

Farzana Khan and Nusrat Faizullah



RESOURCING RACIAL JUSTICE

An Experiment in
Mobilising and Liberating Resources
for Racial Justice in the Age of Pandemics

Cover image and artwork: B.Y. from Earth Liberation Studio

Supporting artwork for Racial Justice Awardees border design: Audrey Albert

Written by: Farzana Khan and Nusrat Faizullah

Design and layout: tiff webster (tiffmweb.com)

Supporting diagrams: Corbin LaMont (corbinlamont.com)

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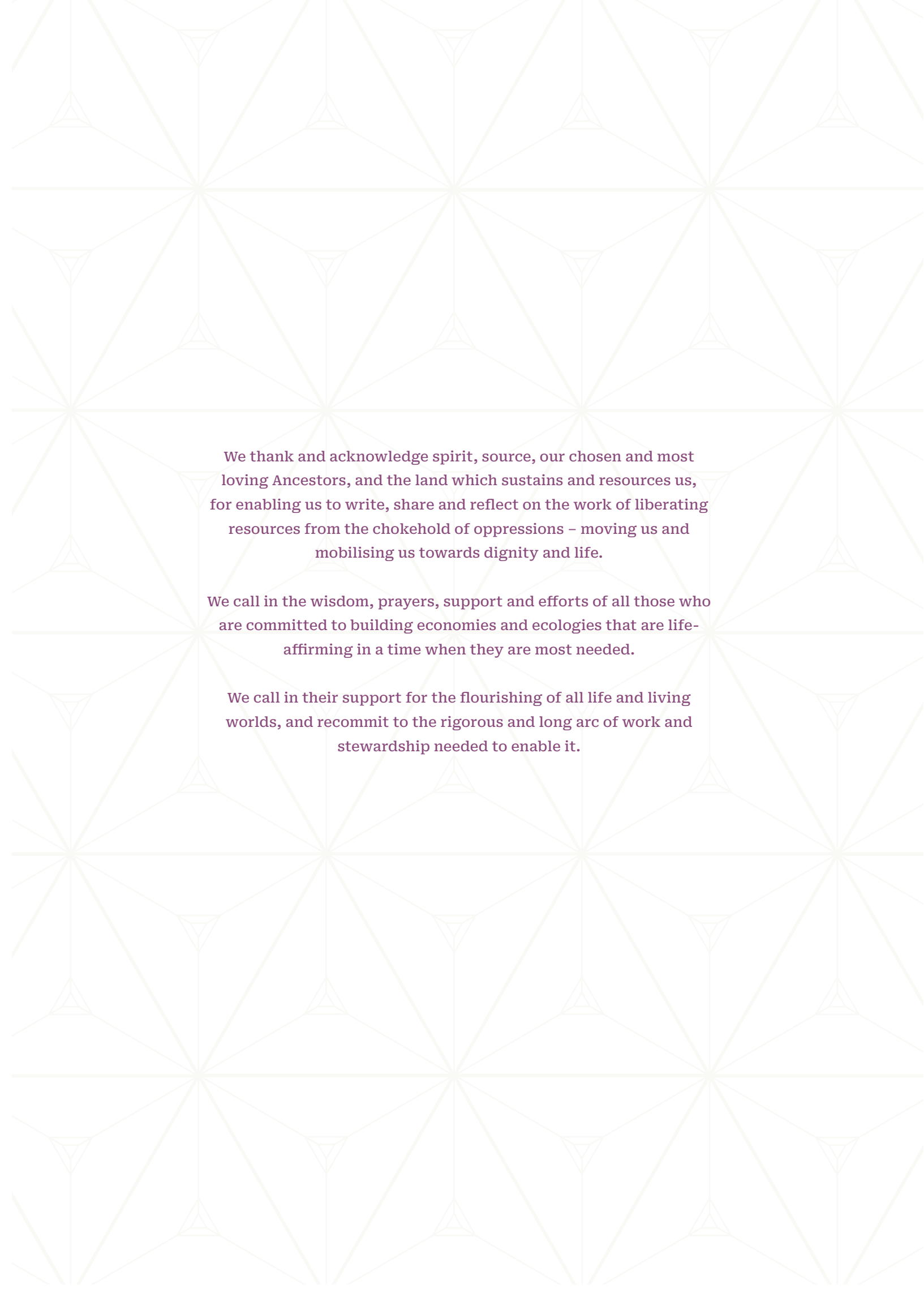
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resourcing

racial justice



We thank and acknowledge spirit, source, our chosen and most loving Ancestors, and the land which sustains and resources us, for enabling us to write, share and reflect on the work of liberating resources from the chokehold of oppressions – moving us and mobilising us towards dignity and life.

We call in the wisdom, prayers, support and efforts of all those who are committed to building economies and ecologies that are life-affirming in a time when they are most needed.

We call in their support for the flourishing of all life and living worlds, and recommit to the rigorous and long arc of work and stewardship needed to enable it.

We dedicate this guide to the spirit of resistance that carries us and moves through us, and to the force of life that is longing to be lived and invites each of us to more life, even in our resistance.

None of this work is possible without the drive and commitment of partners and peers who walk alongside us and are committed to the processes of change and transformation that these types of experiments require.

There are many to acknowledge and give thanks to. We uplift their presence here, and have included an extended and detailed gratitude and acknowledgement section ('What We Mean When We Say WE').

We call them "we" because we know that many of them have not only enabled this guide, but they will also continue to carry the work of Resourcing Racial Justice towards life, wherever they are placed and positioned.

Our work together is just beginning.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Farzana Khan (she/they) is a social sculptor and writer. Farzana is the co-founder and Executive Co-Director at Healing Justice London. Her practice works on building community health, repair and self-transformation rooted in disability justice, survivor work and trauma-informed practice working with communities of colour and other marginalised and underrepresented groups. Farzana has a background in youth and community organising, particularly focused on cultural work both in the UK and internationally. Farzana is the former creative and strategic director at Voices that Shake!, bringing together young people, artists and campaigners to develop creative

responses to social injustice. She ran this while working at Platform London, a climate and social justice organisation working across arts, education, research and activism. Farzana is a trustee of International Curatorial Forum and Stuart Hall Foundation. She is on the advisory board of Kids of Colour.



Nusrat Faizullah (she/her) is a strategist and ecosystem builder who works between the grassroots and mainstream structures to support them to tackle systemic injustice. Her work is concerned with: understanding and disrupting power, structural oppression and its relationship to identity, and nurturing leadership. She has worked with and advised many institutions including the National Lottery Community Fund, Lankelly Chase, Esmée Fairbairn, Blagrove Trust, Nike Sports for Good and Churchill Fellowship. She also works with many groups, collectives and organisations across areas including health, criminal justice, homelessness, LGBTQI+ rights, refugees and forced migration, and education. Nusrat was a teacher in the

first cohort of the Teach First programme and also developed a number of new models and education projects while working at the Young Foundation. Nusrat is also a mother, having had her first child Israr in 2022, in the middle of implementing Resourcing Racial Justice.

Farah AlHaddad's (she/they) work focuses on refugees and asylum seekers. Her previous role as Community and Grant Manager at RRJ sparked her interest in grant making, and she currently works with the Justice Together Initiative. Farah was awarded multiple scholarships, culminating in obtaining a MSc from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), specialising in Women, Peace and Security Studies. Her dissertation focused on men and masculinities among Syrian refugees. Farah is also a part of the Gaza Families Reunited Campaign, calling on the UK government to urgently create a Gaza Family Scheme for Palestinians from Gaza to reunite with loved ones in the UK. Farah is a member of an all-women's Dabké dance collective called "Hawiyya" [identity] which explores themes such as resistance, oppression, displacement, and social justice. Hawiyya has collaborated with, and learned from, El-Funoun Palestinian Dance Troupe, and has performed across the UK including at the Migration Matters Festival and at Bloomsbury Theatre.



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KEY GUIDES FOR THIS REPORT

We have included different types of content to support and illustrate this report. Please find the following keys as guides below:

“Quotes from community members”

Pull out quotes

**Glossary of expanded definition
of terms**

Case study

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ableism

The discrimination of, and social prejudice against, disabled people based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require “fixing” and defines people by their disability.

Awardees

The 58 individuals, collectives, groups and organisations that were resourced by Resourcing Racial Justice.

Climate Justice

A term for understanding how the causes and effects of climate change relate to concepts of justice, such as equality, historical responsibility and reparative justice. It highlights the adverse impacts of climate change on poor people and countries in the geopolitical South.

Colonialism

Colonialism is the process of invasion and theft of land and resources, death and subjugation of the original inhabitants, and destruction of original/Indigenous knowledges, languages and cultures.

Divestment

A socially responsible investing tactic to remove assets from a sector or industry based on moral objections to its business practices. It has historical roots in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

Economic Justice

A term for illustrating how an economy will be more successful if it is fair; prosperity and justice go hand-in-hand rather than in opposition to one another. An economy that builds the common good, meaning all the things that we share and value in common, from the natural environment through to public services, across all communities, regions and sectors of the economy, and across generations.

Global fascism

The rise of far-right forms of government around the world that embrace nationalism and the forceful suppression of any opposition. This includes the opposition of liberalism and democracy, and the belief that the state takes precedence over individual interests.



Global Majority

A collective term for people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the geopolitical South and/or have been racialised as “ethnic minorities”.

Hetero-patriarchy

A hierarchical society or culture dominated by a system of power and control that positions straight males as superior and normative in their expression of gender and sexuality. It emphasises that discrimination against women and LGBTQI+ people is derived from the same sexist social principle.

Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous peoples’ systems of observing and preserving the environment around them. It can provide insight into agroforestry, traditional medicine, biodiversity conservation, customary resource management, impact assessment, and natural disaster preparedness and response. These systems have taken generations to develop, and are crucial in maintaining the wellbeing of ecosystems around the world.

Liberation

A state of being grounded in one’s evolving identity, free movement and freedom from bias, imposed expectations, control and violence towards one’s place in the world, including the policing of it. Liberation is an ongoing process and practice of self-governance, accountability, responsibility, and transparency with oneself and within one’s community. It requires ongoing acknowledgement of: oppression in all its forms and on all levels of society, reparations, meaningful reconciliation directed by those targeted by oppression, and transformational changes on personal, positional, institutional and systemic levels.

Life-affirming

The approach and/or belief in centering and building towards things that enable humans and the more-than-human to survive and flourish. It is in opposition to the arrangement of systems and structures which lead to premature death through sickness, disabling and structural violence.

Marginalisation

A process of social, economic or political exclusion in which individuals and/or groups do not have full access to various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of the dominant group.

Neo-colonialism

A further development of capitalism that enables capitalist powers (both nations and corporations) to dominate subject nations through the operations of international capitalism (e.g. economic, political, cultural pressures) rather than by means of direct military or political control.

Oppression

Exercise of power and authority over another person(s) that devalues, undermines, marginalises and disadvantages.

Organised abandonment

Framed by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, organised abandonment (by capital and the state) refers to the intentional disinvestment from communities leading to the gradual disappearance of safe housing, reliable jobs, clean water, healthy food, and a social safety net, which, in turn, creates opportunities for privatised social services, redevelopment, and increased police presence and criminalisation as a way to fill the cracks of a compromised social infrastructure and maintain hegemonic social order.¹

Racial justice

A vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black and Global Majority people have the dignity, resources, power and self-determination to fully thrive.

Racial trauma

An experience of significant emotional pain, lasting discomfort or alteration to one's usual way of being or seeing the world, which causes difficulties as a result of exposure to racism or racial injustice.

Relational consciousness

A philosophy theory based on the direct and indirect connectedness of both our subconscious and conscious. Direct connectedness refers to the immediate and tangible connections we have with the world around us, while indirect connectedness refers to the more abstract and intangible connections that we may not immediately perceive.

Reparative justice

Rectifying and transforming systemic and structural injustices that were established by past injustices and crimes against humanity.

Settler colonialism

A form of colonialism in which settlers create societies that are distinct from the Indigenous population, and seek to control land and resources and establish their own economy and system of governance. An ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Slow violence

Suffering, degradation and pain inflicted upon people and communities by impersonal, dispersed forces; spread across time and space, with no defined point of impact, but nevertheless the result of a perpetrator or perpetrators' actions. The term slow violence itself was coined by Rob Nixon in his 2011 book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.²

1 Gilmore, R.W. (2007) *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, Berkeley: University of California Press

2 Nixon, R. (2011) *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Harvard University Press



Soma

“A being in its wholeness.” It is a living, changing, dynamic organism in connection with our bodies, earth, land, spirit and each other.³

State violence

Violence perpetrated at the hands of, or on behalf of, the state. This can include police violence, military violence, the types of punishments and uses of control by schools, etc.

White supremacy

A historical system of power privileging white people’s bodies, knowledge, and labour, maintained through the exploitation and repression of people of colour or those racialised.

Glossary contributors include Guilaine Kinouani (Race Reflections), Creative Interventions Toolkit, Lena Mohamed, Staci K. Haines, and Nkem Ndefo.

3 Definition of soma by Staci K. Haines

HOW TO TRAVEL WITH THIS GUIDE

We have organised this body of work to hold some key premises and foundational understandings from which we/it move(s). Please take a moment to read this section to support you moving through this guide.

The first thing to hold is that this is not the piece we intended to write. We arrived at this piece, which was writing us more than we were writing it. Through deep deliberation, soul work, grappling, maturing and transforming, we reckon with what it really means to resource racial justice. At the heart of this, we were aware there is no Resourcing Racial Justice without the end of capitalism and colonisation. This work has to be even more deeply committed to an anticapitalist and anticolonial positioning. So do we.

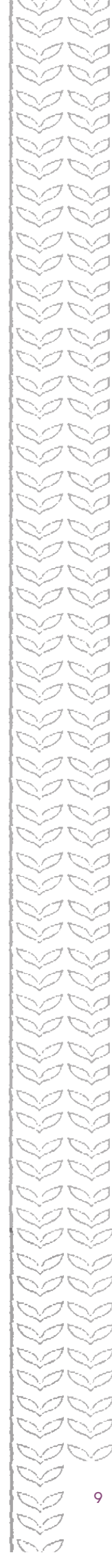
Equitable Open Sourcing

This text, particularly in the first half, speaks to Resourcing Racial Justice (RRJ) and the findings around it in a broad and generalised way. Much of the more detailed work and transference of learning has taken place in hands-on applied learning workshops, training and steering spaces specifically for Black and **Global Majority** people, and will continue to happen in that way. We recognise that information – especially when it comes to racial justice – frequently gets diluted, misapplied or co-opted, and the nuance and intelligence gets lost. To support the work to travel well and with more integrity, we have shared a broader scope of our work rather than the nuanced fixtures.

Practice Over Performativity

We want to nurture a space of non-performative learning that encourages deep study, reckoning and avoiding the quick and simple answers that make us bypass transformation. Capitalism enshrines instancy and urgency culture. Deep transformation takes time. We want to move us away from the tick-box, copy-and-paste, “here’s five things you can do” acts of solidarity. Instead, we invite us to apply rigour; to unlearn oppressive systems requires us to grapple with the hard things over and over again.

In the second part of the guide, we share strategies, ideas and concepts that are being built in real time. Many of us who are trying to build alternatives, while also dismantling the status quo, know that we’re simultaneously learning and unlearning, and finding language that both speaks to now and also gestures towards the future and past.



This is a really big undertaking where the language isn't slick or polished because the work isn't, and masking this can invisibilise the labour and rigour it demands from us. So we aim to think and feel out loud, and build transparency around our drafting and the sketchings – “pencil work” – required.⁴

To support your journey with us, we encourage you to first spend some time with the terms of the glossary, particularly with any words or phrases that are unfamiliar. Please be patient and generous as you grapple with the guide. It's not intended to be something that is digestible or consumable. Take time with it, step away, read it in parts. Query, challenge, think on and come back to it. We are inviting ourselves and you to be in a practice with us of thinking, feeling and grappling, heart and soul deep, around these things that are supposed to transform us and change us. Don't be shy to take some time away, integrate, flick through parts, and sit with what resonates.

Finally, many of our Indigenous and spiritual traditions come from deeply oral traditions, and therefore, intentionally, there are parts of this guide intended to be read out loud and discussed. Creating space to discuss difficult subject matters encourages more of us to shape and find our stake in them; it's how we take the individualising of ideas and make them collective practice and common sense. Please take time to discuss what lands or doesn't with friends, peers and colleagues. It is more important that this guide helps us mobilise and delve deeper and lean into the questions, than reconciles us into the stasis that comes from premature solutionism or fixer culture.

Experimenting Out Loud

We set out to build RRJ as a responsive effort, where we mobilised to crises. We call RRJ an experiment to offer grace towards those of us who are trying to **make alternatives against the backdrop of everything trying to unmake us**. We need the spaciousness of iteration, adjusting and amending to be able to keep trying. Many things worked and many things didn't. So in the spirit of experiments, we expand and extend the generosity and compassion we need to grow to work in the place of unknowns. To explore and discover with curiosity and dedication. To not give up at each hurdle, injury or barrier, because there are so many. To honour that there is no blueprint, just the maps we make together through our experimenting.

If It Is Not Soulful, It Is Not Strategic⁵

This phrase we borrowed from Movement Generation captures how we are working through/out, reconnecting with a politic and practice outside of capitalism and coloniality which relies on destroying the presence of soul and spirit in order to dominate and subjugate. We write this piece forefronting and reinstating spirit and soul as part of our strategy for the endgame of capitalism and colonisation we feel is nigh and inevitable.

4 Finney, N. (2006) Inquisitor and Insurgent, Black Women with Pencils Sharpened, Meridians Vol. 7. P214-221, Duke University Press

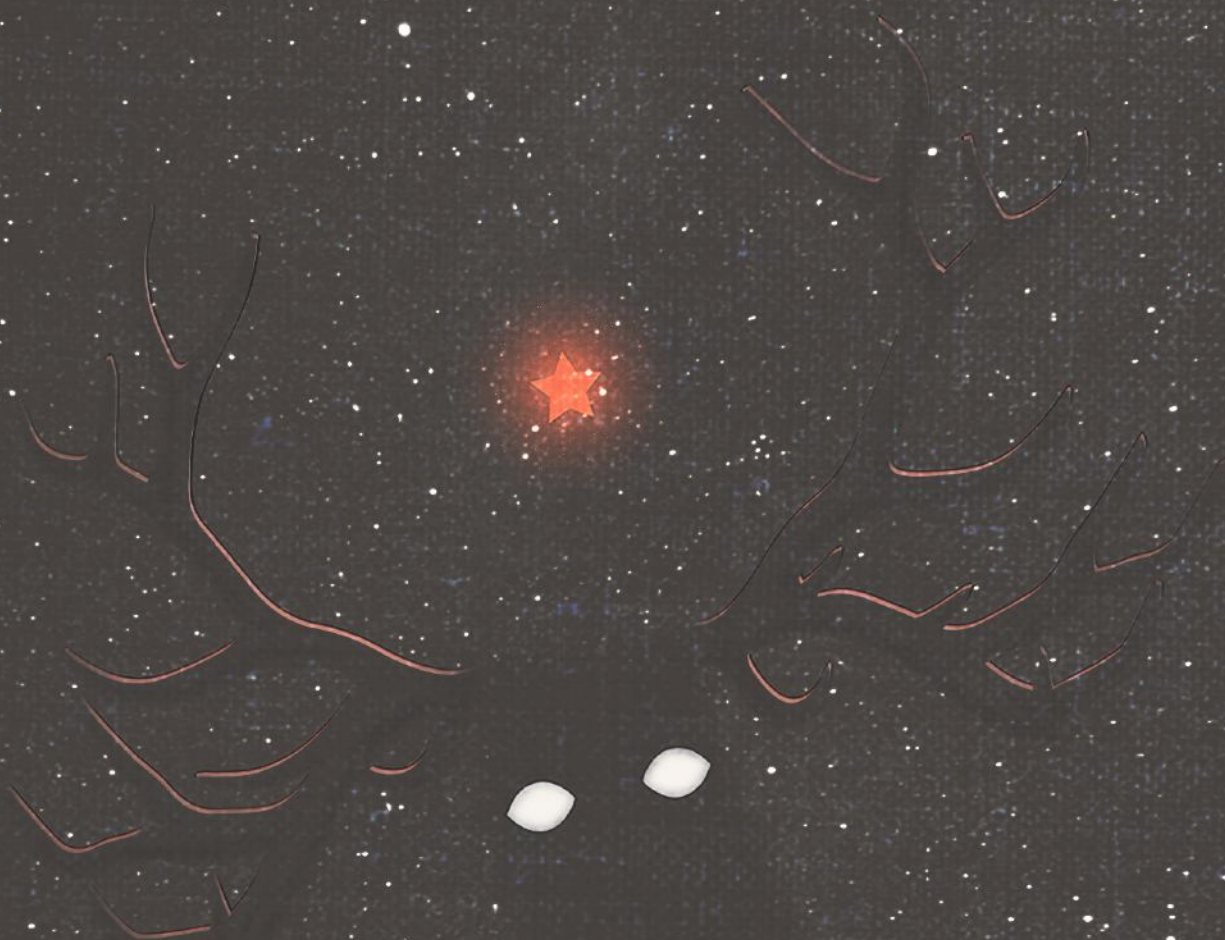
5 movementgeneration.org

You can understand spirit to be Divinity, God, Allah, Life, whatever you resonate with. We offer Chicana feminist Gloria E. Anzaldúa's articulation on spirit:

**The spiritual is a deep sense of belonging and participation in life.
Spirit represents the zest for living—the energizing power for life. It is the inner voice, the
electrical charge, that says, “I’m going to do it, I will do it.”⁶**

With this zest for living and aliveness, we invite you to begin.





a prayer

for the end of capitalism,

for the restoration of earth, and its people

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO RESOURCE RACIAL JUSTICE?

Executive Summary

In 2020, the Resourcing Racial Justice fund (RRJ) succeeded in rocking the philanthropic sector out of its complacency, showing what it took as individuals, institutions and society to address racial injustice. When it comes to change, a famously glacial sector was able to respond by directing more money to racial justice work, becoming more flexible about who and how it funded, and to whom it entrusted decision-making.

This report comes at another key moment for philanthropy as, once again, the focus on racial injustice is fading, and we're seeing a reframing of needs that seemingly deliberately ignores the intersectional and systemic nature of racial injustice. Have the lessons not been learnt?

This report serves as a critique of racial capitalism and a reminder that to radically fund for racial justice, we must, as individuals, first examine how we are connected to the issues, and how and why systems of oppression continue to thrive. What are the transformations needed for individuals and societies to be able to envision a place of justice for all?

Amid the messages spelled out in the report, there are several markers that have been laid down. For instance:

- Being accountable to future generations in how we construct our relationship to resources
- Building collective movements for justice with Black and Global Majority people
- Rebalancing inequity through wealth redistribution and reparations
- Re-establishing human connection in the face of the theories, forces and narratives that seek to individualise and engender competition

This is an unrestrainedly visceral report that, in part, charts the embodied experience of the authors and the arc of transformation needed. While the report can be read solely in the context of RRJ, the authors are challenging readers to see beyond that and to position themselves in something much bigger. They ask us to see the global interconnection of the struggles ahead, and to acknowledge how entrenched ideas, norms, values and systems subvert what's needed to meet those challenges.

– *Jenny Oppenheimer, Edge Funders Alliance Board Member*

when we take it all back,
we will see,



there has always been enough for everyone.

2. WHY ARE WE WRITING THIS AND WHO IS THIS FOR?

We write this report as a bridge and a prayerful offering to everybody in the work of making justice and seeding liberation. It is for our peers, especially Black and Global Majority peoples who navigate dangerous arenas, whose safety is made even more vulnerable when they vocalise and make visible these matters. We understand the deep risk and responsibility that our people hold when doing this work.

These are critical times with the escalating and avalanching crises, ranging from climate injustice to **settler colonialism** and **global fascism**, alongside increasing policing and securitisation of dissent against these same structures of oppression. Any of us challenging these structures and systems are faced with heightened censorship, surveillance and state violence. Philanthropy is entangled with these threats as a structural player in our society.

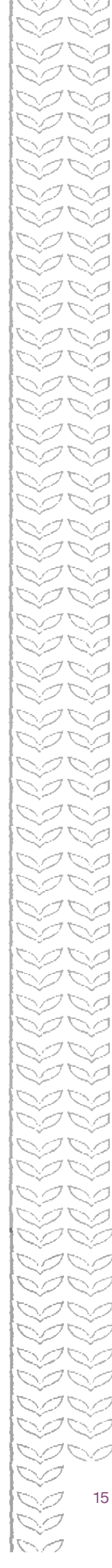
The work of RRJ is neither new nor singular, yet the shape-shifting nature of **white supremacist neo-colonial ableist hetero-patriarchy**⁷ means that we are always in need of strategies that attend to the persistent and adapting manifestations of these forces coming at us from every angle. We, therefore, locate ourselves and our work within the multifaceted continuum of resourcing racial justice and build towards a broader, interdependent vision of economic, social and **climate justice**.

Philanthropy is an extension of racial capitalism and colonisation, implicating us to do the work of **reparative justice** in resource generation, allocation and distribution too.

There is no way to talk about RRJ without acknowledging how it was made possible by the tremendous labour in organising and resistance led by Black and Global Majority peoples from the grassroots, supported by parallel efforts ranging from community organising across struggles and global movements to our allies in UK philanthropy. We are emerging from and embedded in this. Our report extends itself as a contribution towards this work. It is an invitation, provocation and practice on what we must grapple with to appropriately commit to **economic justice** and **liberation** in our lifetimes.

We understand there is no one way or strategy to do the work of racial justice, let alone one way to resource it. As one of the first ever explicitly racial justice funds in the UK, mobilising outside of traditional funding models and infrastructure, we were non-funders trying to build with no blueprint. Our sharing and open-sourcing aims to offer the necessary learnings and reflections from this experiment, for both our movements and liberation visions. The primary intention of this report is for our learning to be built upon, and for future experiments to be made more robust and sustainable.

7 Broadening and adapting concept by bell hooks of “Imperialist White-Supremacist Hetero-Patriarchy” to describe the intersecting oppressions



Our times demand experiments that mobilise resources quickly for pop-up interim infrastructures, combined with long-term structural justice. We need these forthcoming experiments, both short-term and long-term, to braid our values and visions with the context and conditions we are set to transform.

2.1 ACCOUNTABILITY WITH RACIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

Philanthropic practices are ones of accumulation, gatekeeping, powerhoarding and division, despite presenting as the altruistic distribution of wealth and resources. Those of us coming from movement and grassroots backgrounds understand this and recognise that it is incompatible with justice and liberation work. Meanwhile, liberation and justice work is complex, messy and rigorous. We hold that trying to do any type of justice work across these two arms presents us with a complex configuration of tensions that must be worked with and through for our broader ambition of social transformation and economic, climate and social justice.

When working between philanthropy and social justice work, we are inevitably confronted with the fractures, contradictions and entanglements in this work. They have made us deeply reckon with the way oppressive forces limit our choices, assemble our contexts and become internalised by each of us. Therefore, when we undergo processes of racial justice, those same tensions fragment unified movements because we become polarised under pressure and amidst scarcity and fragility caused by dominating systems. This is at the heart of how our movements for justice become unsustainable and sever us from each other.

Our collective sustainability relies on us growing the capacity to stay and move through these sites of rupture, change and vulnerability in order to disentangle us from oppression. When we are able to move together, holding tensions and contradictions, we will have grown the ability to hold each other and our humanness as we endeavour to do this deeply transformational work. We can get aligned and be effective in how we bring about the scale of paradigmatic alternatives needed for life beyond capitalism and philanthropy. We can ally with each other for a more powerful and robust economic transformation.

2.2 WHY ARE WE WRITING THIS?

As we were co-creating our learnings to share and open-source, we kept interrogating why we were doing this. In service of what? The reverberation from our peers across movements and the field was to ensure we did something that helped us “meet the moment”⁸ just as RRJ did for many of us. This same principle guides our writing and reflections.

We have been writing this for over a year and a half. During this time, we have continued to see and feel the consequences of aforementioned oppressive forces: in mass-engineered austerity; the genocides on Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Haiti and West Papua; as well as the continued ecological devastation that is escalating across Global Majority (geopolitical South) countries.

Amidst this onslaught of overt and **slow violence**,⁹ we find it even more critical to use this report as an opportunity to explore how we might skill up so we can attend and/or meet the moment. Therefore you will not find much description on the ins and outs of RRJ – this does not feel as useful right now. Instead you will find distilled learnings, reflections and resources to help us build a more fleshed-out political analysis and deeper strategic insight to strengthen our movement-making muscle.¹⁰

We have included our evaluation and learning of impact on awardees and our funder accountability process for transparency and common learning out loud.

We take this as an opportunity to say what needs to be said in order to do what needs to be done.

8 Shared with us by Staci K. Haines, author of *The Politics of Trauma: Somatics, Healing, and Social Justice* and *Healing Sex: A Mind Body Approach to Healing Sexual Trauma* and co-founder, and prior executive director, of Generative Somatics

9 Nixon, R. (2011)

10 Available on resourcingracialjustice.org

2.3 DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITIES THROUGH DEMYSTIFYING PHILANTHROPY

The basic confrontation which seemed to be colonialism versus anti-colonialism, indeed capitalism versus socialism, is already losing its importance. What matters today, the issue which blocks the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity will have to address this question, no matter how devastating the consequences may be.

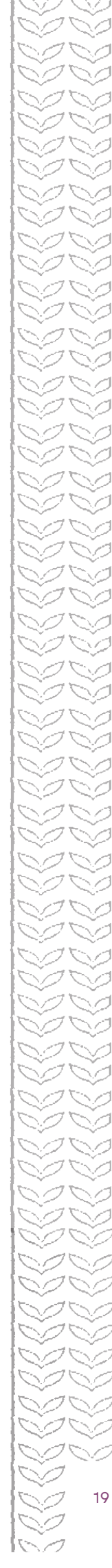
– Frantz Fanon¹¹

Strategically building a movement that can move resources towards justice and liberation requires all of us. Historically and concurrently, Black and Global Majority people are kept out of decision making around wealth and capital, despite how much wealth is generated from Black and Brown peoples' oppression to this day. Money is made to feel shameful and “icky” because it has been so violently used against us, and relentless profiteering has established and grown the architectures of systemic oppression we are trying to dismantle.

*Our skin is already in the game,
but we are not taken as serious civic players.*

We are not advocating for the accumulation of wealth but the strategic mobilisation of money for collective good. This means we cannot be left out of philanthropic decisions about how money is best utilised during the off-ramping from capitalism in the long term, especially when we need resources to respond to the enormous social and climate injustices that have accrued from centuries of oppressive economic structures that philanthropy is part of. The revolution will not be funded *and* we also hold that we can strategically be in the work of reparative redistribution and investment of resources to where it is most needed to drive a vision of social, economic and climate justice.

11 Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press



Currently within civic society, the less mainstream and more marginalised a group is, the less their infrastructures are supported by state resources, and it is largely philanthropic or charitable wealth resourcing those social infrastructure and services en masse. These become civic provisions that are lifelines for some of the most impacted and frontline communities, as flagged by the Ubele report.¹² What this means is that we have some of the most vulnerable people exhaustingly upholding civil society, when it should be resourced from an alternative structural intervention – one that allows us to operate on a more scaled and sustained level that supports distributed and localised self-governing infrastructures. We can only do this if philanthropy and the funding world reckon with the solutions and strategies we have amidst our communities as deeply purposeful and aligned with what needs to happen to bring about contextually rigorous propositions.

At present, our insights and geniuses are seen as remedies or vitamins to malnourished bodies, rather than the deep organising principles that structure our collective body and orient us towards the worlds we long for, safeguarded in the hands and hearts of those closest to the ground. In other words, this requires us to be deep stakeholders in how money is distributed and invested. The philanthropic world still only reflects our voices on a surface level, meaning trickle-down structures continue to fail to create any substantive materialisation of life-giving social infrastructure and services. We continue to un-meet each other through this economic process muddied by capitalism, extended through philanthropy and committed to disappearing the wayfinders of stewarding public resources for common good.

12 Murray, K. (2020), Impact of COVID-19 on BAME community and voluntary organisations, The Ubele Initiative. Available at: ubele.org/research-and-report/impact-of-covid-19-on-bame-community-and-voluntary-organisations

2.4 AN INVITATION AND PRACTICE TOWARDS LIFE-AFFIRMING ECONOMICS

Money and resources are always important, but a new vision and new values cannot be bought. And without at least a rudimentary critique of the capitalist culture that consumes us, even reparations can have disastrous consequences.

Imagine if reparations were treated as start-up capital for black entrepreneurs who merely want to mirror the dominant society.

What would really change?

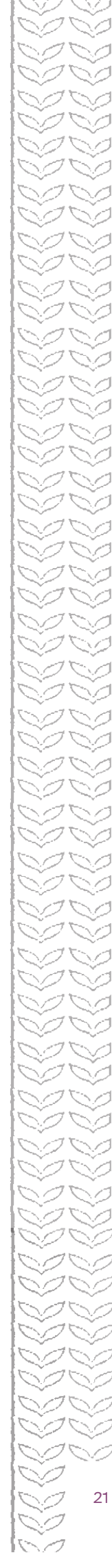
- Robin D.G. Kelley¹³

In order to have truly transformed economies that affirm life and the living worlds, we need to remember our relationship to resources. Even the word “resource” feels tainted like something we extract and transact. We have misused resources so much that we do not know how to be in right relationship with anything. To be in right relationship means finding the balance between give and take, being in reciprocity and supporting “mutual flourishing”.¹⁴ This is a fundamental shift in the hierarchical domination ideology that humans – specifically white, male, able-bodied humans – have organised themselves by. It is re-establishing us as right-sized with all of the world and its materials, which are not just for consumption and depletion and accumulation. They are for us to share and to create more life with a generative economics, a cyclical economics, a life-affirming economics.

To help us transition the current fatalising economic system we are living in, we have to find ourselves simultaneously un-armouring the logics of competition, scarcity, dismembering, and over-intellectualisation that we have internalised while also practising new ways of being with one another. Ways that foster and sustain more generative cyclical economies and our capacities of collaboration, creativity, trust and resource-sharing will be critical. Yet this capacity, which lives inside us, diminishes in moments of pressure and scarcity.

13 Kelley, R.D.G. (2002), *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, Freedom Press Books,

14 Kimmerer, R. W. (2020)

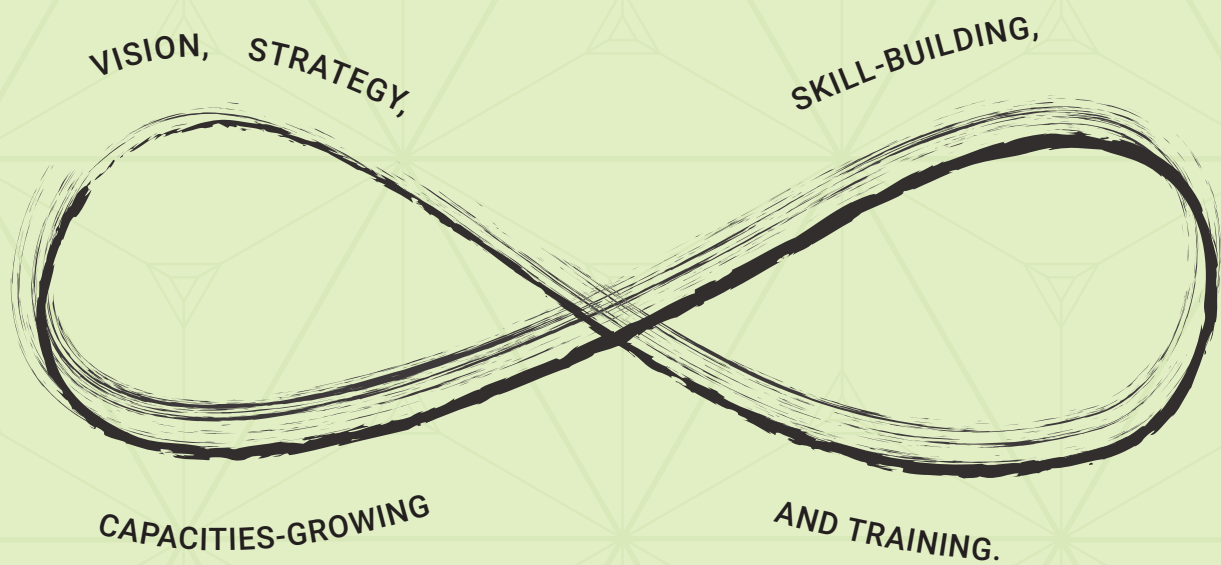


The reality of our resource-stretched and war-torn globe is that the categories in which we put people—legal or illegal, refugee or economic migrant, black or white—determine survival. We struggle for ground and bread and fresh water. We draw down the gates, pull up the drawbridges. We pray and pack in for a place on the freedom train—which grinds to a halt when “they” climb aboard. We take each lost life and stack it as a win or a loss for “our” people. All lives do not matter when we must sort the dead by sides.

- Patricia J. Williams¹⁵

This means our work building resource justice and forefronting race has to grapple with the transformation processes that grow our capacities to stay collaborative, creative, trusting and generous under pressure. We have to train and become skilled at unlearning the default capitalism that makes us reflexively extractive, transactional and exploitative. This includes how we transition within our current contexts and conditioning, as our choices and reflexes are often paradoxical; they don’t always line up with our values. We have to keep shifting the landscape/ conditions that shape our choices, so we can have better choices that reflect our values and can choose them and so on and so on and so on. The launching pad we keep arriving at within RRJ is how to transform the context and conditions of this capitalist system, which philanthropy is a part of, while also skilling ourselves up to be able to transform the context and conditions appropriately. What contextual conditioning and embodied competencies will be needed for a truly different world that affirms life over profit and property?

Our work building resource justice and forefronting race has to grapple with the transformation processes that grow our capacities to stay collaborative, creative, trusting and generous under pressure.



BI-DIRECTIONAL FEEDBACK LOOP

For us, it is a bi-directional feedback loop that requires vision, strategy, skill-building, capacities-growing and training. After all, what we are calling for is a practice of a new economics, that is beyond profit-mongering and towards the deep value and harmonising exchange between all that is life-affirming and alive.

2.5 WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY WE

We write this report in solidarity with and for people like us grappling with the deep implications of injustice. It is easy to fragment ourselves just as oppression has trained us to through divide and conquer – making us live in social constructs such as race, class and gender. Yet, even with all its rupturing and dehumanisation through social categorising and hierarchies, it cannot separate the way in which our lives are interconnected and interdependent. While we forefront Black and Global Majority people as the first recipients of our learning and labour so we can keep building with each other, we also cannot escape that others who have “othered” us are necessary components in the work of liberation and liberating resources.

Our first “we” is Black and Global Majority peoples.

Our second “we” is our Black and Global Majority peoples in movement and grassroots, whose solutions and strategies are stirring up new images for what life could be and how we could live it with dignity, justice and deep love for each other and the living worlds.

Our third “we” is Black and Global Majority peoples who are in philanthropy and funders who exist in this world for the sole purpose of transferring and redistributing resources towards more just and equitable futures and worlds.

Our final “we” is our white allies who are ready and prepared to take bold risks, undergo deep unlearning of white supremacy, and shoulder the risks and responsibilities that this sector produces and participates in.

While we have preferred to sequence and forefront our “we” in this order of prioritisation, we are also not so naive as to believe that “all skin folk are kin folk” and that sometimes our bravest and most courageous allies will be the most unlikely ones. We also hold that white supremacy and capitalism has been internalised by all of us. So we keep our eyes, hearts and spirits open for the brave ones to show up right beside us. This is our “we”: the ones who are moving in the direction of collective liberation and the liberation of capital. This is the “we” that we need for our times.

We can go far alone but we always go further together

- Sufina Ahmad¹⁶

Because we wanted to go further with RRJ, we of course emerged out of a vast “we”: an ecosystem and generational legacy of people who enabled us to steward this emergency pandemic response and experiment. We give deep thanks and gratitude to all the people who shape and shaped RRJ from its inception and all those who prayed and fought for a time when we could disrupt white supremacy and respond to our communities in the way in which RRJ was able to. A million pounds is not a lot, considering the 80 billion pounds in UK philanthropy, but as racialised people who have been denied our wealth (monetary and beyond), we understand the sacredness of every provision and the impact that even a small amount of funding can make. We take it seriously and we honour all those who joined us in this serious task. We want to extend and offer deep thanks to:

Our preliminary founders and co-conspirators that spurred on RRJ and initiated it: Derek A. Bardowell, Nusrat Faizullah, Farzana Khan, Jenny Oppenheimer, Baljeet Sandhu.

Background initiators from the aftermath of the Interdependence Festival, bringing together philanthropy around climate justice as initiated by Thirty Percy Foundation and Farzana Khan from which we gathered our initial founding members: Guppi Bola, Nusrat Faizullah, Tatiana Garavito, Imandeep (Immy) Kaur, Farzana Khan, Nonhlanhla Makuyana, Selina Nwulu, Kennedy Walker (May-September 2020).

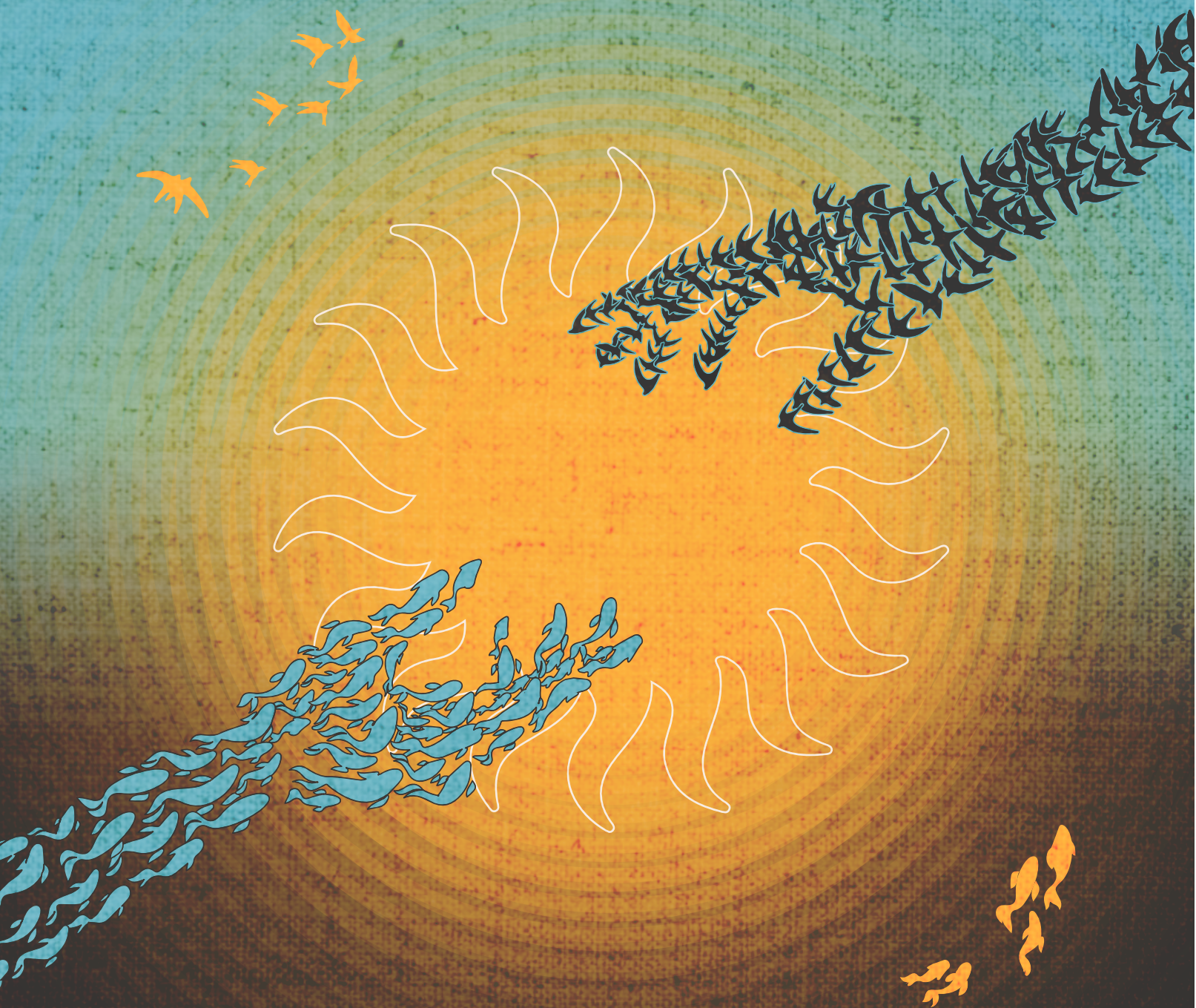
The operating and organisational team led by Nusrat and Farzana, supported by Farah AlHaddad, somatic practitioner and lead Staci K. Haines, and independent evaluator Neela Doležalová, including longtime funding partners who formed a self organising group as part of a funder accountability process designed by RRJ, including John Ellerman Foundation, Lankelly Chase, Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation and Thirty Percy Foundation. Particular gratitude and acknowledgement goes to Sufina Ahmad, Geraldine Blake, Diana Clarke, Nikki Clegg, Julian Corner, Jen Hookes, Christine Oliver and Jenny Oppenheimer.

We also want to give special thanks to elders (not in age, but in practice and experience) in the field who have been shifting the tectonic plate of philanthropy for time to un-grid us from its chokehold, including but not limited to Yvonne Field, Marai Larasi, Derek A. Bardowell, Imandeep Kaur, and Indy Johar. As well as individuals who have been in the background supporting, testing and experimenting with new modalities of what philanthropy could look like in service of justice: Future Foundations UK (FFUK), Baobab Foundation, Project Tallawah, Paulette Amadi, Kamna Muralidharan and many, many others.

And of course our deepest gratitude to activist movement folk who rallied around us when we launched RRJ, gave us messages of support and helped anchor us when we were navigating such a hostile field and environment. We acknowledge and uplift the expansive movements and peoples driving racial justice in the UK, including the 1,400 plus groups, collectives, organisations and individuals who applied to RRJ, as well as the 58 awardees to whom we redistributed funding. Thank you for your trust, embrace and ongoing work for our collective liberations. Your support helped us stay accountable to the mission of Resourcing Racial Justice. You were the why, what and who that we kept returning to, to centre ourselves in this work.

This is for you, this is for us.

all we will have is each other



*which as it turns out
is all we will need*

RACIAL JUSTICE AWARDEES: WHERE WE REDISTRIBUTED RESOURCES TO

Our cherished thanks go to the incredible awardees that have been part of RRJ. Many we got to know very intimately and some we didn't get to know as closely amidst the changing and stressful pandemic we are navigating. Our awardees, as you will see, span a vast arena of racial justice work. They range from political interventions, community organising, resisting state violence, arts, health, food provisions, education, culture and providing direct support to frontline communities. We see, in the varied breadth of work, that there are many leverage points and strategies needed for how porous racial injustice is and how multifaceted our strategies must be to overturn it. Please take a moment to learn about our peers in racial justice; they deserve to be amplified, uplifted and invested in, alongside the approximately 1,400 other applicants that we were unable to resource that are out there doing great work.

These profiles were submitted at the initial stage of the award. Please look up their work for updated bios and to learn more about these incredible organisations, collectives and individuals. Note that we are unable to profile all awardees here due to safeguarding around visibility.

Supporting Individuals Awards

Ayo Akingbade

ayoakingbade.com

A British Nigerian artist, director and writer born and based in London, their films deal with power, urbanism and stance.

Kay Adekunle Rufai

universoulartist.com/smiling-boys-project

Kay runs the S.M.I.L.L.E-ing Boys Project to challenge the stereotypes of Black teenagers. The project challenges institutions and political discourse in the media that target young boys.

Jennifer Owusu Adjei

Instagram: [@neara.health](https://www.instagram.com/neara.health)

Doctor Jennifer runs ChatHerBox with Doctor Remi Mogeke, two Black female doctors in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology. ChatHerBox (now known as Neara Health) supports Black women to make informed choices about their care and move away from medical paternalism.

Audrey Albert

audreyalbert.com

Audrey is a young photographer and artist whose research-led practice focuses around the themes of forced displacement, migration, memories, identity, community and culture.

Amanda Smith

maternityengagement.uk

Amanda Smith is the Founder and Director of Maternity Engagement Action (MEA) CIC, an organisation dedicated to empowering the pregnancy, birth, and postnatal experiences of Black African, Caribbean and Mixed Heritage women. MEA supports the wellbeing of Black women during the perinatal phase so they can experience better maternal outcomes.

Prema Sandy

linktr.ee/preMasandy

Prema is a community builder and a mind body health advocate, passionate about living an authentic life through wholistic teachings. Hosting gatherings and events for young girls and women.

Miranda Armstrong

mirandaarmstrong.com

Miranda is a writer who will turn her doctoral research with Black single mothers into a socio-political non-fiction book for the general reader. It will speak back to racist and misogynist claims about the single mothering of Black women.

Diana Yeh

dianayeh.com

Diana is an academic and activist focusing on challenging structural and systemic racial inequalities through postcolonial, feminist and intersectional approaches that involves collaborating with

and co-producing works with communities outside the academy in relation to racial justice.

Ishah Jawaid

X/twitter: @WOCazadi

Ishah has a background in the violence against women and girls and migrants rights sector. After 19 years of working as a practitioner and campaigner, she recognised the need to step away from frontline trauma work. Reflecting on her experiences, Ishah realised that transformative spaces were needed where Women of Colour (WOC) could come together and heal from collective trauma.

Angelica Udueni

X/twitter: @audueni

Angelica is an anti-racist writer, researcher, educator and organiser whose work looks at the intersection of racial and disability justice, and the role schools and education play in reproducing injustice. Angelica is the founding director of Embracing Difference, which amplifies Black and neurodivergent voices.

Christine Bramwell

<https://soundlikechaos.com/Christine-Bramwell-1>

Christine is an artist, producer and researcher who is highly committed to their own healing and the healing of others in their community through movement, sound and more.

Emergency and Recovery Awards

Fringe of Colour

fringeofcolour.co.uk

A multi-award-winning Scotland-based platform dedicated to supporting Black and Brown people/People of Colour at arts festivals, as artists, workers and audience members.

LGBT Unity Glasgow

lgbtunity.org

A community group of refugees and asylum seekers which offers mutual emotional and mental health support to fight against racism and homophobia. They also offer support to overcome barriers in their asylum cases.

Mentek Foundation

Mentek is dedicated to meeting the needs of those with mental health and substance misuse needs from Black and ethnic communities. Mentek aims to provide integrated support for Users and Care in community settings.

Lesbian Immigration Support Group

lisg.uk

A support group that aims to provide practical and emotional support to lesbian and bisexual women based in Greater Manchester, who are either seeking asylum in the UK, or who are refugees.

Justness

justness.net

An Edinburgh-based charity, working towards addressing the root causes of racial and refugee homelessness through transitional accommodation, education and job training.

Care Link West Midlands

carelinkwestmidlands.org.uk

A charity that supports the refugee community from French-speaking Central Africa living in West Midlands, through mental health support as well as youth and education activities.

Granby Community Mental Health Group - Mary Seacole House

maryseacolehouse.com

A mental health charity and resource service set up to offer support and advice in emotional and practical matters, primarily for BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic and Refugees) communities across Merseyside.

We Are Here UK

we-are-here.co.uk

An artist-led and run platform that aims to provide an open platform for discussion around what it means to be British, led by women and non-binary people of colour.

Rising Arts Agency

rising.org.uk

A social enterprise which aims to support Bristol's underrepresented young people aged 16-30 to affect wider social change through the arts.

Manchester Congolese Organisation (MaCO)

facebook: manchestercongoleseorganisation

A charity that works with the Congolese community and other local BAME groups in Manchester to enable them to reconnect and build their lives to achieve their full potential as well as contribute to their local community.

African and Caribbean Women's Centre

africab.org

A charity set up to provide practical support to BAME women and girls affected by poverty, domestic violence and isolation in Bury, Greater Manchester.

Sahir House

sahir.org.uk

A charity based in Merseyside that provides support to people living with HIV. They support people experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation in the BAME and refugee community as well as asylum seekers amongst others.

Apoyo Comunitario

facebook: ApoyoComunitarioSurDeLondres

A migrant-led Latinx feminist collective based in London that set up Apoyo Comunitario Sur de Londres COVID19 to respond to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on migrant communities.

AndoGlaso

andoglaso.org

A Roma-led charity based in Glasgow that creates opportunities for the Roma musicians to showcase their talent and cultural heritage in the locality, especially given how this has historically been appropriated.

Migrant Media

instagram: @migrantmedia

A collective of radical filmmakers, based in London, who focus on race and class and resistance, particularly in light of how mainstream media can ignore and distort the experiences of racialised communities.

Counselling All Nations Services (CANS)

counsellingallnations.org

A Northern Ireland-based charity that provides culturally sensitive counselling support to clients

from the BAME community. They provide free one-to-one counselling services to improve the emotional, physical, mental health and well-being of their clients in a safe and secure environment.

The Anne Matthews Trust

theannemattewstrust.org

A sanctuary-residential, critical learning resource centre, and community hub for individuals, community groups and organisations seeking to find ways to radically work together to combat the sources and effects of inequality, racism, poverty, discrimination and oppression.

Croydon Refugee Centre

A community resource centre that offers support to refugee and BME communities to address social issues such as poor health, homelessness, family breakdown and youth, as well as support with numeracy and literacy.

Bristol Community FM (BCfm)

bcfmradio.com

Bristol's first and multi-award winning community radio station, which uses a mix of talk and music shows to inform, educate and entertain diverse and under-represented target audiences, 24 hours a day in multiple different languages, including Somali, Arabic and Spanish.

The Voice of Domestic Workers

thevoiceofdomesticworkers.com

A London-based education and support group calling for justice and rights for Britain's 16,000 migrant domestic workers (MDWs). Their work seeks to end discrimination and protect MDWs living in the UK by campaigning and providing education, training, healthcare and legal advice.

Nepali Samaj Nottingham

facebook: nsnuk

A community Nepali organisation based in Nottingham and working all over the East Midlands, to preserve and promote Nepalese culture and values through festivals and Nepalese language and cultural exchange programs. They also offer sports and physical and mental health programs as well as employment support.

Latin Elephant

latinelephant.org

A charity that works with migrant and ethnic groups, and Latin Americans in particular, to increase participation, inclusion and engagement in processes of urban change in London. This is achieved by responding to urban policy frameworks supporting migrant and ethnic economies in London, supporting existing migrant and ethnic businesses in the context of broader processes of regeneration and increasing awareness of displacement of BAME in processes of urban change.

Rewrite

rewritelondon.com

A social enterprise that supports and champions Black Women and Women of Colour writers based in London, by providing the tools, space and confidence they need to achieve their writing goals. REWRITE encourages women to develop their full potential through dynamic and evolving

courses.

Institute of Race Relations

irr.org.uk

An anti-racist think-tank, publishing house and resource centre for all those striving for racial justice. They carry out investigations, analysis and research projects, based around case studies, centring the needs of social justice movements and the most vulnerable in society.

Brixton Soup Kitchen (BSK)

brixtonsoupkitchen.com

A community space for the homeless and those in desperate need, Brixton Soup Kitchen (BSK) empowers Londoners to work together to prevent and relieve poverty and social exclusion. BSK provides mental health support, employment, housing and legal advice with Lawyers in the Soup Kitchen, using food as a facilitator to reach those most in need.

Maan Somali Mental Health Sheffield

maansomalimentalhealth.org

A one-to-one service that has supported Somali individuals facing serious mental health issues for over twenty-five years. They are the bridge between the Somali community in Sheffield and the mainstream NHS services and other agencies.

Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group (CARAG)

carag.co.uk

An asylum seeker, refugee and migrant-led organisation looking to set up the first UK destitution housing project run by and for people with lived experience of destitution/the asylum system.

Black Students Matter UK

instagram: [@blackstudentsmatteruk](https://www.instagram.com/blackstudentsmatteruk)

An educational platform centred around providing support and guidance for young Black students experiencing racial injustice in education. Their primary aim is to provide a safe space for Black students aged 11-18 to share their stories of racial prejudice within educational institutions.

Manchester Migrant Solidarity (MiSol)

manchestermigrantsolidarity.org

A grassroots group founded and led by people with lived experience of immigration and asylum. Formed in 2014, MiSol was set up as a convergence space for all migrants and people seeking asylum to build a powerful political voice against the systematic mistreatment of migrants in the UK.

Long Term Structural Change Awards

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust

racearchive.org.uk

An anti-racist, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) led organisation working with Black, Asian, ethnic minority and migrant communities across Greater Manchester. They collect intersectional archives that document how systematic, institutional and interpersonal racism affect Black, Asian, ethnic minority and migrant people and communities, as well as their broader experiences.

No More Exclusions

nomoreexclusions.com

An abolitionist grassroots coalition movement in education, for a system that works for all. Their mission is to bring about an end to the persistent race-disparities in school exclusions in the next five years and to affect change at legal, policy, practice and cultural level in education and society as a whole over the next ten years.

Land In Our Names (LION)

landinournames.community

A grassroots land justice collective, committed to securing land for communities of colour. Their work transforms narratives around British land, making ownership inequalities visible and linked to systemic oppression. They hold workshops and events to strategise, network-build and document their activities through writing, photography and video.

Ubuntu Women's Shelter

ubuntu-glasgow.org.uk

A Scotland-wide organisation led by and for migrant, Black and minoritised womxn, that supports and campaigns for providing services and shelter for destitute asylum seekers and women with no recourse to public funds who are survivors of violence. Their work has been developed through an intersectional, anti-racist and No Borders ethos and lens.

Daikon* and Remember the Essex 39 (now known as Remember and Resist)

daikon.co.uk

A collective of queer abolitionist and anti-border activists and organisers of East and Southeast Asian descent, primarily working in the arts and political education in order to build solidarity with migrant communities and across anti-racist struggles.

Hope Bereavement Support CIC

hopebereavementsupport.com

A CIC that offers free therapeutic support for women and families around child loss and miscarriage within diverse communities.

The 4Front Project

4frontproject.org

A member-led youth organisation empowering young people and communities to fight for justice, peace and freedom. 4Front supports members with experiences of violence and the criminal justice system to create change; in their own lives, communities and society.

Crowdfunder Awardees

Colorintech

colorintech.org

Colorintech looks to address how systemic racism manifest in tech by increasing the number ethnic minorities entering the UK tech workforce and to make Europe the most inclusive tech hub in the world. They do this by building programs that create access to some of the world's most innovative companies for ethnic minorities.

CAHN CIC

cahn.org.uk

CAHN is a Black-led organisation set up to address the wider social determinants to reduce health inequalities for people of Caribbean & African heritage in Greater Manchester and beyond. We work with the Black community and cross-sector organisations to build community resilience, relationships and a social movement to reduce health inequalities.

Sex and Rage

Instagram: @xrage0001

Sex and Rage is a collective led by sex workers, activists and educators based in London. We work to resist stigma and shame as root causes of gender-based and sexual violence, particularly for BAME communities and sexual minorities.

UK PIVOT

ukpivot.com

UK Pivot wants to influence the narrative and help to make Northern Ireland more inclusive for all races by using modern tools of communication and sharing to engage in dialogue which highlights and celebrates our differences and similarities as we believe that this fosters greater community cohesion and racial equality.

Soul Shack CIC

X/twitter: @TheSoulShackLDN

Black + youth-led social enterprise restaurant + business programme for young people w/ experience of youth violence. delivering programmes + food security.

Brighton and Hove Black Women's Group

Brighton and Hove Black Women's Group (B&HBWG) was established in 1987 as a self-help group with members across Sussex to ensure Black women's needs are heard and met.

Lyla's Place

lilasplace.cc

An Artistic Activist working to address structural and systemic oppression within the community. I am also an experienced Counsellor, Counselling Supervisor, Playwright, Actor, Poet and Therapeutic Theatre Practitioner.

3. CONTEXT SETTING: WHY RESOURCING RACIAL JUSTICE?

During these times a misallocation of wealth is fatal

- Indy Johar, Dark Matter Labs¹⁷

In lots of ways, racial justice doesn't fit with the current state, intentions and practices of mainstream UK philanthropy.

So how do we do racial justice funding?! We can use our institutional experiences to explore and build on what nourishes us; we can call on the collective resistance of our ancestry that is so much more than this sector; and we can embrace and place our power within our communities.

- Paulette Amadi, Grants Management Consultant¹⁸

3.1 THE CONTEXT IN WHICH RRJ EMERGED

RRJ was initiated as a response to the Covid pandemic in April 2020. We formed a coalition of players including funders, activists and movement folks to develop a process to mobilise money urgently to racialised communities who were already being excluded from the emerging funds – from state to philanthropic levels – despite being disproportionately impacted. We originally came together as a group of people deeply concerned by how stark the consequences of Covid would be on racialised people in deepening inequalities and increasing poverty, sickness, disability and death.

We were a group who convened out of necessity because we could not trust the state or mainstream institutional bodies (which philanthropy also resources) to have our interests or lives protected, valued and dignified. We have seen this over and over again in many cases throughout UK history, with the most recent being Grenfell.

17 Shared with us by Indy Johar, architect and the co-founder of Dark Matter Labs

18 Shared with us by Paulette Amadi, Grants Management Consultant

We had to take it into our own hands, because if we didn't, we would be made vulnerable by other efforts emerging and springing up, excluding the reality of how pandemics and moments of crisis only deepen the “original epidemic”¹⁹ of structural racism that we have already been surviving.

We already know that the funding world and philanthropy were established to preserve unfair accumulation of wealth through exploitation and extraction across colonisation and capitalism. We know that at large, they are enacting corporate social responsibility, or at best charity, as a form of redemption. And yet still, it is perpetuated on an individual level through forms of saviour complexes and hierarchy, from philanthropists to operators within it, albeit with good intention, will and sometimes even heart. These undergirding logics of philanthropy have been widely critiqued and documented, so it is perhaps best to do a deeper dive on this elsewhere. We have linked some resources at the end of our report for you to explore.²⁰

The point we want to make here is how far philanthropy is from those it professes to support. Even with our progressive peers in the field striving to transform these undercurrents, they are also reflective and transparent about how little has changed since its origins and that philanthropy is not something to be rehabilitated. That said, it is able to be leveraged and utilised in service of liberation. We can still see a sector that is deeply distant from its capacity to serve the social good that it claims to be its purpose, and we saw this with the inability to effectively respond to the Covid pandemic of 2020.

We could see funders default to their existing modus operandi and this was not only deeply dysfunctional, but set up a climate where deeper racial divides would heighten and be exposed. We were unsurprised and yet still disappointed that a sector that was rife with DEI and diversity agendas, in order to demonstrate “progress”, was still unable to understand why an “all lives matter” frame was hurting Black and Global Majority people in the UK. And having this narrative of both exclusion and flattening of experiences left us vulnerable to not just sickness but also disproportionate death. This was not a moment for rhetoric, but a time to actually get behind processes that could use this moment of crisis/opportunity to reorganise our deeply unfair society towards justice and equity. We needed to see our lives valued, and needed a resounding effort from the key stakeholders that shape our society. In the absence of this, like many gone before us, we self-organised.

Ubele, an “African diaspora-led, infrastructure plus organisation [...] empowering Black and Minoritised communities in the UK to act as catalysts for social and economic change,” released an influential and critical report titled “Impact Of Covid-19 On BAME Community And Voluntary Sector” in April 2020.²¹ It is based on findings from two waves of surveys, which were conducted between 19 and 23 March (Wave 1) and between 27 March and 4 April (Wave 2) from 165 different organisations.

19 Shared with us by Nkem Ndefo, founder of Lumos Transforms and creator of The Resilience Toolkit

20 Available at resourcingracialjustice.org

21 Murray, K. (2020)

These organisations, many operating as lifelines supporting communities of colour on the ground, became even more critical with the pandemic. The report made explicit that despite how necessary these organisations were, only 19% had reserves to sustain them for 3 months while others had no reserves to resource their work beyond this. The report shockingly projected that 9 out of 10 organisations and services led by and supporting Black and Global Majority peoples were unlikely to survive the pandemic.

Preceding this seminal research we also saw the emergence of groups like Future Foundations UK (FFUK), July 2019 and Charity So White, August 2019. These groups were self-organised networks challenging the aforementioned issues in philanthropy and the devastating toll it has on Black and Global Majority people both inside the sector and those outside to whom it is accountable. In particular FFUK, made up of Black and Global Majority people working in funding and philanthropy in the UK, formed to have a coordinated and organised response to the failings and harms of UK funding and philanthropy.

They released their first statement in March 2020 setting out the urgent action required from the philanthropic sector.²²

FFUK set out several key demands to help the sector respond to those most in need, including two statements from which the following extracts are taken:

4. Be pragmatic: Alongside funding for grassroots movements, funders should look for the most practical ways in which their money can enhance and amplify work on the ground. Beyond meeting immediate needs, this may include ensuring that everyone is digitally enabled or the creation of online, culturally appropriate resources. How best can funders subsidise or support community workers and organisers, youth workers, caseworkers, etc who are providing vital support outside of our public services to ordinary people? This applies particularly to those serving the most vulnerable, from the elderly and the homeless to the disabled and domestic violence survivors [...]

5. Shift to a social justice approach: As a sector, this should be our north star. Dominant funding approaches are still based on a traditional top-down model, where power holders – often those who have gained or inherited their wealth from extracting natural and human resources – control how money is distributed to disadvantaged communities. [...]

The demands laid out by FFUK pre-date the UK going into lockdowns and furloughs which would destabilise entire organisations and industries in a way unprecedented in recent history. They call the philanthropic field to strategic and bold leadership that could help course-correct both historical, current and emerging harms through the right use of mobilising money.

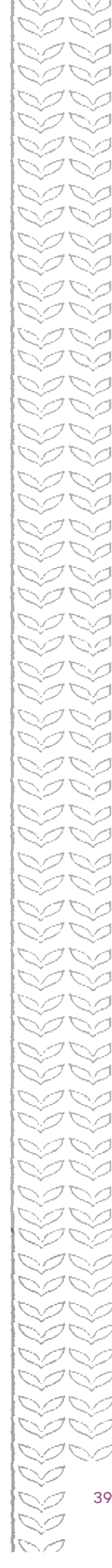
This needs to be a time of bold leadership, empathy, humility and an understanding that the very models created to support people through traditional philanthropy are insufficient at this time.

We, at large, understood that this was a moment where the players that hold society together needed to organise around this unprecedented public crisis, and that philanthropy had, and continues to have, a role in achieving support at scale. Despite this demand from people in the field who also live with the realities of racial injustice and other marginalisation, and thorough evidence of the consequences of a lack of effective crisis mitigation and adaptation strategies, as recommended by Ubele, we still saw an inept response by the philanthropic sector.

Over the years, we have been seeing more desire to engage with racial equity matters. While some feel superficial, there have been genuine efforts made by a handful of allies and led by incredible Black and Global Majority people in the field such as those aforementioned. Even with these efforts we are nowhere near the level of skillfulness needed to mobilise money where it is most needed without the context of pandemics and crises. In most cases, funders were still at a distance from the most impacted communities and their political analysis was not trusted or demonstrated as robust enough. The distance was a result of legitimate distrust, bureaucratic gatekeeping and harm, and an inability to understand the political and social context in which grantees were operating and living.

It is interesting that with all of the resources available to this sector they have not invested time, energy and resources in building the capacity, skills, systems and infrastructures to close this gap, and in 2020 the same demands for understanding the conditions of racial disparity needed to be explicitly demanded and evidenced, and even then were still widely ignored.

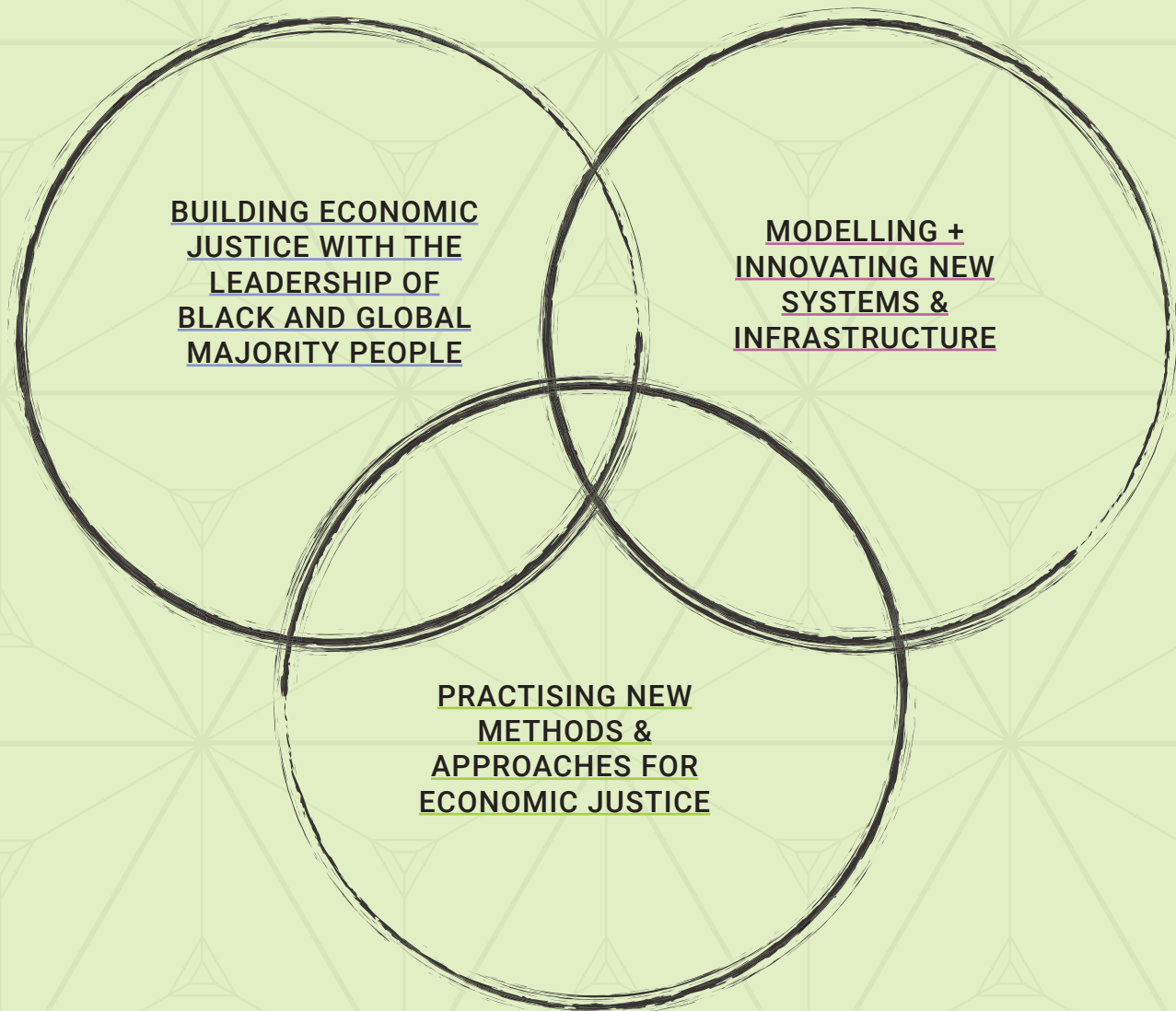
Against this backdrop and more, RRJ emerged. The founding group was part of an ongoing group that came together after the Interdependence Festival curated by one of the co-founders, Farzana Khan, and Thirty Percy Foundation. The festival was aimed to move money that was being invested in climate change without a climate justice analysis – failing again to resource both the most impacted people of Global Majority worlds and diaspora and the most creative and critical solutions emerging from them. In the aftermath of the festival, a working group made up of funders and Black and Global Majority activists, academics and artists focusing on climate justice convened. After the second gathering, the UK government had announced the pandemic crisis had hit the UK.



In establishing RRJ we could not afford to make ourselves more vulnerable to existing default systems and operations within philanthropy. We conscientiously made a choice to prioritise designing and building RRJ solely with Black and Global Majority people. Our reason for safeguarding RRJ in the leadership hands of Black and Global Majority people was not to reinforce representation politics, but to protect against the way whiteness reestablishes itself even amongst places that are for Black and Global Majority people. And to be explicit, for evidenced reasons, we were very, very wary and sceptical of the field and of being co-opted. We understood that it was very easy to compromise the integrity of racial justice work within the context of dominant powers because everything that is inside of this context is held within white supremacy culture, therefore we, and our work, are vulnerable to whiteness all the time. Protecting the RRJ initial space let the team establish from a different centre that was not the dominating one of whiteness.

This looked like several things, including: making sure we were assessing funders around us on their racial politics and investment beyond money; turning away money from funders who were looking to brand wash; and forefronting the wisdoms of Black and Global Majority peoples in their ability to organise and build new things, to name a few.

In hindsight, we found the throughlines of our work to be 3 key facets:



PROCESSES OF DEEP TRANSFORMATION

When we embark on processes of deep transformation we understand that they require all of us and the all extends to the more-than-human. We begin this work in acknowledgement of all that it takes to recode a world that is so coded in an economic system against life and the living worlds. We move in solidarity with all those who are ready to shape a new future and take responsibility for it.

3.2 RACE AND PHILANTHROPY: WHY WE NEED STRATEGIC RESOURCE LIBERATION AND MOBILISING

The current state of affairs is not compatible with achieving racial justice and racial equity in all our institutions and communities because the existence of philanthropy, and continued wealth accumulation and people holding on to their power means that we can't actually get to racial equity.

- Stephanie Brobbley, Founder & CEO, The Good Ancestor Movement²³

Within the work of racial justice we are paradoxically placed to grapple with what the place of philanthropy is, given our historical and living relationship to racial capitalism, and the fact that philanthropy is an extension of capitalism, colonial expansion and conservation of wealth and resources. Therefore when we are trying to position, mobilise and liberate resources for racial justice and broader collective liberations, we are dealing with the contradictions within this work. How can the very thing that has extracted and generated profit from the oppression and brutalisation of our peoples also be part of our remedy? We can easily talk about it in the context of reparations, however when the entire world has been infected by racial capitalism and colonialism, then what could it possibly mean to do really meaningful reparations work, unless it was in service of building an entire new reality beyond these cellular entanglements of white supremacy and other oppressions that extend from it?

While philanthropy claims to be advancing social good, and in service of people's progress and potential, we still find that its ideas of what is good, valuable, just and equitable are entrenched within moral and normative frameworks that rely on racial hierarchy and domination. On a surface level, we see this in who the wealth holders are, who the decision makers around money are, what money goes to, what is deemed visionary, just and equitable work, what is invested in and who is invested in. The racialised DNA is still alive and accruing wealth from racialised people, and therefore fundamentally still maintaining racial dominance and working against life and livelihoods.

23 Quote by Brobbley, S. from Evans, E.M. Akinrele, C, Shah, A. (2022) Racial Justice and Social Transformation: How Funders Can Act, Ten Years Time. Available at: tenyearstime.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Racial-Justice-and-Social-Transformation-2.pdf

We hold all of these contradictions amidst a time of multiple, current and emerging crises, and reckon with the task of how to position the resources in philanthropy to serve and sustain all life, including the more-than-human, in ways that are dignifying and just. Not because we do not see the bloodied waters in which philanthropy swims, lives and breathes, but because we know purity politics will not make us effective in overturning the hundreds of years of oppression that bleeds into and through everything. Straddling this tension is an important part of justice work because philanthropy not only emerges from racial injustice, but continues to perpetuate it. Our peer Stephanie Brobbley, Founder and CEO of The Good Ancestor Movement, like many others raises the question of how is it possible for us to achieve racial justice and equity through philanthropy, given that the latter perpetuates the very conditions which hinder racial equity.

We share some of the realities of persistent racial justice matters in UK philanthropy to recontextualise the status quo, and show that despite philanthropy's charitable PR image, it is not as neutral or as benevolent as it seeks to present itself. Ranging from the way in which UK philanthropic grantmaking reinforces inequalities through its politicisation of racial justice work, deeming it unfundable and in conflict with charity, to the "colour blind" social and political analysis that mainstream funders have about the UK being post-racial or rendering this work as needing to be part of an 'all lives matter' camp.

In the UK racial justice work is not regarded as a charitable justice matter, but rather seen as a protected characteristic in establishing racial harmony. The use of the term "harmony" within a context of racial dominance and hierarchy asks marginalised people to seek and reinforce stabilising the status quo, since anything they do that undermines, critiques or problematises the current social order can be understood as disharmony. By this reckoning, the parameters of racial justice work within the UK, and its permissibility, are fundamentally bound to the appeasement and maintenance of the current racial hierarchy; we must not disrupt the very systems that oppress us. These systemic behaviours reinforce a public common sense about the realities of racism in this country because it is not allowed to have its appropriate redress. It is an active divestment in the lives of racially marginalised and minoritised peoples, while being presented as championing equality.

As for the grantmaking element of philanthropy, even within justice funders, the vast majority of their grants are aimed at service delivery work as opposed to long-term transformational work which reinvests power and lets Black and Global Majority people self-determine with agency. Funders do not invest in building systems and infrastructure that safely transition us out of racial capitalism as needed to really create equitable worlds of mutuality, reciprocity and deep dignity.

While we need both service delivery and provision, we also need more sustained structural shifts that transform the way in which racism is in the architecture of everything – this will only be possible with the latter.



What is also important to note, is that much of the frontline service delivery work, which is also deeply underfunded, is absorbing the labour and responsibility that should either be public provisions in the first place, or have emerged to respond to the failures of public provisions that harm, punish or criminalise our communities for the very **organised abandonment**²⁴ we experience. This is why we also need to have structural capacity responding to our racial justice work.

According to Funding Justice 2,²⁵ a report which analysed UK grants totalling over £950 million between 2021/22, only 5.7% of those grants were dedicated to tackling injustice and only 0.3% were dedicated towards community organising. Given that community organising is disproportionately a field and sector that Black and Global Majority people provide social provision and care to their communities through, a large amount of resources are deliberately not made available to our lifelines – reinforcing the case that the Ubele report made.

This strategic divestment contributes to a dynamic of organised abandonment that leads to the premature and disproportionate deaths of racialised people in a systemic way. If we “follow the money”²⁶ as Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us to do, money is an informant on designed violence by wealth hoarders against Black and Global Majority people.

Money is an informant on designed violence by wealth hoarders against Black and Global Majority people.

The ways in which funding institutions, as well as the wider charity sector, are governed limit their ability to shift power towards racial equity. The default governance structures that are meant to institute accountability become a hindrance to grantmaking because they relegate so much of our work outside of what is seen as fundable, whether it is our community organising, our “politicised” nature or the risk associated because we have been racialised. Majority white boards perceive greater levels of threat when it comes to the type of work Black and Global Majority people do. Notions of risk are framed and informed by the colonising logic that must see the colonised in any efforts it is part of to become equal to the coloniser as a threat.

After all, if it is capable of accessing the might and resources that the coloniser has, then it will do to the coloniser what the coloniser has done to the colonised – and that is terrifying. This is the fear that shows up as constraining and restricting the work and efforts of racialised people we see over and over again.

24 Gilmore, R. W. (2008). Forgotten places and the seeds of grassroots planning. *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics, and methods of activist scholarship*, 31.

25 Civic Power Fund (2023) Funding Justice 2. Available at: fundingjustice.civicpower.org.uk/

26 Kushner, R. (2019) Is Prison Necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore Might Change Your Mind, *New York Times Magazine*, 17th April 2018. Available at: nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/prison-abolition-ruth-wilson-gilmore.html

In the ways Frantz Fanon reminds us in *The Wretched of the Earth*, having Black and Global Majority technocrats, civil service professionals or any other kind of bureaucratic role within these institutions will never be effective enough to soothe the anxieties of the oppressive system.

Anecdotally, but also tragically, we have a recent rare occasion where there was a Black and Global Majority board that was prevented from resourcing a particular initiative because the broader organisation perceived it as “risky”. This backfired against the board.

In this instance, risk was used in two different ways to prevent resources from moving: once against resourcing the community in need, and once against the board, who the organisation claimed it was protecting with its decision, instead of dismantling the structure that designates what is risk and what is safety, working to create safety, or acknowledging that whatever we do as “racialised people” is perceived as threat and risk within the paradigm of capitalism. We found with this example how the use of safety and risk through the normative frameworks of capitalism doubled down on why money could not be invested. We have linked some resources at the end of our report for you to explore.²⁷

Given the nature of racial justice work, often responding to crisis situations and organising around the needs of racialised violence or harm, much of this work is critical and deeply responsive. Yet we see UK philanthropic grantmaking processes’ ability to administer grants as deeply stifled and archaic. There is neither the desire or innovation to move more money more appropriately against the appropriate and timely needs of communities. While we do not subscribe to the urgency and burnout culture that capitalism enshrines in us, we advocate for an appropriateness that honours the pace of meeting escalating needs.

In a pandemic, we couldn’t rely on traditional grantmaking bodies and systems that would prolong money reaching groups in need. We had to find a fiscal body to move money and at pace to the grassroots with less bureaucratic resistance. We imagined that the fiscal body would do that with more ease, and at moments this was possible, but in reality the deeper we got into this work the more we realised how deeply entangled the systems and structures in this country are in preventing money moving towards justice – let alone racial justice. And the use of risk would be the repeated and primary baton by which we were beaten down and in some cases, the preemptive strike used by institutions and bodies to gain favour with the state and its apparatus.



3.3 GENOCIDE ON GAZA

A REMINDER OF WHY WE NEED RADICAL EXPERIMENTS RIGHT NOW

This section has been put together by Farah AlHaddad who has been working on mobilising resources to justice-related work, particularly in precarious circumstances. Her efforts recently have focused on organising around Palestine and Farah was a key member of our operational and administrative team in 2021-2022. As we cowrote this section Farah's examples of experiences within the field, many of which could not be named for safeguarding reasons, have also deeply informed this section.

When we say we need radical experiments right now, it is not to make light of what is happening in Gaza, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Sudan and West Papua, but to encourage a preparedness for this type of increased genocide as a result of the consequences of resource theft and capitalism. We talk about radical experiments here because we need somewhere to practise, rehearse and build systems and infrastructures that can stay agile and adaptive in times of increased precarity and crises. While our oppressors present the multiple forms of crises happening right now as arbitrary or random, they are symptomatic of failing systems that have been deeply engineered and prepared for – and are entirely predictable. This is why we need to prepare through our radical experiments towards life and meet the impending years of multiple polycrises.

When we wrote these reflections, we were nearing the three-month mark of the Israeli genocide on Gaza. In contrast with the hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets across the UK in support of an immediate ceasefire, among other demands, money has been slow to move in the direction of Palestinians. Through the mounting violence and grief that Palestinians are experiencing, the weaponisation of “risk” in philanthropy has been made ever more clear. So far, the philanthropic sector in the UK has demonstrated a variety of attitudes around this violence, primarily marked with multiple shades of silence, censorship and complicity. Within a matter of days, millions of pounds were moved in the aid of Ukrainians as their home country was invaded by Russia, highlighting the discrepancy in response by some of the wealthiest institutions in this country.

Palestine once again is made to be the issue presented as too “problematic” to engage with. However, the misuse of complexity attributed to Palestine only masks the way in which British philanthropic institutions and bodies are complicit in this genocide. The UK is one of the key players, from its media to its arms industry, enacting a genocide on the people of Gaza.


We as a nation are not separate from what is happening, so it is fundamentally illogical for us, as a philanthropic sector, to distance ourselves from the “issue” of Palestine. Solidarity efforts have been clamped down on due to censorship and surveillance and the general lack of awareness between racial justice and Palestine. In particular, Palestine is used to rampantly exercise Islamophobia on racialised communities and reproduce another layer of racism.

What we see in the minimal fundraising efforts within mainstream philanthropy is excessive focus on the humanitarian element (e.g. tents, food, etc.), even during times when supplying these has been impossible due to the Israeli siege imposed on Gaza. What this does is re-erect a degree of separation and white saviour complex: “look at us, we are giving these people aid” as opposed to “we are accountable for changing the political and social conditions that allow the Palestinians to repeatedly experience geopolitical violence and an ongoing genocide extending from the first settlement in 1934 to the first Nakba in 1948 to the genocide today”. This is the consistent way white supremacy and neo-colonisation continue to perpetuate global violations on people and planet while appearing disconnected from it. They then appear as the saviours of the people they have harmed and continue this myth – this is the cycle, since the origin of philanthropy. Philanthropy has yet to practise any other way of being that might course-correct its exploitative DNA towards an orientation of reparative justice and healing as well as mobilising resources towards life.

There has not even been a mainstream effort to endorse the most basic statements of solidarity with Palestinians (excluding a few larger organisations). What we are seeing repeatedly is that within grantmaking institutions, the responsibility of raising solidarity with Palestine has fallen on Black and Global Majority staff. Even this has been a site of vulnerability and many have experienced disciplining and felt penalised for expressing concern or raising these issues. Such dynamics have only solidified the ways in which risk is placed on Black and Global Majority people as well as allies who have been met with the fear of losing their jobs, as well as their organisational funding.

Much of the limited funding that has reached the West Bank and Gaza has been subject to restrictions or suspension altogether. These grants were made through deeply tedious and lengthy bureaucratic processes which constrained movements in Palestine and forced NGO-ized restructuring. Now, with funding unable to enter Gaza, we are not seeing the UK or international philanthropic landscape grapple with this alarming precedent. When people are most in need of resources, oppressive powers can shut off their ability to access resources and supplies for their basic humanitarian needs and even survival. This shows money

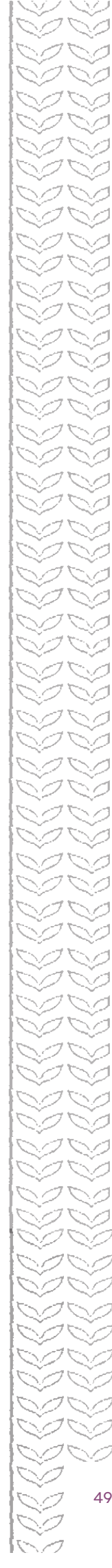




is not enough. Philanthropy's role cannot solely be, even in its most radical expression, redistributing and investing money. It has to be part of growing agile interim capabilities (governance structures, systems, infrastructure, skills and competencies) to mobilise money, even in moments of acute crises, whether it is a pandemic or a genocide or the murder of George Floyd and many others who go unnamed through state and police brutality. We say "interim" because our long term goals aim not to require philanthropic systems in the first place.

We are in too critical a time to not investigate what it means to position ourselves – wherever we are in this deeply entangled and murky world, be it philanthropy or the grassroots – to find our most strategic and effective role in a coordinated effort towards the just worlds we are longing for. Living in a time that is the consequence of many failing domination systems means we are “in the wake” as Christina Sharpe describes it. The wake is not the aftermath or post- anything; it is the capacity to be intimately aware of the realities we are living, while simultaneously trying to build outside of it. Sharpe says the wake is the honest place “to capaciously transform the world”. Grappling with all of the multiple polycrises we are navigating demands from us both surviving them and practising building in real-time, time-bound alternatives. These practices of realising alternatives are named, as aforementioned, as experiments to engender a humility that we are learning as we are building, and there are too many unknowns so the process will be a discovery away from everything we have ever known. And this cannot take away the rigour and severity this will demand from all of us.





The common misconceptualisation, by most of us, of meaningful social change work has constrained the effectiveness of racial justice work in service of healing and remedying so much of social sickness and violence experienced, including those who are perpetrating the dominating and oppressing. Social change, or even justice work, becomes drawn within narrow parameters when it comes from logics of domination and protecting privilege. Our behaviour, our institutions, our feelings and thoughts, all of these facets of us are made to conform to this underlying psyche of oppression. So when our people are doing liberatory work through racial justice, it is hard for those who have so deeply internalised whiteness (i.e. our white peers) and also for each of us. It is hard to reckon with what this work really is. And though it is riddled with unknowns and destabilising, the risk of staying the same is more dangerous to us than the change coming from racial justice or anti-colonial work that necessarily has to disrupt the status quo in order to be effective. We cannot stay the same and be different. We must not allow our fear to become bigger than our courage.

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We have had a strong movement of lived experience work in the UK,²⁸ and the forwarding of social justice analysis through intersectionality and critical race theory, as well as decolonial movements that have helped us deepen in what it means to decolonise with an orientation rooted in racial justice. Yet it is still misunderstood because of how deeply whiteness is internalised in this brainchild of empire. After all, “there ain’t no Black in the Union Jack”.²⁹ What this means is that the visionary eye that comes from Black and Global Majority people and our practices is neither adequately resourced or even attempted to be sustained. There is so little understanding of the ways in which racial justice work must operate to meet our communities’ needs and realities. Our approaches must do many things:

- They must let us self-determine and govern in the interests of our communities’ needs and honouring our ancestral and indigenous lineages.
- They must help us grow the time and resources to be able to access those lineages from the violence they have been subjected to.
- They must support the trauma and healing work within our communities.
- They must bridge the reparative justice work across generations so we can move with more continuity and reconnection.
- They must support us to gather together and repair the communities we have been fractured from. They must give us space to restore and heal our souls and psyches from generations of colonisation and enslavement to generate our most profound strategies and solutions.

28 Sandhu, B. (2017) The Value Of Lived Experience in Social Change: The Need For Leadership and Organisational Development in the Social Sector. Available at: thelivedexperience.org/report/

29 Gilroy, P. (1987), *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, University of Chicago Press

- They must give us space to dream and practise out loud.
- They must let us feel ourselves rerouted because we have been displaced over and over again.
- These needs are, amongst many other things we are yet to discover, beyond the philanthropic remit of racial justice.

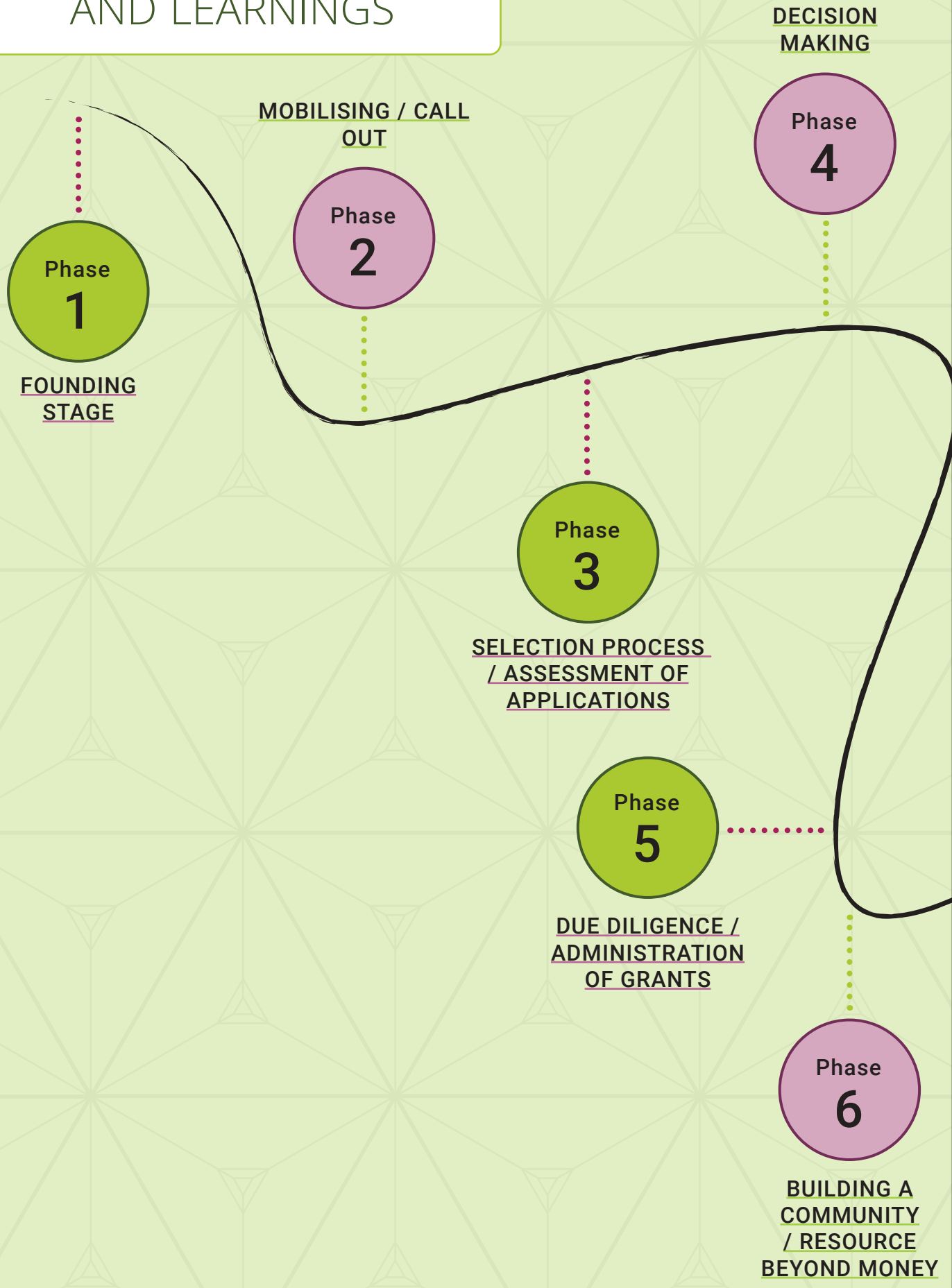
There are many ways racial justice work shows up in our communities, but becomes narrowly defined into categories such as mental health, education, youth work, systemic work etc. This is why, when we put together our application process, we invited people to self-define what racial justice work looked like for them beyond the criterion set out by philanthropy. We tried to open out the parameters with some anchors that could guide the more expanded sense of racial justice we are already practising and driving forward; parameters that also supported people to self-determine and shape their own liberation work in a more authentic form. We wanted to support people to see their own work as racial justice when it is traditionally not seen as such, for example: rest for seasoned activists and organisers who are prone to burn out and become sick; awards for individuals who are often carrying the heaviest burden and risk on racialised and class lines without support or stability; or organisations who are working on a visionary structural level, putting forward entire new worlds which are not organised around responding to white supremacy, and therefore feel unrecognisable to the imaginaries and logics of whiteness.

This work of engendering a new common sense is strategising beyond the status quo because our experiences rely on us being the ones building the infrastructure outside of it. If we do not build it for ourselves we will remain in a perpetual dynamic of master and enslaved, saint and saved, saviour and charity.

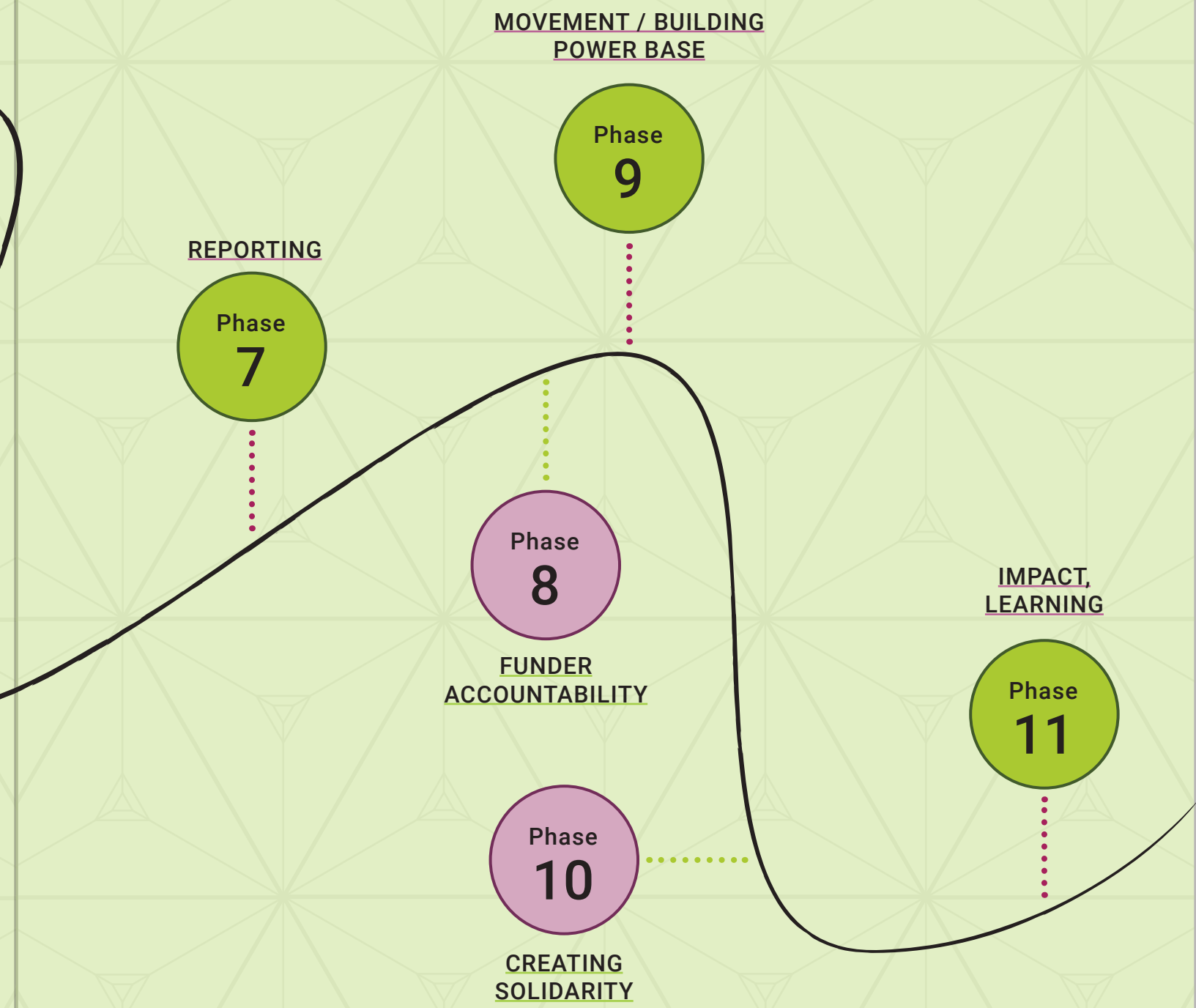
If we do not build it for ourselves we will remain in a perpetual dynamic of master and enslaved, saint and saved, saviour and charity.

How, then, might we unshackle from these spaces to resource and sustain drivers of new visions and infrastructures that hold the “we” as central? And how might we resource them without compromising them or reducing their radical (returning to root) potential? This is the essence of resourcing racial justice work – making all of us disloyal to capitalism and colonialism, and engendering worlds in which the two cannot thrive.

4. THE RESOURCING RACIAL JUSTICE STORY AND LEARNINGS



We have moved £1,161,868.89 to 58 individuals, groups, collectives and organisations.



LEARNINGS

“One of them [...] said, ‘Oh, well, anybody would have done this’. And I said; No, they wouldn’t. They would not have taken on liability for a million pounds... They would not have tried to vision in this way... Made these demands on organisations. They’re quite remarkable people... [taking on liability] that was astonishing. So yeah.... I suppose it’s a good lesson to us, within our groupings, to think; it’s possible to do that, with enough will and commitment... courage, because it takes courage... they’re strong, imaginative, courageous women.”

A sense of the bravery of the fund and the fund’s intentions - a clear vision and the courage to move towards it.

Strong personal commitment and courage from the RRJ team (e.g. personal liability)
Supporting individuals/ groups/ collectives/ organisations that had not received funding before.

Acted as a buffer between absorbing stresses and finding solutions (e.g. found pass-throughs when needed).

ABSORBING RISK & TAKING RISKS

Willing to support individuals and not just formal organisations and charities.

“Most of the big funders consider new organisations to be higher risk... most of them are not that bold enough to want to give you the first chance.”

“For RRJ to have taken the initiative, at that time, to set up this fund that was specifically for BAME communities, I think that was so ground-breaking. And I’m going to say it was quite bold, as well.”

DEMYSTIFYING
&
DEMOCRATISING
FIELD

“There was never any sense of us having to, you know, to kind of present in a different way to be able to meet the parameters of the funders... they [RRJ] understood the language and they felt the language and they went with it.”

Provided space to network, collaborate, and build community – awardees not seen as competitors to each other.

Brought other funders in to learn from awardees and foster connections.

A different – and easier – reporting process.

“I wrote down so much... passed onto friends.”

Provided training and skill building sessions.

Applicants could focus on their work and not the justification for it.

“We felt it was that in principle, it was actually trying to recognise that there were underlying structural factors - political, contextual situations - within which we worked. So it wasn't just somebody saying to us, ‘oh, how many loops can you jump over? And how many evaluation forms can you fill in?’ It felt as though it wanted to actually understand some of the underlying issues, but also get us to actually express, ‘Well, what would you do if you had some resources?’”

LEARNINGS

New connections and peer networks have been forged.

“The money was lovely, don’t get me wrong, we did some really good things with the money. But the fact that we were actually connected to a network of people... having those conversations [about power dynamics and contextual racial dynamics]... you don’t often get to chance to do that.”

PART OF A
MOVEMENT/ VISION/
COMMUNITY

Individuals did not feel their work was solitary or lonely.

RRJ created spaces for awardees to network - a benefit given that other groups are often seen as competition within the funding space.

“They’ve created a vision, which is quite exhilarating.”

LEARNINGS

"It built a level of trust and it also allowed us to think about networking with other people, not necessarily around funding... I think what RRJ were able to remind us of is that we had many common interests... and we could promote those common interests and not feel that we were blocking each other."

A sense of validation and affirmation in often unrecognised spaces led to increases in motivation and gains in confidence.

Proof of concept - shown other funders how it should and could be done.

"Everybody I've met felt invested in what I was doing and what I was trying to achieve."

"Other funders are seen as 'beyond our reach' whereas RRJ get our politics and where we stand... we often stand outside a lot... already have an understanding about the violence of the systems in which projects, and projects that particularly focus around race, operate in. So that was quite interesting... that made me quite, quite excited."

RRJ already understood different types of work and projects - e.g. the language of liberation work.

"They've also been trying to build communities, I think I think that's what's different. So, through RRJ, I've managed to connect to other people."

LEARNINGS

CORE FUNDING & BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY

Did not ask for a budget or project outlines in applications.

RRJ wanted to provide core unrestricted funding.

"If it weren't for RRJ, I honestly cannot say where we would be right now... it was literally a lifeline."

"I think the biggest thing was that it [RRJ funding] gave me time to plan. It gave me time to be strategic about where our work is going, at least for the next year... And I think that was the biggest takeaway; just having that breathing space."

Projects stabilised and projects still exist.

Catalysed other funding by giving awardees a "track record."

Flexibility was very useful, especially given the context of the pandemic.

The fund had quite an open nature in terms of how the money could be spent.

"Access to unrestricted funding. This unrestricted funding was critical and allowed us to have some breathing space to grow."

Allowed the project to survive the pandemic.

“So, I really did appreciate that from RRJ... that human talk throughout the process... It really felt like, this is a human that’s written this... a human from this day and age.”

“I didn’t believe in myself that much. Until like, she went like, ‘no, no, no, like, this is your actual rate’... from that moment onwards, I really trusted them [RRJ].”

“[We were] left to do it the way we wanted to do it, without any other controlling mechanisms in place.”

BUILDING
TRUST / PEERSHIP
ACROSS
POSITIONAL
POWER

Awardees felt supported and trusted.

Owned and acknowledged that there is a power relationship between funder and awardee.

“I didn’t have any expectations. I didn’t know what to expect. But it’s really set the bar... for how people should be treated.”

“I love the freedom of expression... it’s really grassroots led... everything they’re doing, they ask for our voice, our insights...”

“We are excited to see POC led initiative, joining and building this move - more financial equity and transparency so we can have agency on a structural and systemic level.”

"I was also very pleased that RRJ allowed for reporting to be done in creative ways... made life so much easier for us."

Provided emotional support as well as financial / practical.

Valued, and remunerated, people's time.

Lived experience was trusted.

"I've worked in other organisations before - you will never be able to speak to your funder on a regular basis, one to one on Zoom, have a chat. I felt like that was, you know, two different worlds of operation. But with RRJ they were more partners, they were more friends."

"I felt really quite... very safe... very held. Which I guess in some ways, I didn't necessarily need... But actually, I really appreciated it because I was trying to organise and operate and run a project, which I've never done by myself before."

Reporting process was creative and refreshing.

Good handovers despite high staff turnover.

"We have found RRJ to be very supportive, and to be a role model and an exemplar in the kind of level of development and support that we got. And to me it would be ideal for some of the other funding organisations to take a look at what they have done, and the integrity that they have offered the organisations who are on the ground."

RRJ team were accessible and approachable.

Gave people permission to ask for what they needed.

"Everybody at RRJ has just been so supportive. I almost feel like I don't know how to explain really accurately how supportive they've been because I've never had that experience, and I've done a lot of funding applications before."

"They were always one step ahead."

“They met us exactly where we were, you know, and they took us just as we were at the time. And they were ready to put in the hard work, actually, to support us to grow.”

Application process was accessible e.g. felt simple, video applications could be submitted.

High quality of communication: a human tone to communication.

Awardees felt supported, safe, valued and trusted.

ACCESS & CARE

Had faith in people’s skills and abilities.

Although the fund was based in England, it really reached out to all regions, including Northern Ireland. The fund did not allow itself to become London-centric.

“You can feel the care... that they truly care... They are there to support even beyond the grant.”

The team truly cared – a deep sense of authentic care.

“... they were always kind of one email away or one zoom call away, they made the process very accessible and not scary or daunting.”

LEARNINGS

SUPPORTING THE CONDITIONS FOR RACIAL JUSTICE WORK

“Other funders are always looking for outcomes and outputs: Before you think about the idea, you’re writing the evaluation... Obviously that is a structure, but I really hate it; it taints art.”

Funded ideas and space to develop these ideas.

Funded people to participate in research which allowed for non-extractive methodologies within research.

“I always wanted to set up my own project, but I also didn’t want to become a charity. Just because the way the Charity Commission works, and charity law is working... feels more and more... antagonistic and quite violent.”

“when I talk about healing and liberation, people just don’t understand it. And usually those people are the white-led organisations, but it’s not always.”

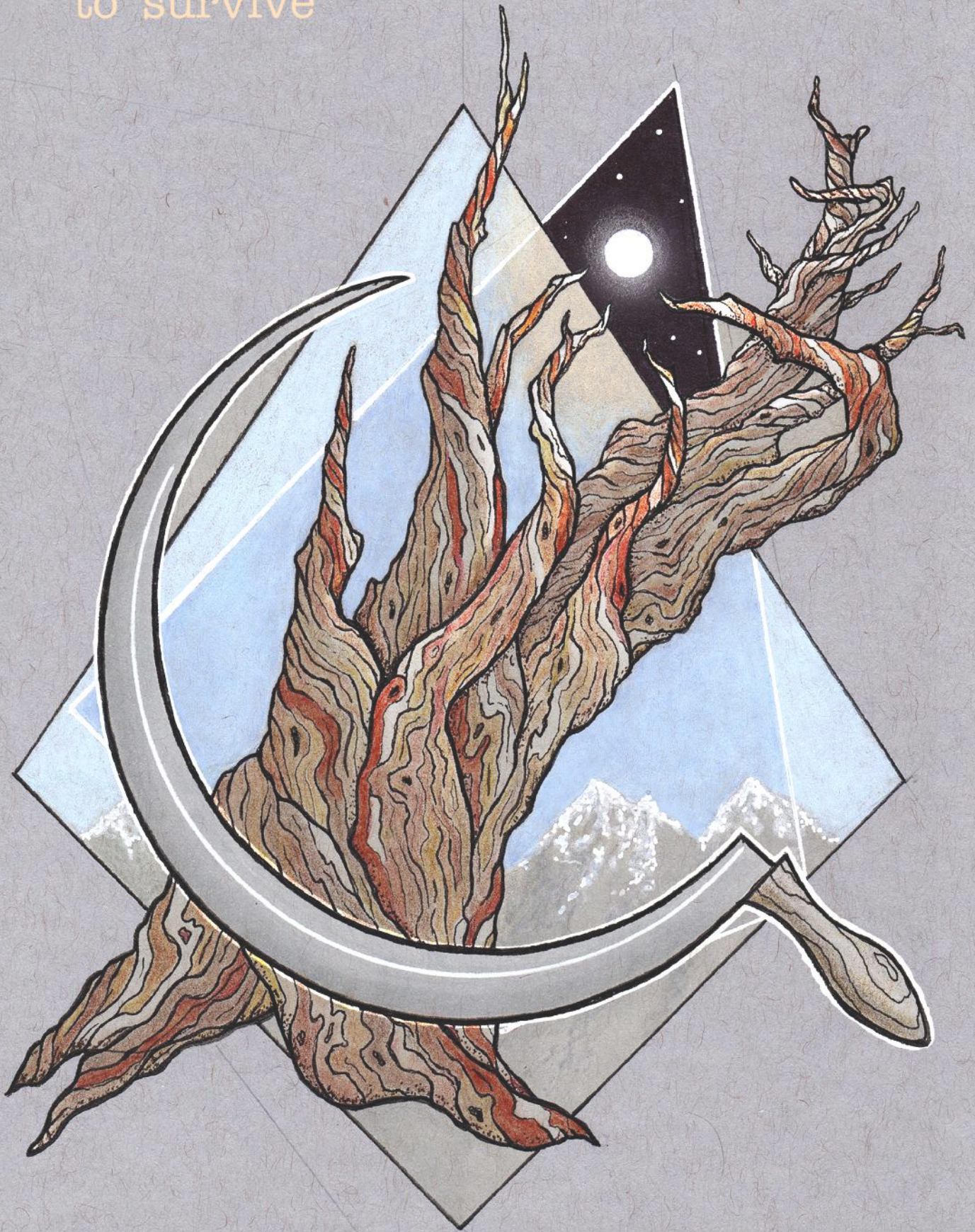
Unrestricted and core funding: this allowed flexibility in how money could be spent, which reflected the realities that awardees faced.

“I don’t know of any funds that were just giving money to rest.”

Funded rest, which legitimised the need for rest.

“They really supported me playing... giving the room to play is perfect... now I’m on this journey ‘what is it that I need to do...’”

for the sacred
to survive



capitalism
must die

5. RRJ: A STORY OF RADICAL EXPERIMENTING IN TIMES OF CRISES

What It Means To Open New Possibilities While Worlds Are Ending

The work of language as a work of capacious mathematics

The works of history as the works of language as a works of new mathematics

The work of this history as the work of being

- Kevin Quashie³⁰

As a girl I tied pencils to sweat and hard work. I associated them with calculations and contemplation. People who worked with their hands and their heads used pencils. People who made mistakes and understood the power of second effort reached for pencils.

- Nikkey Finney³¹

*In a rigorous process of finding the most generous use of our learnings, we knew we had to distil that which was skilling us up and growing more connective tissue in the ways we need to manoeuvre during ever-changing times. Laying out some of our findings about what it requires of us physically, materially and socially to transition from an economic paradigm that is dying, while trying to form our humble arena, opens new sets of possibilities that then go on to open new sets of possibilities. Over the past three and a half years we have undergone a deep process of transformation that was at times both heartbreaking and heart-expanding. Our own ideas and relationship with capitalism, from our material consumption to the valuing or de-valuing we put towards resources, were things we had to deeply interrogate and grapple with. The question we are sitting with, even to this day, in a very lived and living sense, is: for true resourcing racial justice to happen, how do we disentangle and **divest** from capitalism as individuals for the collective?*

30 Quashie, K. (2021), Presentation "Memoir. Sgn. Circumference. On Dionne Brand's A Map to the Door of No Return", A Map at to the Door at 20, Nov 2021. Available at: youtube.com/watch?v=MRMXFnRpW08

31 Finney, N. (2006) Inquisitor and Insurgent, Black Women with Pencils Sharpened, *Meridians* Vol.7. P214-221, Duke University Press

In the weight of the work there were moments where it felt it was easier to leave the work or hide or try to disappear altogether, but what continued to bring us back to centre was a deep knowing that leaving the work to which we are duty-bound as people committed to collective liberation is not possible. There is no one to save us if we want to live in reciprocity and mutuality beyond saviour complexes and dynamics of power and domination. There is nowhere to go where we will not be confronted with how intimately capitalism is lived through us, so if we wanted to leave the work we would still be interfacing with it and infected by it. Wouldn't it be better for us to be able to interface with it from a place of power, dignity and greater agency? Wouldn't it be better that, as we are living in changed times, we might be able to shape and change the times towards life and liberation for all?

In this work, we have continually returned to ourselves, to our commitments of economic and broader justice, and to a practice of recommitment on what it takes from all of us.

We must do it.

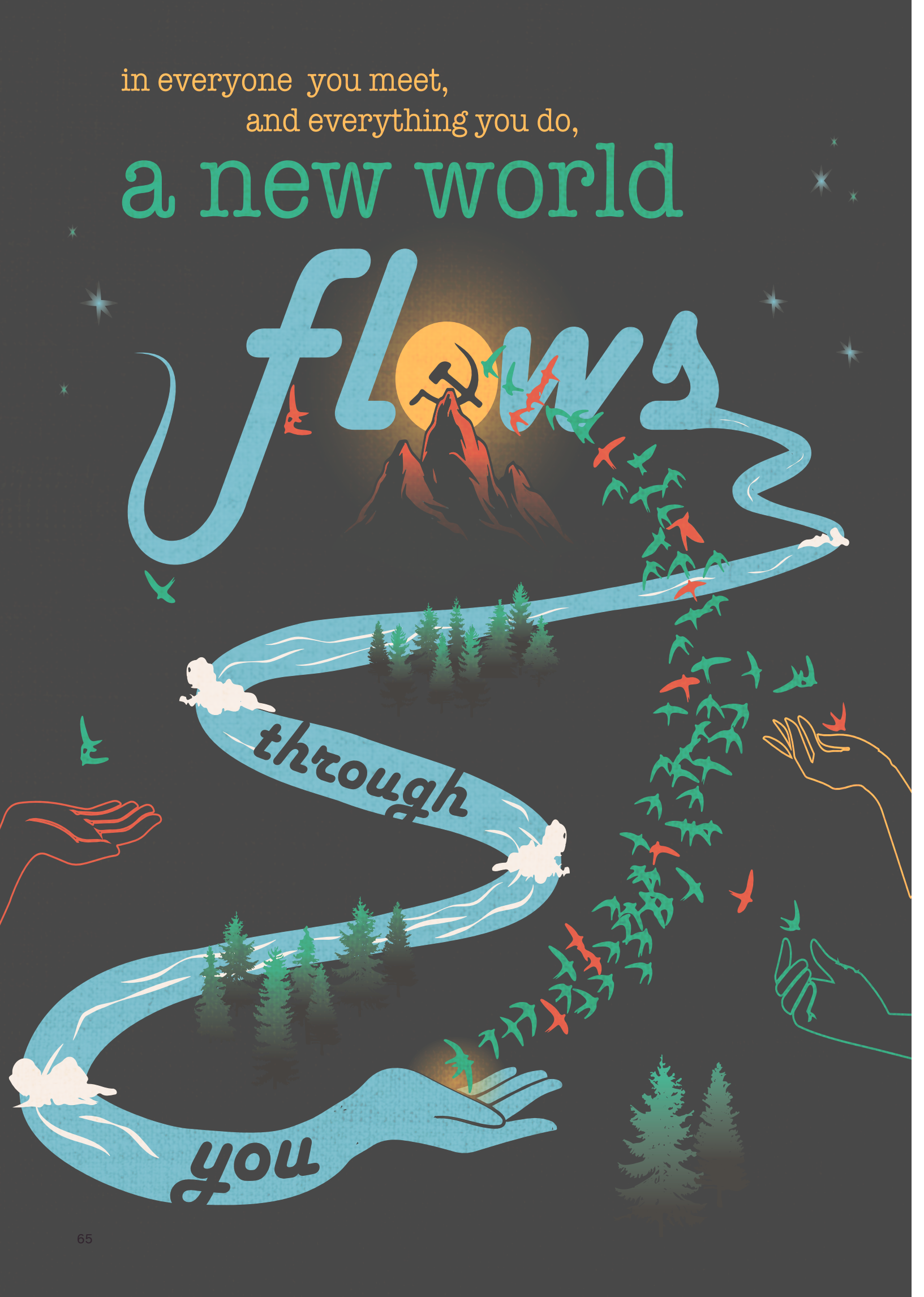
in everyone you meet,
and everything you do,

a new world

flows

through

you



Here are some of our learnings:

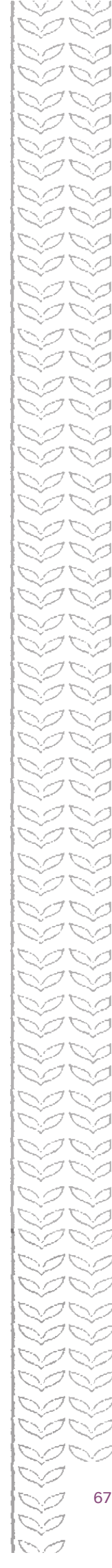
We acknowledge that there have been profound contributions to the work of bridging climate, social and economic justice, and increasingly through the lens of racial justice. We are grateful to have many peers forwarding visions for how we might liberate ourselves from unjust accumulation, including philanthropy, and use it to drive visions and practices of equity and dignity for all life and living worlds. We begin with thanks and gratitude for those that have been alongside us in this work.

In our learnings, we steered away from doing a literature review of existing findings and reports in order to be able to speak from a space of deep practice and situational analysis that RRJ generated within us. This was a deliberate process for us, not to invisibilise the wealth of work that has been done already, but to be able to clearly give expression and articulation to the unique sets of conditions we were responding to, such as the philanthropic field in the heart of empire, a Covid-19 pandemic, and the murder of George Floyd, amongst driving an experiment like ours with a team of Black and Global Majority people, all of us without philanthropic or funding careers. It was these sets of conditions – as well as our unique backgrounds as co-founders across many fields, ranging from community organising to education to racial justice to structural organising and interventions – that placed us in a position to find our orientation of practice/strategies. This report is trying to tune into all of this, while trying to distil the last couple of years in building RRJ. What you will go on to find is the product of emotional, spiritual, intellectual and embodied reckoning of what it takes for us to do this work.

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By “us” we mean, again, any and all of us committed to divesting from paradigms of oppression from colonialism and capitalism more broadly. By “this work” we mean the neoliberal psyche that has been stitching us into these paradigms which we are now consciously refusing to consent to anymore.

When we began our process of starting to collate, evaluate and understand the impact and learnings from RRJ, we found ourselves grappling with many, many tensions that in our isolation felt specific to us and not symptomatic of global crises and arrangement. We had isolated ourselves to stay deeply focused on the work and accountable to the breadth of communities we were responsible for in RRJ, meanwhile feeling that our inability to address some of the structural barriers were personal failings.



Both of us (Farzana and Nusrat) have been stewards of other organisations we have founded and led, and we have grappled with how difficult it is to build and grow alternatives/interventions within the current structural context in the UK. Nonetheless, we were not prepared for the level of dissonance we would experience in building RRJ.

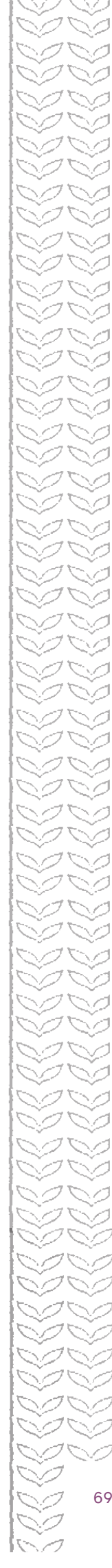
We, unlike before, were placed in positional power by absorbing some type of funder role without actually having the structural power; we are both women of colour without philanthropic professional careers or connections. It was shocking to watch the ways in which we deeply internalised a false binary of oppressor and oppressed. By becoming people who could administer resources, we had assumed we could now address the deep structural constraints (from our very humble humble humble placement). This was not from a place of grandiose sense of self, but from a place of deep over-accountability. We have watched our Black and Global Majority kin assume positions of power and “take the money and run” too many times. We were also acutely aware of how often proximity to money and thereby proximity to power distorts even people of integrity. So in our over-extending, into making ourselves responsible for things that are broader structural work, we both absorbed too much risk that was not sustainable in the long term, and assumed too much responsibility without the correlating power to meaningfully shift things.

For example, what does it mean for us to move a million in a moment of crisis, while billions are being hoarded and in fact invested in our oppression? We do not say this to generate a sense of fatigue, but we share this as we are watching many of our incredible peers start to (following generations of work by those long gone before us) build new alternatives and radical organisations and practices for the first time. We do not want their leadership to fall trap to these ideas that, when we are progressing through our leadership, we must assume an imbalanced and unsustainable level of responsibility for what is truly necessary for the level of transition we need. At its heart, this prompted a deep experience of becoming right-sized to our context and therefore more effective and honest about the scale of work and how much we need each other. When we are right-sized to our context we can do work that is best placed and strategic. We can also gather the peers who need to share responsibility and risk with us together. After all, we can go some of it alone, but we always go further together. With the pooling of our skills and strategies, we can also become multidimensional movements that can act as a counterforce in numbers, even if not in might and money.

In our process of learning and reflecting, we gathered peers from the field, mostly but not exclusively Black and Global Majority peers, to understand what it means to do this work. We interrogated how uniquely challenged and vulnerable Black and Global Majority people are working in UK philanthropy, and most importantly, how the work of experiments in times of crises and urgency, specifically those led by racialised people on the ground, are positioned to fail. In our co-learning spaces, we started to see how much the internalised “failures” we both had around what was working and not working in RRJ were really spotlighting a set of symptoms that were widespread even beyond the UK and the field of philanthropy.

The extent to which we collapse and fold into ourselves when we are doing propositional work (defined below more extensively) is a signifier of how deeply successful the structuring of colonisation and racial capitalism have been in arranging the social order that we live in. It is not just that we were confronted by systems and institutions at every turn that did not want money to flow towards communities of colour, it was even more insidious than this. We discovered how deeply entangled and enmeshed the social codes³² of oppression are in the sets of choices we have. Every choice not only had a shadow and light, but within our current paradigm, those choices also had a trade off; something was being compromised no matter how much we tried to mitigate or diminish the impact.

This means the illusion often in our propositional work is that, as we begin to build, we follow the trajectory of those with inherited and accumulated privilege such as whiteness, class privilege or power and money. So much of the work then became about what it meant for us to personally and structurally transform our conditions to help us create a new set of choices and conditions, and to understand that, as we are unmaking the current sets of conditions, we are also being unmade. Being unmade is both the onslaught of brutal state violence that does not want us to pursue alternatives, and yet it is also the necessary process of liberation whereby old versions of us have to continually die in order to generate new versions compatible with new contexts.



The work of muscular and structural repatterning is not swift. This, of course, is dissatisfying for a global culture of capitalism which convinces people that instant is effective – another reason why we measure ourselves wrong. If we were not quick enough, we were not being effective, and the change was not happening. The “quick enough” was not pertaining to slow mobilisation (we could not have humanly moved any faster), the “quick enough” was pertaining to how quick change and transformation were happening. This surfaced some important reflections, which were not new, but affirmed how those of us committed to the long arc of liberation through transformation find value in our work without needing instant gratification or validation. It also surfaced questions on how we navigate the scale at which systems of domination operate, while we are kept divided, conquered and compartmentalised as part of controlling any real insurgence.

Some of the central questions we often returned to: What does it take to resource racial justice? What does it ask of us, and who must we become? What will a racially just world need, and on the trajectory towards it, what are the skills, strategies and practices that we will need? How might we grow them in a time that is deepening racialised inequity and rampantly reliant on other-isation in order to maintain racial hierarchy and other forms of domination?

What we understood to be an emergency response, which then later revealed itself to be a radical experiment, we now understand to be in the line of propositional work.

Our peer and RRJ co-founder Immy Kaur defines propositional work as work that:

“Deeply respects and understands and is in relationship with the work that opposes violent and unjust systems through resistance, but is uniquely situated in a way that it postures towards designing, building and ushering in demonstrations of the new stories, systems and infrastructures rooted in justice and the futures we imagine together. Propositional work is focused on giving those ideas form in today, and not feeling lost in just opposing that which we are fighting against. It gives energy, creativity, design and demonstration to the liberatory futures we seek today.”

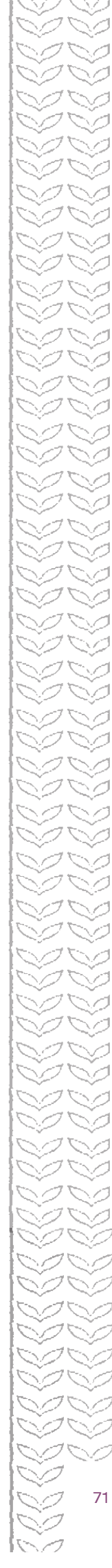
Propositional work is the organising principle that tasks us with being active and agency-filled contributors and shapers of our reality and context. Unlike oppositional work, it does not preoccupy itself with dismantling, as crucial as that work is. Instead, it tries to surface, alongside oppositional work, alternatives that render the current system redundant. It invites us into agency because we are not waiting for someone outside of us to save us or get us free. It is saying: we are here, and we are responsible for what is here, including what is not working. We can give things their appropriate contextual analysis, by attributing histories and political analysis to the types of oppressions and harms that have brought us to this moment, such as colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. However in propositional work we cannot stay stuck there. We use the contextual analysis to be acutely aware of what needs to be healed and repaired and what must not be resurrected.

The deeper we commit to taking responsibility for the environments, societies and communities that we are part of, the more we realise that the us-versus-them dynamic within our movements keeps us preoccupied with constructing new responses to oppressors and things we are resisting, instead of generating our propositions, alternatives, solutions and strategies from a space of liberatory imagining and more wholeness – the very wholeness oppression works hard to deprive us of. This is the reason why we seek to complicate and enrich ideas of complicitness, not to make those harmed and violated feel diminished or erased of their experiences, but to invite each of us into betterness through becoming accountable and responsible for what we can do.

“Restoration of land and relationship pushes that turning wheel [from the Industrial Growth Society to a life sustaining civilization]...Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting.

As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us.”³³

– Robin Wall Kimmerer



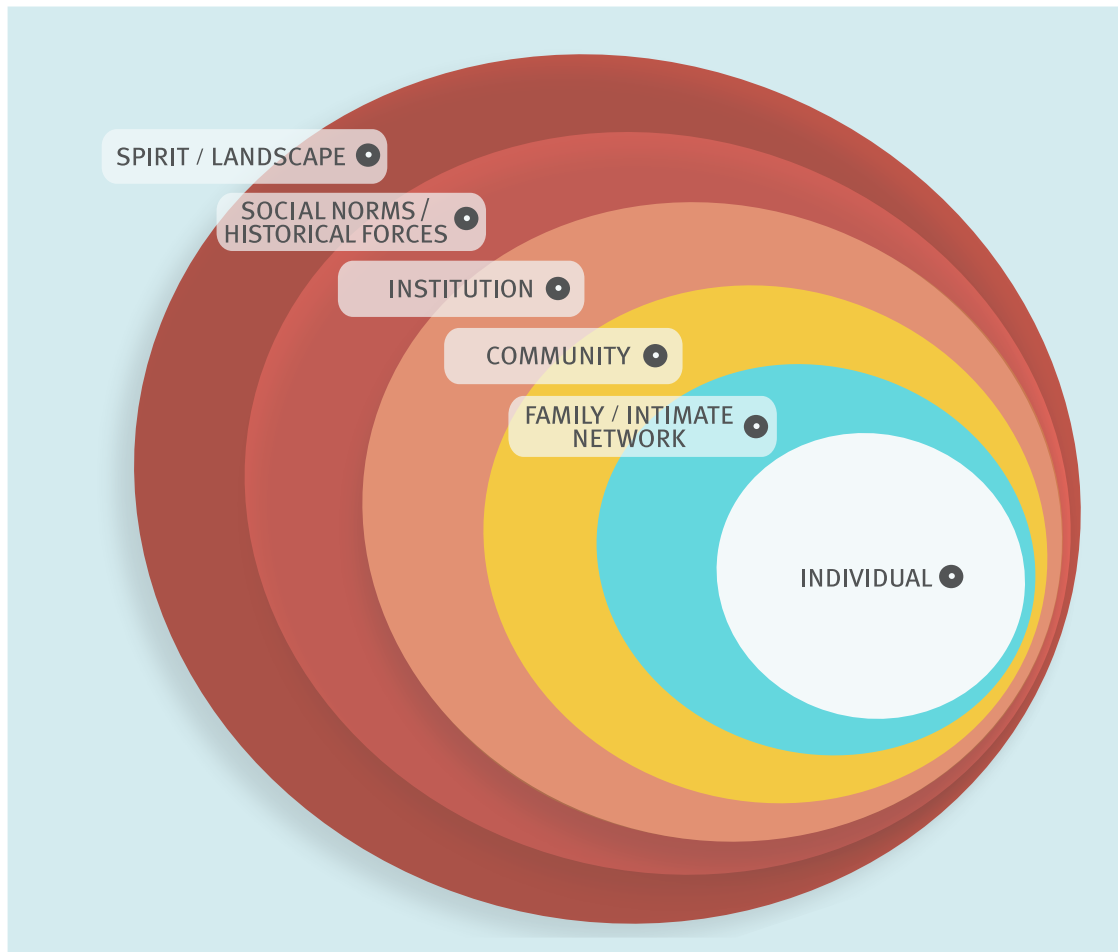
We are setting out some of our learnings in what it means to do propositional work and the conditions that it activates in us as engendered by our social, historical, political and economic shapings and conditions. These conditions often originate and are trained by the very cultures and systems we are trying to repattern ourselves out of. They are the default modes of operating and organising when we are not conscious of them. But what is perhaps more critical is that they are often assumed to be “normal”, inevitable, unchangeable, immutable, unending conditions. Sometimes they are even considered to be our common sense or popular understandings. While they have been arranged to be deeply robust and shapeshifting, these conditions are not fixed. They can be transformed, and we transform them when we generate new sets of conditions. The way we generate new sets of conditions is by consistently practising new choices with ourselves and one another incrementally and iteratively.

This simple yet powerful redress starts to open up new contexts and conditions for us. These contexts and conditions then go on to generate new contexts and conditions. We understand this to be the work of sustained revolution and repatterning. Sustained revolution is the ongoing act of transforming ourselves and our environments to keep opening up new possibilities that enable us to act and fashion a totally different reality. We utilised a theory of change, or a practice of transformation, that holds how multidimensional our leveraging arms are in the work of sustained revolution and transformation. We understand that the nature of our oppressions are interconnected across many tiers of social stratification and arrangement, so that it is impossible to effectively actualise any deep change without a holistic approach.

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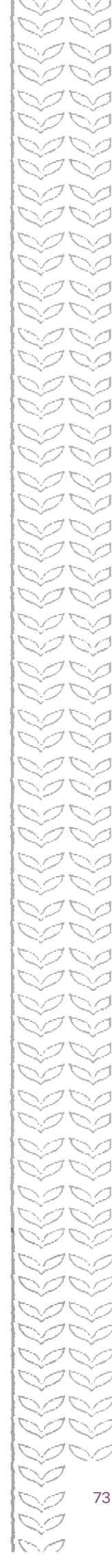
This does not mean we do everything at once, but that we have an understanding and positioning that supports an ecosystem of change to drive the overhaul and reimagining that is needed. An effective tool that helped visualise the key touch points that we needed to work across and identify where we were positioned is the Sites of Shaping, Sites of Change³⁴ model shared by Staci K. Haines and Generative Somatics. This infographic is an articulation of some of the ways we might understand our different chosen and/or imposed placements amidst the multilayered ways in which we impact change.

SITES OF SHAPING, SITES OF CHANGE



This graphic is based on a public health framework, developed by Alan Grier and generationFIVE.

Building from this type of framework we are able to understand that our very sites of being, harmed or oppressed, can also be the very spaces we must and can create liberation from. It also, with inspection, reminds us how entangled systems of oppression are and how they embed and span all facets of life and living worlds. In the work of building alternatives or having radical experiments in times of multiple polycrises that extend possibility and justice, we have to look at how we are located in the ecosystem and who else we must partner and peer with strategically, in order to truly transform the layers of shaping. This will also include our unlikely and unintended stakeholders within this social paradigm. What this means for those of us who are building and growing alternatives is that we are necessarily tasked to not only change our own practices; we have to move laterally to grow a context and field in which our alternative or new practices can seed and flourish, while also simultaneously dismantling or transforming other parts of the ecosystem for a more connected and integrated effort, one that is made less vulnerable to fragility and becoming reintegrated into the dominant structures/status quo.



5.1 THE SITUATIONAL CONTEXT IN WHICH PROPOSITIONAL WORK TAKES PLACE

We are situated in a time of deep constraint and juxtapositional opportunity. Black and Global Majority diasporas are structurally disadvantaged and disempowered socially, economically and politically. In the wake of this (we continue to use wake like Christina Sharpe defines wake, not as “post” or aftermath, but as the alive and shaping present), it is rare that Black and Global Majority people are able to self-determine or self-govern around their material and aspirational needs and dignities, particularly in countries where white supremacy is the dominant mechanism of social arrangement. Therefore, the propositional work of materially building alternatives, both long-term and interim, is an under-resourced and unprecedented landscape particularly for Black and Global Majority people.

This should not undermine the incredible ways outside of state visibility and institutionalising that communities of Black and Global Majority backgrounds have self-organised to create their own lifelines and infrastructures. It points to what they are already doing in spite of resource and state recognition. However, this leaves the work of Black and Global Majority people to consistently fail to meet the needs of their communities as their capacities are not resourced to operate at scale or with sustainability. Beyond this, it leaves very little space for the longevity of racial justice work to thrive while centering our dignity and not just our survival. The immediacy of the work is so often based around our material needs redressing inequity and violence caused by racial oppression. It is only after we are able to stabilise some of this in our communities, that we are able to build towards more structural capacities and apparatuses that can intervene and off-ramp us from white supremacy as the totality of human experience, social existence and, more encompassingly, life.

5.2 BALANCING THE SHADOW AND LIGHTNESS OF OUR CHOICES

Often we are making choices that firstly appear as choices but very rarely are. These choices are the consequences of an arrangement and coding of systems that are designed. Sadly the ones that arranged and designed our current configuration of the world are those whose consciousness and imaginaries are deeply oppressive and fragmented. This means that our choices are infected by these very starting points of oppression and fragmenting. This might seem like quite a presumptive statement to make about the political and social nature of our world, however this is only if we understand the arrangement of the world to exist on material planes only – which is what white supremacy and colonisation have made us believe is the case. And while system thinkers profess to try to connect all the aspects that interconnect and interface with us beyond simply the material, we can no longer neglect that what is called systems thinking is in fact rooted in Indigenous technology.

This frame is actually an Indigenous cosmovision and wayfinding tool that rejects the intelligible architecture that holds up our physical reality as the only reality. So, when we are talking about the interconnectedness of our world, we must also bring in the worlds that world this world. Therefore, we are raising to the forefront of our collective consciousness, that which oppression invisibilises. Meaning the forces that present themselves as invisible hands are actually dynamics of oppression that can live structurally as visible, and somatically as invisible. In the absence of structural justice, this presents us with opportunities to rewire the social codes through our somatic repatterning in order to create new infrastructure and present ourselves with “embodied capacities” to create new choices.³⁵

In the context of propositional work, it is important to understand we do not have the optimum choices at present; we have to grow them, we have to practise and rehearse them with each other. And we have to create a new somatic and embodied template by which people can anticipate the new choices as our new normal. This will first become our relational infrastructure and then our material infrastructure with each new template reducing the amount of shadow (trauma, fragmenting, oppression, etc.), and increasing the presence of lightness. We use the word “lightness” over “light” because we know the words “light” and “shadow” have been used to reinforce racialised demarcation. We use lightness as the opposite of density, which is the measure of compactness – the opposite of choice-fullness.

What we are segueing into, is first a recognition that our work has implicit contradictions, and secondly, considerations of how we might navigate and grapple with those contradictions. We will have to grow a new set of postures and practices that help us to have the embodied competencies needed to skillfully move between the shadows of our work and the lightness we are trying to grow.

5.3 TURNING AWAY FROM COMFORT AND EMBRACING THE CONTRADICTIONS

So much of our realities and lives are pressed against forms of hardship that have not eased, but only become compounding. As racialised people, we are feeling the relentless onslaught of injustices in the UK and across the world. We are seeking justice to soothe deep ancestral and present-day pain that is living through us. Everyday it feels like we cannot take on another injury, so we long for comfort so that we may have a pause to heal. This is a very legitimate need. As Nkem Ndefo, leading expert and practitioner in liberatory trauma work and **racialised trauma**, reminds us: “you cannot heal under oppression”. She gives the analogy of an open wound that is consistently being cut much like how racism is consistently cutting us. If the cutting does not stop, the skin cannot heal. This is a precise analogy of our time where we are seeking to band-aid relentless injuries without disarming the weapons that sever us and prevent us from coming together long enough for medicine to actually take root in us.

The process of dismantling structural oppression is structural justice. While an obvious statement to make, our comprehension of “structural” is often lacking. When we, in mainstream consciousness, talk about “structural”, we are talking about institutions and public bodies. However, in our understanding of “structural”, we are using the term to speak to the DNA, the muscle memory, the reflexes, the bones and the total flesh of our collective architecture, which has been designed to limit the life of that which is communicating the boundaries of our world (e.g. resources both material and spiritual). “Structural” for us is the totalising wireframes of our reality that go beyond institutions and infrastructures, though those are the sites that most deeply and disproportionately lock us into the wireframes we live in now.

Grappling with the deep systemic and structural shifts that need to take place goes hand in hand with the internal processes we develop to transition between these states and towards something entirely different and unfamiliar. The transitioning between different states of ongoing liberation is not a comfortable process. In fact, it is a type of death that we are doula-ing, because the very parts of us that thrive in these oppressive structures are the parts of us that are incentivised by it. Therefore the deaths that we incur are putting to bed the parts of us that can be unshackled from the current system that we no longer need, but may often latently desire. In this work of collapsing the parts of us that have been nurtured by oppression we will find ourselves deeply distressed and also destabilised.

Our material realities are made to be constraining, and resources are withdrawn to create even more precarity and pressure so as to distract us from the sheer level of corporate and oligarchical greed. We need to generate a response of radical redistribution, resource justice and deeper practices of interdependence as we face the engineered tipping point of our planetary limits. In this foreshadowing context of extreme unpredictability and confrontation with catastrophe, we need to be training and practising.

This returns us to how we build the interim infrastructures: through growing our embodied competencies to skillfully and appropriately manoeuvre us towards a different projected reality that is able to structurally and materially manifest.

We have identified a few preliminary conditions of this work that feel widespread amongst our peers who are doing propositional work. Many of us have built our organisations (containers, spaceships, vehicles, vessels) and practices responding to need, as opposed to start-up culture and entrepreneurial ambition. What this means is a lot of our discoveries about the edges and pressure points of our work have been grappled with in isolation. The inability to be discursive amongst ourselves about what is symptomatic in this work has meant we have struggled to articulate what are patterns and conditions of experimenting out loud, within a context that has set us up for “failure” and to fold. The engineered “projectisation” of propositional work that is putting forward alternatives through short-term funding is a habitual reminder that our strategies and solutions are not being taken seriously enough to have the full length of their lifecycle.

5.4 TRANSITION MEANS IMPERMANENCE AND CHANGE

“In order to regain the future we must nurture our relationship to the unknown.”

-Yuk Hui³⁶

A paradoxical and uninvestigated part of transition is what surfaces in people as they embark on shifting from states of oppression to ongoing liberation. People who have undergone therapeutic, healing or spiritual processes whereby they are trying to move from an oppressed state of trauma and fragmentation to a more liberated state of choice-fullness, consent and agency, may be the most familiar with what happens when we undergo transformation. In this movement from what has felt “normal” and native to a remembrance of what is *actually* native to us, there are many surfacings of emotions and experiences that feel disorientating. Change necessitates flux. What we are experiencing as we liberate ourselves from current conditions is the destabilisation of getting unstuck where we have calcified, and relinquishing the hyper control and management that systems of oppression make us internalise.

In a similar vein, building a propositional experiment or a body of work implies heavy doses of destabilisation. In each iteration it oscillates between complete disorganisation and a sense of clarity and direction. This is the rhythm inherent in transition, yet our inability to digest and metabolise disorganisation as an inherent entropy of worlding, keeps us afraid of building towards new things and how discovery can make us relinquish all the places we have settled into. Alongside this is a threat to the idea of permanence or perpetuity that has been mythologised as a virtue by capitalism. Capitalism has indoctrinated us into a belief that it can help us buy eternal life and infinite accumulation as a way to touch God or immortalise ourselves as one. Maybe it's a headstone with our name on it, or maybe it is the skyscrapers that keep growing with vacant floors, or maybe it is the social media presence that is digitalising our entire existence into clouds that can store us unendingly.

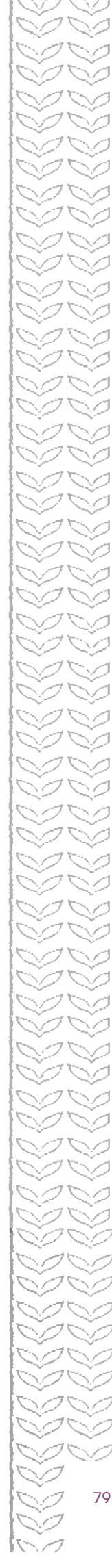
Whatever the nature of this false promise of permanence, it has been conflated with safety. As a result, we seek safety in the default which is the current context and conditions. Our work as liberatory people seeking just economics must allow ourselves to be frequented by impermanence and instability for long enough to be able to mould that moment of elasticity into a new path.

36 Dunker, A. (2021), Planetary Thinking - Philosopher Yuk Hui asks how art can transform technology, 19th November 2021, Nordic Art Review. Available at: kunstkritikk.com/planetary-thinking/#:~:text=If%20our%20desire%20to%20calculate,our%20relationship%20to%20the%20unknown

5.5 THE CAPACIOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM ALIGNING

We have already touched on the fraughtness of propositional work because it is bound by conditions that are riddled with contradictions. What we want to emphasise here is that in the messy work of disentangling from current systems, we can get distracted by our personal traumas, projections and assumptions, which are often the result of our situational and structural conditions and inheritance. While these are very human responses, they do not allow us space and capacity to delicately move into capaciousness or to safely do this work without collateral damage. Too often, we are managing the reactivity coming from our field and also our peers as they navigate, like us, the disorientating impermanence and instability. While these dynamics are alive and thrown up in the air, we are more prone to conflict, misunderstanding and armouring up. Our ability to hold each other – and more importantly, where we want to go – is quickly diminished by this stress/trauma response. This is why establishing where we want to go together is a task for us from the onset; it is how we have grown the bandwidth to navigate these necessary growth and iteration points.

When a contradiction shows up, how do we forward a vision when the work is iterative and emergent? How do we visualise a direction and destination when we need to co-create the future with as many of us as possible, which means moving with many parts? How do we demonstrate the worlds we are building towards when we are having to mobilise at pace and in crisis? When we do not have the luxury of retreats to strategise for days on end as our communities are drowning and dying? Amidst all of this, we still have to keep the oars moving, towards these unknown worlds that feel longingly familiar, yet deeply estranged because we have been ruptured from them. We need to invite ourselves to a degree of capaciousness and pre-forgiveness as we get deep in this messy, entangled and sometimes re-traumatising work.



It is a neoliberal project to try to promise us that the safety of comfort is more desired than the necessary violence of liberation. It has successfully convinced us to seek dopamine and feel-good hits as a way to keep us addicted to oppression. We cannot presume that our sense of safety under this hypercontrol and management is real. Within the level of discomfort and unknowns that we will have to metabolise, we need the alignment and integrity of our thoughts, values, speech and actions to create the consistency that becomes trustworthy; this is how we extend and generate trust. We are not absolving accountability; we are honouring the expressiveness of emergence by demonstrating the consistent commitment of following through.

Accepting and anchoring in the clarity that human beings building human things will inevitably surface our humanness and the limits of our abilities is an invitation to become more deeply interdependent. Whenever we find ourselves hitting the threshold of what we have to offer, this is the opportunity to invite someone else to carry the load with us. A politics that deepens our **relational consciousness**, affords us humanity, provides spaciousness for where it will hurt and sometimes harm – we can choose to let this be loving.

5.6 CENTERING OURSELVES TO MOVE WITH APPROPRIATE ACCOUNTABILITY

It is a widely known characteristic of those that are marginalised to also be the people that are most generous and giving. We see even in the statistics around charity and giving that people with the lowest income are often disproportionately drawing from their money to give in aid and charity at higher stakes than those with more income and wealth. There is something about the way the injury of poverty and how it has harmed generates, not always but most often, the deep yearning to help others. This is also mirrored in our organising spaces in a different way. We see our most vulnerable organisers as often the people who absorb the deepest amount of harm and risk in order to protect their kinfolk. Some of this comes from an overfamiliarity with the impact of harm and violence; a visceral body remembrance awakens and broadcasts through them the threat and danger already experienced. Their body has internalised what is at stake and how that felt. This propels them to act from a place of over-accountability, meaning taking responsibility for things that are either:

- 1) beyond their means to change, or
- 2) beyond their capacity to change.

This impulse comes from our most well-meaning selves, but if we were to ask ourselves: “Are our actions from this place most useful for the people we are trying to ally with? Are these actions kind towards ourselves? And do these actions serve the highest practice of liberation we are seeking?” We would no doubt find that we fall short. Instead, what would be more generative would be to grow the bandwidth to love the parts of ourselves that awaken when we sense and anticipate harm and danger, and find and draw upon the tools that help us move from a place of greater agency or awareness. From this space, choose the course of action that honours all the parts that we seek to care for without over-extending into unsustainable saviouring. Sadly, the extent of trauma and intimacy with violence and harm means we are often in over-reactivity, vigilance and hyper-managing our context and environments to bring about some sense of safety.

This is an earnest and valid desire emerging out of deeply undeserved circumstances where we needed protection, care and love. So, the task becomes, how do we fashion the love, care and protection that we and our communities long for and have been systemically and structurally unmet in, while also ensuring we are not over-extending in a way that ends up undermining that love, care and protection, because our over-accountability is not resourced enough in itself?

“The privileged practise most under-accountability. The marginalised practise most over-accountability.”³⁷

- Staci K. Haines

A broader consequence of over-accountability is twofold. First, it distributes the onus of accountability on the people often least responsible, and secondly it trains the most marginalised to keep self-abandoning and moving from a place of depletion and loss of dignity. A wider consequence of over-accountability is that marginalised communities, in an effort to stabilise their environments, end up having to calcify into their current conditions. What we mean by this is: the more we overextend beyond our capacity, the more we end up depleted, and therein is the vicious loop. However, this is a stress and trauma response that requires tending and compassion, not shame and pathologising. It is akin to how when the body goes into a freeze state and gets fixed in place, it needs warmth to thaw out.

While this protective mechanism serves the trauma that needs safety and stability, we need to be able to embrace the contradictory and destabilising nature of transformation, albeit safely, in order to transition towards just and dignifying futures. Therefore, it becomes part of our obligation as committed people to economic justice and border liberation to grapple with our default or conditioned tendencies, responses and reactivities, so we can present ourselves and each other with better and aligned choices. Again, we cannot escape doing the inner work for the more effective external transformations.

The only way to bear the overwhelming pain of oppression is by telling, in all its detail, in the presence of witnesses and in a context of resistance, how unbearable it is. If we attempt to craft resistance without understanding this task, we are collectively vulnerable to all the errors of judgement that unresolved trauma generates in individuals. It is part of our task as revolutionary people, people who want deep-rooted, radical change, to be as whole as it is possible for us to be. This can only be done if we face the reality of what oppression really means in our lives, not as abstract systems subject to analysis, but as an avalanche of traumas leaving a wake of devastation in the lives of real people who nevertheless remain human, unquenchable, complex and full of possibility.

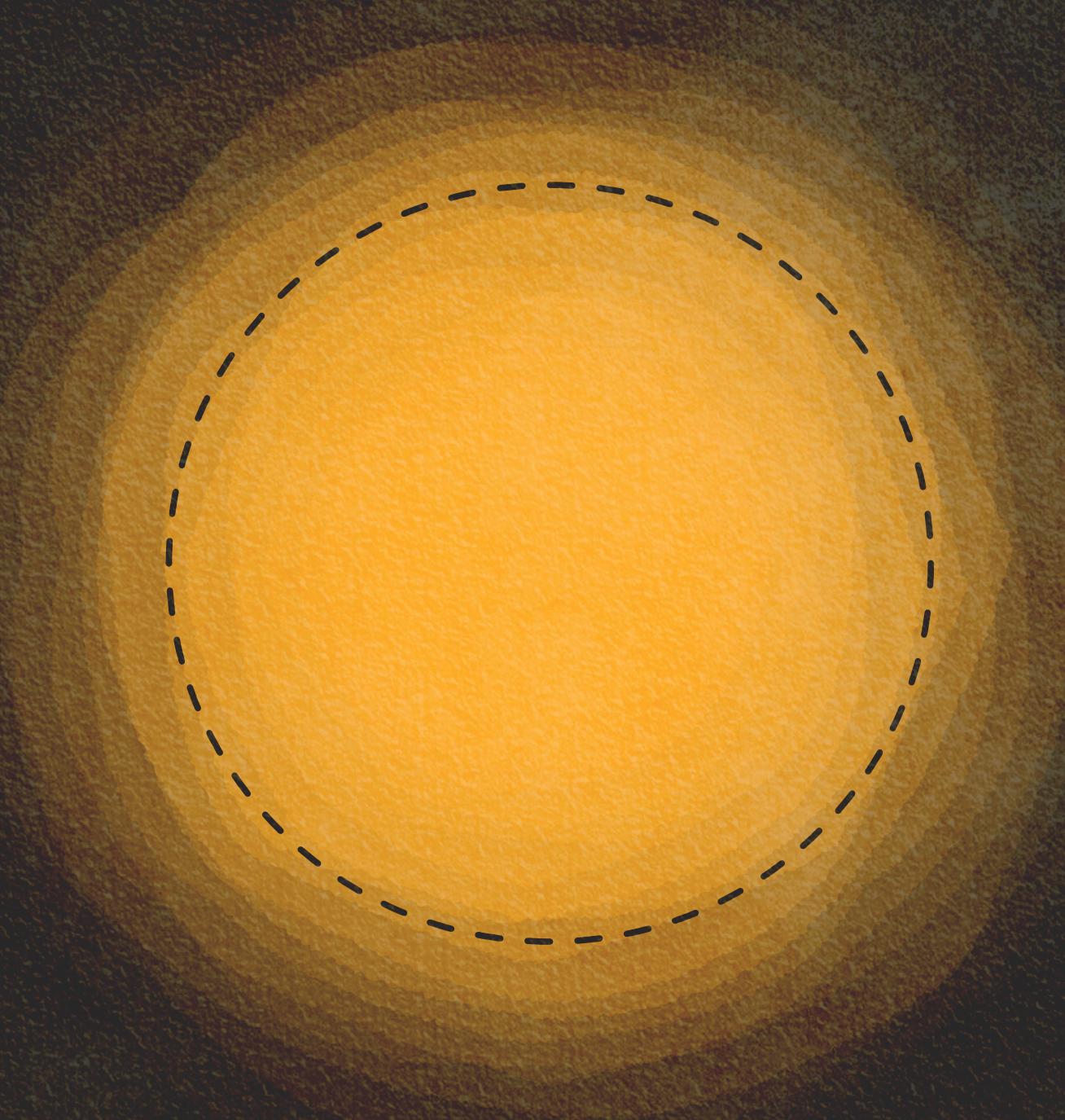
– Aurora Levins Morales³⁸

37 Shared with us by Staci K. Haines

38 Morales, A.L. (1998), *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*, South End Press

We have been setting out some of the aforementioned conditions and tendencies, or as Staci K. Haines articulates, “conditioned tendencies”, of our movement and organising, pertaining to challenges we face, particularly in propositional work. We hope this selection of condition tendencies helps point to and map some of the backdrop against which we are doing this work, and how we might develop strategies to repattern out of these condition tendencies and give us a new set of postures and practices in our work. This list is by no means an exhaustive selection of dynamics hindering our most powerful movement and coalition-making. It is a signpost for the need to grapple with how what we have internalised becomes the behavioural and structural patterns that determine what we do and how we do it, even when they contradict the values we are trying to emerge from and embed.

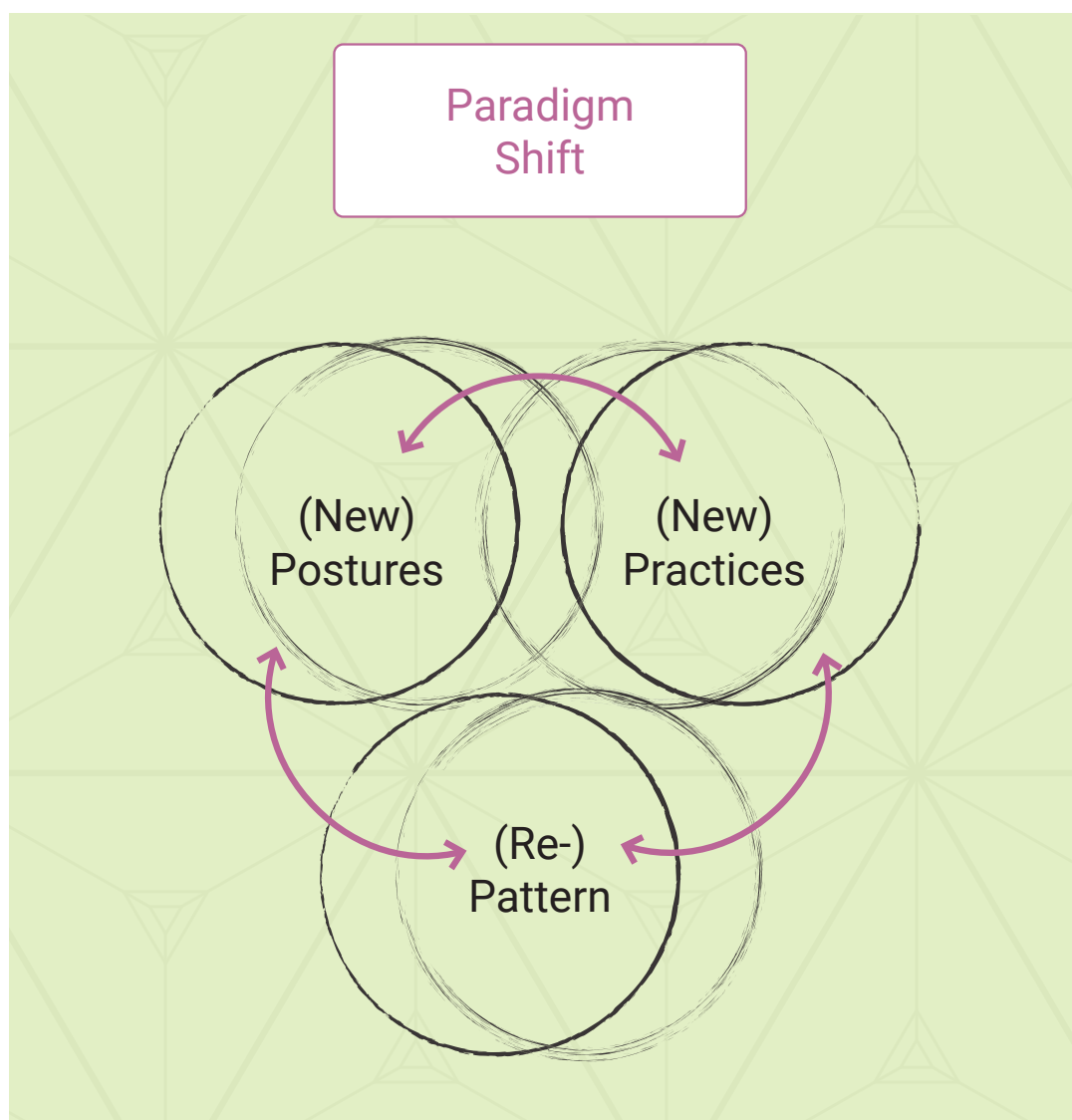
the revolution
will not be
perfect



what is to be done
has not been done before

6. REPATTERNING OUR CURRENT CONDITIONS WITH NEW POSTURES AND PRACTICES

A model Farzana Khan uses to articulate this transformational arc and how we un-condition ourselves from the default is:



We draw upon this model to express some of our findings and how overlapped they are. The section below helps us explore some of the ways in which we have tried to troubleshoot and wayfind the hard edges of propositional work and experimenting out loud that are increasingly requiring us to move at scale and at pace. Below, you will find a series of approaches and methodologies that help us find new patterns amongst ourselves to stitch a different reality together. We hope you will explore these strategies, adapt them according to your context, and share with us what the application or existing use of some of these strategies have surfaced for you.

6.1 CONTEXTUAL COHERENCE

To fulfil her task of building organizations and a broader movement, the conscious organiser must be guided in her work by her answers to basic questions: What's the nature of the system? What are the current conditions within this system? And what are the forces that have the interest and the capability to make change?

- Jaron Browne³⁹

We live in a world that has been organised to keep us separate and interrupted. Piecing together holistic understandings and assessments of our situation is a near impossible task in this era, because of the level of material, spiritual, intellectual and emotional severance we have undergone over centuries. It is a task of justice and liberation to begin the process of deep remembrance and to allow us to carry the lineages and technologies that enable us to make more cohesive assessments of our reality. This means having the contextual understanding to ground where we are located now as a result of where we have been.

Systems thinking has supported some of the work of reconnecting the layers of separation. However, as discussed earlier, systems thinking emerges from Indigenous and spiritual technologies which have helped people wayfind in charting the unknown. They may argue that the unknown is actually the state of the world and life that has not been captured to control and be dominated. The unknowns of the universe and life are part of living with an honest awareness of our epistemological limits, the gaps in our knowing leave space for life, source, spirit to show us the way.

We have already discussed the deep entanglements and codes that undergird our lives and how we are still moving in a time of deep unpredictability. This is why contextual relevance and situational analysis become critical when we are moving through deep uncertainty, because they help us see the patterns and help us attune to the appropriate courses of action needed. Where we are going is deeply determined by where we have been, so there must be processes in our political and social practices as we build towards new futures where we are ongoingly discovering, in parallel, the ancestral frames.

The current wireframe of our reality has been deeply infected by systems of oppression, so we cannot evade the work of consciously unplugging from these systems. Increasingly in our work, we will find how systems of oppression, like settler-colonisation and racial capitalism, are viral in nature and deeply adaptive.

39 Williams, S. Browne, J. Franco, M., Negron-Gonzales, J. (2014) *Towards Land, Work & Power: Charting a path of resistance to US-led Imperialism*, Unite to Fight Press

This means they show up in different guises and costumes across different contexts. Our work is to ensure we are also tracking and interrupting the different mutations and discovering where they are showing up in us and how we are building, through our healing work, an antidote.

The work of contextual coherence is how we keep gathering the fragmented parts into an aligned and appropriate uni-form. Coherence is the word we use because it is derived from “cohere”, which is to bring together parts towards wholeness. In a similar vein, we acknowledge that from our deep state of separation and compartmentalising, as well as our somatic individualism from neoliberalism, the work of accessing any form of wholeness is our life’s work and beyond. The way we can support structuring more cohesive and coherent realities is through temporal and spatial weaving. What we mean by this is: across space and time, we can gather more insightful understandings about our context that move beyond the mainstream common sense, underpinned by colonial logic, and towards a more relational consciousness.

Relational consciousness is the work of connecting more deeply across planes, and extends to the more-than-human. To put it simply, our anti-colonial context-building and political analysis has to seek the permission and guidance of knowledge centres that include our body, land, living world, and spirit/source in order to begin a process of really meeting the moment. Anything less than this not only keeps us underskilled in our assessment, organising and activism, but also reconstitutes European cartesian logics that have been used to dispossess racialised people, and causes us to reproduce those logics inside our movements and therefore become annexes of oppression. Our work of cohering our context cannot begin without a fundamental paradigm shift in what it means to know, to be knowing, and where and what informs that knowing.

6.2 MAKING MULTIDIMENSIONAL MOVEMENTS

Building a more wholesome contextual cohesiveness relies on collapsing binary modalities of organising our work. The fixture of good and bad serves in moments of stark violence, however when we are authenticating our work and assessments of reality, we begin to start seeing the entanglements that complicate binary positioning. As a protective mechanism, good and bad can help us to assess threat. However, when the world has been arranged to be chronically harmful and violent, and in turn we are also reproducing harm and violence in everything from our material consumption to our relational politics – which centres humans in a hierarchy of domination over all life – our ways of relating are fundamentally troubled, and there is no purity in our politics.

Within our current context, it is fitting for us to start developing a more multidimensional approach to the multiple polycrises we are facing. In this work, unlike contextual cohesiveness, we are not trying to bring more wholeness into our contextual analysis and understandings. Rather, we are trying to support people to on-board into more holistic and wholesome ways of relating, connecting and responding. The former is about how we come to know, from a more informed and guided space, and the latter is about how we then move and act from this information and guidance.

When we make space to support people to on-ramp into a more wholesome and connected worldview from wherever they are positioned, we are enabling people to move towards an orientation that can be collectively held. For example, holding a circle means everybody is facing from a different position, but attending to the centre in equal measure. It is not a circle if everyone is not holding it in equal measure – it is a blob.

The ability to build a politic where there are more of us collectively holding the material, physical and spiritual centre of our work means bringing people in from different locations and positions. The multidimensional aspect of this is not the same as building transdisciplinary or interdisciplinary teams. It is more nuanced than that. It is finding peer groups that can partner well, share divisions of labour, and individually self-initiate and forward the dimensions of the work we are accountable for. The binary modality that has been living from within us has taught us that value cascades down and reduces from a hierarchy. A multidimensional politics assumes value cannot be added or taken away but is inherent. What it considers is whether the individual is compatible with the depth of the circle.

A task for all of us growing the future is grappling with the difficult and messy task of identifying: do we have the right dimensions being fleshed out by the appropriate people? This raises some challenges, because multidimensional work means we are looking at our work through our lens, and cannot always accurately understand the different leveraging potential across different parts of the circle or work. We also struggle to relinquish false ideas of skill and experience because of how time has been made linear through Gregorian calendars and capitalism.

These notions of time charting progress and experience is based on material time passing, neglecting spiritual and emotional maturation – which means the depth at which somebody is engaged in accessing deeper wisdoms that can then be translated into the world.

This process of this is not bound by age or privilege, but by practice and emotional and spiritual rigour and discipline. If we are really tasking ourselves with the enormity of unmaking oppressive structures like capitalism, then it matters that our teams reflect the magnanimity of the task, in spirit and skill. This is a facet of how we build teams that can hold the centre of our work and move together from different positionalities as needed, without collapsing and moving into conflict because there is no container.

Multidimensional teams are grasping at different parts of the context to help us piece together a more wholesome whole, and are guided by a shared vision. The vision may not be articulated in the same way, or sometimes even understood by the same frames, however, that is not important; they can sense the sketch of an emerging and evolving future that needs to be collectively doula-ed and stewarded. Multidimensional teams are proactive shapers of their context in the direction of a future less known and mostly, deeply anticipated.

6.3 TRAVELLING TOGETHER AS MULTIFACETED MOVEMENTS ON AN ARROW CALLED STRATEGY

We begin this section by making a distinction between multidimensional and multifaceted. In the previous paragraph, we defined multidimensional as the different parts different players play in making transformation robust. In contrast, we speak of multifaceted as the different agendas and issues that different players and different parties can be forwarding in coming together. More specifically, we are talking about how we need cross-movement and cross-solidarity, that reach across even our own assumptions on who is worthy or unworthy of changed worlds. This can look like multi-racial, multi-class, issue-based movements and coalitions, while also positioning different issue-based stakeholders, from NGOs to local authorities to funders.

At RRJ, due to the fact that, as a group of Black and Global Majority artists, activists and organisers, we did not have a million pounds to spare, we had to strategically organise with those that did. Beyond this, we had to consider and act upon how the legacy of RRJ would not just be about moving a million. This was not impactful enough, nor was it advancing our broader vision and mission of economic reparative justice. So, our tactics within this included a range of strategies to work towards this longer goal. This included: building transferable and open-sourced resources; growing a network of a more economically abled community (both in the stakes and literacy of philanthropy and in material resources); and developing an embodied transformation model for funders preparing to divest from capitalism.

The experiment of RRJ also surfaced a rigorous unmaking of so many assumptions that we as co-founders had about the task of resourcing racial justice, and more broadly, economic justice. We hope that our own embodied transformations and deep learnings, in which many of us are engaged, can serve to demonstrate and contribute to a broader enquiry into what it takes to do this work, and what skills and receptivity we need to grow to embark on a lifelong journey of collective service to life, not profit.

This is a time when our coordination around a vision will support the unification, as well as the sustainability, of our movement goals. We are vulnerable to burnout, breakdown, trauma and conflict, as discussed earlier. We are also vulnerable to the extreme power (military and might), protection through privileges, and economic resources that our oppressors yield.

We are perpetually in states of distraction and distortion from being traumatised. This might be as a result of problematic dynamics amongst us, or most often because of orchestrated precarity and fragmentation that keeps us in the “divided and conquered” modus operandi. Finding ways to un-armour the relentless ways in which white supremacy culture and capitalism calcifies in and around us is an important task, but often so consuming that we have very little left to imagine and organise around the central strategy of what we are building outside of whiteness and capitalism as the central strategy.

This means, as it has historically done, our greatest ability to overturn oppressors lies in our effectiveness to mobilise and organise together. In our movement spaces, we too often downplay the intelligence and craft required to build a strategy that can coordinate and align us.

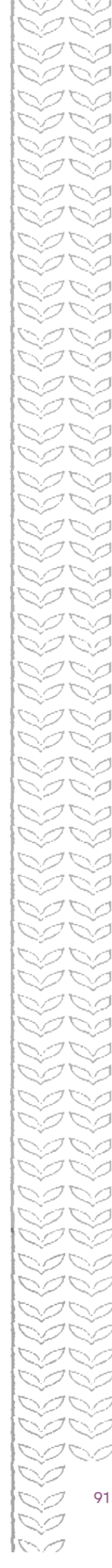
The ability to structure a strategy that can hold the multifaceted needs and nature of our times is a rigorous task that relies on being able to vision the emerging and existing needs of each facet, group and community as well as how an ongoing process of liberation either distorts or activates each facet, group, and community's specific agendas or issues. In tandem, the strategy requires shaping the current landscape to be fertile enough to root and be able to assess what is needed, what is forthcoming. This requires rigorous political education that is connective, so different struggles can see and place one another appropriately. Alongside this, it requires agile oscillating between where we want to go, who we can be, where we have been and who we are right now. This is an almost creative science in understanding the formulaic movements change makes, and the deeply imaginative elasticity required to mobilise so many parts towards a deeper, more serving whole.

When we organise ourselves around a strategy, we are able to move with more integrity. The strategy becomes like an arrow that is moving towards the target and in its movement it wants to be clear, direct and unobstructed.

Though this work is critical, we need other strategies that can forefront and leverage who we are and can be outside of colonisation and racial capitalism. These strategies are the propositional strategies, ones that are concerned with what must be constructed to render the current constructions obsolete and even undesirable. How we build strategies that can do this work relies on our ability to return back to the strategies of contextual coherence and multidimensional movement making. Starting with these as groundwork allows us to surface additional strategies that draw upon what is needed and what can be delivered. As the baseline for strategies, contextual coherence and multidimensional movement-making generate the data from the wisdom of the moment and its people.

Within this understanding, we locate building strategies to be the work of channelling what longs to be lived out of these people and their times. Strategies can evolve and adapt, but, mostly due to the longitudinal nature of how change re-patterns, they require a spaciousness and lifecycle that is generous in years.

What this allows a strategy to do is to become more precise, like the sharpening of the arrowhead of an arrow over the years, because, if effective, it generates new contexts, conditions and capacities from which deeper change can be enacted. Strategies serve to help us vision beyond our current moment in a tactile way, because they are concerned with how we might get there. Effective strategists are people who are engrossed with the devices and technologies (methods and approaches) that enable us to find other ways in each moment. The central question they are asking is, "If we are trying to get over there, what must be practised and grown here that allows us to access the next set of steps towards this place? What must be built here to scaffold us into new landscapes?"



While the work of strategy-making is not new to corporate, NGO and campaign contexts, our relationship to strategy is the thing that we are uplifting in this section. The previous sections of contextual coherence, making multidimensional and multifaceted movements, has hopefully presented some of the preliminary work that needs to take place in order to build really effective strategies; ones that are informed by a totally different way of knowing, being, and being with each other.

6.4 WHAT LOOKS LIKE SOMEWHERE IS OFTEN HOME CALLING US BACK: WHAT IF THE VISION IS A MEMORY?

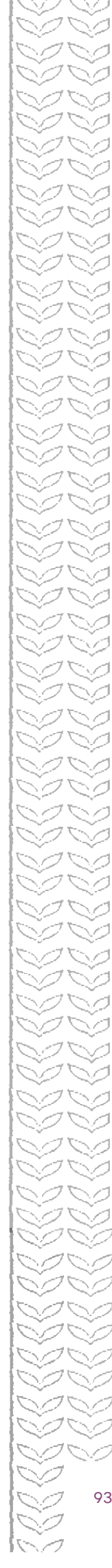
**the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.**

- Mary Oliver⁴⁰

If the logic and premise of oppression is to separate and rupture, then all acts of healing and liberation are necessarily remembrance. From this postulation, our orientation for what is a vision, in movement work and broader justice, is then ancestral, indigenous and futuristic. Our meaning of indigeneity is like the word radical, in that it means bringing us back to the literal roots. It is the state of being that is not repackaged by hundreds and hundreds of oppressive social constructs from gender, race, class, etc., and instead in deep animate relation with all life and living worlds appropriately.

It means, as Mary Oliver says, we are placed in the “family of things”, and through kinship we are accountable and responsible for all life. What this offers us is an account for what our visioning for just and dignifying lives and futures must grapple with. We must grapple with how we dream, in emerging worlds that expand the interdependence of our relational connections across time and space. This metaphysical move is not unfamiliar to the psyches of those who are uncolonised or decolonising, meaning they have not allowed the severance of cartesian logic (“I think therefore I am”) to steal or dispossess their ability to know the deeper valves from which life and therefore learning flows. From this place, our ability to vision is corresponding with our ability to connect and be in relational connection and consciousness.

Vision setting, then, requires us to grow the embodied connective tissue to hold the multitudes that have existed before and will be existing in the future simultaneously, as our ongoing launchpad. This is less a mystical point and more a practice of scenario planning at scale. What will be present? What has been projected into? Where are we intended to be? This skillful practice is not about sharpening the cognitive capacity to predict or calculate through analytics what is to come. It is a deeply spiritual practice. By spiritual practice we mean a discipline that nurtures a deep relationship to connection and receptivity. So much of what we don’t know is not only a direct result of hundreds of years of oppressive fragmentation, but also because of how the living worlds can no longer trust us to be in right-relationship with them.



We must practise a deep intimacy with aliveness and listening. Amidst the everchanging unpredictability that is now going to be our “new normal”, the work of vision setting will require an even sharper capacity to carry forward the wisdoms of those who have charted unknowns, and to do this with permission and consent instead of (bio)mimicry and appropriation.

The ability to do this well is a spiritual leap, because it is the practice of trusting in manoeuvring where there is very little clarity in the rationalised sense, and often generated in un-empirical ways. The act of recommitting towards something that is not yet manifest, is like waiting for a child to be born. While there is a deeper internal feeling that something is there, until the baby has emerged into the material world it feels like a myth. We are using this analogy to remind us that we are in the practice of spiritual leaps all the time anyway. The invitation is to take this capacity and grow it, so we can doula new worlds.

We can look to the greatest visionaries of our time who were not prophetic in nature, but skillful in connecting the multitudes that exist and have to be arranged and organised, to develop new sets of images that can hold the arising circumstance in ever-changing flux.

6.5 CREATING LIFE-AFFIRMING INFRASTRUCTURE IS THE WORK OF TRANSMUTING STRUCTURAL NEGLECT

In Mojave thinking, body and land are the same [...] we often use a shortened form for each: mat-. Unless you know the context of a conversation, you might not know if we are speaking about our body or our land. You might not know which has been injured, which is remembering, which is alive, which was dreamed, which needs care.

You might not know we mean both.

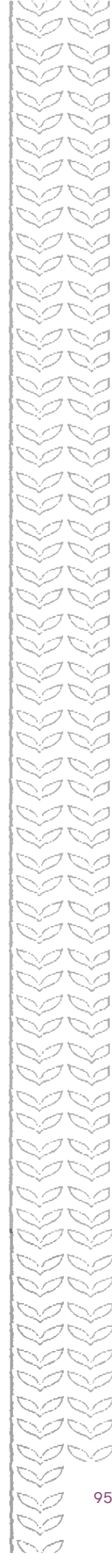
If I say, My river is disappearing, do I also mean, My people are disappearing?

- Natalie Diaz⁴¹

Infrastructures that attend to life have a very serious function in unmaking our current structures that are designed with intent to enact “organised abandonment”, and to be purposefully precarious. Cultivating infrastructures in such a way requires a tremendous degree of social sculpting. This is not only the work of repairing communities as part of building flourishing and robust ecosystems that are able to organise in distributed and equitable ways. It is also referring to the notion described by Joseph Beuys of actively interfacing and shaping an animate world that is feeding back what we are constructing. We apply this theory and creative practice to understand how tactile our work is when we are talking about building infrastructures. Architects and planners can give us templates and blueprints for what the bones of a place can be, however the flesh of it is bodied by the longings, desires and dreams of its constituents and citizens.

If those longings, desires and dreams are broadcast from a place of wounding, trauma and violence, they will necessarily be the most dominant inhabitants of the place. Here we are demonstrating the critical need to work with healing modalities as not only remedial apparatuses, but as preventative springboards by which the dreams, longings and desires are wholesome enough to engender wholeness. While the description of this work sounds poetic, it is in fact the material work that organisers, youth workers, frontline workers and community advocates are already doing.

This is the relational infrastructure building that is the real skeleton of infrastructures. It is also



routinely undermined and erased because it is deeply feminised labour and carework. Its value in structural justice and building towards life-affirming infrastructures is that we cannot fundamentally conceptualise any of this without deeply immersing ourselves in a relational politics centred in care. Care is the opposite of neglect and organised abandonment. This is demonstrable in the stitching work of building care-filled economies, much like the work of Gabriella Gómez-Mont building care infrastructures for collective life in her work, *Experimentalista*, as well as the work she was part of with the Care Blocks of Bogotá, Colombia.⁴² The function of the Care Blocks is to have a societal arrangement that generates time for the most time-depleted demographic, namely working class women. These women underwrite the economic costs of social provisions that should be held on a structural level – ranging from childcare, to attending to the elderly, to assisting the sick and disabled people, to all types of domestic labour that is invisibilised on gendered lines. Their work professes that to care is to learn deeply feminised labour, and this in turn gives us a different structuring of society.

Building infrastructures where the central principle of design is building towards collective care and life requires us to move resources into building structural capacity too. This means the material arrangement of a place must be deeply invested in, so it can allow the people who populate that place to have their social and material needs met, for a quality of life that increases not only lifespan, but the deeply human needs of connection, community, creative expression and access to land from which they can eat and live in reciprocity.

6.6 PURPOSELY DISTRIBUTIVE ECONOMIES LONG FOR DEMOCRATISED AND DIGNIFIED STEWARDS

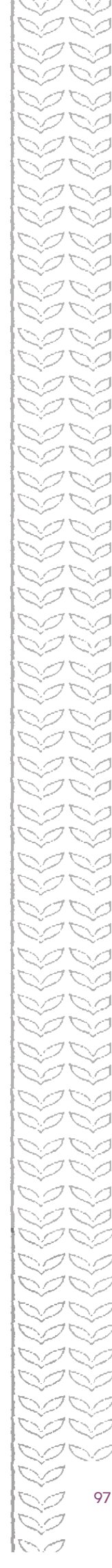
Our current economic model has been extremely successful in hoarding money, and therefore power, at an incomprehensible level and at the detrimental expense of some of the most marginalised people, over hundreds of years. The uneven and unjust extraction and monetisation of land, fuel and other natural resources has violently stacked up seemingly invisible but deeply integrated societal moulds of inequity. This moulding keeps producing social shapes – for example, societies that crave power that can be bought, because it has not been felt as inherent. The same goes for love, connection, health, creativity and deep expressions of our innate longings that get packaged into products because they have not been heard beyond a whisper or an advert.

In a similar vein, with the aggressive pursuit to buy power – which, at its root is really a longing for the more human needs they believe power can attend to, such as safety, dignity and belonging⁴³ – we watch those in power repeatedly jeopardise our safety, dignity and belonging, in order for us to barter for them and relentlessly labour to buy them.

We are seeing this on a macro level, at global scale, with the multiple settler colonialist genocides happening, which are in fact resource theft in the guise of safety, dignity and belonging, as in the case of occupied Palestine, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Haiti and West Papua. On a micro level, these dynamics are often practised in the philanthropic world and those that are proximate to large amounts of money.

We can observe how those who hoard extreme money and wealth move in two directions. One is to assimilate into philanthropy as an extension of capitalism through continued powerhoarding and gatekeeping of resources. The second is to attempt to devolve their power through positioning themselves as only distributing money as acts of charity, without dealing with the politics and implication of their accrued wealth.

In both cases, we see the distribution of money without structurally changing the conditions in which power and money can meaningfully be distributed. We have seen a spectrum of ways in which power operates specifically between philanthropic bodies and civic society.



In our findings, it has been interesting to observe that money is the least interesting part for those who are paying attention to deep social transformation and what is required of it. We are observing that they are more interested in how money is flowing, its direction of travel and impact, and ultimately, they are questioning, “towards what end and legacy?” What often happens in our work is a false dichotomy that says those who are divesting from oppressive economic systems and against capitalism should not or do not require any resources or money. There is a superimposed morality onto social transformation that excludes accessing resources, which is not tactical.

Our ability to discern how money is a mechanism to drive or enable a broader vision that is in service of our values is the real currency we need to be circulating.

The distinction here is that the people most attending to this degree and scale of liberation work are preoccupied with how money opens grounds to do more transformational work. They are holding a broader scope of social overhaul that requires different players in an ecosystem of change to open and activate different parts of the work. They see and perceive any money going in the direction of this broader vision as money that has been in service and spent well, because localised efforts and intergenerational practice shows that there are many different stages and life cycles that are not always familiar.

The spectrum of types of power that show up in this work at first glance feel easily categorisable. There is either power *for* something or *away* from something. Again, in times of stark violence, this type of binary thinking is deeply clarifying and helps us quickly locate ourselves. However, when the context of money is so muddled, and the way in which power moves or does not move is not a transferable process, we have to bring more consideration to our assessment of how power lives, moves and generates in all its shapes, across different contexts. A better way to explore the powers around us is to see them as living organisms that are being fed according to how we want them to exist. An organism that is growing in strategic power to engender bold and powerful movements needs to be fed the appetisers of critical mobilisation, the main dish of lateral and field oversight, and the dessert of creating future pockets of fertile soil to grow living ecosystems that extend backwards and forwards.

What we mean is that there are a set of key competencies that skillful power builders need to be able to implement. First is to be able to mass arrange multifaceted coalitions. Second is the ability to conceptualise the territories in which the work must take place across time and space. Third, they must be able to surgically pinpoint the future openings with an acute eye on how those openings will engage in acts of temporal justice, meaning that those openings will both continue the arc of reparative justice (extending backwards) and will create more just futures (extending forwards).

Growing our ability to discern the different types of power at play will prevent us from falsely framing the enemy as one another. When we apply an abolitionist lens – which looks at transforming societies out of punishment, disposability and disciplining towards restorative,

accountable and just communities that are fluent in rehabilitating us out of trained and practised violence and harm – we are then forced to release the binary making of perpetrator and victim (which, once again, helps us to be clear on harm and violence, but does not help us transform harm and violence as effectively). Allowing ourselves more honest understandings of power is an empowering process. It allows us to understand where we can grow power strategically. It helps us reveal where we can be empowered enough to be accountable and agency filled, and it allows us to recognise where power is being abused more accurately and to act.

All powers have two sides, the power to create and the power to destroy.

We must recognize them both, but invest our gifts on the side of creation.⁴⁴

The nature of our entangled work and lives means a textbook analysis of power will always shortchange us. Instead, growing an intimate curiosity with power, including our own, helps us become skillful in putting power to work. A key part of our learning at RRJ was how suddenly from being organisers and activists, and people outside of philanthropy, we assumed a funder-type role. We had acquired positional power through the RRJ initiative and yet our structural conditions had not changed. While in the context of UK philanthropic wealth £1.1 million pounds is not a lot of money, it is a stunning amount of money for many of us who are working class and racialised out of accessing resources. This positional power was a completely new experience and one that was troublesome on a soul and schematic level.

The sheer scale of accountability we felt around moving this money in a way that was just and equitable, was not proportional to the capacities we had to do that. What we mean by this is that, while we had the position of being able to access this resource and move it, we neither had the infrastructures nor systems to do so at the scale and pace that we desired. Alongside this, we also didn't have the structural identity privileges – in this case particularly whiteness – to protect us from all the types of risks that we were absorbing. A clear example of this was that, to move the money we had as quickly as we did, relied on us (Nusrat and Farzana) being personally liable and individually holding the risk of a million pounds. We visibilise this because, in a time of multiple crises, there are institutions and organisations that have systems, infrastructures, administrative and staffing capacity, as well as the identity markers that privileges and protects them, that were still unprepared to take the bold and risky actions needed in these times.

While this might feel a bit of a trite matter, we recognise that coordinated efforts of social transformation require that the people and parties that have the most capacity to mobilise be leveraged and placed strategically to do so. What this experience again forefronted is the absence of alignment in being able to coordinate towards such a goal; it revealed the extent of work that needed to be done around how we shifted and repositioned powerful bodies towards



a different goal.

Power is a force that is able to be transmuted like money; in and of itself it is not good or bad. How power is generated, applied and impacting is the crucial matter. We are aware that those with extreme wealth have not generated this without a brute use of power, and a brutalising application and impact of power. While it would be easy to stay in the discursive work of repeatedly shunning power because of how it has been applied and misapplied, this does not take us closer towards our strategic justice and liberation goals. Our times are too urgent to “leave power on the table”.⁴⁵ So many of us have never felt able to access our own sense of power, and we have only been given entirely destructive representations of power. Where this leaves us is in a place where we cannot grow powerful interventions, movements and resistances that can overwrite the totalising oppressive use of power as a counter strategy.

The work of re-establishing healthy power is too often re-indoctrinated into a capitalist framework and has its roots in eugenics and social darwinism in claiming the powerful are an extension of a survival of the fittest. There cannot be a justice-oriented approach to our economic and social liberations without reclaiming what power is.

Power perfects a balance between things. It is not about individual might or propositioning of needs, beliefs or desires; it is not overwriting or undermining. It is about affording all life its complete dignity and sovereignty.

When we re-ascribe sovereignty back to all life and living worlds, we are meeting it with a clarity in relational balance and reciprocity. What we mean by this is, “powerless” and “power over” are inherently states of imbalance. “In power” and “empowered” are the spaces from which agency and accountability thrive.

As we try to self-govern on a communal and local level, in kinship with our environments, we will have to be in a practice of accountable agency, meaning all our actions are understood in relation to their consequences on all relations. This paragraph zooms us out of a very material conversation and into a more spiritual discourse, because it is in the traditions of those who have been racialised and ruptured from our indigeneity who speak of power as the lifeforce gifted to us by that which is greater than us and that we are part of. We cannot talk about racial justice and have this conversation in the paradigm of the colonial mind, which has violently separated us from these wisdoms. It is an ethical approach based on integrity to keep returning us to the centre which is not white.

What is opening for us in this moment is an opportunity to claim back the dignity and inherent worth of our people who have been stripped of their power. However, power, like freedom, cannot be granted; it must be embodied without enacting it over others. The spectrum on which power exists can be imbalanced, and therefore distorted into many shapes and can look like many things, even our most well-intended actions. It then also invites us to keep an ongoing political practice of understanding power and how it is moving or not moving, and how it needs to be brought back into balance and alignment.

45 Mitchell, M. (2022) Building Resilient Organizations, The Forge. Available at: forgeorganizing.org/article/building-resilient-organizations

We are so used to finding safety in the binaries of good and bad, that these shifting states of power can disorient us into finding enemies in the wrong places, but mostly denying ourselves the opportunity to take responsibility for the work that is ahead of us. Over the coming years, we will have no choice but to find ways to self-govern as part of our freedoms, and the task then will be how we ourselves will actively keep power balanced. Balancing power towards life is the work of holding the sovereign self in beautiful harmony with the collective body.

6.7 HOLDING THE CENTRE, TOGETHER

We originally wanted to write a piece on risk. We wanted to write on risk because the entire time we were building RRJ felt like we were under threat and in danger. The threats and misconceptions about our work were constant landmines we had to navigate. The emotional and physical stress of this, at points, became unbearable to the point where we were ready to abandon the experiment. We share this to visibilise the toll and intensity it takes for any of us trying to do propositional work, that is by its very nature a threat to the status quo. It is not just a threat to the current dominant structures, it is also a threat to where all of us have found safety in it. The parts of us that are cooperating with oppression are so afraid of unknowns, that the instability of new ways is unbearable.

What we were doing was not groundbreaking in innovation; there are others who have innovated in the field in more robust and useful ways. What we were holding, however, is what it means to do this work in a field trained to endanger Black and Global Majority people, and to do so out loud. Over the years, we encountered so many forms of “risk”, from how it is weaponised to how it is shirked, all of which continue to endanger us.

Throughout this section, we want to discuss risk with a carefulness in order to start to untangle the way risk has been used. Instead of it being used as a preemptive assessor of safeguarding, we have continually found it to be the very tool that made us unsafe. This is important to state clearly because on matters of safety we cannot be ambiguous. The ambiguity that the field of philanthropy and charitability rely on has given it the agility to deem us unsafe without any clear reason or marker. We have routinely been discussed as risky in unnamed, arbitrary and ambiguous ways. We refuse this.

What we often see as perceived threat by the institutions within the heart of the empire, is the continued need to assign threat in order to protect property and profit.

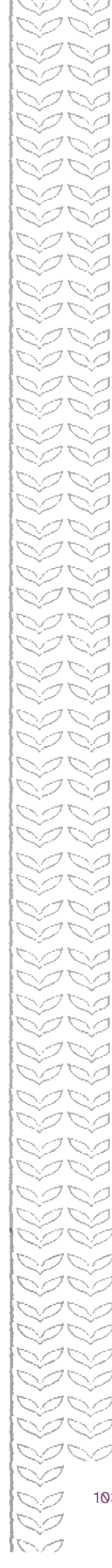
The racialisation of risk has its roots in centuries of colonisation. Colonisers constructed arbitrary demarcations of barbarity in order to subjugate us. This is an ever-present logic. What we often see as perceived threat by the institutions within the heart of the empire, is the continued need to assign threat in order to protect property and profit.

From Gaza to Cop City to the streets of East London, we see the use of surveilling, policing, disciplining and censoring to progress the overaccumulation of property and profit, whether it is by settler colonialism or gentrification. The deep-seated culture of carcerality has long roots in western societies who continue to use risk as a preemptive measure to contain us and cage us. Philanthropy does not sit outside of this, especially given that the roots of many charities were formed initially to conserve and protect wealth. Risk, in this way, becomes, at its heart, a dangerous and sometimes fatal process of racialisation. Discovering how to decode the deeply enmeshed way that risk wraps around all parts of life has been a critical one in order to envision a world that is not trying to protect its conquests. Risk is weaponised in insidious ways because it is presented as safety, when it is most utilised to deter any efforts to disrupt the current social arrangement.

To begin to unravel empire and capitalism is to move the checkpoints of risk, which manage the direction of resource flow. Controlling the flow of capital and resources is a project of coloniality and by extension capitalism. The flow of resources can only be made scarce through engineered scarcity, because in reality there is an abundance. The scarcity is a direct result of a locking and streamlining of where resources can go, contingent on the desires of those who are hoarding an abundance of provisions and resources. This might seem like a banal point, however what we want to surface is not re-demonstrating inequity, but instead demonstrating the direct correlation between risk, control and the locking of common plentitude.

To future worlds that are not reproducing a dominating relationship with our planetary resources is to suspend the apparatus of risk, which will no longer be able to mask the oppressive hoarders' greed. We can no longer mistake safety as control; this limits our capacity to generate public and common provisions from a place of equity.

By instigating control measures in the guise of safety, we have placed exclusionary measures that deny some and benefit others based on arbitrary ideas of threat. In preparation for a time that requires a lot of engendering of safety due to mass uncertainty, instability and dispossession, dominating power will attempt to increase securitisation in every form, from increased bureaucracy to militarised borders. The framing around this will be risk mitigation. Yet, the instability and precarity experienced will be disproportionately by racialised people in Global Majority countries.



Meanwhile, those who access stability and safety will be those who have accrued them through exploitation and extraction. The use of “risk” and “threat” and “terror” will all be instruments to manufacture people’s consent into more exploitation and extraction on Indigenous people across the world, by playing into their fears and vulnerability. We are already seeing this in the resource theft, land grabs and genocides happening across Palestine, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and West Papua amongst many others.

Our counter strategy must therefore unmask on a macro and micro level the role of risk and risk aversion in the construction of neo-colonisation, and more broadly maintaining structures of violence. Following this, we will have to grow and build the embodied individual and collective capacity to cross the thresholds of what is deemed “risky” in order to dismantle logics of control and demonisation. Alongside this, we will have to build the foundations of safety that is not rooted in engineered crisis or control, and instead return and remember where safety really lives.

Safety as the ongoing nurturance established and maintained between humans and the more-than-human. Safety as the foundational baseline delivered through having our material, emotional and spiritual needs met through our environments and ecosystems. Safety as a practice of protection that extends beyond the physical and engages our emotional, intellectual and spiritual safeguarding, especially against forces like oppression that work more in the unseen than they work in the visible. Safety as communities and societies that preserve and practice holding the dignity and sovereignty of all life and living worlds, through reciprocity, care and mutually flourishing economies.

While we wanted to spotlight how rigorously we had been confronted with risk in our day-to-day running of RRJ, like most of this report, we could not escape how deep and interconnected these undergirding logics are. To address how risk manifests in our day-to-day lives and engineers our behaviour in the context of racial justice, requires revealing how empire and imperialism engineer risk as processes of subjugation through the construction of race. We kept repeating the phrase “risk is racialised” over the past three years. At every turn, we were discovering another dimension of risk that reinforced racialisation, to the point where we considered making this whole report about risk and race.

However we are acutely aware of the way risk is conflated with safety and demobilises people, and this is not the time to demobilise. What we want people to do is meet the moment with courage, with an accurate assessment/contextual coherence, with safeguarding needs, and with social-political skill and willpower – and merge these aspects to drive bold, radical, powerful interventions and experiments that can off-ramp from this current economic and social arrangement.

The time on the clock of the world⁴⁶ is as urgent as it is impending, meaning that whether we act or not, the consequences will be felt, and they are already. Therefore, if the frame and language of risk has held you captive to default ways of doing and being, particularly in philanthropy, now is the time to liberate yourself. Risk, or whatever other language is used to stay immobilised and unprepared, are not acts of safeguarding. They will not keep people safe, and they will not keep you safe. We need each other to reach into the deepest parts of ourselves and drag that out for a world that is in desperate need of powerful and courageous people.

This cannot be a handful of us; it requires all and as many of us as possible. So our work is always twofold. What are the ways in which we can responsibly and accountably move towards futures that are just and liberatory? And what must we do to engender safety so others may also do so? The task ahead is too monumental for us to preemptively and overcautiously shrink our capacity.

46 Boggs, G. L. (2014) What Time is it On the Clock of The World. Available at: conversationthatyouwillneverfinish.wordpress.com/2014/09/06/what-time-is-it-on-the-clock-of-the-world-by-grace-lee-boggs/

6.8 TRAINING OUR SOULS AND BODIES FOR AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WORLD

“I want us to train because I love us.”

- Marai Larasi⁴⁷

During RRJ’s inception, we knew that moving money alone to our communities was not enough. Financially, it was not a lot of money compared to the billions that were *not* moving towards the grassroots and communities, least of all racialised communities. We knew that any meaningful intervention had to coincide with a long process of transformation for any of the funders who invested in RRJ. From the onset it provided a superficial filter on who would be prepared to go on an embodied transformational process with us. Long term and more deeply, our aim was to reposition and realign funders from understanding their role as dispensers of money for social good, to active and accountable players in a process of dismantling and divesting from capitalism.

We piloted this process without a clear map of what it would result in, and with the partnership of Staci K. Haines, co-founder of Generative Philanthropy, we led funders in a process of embodied allyship through politicised somatics. We understood the critical need for a process that went deeper than a solidarity or allyship guidebook. For us, this looked like reckoning with how racism is lived in and through us somatically, and therefore an embodied process was necessary to transform some of the default conditioning informing how we and the funders operated and reinforced oppression.

Previously, our solidarity and allyship across anti-racism work has been framed ideologically around how we get people in dominant identities to acknowledge their internalised white supremacy. What this has meant is that people are trying to dislodge centuries of embodied inheritance of oppressive patterning through their minds. We cannot transform ourselves in a decapitated way and presume that it will generate the total overhauling of white supremacy that is needed. White supremacy is not an ideological project only; it requires merciless participation of our psyches and bodies. Abandoning the impact and living consequences of colonisation and capitalism in our embodiment lets coloniality live through our bodies and infect our minds. It doesn’t matter how astute we perceive ourselves to be as allies and in our political analysis; our body will surface what it has internalised as our default and conditioned tendencies, and we will then take this back into our politics and world.

Structuring an allyship and solidarity model that programmatically facilitated a process whereby the participants (in our case, funders) were embarking on a deeper level of transformation to disinherit how oppression is lived through us required a different approach.

47 Shared with us by Marai Larasi, Project Tallawah

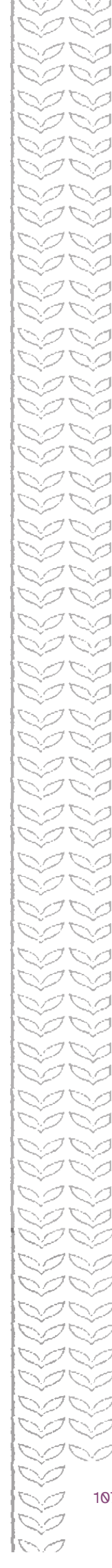
It required us to develop a politicised somatics allyship journey that, from the outset, oriented itself away from what funders could do to demonstrate alliance to racial justice, and instead focused on how racial justice was a lifelong commitment beyond their professional settings and careers. In partnership with Staci K. Haines, we piloted a process that ended up spanning several years with our cohort of funders. You can read in the impact and learning section more about this process.⁴⁸ What we want to focus on here is the need for growing embodied competencies and lifelong skillfulness to generate new postures and practices for the economic justice and liberation we are calling for.

Staci defines **soma** as “the living changing organism in connection with body, land, spirit (all life)”. This expands our common misconceptions of what this work is. Although somatics are frequently understood as just embodiment through connecting with the body, this idea of a body-mind split is still within the dualism of colonial conceptualisation. We only need to look to and remember many Indigenous cosmovisions whose entire paradigms rely on a single premise of absolute connectivity amidst all life and living worlds. The idea of separation within this relational paradigm is an act of violence. The body, land, life are all interdependent and cannot exist independently, and are only presented as separate for dominating, accumulating and controlling.

The body, land and life are all interdependent. They cannot exist independently, and are only presented as separate for dominating, accumulating and controlling.

We could not foresee the magnitude of connective work needed without also undergoing our own embodied transformation process that we are still undergoing. Working with somatics, we discovered the ongoing process by which the more we connected and opened to life and our own aliveness, the more we were entrusted by life and aliveness with openings and connections to be able to do this work. In this bidirectional, evolving fractal, we could not turn away from the strategic paradigm shift this was opening up in our work. While, for both of us, processes of deep healing have been substantial parts of our lives, some of what this process enabled was a language around how the inner-outer transformation could be facilitated as part of a political strategy – in particular, a political strategy within a realm (funding and philanthropy) that both of us felt deep discomfort in and estrangement from.

What remained crucial for us was to re-anchor how the work of somatics in our strategy could offer a return to Indigeneity and the ongoing unmasking of structures and systems like capitalism and colonisation that rob us of this opening. Preparing to immerse ourselves within the realms of social transformation, led by a deeper embodiment, is to start to collect the parts of us that are divided and scattered across our landscapes. Our landscapes are the physical, emotional, psychic and spiritual layers that we are entangled with. Within this space, we are close to or far from the harmonisation of these facets based on our own alignment. The process of racialisation fundamentally fractures and disperses these layers to be able to dominate and control us more without resistance. It can also, with more ease, repress the feedback of such violence.



What we mean by repression is the physiological conscious and unconscious shutting down of emotionality which processes and makes sense of the congruence of actions and intentions through feeling. If there is a lack of coherence between the actions and intentions, there is an energetic circuit of emotion that communicates this and vice versa. It is particularly useful for oppression, by the self and beyond, to try to short circuit this process in order to enact violence without experiencing any of its feedback. The tragedy of this is twofold. It firstly entrenches a process of dehumanising the oppressor by way of their dehumanising actions, meaning the oppressor cannot escape the very means by which they oppress. Secondly, it creates gaps in connectivity whereby the ability to restore connection back to self and each other cannot be achieved through performative words, but rather through transformed action and connection. Undermining the emotional circuit cuts us all out of life.

We can pathologise this experience of dispersion away from life into conditions like dissociation or dissociative disorder, however this does not fully account for the consequences of societies engineered to divide us, and the division of self was and is a neoliberal project, emerging from a eugenics agenda. Where does the separated self live amidst all of life? It lives within a cognitive frame of isolation which can be used by capitalism to progress the agenda of subjugation through making people internalise the idea that they are free in autonomy through individualisation. It can also tolerate the brutality done to its body because it is separated from it.

Indigenous frameworks anchor liberation in collective collapsing of atomisation. The atomised self is not an empowered self because it is removed from its access to collective power and life supply. To explain this more simply, we can use the analogy of trying to piece together a jigsaw puzzle that has pieces of the puzzle hidden inside of different people. As we surface our jigsaw piece, we need to connect with the other pieces, and we need to be able to sense-make together to be able to access the total vision. Trying to do this alone or without conferring with others also in the same endeavour is not possible, and doing so will generate images that put the wrong pieces together and keep supplying us with visions away from wholeness.

Corralling together mechanisms that are divided and fragmented within themselves produces the same effect as oppression, meaning that when we are trying to undergo total transformation, we are needing to bring together as much of our conscious and unconscious selves as possible into this process. Our entire makeup has experienced hundreds of years of separation such that any embodied process will be forefronted by the presence of magnanimous absence and fragmentation. This absence remains undetected by most of us because of how severed we have been. We cannot connect with what we are not connected with, how the oppressed cannot bypass their own oppression, as discussed in earlier sections. Many are just not aware of it, and this is a type of poetic justice. To start the serious work of repair and healing, not just from, but also within, this chronic atomisation,⁴⁹ requires us to grapple with building the internal capacity and tolerance for a degree of connection and connectivity that is terrifying in our current states. It is mostly terrifying because it dredges up our complicity in the chronic atomisation.

While some might feel such an approach is not relevant to addressing matters of economic justice, we affirm that there is no off-ramp from capitalism – and by extension neoliberalism – without going to the root. Our relational capacity has been shrunk to the degree that what is most practised by us in all relations is dominion, power over, transaction, monetisation and extraction. Within this sociality, there is very little capacity for interdependence, which means there is very little ability to be in right-relationship with our resources. We use the framing “our resources” not to reinforce ideas of ownership, but rather as a form of responsibility and accountability to what lives amongst us. Here, the relationship that is most generative and in harmony across exchanges fundamentally requires dissolving capitalism and all practices (intimate, societal, economic, political, etc.) that bring us out of mutuality.

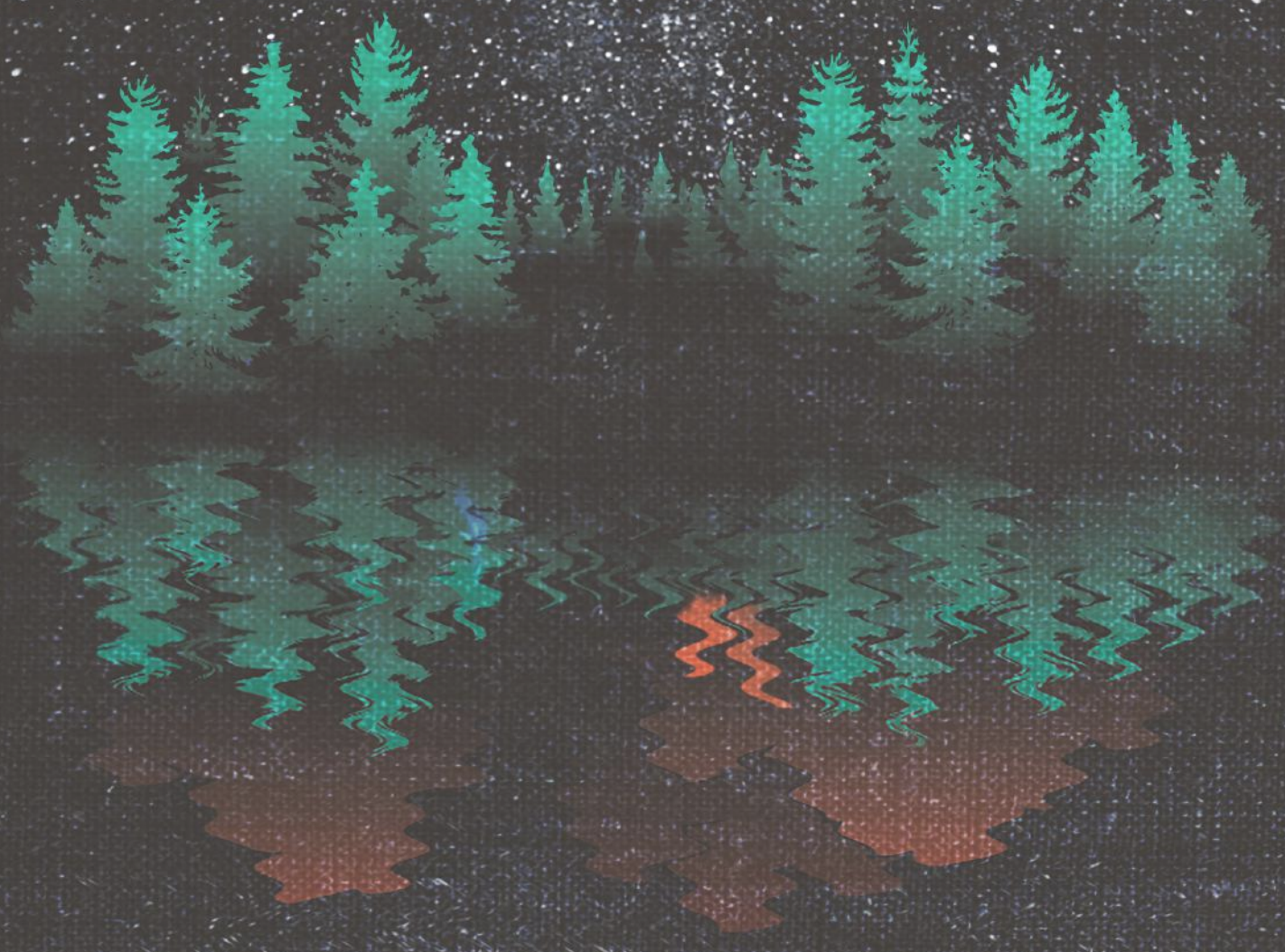
Mutuality is often understood as a bidirectional exchange between two parties. We expand this definition to reflect its application. Mutuality is the site, ongoing and expanding, of relational discovery through consensual living. Relational discovery describes the opportunities that emerge between one another and aren’t limited to the two parties, because our actions and lives encompass all life. Consensual living is a framework Farzana Khan developed in her survivor work, which describes the practice of negotiating, across all planes of life, our boundaries and affirmations.

This is a tactile and material practice, not a poetic gesture. It requires us to live with a reverence and recognition of the sovereignty, aliveness and dignity of all life and living things. Within these frames, mutual flourishing is only made possible through a deep, reparative process of coming into connection with our life-force and life.

Again the “our” is not located in self, but the collective capability. Along these lines, our ability to even practise resourcing racial justice beyond self-aggrandising or tick-box Black Lives Matter statements requires a fundamental shift in collapsing the subject-object relationality which is rooted in separation. So we are tasked with how we attend to a rigorous process of dismantling white supremacy which is lived and living through all of us, which is a mutable gene adapting to survive (see *Black Skin, White Masks*), and which is routinely dispossessing us from the very site in which we can do that work. Our embodied processes for de-racialising a racialised world is the anti-colonial work of remembering our place within “the family of things”. It is reinstating a degree of connectivity that refuses to short-circuit itself in order to oppress. It is developing the practices that make that connectivity so robust we are able to hear the aliveness of our living kin, human and more than human, and any attempt to breach consent is a felt violence on ourselves first.

We embarked on writing these strategies from a place of getting tactical in the long fight we have ahead. But the tactical fight has required of us overhauling the deeply entrenched logics that shape, determine and put momentum behind our actions. So, while we wanted to remain in the realms of strategy and tactics, without providing the wireframes in which all of this lives, we would be underserving the revolutionary requirements of our times. There is no more place for adjusting oppression, there is only what takes us towards life, and therefore liberation, or not.

revolutionary optimism
will lead us to
revolutionary action



— do not despair —

7. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A PICTURE OF LIFE-AFFIRMING ECONOMIES

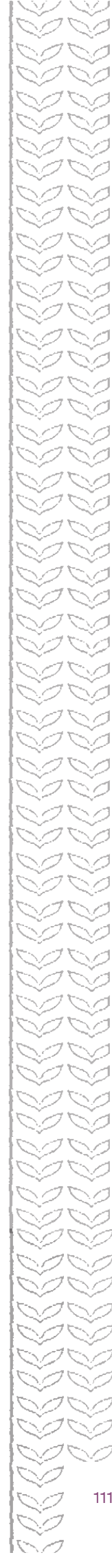
We alone can devalue gold
by not caring
if it falls or rises
in the marketplace.

Wherever there is gold
there is a chain, you know,
and if your chain
is gold
so much the worse
for you.

Feathers, shells
and sea-shaped stones
are all as rare.

This could be our revolution:
to love what is plentiful
as much as
what's scarce.

- Alice Walker⁵⁰



A truly different world requires a truly different arrangement. What our previous sections have continuously surfaced is the need to engage in deep transformation, inner and outer, as part of the self and collective, because none of these things are separate. We wanted to paint a picture of what economics could look like outside of current brutal and violent systems. We are not economists, we are just ordinary people, deeply committed to life and love, who understand that the current economic structuring is against both of those. And perhaps that's the point; the point is to have our economics shaped by ordinary everyday people, deeply committed to life and love, and humbly audacious enough to believe in our power to do it.

Often we are speaking of social change, justice and transformation as these big overwhelming machinations, and while we acknowledge the rigour, graft and severity of doing this work, there is also something that feels so deeply simple about it. The simplicity can be narrowed down to one question: *how do we love what we are loved by and let that love live?* This triangular sentence is actually a circle. It is a feedback loop that is a generative economy, a circular economics, a life-affirming economics. It is the blueprint for any sustainable economy that is trying to be in service of our collective thriving, whereby resources, currency and provisions circulate to serve our growth and expansion, not in terms of profit but in terms of the quality of our connections and relations. We signpost Movement Generation's articulation of economy as a connected articulation of our ethos:

ECO NOMY (“home” + “management”)⁵¹

Economy means management of home. We organise our relationships in a place, ideally, to take care of the place and each other. But “management of home” can be good or bad, depending on how you do it and to what ends. The purpose of our economy could be turning land, life and labour into property for a few, or returning land, life and labour into a balanced web of stable relationships.

Economy does not mean money, or exchange or financial markets, or trading or Gross Domestic Product. These are simply elements or tools of specific economies. Economies (“how we manage our home”) can be measured in many ways: How healthy are the soil, people, water, animals? How much wealth is generated? Who owns the wealth? What even constitutes wealth? Is it money? Well-being? Happiness?

All economic activity has ecological consequences. That doesn't mean that those consequences are always bad. The economic activity of peoples who have developed long relationships with the ecosystems they are a part of have tended towards balance. This traditional evolved knowledge of place is held in language, food, culture and story.

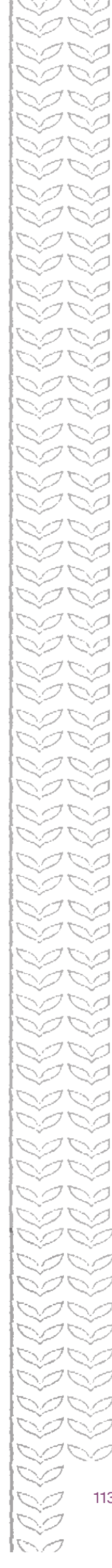
Other human communities have mismanaged home, and have created ecological consequences that are not beneficial to a sustainable relationship with the web of life. But when a people outstrip their resource base, or create damage to an ecosystem in such a way that it can no longer sustain them, they move on or die off – hopefully learning some lessons. Mother Earth has been sufficiently resilient to recover from these paper-cuts. But...

If you globalise the economy, you globalise the ecosystem. The scale and pace of globalisation combined with the power imbalance in decision-making has made it virtually impossible for people to read and respond to the changes fast enough – and in fact, we have not. If you globalise the ecosystem and you have a destructive economy (mismanagement of home) then the consequences are big. Very Big.

The current globalised economy is compromising the life support systems of the planet; destroying biodiversity, exploiting labour, killing cultures, polluting water and disrupting the atmospheric-hydrologic cycle.

In our humble audacity, we understand that to be in right relationship with resources, with each other, with all life and living worlds, we also have to be right-sized; again this is the practice of levelling domination and servitude dynamics. This brings us back to a fundamental tenet in our RRJ experiment. Repatterning and off-ramping ourselves from the current systems of domination and subjugation requires us to know our place and position amongst all life, which is both terribly insignificant and stunningly magnanimous. Here we mean in ego/self we should be little, and in collective spirit/soul we should become abundant and powerful. This requires the diminishing of the neoliberal, colonial, capitalist frameworks which are rendered redundant by our Indigenous and spiritual chorus, reverberating across all life: “we are, so it is,” speaking to our inextricable interdependence.

This statement on being and becoming forms the basis of our final section, because ontology (matters of beingness) underpin any new economic process that is worth pursuing. Who we will be and who we are, is our economic system. Capitalism as our dominating current economic system has been designed to present itself as the mechanism by which our fundamental human needs can be met. Participating in capitalism relies on all of us accepting that we can buy and sell our core and primary needs because they have become commodities. Safety, dignity, belonging, connection are all things that are acquisitioned, and the more money you have, the more you can access these human rights and human rites.



However, this wireframe that has entrapped all aspects of life is being unmasked. We are seeing over and over again that safety, dignity, belonging and connection are destroyed through capitalism, and even the most successful people by capitalism's standard (i.e. billionaires and trillionaires) have not been able to buy themselves these very essential foundations. This should remind us that our deepest fulfilment cannot be met by capitalism, no matter how much it tries to indoctrinate us into believing so. The unquenchable satiation of the most powerful is consistently revealed by their relentless and aggressive need for accumulation and conquest of land, people, space and even solar systems (cue Musk on the moon).

These deeply consumptive, materialistic and wasteful ways are a result of our emotional and spiritual impoverishment, and dispossession created by capitalism and colonisation, that cannot be satiated, so we are left parasitically hungry. This is absolutely a case where the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" as Audre Lorde wrote. The rupturing that takes place breaks our capacities to connect, access completion and feel full. Our disconnected and fragmented selves cannot tolerate connection, sensation and feeling inside ourselves, so we addictively allow external consumption – from food to media to destruction – to feed us, and enlarge the warmongering industries, by our demand, across a whole spectrum, from digital content to fast food to fossil fuels.

Even the idea that we can buy connection through possession, or worse, that intimacy is acquisition, means that instead of getting closer to one another and life, we are actually creating more distance and separation through our distractive consumption; the inverse of our ideals are taking place.

Therefore it is not possible to cultivate a new economics to meet our times if the masses of ordinary people do not dissent, resist the current system and practise an entirely different way of being. Here, we are not talking about placing individual responsibility on people; this is not about recycling and reusing straws, when millionaires and billionaires are creating huge amounts of destruction through aviation, through fracking, through corporate manslaughter and murder.

We are mindful to not perpetuate neoliberal logics when it comes to collective accountability and responsibility. Instead, we are reinstating the power of the collective, as in the BDS campaign (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions), to coordinate and pull the plug on this machine. We are placing economic sanctions on corporate and capitalistic greed, and we are divesting from anything that brings premature death or manufactures destruction.

Towards a life-affirming economics is not an invitation to try to synthetically extend the lifespan of things, including humans, but rather to have an ongoing relationship with life herself, which is deeply instructive on the lifespan and life cycles of all creations. So, what could it mean for us to arrange our lives in a practice of, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore offers, "where life is precious, life is precious", and by doing so, re-sanctify and rarify aliveness? An oppressive training in exploitation becomes undone through feeling the dignity and aliveness of our world and how we come into interdependence. When we orient ourselves into attunement of hearing the living worlds, they are deeply vocal in their terms of engagement. So it becomes less about naive and ignorant notions, like "if the whole world is alive, and we have to be in relationship with it, we won't be able to use anything, we won't be allowed to live or shelter, what do we do?"

This, again, is a signifier of a colonised, dismembered mind/spirit, who is not aware that: the living world longs for us as much as we long for them, and longs to find a symbiosis; that we may collaborate together in mutual flourishing and conversation; that the natural resources can inform us how they want to complete their life cycle – not in landfills through chains of destruction and violence, but as care-filled caretakers and provisions that adorn and enhance life. A tree that becomes a table is also the communion centre for when we gather, for when we play, and from where we nourish. The tree continues to live and love in a different shape, and the shape gives us a new posture. And so, even furniture can offer us new shapes in an intimate way. Through and with new postures, we create different practices, and these different practices generate different choices, and those choices become different collective patterns (see visualisation on page 84).

**What does it mean to design tables and chairs
for a really new life
when we still use knives?
How to design cities so
that dancing all together
will not appear ridiculous or worse a televised special
event?**

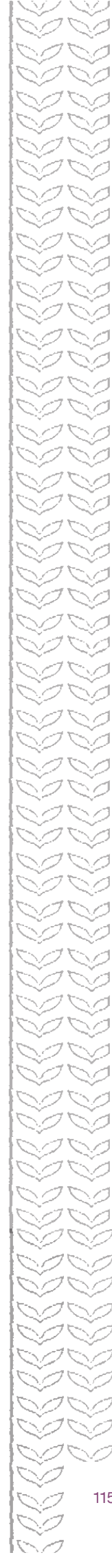
**These designs of revolution require a turning away from the enemy
They require a going up and into hills and mountains as did Castro
Scheming around the clock for a truly different universe.
Or as did Elijah, tuning into a really different frequency**

- June Jordan, Furniture⁵²

We can think about furniture as the protagonists in a specialised practice of care. This brings into provocation how we furnish the world so the old moulds we have settled ourselves into are no longer comfortable, shaping and forming us. How are we preparing to rearrange the house, given that the root and etymology of economics is household/home? Working together as funders, activists and organisers, we must get serious about how we are aligning on a vision that helps us build alternative furnishings. One that brings together the art of sculpting, shaping, transforming.

52

Natalie Diaz (2021) Sharing archival notes from June Jordan's notebook, presented at "Fields of Imagining", A Map to the Door of No Return at 20, Nov 2 2021, Available at: youtube.com/watch?v=NMkH1eOhfSA



Funders, what will you need to do in order to resource and invest in a different type of furnishing? How will the accrued wealth course-correct the interrupted flow of life, and now begin to protect it? How will you open the capacities so we as humans are able to reconnect, remember and become right-sized with all of life through our relationality? How will you liberate the resources, land, buildings, food supplies, systems, space and housing to support new postures from the new furnishings? How will the resources diminish the greed-driven individualism, not through forced collaboration, but through cultivating social landscapes that share and incentivise deep consensual connectivity, that is modelled by funders?

How will resources mend the gaps in our lineages, histories and narratives that keep us unaware of the wholeness that we are part of, and the ancestry that wisely equips us to navigate these times? How will we and you weave processes that can imagine and thereby consciously construct freedom dreams?⁵³

Where will we practise embodying the listening across planes to attune and hear the aliveness of all life conversing with us in sharing worlds? Can we start to unmask the cloak of separatism that keeps us in illusory factions, and consequently keeps us wounding one another, as if we are another and not each other?

Resourcing racial justice is really the work of resourcing and enlarging the capabilities of collapsing social constructs of racialisation that are used to extend and entrench capitalism through a racialised hierarchy. How does this now translate into our funding commitments? From our learnings, as briefly touched on earlier, there are many key practical ways that we can begin to resource this work. Below, we list some key areas. The list is not exhaustive, and it is also not exclusive. It signposts the conditions and capacities that need to be resourced in order to realise life-affirming economics. The recommendations below are groundwork and a vehicle, not the destination or the point.

Liberatory Trauma Work To Transform Us

We have to put resources towards transforming the traumatising impacts of oppression. This is not about therapising or psychologising oppression to become adaptive to it, or to make it more bearable. Both therapy and psychologising have been used to pacify and depoliticise dissent, as well as masking the oppression which traumatises in the first place. In many Indigenous and spiritual traditions, our trauma is symptomatic of collective wounding and injury. The frames by which we heal are indicative of what repairs the psyche, soul and collective spirit. Investing in the healing modalities and technologies that repair the fracturing and deep soul loss that is occurring is about generating alchemical resilience.

Alchemical resilience or transformative resilience, as described by Lumos Transforms, “is not just bouncing back to where we were, but bouncing forward. Not about how high we go, but about how quickly we come down, and go on to change our circumstances.”⁵⁴ This conceptualisation invites us to resilience as a process preventing us from reintegrating into the status quo, and instead growing the capacity, skills and resources to transform our structural conditions. This type of liberatory trauma work is not one that can be found in the western medicalised understanding of health and healing, because the diagnostic tools of European colonial medicine are directly an extension of eugenics and racialisation.

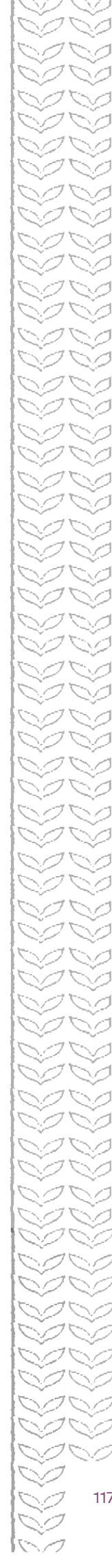
Thereby all other-ed bodies, genders, races, sexual orientations, etc., were rendered outside of a normative sense of health based on the white, male, able body. The trauma work we recommend is the type of liberatory work that remembers, revives and reimagines many ancestral technologies – from grief work, to communal ritual and collective practice, to embodied and somatic practices – as ways of helping us access more wholeness inside and outside of us. Its primary function is to stop us splitting and reproducing violence through atomisation and separation. From this space of interdependence, we cannot assume a power-over position.

This trauma work brings us into right relationship and becoming right-sized, and helps us make decisions and choices that have been clarified away from the loadedness of our stress or survival responses. Making decisions and moving with more choice-fullness is the very way we will stop calcifying capitalism as the first point of departure.

Transformational Narrative Work

Our stories shape and send forward projections of pregnant futures waiting to be birthed. The stories we tell ourselves and each other wire and code our reality. We need new narratives that both remember where we have been and who we have been, and capaciously open up the space to emerge and evolve in alignment and integrity with all of life. Narrative work must bring us close in connection and intimacy with all life and living worlds; it must support our capacity to contextually cohere, meaning that we ongoingly have appropriate political, social and economic analysis. Narratives must be life-affirming in the sense that they both fiercely bring us to truth and roots, and grow strong shoots that can weather the war of narratives and misinformation that is rife.

Our current storytelling modalities rely on epistemological and linguistic injustice; how we know and how we share our stories in language are riddled with forms of oppression already named. Our ways of knowing have prioritised rational/totalising of reason/empirical knowledge as a way to organise and understand the world. It has obstructed the emergence of creative and spiritual worlds that exist, because they cannot be empirically understood. The need to know has gone hand in hand with the proliferation of those that understand in order to overstand/control. This dominant structuring of epistemology keeps us ill equipped for how we could be working the unknowns, harnessing their wisdoms to generate life more compatible with living, and most fundamentally, life that none of us can capture and control the resources of.



In a similar but different vein, language has been used to simplify and distort how much of this work is unintelligible and impermissible for us to access without consent. Our desire for legibility in language has compromised the intelligence of worlds that do not permit us to know until we have come into right relationship and right size with them. So much of colonial language is used to subjugate, and therefore, we see the process of using nouns to name things as a fundamental part of the English language and coloniser culture. What is interesting to note is that, in many of our cultural, spiritual and Indigenous traditions, naming is either done through active verbs or adjectives that are descriptors of the thing or being, and how it is in relationship to you or something else.

In such traditions, naming is not used to capture; instead, naming is used to describe, make aware, demonstrate or show how to be in relationship. What this means is a lexicon needs to emerge that can help us reestablish and open up new ways of relating and being in relationship, that is more honest and transparent about the connectedness of things and how they are interdependent. This is something that has to be developed and opened and invested in, alongside the mechanisms, technologies and platforms that will support this new common sense emerging, and become culture. In tandem, investment needs to be put towards how lineages and ancestries can be reconnected and remembered in order to be able to have integrity in our new narratives, integrity being the soul and spirit that is consistently carried and transports the wisdom contained in our narratives for futuring wisely.

Land and Spatial Justice

The dispossession and unrooting of racialised people, and all people, from land and ecology is fundamentally contributing to the continued erosion of connection and social, physical, emotional and spiritual sickness. Investment into accessing and commoning land is part of our public health strategy, because the fundamental wealth of any society or community is the health of its inhabitants. Health is the demarcation of whether a society is thriving or not. We do not mean health as understood by western medicine deeply entrenched in eugenics and ableism. Instead, we mean how alive, connected, creative, curious and resourced inhabitants are.

Communal stewardship of local land is a fundamental and critical part of transforming our relationship out of capitalism. We are seeing the surge of community-led initiatives repairing and remembering relationships to place and land through food growing, herbalism and land-based community organising. Sadly, the UK is organised around syphoning off land and excluding access to it. This is even more glaring when it comes to Black and Global Majority people.

Only 26.2% of Black people and 25.7% of Asian people recently accessed natural environments compared to 44.2% of white people, according to surveys taken between 2009 and 2016.⁵⁵

55 GOV.UK (2017) Visits to the Natural Environment. Available at: www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/visits-to-the-natural-environment/latest/ Published 10 October 2017

A study of access to UK National Parks exposed an extremely low number of comparative visits from Black and Global Majority communities and found “the countryside is seen by both Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and white people as very much a ‘white’ environment”.⁵⁶ Another study by CPRE found many barriers preventing Black and Global Majority communities from accessing nature in England, including experiences of racism and a lack of feeling welcome: “Many of the stories shared highlighted the close connections people had to nature in their countries of origin but how they were not able to form the same connections here”.⁵⁷ Their findings also showed how important access to land was for Black and Global Majority people, and how disconnection from the land negatively impacted mental health.

Covid-19 starkly showed how racialised and working-class communities faced lockdowns in compacted and combustible highrises, while many white and middle class people went to reside in their surplus country homes. Matters of spatial justice became a deeply revealing aspect of Covid-19, from who was living in cramped houses, to who had access to nature, parks and recreational spaces, all of which forefront class violence as structurally designed and therefore needing to be designed out. The racialised lines in which Black and Global Majority people have been physically organised and situated were also designed, from the “no-go” areas to the landlords who would not rent to racialised people.

The concentration of poverty can be mapped onto the ghettoisation of space, which has been deeply racialised and has socially determined the life expectancy and health outcomes of the people living there. We therefore have to address land and spatial justice matters with an acute analysis of how race intersects with them. This must then be coupled with a disability justice lens. Disability justice demonstrates how structural design disables and reinforces oppression, by rendering certain bodies valued, needed and desired in correlation to their utility to capitalism – and how this is then structurally implemented into our environment.

Therefore, disability justice allows us to have design principles that can both mitigate emerging health crises and pandemics, and also reimagine public health and related social provisions beyond its current failing structuring.

Our built and local environment remains an essential indicator of determinants of health and ecological grounding of quality of life, which diminish and expand based on readily accessible public provisions.

56 DEFRA (2019), Landscapes Review, DEFRA, Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf

57 CPRE(2021) Access to Nature in the English Countryside, CPRE The Countryside Charity. Available at: www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/August-2021_Access-to-nature-in-the-English-countryside_research-overview.pdf

This includes how resourced those public provisions are, from housing, to parks, to clean roads, neighbourhoods with quality foods, and including access to and stewardship of land. Without prolonged and sustained exposure to our primary sustainer, land, there are very few practical opportunities for people to create a sense of collective stewardship with instruction from the rhythms, seasons, cycles and attuned organising with life, which informs us on how to live well. We have included the disability justice principles as set out by Patty Burn's Sins Invalid's design principles that can assist and inform how we are strategising and re-organising towards philanthropy's end game.⁵⁸

10 PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

- 1 **INTERSECTIONALITY** *"We do not live single issue lives" --Audre Lorde*
Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world "invalid."
- 2 **LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED**
"We are led by those who most know these systems." --Aurora Levins Morales
- 3 **ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC**
In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.
- 4 **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING**
Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.
- 5 **RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS**
People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.
- 6 **SUSTAINABILITY**
We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.
- 7 **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY**
We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.
- 8 **INTERDEPENDENCE** We meet each others' needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over our lives.
- 9 **COLLECTIVE ACCESS** As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.
- 10 **COLLECTIVE LIBERATION** No body or mind can be left behind -- only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

www.sinsinvalid.org
SINS INVALID 2015

Structural Investment in People's Material Needs

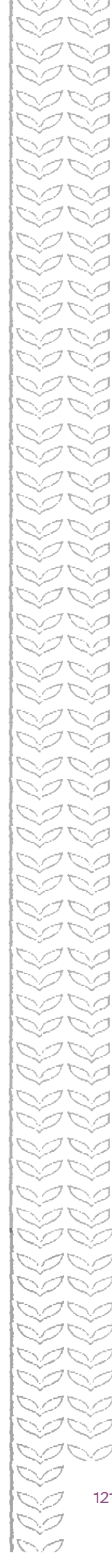
Deep societal transformation is safely made through the anchoring and stabilising forces within people's lives. The structures that enable people to thrive are made possible by the environmental designs that form the foundational scaffolding and grounding of their lives. As discussed earlier, ecological and social determinants fundamentally shape the health and quality of people's lives and, therefore, collective societal health. The public provisions play a constitutional role in configuring the expansiveness of living. Without adequate and sustained resourcing of people's baseline material needs, such as housing, transportation and food provisions, at a hyper local and contextually cohered level, people remain materially and spiritually impoverished by design.

The need to resource scaled infrastructure, starting at a local level, is to generate the capacity for communities to self-govern and steward in relationship with their locality and environment. If they are, as is happening right now, experiencing mass austerity, housing crises and food apartheid, then their preoccupation with survival rams them back into capitalist systems for fear of starvation. Their ability to steward well is compressed from survival responses which engender behaviours of isolation, despair, short termism/immediacy and individualism, as opposed to the connective, curious, collaborative and creative capacities we have when we are resourced. If we want to enable and cultivate thriving communities that can both transition and then steward land and all life, then creating ways for people to feel a degree of material safety is the task philanthropy needs to grapple with. Those structures and infrastructures that provide and organise these baseline needs may shapeshift and need different iterations of structuring, but at large, they serve the function of stabilising and meeting the primary needs of the citizens of their placing and locality.

Relational infrastructure is made more robust and capable by the scaffolding that is provided by life-affirming infrastructures, those with a clear directive and orientation to supply public and common provisions, without discrimination, in favour of what enables collective and mutual flourishing across life, including the more than human. This type of architectural endeavour is largely disjointed from how the UK is organised. A glimmer of this is visible in the welfare system and public health and education. However, due to their origins and living legacies of colonisation and eugenics, the sentiment of it can be carried, but the entire wiring of it needs to be re-visioned to meet the needs of all those it marginalises and leaves behind.

The enquiry of how we build the structural capacity to support the relational infrastructure is paramount right now. As existing structures – from financial to medical to housing – are at a deliberate and designed breaking point, there is a fraught tightrope to be walked between dismantling the systems we have right now, and growing the hybrid, interim and long-term structures we need.

As we try to balance this tightrope, we are grappling with having enough material containers and scaffolding to transport and travel people to emerging and evolving realities, which requires the participation of each person to make those new realities real and possible. This dynamic relationship between ecology and ecosystem, between relational and structural infrastructure, is bidirectional and feeding one another. And as we strengthen one, the other mutually flourishes. When it is harder to deliver the level of interpersonal support, we can consider how to create



structures that help communities organise themselves to be sustaining and necessary forces. What this also offers is the surfacing of genius and wisdom located within those communities, to be implemented and applied contextually, as well as opportunities for the structures to be remoulded based on the living feedback of the community. The possibilities are infinite when we are grappling with unknowns about what the future will look like. However, where we can be certain and build accordingly is in establishing the conditions that support safety, dignity and belonging through the intentional design of how public infrastructures operate and exist, how they serve, and how they shape us and are shaped.

Investing in Growing Political Power That Transforms From the Ground

Globally we are seeing levels of political repression, policing and securitising of any dissent to the status quo. Organisers and communities, from land defenders to civic responders, are facing censorship and discipline for protesting on foundational human dignities. What has been termed “radical” in the social justice realm is done so to remind us of being anchored and attentive to the roots of issues and causes. Yet, these days it seems basic provisions of food, access to health and shelter are being criminalised and discussed as “radical” demands. RRJ co-founder Immy Kaur reflects on this, and says:

“I don’t think we can even call this work radical. The word radical in its etymology is about going to the root. And we know that health, food and justice are fundamental building blocks for even a functioning society, and certainly for a thriving society ... we have been so dehumanised, and society so distorted by those in power, that this work is considered radical when it should just be the foundation of our public goods and rights from which we go on to build flourishing futures.”

What is more alarming is the way in which any dissent around our basic dignities is being described as “violent”, or “moralised” against the benign-ness and apathy that is called “nonviolence”. It is terrifying that we do not discuss that two thirds of families are living with food and fuel poverty as acts of genocide and violence against people. We mindfully use the word genocide acknowledging what is happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Palestine and Sudan while also acknowledging how systemic and structurally, people can be genocided through infrastructure and systems as well as through slow violence.

The UK is also the only developed country to be taken to the UN with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities finding that “grave and systematic violations” of Disabled persons’ rights had taken place because of austerity measures and welfare reforms since 2010, which had “disproportionately and adversely” affected the rights of Disabled people.⁵⁹ Despite being the sixth-richest economy in the world, the UK has over 12 million people living in absolute poverty, which is equivalent to 18% of the population, including 3.6 million children.⁶⁰

There is no way to dislodge the extent of societal and global oppression without those impacted overturning their oppressors “by any means necessary”. The enslaved cannot ask the enslaver for freedom; it has to be willed and attained as an act of freedom and freeing. In a similar vein, there is no practice of democracy without the democratic capacities of civic dissent, protest and refusal by the citizens and inhabitants. The resourcing of social and political uprising is not to monetarily incentivise oppositional work or to co-opt it, but rather to enable a counterinsurgency bold and robust enough to meet its oppressors. NGO-isation of political and social transformation attempts to convince us that the scale of transformation needed can be fit into capitalism’s 9-5 working model. What is required of us is total, and that totality includes the righteous rage that can fuel and mobilise mass civic agency and power, and that transfers the centralising of resources away from a minute few on the necks of the people.

There is no feasible future that is liberatory in spirit, structures and society without the dignifying agency of its people to act, change, amend, dismantle, oppose, propose and build. What we are saying is we need everyone to be responsible and accountable for the worlds we are building, and we have to do this in possession of our humanity. And to be in possession of our humanity is to revolt against everything that is dehumanising; as Fred Moten reminds us, “to riot is to love our survival”. Funders need to play an active role in enabling grassroots agency to grow power and momentum, while also allying with them to transform the structural conditions in which they are mobilising.

The future is in the land, not just as a metaphor, or as a climate justice-based pragmatism, but also as a reminder that those closest to earth and ground can hear her breathing. The grassroots is our grounding and our roots. We have to strengthen the ground and the roots in order to powerfully organise against the oppression that is making our people say “I can’t breathe” over and over again – from police brutality, to pandemic, to toxic air pollution. We gather as an army of trees to be each other’s lungs.

*A new world is possible. We can hear her breathing.*⁶¹

59 Disability Rights UK (2024) UK Government Faces UN For Violation of Disability Rights, 5th March 2024. Available at: www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/uk-government-faces-un-violation-disability-rights#:~:text=The%20UN%20Committee%20on%20the,the%20rights%20of%20Disabled%20people.

60 Butler, P. (2024) 300,000 more UK children fell into absolute poverty at height of cost of living crisis, The Guardian, 21st March 2024. Available at: www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/21/poorest-uk-families-hardest-hit-cost-living-crisis-official-figures

61 Roy, A. (2003) War Talk, South End Press 2003, pg 75 reference to “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

the true revolutionary is guided by



a great feeling of

L O V E

SOURCES

Further resources and appendices, templates and tools as well as this report are available on our website, www.resourcingracialjustice.org, for access and ease of sharing.

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