

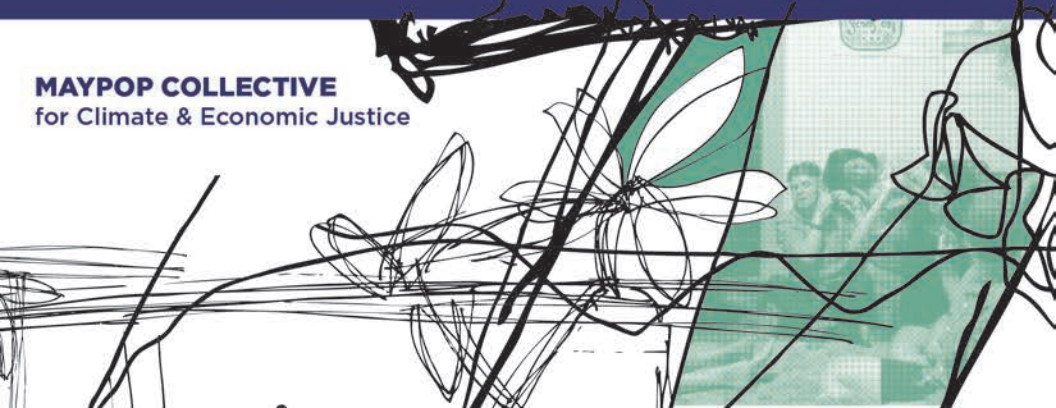


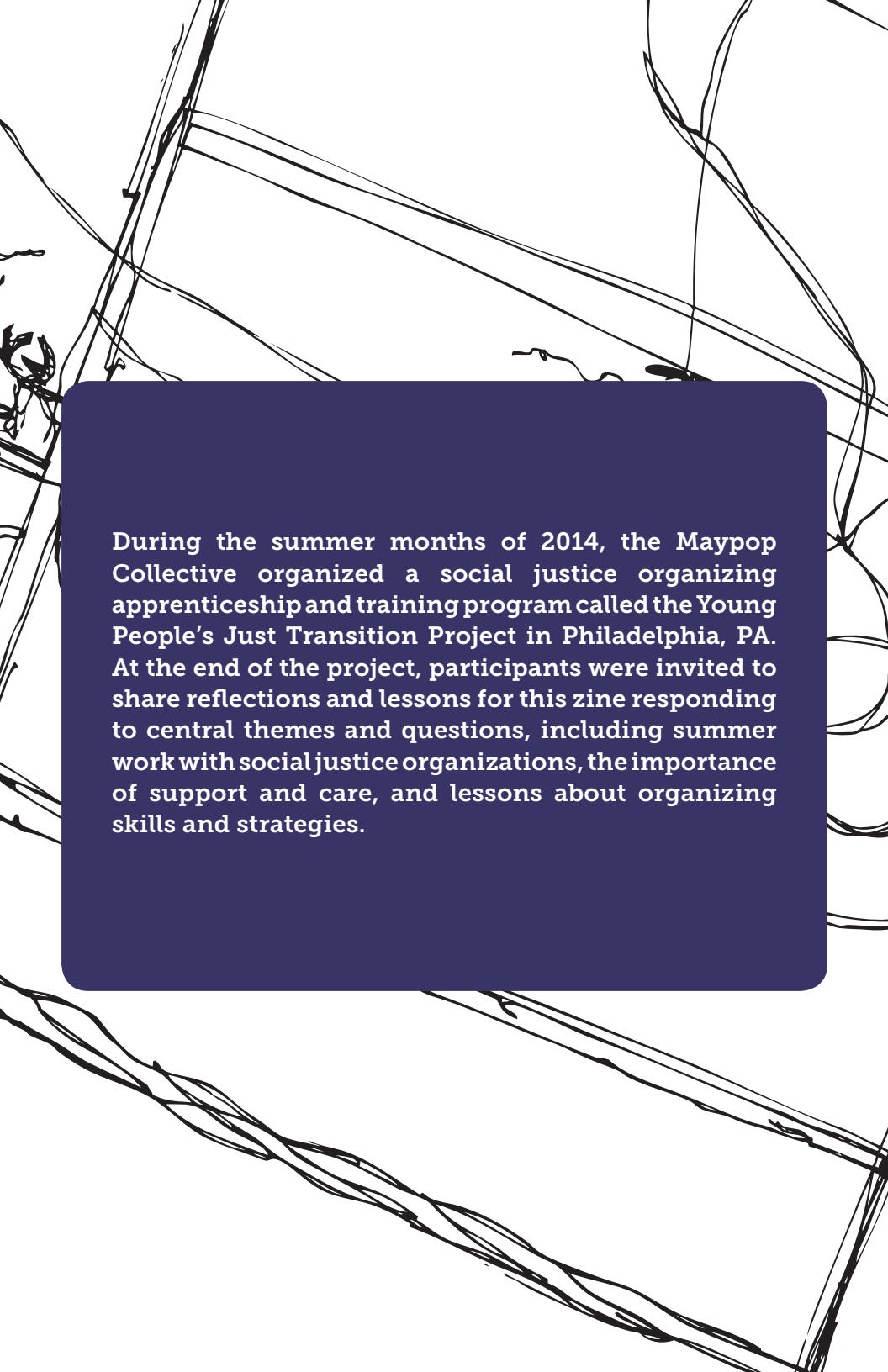
# REFLECTIONS

from the **Young People's  
Just Transition Project**

SUMMER  
**2014**

**MAYPOP COLLECTIVE**  
for Climate & Economic Justice



The background of the page is a white surface covered with a complex, abstract network of thin, black, hand-drawn lines. These lines crisscross and loop around the central text area, creating a sense of movement and organic structure. The lines vary in thickness and density, with some areas being more heavily scribbled than others.

During the summer months of 2014, the Maypop Collective organized a social justice organizing apprenticeship and training program called the Young People's Just Transition Project in Philadelphia, PA. At the end of the project, participants were invited to share reflections and lessons for this zine responding to central themes and questions, including summer work with social justice organizations, the importance of support and care, and lessons about organizing skills and strategies.

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## YOUNG PEOPLE'S JUST TRANSITION PROJECT

During the summer months of 2014, the Maypop Collective organized a social justice organizing apprenticeship and training program called the Young People's Just Transition Project (YPJTP). The program was guided by the political framework of a "just transition," coming out of environmental justice and labor movements.

Our understanding of just transition departs from mainstream climate change and environmental movement narratives that strictly center carbon emissions, fossil fuel regulation, and "green" initiatives. Beyond "greening" of the economy, climate justice demands we transform our relationships to the Earth, our labor, and each other. Climate justice extends beyond mitigating climate change (although that remains a crucial political struggle); it's about restoring our relationships with each other and with the ecosystems that make all life possible. We understand social inequity as the root cause of ecological destruction. The dominant "extractive economy," built upon legacies of colonial and capitalist exploitation, turns social inequality and class hierarchy upon the Earth, destroying ways of life, culture, and ecosystems, making further exploitation possible.

We decided to ground our summer project in Philadelphia, our home. Instead of going for an initial vision of "mass," we scaled the project to prioritize substantial mentorship and tight-knit community building. The choice to center in Philly also meant

shifting from exclusive focus on fossil fuel infrastructure and emissions to include issues of migrant justice, healing and community health, and urban land use and access among others. Our recruitment likewise extended beyond our immediate networks of fossil fuel divestment activists and environmental justice organizers. We reached out to students engaged in Palestinian solidarity, labor organizing, and queer/trans community building to collectively engage questions around Just Transition over the summer.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Over the summer, eight participants joined YPJTP, which ran between June and August. Project participants included eight college students and recent graduates from schools around the Philadelphia area, including Swarthmore College (2), Bryn Mawr College (3), and University of Pennsylvania (3), ranging between 19 and 22 years old. The group was majority women of color and with a majority holding queer/trans identities.

Participants brought diverse organizing experiences and traditions, including student labor organizing, direct action campaigning, radical Jewish summer camp, arts and cultural organizing, popular education, and social advocacy work, among others. While participants shared commitments to social justice, radical, and progressive politics, they brought different levels of organizing experience and understandings of how to make change.

Only a few participants had experience with ecological justice and climate change politics before the program. We actively recruited outside “environmental movements” to more deeply explore collectively how ecological justice strategies relate to racial and economic justice work.

The Maypop Collective fundraised to pay each participant organizing stipends to cover living expenses for the duration of the program.

### **Partner Organizations:**

Each participant partnered with a local social justice “partner organization” in the Philadelphia area where they worked an average of 16 hours/week as volunteers, interns, and organizing apprentices. Partner organizations were determined in consultation with participants around their learning goals, skill sets, and interests. Maypop aimed to work with organizations with diverse theories of change and entry-points to the work to serve as examples in the project’s political education and training components. Participants learned about social change work through hands-on experience while offering direct support and capacity to organizations. Partner organizations focused on diverse social justice issues, with only one explicitly centered on ecological justice. Our vision of just transition necessitates a multitude of groups filling different, equally important roles: a thriving ecosystem of movement.

Partner organizations included: Youth Arts and Self-Empowerment Project (YASP), Serenity House, New Sanctuary Movement,

Women’s Community Revitalization Project (WCRP), Art Factory, Youth United for Change (YUC), Earth Quaker Action Team, and Media Mobilizing Project.

In addition to work with partner organizations, participants took part in a shared political education and co-mentorship program conducted by the Maypop Collective, consisting of “study meetings,” “support meetings,” and “pop-up events.”

### **Study Meetings:**

After engaging with shared curriculum of readings and films, participants spent weekly study meetings discussing organizing theory and history and doing experiential learning activities around central questions and themes. Participants rotated shared facilitation with Maypop members to gain skills in experiential group facilitation. Curriculum included roots of the economic and ecological crisis, the role of healing and emotional organizing, strategies for contesting for power and target-based action campaigns, the role of alternative and prefigurative politics, and cultural organizing and arts-based social change.

### **Support Meetings:**

Central to the program was building a “container” for deep relationship building and mutual support, which we believe is essential to both learning and cultivating long-term commitment to social change work. Support Meetings were weekly gatherings dedicated to emotional support, co-mentorship and co-counseling, and group health. Also through joint Maypop and participant co-facilitation, we



experimented with a diverse range of group practices, rituals, and tools for taking care of ourselves and the group. Practices included arts-based healing, formal peer counseling, singing with guest singers, and small group activities.

### **Pop-up Events:**

In addition to study and support meetings, Maypop organized and promoted various events for YPJTP participants. Some included YPJTP-specific events such as teach-ins from ally organizations on their work, skills shares, and “field trips” to parts of the city. Others were ongoing events and social actions in the city, including city council hearings, direct actions, and panel discussions.

In addition to formal meetings and work with partner organizations, relationship building and training was conducted by various other means. Through a “buddy system,” each participant was paired with a member of the Maypop Collective to check in about the program and provide feedback on their learning and growth. Two retreats, one at the beginning and one at the end of the program, facilitated by the Maypop Collective, brought participants together for group work, trainings, and personal reflection. At the end of the program Maypop and participants held a community banquet for participants and representatives from partner organizations to celebrate their work and share key lessons and moments from YPJTP with each other.



# Preface

Pieces in this zine were created by project participants at the end of the summer. Participants were invited to share reflections and lessons about work with partner organizations, the role of support and care, and lessons about organizing skills and strategies. Pieces could take any written or visual style and are shared here in their original form.

# NORA KERRICH

Nora Kerrich continued work with Serenity House (it began in the winter of 2013) through the Young People's Just Transition Project in the summer of 2014, and will be present there at least through the spring of 2016. This work included organizing events, working on educational pamphlets, and building critical relationships with community members as well as fellow summer volunteers. As a student at Swarthmore College, Nora works with: Serenity House, ASAP (Abuse and Sexual Assault Prevention), SLAP (Swarthmore Labor Action Project), the Womyn's Resource Center (WRC) and studies theories and productions of: education, history, film and media. In Nora's eyes all things are delicately interconnected, which is why there are so many different activities and studies listed above. Somehow a good night's sleep remains a consistent priority. ~ drop a line @ [norakerrich@gmail.com](mailto:norakerrich@gmail.com)

“ Sachie ran a pop-up event on story-based strategy several weeks into the program. One of the activities during the workshop was to create a four sentence fairy tale about the work being done at our partner organizations. The caregiver of Serenity House, O, and I created a fairy tale about Serenity House as a way to clarify the work that we're doing there. Telling stories about our work creates greater meaning for those who are directly involved and creates an accessible point for those not yet aware or involved. Writing the fairy tales was one part of a much more in depth workshop in which we spent time parsing out the different ways we can tell stories and make meaning in our movements. Some other activities we spent time on were breaking down the opposing narratives of a specific campaign or fight and creating and framing images differently. ”





1209 W.  
Lehigh

Once upon a  
time...

there was a lonely butterfly, looking for a community. But all the other butterflies that our brave protagonist came across refused to see the beauty in their wings. So the butterfly flew, and flew, and flew, and flew, and as it flew it wove a transformative thread that wrapped around the hearts of a group of students who dreamed. So the unlikely team continued to weave that transformative thread throughout the butterfly kingdom harnessing the power of living happily the sun, ever after.

# CHLOE SIGAL

Chloe Sigal is a young, cis-gendered, first-generation, mixed-race Latina organizer. Through the Young People's Just Transition Project, Chloe supported the Organizing and Advocacy team (OAT) at the Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP). Along with the rest of the OAT team, she conducting Listening Project interviews and doorknocked in Germantown, and planned, scanned, and flipcharted furiously for the recently-launched Development without Displacement campaign. During her final year at the University of Pennsylvania, Chloe will be working on an economic justice campaign with the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP), calling on her home institution and other mega non-profits to make Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) to the City of Philadelphia. Chloe enjoys hiking, doula-ing, and good sobremesa. You can get in touch with her via email at [sigalchloe@gmail.com](mailto:sigalchloe@gmail.com)

# Just Transition Work on the Ground: The Women's Community Revitalization Project and the Fight for Community Control

## Foreshadowings

In California, tech venture capitalist, Tim Draper, has put forth a plan to split his home state into six. The proposal, which will be on the 2016 ballot, would divide the state largely along socioeconomic lines, effectively creating the country's richest state in Silicon Valley, and its poorest in "Central California," an agricultural region.

Jump to Michigan, where the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DSWS), a state-controlled committee, shut the water off this summer on the city's most impoverished residents. 17,000 Detroiters had their taps turned off and another 92,000 received warning threats. The shutoffs were not announced beforehand and no effort was made to ascertain whether residents had health issues that would be aggravated by a lack of water, of if children or elderly people called those houses home.

From all corners, we are starting to see foreshadowings of the fight we have ahead. Of course, inequality has always been part of this country's social, economic, and political foundation. But, while resource scarcity and state indifference is nothing new to marginalized communities, as the climate crisis intensifies, water, food, and energy shortages will become even more pressing, and the logics of austerity and false-meritocracy even more harmful.

As the planet heats up, Philadelphia, the poorest large American city, is sure to be a site for intense contestation in a variety of arenas. While we could easily follow California and Detroit in relinquishing responsibility and planning to the short-term whims of the market, there is also a chance for us to go down a different path. As Philly-based organizers, we must identify fights we can take on and institutions we can build now that will put us in a better position to negotiate crisis as it happens. Many organizations across the city are already engaging in this kind of strategic thinking.

## **The Women's Community Revitalization Project**

This summer, I lent my labor to the Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP). WCRP started off as a direct service organization, developing affordable housing for low-income families. When it found its projects blocked by the limited resources allocated to affordable housing, it decided to use direct-action organizing to change the rules at both the city and state-funding level. In the years since, WCRP has convened four different cross-issue coalitions in service of its vision of an affordable, accessible Philadelphia. Its current campaign, Development without Displacement unites disability rights activists, urban agriculture groups, unions, housing groups, food cooperatives, and faith-based organizations, among others, to fight for a suite of anti-displacement/pro-community investment policies. In a staunchly pro-business city where large corporations and mega non-profits go untaxed while schools and essential services are shuttered, the campaign aims to change the conversation around who should benefit from municipal development resources.

While WCRP fights community disinvestment by waging capacity-building campaigns, the organization also engages in progressive institution-building to shape a more just future. Members of the Organizing and Advocacy Team hope that the newly-established Community Justice Land Trust will create permanently affordable housing in Philadelphia.

## **The Community Land Trust Model**

The modern-day Community Land Trust model was developed by Southern Civil Rights movement leaders as a way for African American farmers to achieve land access. Land trusts buy parcels of land scattered across a strategic geographic area, and then lease this land out to developers and tenants. While structures are owned by individuals or organizations as property, the land underneath them remains held as "trusterty," allowing the community to make decisions that property-owners must abide by. In WCRP's Community Justice Land Trust, resale restrictions ensure that structures will remain affordable forever. Buildings cannot be sold for market value and speculation is not allowed.

WCRP first became interested in the Land Trust as a way to maximize its impact on investment. Although the brand-new Trust does not yet have land holdings, new housing projects, such as the Grace Townhomes in Port Richmond and the still-unbuilt Nicole Hines Townhomes in Germantown, will

be a part of the Community Justice Land Trust. While tenants in these homes will have the opportunity to become homeowners after fifteen years of renting, the homes will remain affordable, even if these homeowners decide to sell.

## Transformative Work: Material and Symbolic

Whether due to environmental disaster or an influx of back-to-the-city Millennials, community displacement threatens support networks and rends apart histories. Materially, Land Trusts are a way to protect neighborhoods as markets heat up, and preserve stable lives for low-income people who would otherwise be washed out by rising rent and property taxes.

Symbolically, the Land Trust's manner of holding, caring for, and, ultimately, conceiving of land is radically different from that of our current paradigm. Land stewardship replaces land ownership; democratic co-creation of norms and expectations takes the place of individual privilege and responsibility. The traditional Land Trust operates under a decision-making body composed of 1/3 leaseholders, 1/3 community members from the area which the Trust considers to be its base, and 1/3 technical advisors. Rather than allowing the few with legal ownership to make unilateral decisions for the many, all those affected by a decision get to have a say, and, in this way, preserve control of their own lives. Ideally, a large, powerful, well-organized Land Trust would shift the balance of power in a way that would make a DSWS-style handling of a resource shortage untenable. Furthermore, WCRP hopes to realize the Community Justice Land Trust's transformative potential by centering community organizing and leadership development. The Land Trust would become a site for collective action, and its many tenants a base capable of fortifying and leading social justice fights throughout the city.

## Open Questions

After working at WCRP and studying with Maypop this summer, I have many questions about how a Just Transition analysis can inform a Land Trust strategy to maximize transformative potential. *Some questions include:*

**Scale:** WCRP knows that mass land-ownership is powerful. As such, part of the OAT team's mission is to support organizations with similar values in establishing their own land trusts. How could a Land Trust network contribute to city-wide power-building?

**Strategy:** While sheer land ownership is in itself powerful, what factors (city council zones, relation to the means of production, etc.) should be taken into account when acquiring land parcels to maximize poor and working class people's power?

**Longevity:** How can we develop a strategy for place-based organizing that takes into account the realities of climate change? Would establishing a Land Trust in New Orleans or New York be inappropriate, considering that both are coastal cities facing rising sea levels?

**Connection:** Philadelphia's affordability crisis is also largely a jobs and poverty crisis. How can Land Trusts support other elements of the Solidarity Economy, (such as worker-owned cooperatives) to create even more community wealth?

# AMIT SCHWALB

Amit is an organizer, teacher, and motion-enthusiast from the Hudson River Valley of New York State. He is a young, white, trans and queer Jew who grounds his organizing in his faith and vice versa. This summer he continued his work with the Earth Quaker Action Team ([eqat.org](http://eqat.org)), using nonviolent direct action to halt the financing of mountaintop removal and its destruction of Appalachian communities. He is entering his sophomore year at Swarthmore College where he plans to mobilize students around the Philadelphia school funding crisis and seek solace in biology. You can get in touch with him via email at [aschwalb@gmail.com](mailto:aschwalb@gmail.com) and he tweets @amitland.

“ The Earth Quaker Action Team is a grassroots group founded by Quakers on a mission to build a just and sustainable economy through nonviolent direct action. The group’s current campaign, Bank Like Appalachia Matters, targets PNC bank for investing in mountaintop removal coal mining, a mining practice with massive human and ecological health ramifications. One piece of EQAT’s practice that’s felt really special to me is how spiritually grounded our work is. Whether we’re holding meeting for worship inside a PNC bank branch or singing a hymn at the end of a strategy meeting, we infuse spiritual practice in our organizing work. A particularly enchanting spiritual practice I’ve taken from EQAT has been singing together. I hope that by documenting the songs we sing and our stories of them, I can encourage other organizers to infuse this nourishing tool into their work. ”



**WOKE UP THIS MORNING**

♩ = 120

*Woke up this morning with my mind  
Stayed on freedom*

*Woke up this morning with my mind  
Stayed on freedom*

*Woke up this morning with my mind  
Stayed on freedom  
Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah.*

*I'm walking and talking with my mind  
stayed on freedom*

*I'm walking and talking with my mind  
stayed on freedom*

*I'm walking and talking with my mind  
stayed on freedom*

*Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah.*

*I'm gonna walk, walk, talk talk  
With my mind stayed on freedom  
Walk walk, talk talk  
stayed on freedom*

*I'm gonna walk, walk, talk talk  
Stayed on freedom*

*Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelu*

"Walking up Blair Mountain on the last day of the anniversary march to save the historic site from mountaintop removal, singing "Woke Up This Morning." There was a family from Friends of Coal with a number of young girls riding up and down the road in the back of a pick up taunting and lambasting the marchers. But when they passed by the EQAT group they would quiet down, look at us quizzically and seem to wonder how this powerful song out of a familiar faith tradition meshed with the hated and feared "other." It felt as though our singing disrupted the narrative and planted some seed of a different fruit. I felt deeply empowered." – Walter Hjelt Sullivan

"Woke Up This Morning" was a song popularized during the Civil Rights movement, largely due to the Freedom Singers, a musical group whose purpose it was to educate communities about the civil rights struggle through song.



## COURAGE



*Courage, \_\_\_\_\_, you do not walk alone. We will walk beside you to sing your spirit home.*

"For me, the worst thing about getting inside was leaving the center of song. However, we soon took care of that, singing from the prison, in moments between getting to know the remarkable women who were my cellmates, and joining our voices with the voices of the men in the adjacent cell. All of our names were inscribed in song as we sang "Courage, (your name here). You do not walk alone. We will walk beside you to sing your spirit home."

In the moment of calm that followed some 29 verses, a prison guard said, "I'll have trouble getting that tune out of my head tonight!" "What's your name?" asked one of the women. "Bates," he said. "Courage, Bates," sang the choir, "You do not walk alone. We will walk beside you, to sing your spirit home!" Bates shook his head, threw up his hands, and rejoined his fellow guards across the hall (who had also been swaying to the rhythms of our singing)." - Mary Hufford

## SING WHEN THE SPIRIT SAYS SING



Our beloved friend and EQAT staff person Matthew told us the story of being called to go to Ferguson, MO for three weeks to support organizing going on there in the wake of the murder of Mike Brown. Following Matthew's story, we circled up and held worship, offering meditations and gratitude for Matthew's journey as we felt moved. Matthew brought us back with this song:

*You gotta \_\_\_\_\_ when the spirit says \_\_\_\_\_,  
 You gotta \_\_\_\_\_ when the spirit says \_\_\_\_\_  
 When the spirit says \_\_\_\_\_ you gotta \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_ when the spirit says \_\_\_\_\_*

## GUIDE MY FEET

*Guide my feet while I run this race x3  
'cause I don't want to run this race in vain  
Hold my hand while I run this race x3  
'cause I don't want to run this race in vain  
Search my heart while I run this race x3  
'cause I don't want to run this race in vain*

"I find that I feel most connected with Spirit when I am singing in action. "Song leader" is a role I am often asked to fill, and I enjoy it because one has to be listening to so much more than oneself to do it effectively. I find song most powerful when you take a moment to feel the energy of the group. Because fundamentally, singing together is not about my voice or the voice of the person next to me, but the power of all these voices together and the profound communication possible both through and beyond the individual. The song is an African American spiritual from the civil rights fight, and was taught to me by an activist and friend John Beamer, who walked with me and others along the proposed route of the KXL northern branch during the summer of 2013." – Lina Blount

## WHEN I RISE

*And when I rise, let me rise up  
Like a bird, powerfully*

*And when I cry, let me cry  
With a smile all the while*

*And when I fall, let me fall down  
Like a leaf, gracefully*

*And when I rise, let me rise up  
Like a bird, joyfully*

*And when I stand, let me stand  
Like a mountain, solidly*

"I was on day 4 of an exciting and exhausting strategy retreat. At 3pm in the afternoon, we learned by phone that 21 people had been arrested protesting a tar sands mine in Utah. Most of us at the meeting had close friends among the 21. One person's brother was in jail. We were concerned by reports of police violence, and even more troubled by rumors of in-fighting and disarray among the protesters. We wouldn't be able to finish the day's important agenda if something didn't change. I don't have a practice of movement singing, but I've been thinking a lot about how we need the moral and spiritual boost that song can provide. In that moment, I realized that I had an opportunity to put this into practice. I consulted with the facilitation team and we agreed to bring the group back with this song." – Will Lawrence

When I Rise is based off of a line from farmer-poet Wendell Berry's Prayers and Sayings of the Mad Farmer.

# EVA WŎ

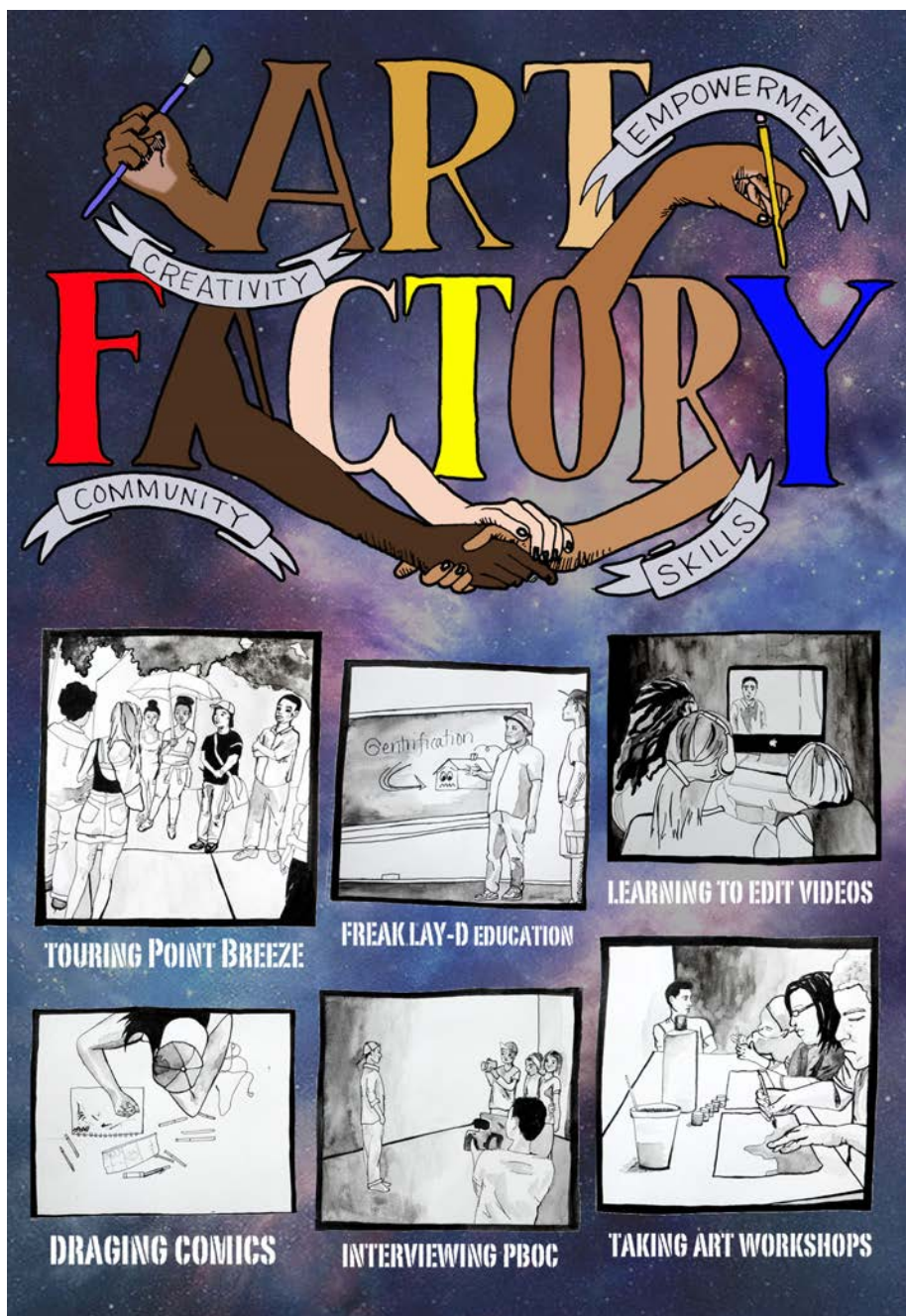
Eva Wŏ graduated from Bryn Mawr College this year. She is a queer multiracial woman born and raised in rural New Mexico and identifies as an artist, designer, and creative force. She is most interested in cultural work and building alternative economies toward social transformation. For now, this means lending her capacities toward various causes – whether it's designing a project logo, illustrating an event poster, or collaborating with other artists on a found object installation. She lives in a collective house and works in an artist collective called Yonic Daze. During the summer her partner organization was the Art Factory of the Norris Square Neighborhood Project. The Art Factory hires urban youth aged 15-19 to use art, design, and technology to explore how social issues like gentrification and racism impact communities throughout Philadelphia. Find the Art Factory at [ArtFactoryPhilly.tumblr.com](http://ArtFactoryPhilly.tumblr.com). Find Eva at [www.evawo.com](http://www.evawo.com) or contact her via [oevawo@gmail.com](mailto:oevawo@gmail.com).



# The Art Factory of Norris Square Neighborhood Project

The images following are just tidbits from the summer: laughter, art-making, and at last, celebration. Norris Square Neighborhood Project (known locally as NSNP) focuses on building up and empowering youth through arts and gardening. The Art Factory is a program that hires youth aged 15-19 to gain creative skills and experience, with a curriculum that is all arts, culture and social justice focused. They imagine a world in which youth are at the forefront of political and cultural change.

This summer, 22 youth took daily workshops on different art media, from making stop-motion Instagram videos to zine building. Eva taught courses on typography and watercolor painting, and brought in another local artist to teach surrealist games. After a few weeks of workshops, they took visits to Point Breeze, touring the neighborhood and conducting interviews with some of the community members that make up the Point Breeze Organizing Committee. Also known as PBOC, these older community residents talked into the camera at length about their experiences resisting gentrification in their neighborhood. In groups, the youth then made multimedia videos and cartoons to reflect and tell the stories of the incredible work done they learned about. Through the process they wrestle with the complex intricacies of social problems and community resistance throughout Philly.



## EVA'S REFLECTIONS:

1. Cultural work is some of the most crucial, most impactful, and most needed work to happen within communities. The Art Factory gives a radical awakening to the potential of small culture-based projects to create community, responsibility and hope among youth.

2. When youth are presented with new forms of storytelling, they easily step up and contend with the political and social realities of our world. While youth are at times challenging of authority and resistant to working hard, youth also have beautiful wisdom and humbling stories when their voices are given platforms to shine.



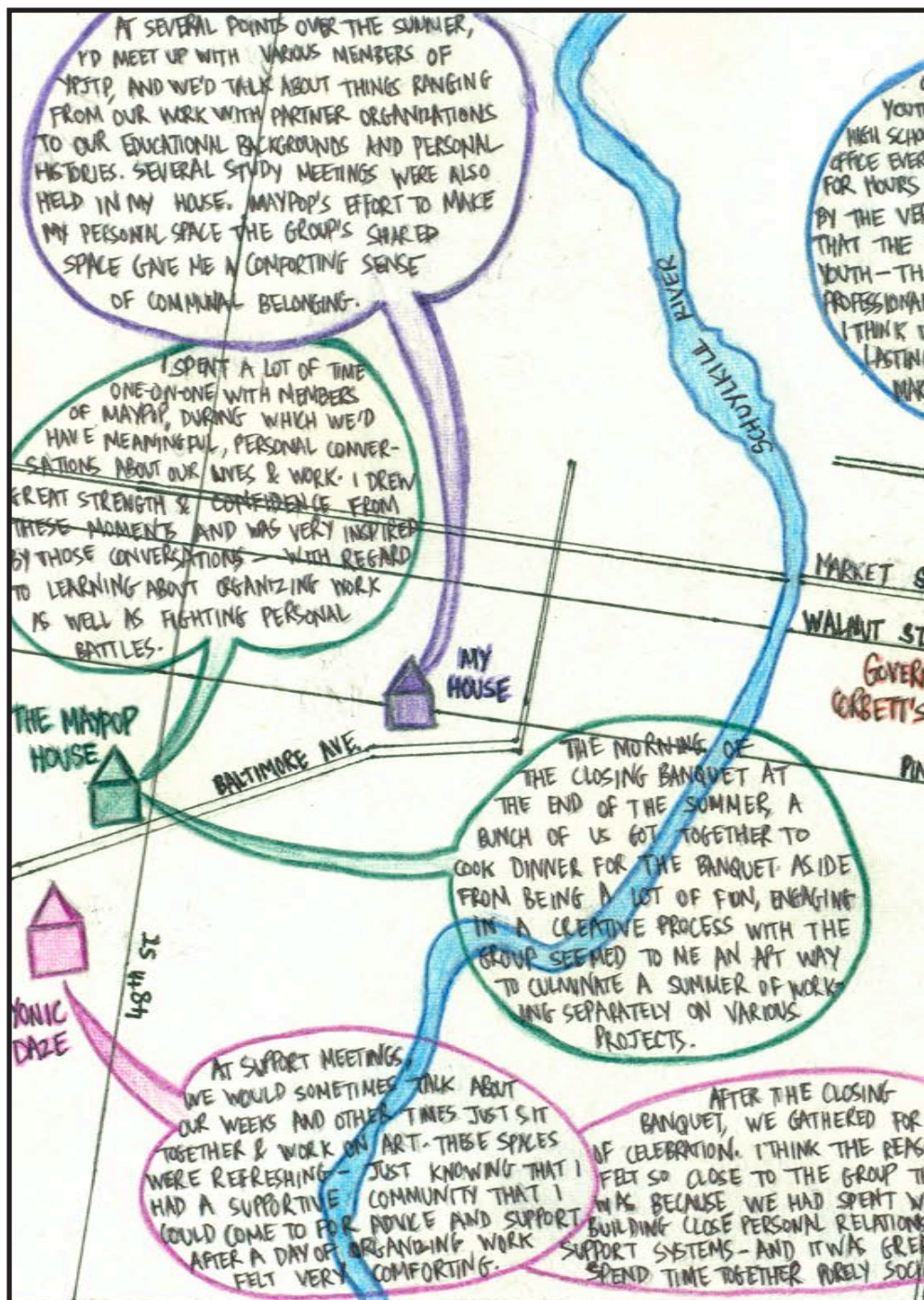
# LAVANYA NOTT

Lavanya Nott graduated from Bryn Mawr College this past May. She was born in California, and raised in Bangalore, India. She likes to write, and is particularly interested in the intersection of writing and social justice work—how writing can be used to inspire, mobilize, and bring people together. She is now thinking a lot about issues of racial justice, and how being a person of color in the US relates to her background growing up in India. During the Young People's Just Transition Project, she was particularly energized and inspired by support spaces and support systems, and sees them as key elements of organizing work. This summer, she worked with Youth United for Change (YUC), a youth-led organization made up primarily of students of color, working to reform Philadelphia's public school system such that it better meets the needs of underprivileged youth. More information on YUC can be found at <http://youthunitedforchange.org/>. Lavanya can be contacted at [lavanya.nott@gmail.com](mailto:lavanya.nott@gmail.com).





“ This summer, I spent three days a week at the Youth United for Change (YUC) office in North Philly. YUC is a youth-led organization, and this summer youth from neighboring public schools were at the office everyday, either learning about organizing, or rehearsing for various flash mobs. From the very beginning, I was captivated by the closeness of the relationships between YUC staff and the youth. It seemed to me that it was in these strong interpersonal bonds that YUC’s power lay—I think that the youth were directly motivated and inspired by the love and support that they received from the staff. I began to think more about the role of support systems and personal relationships in effective organizing work, and about their importance to me as motivating factors. I was helped along the way by YPJTP: every week, Maypop members and summer participants would gather for two hours at support meetings, where we focused on building a strong framework of comfort and strength for one another. Building this strong support system was a major component of the summer program and, looking back, I think that it was what motivated me the most in terms of my organizing. I drew a lot of inspiration from personal interactions with various members of the project, and constantly felt nurtured and encouraged by them. Consequently, I felt like I had more to give to the work that I was doing. In this map of Philadelphia, I have marked out the spots that impacted me the most this summer in terms of how I perceive support and love as being integral to organizing work. I firmly believe that it was the strength of the relationships I formed this summer that will keep me inspired to work with this community in the future. ”



OVER THE SUMMER  
FROM NEIGHBORING  
COUNTRIES WOULD STOP BY THE  
WAY, SOMETIMES UNEXPECTEDLY  
I WAS CONSTANTLY STRUCK  
BY CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS  
YVC STAFF HAD WITH THESE  
THE OFFICE SEEMED LESS LIKE A  
SPACE THAN A LARGE FAMILY  
IT IS THESE FIRM, LONG-  
G, RELATIONSHIPS THAT  
MAKE YVC SO POWERFUL.

YOUTH UNITED  
FOR CHANGE

N FRONT ST.

SPRING GARDEN ST.

DELAWARE RIVER

OFFICE

BROAD ST.

A NIGHT  
ON 1  
THAT NIGHT  
WEEKS  
CHAIRS AND  
NT TO  
ALLY.

SOME OF US WENT TO  
A RALLY / FLASH MOB ORGANIZED  
BY YVC, PROTESTING CORBETT'S ANTI-  
EDUCATION POLICIES. IT WAS WONDERFUL TO SEE  
HOW THE DANCE & MUSIC I'D SEEN THE YOUTH  
PRACTICE FOR WEEKS TRANSFORMED & EXCITED THE  
CROWD, MAKING US ONE COHESIVE FORCE. EARLIER  
THAT WEEK, YPJTTP HAD SPENT AN HOUR  
AT A SUPPORT MEETING JUST SINGING &  
THESE EXPERIENCES GAVE ME A GREATER  
APPRECIATION FOR THE ABILITY OF  
MUSIC TO EMPOWER

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# MADDY JENNE

Maddy Jenne graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in May 2014. She was politicized as a leftist through building and winning a union for dining hall workers at Penn with the Penn Student Labor Action Project. She was also a founder of Penn's first housing co-op, Penn Haven. This past year and summer she worked at Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) helping to grow MMP's grassroots fundraising program. She is inspired by the work of MMP to build organized and long term mass movements of working people. She was raised in California alongside her twin sister.

## **BUILDING WORKING CLASS POWER TO STOP AND SURVIVE THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS**

One of the topics we've worked through this summer is how to get out of the crisis we face—what theory of change will we use to fight our enemies? How do we move ourselves from our place of relative powerlessness and actually fight back against those who cause the climate crisis, exploitation and the cold-blooded murder of black people in the streets? We ask these questions given the limitations put on us by time and personal needs. Given that, how do we most strategically use our time to grow strong enough to contest with right wing forces? This essay approaches these questions through the orientation of organizing poor and working people as a powerful way to build what we need to build to fight back and contest for power and that organizing poor and working people is a way to solve the climate crisis.

The root of the climate crisis is capitalism—an economic system that exploits people and the natural world. At its core, capitalism extracts value from people through their labor. People feel the effects of capitalism in the workplace, in underemployment, and in their lack of work. The same mechanism that extracts value from people's labor is the mechanism that extracts from the ecological world at an unlimited pace. To fight against the continuing ecological crisis and to weather the changes that are going to come, we need to be clear about its ultimate cause: capitalism.

As it stands now, there are no interests in power that feel pressure to address the climate crisis. Right now in cities across the country, including Philadelphia, the Chamber of Commerce, the real estate developer class, and elected officials are the ones who make the decisions that govern our lives. We can zoom out and identify those same well-organized right-wing forces at the state, country, and international levels. The balance of power is fundamentally shifted away

from the interests of working class and poor people and those who stand in solidarity with them. To shift the balance, we need to build the power of working class and poor people through organization and through thinking on a mass scale.

**ORGANIZATION** If we're going to fight the climate crisis by getting to its root cause, one important piece of the puzzle we need to build are institutions that root in one place for the long term. We need institutions that grow roots in one place and create political programs that can develop leaders and carry fights through over time. One place we can look to for a show of how strong a long-term institution can be is the labor movement. Unions are the only institutions that are made up of working class people and exist to fight for the interests of them. At the core, unions engage working class people at scale and they can mobilize, hold, and develop people because they have the infrastructure needed to do that.

Mass uprisings are distinct from institution and organization building in that they are important moments when people previously untouched and unmoved to action become moved to action in huge numbers. These moments are a tool for building the world we need to build, but without institution building behind them, mass uprisings are just moments of justified rage. Organizing to make real change is a skill that for any kind of person involves getting rid of ideas you once knew as truth and planting new ones. Rage in the streets won't lead us to where we need to be. We need institutions like unions to build political leaders and build strategists that can lead us to where we need to be.

**SCALE** To build the power we need to build the left, we need to organize

poor and working class people into a movement on a mass scale. Again, we can look to the labor movement as a good example of reaching working people in numbers. The labor movement once contained one third of America's working population. Today, with decades long decline of the labor movement, organized labor still engages about 11% of the working population. This number of hundreds of thousands of people pales in comparison to the 50 or 200 people that might show up to a protest for an important action and what might be read in some activist circles today as good turnout.

There are creative and spirited things we can do with 50 or 200, but 50 or 200 does not need to be what we settle for. Going to scale and dealing with numbers of people in the hundreds and thousands and beyond can mean making tough choices. It can mean asking one group of people to deprioritize their needs in the short term to help their shared medium or long term goals come to fruition sooner. It can mean making assessments based on capacity or strategy about which battles to choose and which to let go. These are hard decisions to make, but if we actually want to think about winning broad societal change, we need to be willing to think on a mass scale.

There are a number of different strategies for change being put forward on the left. After an assessment about what we're up against and the relative power we hold in relation to the right, what is the best way to build our power and fight our enemies? The climate crisis is caused by capitalism and it must be fought through building up the power of the masses in relation to our enemies. An organized mass force that can contest for power is the only thing that can stop capitalism and the climate crisis.

# SHUG PIERCE

Shug Pierce is a Black non-binary person on indefinite medical leave from Bryn Mawr College. They are most invested in social change work involving education, community building, and healing, which has mostly been for Queer and trans People of Color or about issues that they face. Though Shug considers this group their home base, they have become interested in exploring other issues more deeply, specifically mental health and survivor advocacy. This summer Shug worked with Serenity House (see: Nora's bio) and the Youth Art and Self-Empowerment Project (YASP). The latter is an organization dedicated to upholding the dignity and rights of incarcerated youth, specifically those who have been through the adult criminal justice system as youth. At this organization Shug mostly helped in the assembly of a reentry resource guide and in compiling data on petition signatures by region. Shug continues to work with this organization. To learn more about YASP, visit [yasproject.com](http://yasproject.com).

“ This collage represents my interpretation of varied styles of and approaches to leadership that I have witnessed in Philadelphia over the years, both on an organizational and individual level. ”





This summer I worked with the Youth Art & Self-Empowerment Project (YASP), an organization that focuses on the rights and dignity of young people in Pennsylvania, particularly those who have gone through the adult criminal justice system. Their main means of realizing this is by lobbying for the repeal of Act 33, an amendment to the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act which automatically tries youth ages 15 and over in adult court if they are accused of particular crimes (those perceived as violent). In addition to this, they perform a broad range of other activities related to this cause, such as leading workshops on the school-to-prison pipeline and prison-industrial complex at levels from elementary schools through college, visiting state prisons once a week to run arts workshops with incarcerated youth, and organizing reentry resources for youth finishing their sentence and a book of poetry by the incarcerated youth.

In supporting these efforts, I was able to observe my coworkers in a variety of contexts, which allowed me to get to know them holistically. One thing that was particularly intriguing to me was their approaches to their work - although it is inevitable that there be differing leadership styles within any given organization, it was surprising how their sometimes conflicting methods interacted, dancing with each other and sometimes stepping on the other's toes, but ultimately settling into fit together in a reciprocal - however jerky - exchange. In these interactions, I noticed patterns of behaviors, which I have collected into loose archetypes. Those are:

## **1. The Egalitarian**

In this style, making decisions based on the input of all members is prioritized. Unanimity would be ideal, though consensus is ultimately the goal. While this is a useful framework for running an organization, when it is insisted upon for its own sake, it can lead to delay or stagnation in addition to conflicting with other personality and leadership styles (which I will discuss in other sections).

## **2. The Proactive**

The goal of this approach is getting things done - those with such an inclination are more interested in pushing the task to completion than wasting time considering the details, which can be dealt with later. This has the benefit of maintaining energy and having more to show for the work done (which can be helpful in, for example, the grant decision-making process). The other side to these things are susceptibility to burn-out and more complications in the future. In the context of the office, this role worked very well with the Egalitarian role - when progress had halted because people were either uninterested in offering input or interests were too split, this person was willing to choose a path and stick to it.

## **3. The Reactive**

This style is the least likely of the three to be recognized as leadership, being mostly based around shaping the direction of work rather than planning or

initiating it. In the context of the organization I worked with, this person was mostly quiet and kept to themselves unless there was something they felt strongly about. At this point they were in no way intimidated by stating their opinion and solutions to the perceived problem. This style was especially useful during canvassing, where they could quickly and effectively respond to any resistance to the goals of the campaign. This was also the style that conflicted most with the Egalitarian – they were not interested in contributing to decisions that they did not feel strongly about, and would therefore stay quiet or say that they didn’t care, directly opposing the goals of the Egalitarian.

## ( SOURCES )

Background: Faith Ringgold, Tar Beach 2. Created and resides in Philadelphia.

Top-left to bottom-right -

Andrea Zamel, Black Bottom Memorial Wall. On a wall of the former University City High School, recently destroyed by vandals shortly after the building and land was purchased by Drexel University.

(Overlain) “Loathing, Sympathy”. A newspaper article on the MOVE bombing, printed originally in the Montreal Gazette 5/14/1985

The Attic Youth Center logo.

A piece of art from a young person incarcerated in an adult prison, collected by YASP.

Photograph of the former Cookman Methodist Church as seen from Serenity House.

(Overlain) Youth drawing accompanying a writing prompt from a YASP workshop.

Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, “The Roots Mural Project”. Located on the World Communications Charter School on South St between Broad and 15th.

Josh Sarantis, “We Rise! Children, Trauma, and Resilience”. Located on a former PNC Bank branch near Fairmount & Ridge.

Photograph from a Hotpot! event.

Photo of a Philadelphia US postal worker joining a wildcat strike in New York City. March 20th 1970, retrieved from [phillyradicalarchives.org](http://phillyradicalarchives.org).

Youth art from a YASP workshop.

Poster used by Decarcerate PA. This photo is from a 2012 action.

Drawing by Morgan at Philadelphia Theater of the Oppressed. For “Unpacking Race” workshop series.

Logo for Positivo, a GALAEI program.

Tweet from Decarcerate PA.



# LAUREN BALLESTER

Lauren Ballester. Woman of color, multi-racial. My student organizing work has been Palestine Solidarity work. I am most excited about making that work about understanding the stakes we all have in liberation from colonialism, particularly as students. New Sanctuary Movement does interfaith immigrant justice organizing. I worked with them three days a week. I facilitated workshops, did one-on-ones for their listening campaign to determine what their new campaign will be and helped with event planning and other administrative stuff. Contact them via [NSM@sanctuaryphiladelphia.org](mailto:NSM@sanctuaryphiladelphia.org) or (215) 279-7060 [www.sanctuaryphiladelphia.org](http://www.sanctuaryphiladelphia.org). My contact info: [laurenbee93@gmail.com](mailto:laurenbee93@gmail.com)

## I STEPPED IN TO THE SUMMER PROGRAM WITH A YEAR'S BAGGAGE

from fighting depression. That deep darkness that leaks in to every dusty corner of you and steals away everything you once loved: your relationships, your motivation, your once fiercely glowing flame that told you what to do next. I know so many organizers who have experienced burnout. Whether it was connected to a mental illness like mine was or a product of an unhealthy environment, this world that we live in will take you there even when you put up your best fight. I don't want to be part of a revolution that recreates the moment of that downward spiral.

The Just Transition framework has taught me that a transition that is not just will not lead to a just world. I've been grateful for this framework and have grown to understand healing to be part of that transition. In the same way that justice is the transition, healing is the transition. Capitalism holes us in to isolation and teaches us that there is just not enough time or resources to take care of our communities or ourselves. Our economy relies on extraction—extraction of our natural resources, our labor, and with deportations and mass incarceration on the rise, extraction of people from their families and communities. If we wish to create a new world, we must find ways to heal from the traumas that this extraction brings us. That healing must be the work, not just what we do on a Saturday morning to recharge. That healing must be transformative.

My work with my partner organization, New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia taught me a lot about transformative healing. I learned about their recent campaign that ended local police's collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The framework of the campaign was very centered around healing. The campaign was run by a coalition of five groups. One of them was OneLoveMovement, a crew that organizes for previously incarcerated folks in the Asian American community. It also included Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia (VWSSP), they work with folks who have been the victims and witnesses of crimes in Philly. The coalition was coming from a place that recognized the need for transformative healing for everyone. Having both of those groups present in that conversation was a vital part of being able to look at the root problems with deportation in a holistic way. It recognized that we need to fight for everyone, not just people without criminal convictions, if we will ever see our community heal. It also recognized the trauma that communities face when they are pushed to the margins and violence arises. The over-policing of Black and Brown folks that leads to deportation is something that affects us all and that we all need to heal from.

New Sanctuary is a faith-based organization so it makes sense that transformative healing would be at the center of their mission. Working in communities of faith brought me back to my childhood church in Norristown. Church was one of the only places where I could look around and see other multi-racial families. We sang together in Spanish and English and the service was bilingual. The number of times I saw a mother's fiercely hopeful tears as she raised her arms in surrendering praise is too large to count. Faith brings us together in unearthly ways. It opens up a space for forgiveness and grace in ways I have never seen in other spaces. That space translates to the political work as well. Even practices as simple as an intentional lunch break where everyone stops to eat and talk together, or a weekly faith reflection, or a system for taking comp time so we don't overwork ourselves really contribute to the kind of organizing spaces that we need to create in order to be in this work for the long haul.

I really believe that a politic that has transformative healing at the center is not just better for our communities and ourselves, but it is better for our movements, our strategies. We can't win without it.

# Lessons Learned

by Maypop Collective

## Experiential Learning

In facilitating group spaces, we used activities that allowed participants to learn through doing. We created agendas that required moving our bodies, writing or creating visual art, drawing from personal experience and stories, and breaking into smaller groups to more deeply explore each person's opinions and questions. Because this facilitation style seeks to serve many different styles of learning, participants found it rewarding in a way that academic or strictly discussion-based meetings can fail to be.

## Building Spaces for Support

We believe developing supportive, caring, and accountable relationships are vital to the change we seek. Not only do deep relationships nourish us to continue organizing work “out there”, but also allow for personal and collective transformation “in here.” Cultivating practices and traditions of group- and self-support lets us access our full intelligence and collective vibrancy. We seek to practice and deepen our understanding of anti-oppression and collective liberation. This involves learning about and engaging how oppression and inequality manifest in our relationships, our communities, and our lived experience. It requires we honor our diverse identities and the diverse wisdoms that they unlock. The systemic forces we're up against seek to regulate, invisibilize, and exterminate identities and experiences they deem threatening or non-normative. Creating spaces that invite our “whole selves” and equip us with tools for exploring their full nature is essential.

One of the most common reflections from participants after the program was how important support, relationship, and healing were to their overall experience of the program. The lesson here feels clear: the extractive economy we're fighting wreaks devastation in our communities, relationships, and selves as much as on our wetlands, streams, and mountains. There is immense power in creating containers like the YPJTP that open the possibility to re-define relationship in ways that aren't often provided for us. It is an essential investment to organize our movements in a way that affirms the fractal nature, as Adrienne Maree Brown would say, of oppression and liberation- our commitment to creating life-affirming energy systems must include a daily commitment to life-affirming organizing spaces.

## Hybrid Strategies

We've been mentored and inspired by organizers who hold diverse “theories of change,” organizing strategies, and approaches to social justice. We strive to acknowledge these diverse movement traditions and apply them in context, looking for opportunities for synergy and rather than looking for

dominance. Specifically, we're inspired by the "resilience based organizing" of the Our Power Campaign<sup>1</sup>, where communities are integrating parallel institution building with contests for political power. We believe the social and economic transformation we seek will require both "building the new economy" from the grassroots and aligning forces to contest for political and economic power. Over the summer, we studied the Jackson-Kush Plan and the ways Cooperation Jackson and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement weave electoral organizing, participatory democracy, and solidarity economy into joint strategy<sup>2</sup>. We compared "momentum-based" mobilization strategies with more "structure-based" community organizing and base-building traditions, reflecting on the interaction between the traditions and advantages of hybrid strategies<sup>3</sup>.

After this summer, Maypop's commitment to understanding diverse organizing traditions and synergies that are possible amongst them has been strengthened. Offering the frame of "organizing traditions" is useful in acknowledging the often invisibilized histories that have shaped the struggles we see today. At the same time, the frame also prompts us to identify the underlying practice and ideology of different types of social justice work in contrast to others. These are critical thinking skills that challenge young people who become activated in one tradition and may take that tradition's underlying assumptions for granted. Discussing organizing traditions is an accessible way to bring young people to the strategy table in the journey of creating new points of collaboration between groups and re-mixing traditions.

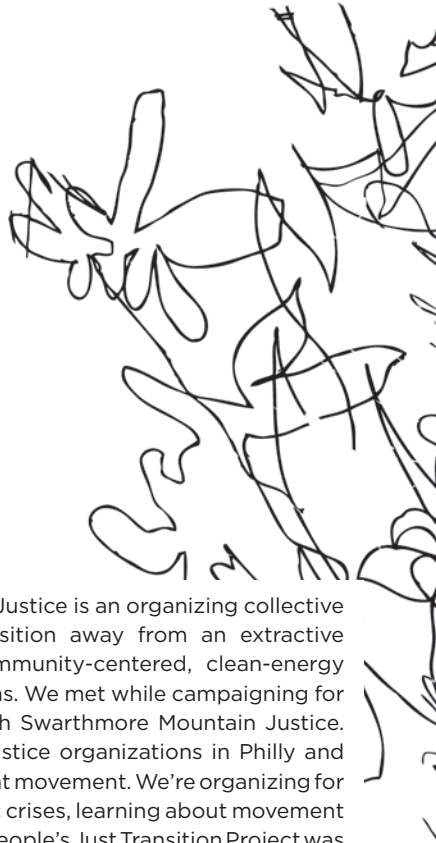
The YPJTP also revealed the challenges that come with bringing different organizing traditions into conversation. First, each participant brought fairly cemented assumptions about what or who doesn't create change based on their respective organizing background. A labor organizer struggled to see real merit in cultural work. An artist thought movement theory to be far removed from the lives of everyday people. Second, the YPJTP highlighted the way these differences are much more than theoretical. They interact with our self-limiting beliefs, impacting our stories of self and what we believe we're capable of. Third, the project exposed the emotion and pain that accompanies these tensions. Maypop got a good sense of the persistent healing and re-building of respect that will need to happen between activists in order to move towards synthesizing the beautiful and invaluable elements every tradition has to offer.

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1 Our Power Campaign (<http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/campaign/>). Also check our more on 'resilience based organizing' from Movement Generation: <http://movementgeneration.org/our-work/movementbuilding-2/resiliencebasedorganizing/>.

2 Learn more about Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Jackson-Kush Plan here: <https://mxgm.org/the-jackson-plan-a-struggle-for-self-determination-participatory-democracy-and-economic-justice/>. Also, check out Cooperation Jackson: <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/>

3 We pulled from and studied frameworks of "structure and momentum" – Check out this webinar from Paul Engler and Carlos Saavedra Diaz to learn more: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VMyg\\_TnMXE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VMyg_TnMXE)



The Maypop Collective for Climate and Economic Justice is an organizing collective in Philadelphia, PA working toward a just transition away from an extractive economy of exploitation and inequality to community-centered, clean-energy economies that take care of people and ecosystems. We met while campaigning for fossil fuel divestment at Swarthmore College with Swarthmore Mountain Justice. Since September 2013, we've allied with social justice organizations in Philly and supported the national student fossil fuel divestment movement. We're organizing for social justice solutions to the climate and economic crises, learning about movement building, and living in deep community. The Young People's Just Transition Project was our first project of its kind. We're grateful to our many mentors, peers, and communities for consulting with us, providing feedback, sharing facilitation skills and for the donors and funders who made the project possible.

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Philadelphia

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