

re-imagining systems transformation leadership



network spotlights

Together, we're cultivating a stronger future. Across the Cradle to Career Network, leaders like Lexy Roberts are re-imagining ways of transforming local systems to cultivate a stronger future so Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and youth living in poverty will thrive. Read the full interview below to learn more about Lexy's insights and reflections on this year's convening theme and lessons in leadership coming out of the Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian Collaborative.

strivetogether 2021 cradle to career national convening

We're cultivating a stronger future. Across the Cradle to Career Network, roots stretch deep and broad — connecting individuals, organizations and communities that are measurably and irreversibly seeding change. These roots are made of the experiences, stories and strength of our communities. They grow and spread through our shared commitment to an equitable future, the data we use to make better decisions and the collective expertise of working across sectors that leads to results. This fall, we will come together to learn from the histories of our communities and our movement; those who have come before us and the new leaders emerging in this moment. These roots feed our determination to rise: to transform the systems of this country so that Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and youth living in poverty will thrive. Grounded in this unshakeable vision, we will find new ways of working together across communities and across the nation so that our progress and conviction are clear. We will not back down. We are rooted together, we grow together and we rise together.

convening reflections

1.

What about this year's theme "Roots to Rise" resonates with you?



"At Alamance Achieves, the way we are being rooted in these themes and tending to our community soil is facilitating spaces that are centered in capacity building. Our commitments, investments and spaces we hold are about building capacity of leaders within the community and providing the support, whether providing racial equity training, data research training, community organizing information and more. We want to ensure our access to institutional resources are directly invested into the community and the way that community wants to see those investments.

The line [in StriveTogether's equity statement, *we must also breakdown and also rebuild the policies and power structures that fail youth of color*] fills me with so many emotions of excitement, uncertainty and urgency. The invitation to rebuild to me is where all the communal and relationship work meets the freedom: dreaming/visioning. That part of the process is what fills my dreams and should be the part that scares us because of what we know is at stake. Even still, it also energizes us to know that there is a new way of being at which we all thrive. This to me is the goal to create movements that can hold work that support and sustain the rebuilding of our systems."

– Lexy Roberts, Community Engagement
Manager at [Alamance Achieves](#)

-Connect with Lexy at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexis-roberts1/>

black, indigenous, latinx and asian collaborative

StriveTogether network members who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian used this peer-learning community to explore:

- (1) What are the possibilities when we redefine who leads and the qualities needed to lead systems transformation work?
- (2) How do we create the liberated spaces for us to advance community work and community care?
- (3) How can we lead from a place of authenticity that celebrates racial difference but does not perpetuate racial harm?

From the collective wisdom of network members who joined this session, several insights and lessons emerged on new and visionary ways to lead systems transformation work:

Remember to uplift and pull into our leadership competencies and skills true to self

- Remember to fellowship! Fellowship is a way of keeping others in our wheelhouse of care
- Fellowship can be a culturally responsive practice that buffers against historical, systemic racialized traumas that exist
- Reconnect back to traditions of storytelling
- Acknowledge the roots of cultural practices; for example, mindfulness practices have roots in Buddhism and Eastern traditions. This is what moves us from mindfulness as a colorblind practice, to an anti-racist practice where we honor, respect the ancestors, the elders and the collective wisdom that birth that practice that we all enjoy
- Make appreciation a part of our daily practice. The current status quo is extracting culture without the recognition; Our goal is to move toward inclusion that acknowledges the talents and brilliance of POC and their contribution to the work
- Systems have conditioned people of color to lead in ways that are inauthentic; remember to bring to the forefront of leadership practices that honor all aspects of one's identity

Re-imagine Power

- Though positional power is valued the most in our system, there are other forms of power that we need to recognize (i.e. community power, informal power, etc.)
- Continue to explore how to stay true to cultural beliefs and values while also being seen and valued in power and authority as a strong leader
- Sharing power in white led organizations is critical. Creating the space of trust and psychological safety is foundational, rumbling skills to have the hard conversation about racialized diversity at the leadership level is a must
- System must prove to individuals that it is safe to push back and stand up
- Organizations must create metrics to measure upward communication on a scale
- Need to be center in the voices of the people we serve—that power is different!
- Folks of color are not allowed to access a full range of emotions in leadership like white leaders. Reclaiming emotions as a POC leader is essential work
- Weaponized white fragility and tears derail racial equity work, making it hard for leaders of color to navigate
- Family and community power are essential—let's get out of the individual focus to community perpetuity

black, indigenous, latinx and asian collaborative reflections

2.

In service to community work and care, what does a space of liberation look like, feel like when you lead from other forms of power that exist for you? What new skills and competencies true to self are you bringing to the forefront of your leadership?



“It is about embodying the work. I will not ask anyone to do something I have not done myself whether that is as granular as a “check in” question to as meta as reflecting on their racialized identity or going out into the community to advocate for policy that increases education opportunity.

Embodying the work pushes those who are leading to take ego out of the work which creates better space to support those they are leading alongside. I truly believe that embodying the work is to display commitment to relationship building especially with the history and legacy of this country where from its inception this country has broken treaties, created discriminatory policies, and institutionalized inequitable practices which have disenfranchised communities of color resulting in distrust. And to begin the journey of reconciliation, we have to display the commitment to building movements alongside each other rather than on behalf of someone.

Everyone's an expert in their experience, as a facilitator I see my role in creating space for folks to own their experience and be empowered to build alongside one another. It is a beautiful process once someone sees their power in owning their experience and how that creates the soil for new learnings to come, and I believe that those new soils are where the new systems begin to take form.

The other skill I bring to the work is understanding that so much of this work is in our bodies. We desire to be data driven so we must acknowledge the data and information we get on a day-to-day basis from our bodies. The information from our bodies shape how we interact with the world around us. Oppressive systems have often stripped us of that body connection, so working alongside a community to create space which centers the body experience has provided opportunities to support each other in non-traditional ways.

We are situated around so much power it just isn't always visible through our systems which is why I believe storytelling is essential in making that power visible. One of my favorite authors bell hooks writes, “The heart of justice is truth telling, seeing ourselves and the world the way it is rather than the way we want it to be. More than ever before we, as a society, need to renew a commitment to truth telling.” So yielding the power of storytelling is where the work for [equity] begins.”

– Lexy Roberts, Community Engagement Manager at [Alamance Achieves](https://www.alamanceachieves.com/)
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“To begin the journey of reconciliation we have to display the commitment to building movements alongside each other rather than on behalf of someone. We must remember that this work is deeply personal, emotional, spiritual and communal.”