



Healing Justice Funder Convening *Summary Report*

Overview

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice held a Healing Justice Funder Convening on Wednesday, May 16, 2019 at the New York Open Center. The convening brought together funders with healing justice practitioners, organizers, and advocates to strategize how we can bolster the resilience, power and sustainability of our movements.

60 participants from 30 philanthropic institutions gathered for the day, alongside 15 organizers and healing practitioners. Funder participants represented a range of public foundations, private foundations and funder affinity groups working in multiple areas, including gender, racial and economic justice, HIV/AIDS, health and LGBTQ rights. The list of participating organizations is at the end of this report.

The convening took place following the launch of Astraea's report, [*Healing Justice: Building Power, Transforming Movements*](#), which opens the door to the multitude of ways healing justice can be understood and recommends how funders can most effectively support this work. The report and convening came out of the need we saw emerge after the 2016 U.S. elections, when many donors wanted to start funding healing justice as a way to support grantee partners in a time of heightened violence and backlash but did not have a lot of context or knowledge about this body of work. We wanted to center the voices of organizers and practitioners and invite our colleagues in philanthropy to lean into their expertise and visions.

Astraea's Healing Justice Framework

Astraea understands healing justice as resiliency and survival practices that center the collective safety and wellbeing of communities. By supporting healing justice, we hope to see:

- Sustainability and safety practices to address the impact of violence and trauma integrated into organizing strategies

- Cultural and holistic practices relevant to the community, including ancestral-based traditions, integrated into organizing strategies
- Strengthened leadership and organizing skills that explore safety, security and well-being as integral to movement-building and collective survival
- Development of collective care strategies to address burnout, PTSD, trauma, and exhaustion
- Increased knowledge and use of holistic security practices, including, physical and digital security
- Deeper engagement in organizational analysis and political education to address the pathologization of LGBTQI people and to improve access to dignified care
- Expanded safety and wellbeing strategies designed and led by and for communities who are marginalized, objectified, and policed by state institutions

Goals of the Convening

- Build a shared understanding of healing justice as an organizing strategy that can build the power and sustainability of movements
- Strengthen relationships among funders committed to deepening support for healing justice work in all its forms
- Identify how funders can most effectively support healing justice work, grounded in the needs, priorities and self-determination of movements

Facilitator's Welcome

Our convening facilitator was Adaku Utah, a healer, liberation educator and organizer, and performance ritual artist committed to healing and liberation within oppressed communities. Adaku is the founder of Harriet's Apothecary and currently serves as the Movement Building Leadership Manager with the National Network for Abortion Funds.

Adaku opened the convening with a warm welcome to all in the space and offerings of gratitude to the many people who enabled us to be together that day, including the care workers who came together to make the physical space and the ancestors and transcestors who lived healing justice work before us and enabled our very existence. She thanked the queer and trans folks in Alcatraz who created healing circle in prisons; the folks in the Amazon blocking the destruction of our lands; those in the migrant caravan, figuring out how to get care back and forth to communities; and more. She built a beautiful altar and explained its many components.

Having a healing justice practitioner hold the day was critical for shifting power in the room, creating the conditions for reflective and honest dialogue, and allowing conversations on healing justice to be led and shaped by those who practice and embody the framework.

Community Invitations

As she offered a list of community invitations to participants, Adaku invited everyone to reflect on their participation in the day to come: "Notice which of these you're really practicing and on which ones you have work to do. There is always more to do as we move away from harm and towards care and responsibility for each other." The invitations included: Use I statements; Move Up, Move Up; Be aware of power in the room (it is always present); Listen with your body; Jargon Giraffe (ask questions if you don't understand by making a giraffe symbol); and Take care of your needs, each other and the space.

Morning Panel: Healing Justice Lineages from Past to Now

The morning of the convening centered on a content-rich panel, organized as a “Speakers in the Round,” that aimed to ground participants in the historic lineages of healing justice. Panelists, including the early architects of healing justice as well as those using it in movement today, shared examples of the ways in which healing justice has been held in many movements and communities as healing, resilience and survival strategies and made a powerful case for how it can strengthen organizing and movement work.

Moderator **Shalini Eddens** of Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights introduced the panel as a “remix,” naming that it would bring the history of healing justice work together with some of its present manifestations in organizing in the U.S., while outlining the trajectory of healing justice as a framework.

Cara Page of Kindred Collective (and Program Consultant/former Director of Programs at Astraea) started the panelists off, sharing how healing justice was born at Kindred Collective as a response to “the policing and pathologizing of bodies and genetic material, the criminalizing of our medicines, our practices, our healers, and our birth workers as an extension of state control.” Cara led the participants through Kindred’s journey to forming intersectional spaces that make healing central to liberation. Eventually, these activists took the healing justice framework to begin a political conversation about healing at the US Social Forums in Detroit in 2007 and 2010.

Susan Raffo of the People’s Movement Center (and author of our Healing Justice report) highlighted several of the ‘elders’ who had done the work of shaping the healing justice framework long before it was called that, including Dr. Joy de Gruy and Aurora Levins Morales, sharing that these women were and are immersed in their own cultural histories, through conversations happening around kitchen tables and memorial sites and all kinds of gatherings.

Adela Nieves Martinez of Healing By Choice! (and our convening meeting planner) asserted that organizers coming together in Detroit at the Social Forum was a deeply political act, given that Detroit is one of the most segregated places in the country, where communities do not know of each other’s work and practices. Going into that space, organizers and healers made a commitment not to extract from one another, but rather to learn and exchange. She shared that it was the first time organizers had access to politicized healing spaces that were just for them, and were free. For her, it was the first time seeing Western practitioners and traditional healers working together, while also speaking about what was happening on the ground in Detroit.

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Julia Bennett of the Audre Lorde Project and Third Root Community Health Center reminded participants that organizers of her generation have lived through a lot of trauma - she was active during the 1950s Civil Rights Movement, and was a part of the Black Panther Party - while also carrying the

traumas of their ancestors. She said, “The traumas we experience everyday have to find a place to live.” In 2008, with others, she co-created the Third Root Community Health Center in Brooklyn as a way to address some of that trauma, particularly within underserved populations. She described it as a place where every single body can find healing.

Mark-Anthony Johnson of Resilient Strategies shared how he came into healing justice work during his time working on Right of Return efforts in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. He was struck by the ways in which Black people’s lives were under attack, as the systems built to sustain life had been demolished and were not being addressed by the state with any urgency. Fighting back was about much more than organizing in that moment and he saw the ways in which healing traditions could really care for and support a community during a time of crisis, so he decided to become trained in acupuncture himself. Mark-Anthony spoke of healing work as abolition: “Black healers, Black spirit workers, Black herbalists on plantations -- the function of Black healing in that context was abolition.” He also shared how healing justice is a critical tool to build power. In his estimation, without using a healing justice framework that engaged currently and formerly incarcerated people and their families, Dignity and Power Now would not have won their fight to stop the construction of a \$3.5 billion dollar jail in Los Angeles and the reallocation of money into mental health diversion programs and community resources.

Finally, **Hanifah Rios** of Project South shared why healing justice being rooted in the U.S. South is so critical. She explained that the South has a long history of being a battleground for political issues and a testing ground for racism and violence. When racist and inhumane policies are allowed to pass in the South, they are then farmed out to the rest of the U.S. and to the world. The landscape of the South is steeped in generational poverty, natural disasters and racial violence. On the flip-side, it is also in the South where Black women who have lived under these racist policies and laws have convened to resist systemic racism. Black women are developing healing and life-affirming strategies for our communities most impacted by injustice. Project South aims to use the history of resistance in the Black Radical Tradition to build practices that do not create more harm. Often in this work, moving the needle feels impossible, and we can often cause more harm, even when not intended. She said, “Healing justice is not about building capacity to do more, but creating the capacity to live full healthy lives.”

Afternoon Panel: Visioning Healing Justice - Movements and Philanthropy

The afternoon panel was a generative dialogue between activists and donors about how donors can effectively and sustainably fund healing justice. Organizers shared how they are engaging with healing justice and recommendations for how funders can best partner with them. Funders shared experiences, questions, and recommendations they have for themselves and their peers. The panel was a refreshingly honest – and frequently funny! – conversation about the struggles, tensions, and opportunities to build authentic relationships in the context of unequal power dynamics between funders and grantees. It underscored just how important relationships and trust are to funding this work well.

Moderator **Reverend Jen Bailey** of Faith Matters Network framed the panel around story, asking the organizers to share a story about a time philanthropy has been effective in creating platforms for healing justice, and funders to share an ‘aha!’ moment about the role their institution could play in supporting healing justice.

Guadalupe Chavez shared how Dignity and Power Now received funding last year from a couple of individual donors who had asked what they needed to continue their work. The funding covered rapid

response for some of the families the organization works with, which meant providing reiki, counseling, and acupuncture as they were facing crisis. Guadalupe was able to see the ways in which being able to provide healing practices to families can really build their capacity to live and thrive, which was necessary for them to engage in movement work, and it would not have been possible to do so without funders asking that question.

Cynthia Lin of the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) shared how Groundswell Fund offered them funding for restorative work after the 2016 election. It was a small pot of money but it went far, and there was no expectation for what they needed to tell them to get it or after they gave it – Groundswell just trusted them. Cynthia also shared that NNAF has been gifted thought partnership with funders, particularly while they are in a multi-year process of transformation from direct service to cultural change and organizing and to build and sustain a network of abortion funds in alignment with and practice of shared values. They appreciate having strong and trusting partnerships with their funders as they continue their evolution, including deepening their understanding and practice around oppression and healing.

Erica Woodland of the National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network shared that they got their very first grant from Astraea before he really even knew they were an organization. He said, “At Astraea, I’ve found there is a deep listening and understanding of the spirit of this work, so there’s an aspect of healing in my relationships with the people there. I want to uplift the personal work it takes for funders to show up in this work. Both Mónica and Brenda (my past and current program officers) essentially said, ‘I see you and I see the work you’re bringing into this world.’ The opportunity for me to be in spaces like this and to interface with funders and people in power is because they saw us.” Erica also emphasized that getting general operating support is super helpful, especially for small organizations; it allows them room to be innovative, to make their own work plans and set their own goals, and to be reflective in their reports when they do or don’t meet them.

Brenda Salas Neves of Astraea shared the experience of receiving funding to organize a healing justice grantee partner convening in Detroit, which was an amazing generative space for QTPOC organizers. She and the Astraea team then asked themselves the questions of ‘What’s next?’ How do we fund all these different types of work? Do we want depth or breadth? What is most important to fund?’ As a public foundation, other funders look to Astraea for strategies, so there can be a pressure to know the answer. Brenda reflected that “the ‘aha!’ moment was realizing we could slow down. We talk about giving space to grantee partners to slow down, but that should apply to us as well.” Astraea decided to give grants to a diverse cohort of grantees who were already out there doing the work, helping move them it forward. It was a journey of figuring out how to support the movements, but also how to support Astraea’s staff to be sustainable.

Claribel Vidal shared how Ford Foundation launched a fund to support youth-led and youth-centered groups that were embedding healing practices into their organizing models. After the 2016 election, the grantee partners of the US Civic Engagement & Government (CEG) portfolio began raising concerns about burn-out, trauma and increased suicide rates within their social justice movements. The CEG team first began supporting healing justice in an ad hoc manner. If grantee partners needed the support, the team was happy to provide resources. It was through that initial support that the CEG team realized that healing practices have always existed within social justice movements. In order to holistically support youth leaders and sustain the movements they’re leading the CEG team needed to dive deeper and be more intentional about supporting healing. They identified three principles that would guide their resourcing of healing justice: grantee-responsive, grantee-informed, and experimentation and learning.

The key idea was for grantee partners to be able to decide what they needed and to acknowledge the work had existed long before Ford began funding in the space. To launch the fund, CEG partnered with a longstanding grantee, the Movement Strategy Center in Oakland. This arrangement allowed for a vehicle to create space for learning and experimentation outside of the constraints of a private foundation.

Mónica Enríquez-Enríquez of the Foundation for a Just Society (FJS) shared a moment of meeting with an indigenous feminist organization in Guatemala that centers their work around healing of Indigenous Mayan women in the context of the Guatemalan genocide. Their former director invited those at the meeting to think about the words and language we use – e.g. fight, struggle - when we're talking about activism and organizing, and to be aware of the energy that the words we choose carry. The way we talk about healing justice matters. Mónica spoke to the care that went into Astraea's report, the care for the words and phrasing, especially in the recommendations to funders, and recommended that participants look to those for 'aha!' moments that we can all weave into next steps for funding this work.

Funder Strategy Breakout Sessions

Following the afternoon panel, the convening moved from learning to strategy with breakout groups on how to support and sustain healing justice work. Participants were encouraged to think about what they were called to do as funders and what needs to shift in their institutional practices in order to show up better for movements. The four groups were: 1) Funding ideas for healing justice; 2) How to make the case for healing justice in your institution; 3) How to practice trauma-informed philanthropy; and 4) How to build a long-term response to generational trauma.

1. Funding ideas for healing justice

This group spent a lot of time asking questions and thinking about the importance of relationships. There was a specific call by the group not to invent a new collaborative fund or to fund a new specific initiative called healing justice in their institutions. Instead the group felt that committing to collaborate with each other and to embed the work within their broader portfolios was the most effective way to fund healing justice. There was an agreement that no matter the size or scope of the institution, if healing justice is an imperative to all movement work, then it is justifiable for all progressive philanthropic docket.

2. How to make the case for healing justice in your institution

This group discussed the need to advocate for better resourcing for healing justice, as well as for bringing healing justice frameworks into their own institutions. One of the major points that emerged is that the language of healing justice needs to be made accessible within philanthropic institutions where it is either a very new term or one that is not completely understood. Relatedly, the group discussed the fact that the term 'healing justice' is very rooted in the U.S. domestic context and needs to be linked to terms and framings such as holistic and integrated security from a feminist frame for example, which is more widely understood in international funding contexts. In order to create a better understanding of healing justice and how to implement it within an institution, the group underscored the need to ground it as critical to how movements work, and then frame it as necessary to change culture and policies. They added that it would be important to begin an educational journey for the board and leadership to help them understand why they need to invest in that approach. The group also collectively brainstormed and called on each other for support around how to ensure that healing justice frames other funding streams within their organizations, particularly when healing justice is not its own stream or issue area.

3. How to practice trauma-informed philanthropy

This group delved into specific ways that funders can practice philanthropy that acknowledges and is responsive to the trauma that movements, organizers, and those working in philanthropy experience. There was consensus in the group that, at the very least, in order to respect the energy and time of grantee partners, funders must be clear with what they need and respect the effort and time that goes into completing grant applications. The group looked at Third Wave Fund's trauma-informed grantmaking process as a model, discussing the idea that if healing justice is a political act that works to interrupt capitalism as a cultural system, grantmaking informed by these practices must do the same. Third Wave Fund's model tries to embody healing justice with practices such as working with other rapid response funders so organizations don't have to go through the same processes to apply to multiple funders, thereby re-living the trauma of telling their stories over and over again. They also pay people for the labor it takes to apply for grants or partake in site visits. Additionally, the group discussed the limitations of rapid response funding models when activists are burnt out and in need of flexible general operating resources across the board.

Finally, the group named that people working in philanthropy who come from movement may also have been harmed by movements in certain ways. Therefore, funders must be cognizant of the secondary trauma that can come from having to hear about activists and organizers experiences, and work to alter those practices.

4. How to build a long-term response to generational trauma

This group discussed how long-term responses to generational trauma can and are being built both individually and collectively, and how funders specifically can and should take accountability for the harm they cause. The group highlighted that there needs to be a critical shift in philanthropy, an understanding that not everything can be 'fixed' through funding, but rather that there need to be changes of hearts and minds and rejuvenation within the field, and a critical understanding and willingness to speak about the fact that trauma is perpetuated within philanthropic organizations. For this group, this means a philanthropic institution examining its own leadership, how that leadership treats its people, and what kind of environment is fostered within that institution. Another conversation this group had was around the need for philanthropic institutions to begin acknowledging where money and resources come from, and take responsibility to think about how redistribution will happen in cases where funder money has been taken from Indigenous groups, contributed to slavery, and/or is tied up in environmental degradation.

Embodying the Principles of Healing Justice

One of the learnings of Astraea's report is, "Funders can't fund this work without practicing it as well." We see many of the same issues of burnout, exhaustion, and trauma within our own philanthropic institutions, including Astraea, and therefore it is critical that we too commit ourselves to ensuring the sustainability and wellbeing of our people.

To model this and to create a space where healing justice was not just talked about but embodied, the convening offered participants access to healing practices from incredible community-based practitioners: Julia Bennett of Third Root Community Health Center provided acupuncture, Shelley Nicole of Sovereign Hands provided Reiki, Griffen Jeffries of the People's Movement Center and Shanequa

McCrimmon from Third Root Community Health Center provided massages, and Heidi Lopez of Sana Sana shared herbs and tinctures. These healing practices offered participants quiet moments to breathe and integrate in the midst of a rich, full, and sometimes heavy day. In between panels, embodied reflective practices were offered by Adaku Utah and Susan Raffo, inviting participants to be in their bodies and to really sit with the experiences and learnings of the day.

Because healing justice is about nourishing our bodies and minds in every way, breakfast and lunch were also thoughtfully planned and prepared by local chefs [Ora Wise](#) and [Chinchakriya Un](#). The chefs used fresh, bright locally-sourced ingredients, offered meals that were balanced, nutritious, and delicious, and shared cultural story alongside them.

Next Steps

The convening closed with evaluations, an offering from Astraea to share the report with participants' institutions and to use it to influence the field, and an invitation to participants to continue the conversation via the Healing Justice Strategy Group, which is part of Funders for Justice and the Neighborhood Funders Group. The Healing Justice Strategy Group is co-chaired by Astraea's Shaena Johnson and Third Wave Fund's Joy Messinger. Shaena reminded us, "Healing justice is not new; it's been around forever. It's something that philanthropy is just starting to catch up with." We have many opportunities as funders to partner with movement organizers to deepen our support for this powerful tool for our collective liberation.

Annex 1: Participating Organizations

AIDS United
Andrus Family Fund
Arcus Foundation
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Auburn Seminary
Borealis Philanthropy
Butler Family Fund
Dignity and Power Now
Faith Matters Network
Ford Foundation
Foundation for a Just Society
Frontline Wellness Network
Funders Concerned About AIDS
Funders for LGBTQ Issues
Global Philanthropy Project
Grantmakers for Southern Progress
Harriet's Apothecary
Healing by Choice!
Ms. Foundation for Women
Nathan Cummings Foundation
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network
Native Americans in Philanthropy
Neighborhood Funders Group
NEO Philanthropy
NoVo Foundation
Open Society Foundations
People's Movement Center
Project South
Potlatch Fund
Sana Sana
Solidaire
Sovereign Hands Wellness
Susan T. Buffett Foundation
The Overbrook Foundation
Third Root Community Health Center
Third Wave Fund
Trans Justice Funding Project
Trinity Church Wall Street
Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
Youth Engagement Fund