

Disrupting Injustice and Mobilizing Social Change

This chapter will explore how to build strong communities that nurture individual and collective wellbeing while shifting paradigms of injustice. This chapter is guided by a four-step framework developed by criminal justice activist and lawyer, Bryan Stevenson (2016)¹:

Step (1) *Becoming proximate*: In order to really understand and care about the complex social problems plaguing our society, it is necessary to get up close to them. Comprehending the nuances and urgency of any social issue requires becoming proximate to the lived experiences of injustice, and those living it.

Step (2) *Shifting the narrative*: Once we more intimately understand and care about a social issue and the communities it affects, we begin shifting the narrative we hold about that issue. The problem at hand often reflects a grander, dominant narrative that sustains the status quo, so recognizing and actively altering its narrative can disrupt broader systems of injustice.

Step (3) *Getting uncomfortable*: Shifting the narrative about a social problem unsettles one's beliefs, assumptions, and participation in oppressive structures in society. Coming into critical consciousness can elicit anger, fear, grief, or apathy, and can tap into the collective pain of oppression. This process necessarily involves an encounter with emotional discomfort and cognitive dissonance.

Step (4) *Cultivating hope*: We cannot rely merely on our proximity to others and raised consciousness alone to bring social change to fruition; we must also have a strong sense of purpose and hope propelling us. Cultivating

hope involves connecting with others around shared lived experiences, radical visions of what our world could look like, and action strategies that will take us there.

While Stevenson's step-by-step model frames this chapter, it is supplemented with concrete strategies for promoting social change that come from other scholar activists around the globe. Their methods draw on indigenous knowledge systems, theories of critical pedagogy, healing justice, and asset-based community development. Specific examples of what this looks like in action are sprinkled throughout the theoretical frameworks suggested.

Because theory should never be divorced from practice, this chapter also grounds these concepts in personal experience by promoting an iterant cycle of critical reflection. Each section concludes by offering a variety of proposed reflection prompts so the reader can explore the meaning, purpose, and growth that arises from actualizing social justice activism or community engagement experiences. Due to the intimate and sometimes challenging nature of critical learning and radical healing, it is recommended that readers create a conducive place in which to become centered and purposeful as they participate in these activities. I suggest that readers respond to the critical reflection prompts by journal-writing, letting the questions be a springboard for deeper considerations. Although the questions are seemingly simple, they can prompt deep personal and sometimes painful reflections so readers should be prepared for and mindful of any challenging reactions that surface. The mindfulness activities provided in Chap. 3 can also be put to use when responding to tough questions, as they enable readers to more effectively navigate any reactions triggered by provocative topics. The theories, critical reflection prompts and application strategies offered throughout this book can also be explored as a collective experience with others. Creating a "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger 1991)—whether amongst classmates within a course, colleagues in a community engagement support network, or in conversation with community partners—will allow the reader to engage in contemplative listening and meaningful dialogue around ideas or challenges that the questions of the book elicit. It is often in this space of experiential learning and collective critical reflection that our greatest insights emerge. When mobilized, the social change models presented and personal reflection ignited can have a profound impact on structural problems and the individuals who rally together to change them.

BECOMING PROXIMATE

Becoming proximate requires personally showing up in the context of injustice and social suffering. People who have never suffered from poverty, discrimination, mass incarceration, homelessness, or other social problems can only learn a limited amount about these issues from books or other media. Becoming proximate respectfully and ethically involves getting out of one's comfort zone and opening one's mind and heart to learn, care, and engage. At the same time, in this process there is great danger of exacerbating voyeurism, exploitation, or the distanced ethnographic gaze on "the Other."²

To avoid perpetuating "poverty tourism," individuals must investigate their motives for getting involved in social change activism.³ Critically reflecting on one's motivations is explored in depth in Chap. 3, but we can note here the distinction between community engagement based on pity or curiosity and that founded on a sense of moral obligation and interdependence. The latter requires individuals to extend beyond wanting to "help" those that are suffering and instead becoming accountable to the interlocking systems of domination that marginalize some people while benefiting others. As Lila Watson and her Aboriginal activist group warned, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (1970).⁴

The shift from a shallow sense of moral obligation to a heartfelt commitment to work alongside others around issues of injustice cannot be forced. It emerges organically from authentic engagement, respect, understanding, and empathy built upon genuine experiences of proximity. Getting to know and truly care about each other leads to a deep understanding that every person's happiness or suffering is interdependent with others, including those that seem removed by differences in race, religion, culture, or location. Thich Nhat Hanh, the acclaimed monk and founder of Engaged Buddhism, describes the degrees of compassion and equanimity that can occur when we develop deep relationships with people different from ourselves: "In a deep relationship, there's no longer a boundary between you and the other person. You are her and she is you. Your suffering is her suffering. Your understanding of your own suffering helps your loved one to suffer less. Suffering and happiness are no longer individual matters" (2015, p. 21).

Cultivating such deep relationships first involves immersing oneself in environments where social problems are playing out and forming connections with those facing those problems. This must be done thoughtfully, using non-exploitative strategies such as working through an interlocutor who is known and respected by both parties and can facilitate relationship building based on mutual respect, clear communication, and reciprocity. The practices of deep listening, open-mindedness, humility, and patience are also inherent to becoming proximate. So too is an authentic commitment to exercise social responsibility and act as an ally around the issue at hand. As such, one must critically reflect on personal accountability or complicity in the problems that bring suffering to others. Through this process, one's heart seems to break open as they become intimate with the pain and suffering of real human beings facing real social problems and a sense of interconnectedness is deepened.

While everyone can learn something by becoming proximate to the experiences of another, becoming proximate to one's own personal experiences of suffering or injustice is another critical act of engagement, as history shows that the communities directly affected by injustice are typically the ones who lead movements to change it. In instances where one is advocating around social issues that directly impact one's own community, the process of proximation allows greater reflection and reflexivity about one's own lived experiences. This process of making the personal political involves reclaiming one's own expertise on the issue and discussing experiences of injustice with others who are similarly impacted.

Reflecting critically on one's own lived experience usually leads to formulating theories about the causes of injustice. This is what radical Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire called "naming the world," meaning naming the issues, responses, and associated power structures that frame one's experiences of injustice (1970). Renowned feminist scholar, bell hooks, has written extensively about the liberatory and healing effect that can emerge from crafting theories around one's own lived experience:

I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. (hooks 1994, p. 59)

Defining the larger political and social contexts of injustice raises both consciousness and empowerment amongst those who have suffered. Becoming critically conscious of the injustices that impact one's own community can be unsettling, but it is also a powerful, and, as hooks reminds us, healing process. Collectively raising consciousness from the inside out about issues of structural domination cultivates the power awareness and agency necessary to begin effectively dismantling the narratives and deconstructing the systems that cause suffering.

At the same time, becoming proximate to communities other than one's own can generate solidarity, another important ingredient of successful social change. According to Freire's conceptualization of *critical pedagogy*, a primary step toward challenging oppression is creating authentic relationships based on mutual learning, critical reflection, and reciprocity where a liberatory education of self and other can take place.⁵ As such, critical pedagogy is both a methodology of teaching and learning and a site for socio-political activism. It is a community-based educational model that aims to deconstruct hierarchies of power and knowledge by re-centering common knowledge (knowledge/wisdom of the people, formed by lived experience) in a consciousness-raising process that mobilizes communities toward grassroots social change. Elevating respect for the knowledge of those most marginalized (and sometimes least educated) amongst us nullifies the idea that knowledge is a commodity (Freire 1970).

In my own experience of becoming proximate, I have been profoundly impacted by teaching college courses inside a local men's prison through a critical pedagogy approach. Following the Inside-Out Prison Exchange format, a dozen "outside" college students from my university merge with a dozen "inside" incarcerated college students to take a credit-bearing course, "Healing Arts and Social Change" within the prison.⁶ The course explores the theories and practices of self-awareness, critical consciousness, and social change on which this book is based. Over the course of the semester, both inside and outside students are transformed deeply by becoming proximate and confronting their differences. The connection and learning stimulated by this act of engagement is simultaneously cognitive (intellectual) and affective (emotional). I, too, become deeply involved in the dialectic, reciprocal exchange of knowledge, consciousness-raising, and connection with this unique mix of students (Pompa and Crabbe 2004). The liberatory education that we co-create inside this punitive system temporarily disrupts the dehumanizing and oppressive norms that operate

within the prison while simultaneously empowering both inside and outside students to critically develop their own political and personal awareness. Simply being proximate to the workings of the prison and the experiences of those trapped inside has greatly deepened my and my outside students' comprehension of and commitment to dismantling the American system of incarceration.⁷

Through this proximation, both my mind and my heart opened to the realities of injustice and deep pain that exist in and as a result of our system of incarceration. With this, I realized the importance not only of becoming proximate to the issues of injustice or the communities facing such issues but also to the despair we feel about these issues. Systems theorist and Buddhist philosopher Joanna Macy calls this an act of allowing ourselves to feel “our pain for the world” (1998, p. 5).⁸ Through her decades of facilitating activist groups around the world, she finds that this occurs best by forming genuine relationships with a community of people also invested in and willing to collectively reflect on the issues. Macy’s version of becoming proximate occurs through “the work that reconnects,” a group process intended to “help people uncover and experience their innate connections with each other and with the systemic, self-healing powers in the web of life, so that they may be enlivened and motivated to play their part in creating a sustainable civilization” (Macy and Brown 1998, p. 58). Becoming proximate in these terms entails coming together in a group to participate in facilitated dialogues that create an atmosphere of trust, support, and safety. These dialogues cultivate the compassion and insight that in turn “arouse desire to act” (p. 60). The goals of the “work that reconnects” include the following:

- providing people with the opportunity to experience and share with others their innermost responses to the present condition of our world;
- reframing their pain for the world as evidence of their interconnect- edness in the web of life, and hence of their power to take part in its healing;
- providing methods by which people can experience their interde- pendence with, their responsibility to, and the inspiration they can draw from past and future generations, and other life-forms; and
- enabling people to support each other in clarifying their intention and affirming their commitment to the healing of the world (ibid).

The above approach is similar to the qualities of becoming proximate known as “*acompañamiento*” (accompaniment) that is a prominent practice in many Andean communities.⁹ Through the connections of my mentor, over a dozen years ago I had the honor of accompanying a number of rural, native communities of *campesinos* and affiliated grassroots organizers throughout Peru with PRATEC (*Proyectos Andinos de Tecnologías Campesinas*, Andean Projects of Peasant Technologies).¹⁰ This experience working with Quechua, Lamista, and Ayamara native communities and their *mestizo* allies helped me understand new ways of thinking about community building, wellbeing, and the connection of the personal to the collective. Through their teachings around the importance of mutual nurturing, interconnectedness, and reciprocity in communities, I came to see how these values must be embodied in all of our relationships, especially when attempting to accompany communities outside our own that are working for cultural affirmation in the face of injustice.¹¹

“Accompaniment” means sharing and participating with a community in their ways of being from a position of epistemological situatedness that honors the knowledge and lived experiences of the community (Tomlinson and Lipstiz 2013). The one who accompanies considers how best to participate in a relationship characterized by equivalency, respect, support, and thoughtful engagement. This involves critical reflection of one’s positionality and any engrained beliefs that could inadvertently devalue the community one wishes to accompany. As my Peruvian mentor said, “Whoever wants to exercise the role of accompanist must realize s/he has been subjected to colonization. Colonization is dual” (Ishizawa 2006, p. 8). As important as relational accountability and reciprocity are to accompaniment, so too is the commitment to practicing decolonization and fostering intercultural understanding (which will be explored in greater length in Chap. 3).

Becoming proximate usually leads to caring deeply about a social justice issue and the desire to become an ally in working to change the social structures that sustain that form of injustice. Becoming an effective ally is delicate work, however. The desire to advocate for others can sometimes result in usurping their power to speak for themselves. Discovering what kind of support those you accompany want from you is of critical importance when getting involved in any social change movement.

“Accomplice” and “co-conspirator” are other terms that approximate the concept of being an accompanist. These terms have gained traction in recent years among criminal justice activists, advocates, and scholars who

are intentionally politicizing the work of allies attempting to take down interlocking systems of domination through targeted analysis, planning, and action (Phillips 2015). Accomplices and co-conspirators shift focus away from simply breaking bread together to coordinating actions intended to disrupt the status quo. This centers the attention less on the ways individuals are affected (i.e., an outsider gains an understanding of another's suffering or the one suffering gains camaraderie and reassurance in knowing they have an ally, friend, or accompanist) to advocating for concrete legal, academic, or activist strategies for undoing injustice. This conceptualization encourages academics in particular to make their scholarship contribute concretely to the public good, or as Tomlinson and Lipstiz note, "rather than merely producing ever more eloquent descriptions of other people's suffering, scholars can join with others to address the suffering and to create ways of ending it" (2013, p. 13).

A successful example of this occurred during the Black Lives Matter protests at the Claremont Colleges in late 2015. That autumn, fervent protests led by young activists of color (many of whom also identified as low-income, queer, first generation, and/or undocumented) had erupted on college campuses across the nation. Students organized protests in the space of hours, days, and weeks to articulate demands concerning issues of access, equity, and wellbeing that were affecting their day-to-day experiences at college. They spoke to issues related to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, citizenship, ethnicity, ability, and more. They demanded to be treated fairly and to be included and cared for in all aspects of college life, from admissions to student affairs, financial aid to academic affairs. They spoke about the microaggressions from fellow students and professors that occurred in dormitories and classrooms. They argued for the necessity of having "safe spaces," wellness services, and student support resources on campus. They also demanded transparent, interactive dialogues with their administrations concerning the authentic meaning of such overused terms as "diversity" and "inclusion." They spoke about feeling underrepresented, underserved, and undervalued, institutionally and interpersonally.

Students expertly and expeditiously organized strategies to convey their feelings and demands, including occupying academic and administrative buildings, facilitating sit-ins, teach-ins, marches, and face-to-face meetings with the highest levels of student, faculty, and administrative governmental bodies at schools across the nation. In preparation for a massive, five college-wide Black Lives Matter march and protest at the Claremont

Colleges, Black students and other students of color came together around the injustices, insensitivities, and inequalities they confronted in their schools and created lists of demands to share with the administration.

They felt increasingly exhausted, fearful, and stressed as a result of organizing the protests in the midst of juggling classes, jobs, family obligations, and other responsibilities. As tensions mounted, white students who were their friends, roommates, and classmates expressed their desire to support the students of color who were organizing the demonstrations and become a part of the movement. These white students recognized that self-identified allies often hijack meetings, microphones, or agendas even when they intend to respectfully hold a space in partnership with marginalized communities. They asked what work they could do to support their peers, how to keep those being targeted by injustice at the forefront of the fight, yet not be alone in the struggle. The students of color discussed amongst themselves what would most support their cause, then, using an activist-ally model taught by Black Lives Matter movement leaders, came up with a list of things these potential allies could provide. The first item was providing logistical support in the form of organizing press, campus security, and march permits. The second involved providing physical support in the form of creating a buffer zone of protection by putting their (white) bodies in a circle around the Black Live Matters protesters, so that if the march was met with violence, the allies would act as the first line of defense. They also asked the allies to organize all this on their own, because the students of color did not have the time and energy to explain and lead them through yet another series of meetings. However, they ensured that one student of color organizer was present at each of the ally meetings to make sure that the allies were representing their needs accurately.

One of the students of color leaders on campus who was designated to sit in on the white ally organizing meetings shared with me her interpretation of this experience (R.C., *personal communication*, 2016). She was surprised and impressed by how thoughtful, conscientious, and reflective the white students were about their positionality and in figuring out how best to fulfill their roles as allies. She was also appreciative of how effective and respectful they were in carrying out these roles before and during the organized action.

A lesson that emerged from the Claremont Colleges protests was that diverse people can work together to foster social change provided they are willing to become proximate in transparent and respectful ways. In their

willingness to collaborate, be held accountable, and respect students of color who were organizing the protests, these white students demonstrated their ability to effectively accompany, advocate for, and act as accomplices with those targeted for injustice. Activist students of color navigated this partnership by giving their allies important tasks to do while prompting them to actively and critically reflect on their own experiences and responsibilities in spaces where injustice and discrimination exist. They also encouraged them to seek the tools they needed to do the work, instead of relying on the students of color to tutor them. For example, the white students sought out non-violent, civil disobedience training to prepare for being buffers during the protests. Despite their disparate life experiences, these students felt compelled to create spaces where they could connect and share the work of change.¹²

Becoming proximate to others and to the (micro) lived experiences generated by (macro) social problems often results in developing a heartfelt commitment to changing society. Becoming proximate to others requires cultivating the same qualities needed to develop caring and awareness of ourselves: love, courage, humility, open-mindedness, and accountability.

To reflect on what becoming proximate might look like in practice in your own life, I encourage readers to pause here and explore the following prompts, either by free-writing responses individually or in a group conversation.

Critical Reflection: Becoming Proximate

1. Do you educate yourself about the culture and experiences of other racial, religious, ethnic and socioeconomic groups by reading and attending classes, workshops, cultural events, volunteering or creating community partnerships, etc?¹³
2. Where, with whom, how often, how deeply, and why have you attempted to become proximate to communities or social issues different from your own?
3. Where or in what contexts have you resisted becoming proximate? Why or what fuels that resistance?
4. In what ways do you become proximate to communities of which you are already a part?
5. How have you seen others outside your communities attempt to become proximate to your community? What have you

learned from observing their successes or failures in pursuing proximity?

6. What ethical issues are you cautious about in the work of becoming proximate?
7. What are the necessary ingredients for becoming a respectful and effective ally, accomplice, or accompanist?

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE

Once we become intimately connected to a social issue, we begin to question the dominant beliefs and systems that underlie that issue. We open up to new ways of interpreting the historical trajectory of that social problem and the power structures and interlocking political and social contexts that effect it, thus shifting foundational narratives for how we understand the problem itself. This can then lead to figuring out the personal and systemic moves needed to change the problem, and a commitment to employing effective strategies for that change.

I began my own shift in narrative about indigenous knowledge when I was in the small village of Huito in the Peruvian Andes. At that time, as part of PRATEC, I was sitting in on a community-based education program on “mental decolonization.” At the end of the program, I was asked to introduce myself. Then I was asked to talk about the native peoples living in Southern California. I quickly grew embarrassed both by my country’s historic and current treatment of native communities and by my lack of knowledge about native tribes in Los Angeles. As a proud, second-generation local Los Angeleno, I thought I knew the area well, but when asked, I realized I was not even sure who had originally lived there or what the status was of native communities there. The only story I could tell the students, parents, and teachers in Huito was that most of the native peoples in the USA had been decimated during periods of colonization and genocide and that the few that survived were still struggling to maintain traditional languages and practices. My shame deepened as I realized that, while I had become proximate to the peoples, cultures, and struggles of the indigenous

communities I was accompanying in Peru, I had no proximation to the histories, communities, or stories of the peoples native to my home territory.

From this shame grew motivation to learn, to become proximate, and to see if my own narrative on native communities needed shifting—which, unsurprisingly, it did. When I returned home, a native colleague who had spent many years working with local native communities opened doors for me to accompany, learn from, and work with local native elders. These relationships developed into now nearly decade-long community engagement partnerships between members of local native tribes and students and colleagues from my college.¹⁴ In fomenting long-lasting relationships with these elders, inviting them to be co-educators in my courses, collaborating on projects around indigenous knowledge, arts, and culture, and teaching about indigenous knowledge systems and decolonization in my classes, I not only learned a great deal, but also shifted the beliefs I had held about native rights, epistemologies, and histories. These shifts in narrative then informed how I saw myself as a product of settler colonialism. I investigated the epistemology I had been raised in and the cultural biases I held. I also reflected on my own practice of interconnectedness with others and the earth. These relationships and paradigm shifts in my thinking led me to invest in becoming an ally with local native communities working for social change. I also made a greater commitment to shifting the narratives in my academic community and work with my colleagues to address issues of equity, respect, and access to land and college education for our local tribal communities.

PRATEC's version of "shifting the narrative" focuses on undergoing mental, emotional, and spiritual acts of *decolonization* in order to reverse the effects of colonization. The decolonization process requires first recognizing the oppression of indigenous communities that began when they were first colonized over 500 years ago and then acknowledging that these communities continue to be socially, culturally, politically, and legislatively marginalized. Unlearning the ideologies of oppression and dominant assumptions that native customs, cosmologies, and forms of knowledge are backward, along with deconstructing narratives that underscore the primacy of western cultures or claim the absolute truth of western epistemologies, enables us to shift personal, institutional, and systemic narratives.

According to PRATEC, when we disentangle ourselves from oppressive, false teachings about indigenous cultures, we can generate new narratives that value indigenous forms of knowledge and culture.¹⁵ We can honor demands that these be valued in educational and political contexts

alongside western traditions. The methods and objectives of the educational system can shift to being informed by indigenous knowledge systems, respecting storytelling as a way of transmitting knowledge, providing different ways of understanding space, time, notions of individualism, and ownership, and recognizing how teaching and learning embody intellectual, spiritual, moral, and physical development (Mosha 1999; Smith 1999). While “Indigenous knowledge systems are themselves diverse (as are knowledge and traits ascribed to Western societies),” many indigenous epistemologies privilege the dynamic over the static, the subjective over the objective, the collective over the individual, the experiential and practical over the theoretical, and diversity over monoculture and standardization (Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005, p. 8).¹⁶ Valuing and incorporating such notions and practices into conventional western schooling systems simultaneously affirms diverse cultures and ways of knowing while shifting colonial narratives about indigeneity.

PRATEC’s decolonization process not only applies to “shifting the narrative” about indigenous communities, it can be used to understand any community and the institutions, norms, and laws that perpetuate oppression and injustice for members of that community. “Decolonization” is thus similar to the practice of “*conscientizacao*,” or raising critical consciousness, as outlined by critical pedagogists. This process is designed to liberate both oppressors and oppressed by recognizing and shifting the narrative they hold about the interlocking systems of domination within which they operate. As stated by Freire, “Desocialized thinking called critical consciousness refers to the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge and power in society, to the way we use and study language, and to the way we act in school and daily life to reproduce or to transform our conditions” (2006, p. 129).

There are four primary components to *conscientizacao* or raising critical consciousness:

Power Awareness: Knowing that society and history are made by contending forces and interests, that human action makes society and that society is unfinished and can be transformed;

Critical Literacy: Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meanings, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meanings, root causes, social contexts, ideologies, and personal consequences of any action, event, object,

process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse;

Permanent Desocialization: Understanding and challenging artificial, political limits on human development; questioning power and inequality in the status quo; examining socialized values in consciousness and in society which hold back democratic change in individuals and in the larger culture; and seeing self and social transformation as a joint process;

Self-education/Organization: Self-organized transformative education to develop critical thought and cooperative action (Shor 1992, pp. 129–130).

Critical pedagogy's practice of *conscientizacao* advances shifts in narratives through providing popular education in critical thinking. It engages individuals in defining, naming, and restructuring the power structures that inform their social and political opportunities. The consciousness-raising process thus situates the individual within the power constructs of society.

Shifting narratives around knowledge production, power, and rights ideally results in a greater sense of personal agency, leading to strategies to confront and transform oppressive systems. However, learning about the systems that perpetuate social problems often leads to an initial period of devastation, hopelessness, anger, and grief, recalling again Macy's concept of feeling "our pain for the world" (1998, p. 5). This devastation often collides with anger at the conditions, policies, and people that perpetuate unjust environments. When anger toward oppressive or unjust systems is first expressed, it is often ignored or dismissed by the status quo. Black Lives Matter co-founded, Patrisse Cullores, has made the observation that proclamations about oppression and freedom made by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi were initially considered outrageous; they were only memorialized after the social movements they instigated proved successful (On Being with Krista Tippett 2016a).¹⁷

Shifting the narrative also includes examining how we can use anger strategically instead of letting it generate more violence in the world and in ourselves. Expressing anger through art is one method of "shifting the narrative" about issues of oppression and agency. Examples include Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, poetry slams, graffiti art, political murals, and political music.¹⁸ Anger is transformed into social action "through the creation of radical culture, whether in the form of texts, movement, images, film, music, or performance, art is used as an effective medium and powerful tool for systemic change and transformation" (Ginwright 2015, p. 37).

As we will dive into in greater depth in Chap. 3, these “liberation arts” not only allow us to express ourselves, but enable us to cope with, heal from, and transform our suffering into a social good (Watkins and Shulman 2008).

Another way to shift the narratives is by transforming our social movements themselves. Transformative movement organizing and healing justice are emerging frameworks for reimagining social movements to include methods for both community healing and liberation.¹⁹ “Healing Justice seeks to lift up resiliency and wellness practices as a transformative response to generational violence and trauma in our communities” (Page 2010).²⁰ Healing justice recognizes that individuals and communities are both chronically and acutely traumatized by oppressive social systems. These traumas can be healed through practices that address suffering and shift “how individuals, organizations, and communities relate to one another as they envision a new way of creating collective hope” (Ginwright 2015, p. 28) . Healing justice seeks “to regenerate traditions that have been lost; to mindfully hold contradictions in our practices; and to be conscious of the conditions we are living and working inside of as healers and organizers in our communities and movements.” (Page 2010). The healing justice and transformative movement approaches shift the narrative about how we go about making change, which then alters the social change methods, goals, and movement environment.

Healing justice methods involve the creative arts, mindfulness and contemplative practices aimed at reimagining the world we want (not just what we are fighting against) and reorganizing our tactics and daily operations to bring about healing changes. Without such opportunities for healing, individuals and communities continue to carry unresolved traumas that may result in harming themselves and others. This shift in movement narratives ensures that changemakers do not end up internalizing their anger with unjust systems and projecting it internally within their movements and communities but instead work intentionally to create movement spaces that thoughtfully process anger and make room for healing.²¹

A key healing justice method is the healing circle. Similar to Macy’s “work that reconnects,” healing circles involve small groups of people creating the “group safety necessary for group members to share their experience and opinions” through dialogue, witnessing, and supporting each other (Ginwright 2015, p. 36). A similar shift occurs in the *restorative justice* model wherein community dialogues “restore group trust and fairness in cases where conflict occurs” (ibid). This approach re-envision conflict in a way that disrupts conventional, polarizing conceptualizations

of “victims” and “perpetrators.” Instead of using punitive methods to separate individuals, these dialogues bring people together for the shared purpose of restoration and reconciliation as a form of justice and healing. Restorative and healing justice methods thus shift the narratives around oppression by focusing social change efforts on individual and collective healing as a means of creating the world we want to live in. “Rather than viewing wellbeing as an individual act of self care, healing justice advocates view healing as political action” (p. 8).

Based on his extensive research on hope and healing with young men of color in Oakland and San Francisco, scholar-activist Shawn Ginwright has articulated a number of factors necessary to shift the narrative of oppression toward hope. When facilitated in healing circles, these practices cultivate cultural affirmation, empowerment, community belonging, and hope, resulting in the motivation and sense of agency necessary to act personally and collectively against injustice. Principle components of such a shift include the following:

- *Culture*: Drawing on culture as “an anchor to connect young people to a racial and ethnic identity that is both historically grounded and contemporarily relevant” helps build connection and sense of purpose, belonging, and self-esteem. A sense of intercultural interconnectedness can be manifested by engaging communities in culturally appropriate (rather than appropriative) traditions such as rituals, music, sweat lodges, or healing circles.
- *Agency*: Defined as “the individual and collective ability to act in order to create desired outcomes and transform external conditions,” agency is cultivated when groups “create space for youth voice [and] identify ways for young people to address community issues.” Providing tangible projects for local change that are both achievable and empowering shifts the narrative from assuming that change is impossible to believing that anything is possible.
- *Relationships*: Defined as “the capacity to create, sustain and grow healthy connections with others,” meaningful relationships are nurtured when groups “create healing circles where members share their interests, fears, and hopes.” Developing meaningful relationships enables individuals and social activist groups to shift from being fragmented by oppression to being collectively empowered by community.

- *Meaning*: Cultivating meaning that supports “discovering our purpose, and building an awareness of our role in advancing justice” can be manifested when groups “have conversations about what gives life meaning [and] create discussions that foster self discovery,” promoting a shift from apathy to purpose.
- *Achievement*: Achievement “illuminates life’s possibilities and acknowledges movement toward explicit goals.” It can be manifested when groups “build knowledge and skills about individual assets and aspirations” and work collaboratively to create the world they want (2015, p. 26).

Shifting the narrative toward acknowledging the need for healing and connection amongst political activists and movements has been recognized by some and resisted by others. Two well-known activist sisters recently discussed this narrative shift:

Angela Davis: I think our notions of what counts as radical have changed over time. Self-care and healing and attention to the body and the spiritual dimension—all of this is now a part of social justice struggles. That wasn’t the case before.

And I think that now we’re thinking deeply about the connection between interior life and what happens in the social world. Even those who are fighting against state violence often incorporate impulses that are based on state violence in their relations with other people.

[...]

Fania Davis: The question now is how we craft a process that brings the healing piece together with the social and racial justice piece—how we heal the racial traumas that keep re-enacting.

Angela Davis: I think that restorative justice is a really important dimension of the process of living the way we want to live in the future. Embodying it.

We have to imagine the kind of society we want to inhabit. We can’t simply assume that somehow, magically, we’re going to create a new society in which there will be new human beings. No, we have to begin that process of creating the society we want to inhabit right now. (van Gelder 2016)

Healing ourselves so that we may connect and strengthen our combined capacities to advocate for justice involves recognizing our strengths as individuals and as collectives. One of the strengths of communities is their

ability to love, support, and assist their members so they can survive injustice and trauma. Honoring and mobilizing around such strengths is predicated upon another paradigm shift in how we think about communities and methods for social change. This kind of approach is promoted through the community-organizing model known as *Asset-Based Community Development* (ABCD), which is based on building relationships of trust, respect, and reciprocity among community members and then mapping out the capacities and assets of individuals, groups, and institutions. The notion of emphasizing human assets in this way disrupts a capitalist approach that measures the value of individuals based on their financial worth or ability to be financially productive and instead focuses on the inherent value of an individual based on their knowledge, skills, and capacities.

The ABCD model posits that traditional methods of assessing marginalized communities are inherently flawed because of the inclination to focus on problems, deficits, and needs rather than on assets, strengths, and capacities.²² This former model leads to deficit-oriented service-providing models that promote temporary social services as solutions to community problems, instead of developing asset-building movements that are mobilized from the inside-out and generate long-term change. When service-providing agencies, foundations, universities, and even neighborhood residents define a neighborhood only in terms of its deficits, the community is quickly bound to rely on outside services for its wellbeing. Stereotypes are projected onto community residents as victims who lack agency. Community wisdom and knowledge, networks of support, and talents, abilities, and assets amongst residents are denied existence rather than drawn upon to solve problems and mobilize for change. Any solutions are usually temporary and fail to generate systemic change, since they are funded and provided by outside services rather than controlled by the community itself. This dynamic of reliance is unstable and unsustainable. An ABCD approach shifts this paradigm by recognizing the skills and abilities that exist within communities, connecting them to definitive needs, and ensuring that community members and groups design and execute agendas for change (Kretzman and McKnight 1993).²³

Recognizing that marginalized communities possess internal assets does not hide the fact of real problems. Critiquing the power structures in society that contribute to oppression of such communities is imperative. Nevertheless, “all the historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are

committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort” (Kretzman and McKnight 1993, p. 7). Acknowledging the value of community knowledge, bonds, strengths, and capacities promotes agency and supports communities in imagining and directing the changes they want, rather than being situated as recipients of the next fad in service provision.

Asset-based community development, healing and restorative justice, critical pedagogy, and practices of decolonization all provide ways of shifting the dominant narrative around oppression. These approaches change the lens through which we usually view social problems and alter our understanding of how to manifest social change. The largest shift we can make subsequently is to the issue of injustice itself. There are no one-size-fits-all methodologies for overturning injustice, however. These approaches all recognize that change is case specific and depends on the needs, assets, values, culture, norms, laws, institutions, politics, environment, and moral compass of each community and individual.

Some possibilities for shifting the narrative and mobilizing action around injustice occur in big, collective acts, such as shifting policies and community structures, while others occur in (equally important) small, personal acts, such as shifting beliefs and habits. Actions might include:

- giving money or time to organizations making change on the ground level;
- engaging with a local community or organization to conduct community-based participatory research or service aimed at creating larger structural shifts over time;
- calling or writing elected officials to voice support for or protest against specific legislation that impacts equity and justice;
- organizing or attending rallies, protests, marches, or teach-ins;
- educating yourself about and then voting in public elections for issues you believe in and candidates you think will best represent them;
- participating in neighborhood or city councils to push for local change;
- creating or attending gatherings in one’s own neighborhood with others seeking to organize grassroots social change efforts;
- participating in organizational change within institutions (religious, professional, or civic) of which you are a part, including questioning

if/how your institution may be unwittingly colluding in upholding longstanding oppressive structures;

- participating in grassroots collaboratives that provide alternative community structures or systems;
- bearing witness to suffering and raising your voice against it;
- recognizing and changing personal biases;
- calling others up when unjust or discriminatory comments are made²⁴;
- engaging in difficult dialogues with people who have different life experiences or beliefs than you do to see if you can build common ground or bridges of understanding;
- re-learning history from the point of view of the oppressed;
- addressing the reproduction of inequalities in your own life (including in your intimate relationships and school or work communities);
- healing yourself and your community from the traumas of injustice.

The actions to shift injustice follow a shift in one's own understanding of the injustice itself and will vary from person to person. Before moving on to the next section, I encourage readers to explore what shifting the paradigmatic narrative might entail in your own life by responding to the following prompts:

Critical Reflection Activity: Shifting the Narrative

1. What dominant narrative have you inherited about a social issue you want to change?
2. Who authored, taught, or perpetuated this narrative? What is missing from it?
3. What counter-narratives undergird the issue? What narratives remain unspoken or silenced by the dominant narrative?
4. What would you need to learn more about to get a full picture of the factors, conditions, and histories influencing the issue and its dominant narrative?
5. Who might hold knowledge or a different way of seeing the world that you could learn from so as to promote a narrative shift concerning this issue?
6. What new ways might you imagine social change if you shifted the narrative around this issue?

7. What visions do you or people in your community hold for the kind of world you want to create? How are these visions distinct or similar to the world we have now?
8. What are concrete measures you can take in your life today that support shifting the narrative and creating real change?

GETTING UNCOMFORTABLE

Although coming face to face with community suffering and the narratives we hold that support them is crucial to social change, a great deal of discomfort can arise in the process. Joanna Macy dissects this discomfort in her discussion of “*apatheia*,” a collective refusal to fully experience the pain of the world (1998). Most individuals often hesitate to acknowledge oppressive cultural, racial, and gender relations, economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and other realities of injustice for fear of experiencing despair, guilt, or powerlessness. Many tend to follow cultural norms that value stoicism over the risk of appearing weak, emotional, morbid, or unpatriotic and worry they may cause others distress by bringing social issues to the communal table (*ibid*). There are also great forces at work to repress this discomfort, including mass media, job and time pressures, social violence, and, for many, the need to direct all attention and energies to merely surviving.

Confronting this pain can seem unbearable, especially for those who have not been socialized to experience this level of emotional openness or do not have a place to process it. The findings of Shawn Ginwright demonstrated that young men of color who sought healing against a backdrop of state-sanctioned violence, poverty, discrimination, and poor schools were rarely given “permission to grieve and therefore find their own way to process their feelings [...] The streets had taught them that focusing on their emotions, such as fear, uncertainty, and sorrow made them vulnerable to the dangers of street life” (2015, pp. 49–51). Drawing attention to the pain of oppression can become a liability under such conditions.

In addition, critical thinking about social injustice is seldom part of the conventional educational experience. Assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, and other social identities are often opaque both to those who

instruct people (i.e., teachers, clergy, program leaders) and to those being taught how to live. For many people, an encounter with the post-modern critiques that might disrupt such oppressive norms only occurs when they undergo a consciousness-raising experience, such as attending college, living abroad, or joining a social movement (J.C., *personal communication*, 2016).

Many activists and Cultural Studies theorists propose that hegemonic assumptions and norms are intentionally integrated into educational systems and political structures as operatives for oppression. Interlocking systems of domination cannot continue to function if those who are repressed by them become educated about the processes of exploitation. Repressing the truth about oppressive structures results in people living in “false consciousness,” as explained through the traditional Marxist lens:

Marx asserts that social mechanisms emerge in class society that systematically create distortions, errors, and blind spots in the consciousness of the underclass. If these consciousness-shaping mechanisms did not exist, then the underclass, always a majority, would quickly overthrow the system of their domination. So the institutions that shape the person’s thoughts, ideas, and frameworks develop in such a way as to generate false consciousness and ideology. (Little 2007, p. 1)

Cultural Studies theorist Antonio Gramsci refuted the latent implication in Marxist theory that the oppressed do not have the agency or political capacity to break free from being “passive tool[s] of the dominant ideology” (ibid). Gramsci argued that everyone has “the ability to influence the terms of [their] consciousness” and to contest the “terms of representation of the existing social reality” (ibid). Gramsci insisted that the oppressed can and do confront the ruling elite’s hegemonic order by crafting their own “counter-hegemonic struggle.” By facing their own pain and refusing to remain complacent about the dominant narrative, oppressed peoples all over the world ignite social change (Gramsci 1971).

Emotional discomfort can be a constant companion for those who personally, politically, or socially negotiate systems of oppression on a daily basis. bell hooks argues for intentionally developing a space for “radical openness” on the margins of dominant society. This is a place where oppressed peoples can craft liberatory consciousness and the tools of resistance. She says, “much more than a site of deprivation...it is also the site of radical possibility [...] a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult

yet necessary. It is not a ‘safe’ place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (hooks 1989, p. 206). Raising consciousness about marginality and sitting with the discomfort generated by that position is a prerequisite to action and an opportunity to build solidarity with “a community of resistance.”

Those who do not regularly experience oppression as a result of their racial, gender, class, or other social identities may initially encounter despair, anger, or guilt once they become aware of systems of oppression. Cognitive dissonance may arise when innocent beliefs such as “I am generally a good person, most people are generally good, and the world is generally a good place” are juxtaposed against the reality of injustice. Even greater personal and interpersonal turmoil emerges when those in privileged positions realize that they in fact benefit from systems of oppression (discussed further in Chap. 3). People who have had their consciousness raised about their deliberate or inadvertent complicity in such systems tend to gloss over their feelings of guilt or shame so they can move on to the “real work” of fighting oppression. It is true that any work intended to undo such systems should focus on those who are at the receiving end. However, those in power may undermine activist efforts if they are not willing to acknowledge their own guilt and shame.

In her study of “Integrating mindfulness into anti-oppression pedagogy,” Beth Berila argues that discomfort “is the safety mechanism for systems of oppression to keep them intact” (2016, p. 140). When confronted with their roles in oppressive systems, those in positions of power typically react as if they are being attacked. As trauma therapist, Hala Khouri, explains: “One of the ways that people with privilege cope with their guilt and overwhelm is to dissociate from the injustice and oppression that they benefit from. Dissociation can take the form of denial (‘it’s not really that bad’), blame (‘everyone can make it if they really try’), and/or conscious ignorance (‘it’s too much, I don’t want to know’)” (H.K., *personal communication*, 2016). They may automatically react with attempts to appear bigger by physically intimidating others or lashing out aggressively against allegations of privilege, they may attempt to appear smaller by shrinking away from social encounters and refusing to take responsibility for privilege, or they may distract or numb themselves in order to avoid the painful emotions triggered by awakening to their roles in oppression (Berila 2016). “All of these are part of the ‘fight, flight, freeze’ response of how one deals with an overwhelming event or circumstance. These coping strategies get passed on and even codified in cultural norms,

beliefs and (re)actions in privileged communities” (H.K., *personal communication*, 2016).

Activists should not permit people in positions of privilege to hurry past any discomfort they might feel about a social issue, but they also should not shame or blame them to the point where they become immobilized by guilt. Neither option moves us towards effective social change. Instead, we should all become consciously aware of where we experience privilege and participate in unjust systems and carefully attend to any emotional reactions that arise in this confrontational process. Beth Berila reminds us that:

What arises for us is the work. The complex reactions are not things to get past in order to get to the ‘real’ social justice work. The grief, anger, pain, confusion, horror and denial that arise, those feelings, *is* the work. When we regularly reflect on what arises for us in discussions about oppression, along with our various attempts to examine them through various mindfulness practices, we will learn a great deal about our own role in oppressive systems and how to interrupt it. Only then can we imagine new possibilities into reality. (2016, p. 111)

Considering the systemic proliferation of oppression and violence against women, children, people of color, people with disabilities, people who identify as queer, people who are in prison, and so on, it seems unlikely that anyone is completely free of complicity in the structures that perpetuate harm. Recognizing ways in which we are implicitly or explicitly complicit in systems of injustice is a critical step in mobilizing the will and strategies necessary for making effective change. Whether we suffer or benefit from systems of injustice, facing our discomfort contributes to long-term individual and collective wellbeing more than ignoring such pain. Most people are taught to conquer their fears instead of sitting with them, but research demonstrates that suppressing emotional reactions to injustice can contribute to social fragmentation, alienation, blaming and scapegoating, political passivity, diminished critical thinking, avoidance of information about social issues, burnout, or feelings of powerlessness and despair (Macy and Brown 1998). In contrast, becoming mindful of how we embody the discomfort we feel about social injustice and our complicity in systems of oppression enables us to more effectively advance strategies for dismantling them.

Drawn from ancient secular and religious traditions, mindfulness practices such as meditation, introspection, and contemplation can help us tolerate uncertainty, confusion, and the contradictions that arise around

social issues. They can also help us become better attuned to our embodied state and habitual forms of reaction. As Berila explains,

Rather than merely seeing patterns of oppression in the society around us or even in our external behaviors, we can begin to recognize *how* they have insinuated themselves into our selves, bodies, and spirits. We can learn to recognize the effects in our rapid heartbeat, our anger, our deep shame or sadness. We can start to recognize how we want to lash out as a defense mechanism that both protects us from external threats and gives us something to focus on besides our pain. While there is a time and place when such lashing out is a necessary survival mechanism, with deeper reflection we might find that that behavior does not serve us in every moment. (2016, pp. 16–17)

Getting uncomfortable is one of the consequences of critical reflection, but sometimes people who have suddenly awakened to issues of injustice become so passionate about them that they begin policing or supervising other people's reactions. A provocative example of this occurred during one of my Inside-Out Prison Exchange courses. After reading Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the mix of inside (incarcerated) and outside (non-incarcerated) students were talking about where and how oppression manifested in their daily lives. After listening in silence to the discussion, one of the inside students, a 26-year-old Latino man, suddenly exclaimed, "Look, I don't know what you guys are talking about. I'm not oppressed! I've never had problems with the cops. I always did what I wanted to out on the streets. Now, I'm here in this place where I have free rent, free healthcare, free education, and time for meditation and reflection. I'm not oppressed!" Many of the outside students stared in him in disbelief, but said nothing. After leaving the facility, a number of the outside students, primarily white women, debated his claim. They argued that since he was incarcerated he was obviously oppressed but, due to false consciousness, he just did not know it yet. Another student, the only African-American woman in the class, then interjected that they had no right to decide if other people felt oppressed or not. She stated that the white students' positionality, which presumed the authority to determine a man of color's state of oppression, was extremely problematic.

Instead of consciously sitting with the complexity of this topic and the emotions and uncertainty that arose from it, students left that day feeling perplexed and angry. They needed time to digest and reflect on the

nuances of the situation given that they were, in the moment, unable to bring differing perspectives into genuine conversation with each other. I believe that this interchange would have had a better ending if mindfulness activities had been integrated with critical reflection:

Helping students to learn to pause, breathe, witness, and befriend their discomfort is a critical step in this process [...] With practices of mindfulness, we also can intentionally cultivate greater practices of compassion. The quality of compassion enables us to deeply connect with the suffering in ourselves and others, and once we feel connected to it, we are far more motivated to work to transform it [...] When the pain arises, we can breathe into our heart center, feel the pain, and use it to connect with others who have felt that pain. We can mourn the disastrous impacts of systemic oppression that robs all of us of our humanity, in different ways. Fierce compassion helps us connect with one another in a radical openness, offering us an alternative to hardening and cutting ourselves off. (Berila 2016, pp. 137, 140)

Becoming better equipped to handle discomfort within will increase the capacity of individuals to do so in relationship with others. This is key for becoming proximate with others that are different in background, values, or belief systems. “We live in an individualistic society full of anger, greed and violence. It is absurd to think that people working for social change have been spared these messages [...] we tend to take a highly polarized us-versus-them stance, isolating our movement from potential allies and partners” (Zimmerman et al. 2010, pp. 14 and 18). Real change involves changing how we view and treat those we see as opponents so that we are “engaging in real relationship building with [them] and developing ways to hold them accountable without demonizing them. We must help them (and our communities) to better act with love and compassion” (p. 31). Working across our divides is a site of both challenges and also the sweet spot of emerging compassion.

Taking a lesson again from transformative movement building, we must reflect critically on how our movements or organization for change negotiate the following:

- how much time and energy we put into attuning and aligning with others—and the work of relationship building that goes with it;
- how we “show up” to the work—and if we can be present, open, grounded, and sustainable *within* the daily grind;

- how we think about and utilize notions of power—enacting power *with* versus power *over* strategies so as not to replicate problematic hierarchies;
- how our actions mirror the world we wish to create—embodying the values of peace, love, and justice upon which their movements are based (Zimmerman et al. 2010).

“Moving from bystanding to compassionate engagement, facing one’s own collusion with the perpetration of violence and/or injustice, and healing from the wounds of oppression require the development of dialogical skills” (Watkins and Shulman 2008, p. 176). We cannot hope for politicians and warring parties to create peace and justice if we are not willing to sit down and attempt to build bridges of understanding with those right beside us that are different from us or believe differently than we do. While invariably unsettling and challenging, engaging respectfully and effectively with folks with whom we may disagree is a key component of making change. Developing difficult dialogues across divides enables us to ensure that all voices are heard, that we learn from distinct points of view, develop patience and tolerance—and eventually, acceptance—of our differences, and build coalitions that can work together toward change.

Authentic dialogue with competing perspectives is a core value of a liberal arts education, though models of “affirming inquiry” emphasize connection over debate, where “mutual exploration of experiences/narratives by sharing” is valued more so than “seeking ‘proof’ or facts supporting discordant experiences/narratives to the inquirer” (University of Michigan 2016, p. 2). Affirming inquiry models of dialogue create “exchanges between participants seeking to surface and/or clarify particularly complex, potentially controversial or emotionally charged topics” (University of Michigan 2016, p. 1). Through the use of collaboratively created communication guidelines (see example in Chap. 5), participants can make space for multiple perspectives and “participate in sharing perspectives that they have critically, reflectively considered and can definitively identify what have informed their perspective” (ibid). Such dialogue requires mutual vulnerability, mutual contribution, and “expressions of appreciation, affirmation and/or gratitude” (ibid).

Similar to the “affirming inquiry” form of non-violent dialogue, the model known as “LARA” provides these tools for navigating the discomfort that arises in intergroup dialogue. These include the following:

- *Effective listening*: setting aside your own agenda while someone else is speaking, hearing what people mean, not just what they say and responding to a speaker's feelings.
- *Reflective listening*: listening for a feeling, relating to that feeling, and then reflecting, and restating that feeling back, affirming the connection you found when you listened.
- *Responding*: demonstrating that the other person's question deserves to be taken seriously and responding to it.
- *Adding information*: sharing resources, anecdotes, or other information that seems pertinent to developing greater understanding.
- *Empathy*: perceiving and responding to the feelings of another person while remaining in touch with your own feelings (University of Michigan 2014).

I don't believe we can reasonably expect broad social change to occur if we are unable to sit face to face with those with whom we disagree, negotiate the discomfort that will invariably surface, and seek bridges of understanding. This is of particular importance today as our country is torn apart by differing political beliefs, cultural backgrounds, and social value systems. From students to activists, politicians to organizational leaders, this coming together across difference is a key tool to heal our divided families, communities, states, and nations.

The mandate to "get uncomfortable" involves first recognizing the false consciousness we have been raised in and how we contribute to or are harmed by unjust systems. It also involves reflecting on how our implicit or explicit complicity in structures of domination relates to our complicity in perpetuating bias, microaggressions, or "othering" in our neighborhoods, work places, and schools. It also involves negotiating the discomfort or anger of that awakening. We must not be afraid to sit in the discomfort of our ignorance and biases, fears and apathy, oppression and pain. In the midst of confronting our own shortcomings, traumas, and the pain of the world, we must remember to find our breath, ground ourselves, push past our limitations, and extend compassion toward ourselves and others, including people we think are too different culturally, racially, and religiously from ourselves to understand (Corn 2015). Only then can we challenge the ideologies of oppression that limit us and begin to craft strategies for mental, physical, and political liberation.

Please take a moment now to respond to the prompts in the *Critical Reflection Activity: Getting Uncomfortable*

1. What makes you uncomfortable when participating in conversations about social justice?
2. What constitutes your comfort zone?
3. What scares you about going outside of your comfort zone?
4. What do you need to feel safe enough to get uncomfortable?
5. What forms of knowledge and understanding might you be missing as a result of your resistance to getting uncomfortable?
6. Do any of the communities, organizations or movements in which you participate perpetuate problematic social hierarchies? Are there any ways that their rhetoric, activist strategies, or interpersonal dynamics cause harm?
7. How do notions of power play out in your own life or work?
8. Which of your behaviors and activities require further critical reflection, healing, or shifting?
9. Are you able to remain emotionally grounded in the midst of challenging community work? If not, what practices might help you do so?
10. What can you do to contemplatively sit with *and* move through discomfort so it doesn't immobilize you?

CULTIVATING HOPE

One more ingredient is needed to transform the previous steps into action: *hope*. The sorrows and traumas of injustice are so great that “in order to survive, every human being must have a place that is furnished with hope” (Angelou 2016). Hope is shaped not only by individuals, but also by our social ecology. Cultivating hope is a collective action that draws on our convictions, faith, and interdependence to imagine a better world.

As Shawn Ginwright notes, “wellbeing is both a function of external opportunities such as access to jobs, good education, quality health care, *and* our capacity to hope for a more equitable, inclusive and safe society”

(2015, p. 17). The capacity for hope, wellbeing, and equal access to opportunities are thus entangled:

Research suggests that both chronic and acute exposure to traumatic stressors erode young people's aspirations. The ability and capacity to envision a promising future is fundamental to having hope. Without hope, young people are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and hostility and resort to substance abuse and are more prone to engage in violent behavior. (p. 20)

We must confront the fact that personal traumas as well as the persistent, collective traumas of injustice often erase hope and the capacity for self-care or community healing. Yet without hope and self-care, our chances of effectively building a movement for change become greatly diminished. Ginwright argues that “the presence of hope is one of the most significant factors to evoke social and community change. When people build a sense of collective hope, they are more likely to engage in activities that will improve their neighborhoods, schools, and cities” (ibid).

Collective hope is critical to surviving and thriving under conditions of social injustice. Ginwright conceptualizes collective hope as focusing “on those aspects of community life that provide meaning, purpose, happiness, and joy” (p. 21). Collective hope is predicated on “a salutogenic analysis of community which focuses on collective strengths and possibility, and views communities, groups, and collective action as key to wellbeing” (ibid). Hope is far more than a mood or feeling—it is the very basis of social will and political action, something born of our social belonging, something that propels us into a powerful collective force, an active *we* (Aaronson 2017).

Cultivating collective hope depends upon sharing “experiences from the conditions of everyday life,” understanding the root causes of injustice, and imagining a radical future that embodies justice, peace, and freedom (Ginwright 2015, p. 22). Collective hope is generated when people connect with others in community—this may occur through healing circles, support groups, venues for popular education, religious or spiritual gatherings, activist gatherings, and other spaces dedicated to identifying shared experiences of suffering, learning about the larger structural issues that create or perpetuate injustice, and discussing collective methods for changemaking. In such groups, people discover their shared strengths, resilience, and the resources that can be called upon for surviving and thriving. People that develop a shared sense of connection in such groups

can then work together to shift the narrative about the issues at hand, radically imagine the world they want to build, and cultivate the agency to pursue that vision.

In many instances, groups pay less attention to envisioning a better future than to “the struggle” itself. However, cultivating hope involves shifting the narrative around the work we do and how we do it. Another personal anecdote illustrates this point. Toward the end of my fieldwork in Peru, my Andean mentors asked me to share details about my work in Los Angeles. I explained that I was an *anti*-racist activist, working (at the time) for the *Anti*-Defamation League on *anti*-hate crimes legislation and facilitating *anti*-bias education programs. They began to laugh, then asked as respectfully as they could, “You are *anti*-everything; what are you *for*?!” Their question put me into an existential tailspin that lasted for a long time, but I now use it as a reminder not to get so caught up in what we are against that we forget to dream, imagine, and mobilize around what we are for. Activist scholar Robin Kelley reminds us that “without new visions we don’t know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us” (2002, p. 14). Cultivating hope thus requires not only changing the ways we understand social problems, but also dedicating time and energy to concretely envisioning a better world.

Another core component of cultivating hope is cultivating community connection and wellbeing. Mutual wellbeing is both the source of and feeds into collective hope. At the core of this is the belief that we are all interconnected. Mutual nurturing, interconnectedness, reciprocity, and attunement with each other and the natural world are the foundations of PRATEC’s work toward decolonization and cultural affirmation. As explained by one of PRATEC’s indigenous elders, Eduardo Grillo Fernandez:

We are all relatives. We all belong to our community which we nurture and which nurtures us in turn. The contribution of each one of us is indispensable in the daily nurturance of our harmony and our harmony nurtures each one with the same love. Here there is no world in itself differentiated from ourselves. (Apffel-Marglin and PRATEC 1998, p. 128)

Engaging a sense of belonging, connection, and responsibility to others is necessary for the survival of our species and planet. We are intricately bound to those with whom we share lived experiences within our own

communities as well as those who differ from us. As Martin Luther King, Jr. famously wrote during the civil rights movement: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (Qtd in Washington 1986, p. 290).

Many social movement activists currently struggling to be effective deem King’s notion of the “network of mutuality” as romantic or esoteric. Yet, messages of interconnectedness have long been foundational to indigenous communities and movements and have echoed throughout every successful social movement of our time, from the grassroots civil rights movement of the 1960s to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission efforts aimed to heal and unify post-Apartheid South Africa in the 1990’s. (It was in this period that Bishop Desmond Tutu reminded the world that each of us “belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are” [Tutu qtd in Watkins and Shulman 2008, p. 154]). This concept of interconnectedness extended even to the hope-embedded campaign of President Barack Obama, who offered a similar refrain in his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention:

Alongside our famous individualism, there’s another ingredient in the American saga: a belief that we’re all connected as one people. If there’s a child on the South Side of Chicago who can’t read, that matters to me, even if it’s not my child. If there’s a senior citizen somewhere who can’t pay for their prescription drugs and having to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it’s not my grandparent. If there’s an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties. It is that fundamental belief—I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sister’s keeper—that makes this country work. It’s what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, and yet still come together as one American family. “E pluribus unum.” Out of many, one. (Obama 2004, p. 5)

Joanna Macy affirms that interconnection not only inspires collective hope, it is key to our very survival: “To the extent that we allow ourselves to identify with the suffering of other beings, we can identify with their strengths, as well. This is very important for a sense of adequacy and resilience, because we face a time of great challenge that demands of us more commitment, endurance and courage than we can dredge up out of our individual supply” (Macy and Brown 1998, p. 192).

To this end, Macy encourages small groups of people wishing to recognize personal and collective wounds and work toward making great changes to allow themselves to actively express gratitude for their connection. She argues that “we can proceed, of course, out of grim and angry desperation. But the tasks proceed more easily and productively from an attitude of thankfulness” (1998, p. 82). She reminds us of some of the interconnections for which we can all be grateful, including for each other, our ancestors and “the inspiration offered by future generations,” and “our bonds to other life-forms” (ibid, p. 89). Thankfulness is not simply a warm-and-fuzzy individual attitude. Research shows links between wholehearted gratitude, hope, and agency (Brown 2010; Ginwright 2015; Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky 2006), perhaps because gratitude “enables us to be aware of the vast resources we can draw upon, and...our strengths, too” (Macy and Brown 1998, p. 89).

Acknowledging our interconnections and taking collective action enable us to confront the despair or apathy that surface when we come face to face with injustice. As Flanagan and Budnick reveal in their study on the links between civic engagement and psychosocial wellbeing:

The collective nature of public work is likely to benefit individuals due to an awareness that many problems that we feel are personal, in fact, have political roots and require collective solutions. Even when facing seemingly intractable social problems, the shared experience of tackling them together is likely to reduce anxiety; by acting collectively people are more likely to feel empowered and efficacious (Bandura 2000), and a sense of collective efficacy, in turn, may reduce psychological stress (Jex and Bliese 1999). Furthermore, collective action and the sense of common purpose engendered by it may build social trust; it may increase one’s faith in humanity. (2011, p. 24)

Confronting social issues through community engagement not only decreases despair and anxiety, but it also increases feelings of connectedness, empowerment, faith, and hope. In fact, some believe that it is unusual that we would cultivate hope and then move to action; rather, it is in moments when it seems all hope is lost that our despair moves us to action (out of necessity, survival). It is the action itself, taken in concert with others, that moves us from hopelessness to a shared sense of energy, purpose, power, and hope (Aronson 2015).

I would like to share a tangible example that has resulted in the cultivation of both hope and social change through the creation of an urban

farm called Huerta del Valle, which I am involved in through one of my community engagement courses. I teach a course, *Research Methods for Community Change*, in a semester-long, justice-oriented, interdisciplinary program focused on urban studies and community-based research called Pitzer in Ontario (see appendix I for this program description and course syllabus). While in the program, students study local community issues such as food justice, labor rights, incarceration, education, community health, and immigration. Students commit to 150 hours of community engagement with organizations in Ontario working for social justice and conduct a community-based research project relevant to these partnerships.

Ontario is in San Bernardino County, just 6 miles southeast of Pitzer College. Although San Bernardino borders Los Angeles County, its landscape is much less glamorous and its residents far less healthy. In 2015, the “Inland Empire” of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties had a poverty level of 20.9% (Cox 2015). California Enviroscreen data from 2014 showed that the 91761 zip code in Ontario was among the top most toxic areas in the state of California (OEHHA 2017). Ontario residents have an obesity rate of 67%, leading to chronic disease such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease (San Bernardino County 2015). The City of Ontario is not technically a food desert, but neighborhoods in the south of Ontario have high rates of poverty, low education, food insecurity, linguistic exclusion, stress, and other social determinants of health (Partners for Better Health 2017).

In 2010, the director of Pitzer in Ontario Program became interested in improving access to nutritious food in Ontario and she and our students began putting energy into collaborating with members of the local community to create an urban farm. This collaborative effort eventually involved Pitzer College, the City of Ontario, and low-income Latino residents—led by the hope of one community member in particular who wanted to bring positive change to her family and community. María Teresa Alonso originally came from Michoacán, Mexico, where she had worked as a registered nurse. After emigrating to the USA, she moved into a mobile home park in Ontario. She then became a community co-educator for Pitzer College’s Spanish Practicum in the Community, an advanced course wherein students spend time every week with a local Spanish-speaking family to practice the language, get to know the culture, and build community. She learned about the concept of food justice and students’ interests in this topic through her weekly dinners with Pitzer students.

As a community co-educator, María was able to share her concerns around access to healthy, fresh food with Pitzer students and faculty. Her interest in food justice was less political or theoretical than it was for most of the Pitzer students. Hers was born from the intimate needs of her own family. This mother of three recalls a medical visit in which her doctor recommended organic vegetables as the best treatment for her son's ADHD. The same year, her family's health problems with diabetes, obesity, and cancer came into sharp focus and she wanted to help her own and other families who struggled to gain access to affordable, fresh, organic produce.

María became the natural leader of the budding farm project. She got the word out by meeting with community members, students, city staff, and priests and making announcements at local aerobics classes and on a Latino radio program. Her tenacious hope and optimism were contagious. The students at Pitzer became just as dedicated to developing and sustaining the community garden. They conducted research on food needs in the community and wrote rigorous literature reviews on the socio-political, economic, cultural, and environmental barriers to food access and food quality. Working with Pitzer faculty and staff, the City of Ontario, and María and other community partners, the students used their research data to build relationships, write grants, and pursue a collective vision of what the community farm might look like. The collective imaginings of this group included building a large urban farm called Huerta del Valle that could be used by multiple families and that would operate as a hub for community education.

They started small, by putting a garden into unused land of a former elementary school. The collaborative faced myriad challenges in securing a larger city plot on which to farm. After an arduous process that lasted several years, their conversations with staff of the City of Ontario's Planning Department resulted in a 10-year land-use agreement to farm a four-acre parcel of land. After having been incubated through Pitzer College, members of the community farm collaborative secured pro bono legal support and became incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit. Another major triumph came in securing a small piece of a rather large pie when the farm became one of a nine-member consortium of community partners in a million-dollar Kaiser grant called "the HEAL zone" (the "Healthy Eating, Active Living" zone, which incorporated most of south Ontario).

Now in its seventh year of operation, Huerta del Valle has 62 plots available for gardening by local families. In addition to the family plots, a

communal garden provides food for a Community-Supported Agriculture program and is sold to Pitzer's dining hall and local restaurants in the area. On Saturdays, Pitzer students and resident volunteers teach food justice literacy classes to children while their parents harvest their produce. A number of the community gardeners have now become community leaders and are being trained as "community health first responders" in order to be able to accompany, advocate for, and connect alternative health resources to community members suffering from mental or physical health problems. Huerta del Valle has now secured enough grant funding to pay moderate salaries to María, as director of the farm, and to Arthur Levine, a Pitzer alum who manages the farm and does outreach, as well as four other part-time farmers and development staff members. Indoor and outdoor classroom facilities are currently being planned for construction on the property. Huerta del Valle continues to be sustained by a team consisting of community members and leaders, Pitzer students, faculty, and alumni, and city officials. Huerta del Valle has received both local and national recognition for the innovative blend of urban farming with community gardening, and the unparalleled sense of community that sustains their work. In 2016, Huerta del Valle won its first major grant as an independent non-profit when was awarded a USDA grant.

The success of Huerta del Valle demonstrates that collective hope comes fully alive through critical action. When community members achieve a goal for change, it fosters empowerment, hope, and a sense of accomplishment that can come from civic engagement. This then creates further hope, creating an iterative process resulting in a greater shared sense of purpose and faith that encourages communities to collectively imagine and plan how they might achieve greater peace and justice in the future.

Pitzer College students who had only studied social justice issues in textbooks were provided a palpable example of food injustice when Maria communicated her despair over trying to meet her family's health needs without having access to organic produce. By becoming proximate to one another, two disparate communities—the mostly low-income, Latino population of southern Ontario and the mostly upper-middle class, white student population of Pitzer College—built authentic, trusting relationships and collaborated to create a community garden. The process of building the farm itself debunked dominant narratives claiming that immigrants are uninterested in community organizing and mobilizing for change. Students, faculty, staff, and community members all experienced discomfort as they navigated the uncertain terrain of building a community-campus

partnership and sharing leadership and decision-making processes across differences of class, culture, geography, and concepts of social change. In the end, the despair that motivated the attempt to change the conditions of food injustice was matched by the collective hope that students and community partners could and would make such a change. The achievements of this community-campus partnership are many: securing land and creating the farm in more than one location, generating community buy-in and interest in the farm, conducting community-based research and organizing initiatives based on the results, and garnering financial support and public land-use agreements. None of these would be possible without collective hope, radical imaginings, and the mobilization of community assets, knowledge, and determination in an effort to disrupt injustice and create wellbeing in the local community.

As with the previous sections, please take a moment now to explore the prompts offered in the *Critical Reflection Activity: Cultivating Hope*

1. How do you define hope? What does hope *feel* like?
2. What does hope look like in action?
3. What stands between you and hope?
4. What stands between your community and hope?
5. What current locations furnish hope for you and your community?
6. What actions or beliefs might you embrace if you had more hope?
7. Can you think of any examples where hope fueled social change despite pre-existing barriers?
8. What vision do you have of a world built on hope and faith and characterized by peace and justice?

CONCLUSION

A variety of social change models and concepts, including decolonization, cultural affirmation, asset-based community development, the work that reconnects, critical pedagogy, transformative movement building, and

healing justice have been threaded together in this chapter in an exploration of methods for disrupting oppressive systems and creating community wellbeing. Their coming together has centered around the four-step framework of “becoming proximate” to issues of social justice and the people affected by them, including ourselves; “shifting the narrative” around the systemic scaffolding of the social issues that concern us; “getting uncomfortable” with our own complicity, marginality, or pain related to these issues; and “cultivating hope” by coming together and imagining a new world into being. It is the responsibility of individuals, groups, and institutions to grapple with these steps and imagine how they can be embedded into daily operations, movements, and systems.

In reality, our social, educational, political, and professional institutions rarely provide spaces and opportunities for diverse individuals and communities to heal, share, listen, and learn from one another in the ways suggested here. If we wish to change policies and practices that sustain injustices and inhibit our wellbeing, we must begin by transforming the institutions and individuals that design and implement such policies and practices. Indeed, since the focus of this book is on institutions of higher education, the bulk of this book explores how the models and steps described in this chapter can be integrated into community-campus social change partnerships. First, however, we move from this chapter’s macro-analysis of community wellbeing and social injustice to the micro-analysis of individual wellbeing and critical awareness presented in Chap. 3.

NOTES

1. I came upon Bryan Stevenson’s work through a talk entitled, “American Injustice: Mercy, Humanity and Making a Difference,” which he gave on March 29, 2016 at the Criminal Justice Symposium at Pomona College. Stevenson founded and directs the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, where he works to challenge bias against poor people and people of color through his work in legal defense in hundreds of criminal justice cases that aim to upturn our country’s unjust policies pertaining to incarcerated youth, condemned prisoners, and death row (<http://eji.org>). While his work focuses specifically on criminal justice, I found that his four-step approach can be stretched into a framework for addressing social change in a variety of contexts.
2. This phenomenon has been examined at length by post-modern, post-structural, feminist, and cultural studies researchers such as Anzaldúa (1987), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Gannon and Davies (2012), Hall

- (1997), Harding (1987), Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2012), Minh-Ha (1989), Smith (1999), and Wolf (1992).
3. Poverty tourism has been defined as such: “Poverty tourism refers to cases in which financially privileged tourists visit impoverished communities for the purpose of witnessing poverty firsthand. Many visitors expect the trip will prove educational and help alleviate poverty” (Outterson et al. 2011, p. 39). Poverty tourism can be heavily unethical and problematic on a number of levels; “it plays with notions of the romantic sublime, almost celebrating a type of inverted aesthetics where the tourist wishes to see the drama of shanty towns, both literally and metaphorically, precariously and haphazardly holding on to the very margins of society” (Frenzel and Koens 2012, p. xv).
 4. In an effort to accurately locate the citation for this now-famous quote, I discovered a blog from an activist artist who discussed it directly with the woman who is usually credited with the statement, Lila Watson. Ms. Watson indicated “that she was not comfortable being credited for something that had been born of a collective process [and] came to an agreement on how it could accurately be credited [...] ‘Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s’” (Unnecessary Evils 2008).
 5. Founded over 40 years ago by Brazilian educational theorist, Paulo Freire, the critical pedagogy model draws on the earlier works of John Dewey and Jean Piaget and has been expanded upon by more recent scholars such as Ira Shor, bell hooks, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Michelle Fine, and Stanley Aronowitz. Discussions of critical pedagogy throughout this book draw primarily on Paulo Freire’s principle text, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970) and Ira Shor’s “Empowering Education: Critical teaching for social change” (1992), as well as my experience utilizing this methodology in my teaching and community work.
 6. To date, I have taught five courses at the local men’s prison, as well as helped facilitate a partnership with the prison that now allows faculty from the Claremont Colleges to teach up to eight credit-bearing inside-out courses in the prison each year. This has occurred through the framework of the national Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program: “The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program increases opportunities for people, inside and outside of prison, to have transformative learning experiences that emphasize collaboration and dialogue, inviting participants to take leadership in addressing crime, justice, and other issues of social concern. Education through which we are able to encounter each other, especially across profound social barriers, is transformative and allows problems to be approached in new and different ways” (Inside-Out Prison Exchange 2017).
 7. There are definitely contradictions and tensions that persist in negotiating a working partnership with a prison, and I am unsettled by the prospect that the partnership itself ends up supporting the current incarceration system to

some degree. Yet, I join others in the prison education community in the belief that one meaningful route for creating change is from the inside-out. This is work that is co-created and driven with those who are currently incarcerated, forging social change through the creation of liberatory education that attends to the academic interests and political empowerment of those inside. In so doing, we aim to create educational opportunities and raise critical consciousness which can fly in the face of the domination and dehumanization detention facilities embody.

8. Joanna Macy founded The Great Turning, a theory and small-group global practice, in the 1980s as an approach to planetary transformation that confronts apatheia (spiritual, emotional, and political apathy). It aims to disrupt individual and social destructive habits in order to shift our perceptions around the problems we face and explore alternative paradigms for manifesting a restored relationship with the earth and each other. To share this work I draw primarily on Joanna Macy and Molly Brown's book, "Coming back to life: Practices to reconnect our lives, our world" (1998).
9. This concept was originally developed by Archbishop Romero during the civil war in El Salvador. It has since been adopted by academics in American Studies and Anthropology as well as used as a key form of engagement within PRATEC, as described in Ishizawa (2006).
10. PRATEC (<http://www.pratecnet.org>) is a Peruvian organization co-founded in 1986 by Grimaldo Rengifo Vásquez, Eduardo Grillo, Francois Greslou, and Marcela Velásquez. It aims to regenerate traditional cultural knowledge and practices that support biodiversity, cultural diversity, interculturalism, and individual and systematic decolonization. I draw primarily on my Masters fieldwork research with PRATEC and its sister agencies, Urphichallay, CEPROSI, Waman Wasi, Suma Yapu, and Chuymaru, (Hicks 2005) and their book, "The spirit of regeneration: Andean culture confronting western notions of development" (Apffel-Marglin and PRATEC 1998).
11. For additional scholarship that speaks to the importance of engaging such values in the work of cross-cultural partnerships and decolonizing research, see Alfred (2005), Ishizawa (2006), ITK & NRI (2006), Smith (1999), Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998), Steinman (2011), and Wilson (2008).
12. Following this and other protests, as well as the well-orchestrated media storms that followed them, student, faculty, and administrative governmental bodies simply had no other option but to listen and respond to student demands. Some changes came with unexpected reactivity—across the country, presidents and deans were fired or resigned, policies were changed in real time, and new centers, programs, and staff positions were created with the intention to support diversity. Apologies were formally issued and promises were made to further the dialogue and response

strategies. Of course, the traumas experienced by students who live at the crossroads of multiple forms of oppression did not disappear because of a finite uproar on campus that made faculty, staff, and administrators feel temporarily outraged or nervous. In the nearly two years since these student protests occurred, colleges across the country have been trying to figure out how to transform student demands into structural and behavioral changes in classrooms and residence halls to ensure that colleges promote learning and support for all students, not just some. This work necessarily involves integrating support services in academic and student affairs that will cater to all students, not just those that enter with the cultural capital that is modeled after the “typical” college student of the past: white, straight, cis-gendered, middle-class males. It means infusing diverse histories, epistemologies, value systems, learning styles, and communication styles representative of our multicultural society within disciplines, curriculum, and student affairs. It also means actively creating policies that confront and transform the reproduction of social inequality. The story of this movement and the changes it demands is still being written.

13. This question has been adapted from a handout entitled “Personal Self-Assessment of Anti-Bias Behavior” (Anti-Defamation League 2007).
14. In my role both as director of the Community Engagement Center and as a faculty collaborator, I have been a part of building these partnerships between our college and local native communities since 2008. I owe tremendous gratitude to my partners in these efforts, including Pitzer staff member Scott Scoggins (who originally opened the doors of the partnerships through his personal relationships), Pitzer faculty Erich Steinman, Gina Lamb, Brinda Sarathy, Paul Faulstich, and Joe Parker, and local native elders, Julia Bogany, Robert John Knapp, Tony Cerda, Barbara Drake, Kim Marcus, and Luhui and Mati Waiya, as well as the college students, other professors, and local tribal members who have helped shape the projects and relationships over the years.
15. These aims at “shifting the narrative” take place in PRATEC through programs of “Afirmacion Cultural” (Cultural Affirmation), “Ninez y Biodiversidad” (Children and Biodiversity), and “Conservacion In Situ” (In Situ Conservation)—all of which work to reinvigorate native traditions and agricultural methods that have cultivated the earth’s highest levels of biodiversity for centuries. “Cultural Affirmation” workshops in Andean schools and communities support the revaluing of native traditions such as dance, music- and instrument-making, arts, language, sewing, ceramics, and tending the earth alongside more western epistemological practices in the school curriculum. In early childhood schools where the children are too young to participate in these activities, teachers instead paint the walls of their classrooms with murals depicting traditional indigenous practices so that the children are surrounded by visual representations revaluing their

- customs. Community-supportive agricultural practices occur through “Ferias de Semillas,” a seed exchange festival where farming families from various villages come together and trade and barter their different seeds in order to mutually support the biodiversity in each of their farms. Programs of “Interculturalismo” (Interculturalism) focus on action steps of reintegrating indigenous culture alongside western ways of knowing, being, schooling, governing, and engaging in community. For more details on this topic, see Apffel-Marglin and PRATEC (1998).
16. When characterizing indigenous knowledge, any “generalizations must be recognized as indicative and not definitive... these knowledge systems are constantly adapting and changing in response to new conditions” (Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005, p. 8). For more on scholarship about indigenous knowledge systems and their connection (and disconnection) from western epistemologies, see Apffel-Marglin and PRATEC (1998), Armstrong (2006), Delgado and Gomez (2003), Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), Mankiller (2004), Mosha (1999), Semali and Kincheloe (1999), Smith (1999), Vasquez (1998), and Wilson (2008).
 17. As King and West (2016) notes, even when our freedom fighters are honored, their declarations are often sanitized for posterity. Their more radical reactions and analyses of unjust social and economic systems are swept under the rug in favor of more palatable hero legends.
 18. Theatre of the Oppressed was developed in the 1960s by Augusto Boal in Brazil (influenced by the principals and methods of Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed). Investigative, invisible, legislative, image, and forum theatre are specific theater forms used as a means of promoting social change, first “used by peasants and workers; later, by teachers and students; now, also by artists, social workers, psychotherapists, NGOs ... At first, in small, almost clandestine places. Now in the streets, schools, churches, trade-unions, regular theatres, prisons.” Greater detail on the use of this theatrical-activist method can be found at Theatre of the Oppressed (2017).
 19. Transformative movement building aims to change the changemakers and the methods and approaches they take to making change. This leads to “more effective organizational communities that are better able to communicate, manage conflict, be self-aware and self-reflective, evolve and change. It also leads to changes in organizing models and social change practice as organizations reorient their goals and strategies to match the values they want to cultivate in the broader world, such as compassion, equity, love and non-violence” (Ginwright 2015, p. 35). A related practice of transformative movement building is healing justice.
 20. The healing justice framework utilizes a variety of approaches, including restorative justice, transformative organizing, and contemplative practices, to both respond to and explore the conditions that create collective harm,

while actively restoring community wellbeing (Ginwright 2015). To share this work, I draw primarily on Shawn Ginwright’s “Hope and Healing in Urban Education: How urban activists and teachers are reclaiming matters of the heart” (2015).

21. A more extensive discussion of this is eloquently addressed in a blog article by Kai Cheng Thom (2016).
22. A similar framework exists within community psychology, known as *appreciative inquiry*, which “rather than beginning by asking about difficulties and deficiencies, [practitioners] begin to inquire into what is generative and life-giving, knowing that it is these pieces that should be built on and nurtured [and] enables the community to name valuable resources and capacities that can be used as they work together toward mutually desired aims” (Watkins and Shulman 2008, p. 199).
23. Asset-Based Community Development is a theoretical and action-oriented model for building communities from the inside out, developed by John McKnight and John Kretzmann and based on community-organizing work with diverse communities across the country over the last 25 years. The ABCD methods include building relationships, mapping assets, sharing information, connecting assets and needs, and mobilizing neighborhood change initiatives from the inside. “Mapping assets” involves creating an inventory of the capacities of members in the community (from skills and abilities to enterprising interests and experience) and proceeds with an inventory of assets and capacities of local associations and institutions. An assessment of how to mobilize assets toward rebuilding the community’s economy and leverage outside resources to support locally driven community development is a principal focus. For a complete overview of how to implement the praxis of the asset-based community development model, see Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993) *Building Communities from the Inside-Out: A Path Towards Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*. Chicago: ACTA.
24. “Calling people up” is a phrase and practice used in many contemporary social movements and educational spaces as a means of pointing out unjust, insensitive, or oppressive comments in a way that invites conversation, curiosity, compassion, and solidarity. It intentionally moves from the practice of “calling people out” (which often aims to judge, criticize, and sometimes silence those who make inflammatory remarks). Similarly, “calling people in” suggests bringing them into a dialogue about the problematic aspects of what has been said; calling them up poses an invitation to speak in a more elevated, inclusive, and thoughtful way. Of the many articles that have been written about this in the online social activist blogosphere, for those interested in this topic I suggest “A note on call out culture” (Ahmad 2015).

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