

# Rooted in Resilience:

Mapping the expanding horizons where social justice, spiritual practice, and healing meet

The Rooted in Resilience Mapping Project is an attempt to capture one view of the significant and expanding body of work being done to integrate personal and collective transformation, spiritual practice, and healing, within frameworks for social change. The question of how communities can best equip and ready themselves for both the challenges they face today, and the looming threats of ecological and economic rupture in the years ahead is a serious one that we are discovering requires our attention and our resources. By providing this view of how individuals, organizations and entire movements are imagining and drawing on lineages of spiritual sustainability or holistic care to resist *well* and achieve freedom and justice for all of us, Rooted in Resilience seeks to emphasize how important the work of transformation, spiritual engagement, and healing is, highlight the questions and challenges practitioners are themselves facing, and make the case for why and how we can invest in the roles and resources needed.

## Background

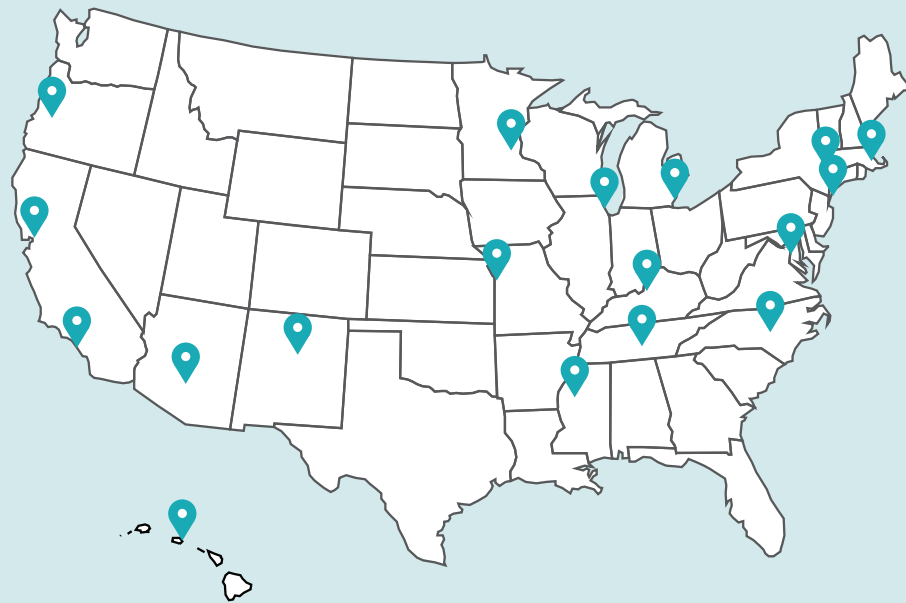
The past decade has seen the reinvigoration and reemergence of social movements in the face of devastating economic inequalities and the stubborn staying power of white supremacy, corporate greed, and militarism. These movements have also brought growing and louder calls for healing and community-oriented care that can support people in their pursuit of collective dignity and liberation. Indeed from Occupy to Standing Rock, from the Movement for Black Lives to the disability justice movement, it is the recognition of historic and ongoing hurt and trauma, the possibility of transformation, and the need for a different way of organizing that contributes to their strength and vitality.

The dominant social justice organizing culture is awakening to and adopting this more “ecosystem”-based framework for thinking about how change happens and power is won—incorporating personal and spiritual practices, collective care and community building around healing modalities, and creating spaces and centres for repair, restoration, and connection to land. While this reflects a shift for many in the mainstream organizing space, it is in many ways a *return* to ancestral practices and roots that were all but erased by the American project writ large and by the homogenization and professionalization of social movements. One of the more exciting aspects of this mapping project is tracing the many lineages and ancestors that drive different solutions in different regions and communities.

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and practices takes structural  
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The emerging ecology of social movements today is a rejection of this highly professionalized, elite-facing organizing culture that emerged in the ‘90s and into the Obama years, and simultaneously a constructive response to the ways in which movements have themselves been spaces of harm, recreating generation-old traumas and lines of division. Movements are too often sites of oppression and erasure where resource-scarcity favors individuals over the group, competition over collaboration, and where mistakes are turned into sources of shame and derision, instead of collectively-held lessons for future efforts. Some of the work at this intersection of social justice and spiritual/healing practice is a direct response to the inequity, fracture, and pain





In the first nine months, we have learned from, talked with, or attended spaces convened by individuals and groups, including the following: Auburn Theological Seminary, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Cara Page, CTZN WELL, The Dinner Party, Down Home North Carolina, Faith in Action, Francisca Porchas Coronado and Puente Human Rights Movement, #FreeOurFuture/Mijente, Healing By Choice, the Healing Justice Track at the Allied Media Conference, Healing Justice Podcast, Joan Halifax and Upaya Zen Center, Higher Purpose Co., Liberation School South, Marya Bangee, Mystic Soul Project, On Being, The People's Supper, Poor People's Campaign, Rabbi David Jaffe, Rabbi Sharon Brous, Relational Uprising, Revolutionary Love Project, Dr. Ruby Sales, Rural Organizing Project, Sacred Places Institute, The Sanctuaries, Tzedek Lab, The Watershed Center, Wildseed, and individual practitioners in somatic and healing modalities...

felt from *within* this subculture. For organizations to function like healthy organisms, and movements like thriving ecosystems, this must and is being addressed. But birthing new norms, expectations, and practices takes structural investment and support.

The goal of Rooted and Resilience, then, is to shine a light on the forms and efforts underway, emerging and long-standing, that are readying people and communities for both the systemic challenges that lie ahead, and intra-group tensions so that this work may be seen, yes, but also better resourced and supported.

### Many Streams, One River

The integration of personal transformation, practice, and healing with social justice is at once a place of great experimentation and discovery, and of re-membering cultures, lineages, and traditions lost or ignored by the

dominant organizing culture. In the first nine months of the mapping project, we interviewed organizers, healers, spiritual leaders, artists, and thinkers who are approaching this work from different perspectives, drawing on distinct histories and cultural experiences, and experimenting with the new. Most of the people we talked with and the projects they pointed us towards fall along these sometimes overlapping lines:

- Politicizing health and wellness at the systems level
- Service provision in healing and somatic modalities
- Faith-based or spiritually-based projects that center social justice
- Convening spaces, land-based projects, and courageous conversations projects



- Organizing projects or social movements that embody and have spiritual or healing lens explicitly within their theory of change
- Cultural organizers and creative practices
- Training programs for new roles within the field

It's worth noting how together this list reflects the (re)emerging ecosystem approach to social change, working across the realms of personal transformation, community building, and systemic solutions.

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### Initial Themes and Learnings

Our interviews focused on three main set of questions:


1. How did you come to this work and how do you define it?
2. How do you understand your role and purpose in movement spaces at this time? What other roles and resources are needed in this moment?
3. Outside of your own work, where do you see the most exciting work in the healing justice movement happening? Where do you see the challenges and obstacles?

By listening closely to the answers, we were able to discern some of the most pressing questions and realities that folks are confronting. Here are some topline and emerging themes:

1. There is necessary work to be done to recognize and repair histories of erasure within our organizations and movements, as well as in American society as a whole, in order for social movements to be places of healing.
2. The commitment to personal healing and spiritual transformation can reinforce individualism and identity—how can we avoid these pitfalls?
3. Resilience is dependent on integrating and transmuting harm and hurt, not reaching a destination of “healed.” How can we support groups and individuals to develop their capacity to adapt and find strength in their own malleability?
4. Communities often know what resilience looks like for them, but aren’t always listened to. Too often resources depend on fitting the work into someone else’s idea of what is needed.
5. Similarly, collaboration is not always possible, although desired, because of the competition for resources and attention from funders, media, etc. How can resources avoid recreating the problems they are trying to help solve?

There was considerable conversation about resources and resource allocation: much of the work described in this document is happening with little to no monetary resources—especially when spiritual or healing practice is not the central work of an organization or institution. As has been common throughout history, communities lean heavily on individual practitioners—often women and queer folk—who do this valuable work as an expression of a vocational call, despite being chronically underpaid and underresourced. Moreover, practitioners who identify as trans or gender nonconforming, many of





whom have been driving this work, do so at the same time they are grappling with a culture that sees and treats them as expendable and unworthy of care. Cultural practices—communal cooking, art, song—are increasingly recognized as a means of resistance, resilience, and sustenance, but just as with other so-called “women’s work,” these alternative economies of care are undervalued and misunderstood even within movements, and practitioners are often expected to resource themselves. This is seen as work that happens “on the side” or as a preamble, but not always seen as part of the “real work.”

### Moving Forward

The irony in all of this, of course, is that as spiritual and healing practices have become more popular and mainstream, they have become more commodified and therefore more expensive. So while organizing communities struggle to support the labor of resilience, personal transformation, and healing, “wellness” itself is a multi-million dollar industry. Communities are seeing their ancestral practices sold back to them for a high price—one one they cannot afford.

Rooted in Resilience is a call to trace, recognize, honor and resource this labor. Mapping the landscape without responding to the contours that have been revealed would in our view be irresponsible. We hope this project can be a portal for listening, learning and responding to *what* communities and leaders need, and *how* they are defining themselves, their roles, and their work.

The next phase of our work (January 2019-July 2020) will focus in and dig deeper into the emergent themes laid out above. We will convene a series of regional learning circles to bring practitioners at the intersection of social justice and spiritual or resilience-based work together with funders to move towards a vision of how resources can help overcome the obstacles folks are identifying, and significantly build upon strategies and modalities that are having a positive impact at the local level in particular. We see these learning circles as shaping a vision of a creative and ethical funding stream that can ultimately lead to the launch (Winter 2020/1) of a collaborative fund to support the growth of this evolving ecosystem.

This work is evolving and moving. We are always looking to expand our conversation and highlight work, especially in areas of the map that we haven’t reached yet. If you have an experience or project to share, or simply would like more information about the project please contact:

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or Carinne Luck ([carinne@faithmattersnetwork.org](mailto:carinne@faithmattersnetwork.org)).

You can also visit our website: [www.faithmattersnetwork.org/rootedinresilience](http://www.faithmattersnetwork.org/rootedinresilience)

