, Out, Justice Project, and Lifeline.*

We spent most of the day in the Human Rights Conference room engaged in a rich and engaging discussion about ending prison rape with colleagues of Movement Makers Vivian Jojola and Lovisa Stannow, [Just Detention International](#), from JDI South Africa, as well as some of their closest allies from the [Justice Project](#), [Lifeline](#), and [OUT](#).

These groups are part of a loose federation with other allies who work together toward a common vision. It was inspiring to hear how they share information and resources and strategically play to their strengths, for example by having one group stay in the background to preserve access to crucial data about what is happening in the prisons and sharing that information with another group better positioned to take a more aggressive public stance. It was exciting to see such an effective networked approach to movement building for social change.

Over the course of the day they shared some of their strategies to end prison rape, from investigative reporting on rape and torture of incarcerated people, to advocacy to shut down private prisons that were abusing prisoners, to intense 6-day long trainings with prison guards to help them adopt a different way of being with incarcerated people, to digital story-telling designed to create public awareness about prison rape, connect folks to incarcerated people's humanity and disrupt the belief that people in prison get what they deserve.

We were inspired by the group's unyielding compassion in the face of brutal rape and torture by agents of the state and other prisoners under the state's control. Rather than hold these actors as the enemy, these advocates looked for their humanity, recognized that they too have experienced trauma and are working in devastating conditions that degrade and dehumanize all involved. They sought to reconnect the guards to their own humanity and then to the humanity and dignity of incarcerated people.

<sup>1</sup> One advocate who trains guards on gender binaries and boxes, said "If you want people to change, you have to be loving and

compassionate. I can work with a rapist, because I see the human standing in front of me who is in pain and needs help to change." Movement Maker Q Walcott likened that to the way that his group engages men and boys, meeting them where they are in order to bring them somewhere else, with compassion and accountability. As one member of our group described it, this approach feels like reconciliation in action.

We were also given the opportunity to watch three videos of survivors of prison rape telling their stories as a part of JDI South Africa's public awareness campaign. These survivor stories and narratives are critical to JDI's work transforming the hearts, minds, and behavior of the guards. After watching the heart-wrenching videos, we heard from one of the survivors himself about what his healing journey has been like and how it has led him to find his purpose as an advocate to end prison rape.

It was an extremely powerful experience and an honor to spend the day with this survivor. By the end of the afternoon (which went on to include spirited discussions about ending mass incarceration in the US, the school to prison pipeline, how prison is an extension of Apartheid in South Africa and Slavery in the US and more...) he shared that after participating in the day's discussion, he felt ready to step even more fully into leadership on ending prison rape.

At the end of this long and engaging day, our group had the honor of touring the former prison which held political prisoners like Albertina Sisulu, Barbara Hogan, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, as well as folks whose violations were nothing more than being on the streets without a pass or stealing food because they were hungry. The tour of the cells and description of wretched conditions brought the day into even sharper focus and reinforced the urgency of ending prison rape and mass incarceration.



*A women's prison on Constitution Hill*



*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(INDEX\)](#).*

# Final Site Visits in Johannesburg, Conversations on Solidarity and Movement Building

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 9, 2016 Share:

## Day 8: Johannesburg –Community Learning Visits

### Day's Itinerary:

- Community visits – choice of focus on HIV and gender-based violence or prison abuse

Today was our last day of community visits in South Africa. The community visits continue to be where we have the deepest conversations with local residents, where we spend the most time building relationships, and where there are multiple opportunities for transformative experiences. Movement Makers had the choice of two visits: meeting with [Positive Women's Network](#) and doing a learning exchange with women living with HIV/AIDS, or doing a site visit with [Just Detention International South Africa \(JDI\)](#), which is an organization that has been part of the current cohort via Vivian Jojola, as well as Cohort 2, via its executive director Lovisa Stannow. This exchange focused on the dignity and safety of people in detention.

To learn more about the Positive Women's Network visit, [click here](#).

To learn more about the Just Detention International visit, [click here](#).

What both visits had in common was calling into question what it means to be in solidarity with other organizations and movements across the globe. To help share each other's experiences and to make sense of what solidarity looks like, the Movement Makers gathered after dinner to reflect together. We opened with this quote from bell hooks:

*Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment.*



One common theme was a new or renewed commitment to solidarity because that is the only real way to work toward justice. Phrases used by Movement Makers include: “none of us are free until all of us are free,” “I am her, she is me,” and “solidarity is the only way to change global systems.”

Despite this realization that we need to work in solidarity, there was also recognition that it’s hard and uncomfortable. We were reminded that solidarity is an ongoing lesson for us to learn and an ongoing exploration that we won’t get right most of the time, but that it is a journey we must be willing to take.

*This international learning exchange was planned in conjunction with our esteemed partners at [International Development Exchange \(IDEX\)](#).*

# Lesley Ann Foster, Masimanyane Women's Support Centre, Meets with Movement Makers to Reflect on Leadership and Movement Building

Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 11, 2016 Share:

## ***Day 9: Johannesburg –Bringing it All Together***

### **Day's Itinerary:**

- Meet with Lesley Ann Foster, [Masimanyane Women's Support Centre](#)
- [Visit Apartheid Museum](#)
- Celebration Outing

It's hard to believe that today was our last full day of programming here in South Africa. To help bring it all together and connect what's happening in the movement and our individual leadership journeys, Lesley Ann Foster of Masimanyane Women's Support Centre spent the morning with us sharing her impeccable insights. For over 20 years, she has successfully worked in community, nationally, and internationally to advocate for the rights of girls and women and to combat violence against them, using a multitude of strategies.



*Lesley Ann Foster of Masimanyane  
discussing women's rights with Move to  
End Violence.*

Lesley Ann described some of the consequences of apartheid, including how the forced removals devastated community cohesion and that violence became normalized. Post-apartheid, the women's movement clarified their vision in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality and she feels the movement is in a moment when they need to again find that clarity of vision and support leaders to drive it.

She spoke at length about the current state of the movement and the backlash against women's rights, much of it driven by international funding pressures. These include a switch to gender-neutral policy that does not acknowledge the disproportionate violence faced by women, focusing on family and children or men and boys rather than women, pushing for a process of equity rather than the end goal of equality, professionalization of NGOs and services as well as privatization of the field, religious fundamentalism across all religions, and hierarchies of violence where the everyday violence that permeates women's lives is allowed to be ignored. Overall, she spoke strongly to the need to re-politicize violence against women.

This sparked discussion among the Movement Makers about when to accept funding, fissures within the movement, backlash against women-centered language and practices, and lack of clarity in our analysis in the U.S.

Lesley Ann closed with multiple leadership lessons that she has learned herself over the years and wanted to impart to us. She put it as "women have earned the right to be terminally tired", and her experience of burnout and the need for self-care resonated with many of us. She spoke of the need to always be developing new leadership: "*An important lesson was not to hold onto good people*

*and build the culture around me, I had to let them go and they took the work to the next level” and “Leadership and leading is not a solo game. It’s not about you and you can’t do it alone.” She shared that “leadership is an inside job” and you have to constantly be self-reflective and take the time for your own renewal.*

We spent the afternoon at the Apartheid Museum, a powerful collection of photography, news clips, and other historical artifacts documenting the rise and fall of apartheid. The museum opened in 2001 and provides rich context for many of the things we have been learning, including leaders we have been hearing about and are inspired by, successful strategies for building a powerful movement in the face of violence, the patience and great personal risk needed to build a mass movement, and the complicated transition from activism to governance.





Apartheid Museum. Photo credit: Movement Maker  
Jamia Wilson.

To help decompress afterward, we had the pleasure of visiting a jazz club in Johannesburg to see Pilani Bubu, a young black South African singer-songwriter whose lyrics touch on love, heartbreak, and following your dreams. Colleagues from Just Detention International – South Africa and Positive Women's Network joined us – and PWN even received a shout-out from the stage. Listening to Pilani's lyrics together, "*you will find the joy in living life in your own way...*", was a fitting way to celebrate our last night together of a powerful and affirming journey.



*The beautiful music of Philani Bubu at The Orbit.*

*Photo credit: Movement Maker David Lee.*



*Enjoying our final night out with gorgeous  
Jazz at The Orbit, Johannesburg.*

# Closing Reflections on Our International Exchange in South Africa

## Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 11, 2016 Share:

### Day 10: Johannesburg –Closing Reflections

#### Day's Itinerary:

- Reflections, closing, depart South Africa

To honor our last day of an incredible two-week journey, we began the day with dancing. This is a lesson that we learned over and over from our South African teachers: song and dance heals, builds community, and opens us up to receive.

We then spent the rest of the morning sharing our “compost” – old ideas and habits we want to transform into something new – and our “cauldron” – new ideas and practices that are bubbling up. The themes below are by no means a complete list of what Movement Makers are taking home from this exchange, and we eagerly await when they are ready to use this blog to share their own stories with the greater Move to End Violence family. Stay tuned!

1. Being able to visit South Africa and participate in activities and access comforts that the vast majority of South Africans cannot is an immense privilege. The ability to be treated like family by local leaders because of their deep relationships with International Development Exchange (IDEX) is an immense privilege. With that privilege comes immense responsibility. *“How do I take this awesome responsibility back and do it in ways that infuse and ignite things on the ground in the U.S.?”*
2. What do healing, justice, and forgiveness look like in the face of great violence? What do survivors need for their lifelong healing journey? What does justice look like, given that our criminal justice system often re-victimizes people and mass incarceration is tearing apart our communities? How do we help those who have experienced violence not perpetrate violence themselves?
3. Connecting with the land is an essential human need and growing food to feed one’s community is the ultimate form of sustainability; it transforms our energy into something that sustains us, not just something we expend. How do we find more ways to connect with the land and tap into our own renewal? How do we see access to land as part of our social justice movements? *“We always talk about sustainability and this is the answer!”*



4. Structural oppression and global poverty are by design. It is part of a continuum of oppression in order to increase white wealth through the acquisition of cheap labor. What strategies do we need to employ to counter and dismantle oppression? How do we hold the State accountable and not use nonprofit organizations to prop up failing systems? How do we also pursue alternatives? *"At the Apartheid Museum, I saw strategies to tear apart and oppress, and I saw strategies people used to resist every step of the way."*
5. We explored the relationship between solidarity and the deep human connection we experienced and witnessed here. On day one, Mmatshilo Motsei reminded us to keep it simple and connect as humans. They don't silo their humanity and they don't make their struggles ideological. They tap into an innate knowing that we all possess, which allows them to bring clarity of vision. And if we are to be in solidarity with them, then we need to do the same. *"The vastness of this land is incredibly spiritual. I'm re-opening my heart and mind and just have to let intellectualism go. I want to let the universe talk to me."*
6. We have to be able to hold deep sadness and pain while readily tapping into joy and hope. Without a willingness to sit with the pain, we disassociate and disconnect. And without joy, the pain will overwhelm us and we will not be able to envision what is possible. *"Everyone here is a miracle, to be alive is a joy. We weren't meant to survive but we did."*



Movement Makers of African descent felt seen, whole, and connected to the continent in a way that does not happen in the U.S. after generations of disruption and violence due to slavery. Our First Nations Movement Makers felt an innate connection to the tribes of South Africa and the devastating impact of hundreds of years of colonization and displacement. Others of us reflected deeply on what it truly means to be a comrade, not just an ally. But these were not just individual experiences based on race; all of us were impacted by these profound connections.

The journey of this international learning exchange sets us up well for our next convening in June focused on social change. We were able to witness a country going through a momentous period of social change: systems becoming increasingly oppressive, people of all backgrounds making great sacrifices to rise up and resist, activists moving into positions of power and governance, and the next phase of organizing to address continuing violence against women, economic injustice, and racism. The revolutionary leadership, strategic use of multiple social change tactics, and lessons learned here will fuel us in the next stage of our work.



# International Learning Exchange in South Africa

## Move to End Violence

Originally Posted February 12, 2016 Share:

The third cohort of Movement Makers just returned from an international learning exchange in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa.



The international learning exchange, a key part of the Move to End Violence program, is an opportunity to learn from and with allied activists and sisters movements on how we can build global movement for liberation and social change. ([Read more](#) about why an international exchange is a key component of this program.)

Follow the Movement Makers' journey in South Africa via these blogs.

[Day 1](#): Cape Town, South Africa—A Glimpse into the Anti-Apartheid Struggle and Meeting Local Women Leaders

[Day 2](#): Building Connections Between Movements, Immigrant Rights and Ending Violence Against Girls and Women

[Day 3](#): Community Transformation Through Land, Water, and Agricultural Reform

[Day 4](#): Cape Town, South Africa—Gender-Based Violence & Trafficking; Cultural Resistance; LGBTQ Rights

[Day 5](#): Learning the Power of Oral Histories in Advancing Human Rights

[Day 6](#): Movement Makers Explore Pilanesberg National Park, Johannesburg

[Day 7](#): Johannesburg – Violence Against Girls and Women

## Day 8: Final Site Visits in Johannesburg, Conversations on Solidarity and Movement Building

Day 9: Lesley Ann Foster, Masimanyane Women's Support Centre, Meets with Movement Makers to Reflect on Leadership and Movement Building

Day 10: Closing Reflections in South Africa

Read more about the [individuals and organizations Movement Makers met with in South Africa.](#)

# Knowledge as Liberation

Vini Bhansali

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SOLIDAIRES NETWORK

Originally Posted August 17, 2016 Share:

[Re-posted with permission.]

Grassroots workers, community leaders, movement builders, network weavers, artists, farmers, and healers are holding up what the world needs – cultural and indigenous knowledge.

Participants of the Move to End Violence international learning exchange in South Africa, with IDEX staff in February 2016.

Even as their labor and expertise is disregarded, the act of producing knowledge when all has been stolen, extracted, taken by force or under duress is itself an act of resistance and defiance. Producing, lifting, reclaiming, and sharing this rooted and deep knowledge feels, sounds, and dances like a liberatory project.



*Participants of the Move to End Violence  
international learning exchange in South Africa, with  
IDEX staff in February 2016.*

The creativity and imagination with which comrades in South Africa claim their own knowing inspired me greatly during a learning exchange between the Move to End Violence Movement Makers from the United States, Thousand Current's [South Africa grantee-partners](#), and many South African revolutionaries, artists and activists in 2016.

Below are some insights shared about reclaiming knowledge:

### **1. Knowledge production is something to be claimed.**

Our experiences of oppression become internalized in such a way that we no longer believe that as third world people, women, queers, working class and poor peoples, people of color that our contributions have anything new to add to the political, economic, or cultural knowledge base that informs our world. The dehumanizing process of colonization removes us from our own "innate sense of knowing."

"*Knowledge Production is contested territory that we must claim,*" says [Mmatshilo Motsei](#), a poet, artist, gender activist and spiritual healer who founded [Afrika Ikalafe and Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training \(ADAPT\)](#) in the Alexandria township outside of Johannesburg.

We forget that we have access to guidance, to ancestral knowledge, to our own lived wisdom burnished in the fire of experience and struggle. To claim this territory, then, is to claim our self-worth, power and creativity.

### **2. Knowledge production is subversive.**

Robben Island during the apartheid regime produced an intricate and ingenious communications and political education infrastructure created by its famous prisoners. The foremost goal of these forms of knowledge production was to ensure that prisoners built connection and solidarity with each other. The systems of education helped stand up to forces of divisiveness that the apartheid regime employed to keep them from organizing inside the walls. The other purpose was to export critical political strategies and ideas to the outside world.



*Former political prisoner Sparks Mlilwana leading a tour of Robben Island. Photo courtesy of Move to End Violence.*

From toilet paper to leaves, every thing the leaders had access to became a tool of knowledge production. It was the quality and dissemination of ideas that mattered more than the vehicle through which they were delivered.

### **3. Agroecology is knowledge production.**

*“My strength comes from mother earth. This land knows me and I know it,”* explains Lumko Ningi, a founder of Tyisa Nabanye, a guerilla gardening initiative on the sloping hills of Signal Hill in Cape Town developed by youth associated with [Surplus People Project](#). *“Plants absorb our energy and release it back to us.”*

The lush garden growing on what was once barren defense land says it all.

The young people are clear about food sovereignty as a key struggle of our times. Their desire to build a movement with open access to seed and permaculture knowledge is reclaiming power, land, and community.

*“Caring for people means processing our own knowledge and sharing what we know,”* says Lumko. *“We might not end up winning the cause. The future is uncertain. But we are going to carry on. We will make this [garden] a paradise which cannot be destroyed.”*

#### 4. **Every person's experience is vital to knowledge production.**

In the process of healing herself from the brutality of sex trafficking, Grizelda Grootboom, a survivor tells her story. As she describes what she endured to us and in her memoir, [Exit](#), she draws lessons and shares wisdom uniquely her own.

*"I don't want you to save me. I want you to support me in finding my own healing,"* says Grizelda.

Grizelda has developed her own strategies for resilience not only for herself, but for many others in vulnerable circumstances such as herself. IDEX partner, [Whole World Women Association](#), also works to empower refugee women and children from all over the African continent in Cape Town to tell their own stories.

To acknowledge her agency and her horror is to give her experience its legitimate place in the knowledge production required to liberate women's bodies from the scourge of labor and violence without consent.



*Sitting in the circle with Mary Tal of Whole World Women Association, an IDEX partner (2nd from right), and Mmatshilo Motsei (far right), author of The Kanga and The Kangaroo Court: Reflections on the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma, and a leader with decades of experience working to end gender-based violence in South Africa.*

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## 5. Knowledge production needs comrades.

*"We learned politics...our rights and how to be a comrade, [not just an ally],"* shares [Shirley Gunn](#), a former anti-apartheid activist and director of the [Human Rights Media Centre](#) in Cape Town.

As Gunn explained this political education methodology as a part of the apartheid struggle, Gunn explained that white South Africans like herself would seek to dismantle their own notions of entitlement, constantly sharpen their political analysis, and seek to put their bodies and minds on the frontlines for the liberation of those most oppressed to become comrades.

How would the United States change in its moment of resurgence of heinous acts of white supremacy if all anti-racist whites claimed their role as comrades?

*"Solidarity is a very important part of our struggle. It scared the racist regime out of their wits,"* says Gunn.

## 6. Knowledge production has rigor.

Our academic and philanthropic institutions would have us believe that the dispossessed have lost language, analysis, or the capacity to produce knowledge. The opposite is true, as history has shown, over and over again that the observation, reflection, dialogue and sense-making processes of indigenous cultures akin to scientific methods.

But institutions can resource and create opportunities for research and knowledge production to be led by the people in the trenches and to give it the value and recognition it rightfully deserves.

*"Black women's bodies have been sites that research has been enacted upon, but now we wish to lead our own research,"* says Sibongile Ndashe, a feminist and public interest lawyer and founder of the [Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa](#).

## 7. Experimentation and exchange is key to knowledge production.

Learning exchanges help surface the lessons learned through experimentation. The [Agroecology Fund](#) brought together agroecology practitioners, donors, activists and policy makers from around the world in Uganda in May 2016. There too it became evident that the approach and process of agroecology works because it converges scientific and indigenous knowledge systems with people's lived experiences of what works in the soil.



The Agroecology Fund and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) hosted a learning exchange summit from May 10-13, 2016 in Uganda. In the center is María Estela Barco Huerta, General Coordinator of Social and Economic Development of Indigenous Mexicans (DESMI), an IDEX partner.

*The Agroecology Fund and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) hosted a learning exchange summit from May 10-13, 2016 in Uganda. In the center is María Estela Barco Huerta, General Coordinator of Social and Economic Development of Indigenous Mexicans (DESMI), an IDEX partner.*

But the exchange also highlighted what works in transforming peoples' souls. Agroecology offers not just a set of food and fiber production techniques, but an ethos of how to steward the earth, and a foundation for a just transition towards healthy and equitable rural and urban communities.

Knowledge production centered in the lived experiences of people considered to be at the margins of society will shatter all our preconceived notions. This is an experience we try to offer change makers through the [IDEX Academy](#). This is necessary so that a new worldview can be created.

Indeed only then will liberation be possible.

