

UNTIL WE ARE ALL FREE:

A CASE STUDY IN CULTURAL STRATEGY



LOVE & DIGNITY BEYOND BARS & BORDERS



All Free Art Commission by Favianna Rodriguez

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The story of the *Until We Are All Free* initiative is a story of transformative possibilities. Launched in 2015, *Until We Are All Free* (All Free) was an unprecedented racial justice collaboration between CultureStrike and Power California—formerly Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV) and YVote—in partnership with Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI). This collaboration was one response to a long-standing call from Black leaders to immigrant and refugee rights organizers to boldly address racial justice and to show up for Black lives. Spanning the years 2014–2017, All Free generated critical learning for Cultural Strategy for social movements and bridged immigrant and refugee rights, civic engagement, arts and culture, criminal justice, and racial justice.

Rooted in arts and culture, the *Until We Are All Free* initiative elevated and connected the experiences of Black, migrant, refugee, undocumented, Indigenous, queer, and transgender communities. Focused on deep storytelling, relational organizing, and arts and cultural production, All Free generated a plethora of innovative strategies, art, relationships, lessons, and organizational shifts at Power California.

This retrospective story of All Free captures its conception, history, design, goals, components, outcomes and impacts, challenges, and roadblocks. Along with its companion resource *Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer*, this case study lifts up concrete lessons to help movement leaders and social justice organizations learn how to centralize arts and culture strategies, explicitly address anti-Black racism, and weave a bold, intersectional, and future facing vision for dignity and self-determination. The discussion guide following this case study also features questions for leaders and organizations interested in integrating Cultural Strategies into their work.

CORE COMPONENTS OF THE ALL FREE INITIATIVE

1. **Four multiracial, cross issue, and intergenerational convenings**
2. **Commissioning of visual and literary art** including the Declaration of Unity by NoViolet Bulawayo, available in six languages
3. **Public actions, protests, and community art builds**
4. **Arts and culture resources** including an arts and racial justice storytelling curriculum, stencil toolkits, and art kits
5. **An eight month long artist residency** that generated original, collaborative art within Power California's network

ALL FREE IMPACTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

The Power California organization and network:

1. **Integrated art and culture as vehicles for vision led future making grounded in interconnectedness and healing historical trauma**
2. **Clarified the role of culture and the necessity of an “inside out” Cultural Strategy** within their electoral organizing and movement building
3. **Disrupted anti-Black racism and increased political education about anti-Black racism** both internally and within movement spaces

4. **Strengthened relationships with partner organizations** in its organizing network
5. **Made transformative shifts in organizational structure, leadership, and strategy**, including an organizational merger and the creation of Cultural Strategies positions and department

EMERGENT CHALLENGES:

1. **Making the case for the centrality of cultural work** both internally and externally with network partners and funders
2. **Contending with limited spaces and infrastructure for visioning and for arts and cultural work** within grassroots organizing spaces
3. **Clarifying roles and expectations between the initiative's partner organizations** in a reciprocal, transparent, and consistent way
4. **Grounding Cultural Strategy** by integrating culture into the day to day operations of the organization
5. **Strategizing and planning in an emergent space** with unknown outcomes, while developing evaluation tools for Cultural Strategy
6. **Inadequate funding and resourcing** for Cultural Strategy work

Through its multiyear engagement with All Free, Power California experienced deep transformations in its strategy and organizational culture, sharpening its ability to build intersectional, future facing, visionary, and inspiring work for racial and gender justice. Its journey into Cultural Strategy has been iterative, exploratory, and transformational. The process has also generated questions about the integration of Cultural Strategy into electoral and civic engagement work as well as grassroots organizing. Many of Power California's struggles and lessons—and some of its specific interventions—can be instructive and replicable in movement organizations, within both immigrant and refugee rights and electoral spaces, and beyond.

Rooted in Cultural Strategy, this historic initiative brought a diverse community of organizers, creatives, artists, and movement leaders together to dream, humanize, connect, build, and co-create toward a shared future of dignity and self-determination for all people. In revisiting the journey of Power California within the All Free initiative, we can see that Cultural Strategy, when done well, transforms us from the inside out. In its goal to transform culture at the societal level for justice, Cultural Strategy helps us transform our organizations at all levels, from strategy to programs to relationships.

MORE INFORMATION

- For more information about Until We Are All Free, visit the initiative website at <http://www.untilweareallfree.com>
- For Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer, including a reading list on Cultural Strategy, visit <https://powercalifornia.org/cultural-strategy-report> or www.artworkpractice.com
- To contact Power California, email imagine@powercalifornia.org
- To contact Art/Work Practice, email nayantara@artworkpractice.com

INTRODUCTION: BRINGING CULTURAL STRATEGY FROM THE CLOUDS TO THE GROUND

In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, social justice leaders across various fields realize that we are, once again, in a full-scale cultural war. The federal administration is escalating attacks on marginalized communities. People who are: from Indigenous Nations, queer and transgender, young, Black women and women of color, Muslim, immigrants, and refugees are under political, economic, and environmental siege. These attacks reveal historic fault lines between our communities that have been long left unaddressed by traditional electoral progressive models. At the same time, these communities are coming together in new and unexpected ways, turning away from single issue, siloed work, to organize, build power, and manifest a more just and equitable future. As our movements strive to scale and strengthen our political, economic, environmental, and faith-based responses, a critical mass of people now understands that we urgently need to stake a claim in the cultural realm. We can do this by building cultural power that heals us, transforms the country, envisions an achievable and liberatory future, reclaims silenced narratives, and emancipates all our people. The path to this power is through the practice of *Cultural Strategy*.

The need and urgency to apply Cultural Strategy to transformative social justice is clear. But how, exactly, do we do it? What does it mean to bring Cultural Strategy from the clouds—from boardroom discussions and conference panels—down to impacted communities on the ground? What does Cultural Strategy realistically look like when connected to grassroots organizing? Who's done it well? And how can we amplify their lessons and learn from their mistakes?

Power California convenes a statewide network of grassroots organizations mobilizing young voters and their families from communities of color and Indigenous Nations for civic engagement. During the past two years, Art/Work Practice has partnered with Power California to examine, document, and deepen Cultural Strategy practices for movement work.

This partnership has involved a deep dive into the lessons learned from a groundbreaking Cultural Strategy initiative *Until We Are All Free* (All Free) which unfolded from 2014 to 2017. All Free is a Cultural Strategy intervention, bridging racial justice, immigrant and refugee rights, civic engagement, arts and culture, and criminal justice.

Formally launched in 2015, *Until We Are All Free* was an unprecedented collaboration between CultureStrike and Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV) in partnership with Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI). All Free was one response to a long-standing call from Black leaders to immigrant and refugee rights organizers to boldly address racial justice and to show up for Black lives. In a climate in which more than 200 Black people were killed by law enforcement in the last six months of 2015, and 1,100 migrants were deported every day, All Free engaged

art and Cultural Strategy to build transformational solidarity and envision a more just and free world. All Free also worked with artists across disciplines and leaders across multiple sectors to break down the walls that separate us and challenge the systems of incarceration, deportation, and detention of our communities.

This case study is one segment of a two-part documentation series that excavates the story, lessons, impacts, and challenges of All Free, and captures synthesized characteristics and practices of Cultural Strategy for social movements. The series is comprised of:

1. **This comprehensive case study on the *Until We Are All Free* initiative**, which includes a one-page discussion guide with questions and prompts for leaders and organizations interested in integrating cultural strategies into their work
2. ***Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer***, an introductory, definitional resource that explains key characteristics, pitfalls, and possibilities related to Cultural Strategy

To download and read the full documentation package or its individual components, visit the Power California website at bit.ly/culturalstrategyprimer.

The following pages of this case study on All Free capture the remarkable journey of Power California as it navigated the creation of All Free with CultureStrike and BAJI, and as it transformed inside and out as a result of intentional and deep Cultural Strategy work. The stories shared here span from 2014 to 2018, and feature the voices of several partners and stakeholders in All Free.

We hope that our retrospective and reflection on this unprecedented Cultural Strategy initiative, as well as Power California's experiments in integrating arts and culture into its civic engagement work, will prove instructive for readers. We also hope that you'll read, enjoy, and share this documentation package widely. If you would like to reach out with questions, you can contact Power California at imagine@powercalifornia.org and AWP at nayantara@artworkpractice.com.

BEHIND THE LOGO

All Free proliferated many artistic images and products, including a set of commissioned artworks by various artists. The definitive image of a bright yellow hummingbird was adapted to become the All Free logo. Commissioned by CultureStrike and Mobilize the Immigrant Vote—and designed by migrant artist Rommy Torrico—the yellow hummingbird represents the spirit, song, and ethos of All Free, and reminds us of the central goal of the initiative, which is racial and gender justice for all.



Until We Are All Free logo by Rommy Torrico

WHY CHOOSE THE HUMMINGBIRD?

There are more than 300 species of hummingbirds found all over the world. As a species, they are brilliantly diverse and represent a dazzling array of geographies, colors, sizes, voices, and songs. Despite assaults on their home environs because of climate change, hummingbirds persist. They travel, migrate, and return, with impressive contempt for human-made borders. They are playfully complex—and they remember their homes. Their evolution also reflects their incredible adaptability and ingenuity. Some hummingbirds have long, tapered beaks that help them reach into flowers to find elusive nectars for food. Some hummingbirds can fly right, left, up,

down, backwards, and even upside down. They show us how small, light, and purposeful beings can thrive despite the formidable odds of our planet.

Hummingbirds remind human beings that adaptation, resilience, and continuance are part of the natural ecology of our world. No matter the political or environmental onslaughts we encounter, we can adapt and thrive.

WHY CULTURE?

When Power California—formerly Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV) and YVote—first embarked on the journey to publicly and explicitly frame its work as culture shift, that decision was greeted with raised eyebrows, skepticism, and confused questions from various stakeholders.

Aparna Shah, Co-Director of Power California, shared, “There was a lot of ‘Are you all doing this?’ And ‘Why exactly are *you* doing it? You’re a civic engagement shop. You’re not an arts and culture organization. What do you know about this?’” In other words, why was MIV, an electoral shop running statewide organizing campaigns with immigrants and refugees, suddenly pivoting to focus on cultural change? Especially cultural change that emphasized *art*?

While Power California had historically engaged with multiracial, multi-ethnic, and multilingual grassroots organizations in order to fashion campaigns that were rooted in their base’s cultural values, they had never explicitly or publicly framed their work as “cultural work” before All Free. In the years following the inception of All Free in 2015, staff and leaders had to consistently make a case for cultural work as strategic to their members and partners as well as to funders. Power California’s stance reinforces the knowledge that culture is not removed from civic engagement and organizing. In fact, it is the bedrock of an engaged, participatory, and democratic civil society.

Shah clarified that the connection between cultural work and responsive, equitable, people centered governance is actually quite simple: “The easy answer to ‘*Why culture?*’ is that we can’t make the scope and scale of transformative change that we want in governance, especially structural changes that redistribute power, without Cultural Strategy.”

The Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA) organizes a multiracial community of refugees in San Diego and is a steering committee partner in the Power California network. While working as Director of Movement and Campaign Strategies at PANA, Ismahan Abdullahi and her team were involved in All Free. As a result, they transformed their organizing and civic engagement practices. Abdullahi said:

“*For us, art and Cultural Strategy has now become part of the bread and butter of organizing. To use art to tell our stories puts the power back into the hands of our community members and gives us control over narrative building again. And our people are those who have had power taken from them, whose histories and stories have been taken away. If we look at how our opposition on the Right uses Cultural Strategy, we see them hijacking the narratives. For example, how they define patriotism or freedom. Or the message to ‘make America great again.’ For me, being a patriot means being able to stand up to my country when it’s wrong, because when you love something you want to make it better. Arts and culture help us to fight back and band together around more unifying platforms of solidarity. Arts and culture help us redefine what being an American means.*”

Rufaro Gwarada, Cultural Strategies Director at Power California, explained the linkages further:

“*Cultural Strategy animates Power California’s values within civic engagement. It opens opportunities to move beyond just the communities that we organize with and for, because Cultural Strategy is about achieving mass change. To this end, our take on Cultural Strategy is that it’s a vehicle for activating solidarity and for humanizing people to each other. We can’t generate freedom and liberation just for our own people. We have to organize around a point of view and a shared future that enables shared liberation. Infusing Cultural Strategy into our work allows us to work beyond short term electoral wins toward long term, stable conditions of transformation.*”

All Free was Power California’s first major step toward embedding and operationalizing a cultural lens into its work. As captured in the distilled learnings in *Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer*, Cultural Strategy and cultural organizing supported Power California in moving holistically, strategically, relationally—and creatively—toward fulfilling its mission of co-creating an equitable and just California. To read All Free’s statement “Why Art + Culture?” visit untilweareallfree.com.

One major change stemming from All Free was the decision to resource a full time staff position. Pacita Rudder, Power California’s first Cultural Strategist, joined the team in 2017. Since the creation of that role, the cultural strategies team has been amplifying opportunities for cultural work and integrating Cultural Strategy into Power California’s organizing and movement building efforts. Rudder’s role involves bringing Cultural Strategy down from the clouds and anchoring cultural and artistic work directly into the programs and the day to day operations of Power California.

Rudder explained that Cultural Strategy is essential to organizing because it interrupts an over-reliance on the status quo:

“*Cultural Strategy is vital because it helps people reimagine the world and it shows us what’s possible. These possibilities and visions then shape our government, which then shapes who’s in power. Civic engagement without a Cultural Strategy won’t create the world that we need because then we’re not shaping culture though it is the foundation of everything we believe and practice. We see evidence of this when we elect officials into positions of power who look like us or come from our communities but then recreate systems of oppression, patriarchy, and capitalism instead of liberation and justice.*”

At its very core, culture is how humans make meaning. Epistemologically, culture is what helps people *know* what they know. Cultural Strategy for racial and gender justice generates belonging, transmits values, heals and fortifies communities, and moves individuals into ethical political analysis and action. Cultural Strategy provides the through line between the grand, disruptive, and liberatory vision of the world we want to create—and the realities of changing people’s lives and conditions on the ground. Like policymaking without culture change, organizing without culture change produces a boomerang effect, causing political action or law to advance without collective consciousness raising. This action or law then generates backlash and deeper retrenchment.

“That’s what we’re seeing now in the political sphere,” said Gwarada, “where the Trump administration is an equal opportunity oppressor and is coming after all our communities.”

Without cultural change, there is no restoration, no radical dreaming, and no collective sensemaking. *Without cultural change, there is no social change.*

To learn more about the field of Cultural Strategy and its characteristics, possibilities, pitfalls, and problems, read the supplementary resource to this case study, *Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer*. The primer describes the 10 qualifying characteristics of Cultural Strategy, which include its emphasis on: Vision, Values, and Worldview; Discovery; Prefiguration; Issue Development; Stickiness and Sustainability; Power Shifting; New Normals; Arts Integration; Organizational Integration; and Narrative Shift.



Source: Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy by The Culture Group

Power California's journey into Cultural Strategy has been iterative, emergent, and generative. At times, All Free leaders navigated without clearly discernible outcomes in sight. In insisting on the need for deep cultural work for racial and gender justice over the course of several years, Power California has also been deeply transformed internally and externally. We hope that looking back on this journey and capturing the learnings, impacts, and roadblocks encountered by Power California makes this two-part documentation series a useful offering to the field, especially during this politically volatile time when cultural change work is messy, complex, contested and more urgently needed than ever.

UNTIL WE ARE ALL FREE: INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION

HISTORY

The seeds for *Until We Are All Free* were planted by the leaders of CultureStrike and Power California, then known as Mobilize the Immigrant Vote. Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) came on as a partner in early 2015. As in many other critical social justice interventions, the impetus for this intersectional initiative was born out of a shared desire to step into a visionary future of dignity and self-determination in the face of an unjust status quo.

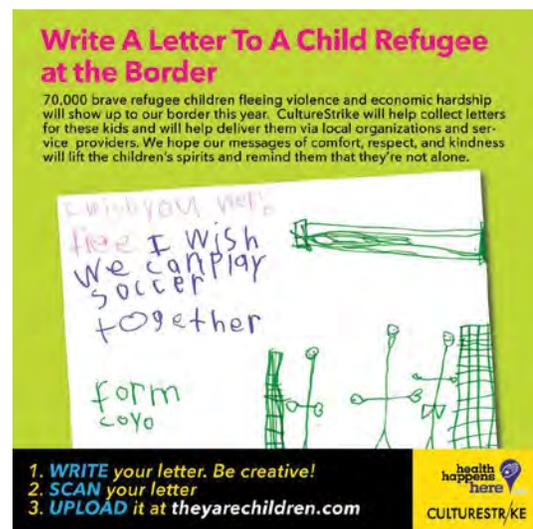
In 2014, Power California activated an organizational plan for strategic leadership and greater impact. With support from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Flexible Leadership Award, one of the key elements of this plan was learning about Cultural Strategy. In April 2014, CultureStrike's team trained up Power California's staff and leadership on their *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy* presentation. Favianna Rodriguez, Executive Director of CultureStrike, helped explain the role that artists can and should play with movement building organizations.

At that time, Power California was organizing its network partners around a statewide policy challenging racial profiling. When Power California staff members brought their proposal to the network steering committee, the committee chose not to take it up. In the midst of the protracted fight for immigration reform, some members felt that racial profiling was not a primary concern for their communities. Power California staff were taken aback by this reaction because their political analysis connected racial profiling to structural racism.

In July, they forged ahead on integrating Cultural Strategy into their work when Rodriguez led a workshop where Power California partners, staff, family members, and Board participated in The California Endowment's "They Are Children" campaign and wrote letters of encouragement to undocumented children at the border.

While Power California staff continued to build their Cultural Strategy capacity and sought to address the moment of disjuncture around the racial profiling policy, other major events were unfolding on the national stage around the social justice movement's inability to deal honestly with anti-Black racism.

The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) had begun picking up momentum and speed, while anti-immigrant rhetoric on a national level became increasingly toxic. Late in the year, Power California staff attended a national immigrant rights conference where leaders from BAJI, Black Immigration Network (BIN)—including a Power California staff member—and Black Lives Matter (BLM) staged an intervention, calling attention to the immigrant



All Free letter to undocumented children, 2014

rights sector's need to address its own anti-Black racism. Examples of anti-Black racism included some of the messaging and concessions made in the midst of fighting for immigration reform.

The call to action that Black leaders put out to the sector struck a chord with Power California staff. Internally, they started talking more honestly about anti-Blackness as well as noticing the unspoken shame, confusion, and dissonance around the issue within immigrant and refugee communities of color. Since anti-Black racism cuts deep and is rarely addressed head on, Power California's leadership decided that part of their work necessarily had to address the isolation and disconnection enabling the political wedging of immigrants, refugees, and Black people, especially African Americans.



BAJI, BIN, and BLM call to action at immigration conference, 2014

Shah reported:

“ We came back from the conference and conversations in 2014 pretty fired up. The call to action from our Black sisters to see, name, and take apart my and our own anti-Black racism was profound. How could we not hear them, honor their request, and evolve our approach and strategy? We told Favianna [Rodriguez] the story, and that's when All Free was born.”

All Free came together in 2015 through a range of conversations between CultureStrike, Power California, and BAJI. The collaboration between these three shops was unusual and also tremendously generative. Gwarada described it:

“ We learned the magic that can come from working with the nontraditional collaborators. I don't know that anyone would have ever thought of BAJI, CultureStrike, and MIV working together on this kind of a project. Yes, we were all swimming in the movement space around migration. But MIV does civic engagement, CultureStrike mobilizes artists and cultural workers, and BAJI has an explicit racial justice framing. In coming together for All Free, we opened up a new strategic space full of possibilities for transformation.”

As the three organizations combined their specific skills, communities, and approaches to create something altogether, All Free took shape as an initiative with ambitious goals and multiple interlocking components.

INITIATIVE GOALS

The goals of the All Free racial and gender justice initiative involved

- leading and framing with a vision for a more just world with explicit attention to the disruption of anti-Blackness;

- intentionally building relationships with artists and cultural workers, integrating them into projects from inception;
- elevating the voices of those most impacted, especially Black, queer, transgender, migrant, refugee, and Indigenous communities;
- generating solidarity, dignity and self-determination between impacted communities, especially through deep storytelling and relationship building; and
- illuminating the inherent inhumanity of the carceral system, specifically criminal law and immigration systems that treat communities of color as criminals, lock them away, and deport them.

COMPONENTS

All Free had five major programmatic components, which are described in this section.

Most of these components unfolded simultaneously between 2015 and 2017:

1. Multiracial, cross issue, and intergenerational convenings
2. Commissioned visual and literary art
3. Public actions and community art builds
4. Arts and culture curriculum and resources
5. An eight month long artist residency

CONVENINGS

Drawing on their primary audiences and communities, Power California and CultureStrike brought together Power California's network members, CultureStrike's community of artists and culture workers, leaders from Black led and transgender organizations working with migrants, formerly incarcerated people, and Board members.

Altogether, in March, April, August, and October 2015, four convenings took place, building upon each other, enabling All Free to gain momentum, deepen understanding, and generate buy-in from relevant stakeholders. The March convening brought together Power California staff and network partners with CultureStrike staff. In April, the second convening engaged network partners, artists, Power California Board members, and staff from BAJI, CultureStrike, and Power California. The August convening folded in leaders from Priority Africa Network and Transgender Law Center. Then, in October, the initiative publicly debuted through a major movement facing launch event.

Pictured at right, the April 2015 convening was small and intimate, bringing together staff of all three partnering organizations, Board and network members, and artists like NoViolet Bulawayo, Francis Wong, and Tanzila Ahmed. Shah remembers that although many participants had not met before, the conversations went deep pretty quickly. At this convening, Tia Oso from BAJI challenged non-Black people at the table to show up for Black lives and connect with local BLM activists in their respective locales.



Until We Are All Free – Migrant Rights meets Racial Justice Organizer and artist story sharing and art making convening in Los Angeles

Shah recalled:

“ I remember being in the room and feeling like, something’s really different. Something’s happening right now. People are sharing personal stories they had never shared before, stories of isolation and shame, and ultimately of the courage and love required to move back into wholeness.”



Top: All Free convening participant sharing his story in Los Angeles
Bottom: AAPIs Behind Bars visit to San Quentin State Prison

During the convenings, participants shared stories of incarceration, detention, and deportation, and talked about racial and gender injustice, anti-Black racism, and migration. Every convening integrated hands on, experiential arts and culture practices with CultureStrike consistently articulating the centrality of cultural organizing at the gatherings.

In June 2015, Shah and Rodriguez participated in *AAPIs [Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders] Behind Bars: Exposing the School to Prison to Deportation Pipeline*. This national convening sought to raise awareness, strengthen networks, and empower AAPI prisoners and formerly incarcerated people in the movements against mass

incarceration and deportation. Organized by Asian Prisoner Support Committee, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, and the National Education Association, this first ever convening centered on a visit to San Quentin State Prison, in collaboration with the Restoring Our Original True Selves (ROOTS) AAPI prisoner program. The visit included listening sessions with incarcerated Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, who also made cultural presentations, sharing their personal and family histories including the reclaiming of their cultural practices of dance, martial arts, poetry, meditation, and storytelling. For Shah, bearing witness to the participants’ lives was a profound experience, and learning the magnitude of systems change required for a humane, restorative and truly just law system continued to galvanize her own and Power California’s commitment to All Free.

On the following day at the AAPIs Behind Bars conference, Shah led an All Free session with participants imagining, drawing, writing, and sharing what a world without incarceration, detention, and deportation looks like. Rodriguez’s original “Love & Dignity Beyond Bars and Borders” artwork was displayed at the convening reception, and participants took home posters and postcards of the piece. Read the AAPIs Behind Bars report at bit.ly/AAPIs-behind-bars to learn more about this historic convening.

COMMISSIONED ART

VISUAL ART

In 2015, Power California brought on Robert Liu-Trujillo as an artist in residence in order to deepen its commitment to integrating art and artists into its organizing. Robert Liu-Trujillo is an illustrator and visual artist who was involved with a broader network of artists and activists through CultureStrike. During his eight month residency, Liu-Trujillo created original artwork in collaboration with youth organizers in Power California's membership base.



Art by Robert Liu-Trujillo

Liu-Trujillo shared:

“ I learned so much from them that I wish other people in my community knew about. It was just really mind blowing to see things on a small and local level, in as far as policymaking at the city, county, and community level goes. I enjoyed learning from the organizers and watching them work. It wasn't like they just researched candidates and told people to vote. They actually broke down the bills, legislations, and issues. It was powerful. Based on this, I wanted to create portraits of the young people and organizers. Power California let me do it, so I went ahead and painted a bunch of portraits.”

In partnering with youth, Liu-Trujillo utilized deep listening and storytelling in his creative process. As the election cycle ramped up in 2016, Power California's sister organization, PowerCA Action (formerly MIV Action Fund) incorporated his art into its 2016 Voter Guide. The Voter Guide featured these portraits alongside stories about why featured individuals supported or opposed propositions within All Free themes of incarceration and migration, and emphasized impact on their communities. CultureStrike and Power California also commissioned five artists to produce original visual art pieces for the initiative. The artists were Crystal Clarity, Francis Mead, Mar Pascual, Favianna Rodriguez, and Jess X Snow.



Art by Liu-Trujillo for 2016 MIV Action Fund voter guide

Each artist had a unique visual style, and at the end of the commissioning process, All Free had a set of powerful posters and prints that depicted real and aspirational images of racial and gender justice in action. The commissioning process also involved a collaborative feedback loop led by CultureStrike. In engaging with the artists, Power California's team learned much about articulating a vision while also respecting the artist's creative process and voice.

You can see images of some of the commissioned pieces at untilweareallfree.com/#art-culture-resources. Jess X Snow's graphic illustration represents many communities coming together into the shape of the All Free hummingbird, and is an invitation to all impacted communities to adapt, persist, and take flight for freedom together.



All Free Art Commission by Jess X Snow



Public reading of the Declaration of Unity, October 2015

THE DECLARATION OF UNITY

Perhaps the most central, uplifting, and galvanizing product created through the initiative is the *Until We Are All Free Declaration of Unity*, written by NoViolet Bulawayo, a Zimbabwean author. Reading the Declaration, even silently, is a profoundly moving experience. To read it aloud in community, with the voices of many impacted people and their allies weaving together, is breathtaking. It's impossible to not be moved by the words and the vision the Declaration proposes. If you haven't encountered it before, we urge you to read it on pg. 48.

Before the Declaration was publicly released in 2016, NoViolet Bulawayo wrote with input from all three organizational partners, and the finished piece went through several rounds of revision. Power California immediately began using the lyrical device at gatherings of members and partners. The overwhelming response to the Declaration has been a resonant sense of connection. People held hands as they read it together. They cried. They turned toward each other. The writing speaks to people at the level of their core emotional truths in the ways a bill or campaign platform never could.

When commissioning the Declaration, Power California committed to making the Declaration available in multiple languages to ensure that as many of its community members as possible could readily access the vision and message of the Declaration as an artistic and literary product. Within what was then Power California's primary base of Latinx, Black African, and Asian Pacific Islander immigrants and refugees, language justice continues to be a major issue. When access to appropriately translated information and materials is limited, civic engagement at all levels is also impeded. Across the electoral landscape, inequities are compounded by the use of English-only materials, and Power California did not want to replicate that cultural and political dynamic with the Declaration of Unity.

The Declaration was translated from English into Amharic, Chinese, Korean, Somali, and Spanish—five of the languages spoken within the communities included in Power California's base. Shah clarified that these translations were not literal, but rather they captured the literary qualities of NoViolet Bulawayo's writing as much as possible. "Our translations are not just in language, but also in culture," said Shah. "We needed our people to read and experience the

poetry of the Declaration in their own languages with the lyricism of the original.” Indeed, the majority of translators that Power California engaged are creative writers.

Spearheaded by CultureStrike and Power California with input from BAJI, the Declaration’s release included a comprehensive communications and press strategy. In the press release, author NoViolet Bulawayo wrote about her inspiration for the piece:

“ *In thinking about this hope of mine..., I am reminded that the Shona people of my beautiful Zimbabwean homeland answer to the greeting, ‘How are you?’ With ‘Tiripo kana muripoo’ which literally translates to, ‘I am well, if you are well.’ It means, ‘I see you; you are not invisible to me.’ It means, ‘I am interested and invested in your wellbeing.’ It means, ‘I recognize your humanity, and it is connected to mine.’ It is my hope then, that this Declaration helps to further questions around what it would mean to see and acknowledge and invest in the other(s)... so that we can all truly be ‘well.’*”

Upon release, the Declaration was co-signed in solidarity by more than a hundred signatories including artists and leaders for racial and gender justice. (To see the full list of signatories—and to sign on yourself—visit untilweareallfree.com/declaration-of-unity-english.)

To date, the Declaration continues to be a central catalyst in bringing people together at Power California’s network meetings, workshops, and boot camps. One only needs to revisit it periodically to be reminded of the future we are all dreaming of. Here is an excerpt:

“ *We call for innocent Black-Brown children who are the apple of the world’s eye. Who grow and live to the fullest because their lives are so sacred that nothing, no police weapon, will dare try to kill them before they grow...We call for nations that will take roll every morning to remind themselves of how precious we are—of how beautiful, how relevant, how important, and therefore, how they must not fail us. That will tilt unprejudiced hearts to the anthem of our being, lift us higher than flags of victory and fly us into futures the shape of true justice. Because we are here and we are not going anywhere. Because we will call and call and call until we are all free. Because we know there is more than this. Because there will be more than this.*”

ENGAGEMENT WITH ARTISTS

As All Free worked with a range of artists in various media, genres, and disciplines, the Power California team began learning more about best practices for working ethically, responsibly, and collaboratively with cultural workers toward a specific Cultural Strategy. Much of this learning paved the way for Power California to create its first internal Cultural Strategist staff position. The team also learned about how to engage in reciprocal feedback, how to follow the lead of artists, and how to trust artists' creative processes.

Power California is also doing ongoing work to learn about the constraints that come with artists working with, or within, nonprofit movement spaces. One such constraint is that artists employed for Cultural Strategy within social justice organizations are often siloed (especially when there is only one such person on staff) and disconnected from their community of practice—other artists with whom they can collaborate.

Rodriguez shared four topline tips for social justice groups who are attempting to engage collaboratively with artists:

“*First is to let the artist lead in the creative arena, so that they can bring their whole, creative selves. Second is to create a long term relationship with the artist and know that this is not just about a one-off or doing one thing. It's actually about having non-transactional relationships and beginning to incorporate artists more into the DNA of your organization. The third thing I would say is to have the ability as an organization to really follow through. Promote the artist, generate press releases, get people out to the event. And lastly, start with the artists in your neighborhood, community and circle. Think about how you are cultivating relationships with the artists in your community. If you're about the grassroots when it comes to your members, are you about the grassroots when it comes to artists?*”

For more detailed information about best practices for engaging with artists, we recommend reading “13 Key Principles for Working with Artists” in *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy* by The Culture Group.

ART BUILDS AND PUBLIC ACTIONS

The All Free initiative was built around the centrality of art making and cultural production. As a result, the project needed to integrate many opportunities for partners and community folk to create, build, draw, design, paint, perform, and act together. While the formal convenings created space for story sharing, CultureStrike and Power California staff also led several All Free art builds in California.

Sonia Guiñansaca from CultureStrike explained that the art builds were critical in exposing the labor and the process of art making to movement groups, and to demystify cultural work generally:

“*There's this assumption that artists work in isolation in their studios, and they're so removed from movement. The idea is that they're working from home, they're writing, designing, and producing alone. The first phase of understanding Cultural Strategy and cultural equity is to build an ecosystem where people are actually working together, being present with each other, witnessing their work, and being in their shoes. This is essential so that the relationships don't become transactional, and so artists are not called in just to design a flyer without further engagement. We wanted movement folks to understand what goes into an artist's labor. Banners*

often just appear at rallies, but they require a lot of effort and hours. We wanted people to understand the language and the images, for instance, what's the story behind the hummingbird? The art builds were the mechanism to bring the two ecosystems of artists and movement workers together. And the art builds created more relationships and intimacy."



Participants at All Free launch art build, October 2015

During the lead up to May Day 2015, there was an art build in Oakland, California which drew from the All Free Art Toolkit created by the CultureStrike team. The toolkit could easily be replicated by organizers for future actions. In October 2015, there was a second art build during the All Free launch event. As a key visual art piece for the launch, CultureStrike developed a beautiful giant multicolored parachute designed by Oree Originol. Led by Originol and CultureStrike, organizers, faith leaders, and artists co-created the parachute by measuring, coloring, and drawing on the parachute material. This multisector community took the parachute to an action at the Glenn Dyer Detention Center in downtown Oakland, where immigrants were detained by the sheriff based on money making bed quotas.

Fluttering against the backdrop of the jail, the enormous 24-foot parachute was a clarion call to community members to set loose their dreams, drop the ballast holding them back, and soar toward a liberated future for all. During the action, children and adults alike ran underneath and played with the parachute as community members—including formerly incarcerated people, Ohlone community leaders, and faith leaders—spoke. In front of the colorful parachute, musicians performed, and movement organizers read the Declaration. Since then, the Until We Are All Free parachute has been used at several actions and events.



All Free launch parachute, October 2015

Robert Liu-Trujillo and Jidan Terry-Koon (then MIV’s deputy director) created two banners to support the “Free the People” Caravan, a multiracial decarceration campaign led by BAJI and Priority Africa Network (PAN) in May 2015. The campaign supported the release of Kwesi Amuzu, an African asylum seeker who had been held indefinitely by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield, CA. BAJI and PAN bussed activists to the detention center where they agitated for Kwesi’s freedom. After months of sustained visibility and pressure on ICE, Kwesi was released.

The collaborative creation and proliferation of artwork helped stage the initiative in a more visible and formal way across California. Often, “protest art” or community generated art is seen as less rigorous or valuable, and doesn’t get the respect it deserves. Through All Free, the images associated with the initiative—the hummingbird, the parachute, the commissioned art pieces, the portraits, and the co-created signs and banners—had a legitimated platform for dissemination. Member artists also saw their art in action, and forged new relationships with organizers and groups across the state.

In 2016, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco, CA) hosted a public art exhibit titled *Take This Hammer: Art and Media Activism from the Bay Area*, featuring many pieces of All Free art, including banners, signs, and segments of the parachute. CultureStrike’s Jess Cook noted that All Free’s artistic production was particularly unique because the artists were intentional about using positive and visionary framing. “For instance, the banners didn’t say ‘take down the bars’ or ‘let us out of jail,’” she explained. “They said ‘Until We Are All Free.’ It wasn’t the *no* or the *anti*. It was the vision for who and where we wanted to be.”

To see more photos of All Free community events and art builds, visit the website at untilweareallfree.com/#art-culture-resources

TOOLKITS, TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

The anchoring organizations for All Free made their arts integrated resources, materials, and toolkits available to a broader movement audience as well. Their intention was not only to demonstrate what Cultural Strategy looked like in practice, but also to provide some “starter kits” for similarly positioned social justice groups who were interested in bringing arts and culture into their organizing work, while also centering the disruption of sexism, racism, xenophobia, and anti-Blackness.

To this end, Power California led the development and translation of the Racial Justice Art and Story Sessions curriculum, co-authored by Jidan Terry-Koon, Gerald Lenoir (founding director of BAJI), and Favianna Rodriguez. CultureStrike developed and produced the previously mentioned All Free Art Toolkit (available for download at bit.ly/untilweareallfree). Both these toolkits are evergreen resources that All Free generated for the movement, and they continue to be downloaded and used.

RACIAL JUSTICE ART AND STORY SESSIONS

The Racial Justice Art and Story Sessions curriculum came out of workshops on race, anti-Black racism, and policing in the U.S. Originally piloted at the October 2015 launch of All Free, the curriculum uses interactive activities, story sharing, guided visualization, and art making—as well as the Declaration of Unity—to achieve three goals:

1. Connect the past, present, and future to build a bold and inclusive vision through art, culture, and dialogue
2. Promote connections around experiences of race, gender and migration
3. Explore how racism manifests across people, communities, institutions, generations, and structures

To draw parallels between global migration and the Great Migration, which saw African Americans move north from southern states in search of better lives, the curriculum pulls in other useful political education resources, including Isabel Wilkerson’s *The Warmth of Other Suns*. At the beginning of 2016, Power California staff incorporated this curriculum into their Movement Building Electoral Organizing Boot Camps.

FAIR PAY! LESS GREED!



BEYOND BARS

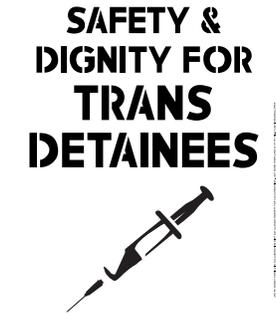


BEYOND BORDERS

**PEOPLE!
Over
Profit**



**PRISON ISN'T THE
END OF MY STORY**



Stencil templates, available for download at bit.ly/untilweareallfree

ALL FREE ART TOOLKIT

Developed in 2015 for May Day and World Refugee Day actions, the All Free Art Toolkit includes comprehensive step by step instructions for creating stencils and banners for public actions, protests, events, and gatherings. The Toolkit consists of a wide range of template images that people can download and cut out to make stencils and banners.

CultureStrike's Guiñansaca described the purpose of the toolkit:

“ We wanted to invite movement groups into a clearer understanding of what the labor of art and culture making involves, and we thought a good way to do this is through a toolkit that they can use. At the convening in Los Angeles, we identified a gap that the art kit could fill. Many activists wanted to engage with Cultural Strategy and had the appetite, but they didn't know how to go about it. So CultureStrike's stencil and banner toolkit focused on DIY art production, and we brought these instructions and resources to the art builds. Several movement groups came to the art builds. In the future, they can continue to use the art and banners they made.”

Access to these images is important because across the field, people were searching for images that represented queer and transgender communities, youth of color, refugees, and undocumented immigrants—not just because political actions, rallies, and protest are the lifeblood of a civically engaged community. The stencil and banner toolkit makes it possible for organizers and community leaders across the nation to be inclusive in their art making and their political actions.

Power California has incorporated these art and cultural resources and practices, the toolkits, the Declaration, and the commissioned art pieces into its annual Movement Building Electoral Organizing Boot Camp, as pictured below in 2016. The boot camps lead with Cultural Strategy and include training in political education and campaign skills for their base.

To download the toolkit, visit the All Free website at untilweareallfree.com

In retrospect, the conceptualization, development, design, and implementation of All Free happened quite quickly. Within a year, all three organizations came together to co-create and launch a multipronged initiative that involved artists and deeply centered shared values and worldview.

During that time, Power California completed a remarkable amount of work that cut across internal programs and communications infrastructure, as well as external campaigns, partnerships, and network partner engagements. The expedited 2015 timeline was in part because 2016 was a pivotal election year, and as an electoral shop, Power California's staff and resources would be fully extended during election season. Because of that incentive to launch All Free quickly, the bulk of convenings and program development happened within only six months.

It is important to note that Power California's Board and leadership chose to go ahead with All Free in 2015—despite not having dedicated funds for the initiative. “We were willing and made something quite big happen in the lead up to a pivotal and deeply consequential election for the very communities we sought to lift through All Free,” said Gwarada.

For an easy to understand, visual, and illustrated timeline of the All Free initiative, flip to the back of this report to Appendix A. You'll find an initiative timeline from 2014 to 2017 listing major activities and outputs.



Participants at Los Angeles MIV boot camp, 2016

WHAT'S BLOOMING? IMPACTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS FROM MULTIYEAR CULTURAL STRATEGIES

During the course of the past five years, and especially during the active run of All Free from 2014 to 2016, Power California's team learned enormously valuable lessons. The organization underwent transformation in multiple areas of its work, *internally* in organizational strategy, leadership, structure, and communications, as well as *externally* in its organizing, partner relations, and campaigns. Together, these impacts substantially shifted Power California's positionality and value in the fields of youth organizing, immigrant and refugee rights, civic engagement, and racial and gender justice. These results demonstrate what's possible when Cultural Strategy is intentionally and meaningfully integrated into movement work.

It's worthwhile to note that Power California's transformation—including the strategic union of Mobilize the Immigrant Vote and YVote—was informed in part by the experience of co-creating Until We Are All Free. CultureStrike led on Cultural Strategy and trained up Power California's team in understanding how best to work with artists of color within an organizing context and within the confines of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit institution. BAJI showed Power California's team how best to center the stories and experiences of disproportionately impacted Black migrants and Black women in the initiative and, by extension, in their broader work. BAJI also connected initiative partners to high profile campaigns and events that enabled them to show up for Black lives, including through the "Free Kwesi" campaign and the "Free the People" caravan. Power California led on engagement of movement people, including its insistence on a multilingual and intergenerational approach to storytelling and stakeholder engagement.



Artists at All Free launch action, October 2015

The following five key outcomes were made possible at Power California through the All Free initiative.

1. INTEGRATED ART AND CULTURE TO PROGRESS FROM HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND DISCONNECTION TO HEALING AND INTERDEPENDENCE

In reflecting on the story sessions, convenings, art builds, and workshops that took place through All Free, Shah recalled how art making and storytelling opened up incredibly generative spaces for connection and healing.

“ What was really powerful about the story sessions was that people shared things they hadn't talked about for decades or with anyone not immediate family. They shared stories that, they had never spoken out loud, despite having worked in this sector for so long. People started sharing from a place of trauma and shame. All Free created the space for them to realize that we are not alone in our familial experiences of incarceration, detention, deportation. We came together to draw strength and interconnection from those hidden stories.”

Rather than being ancillary, art and culture was in the DNA of All Free, as many efforts for arts integration within organizing often can be. From the Declaration of Unity to Liu-Trujillo's work as a resident artist, to CultureStrike led art builds, to commissioned art pieces and story sessions, art amplified stories and meaning. Through cultural activities, people made sense of the issues together. A shared community narrative began to emerge lifting connection, healing, and solidarity to challenge isolation, trauma, and the neglect of Black women, transgender and queer immigrants, and Black immigrants and refugees.

2. CLARIFIED THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND THE NECESSITY OF AN “INSIDE OUT” CULTURAL STRATEGY WITHIN GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING AND MOVEMENT BUILDING

Through All Free, Power California’s team came to understand Cultural Strategy as a way to lift up communities into engaged, inspired, and visionary action. They saw the value in real time cultural work opening up increased opportunities for investment and action. They crystalized these learnings into their institutional strategy, and wove them into their movement building work in what they call an “inside out” approach.

The “inside” part of Power California’s approach involves building network partners’ understanding of Cultural Strategy while also supporting integration of art and culture into the partners’ work. For instance, Pacita Rudder, Power California Cultural Strategist, established the *Cultural Strategy Ambassadors Program*, and collaborated with the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society to train up culture workers and staff at partner organizations in the areas of cultural organizing and Cultural Strategy. The idea is to build a critical mass of network partners versed in and ready to create and execute a large scale Cultural Strategy for the long run. The “outside” part of Power California’s work includes projects and productions geared toward individuals and organizations outside of their network. To this end, Rudder produced Power California’s story-based podcast *Homegrown Power* on Cultural Strategy and organizing. In addition, their Cultural Strategies Director Rufaro Gwarada is co-founder of Wakanda Dream Lab, a collective fan driven project that bridges the worlds of Black fandom and #Blacktivism for Black Liberation.

Network partner organizations who were involved in All Free report an increased degree of comfort and skill in integrating an arts and cultural lens into their grassroots organizing work. Abdullahi from PANA said:

“ Before All Free, we had no Cultural Strategy at all at PANA. We did have formalized civic engagement and organizing infrastructure, but it was dry. Then through All Free, we got to work with the artist in residence [Robert Liu-Trujillo] during our network meetings, and he really showed us how to take art, storytelling and culture back to our organization. Our youth organizing fellow who was resourced through MIV (now Power California) really understood it, and he completely reshaped our youth engagement to include Cultural Strategy. For example, we went from five youth at meetings to more than 100 youth coming to events. We had open mic nights, and events where youth captured their experiences and struggles with civic engagement through photography, painting, poetry, and spoken word. We also used the toolkits provided to shift our engagement with youth.”

Abdullahi also shared that in the years since All Free, her team has begun to elevate the importance of using arts and culture to center their communities’ stories. In 2017, they took the lessons they learned from All Free to create an Advocacy Academy for youth. The Advocacy Academy is a six to nine week program that trains PANA’s youth organizers in political education and activism—and now includes a lens on arts and culture. PANA’s team has continued to experiment with ways to tie Cultural Strategy into power building for their base and to offer arts integrated events for youth members.

Abdullahi commented:

“ It was originally challenging to communicate the vision of why Cultural Strategy was important for our communities, but then we started clarifying that if we didn't tell our own stories on our own terms and use art to center our experiences, then someone else was going to tell our stories for us. This resonated with people, but it took a while to build buy-in around this with staff and youth members, and it required a perspective shift.”

Sammy Gutierrez, youth organizer at Filipino Advocates for Justice who has been doing art builds around gun violence, gender rights, gentrification, and immigration, said:

“ We've learned a lot about Cultural Strategy from Power California and folded it into our youth leadership work. We regularly take youth to gallery and mural tours, art builds, and local artists' events. What resonates most with our young people is that 'culture' needs to shift and change before the 'political' shifts and changes. Exploring and expressing through art is a way to process what our communities struggle with and what we personally struggle with, and then we can connect it to civic engagement and the change we envision for our futures.”



Musician Francis Wong supported by Power CA staff member Suguey Hernandez, October 2015

Across the nonprofit social justice movement field, organizing, policymaking, and cultural work are fairly siloed, and it's hard to find successful examples of Cultural Strategy being integrated into grassroots organizing. Power California's journey shows us that not only is it possible, it's also feasible to lead with a culture lens in organizing without just "sprinkling in art" or working transactionally.

In looking back on the multiyear initiative, CultureStrike's Rodriguez explained that a critical impact was the shift in the centrality of Cultural Strategy to Power California's work:

“ *Power California learned how to view the work differently through All Free. As an artist, I view the world in a certain way. I'm about changing what you see. I'm about possibility and about futurism. Those mindsets and feelings helped Power California engage a spectrum of practice, and to move out of reactionary work into visionary work that imagines the world we want to build. The big success was that the organization was transformed, and that the desire to engage in Cultural Strategy became a part of where Power California wanted to go.”*

3. EXPLICITLY PRIORITIZED THE DISRUPTION OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM WITHIN MOVEMENT SPACES

As the national social movement sector was pushed by Black Lives Matter to contend with the entrenched anti-Black racism within social justice spaces, Power California attempted to bring that long overdue conversation to their partners through engaging them in art making, story sharing and cultural activities. All Free was the vehicle that enlivened this effort. It took painful and heartbreaking histories and the realities of anti-Black racism and brought communities across California together around a healing space of connection, solidarity, and purpose. Its success relied on the fact that it engaged a multisensory Cultural Strategy to uplift Black liberation and leadership in ways that other traditional organizing campaigns would not have been able to implement.



BAJI banner art by Jidan Terry-Koon

4. STRENGTHENED RELATIONSHIPS AND POLITICAL EDUCATION WITH MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Since All Free prioritized storytelling and shared cultural experiences, it also created more meaningful and authentic relationships between Power California and its network partners, which in turn helped with shaping analysis and language within their network. One example of this influence was with the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA). Shah explained that prior to All Free, Power California typically just used language referring to immigrants, but not refugees. While there are some overlaps in experiences between immigrants and refugee communities in California, there are numerous differences. At the April 2015 convening for All Free, Ramla Sahid, PANA's Executive Director explained that the sector excluded refugees by calling itself 'immigrant rights.' Since then, Power California has expanded their frame to include refugees, contributing to increased inclusion in their base.

Shah projected that the strengthened tenor of these relations and the increase in trust and leadership across the network will pay off in the long term, as their base continues to engage in political fights.

“ In civic engagement and in immigrant and refugee rights, we've often seen compromises made or deals cut at the expense of some folks in our communities who are not a part of the first circle of engagement. We understand that compromises have to be made, but there's a whole different way of negotiating and navigating hard decisions when we are in deep relationship with each other. Then it becomes about moving toward a shared future that leaves doors open for forthcoming fights, instead of leaving some of our people, and often the same people, behind.”

In the years since All Free, Power California's base has experienced more responsive and trustful relationships, as well as stronger political analysis about anti-Blackness within immigrant and refugee communities. They've also clarified understanding of cultural organizing for civic engagement and immigrant rights.



Participant at All Free launch action, October 2015

5. SPURRED TRANSFORMATIVE SHIFTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, LEADERSHIP, AND STRATEGY

As the lessons from the All Free initiative began to percolate at Power California, and as they slowly began to influence the culture and practices of the organization, Shah and Gwarada realized that the successful scaling, reach, and impact of their civic engagement work would rely on their ability to deeply integrate cultural strategies into their shop.

To support this effort, Power California partnered with Art/Work Practice to help them operationalize, implement, and align Cultural Strategy within all aspects of the organization. This included documenting and capturing their journey toward cultural organizing, coaching the leadership team, and training up staff.

Power California also initiated some concrete shifts in their organizational structure and staffing plans in order to leverage cultural work more fully. As mentioned earlier, the organization created a position for a Cultural Strategist, seeking an artist who was also well-versed in community organizing. Cultural work is hard work: It requires strategic visioning and creative skills—and it's also crucial to integrate artists who thrive in community-based and socially engaged practice art. Without two dedicated staff roles on its team, Power California's cultural work could easily have fallen by the wayside, become ancillary or transactional to its seasonal electoral work, or worse, continued to operate only in external programs and campaigns without being diffused or embedded internally.

In addition to changes in staffing, All Free also spurred an enormous organizational change. In the summer of 2018, Mobilize the Immigrant Vote came together with YVote forming Power California. Shah said:

“ In the preliminary conversations that MIV and YVote had about merging and around leveraging our strategic compass [see bit.ly/MSC-MEV-strategic-compass for more information], a core part was tied to Cultural Strategy. Both shops had a shared commitment to a long term cultural shift, integrating arts and culture, and a longer time horizon and vision—rather than just campaigns and tactics. We came together because our political work is possible through the seeding of our shared cultural work.”

Integrating a cultural lens at Power California caused reorientations and shifts to happen in organizational positioning and stance, structure, and staffing, as well as leadership and strategy. “There was so much transformation because of All Free in the organization,” said Shah. “It also meant we had to reflect and sit with what that meant for leadership, for me, for our Board, and our steering committee, which is the leadership body of our network. We had to figure out who was in leadership, who we were lifting up, and how we were committing to doing so.”

In the next section, we reflect on some challenges that surfaced through Power California's amplified focus on Cultural Strategy. While the challenges are not comprehensive and may not translate to other social justice, issue-based organizing or advocacy organizations, we think they are instructive nonetheless. And we hope they illustrate some of the challenges in the field of Cultural Strategy for social movements, generally.

LESSONS AND CHALLENGES IN CULTURAL STRATEGY

Predictably, many challenges arose along the way as the Power California team synthesized and implemented learnings from All Free into a more comprehensive Cultural Strategy for their civic engagement work. Six institutional challenges for their cultural work are captured here, although other emergent challenges continue to surface as the organization grapples with embedding and operationalizing Cultural Strategy into their daily work.

1. MAKING THE CASE FOR CULTURAL WORK

At every step, Power California had to make a case for the inclusion and centrality of cultural work within civic engagement and organizing spaces. Given that Power California had not historically been a shop that explicitly led with culture and it was not considered a leader in Cultural Strategy spaces, cultural work is still a new enterprise for the team. They now explicitly stake their claim, hold their space, and share their experiences with the broader sector.

One of the most significant ways that this dynamic presents itself is when encountering outcome oriented systems within a nonprofit context. Most nonprofits, including those that are social justice movement organizations, have communications programs that are modeled after priorities of storytelling, narrative building, dissemination, framing and messaging, message discipline, and rapid response. Cultural Strategies can sometimes be at odds with these mechanisms; not because they are inherently opposites, but rather because cultural change happens slowly, over many years, and involves shifts in consciousness and experiential learning. Accordingly these shifts are hard to measure by standard quantifiable success metrics.

Guiñansaca recalled that All Free raised dissonant expectations between cultural workers and organizers around outcomes and actions:

“ I remember at the Los Angeles convening hearing a lot of questions like *What’s the next step here? What’s the action or the petition to sign? And we had to push back on the movement groups to say ‘No, the goals are about increasing awareness and engagement and shifting narrative and culture.’ Making cultural change is not about generating benchmarks in the way a signed petition does.*”

For Power California, these tensions have meant deeper engagement with questions about roles, expectations, and responsibilities of its teams, and surfacing assumptions about what types of storytelling, artistic production, and cultural work are valued internally—even when they don’t fit into a readily packaged illustration or marketed products for dissemination.

2. LIMITED SPACES FOR VISIONING AND CREATIVITY WITHIN GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

When asked to describe a significant challenge with All Free, Gwarada answered, “We learned an important lesson: As organizers we have a hard time imagining the future we’re building toward. It’s not that we cannot imagine, it’s that the nature of the work constrains imagination and forces us to artificially split our creative and political selves.”

Grassroots organizing spaces are not naturally geared toward artistic or arts-based creative work, or conducive to exploratory, imaginative cultural work. As a whole, the organizing sector is under resourced, which often means organizers of all types, including youth organizers within Power California’s network, are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. Besides draining the capacity of organizers through energy intensive campaigns, the social justice sector also artificially separates the organizer from the artist, forcing people to leave their creative and whole selves at the door when they show up to organize. Through All Free, Power California and CultureStrike intentionally muddled that split.

Additionally, organizing groups frequently see art making as functional rather than liberatory or exploratory. Organizers and leaders often try to “plug and play” art products or art making into their pre-existing campaign infrastructure or organizational programs and processes.

Rodriguez explained this tension as both a problem with perception and value of the power of art in movement spaces, as well as a fieldwide infrastructure problem in organizing.



Participant at Los Angeles MIV boot camp, 2016

“ I can do a Migration Is Beautiful campaign, and work with many different artists, museums, galleries, and even people in Hollywood—people who really love the concept and want to just make stories about it—but if I take that idea to an immigrant rights organization, perhaps even MIV in the past, they’re going to ask, ‘What does it have to do with the campaigns we’re running?’ They’re also going to tell the artist what to create.

“The current infrastructure emphasizes a didactic approach and, frankly, doesn’t move people far enough. Policy and organizing folks are going one way, and artists and cultural workers are going another way because the movement work is not getting sufficient traction or visibility. Until We Are All Free provided an opportunity for MIV, network partners, and other participating organizations to learn new ways of engaging with artists and cultural work.”

Rudder, who first encountered All Free as staff at one of Power California’s network partner organizations, explained:

“ All Free showed us that electoral work can be creative and imaginative, and it can include art and culture. They’re not separate things. Those two sides of myself are not split, and I can only do my

best work when I combine my politics and my art. In fact, combining those two is powerful and necessary.”

Cultural Strategy is a powerful way to bring the complexity, humanity and creativity of impacted people together. Gwarada reminded us that the only way to shift our organizing work is to tap into that creativity. Through the course of All Free, Power California’s team did learn however that the split and rupture *within* movement spaces is a major challenge. All across the field, organizers are disincentivized from bringing their creative, visionary, artistic and rebellious work to the job – which limits their organizing, and furthermore, discourages artists from joining movement work.

3. CLARIFYING ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS BETWEEN PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Since All Free was a large initiative and collaboration between CultureStrike, Power California, and BAJI, it involved many moving parts and a broad range of stakeholders. It was a heavy lift in workload: Coordination and planning were required at all stages, and each organization had less than 10 staff members at the time. The Declaration of Unity alone went through many months of revisions and drafts with input from multiple partners along the way.

One challenge experienced across the collaborative had to do with clarity and shared understanding around roles, expectations, and ownership of elements of the initiative. This could be resolved by generating memorandums of understanding (MOUs) from the beginning, as well as establishing a project management team comprised of staff with dedicated time to work on the initiative.

All three organizations worked hard to ensure a collaborative decision making process. As often happens, time and workloads impeded consistent collaboration, so some portions of the initiative experienced heavier collaboration while others were lifted by a single organization.

Parity in financial resources, energy, and time commitment was a challenge, as was the ability to keep the initiative and its virtual presence alive through its website, curriculum, and art. In part, this is reflective of limited capacity and under resourcing of cross organizational Cultural Strategy work across the movement sector.

4. BRINGING CULTURAL STRATEGY DOWN FROM THE CLOUDS TO THE GROUND

Cultural Strategy is a contested space right now. While many people are theorizing about it, the groups and networks executing Cultural Strategy on the ground are both under resourced and siloed. As Power California discovers ways to engage with Cultural Strategy, it is imperative for staff and partners to talk about it concretely and integrate it robustly into their day to day operations.

Rudder commented:

“ *It feels like a lot of the Cultural Strategy conversations that are happening are very lofty and intellectual. They’re kind of removed from everyday life. When we talk to organizers about integrating art and culture into their work, it helps them realize that this isn’t something that’s removed from us, from our organizing work.”*

Abullahi explained that organizers also have challenges integrating Cultural Strategy into their work:

“*Cultural Strategy involves truly adapting to the cultural needs and contexts of specific communities. For example, the Somali community is very oral. Stories are shared orally; they’re not written down as much. For some refugee communities, they use knitting and weaving, and talk about understanding stories through patterns. For organizers, it means that we really have to utilize art and culture that resonates with and speaks to specific communities.*”



All Free launch action pledge, October 2015

There are also many operational challenges for movement organizations. Since Cultural Strategy is broad and visionary, operating within a long timeframe, questions about progress, integration, alignment, and work planning arise within each team and department.

Shah shared that the particular nature of Power California’s work around civic engagement proves to be difficult as well:

“*There’s an ongoing tension around doing civic engagement with Cultural Strategy. Just the rhythm and the very tactical focus and timeline around election season, for instance: How do we hold both? We are committed to building our base of 500,000 young people who will turn out 5% of California’s winning electorate in 2024, and we think the path to get to these and even bigger impacts is rooted in Culture Strategy. We have to do both, and do them well, at the same time.*”

A related challenge for All Free is that the platform, resources, toolkit, art, and Declaration of Unity are essentially evergreen—at least until we eradicate anti-Black racism, patriarchy, and xenophobia. To continually push out these products and frameworks on an electoral cycle is taxing. Gwarada clarified:

“*Looking back to All Free in 2015 and 2016, it now feels like the initiative was before its time. Since the 2016 election, there’s been family separation at the border, escalating deportations, new policies of exclusion with explicit grounding in racism, attacks on the rights of LGBTQ+ community, and unchecked sexism. The list goes on. It becomes hard to hold the initiative expansively and loosely, while also overlaying our communications channels in order to effectively deploy the content and re-engage at pivotal political moments on a news cycle.*”

Beyond translating Cultural Strategy for an organizing audience and partners within the Power California network, there are also issues with transmuting cultural work into the footprint of their electoral and civic engagement work generally. One issue, for instance, is that after the merger, Power California pivoted toward engaging and mobilizing young people of color. Power California's mission involves activating youth and their families, so their Cultural Strategies have to be necessarily intergenerational. Their team collaborates to experiment with best ways to weave arts and cultural work into their programs and campaigns. They do so while also holding the complexities of designing Cultural Strategies that engage the Power California base across race, age, gender, class, migration status, and geographies that will unfold over the next seven to 10 years and beyond.

5. STRATEGIZING AND PLANNING IN AN EMERGENT SPACE



Young participant at MIV arts led tax reform action, July 2015

Cultural Strategy is conducive to emergence, social transformation, and adaptation. When culture shifts, people transform. The way they work and relate to each other changes, and the institutional parameters of their organizational lives change as well. Predicting the outcomes, therefore, is challenging. Cultural change is about generating radical transformations that we currently believe are not politically viable. In the realm of Cultural Strategy, success can be envisioned and projected, but not simply as exact numbers of votes, click-throughs, downloads, or poll results. *Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer* explains that cultural change work expands the boundaries of the Overton Window and describes the four Cs—the principles of clarity,

compartmentalization, closure, and catharsis—that are inherently incompatible with Cultural Strategy. (Read more at bit.ly/culturalstrategyprimer.)

This is understandably challenging for all stakeholders and for any movement organization that operates within the nonprofit industrial complex and is required to generate impact measurements and outcomes for its work. Power California predictably struggled with generating an emergent space of possibility and audacious vision without fully knowing what that future reality will look like.

In this space of uncertainty and unpredictable outcomes, Shah led her team confidently through All Free. She said:

“ We are suffering from a severe hunger for radical, liberatory political and cultural—and likely also spiritual—maturation. To restore ourselves and our movement, we need sustained practices that build our individual and collective muscles to generate spaces of expansiveness and to reconnect with our own and each other's humanity, so that we're not constrained by what we've done, what is familiar, or what is politically viable. The potential for the most transformation can come when we don't have set outcomes.”

Power California's leadership in the All Free initiative was particularly bold, and enhanced the organization's ability to lean into the emergence of Cultural Strategy. Doing social movement work with a cultural lens requires courage and conviction to run with it, even when the outcomes are unknown. The field is innovating ways to understand, measure, and predict impacts and outcomes for cultural change work. But, because culture is necessarily so vast and so amorphous, standard evaluation tools and methodologies are proving to be inadequate. For now, Power California understands that an ecosystem of cultural organizers, leaders, organizations, and funders who are comfortable building the new in the midst of complexity is essential to broad cultural change making.

6. INADEQUATE FUNDING AND RESOURCING

Until We Are All Free received sparse funding from the start, and Power California moved forward with the initiative despite limited resources. Barring the contributions and funding from a couple of early institutional funders, specifically the Akonadi Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy, Power California struggled to get funders to sign on and resource the initiative. The then five-person staff team at Power California undertook their first ever crowdfunding campaign to support All Free, reaching out to their families and friends.

Gwarada said:

“ We ran into a lot of problems because at that time, most of our funders provided voter engagement funds. All Free was about more than just voter engagement, so it didn't fit the mold. One funder told us to pull it completely from our proposal because they didn't see how it related to civic engagement work. Then later, after All Free launched and was getting traction and visibility, the same funder said we could include it in our next proposal because it was related to the general operating support they gave us. Altogether, it felt like we had to dance for our money. Funders were learning about Cultural Strategy at the same time that we were implementing it on the ground, and we struggled to reflect that in our fundraising. In fact, some funders came back to us two years later and said, 'Now you can talk about Cultural Strategy,' after we'd already activated it.”

A major obstacle with resourcing Cultural Strategy work, especially cultural work within organizing and civic engagement, is that philanthropy as a sector overemphasizes concrete, measurable outcomes and documented metrics of success. Simultaneously, it is behind the curve in understanding and resourcing cultural strategies.

“We were trying to explain that transformation was underway,” said Shah, “but the challenge is that specific outcomes were harder to prove in a time bound way.”

This tension will continue to arise in the nonprofit industry for the foreseeable future. Philanthropists and movement leaders alike are hard pressed to identify what outcomes cultural change can produce, in part because we don't know what liberation looks like yet. As the conjoined fields of philanthropy and nonprofits experiment with Cultural Strategy, it is imperative for bold, visionary, and committed funders to invest in Cultural Strategies on the ground.

EMERGENT QUESTIONS

It has now been five years since the original conception and launch of the groundbreaking All Free initiative. In that time, much has changed in the institutional life of Power California, including its merger into a new, bigger organization scaling its statewide civic engagement work. The leaders who engaged with All Free at Power California learned many concrete lessons, and generated specific impacts and shifts as a result of this collaborative initiative. They also grapple with a set of open and unanswered questions that are still alive in the field of Cultural Strategy today.

Many of these emergent questions do not have singular or definitive answers, and are likely to spark and inspire even more questions. We believe that the messy and unpredictable nature of cultural work makes it challenging to assign definitive answers and causality. In *Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer*, you can read more about how the values of clarity and closure are inherently incompatible with Cultural Strategy. Local context, relationships, conditions, and sociopolitical changes large and small influence Cultural Strategies on the ground. Culture itself is constantly in flux. As a result, leaders wishing to engage with Cultural Strategies must generate adaptations and experiments—trial balloons, if you will—and prepare for deep, iterative learning, rather than expecting definitive or predictable solutions.

The following open questions encourage the Power California team to seek community and collaboration in search of better, more innovative Cultural Strategies. We share these outstanding questions for the movement, and encourage readers to consider them in the context of their own work:

- As more movement spaces and organizations engage artists to work on staff, how can organizations continue to hold space for these artists to
 - » have protected time and space for their creative practice, and
 - » be in community with other creatives?
- What does it take to sustain collaborative Cultural Strategies for the long term?
- Can one organization meaningfully engage Cultural Strategies? Are partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration essential to Cultural Strategy?
- How do you internally institutionalize a “culture” for valuing cultural work? Beyond intellectually valuing cultural work, how do you operationally ready an organization to experiment with and refine Cultural Strategies over time?
- Given the limitations of traditional evaluation tools in the realm of cultural work, what are innovative and effective indicators, outcomes, and impacts of Cultural Strategy over time?

**“...WE ARE REMINDED
THAT LIBERATORY,
VISIONARY LEAPS
TOWARD JUSTICE
REQUIRE US TO
TRANSFORM OURSELVES.
CULTURAL STRATEGY,
WHEN DONE WELL,
*CHANGES US FROM
THE INSIDE OUT.*”**

CONCLUSION

This is a retrospective story of the journey of Until We Are All Free from the perspective of Power California. It is a story that captures All Free's conception and design, its history, its multi-issue, multi-audience, and cross-sectoral collaboration with CultureStrike and BAJI, as well as its goals, impacts, lessons, and challenges. Reviewing the breadth and depth of this ambitious, visionary, and future facing initiative reminds us that big, inspired moves for our liberation are not only possible, they are necessary. It shows us that strategically centering the stories, cultures, and voices of those most impacted is essential, and that "intersectionality in practice" is possible. It also demonstrates that the disruption of anti-Blackness in thought and practice within our movements is eminently possible.

The story of Until We Are All Free is ultimately a story of transformative possibilities. Rooted in Cultural Strategy, this thought provoking initiative brought a diverse community of organizers, artists, and movement leaders together to dream, humanize, connect, build and co-create toward a shared future of dignity and self-determination for all. In revisiting the journey of Power California within the All Free collaborative, we are reminded that liberatory, visionary leaps toward justice require us to transform ourselves. Cultural Strategy, when done well, *changes us from the inside out*. In its goal to transform culture at the societal level, it helps us transform our organizations at all levels, from strategy to programs to relationships.

The mandate of the All Free initiative calls to us across the reaches of time and place to tap into the power of art and culture, and to build the expansive, free, just world we deserve. We hope the telling of this story of All Free calls to you too, and that it provides a set of useful examples and lessons for your own journey toward Cultural Strategy for racial and gender justice.

In the words of the Until We Are All Free Declaration of Unity:

“*The call is a prayer to the human in each one of us; all our names make it holy. The call is a song that will save us. The call is a balm to heal our bruised humanity. The call is truth's mirror; it dares us to look into our hearts. The call is a bridge over borders that never belonged to the earth to begin with. The call is light to swallow the darkness we've been fighting against so we can finally sit in bright justice. The call is a funeral poem, it weeps for the precious bodies murdered by the police and border agents. The call is a map into destiny, it charts the free world we want to live and love in. The call is against silence; it will ring from Baltimore to Bangladesh. In Ferguson. In Johannesburg. Around Mexico. El Salvador. All over the Americas. In Folsom State Prison. On every street. From Syria to Kosovo. In China and Eritrea. In Cambodia and Haiti. In Karnes County, Texas. In Zimbabwe. At checkpoints. Outside your backyard.*

“And we call in every language, feel our itching throats shake the whole wide world with voices that will not cease until we are heard. Until they honor the living song of our wronged names, our silenced names, all our names. Until the wars on our humanity come to an end. We are not going anywhere, we will stand here and all over and call until all chains are broken. And they take down the fence and dismantle the bars. And erase the lines and open the borders. And shatter the ceiling. And justice comes to our neighborhoods. And the world at last guarantees our living.

“Because you are not free until all of us are free.”

To sign on to the Declaration of Unity, and to learn more, please visit untilweareallfree.com.

To connect with Power California, email imagine@powercalifornia.org.

To reach Art/Work Practice, email nayantara@artworkpractice.com.



All Free Art Commission by Crystal Clarity

APPENDICES

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UNTIL WE ARE ALL FREE (2014 - 2017)

2014

APRIL

Artist & Cultural Strategist Favianna Rodriguez
MIV staff training: *Making Waves*
- *Cultural Strategy 101* (Oakland)

JULY

MIV Electoral Organizing Boot Camp:
Rodriguez leads MIV partners, staff, and
Board to write letters and make art for
detained migrant children (Los Angeles)

DECEMBER

BAJI, BIN, & BLM Call to Action
at Immigration Conference

2015

MARCH

MIV partners CultureStrike exploration:
Immigrant Rights meets Black Lives (Oakland)

APRIL

Until We Are All Free - Migrant Rights meets
Racial Justice: Organizer and artist
story sharing and art making (Los Angeles)

MAY

All Free Stencil & Banner Toolkit
and How-To videos released

JUNE

AAPIs Behind Bars: Exposing the School
to Prison to Deportation Pipeline
conference by Asian Prisoner Support
Committee and Southeast Asia Resource
Action Center (San Quentin State Prison)
Facilitated *All Free* session at conference

AUGUST

Cross sector organizers and artists
All Free launch planning meeting

OCTOBER

All Free launch with community art build and
action at Glen Dyer Detention Center (Oakland)

2016

JUNE

Robert Liu-Trujillo engaged as artist in residence

SEPTEMBER

All Free Declaration of Unity and Racial Justice
Art & Story Sessions curriculum released

OCTOBER

General Service Foundation 2016
Lani Shaw Movement Fund Award
*"Until We Are All Free is a seed of a beautiful idea,
and the seed of a powerful, visionary collaboration."*

NOVEMBER

All Free original artwork by Liu-Trujillo, stories, and
messages lifted up in MIV Action Fund Voter Guide

2017

APRIL

Launch of *Vision for a Strong California*
co-created by MIV and immigrants rights leaders
in the Rockwood Fellowship for a New California
Art by Robert Liu-Trujillo

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL STRATEGY

PULLOUT

1

ARTS INTEGRATION

Culture change is impossible without artists and their art. As organizations work toward arts integration, it's important to consider some key questions: Are artists/creatives part of your visioning and planning process right from the beginning? Are you checking for input, ideation, co-creation and advisement from artists along each step of your process? Do you have processes or mechanisms for iteratively engaging artists as stakeholders and as community members? Have you budgeted to pay artists fairly for their time and talent? The right kind of artist is crucial on this last point; well-established and famous artists might help elevate your organization's profile and visibility, but it's far more important to ethically engage artists who are connected to communities you work with - and ideally who are from those communities.

2

VISIONS, VALUES AND WORLDVIEW

Cultural Strategy allows us to

be forward facing, to imagine and say what we are for and to envision the future and the values that will get us there. Integral to this work is being able to look back and learn from the past in order to inform our future. And, as we articulate our vision, we must connect it to a clear worldview as well, e.g. Migration is Beautiful and the ambition to do away with borders.

3

POWER SHIFTS

When working in service of liberation, Cultural Strategy catalyzes the transformation of oppressive power structures and hierarchies. It focuses on shifting and redistributing power by populating stories, narratives, art, cultural tropes, practices and ideas that actively disrupt dominant power structures. Cultural strategists understand the holistic ecosystem that supports broad and scalable change, and must work in concert with their allies in the fields of organizing, media, direct action, policy, education, electoral action, narrative change, pop culture, social entrepreneurship, coalition building, and elsewhere.

4

NARRATIVE SHIFTS

Narrative shift is essential to Cultural Strategy, and skillful cultural strategists and workers should understand narrative design. This involves being able to explicitly name dominant frames, identify storylines that advance or disrupt frames, and craft compelling stories that carry the messages for their cause. Narrative is however, one major part of culture change - not all of it. Jeff Chang, Liz Manne, and Erin Potts describe the relationship between stories, narrative, and culture as follows:

Stories are like stars.
Individual, shiny and bright, they move and inspire us.

Narratives (and narrative systems) are a collection of stories in the same way that constellations are a collection of stars.

Stories can be connected together into narratives, like stars can be connected together into constellations, making deeper sense and meaning.

A culture, then, is like a galaxy.
Ever expanding and evolving, a culture is comprised, in part, of narratives as the galaxy is comprised, in part, of constellations. The galaxy is where stars and constellations live—it is their home.

¹ Chang, Jeff, Liz Manne, and Erin Potts. "Conversation about Cultural Strategy." https://medium.com/@erin_potts/a-conversation-about-cultural-strategy-9e2a28802160.



DISCOVERY VERSUS DISSEMINATION

Artistic or creative expression and cultural work are central to social change; they allow us to feel at the emotional, physical, and spiritual level. Cultural Strategy focuses on creating conditions for discovery, experiential learning and artistic immersion — versus simply focusing on ideas, stories, or message dissemination.



PREFIGURATION

Prefiguration is the ability to enact and manifest future realities as though they already exist now. This entails practicing living our desired future in the present, e.g. trying out leadership structures that are more inclusive and responsive to team and community needs.



ISSUE DEVELOPMENT AND DEFINITION

Cultural Strategies define and outline issues clearly, shift dominant paradigms, connect audiences, and fundamentally set the terms of the debate. Cultural Strategy is foundational to movement building because in defining an issue, it identifies who the stakeholders and impacted people are, and draws

connections between siloed groups in support of structural and systemic change. It helps unite audiences across issues, particularly those wedge issues that are used to divide communities.



NEW NORMALS

Cultural Strategy allows interrogation of questions like: What's 'normal'? Who belongs, who is acceptable? What are the values that underlie the perception of normal? Why? These questions excavate untruths and challenge us to change what's 'normal' when it diminishes, devalues, or leaves anyone behind - especially those pushed to the margins.



STICKINESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

For something to stick and be sustainable, it must be a long-term endeavor. Freedom and liberation and the requisite cultural changes to get us there are not won in a short time frame or via a campaign or policy change. Cultural Strategy requires stamina and adaptability for the long haul. In the fight for LBGTQI+ rights, marriage equality won after a sustained push over at least a decade. And there's more to overcome, e.g. the lack of centering of the experiences of Black and Brown people in the community, as well as the experiences of transgender and

gender non-conforming people.

Stickiness and sustainability require: investment in infrastructure, e.g. full compensation and permanent positions for artists and culture workers, and the fostering of deep, durable relationships.



ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION

Many movement people are mounting beautiful, inspiring culture change campaigns or projects often with dissemination plans that allow them to reach far and wide. However, this is not Cultural Strategy — these are external, visible, constituent or member-facing outputs of cultural work, e.g. performances, murals, literature, art events, banners and more. This type of arts integration is a major *component* of Cultural Strategy; however, there's also need for a less sexy, less visible but just as critical component of Cultural Strategy, which is internal organizational change.

Effective Cultural Strategy must be understood, integrated and truly rooted in an organization's operations and practices. How do the values, vision, and change outcomes demonstrated externally manifest internally?



UNTIL WE ARE ALL FREE

Migrant Rights Meets Racial Justice Declaration of Unity

By NoViolet Bulawayo

Calling the border crossers, footsteps mourning lost homelands. Calling beautiful black men, beating hearts stilled by police bullets. Calling incarcerated mothers, milk souring behind bars. Calling the forgotten bodies, seeping sorrow into the Mediterranean. Calling indigenous peoples, displaced in their own lands. Calling produce pickers, lungs ravaged by pesticides. Calling the “alien.” Calling black and brown children being groomed for jail in neglected schools. Calling their brothers, fathers and uncles, choking the throats of greedy prisons. Calling the landscapers, the maids, the cooks, the nannies, living on throbbing feet. Calling the “undocumented.” Calling the oppressed, waiting in vain for justice. Calling murdered transgender sisters, their precious names unsung. Calling the citizens of no nation. Calling the brilliant blood spilled by border agents. Calling the homeless, dreaming of home. Calling disabled communities that are too often forgotten. Calling sweatshop workers drenched in rivers of sweat. Calling the disenfranchised. Calling mothers languishing in welfare lines. Calling deported parents, hearts breaking for separated children. Calling the weary tillers of the land who don’t get to eat the grain. Calling the “illegals.” Calling the evacuees waiting in refugee camps. Calling brown bodies, packed like sardines in detention centers. Calling the poor, waiting for the future with posters that read, “What About Us?”

The call is a prayer to the human in each one of us; all our names make it holy. The call is a song that will save us. The call is a balm to heal our bruised humanity. The call is truth’s mirror; it dares us to look into our hearts. The call is a bridge over borders that never belonged to the earth to begin with. The call is light to swallow the darkness we’ve been fighting against so we can finally sit in bright justice. The call is a funeral poem, it weeps for the precious bodies murdered by the police and border agents. The call is a map into destiny, it charts the free world we want to live and love in. The call is against silence; it will ring from Baltimore to Bangladesh. In Ferguson. In Johannesburg. Around Mexico. El Salvador. All over the Americas. In Folsom State Prison. On every street. From Syria to Kosovo. In China and Eritrea. In Cambodia and Haiti. In Karnes County, Texas. At checkpoints. Outside your backyard.

And we call in every language, feel our itching throats shake the whole wide world with voices that will not cease until we are heard. Until they honor the living song of our wronged names, our silenced names, all our names. Until the wars on our humanity come to an end. We are not going anywhere, we will stand here and all over and call until all chains are broken. And they take down the fence and dismantle the bars. And erase the lines and open the borders. And shatter the ceiling. And justice comes to our neighborhoods. And the world at last guarantees our living.

Because you are not free until all of us are free.

And we won’t stop calling until our voices rearrange the world into a place that looks like home, we will call. From far from deep from near from up from down from under, we will call. From home from exile from everywhere, we will call. From knocking on doors, from street protests, from marching for justice, we will call. Because we want to see black and brown bodies living in freedom, untouched by police bullets and border agents who hunt our bodies like wild game.

Because we want to wear our skins like prized jewels through doors that do not slam in our faces. Into quality schools. Into good jobs. Into safe neighborhoods. Into better services. Into opportunity. Into streets where we are not profiled. Into dialogues in which we are heard. Into places for which those before us marched and fought and died as lynched ancestors wept.

We call for innocent black-brown children who are the apple of the world's eye. Who grow and live to the fullest because their lives are so sacred that nothing, no police weapon, will dare try to kill them before they grow. Who strive and win because they have food, shelter, healthcare, education, chances, love, beauty and everything that holds them to the sun. Because their proud parents are not behind bars but at home being parents. Because they live in a world that does not fight them but fights for them.

Because oppression stops here, Because dignity starts here.

We call for countries that have the conscience to kiss the hard callouses of the hands and feet that daily bleed for them, that walk hard roads for them, that sacrifice for them, that feed them, that tend to them, that hold them together. We call for countries that will give in turn to those who give themselves because they know the language of gratitude.

We call for countries that will shepherd us from scorching fields and construction sites and restaurant kitchens and dirty toilets and school corridors and corporate floors and from every nook and cranny from which we bend and groan and sweat. We call for countries that will thank us with ground on which to place our aching feet. And on that ground, the police and border agents will know to offer us bread and shade. We call for countries that will not insult us, that will treat us with dignity for what we've lost and given, that know that without our shoulders, they would not stand as tall.

Because a person is a person because of other people.

We call for checkpoints that will not say, *Where are you from? Go back home. You are not wanted here.* That will turn on the lights and call us by name. We call for countries that will look at us with their hearts and refuse to watch us die. That will rescue us from the water and meet us with balm for every wound.

We call for nations that will take roll every morning to remind themselves of how precious we are—of how beautiful, how relevant, how important, and therefore, how they must not fail us. That will tilt unprejudiced hearts to the anthem of our being, lift us higher than flags of victory and fly us into futures the shape of true justice. Because we are here and we are not going anywhere. Because we will call and call and call until we are all free. Because we know there is more than this. Because there will be more than this.

APPENDIX D: CULTURAL STRATEGY DISCUSSION GUIDE

This two-part documentation series includes this comprehensive case study of the All Free Initiative, as well as *Cultural Strategy: An Introduction and Primer*—an introductory resource that describes the characteristics, pitfalls, and possibilities of Cultural Strategy.

Here are a few Cultural Strategy discussion questions to help guide your learning. We recommend reading both the case study and the primer in order to better understand the field and practice of Cultural Strategy, as well as to discover concrete takeaways from the multiyear All Free Initiative.

After reading, you can review these questions by yourself. Or better yet, start a reading group with peers or allies, and dig into discussions together!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did you find interesting or provocative about the All Free initiative and its integration of Cultural Strategy?
2. How is culture work—the labor of producing creative, cultural experiences through traditions and practices like food, ritual, storytelling, play, art making, dance, music and more—currently valued in your organization or community? How are cultural practices resourced and supported?
3. In reviewing the 10 key characteristics of Cultural Strategy (Appendix B), which characteristic(s) could be more easily practiced in your organization or community? Why?
4. In reviewing the 10 key characteristics of Cultural Strategy, which characteristic(s) would be challenging to integrate or practice in your organization or community? Why?
5. How do you currently engage with artists, cultural workers, storytellers and producers in your community? What inequities, assumptions and power dynamics are at play?
6. Which opportunities are available for you to engage arts and culture-based strategies? What can you try as a cultural intervention in your work?
7. What policies or practices would need to change in your organization or community in order to try out some Cultural Strategy interventions?
8. Who needs to be cultivated or organized at your institution or in your community in order to encourage the prioritization of Cultural Strategy?
9. How are you currently interrupting anti-Black racism in your organization or community? How can arts or culture-based interventions open space to engage with topics of anti-Black racism?
10. What questions or ideas are emerging for you about Cultural Strategy? Who can you connect with to explore and deepen your learning?

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Power California is a statewide multi-racial civic engagement organization that convenes on-the-ground community partners in urban, suburban and rural communities throughout California. Together we are building a movement of young people as informed, regular voters to create an equitable and inclusive state for all.

POWERCALIFORNIA.ORG