

Cohort 4 Comes Together for First Convening to Build Beloved Community

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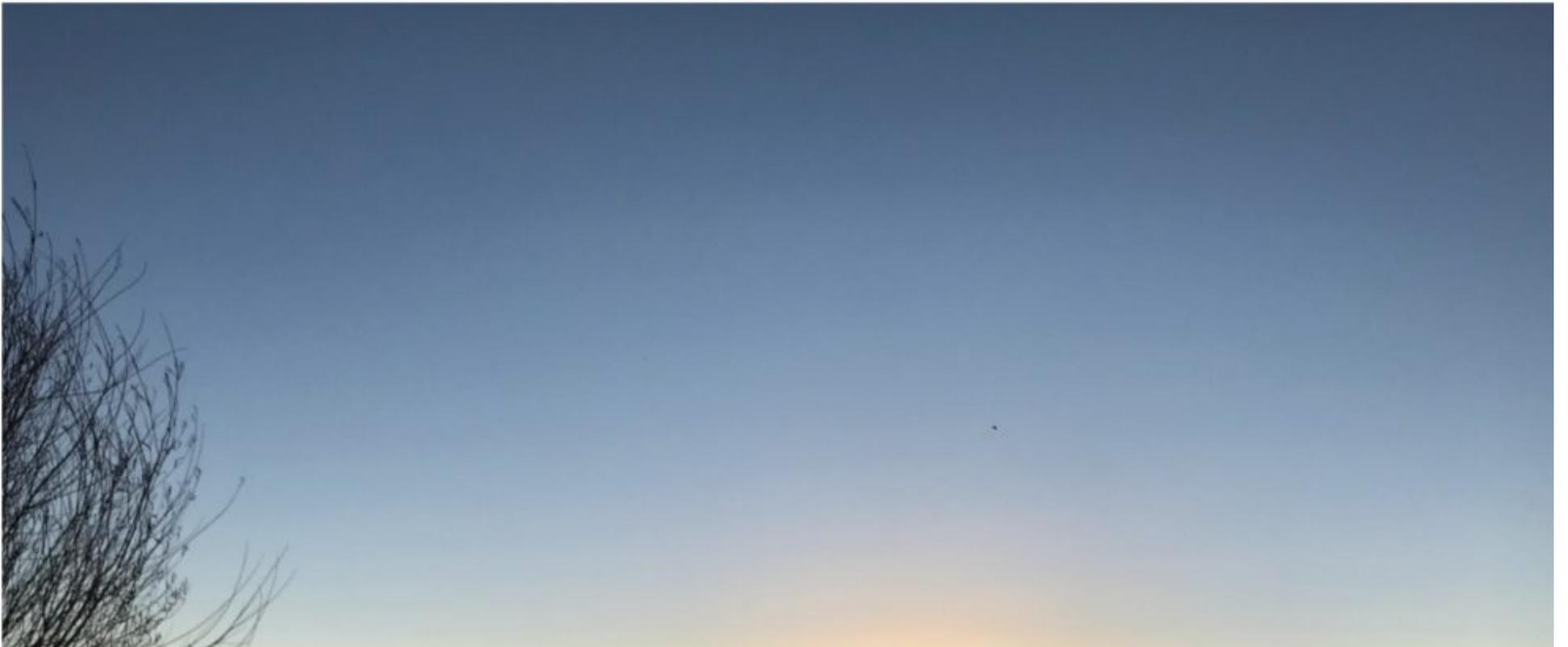
CO-DIRECTOR
MOVE TO END VIOLENCE

Originally Posted February 1, 2018 Share:



At the end of January, our incoming cohort gathered for the first convening of six that will happen over the next two years. Cohort 4 is an incredible group of individual leaders – and the powerful energy that was felt in the room by bringing together strong women of color was palpable. Our hope for this week was to begin building Beloved Community, a vision seeded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and authentic relationships based on our whole selves that build the trust needed to successfully leap into the unknown together.

In thinking about the start of Cycle 4, it was fitting that we gathered in New Mexico at the Santa Ana Pueblo, where the Tamaya people have inhabited the land since at least the late 1500s. As a Native Sovereign Nation, theirs is an incredible story of Indigenous resistance and resilience in the face of horrific violence.





Throughout our week together, we practiced Locating Self, a necessary practice to reconnect us to ourselves and our people, and building block to building deep relationships to others. Being in a place where people intimately and deeply know their land, their peoples, and their history was painful and challenging for those of us who were ripped from our lands and had ancestral memory forcibly erased, especially African Americans and refugees. We explored the power of reclaiming ancestral connection and healing practices, traditions all of us can access even if we don't know where we are from.

Another key part of building Beloved Community is to get out of our heads and into our hearts and spirits through music, movement and art. We breathed, moved, and danced together. We sang, hummed, and listened. We journaled, colored, and drew. We prayed, rested, and cared for ourselves. Join us by listening to Cohort 4's Playlist on Spotify!

Leaping into the unknown together also requires us to risk, disagree, hold each other accountable, and figure out ways forward after harm has happened. The cohort challenged MEV and invited all of us into dialogue about transphobia and cis privilege as harmful habits within our movements and how we move beyond biological essentialism and heteronormativity. We made commitments to solidarity practices, to challenging elders with respect, and to deep reflection.

We are grateful to many people in New Mexico for sharing their spirit, passion, and wisdom with us during the convening: Angel El from La Plazita Institute; Marian Naranjo of Honor Our Pueblo Existence (HOPE); Roxanne Swentzell of Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute and Tower Gallery; Nathana Bird of Tewa Women United; Chef Ray Naranjo; Lyla June Johnston; Pat McCabe; and the staff of the Poeh Cultural Center.

This was a powerful beginning to this cohort and a beautiful glimpse into what is possible in our movements when we come together in beloved community. Our next convening is in May and we can't wait to see what's next!

Want to integrate some of these practices into your own work?

• For Locating Oneself and other ways to practice racial equity, sign up for our virtual Racial Equity and Liberation (REAL) 6-Week

activities, and reminders for the six weeks of the series.

- To get started in building Beloved Community, check out our [Love Notes tool](#).
- To help motivate you to practice self-care, sign up for our virtual [21-Day Self-Care Challenge](#). It starts on the first Tuesday of every month with daily email prompts to help you connect to your heart, body, and spirit.