

Holding Simultaneity and Exploring Language Justice

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Originally Posted November 15, 2018 Share:

The third convening of [Cohort 4 Movement Makers](#) took place at the end of October and we are about halfway through this cycle. We gathered next to the healing waters of the Pacific Ocean just outside Los Angeles. The invitation for this convening was for each of us to step more powerfully into transformative leadership.



Cohort 4 Movement Makers, Faculty and Staff. Photo credit: Mary E Wyman



The healing waters of the Pacific Ocean just outside Los Angeles served as the backdrop of this convening.

We began by grounding in the land and communities we are inhabiting for the week. [The Tongva people](#) have been Indigenous to Los Angeles for over 7,000 years and they continue to fight for federal recognition. Today, this area is incredibly diverse and several of us who call Southern California home shared stories of growing up in South Central and in Little Saigon and of finding refuge here after the Salvadoran Civil War. We spoke of the contrast between being in one of the most progressive and prosperous states in the country, while Black communities continue to experience intense police brutality and displacement and farmworkers toil under inhumane conditions for poverty wages.

Acknowledging these contrasts from the get-go helped us with the liberation practice of “simultaneity” – the ability to hold multiple truths at the same time without seeing them as in competition with each other, or that one has to be right and the other has to be wrong. It is sometimes called “Yes and…” or “Both/And.” This practice can be difficult but is essential to interrupting violence. How do I authentically take responsibility for the fact that what I said hurt you, while still believing in the truth of what I said? How do I understand that all of us who are not Native American or forced here as slaves are settling on land that is not ours, while still believing that immigrants have a right to be in this country? How do we design solutions that honor both civil rights and tribal sovereignty?

Among the contrasts, we also found many places of common ground and shared experience. The cohort broke into groups to weave stories of their work: **Base Building & Organizing Approaches**, **Spirit & Faith in Movement Building**, **Anti-Criminalization & Mass Incarceration**, and **Organizing Immigrant & International Communities**. Fierce women of color shared stories of personal and collective trauma, of finding grounding and healing in our ancestors, of stepping deeper into leadership because our communities need it, of the clarity and hope they bring to their work. We saw ourselves in each other’s stories and felt more deeply seen.

We also stepped into what was a new experience for MEV: language justice. Many people involved with MEV have deep experience with language justice, but MEV as a program is very English dominant. Building off others who have led the way and what we have learned over the years, we are making a stronger commitment to creating English/Spanish bilingual spaces in the program and to further exploring how we can practice language justice, especially as we prepare for Cohort 4’s *Intercambio* in Guatemala next year. We partnered with [Antena Los Angeles](#), a language justice and language experimentation collaborative, to provide interpretation and to help us explore the ways we all use and have access to multiple languages. We look forward to continuing to learn and practice.

Being able to hold multiple truths at once, seeing ourselves in each other’s stories, and deepening our commitment to justice in all forms is especially needed in these volatile and violent times. This is how communities fighting for liberation and equity will make it through and women of color are at the forefront. We are deeply honored to fight alongside you all.

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

- Learn more about our core element of [Transformative Leadership Development](#) and get access to useful tools and perspectives.
- Learn more about racial equity and liberation practices like “Simultaneity” by signing up for our virtual [Racial Equity and Liberation \(REAL\) 6-Week Learning Series](#). You can choose which Monday you want to begin and you will receive automatic email prompts with resources, activities, and reminders for the six weeks of the series.

