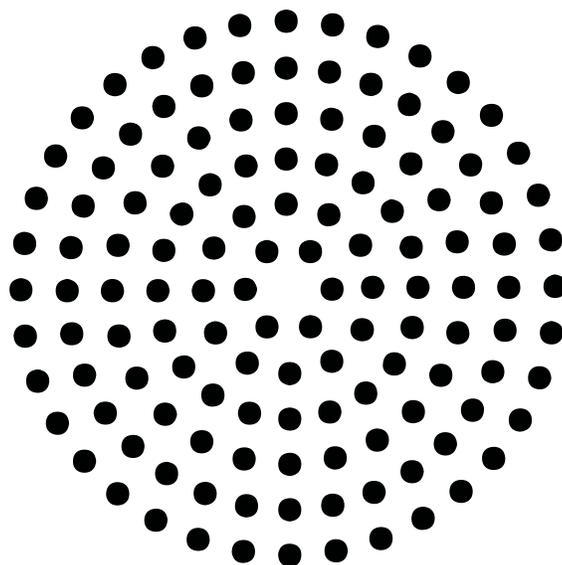


**A THEORY OF CHANGE**

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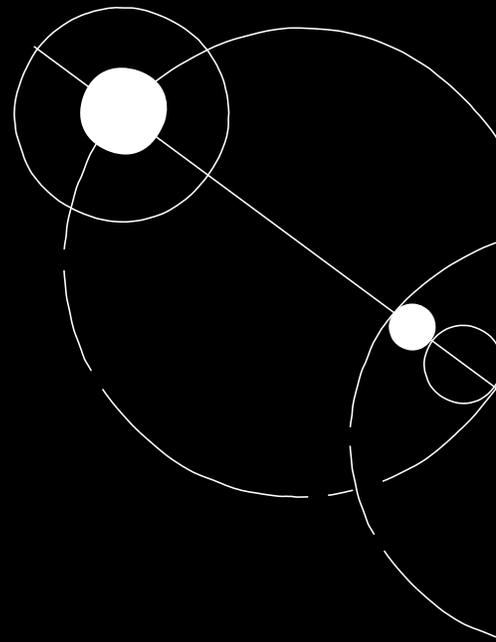
<b>3</b>	<b>A CRISIS OF THOUGHT</b>
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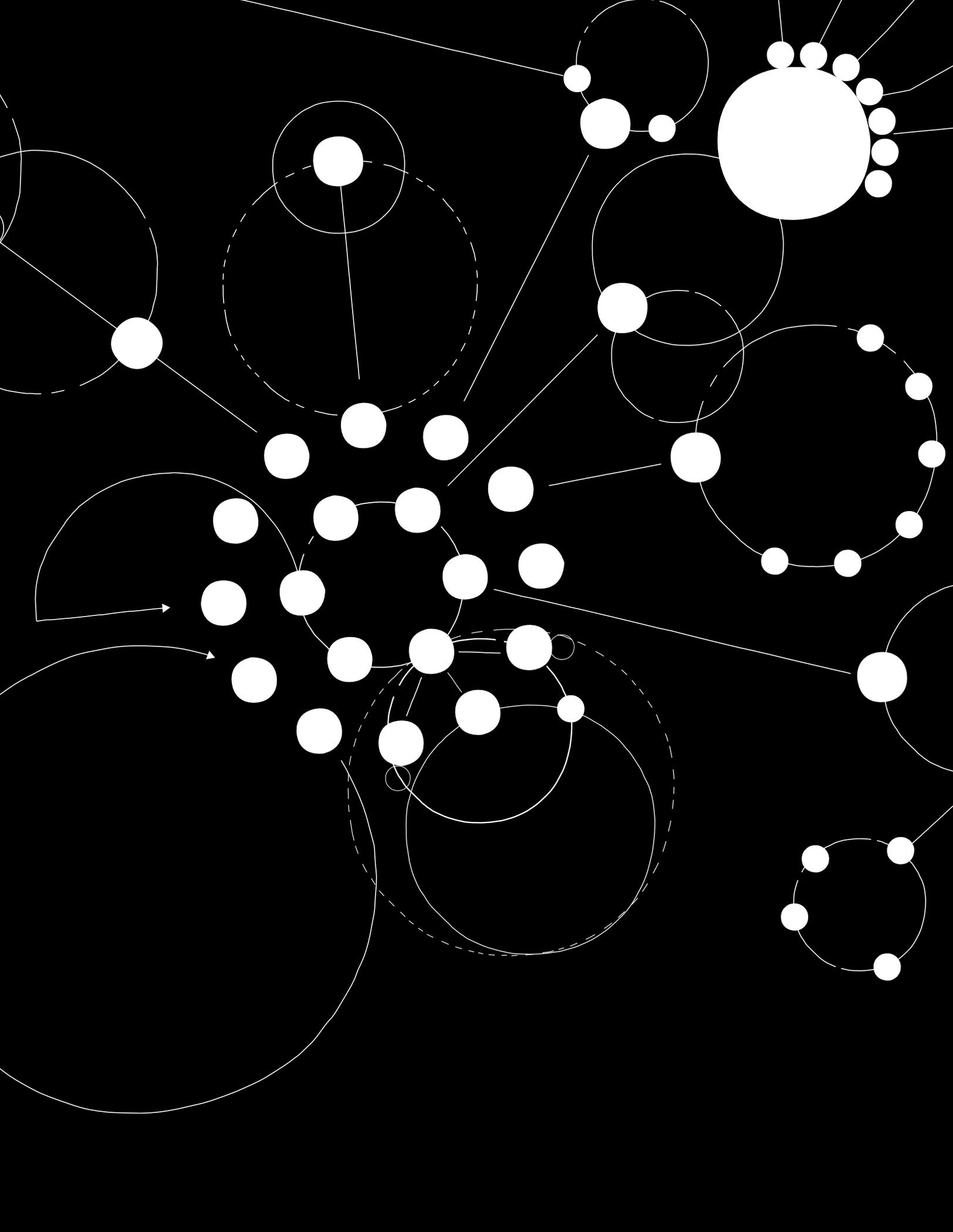


# A THEORY OF CHANGE

With abundant gratitude for the survivors that have shared with us their wisdom and imaginations, the advocates that have offered their expertise and lived experience, and those who have harmed who have come to the table in the light of accountability.



# A CRISIS OF THOUGHT



MYTH 255
DISCLOSURE TIMELINES
It happened 30 years ago. It's kind of suspect that they're making these accusations now, it seems like they have another agenda.
MYTH 764
THE GOOD-BAD BINARY
He couldn't have done it. I know him. He's actually a really good guy. Only bad people do that kind of thing.
MYTH 80
VICTIM BLAMING
If someone willingly gets drunk, then ends up getting raped—they are responsible for what happens to them. It was their choice to drink.
MYTH 5
PUNISHMENT WORKS

MYTH 56
TONIC IMMOBILITY
They didn't even try to fight back, so clearly on some level, they kind of wanted it, or at least they didn't mind so much.
MYTH 475
BLAMING THE VICTIM
It's her choice - if she's choosing to stay in a relationship with someone who beats her, that's on her. You can't have much sympathy for that.
MYTH 600
RACIST ADULTIFICATION
But black girls are more experienced, they're stronger and they can deal better with these kinds of things.
MYTH 995
THEY COULD LEAVE

MYTH 4819
TRAUMA PRESENTATION
I saw their interview on TV. They were smiling and almost laughing when they told their story, but they didn't cry at all. I feel like they're lying.
MYTH 12
SEXISM + GENDER BIAS
Guys can't really be "raped." If they were able to get it up, then they clearly wanted it to happen on some level.
MYTH 303
A JUST SYSTEM
They were acquitted in a court of law, so clearly they didn't do anything wrong. We have processes like this for a reason, to be fair.
MYTH 8421
TRANSPHOBIA

# THE DANGEROUS LANDSCAPE OF MYTH AND MISUNDERSTANDING

We know sexual, intimate and gender-based violence is a problem, but as a nation, haven't begun to solve it. We've heard the stats, we see the victims, but we struggle to understand its root system. We still greet every new disclosure as isolated, unexpected and inevitably tragic, without taking collective responsibility, drawing the connections, hearing the relevant voices, visualizing the big picture, and investigating the flawed foundations on which we have built our responses.

For survivors, when the violence ends, a different process begins. Survivors are forced to navigate the vast socio-cultural, economic, physiological, spiritual and relational impacts that the trauma creates, and they have to do so in a cultural climate that blames victims, normalizes violence, tolerates violation and doesn't hold those who commit harm accountable.

But there is critical insight available to us when we look at myth acceptance. With sexual violence, the associated myths are referred to as "rape myths," and endorsement of them is called RMA (rape myth acceptance).<sup>1</sup>

Over 80% of survivors of sexual violence know the person who harmed them,<sup>2</sup> yet

there remains the social perception that rape is committed by strangers hiding in dark alleys. Hundreds of other myths are perpetuated by the media and our society. These myths, ranging from the overt to the seemingly benign, blame victims, empathize with perpetrators, imply consent, and question victim credibility.

There are generally speaking two categories of rape myth: situational and attitudinal.<sup>3</sup>

Situational rape myths refer to how we think about the crime, including who commits it, its victims, and when/where it happens. Situational myths influence how we as a society address the violation, and ultimately, resource allocation, media representation, justice processes and community response.

Attitudinal myths attempt to explain (incorrectly) why intimate violence occurs. They reflect our implicit biases and social constructs, the false or stereotypical beliefs held around gender, intimacy, sexual orientation, violence, and the people involved, and are linked to cultural beliefs about race, class, religion, and age. Attitudinal myths influence how we as a culture will address the people affected. They contribute to a social climate that

is hostile toward survivors, sympathetic towards people who harm, and tolerant of interpersonal violence.

These myths and their impact can be measured.

The most commonly used myth acceptance scale for sexual violence is the Bumby RAPE Scale.<sup>4</sup> It is a 36-question self-reporting tool reflective of attitudinal rape myths. Research utilizing this tool correlates the degree to which one endorses common rape myths, and one's likelihood to commit harm, excuse harm done by others, and endure greater trauma if surviving harm oneself. When the Bumby Scale is tested alongside scales measuring racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ageism and religious intolerance, we see that people who believe rape myths also endorse other oppressive beliefs and attitudes.<sup>A</sup>

Toxic myths have so much in common because they grow from the same garden, seeds we have nurtured in our nation for centuries: founding principles of white body supremacy,<sup>5</sup> unconsensual colonialism, state sanctioned violence, capitalism and transactional relation. Dismantling our cultural acceptance of this deep patriarchal violence<sup>6</sup> is no small feat. These mythologies have informed our environs of communication, justice, community and well being, and will shape the trajectory of a survivors healing journey, and their community's ability, or inability, to process and prevent injustice.

The implications of this research for healing, prevention and cultural transformation are profound. If we can shift our cultural orientations towards intimate harm by targeting, studying and dismantling the mythologies that underpin them, then we can see a significant reduction in incidences of intimate harm and better responses to its victims.

## MYTH SHAPES SURVIVOR HEALING

- Whether a survivor will self identify and seek support for the long term biological, social and economic impacts of their trauma
- How isolated a survivor becomes in their healing process and community relationships
- Whether a survivor blames themselves, resulting in an increased recovery time
- Whether a survivor's disclosures to those they are closest to will result in dismissal, minimization, blame or retraumatization
- How our society imagines the identity and behavior of victims, and allocates belief and resources accordingly
- Whether a survivor will be terrorized or harmed further during attempts to find support or seek justice by first responders, police, justice professionals, advocates

## MYTH SHAPES VIOLENCE AND JUSTICE

- Whether one is likely to cause intimate harm to another person, or tolerate similar violence in others
- Whether one is likely to align not just with intimate violence, but also endorse other forms of systemic oppression like racism, sexism and homophobia
- Whether people who harm will be held accountable in their community, or even have their violence acknowledged
- Whether the processes we use for justice incentivize denial, and to what degree they function to produce truth, address needs, create accountability and prevent harm
- How the media represents intimate violence, and ultimately influences criminal justice proceedings
- What mitigation and prevention strategies we as a society choose to resource and implement, and whether or not they work

**A** WE ARE AWARE OF THEORETICAL LIMITATIONS OF RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE (RMA), HOWEVER, WE AGREE WITH THE MANY SCHOLARS THAT SUGGEST THAT RAPE MYTH RESEARCH CONTRIBUTES SIGNIFICANTLY TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF RAPE AND ITS IMPACT ON VICTIMS/SURVIVORS.

# DISMANTLING PROBLEMATIC FOUNDATIONS

To combat the myths and -isms that we face, we need to unlearn and relearn. But to do that, we first need to understand how we learn, how we access that process of relearning, and how that in turn informs our moral compass that drives our beliefs and actions. From that understanding, we employ the most effective pedagogies for learning and integrate them into our work.

Our minds are formed and re-formed based on the experiences throughout our lives. In other words, our minds are malleable. Surviving violence transforms the brain, just as intergenerational trauma transforms the DNA. As a people who have been enculturated into this mythology, unlearning the neural, associative and experiential pathways that have already been laid down in our brains is difficult, though not impossible. Studies in brain plasticity<sup>A</sup>, neurogenesis<sup>B</sup>, and

the epigenetics<sup>C</sup> of learning have shown that it's possible to rewire the adult brain through experience and environment.<sup>7</sup> In fact, we can see these changes in offenders who take part in restorative processes.<sup>8</sup> and in classrooms that center students and value equity<sup>9</sup>.

Given that our brains are capable of learning, unlearning and relearning, the next question then becomes, what is the most effective, powerful ways to learn, grow and transform our approach to healing and justice?

Healing Courage's pedagogical approach draws from these characteristics, as well as contemporary constructivist educational approaches with origins in existing methodologies and age-old ideas and grounded in human-centered design, authenticity and connection to community.

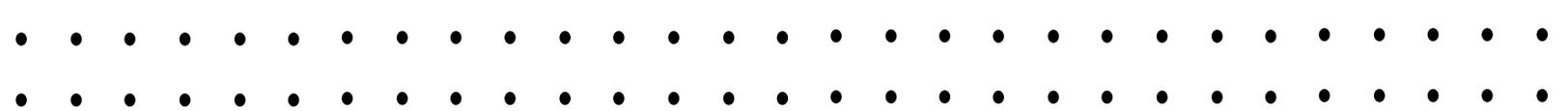
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**A** BRAIN PLASTICITY (OR NEUROPLASTICITY) REFERS TO THE BRAIN'S ABILITY TO CHANGE AND ADAPT AS A RESULT OF EXPERIENCE.

**B** NEUROGENESIS IS THE PROCESS BY WHICH NEW NEURONS ARE FORMED IN THE BRAIN

---

**C** EPIGENETICS IS THE STUDY OF CHANGES IN ORGANISMS BROUGHT ABOUT BY MODIFICATION OF GENE EXPRESSION, RATHER THAN BY ALTERATION OF THE GENETIC CODE IN THE FORM OF DNA



# DRAWING FROM HEALING JUSTICE AND PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Our angle of approach draws from both education and healing justice. Why? Because it's these pedagogies that focus on prevention, communication and transformation.<sup>10</sup>

Education is preventative, and prevention is economical. "On average, American states spend \$88,000 to incarcerate a young person, but allot an average of \$10,000 to educate them."<sup>11</sup> It costs far less to educate, than it does to mitigate and litigate. But the type of education matters. The source of information, the power in the room, the context behind the conversation, the voices allowed and the questions asked all flavor the level of authentic transformation in a growth process. We have to use strategies and methodologies that recognize inequity, address blind spots, value every voice in the room and make space to critique the norm.

The criminal-legal system and prison industrial complex are deeply discriminatory and frequently terrorize and abuse victims until they are alienated from systemic support entirely. Alternative accountability processes and cultural practices, like indigenous peacemaking and circle conferencing, and restorative and transformative justice, center on anti-oppressive values with the priority of harm reduction over retributive punishment. What does that look like in practice? While criminal justice represents the state and asks what law was broken and who needs to be punished, restorative justice asks: who was harmed? What do they need? Who needs to be part of the conversation?<sup>12</sup> Transformative approaches address the relationships violated, but also the conditions in which the harm occurred, asking: what was the ecosystem of values and structures that led to the harm in the first place? How can they be transformed? Thanks to generations of work by communities that have been marginalized and First Nation wisdom, we can draw on this landscape of accountability processes and relational practice to transform our culture of communication, conflict resolution, belief and collective relation.

We work at the intersection of these worlds, especially because they do have so much in common. In designing our approach to tackling myth in the work of deep healing, we channel and practice these processes and pedagogies addressing the deep personal, cultural, and institutional mythology we face.

**WHAT THESE WORLDS HAVE IN COMMON:  
A VISUAL MAP OF THEIR INTERSECTING VALUES AND PRACTICES**

# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

## WHITE WESTERN PEACE CHURCH ORIGIN

DEVELOPED AS AN ADJUNCT OR DIVERSION APPROACH TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE BY MENNONITE LEADERS

**REDRESS OR REPARATION**  
THOSE WHO HAVE HARMED SEEK TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE THAT WAS CREATED

**HUMANISTIC**  
ALL PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF HARMING AND BEING HARMED, AND NO ONE ENTERS VIOLENCE FOR THE FIRST TIME HAVING COMMITTED IT

**BE ACCOUNTABLE**  
TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR BEHAVIOR, OWN YOUR ACTIONS AND THEIR REPERCUSSIONS

**ACKNOWLEDGE IMPACT**  
WORK TO UNDERSTAND THE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF OUR ACTIONS

**CENTER THOSE HARMED**  
THOSE MOST IMPACTED BY THE HARM SHOULD BE AT THE CENTER OF DEVELOPING ITS RESOLUTIONS

# CIRCLE KEEPING + PEACEMAKING

**BUILD RELATION**  
BUILDING GOOD RELATION IS EVEN MORE CRITICAL THAN ACCOMPLISHING AN OUTCOME

**COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY**  
HARM DOES NOT HAPPEN IN A VACUUM, SO NORMS, VALUES AND STRUCTURES NEED TO BE EXAMINED AND RE-ESTABLISHED

PEACEMAKING, CIRCLE PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE ARE INTEGRAL LIFEWAY TRADITIONS AMONG THE ANISHINAABE, TLINGIT, NAVAJO, MAORI, IGBO, AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN CULTURES, WHO HAVE CULTIVATED THESE VALUES AND APPLIED THIS APPROACH TO INJUSTICES ON THE INTERPERSONAL, COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL SCALE

## HARM IS A VIOLATION OF RELATIONSHIPS

**LEARNER CENTERED**  
EQUALITY OF WISDOM; THE LEARNING FACILITATOR IS A GUIDE ON THE SIDE, NOT A SAGE ON THE STAGE

**INQUIRY BASED**  
ASKING QUESTIONS, NURTURING INVESTIGATION, CREATING SPACE FOR DEFIANCE

# EDUCATION

**PROJECT BASED**  
PRACTICAL PUBLIC PRODUCTS FOR REAL WORLD APPLICATION

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE**  
CULTURAL CONTEXT IS CRITICAL FOR RELATION AND RETENTION; THE IDENTITIES + STRUCTURES OF POWER IN THE ROOM SHAPE THE GROWTH

**ACCESS EQUITY**  
ADDRESS THE BASIC NEEDS TOO, REMOVE THE BARRIERS

**DESIGN THINKING**  
EMPATHY, IDEATION, ITERATION, FEEDBACK

**TRUTH TELLING**  
SPEAK HONESTLY, AUTHENTICALLY AND VULNERABLY FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT**  
BOTH HEALING AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIRE LONG TERM COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

**RESOURCING**  
SURVIVORS NEED RESOURCES TO HEAL, PEOPLE WHO HAVE HARMED NEED RESOURCES TO PREVENT FURTHER HARM

**ENGAGE IN DIFFICULT DIALOGUE**  
ESTABLISHING SHARED VALUES CREATES SPACE TO HAVE CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

**ADDRESS THE ECOSYSTEM**  
TRANSFORM THE CONDITIONS THAT CREATED THE HARM BY RESOURCING THE ROOT SYSTEM

**CONFRONT ALL INJUSTICE**  
THE OPPRESSION THAT OPERATES ON THE SMALL SCALE OPERATES AT THE LARGE; RESTORATIVE CULTURE CAN'T LIVE ALONGSIDE AUTHORITARIAN

# TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

## INDIGENOUS ORIGIN

**CON**

# **RESEARCH**

Our three-fold approach advocates for survivor wisdom, trauma literacy, systemic innovation, and transformative justice - solutions to the status quo that address both individual and collective harm.

# **THE WORK**

Our work for the next five years is centered on three critical manifestations targeting authentic transformation of cultural mythology: community conversations, survivor-centered research and educational multimedia content.

**CONVERSATION**

**AMPLIFICATION**

# THREE ACTIVATIONS

## CONVERSATION

### CONCENTRIC CIRCLES WITH SURVIVORS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

We facilitate community conversations with survivors, collaboratively making meaning of our traumatic experiences. Hosted in partnership with local anti-violence community organizations, these meta-cognitive sessions co-explore the impacts of our trauma, identify patterns between our survival experiences, dismantle the myths & misunderstandings we've encountered, and reimagine the course of our healing with creative systemic interventions. Survivors can invite allies, family, partners, first responders, advocates, community decision makers, and people who have committed harm to engage in vulnerable constructive discourse. Scaffolded with learning resources, these community building opportunities embolden trauma vocabulary, practice radical vulnerability, increase community accountability, and foster survivor imagination and systemic change.

## RESEARCH

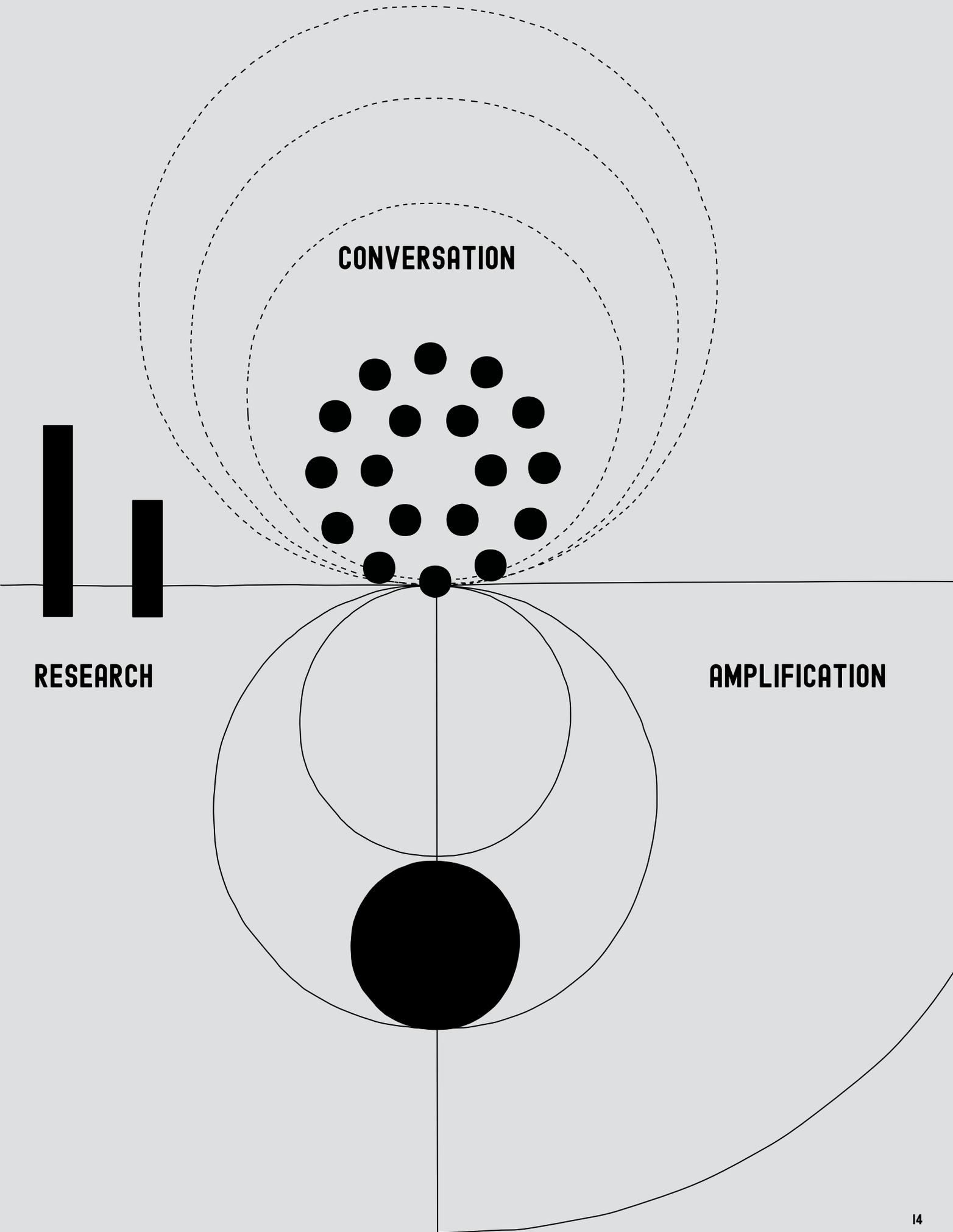
### RESEARCH ON HOW SURVIVORS DEFINE HEALING AND JUSTICE

We carry out groundbreaking, survivor-centered research, that actively targets and includes traditionally underrepresented populations, and asks critical, overlooked questions. Our research findings will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals and presented at professional conferences across the country. Our findings will contribute to the pool of evidence and precedent on which we can base a new landscape of community-based services of healing and justice that is inclusive of all survivors.

## AMPLIFICATION

### CONTENT CREATION AND COMMON KNOWLEDGE EXPLAINER CAMPAIGNS

Our media dimension both amplifies and informs, leading the conversation away from harmful mythology, while empowering the public with a deeper understanding of intimate harm and the reality of its impacts. Our creative team not only captures our conversations, conducts survivor interviews and assists the research team in data visualization, but produces dynamic short form educational content around trauma science, myth demystification, research amplification and how-we-got-here histories. These graphic and video campaigns, developed in collaboration with survivors, educators, researchers and media professionals, will explore, explain, dismantle and debunk the science and social paradigms behind trauma and our culture of response, making trauma truths accessible and common knowledge.



# CONVERSATION | CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Just sitting down to talk about our experiences may seem obvious, but it's rarer than you'd think. Conversations about intimate violence are plagued with taboo, awkwardness, terror, embarrassment, vulnerability, shame, blame and minimization. It's hard to talk about, and most people don't have a lot of practice.

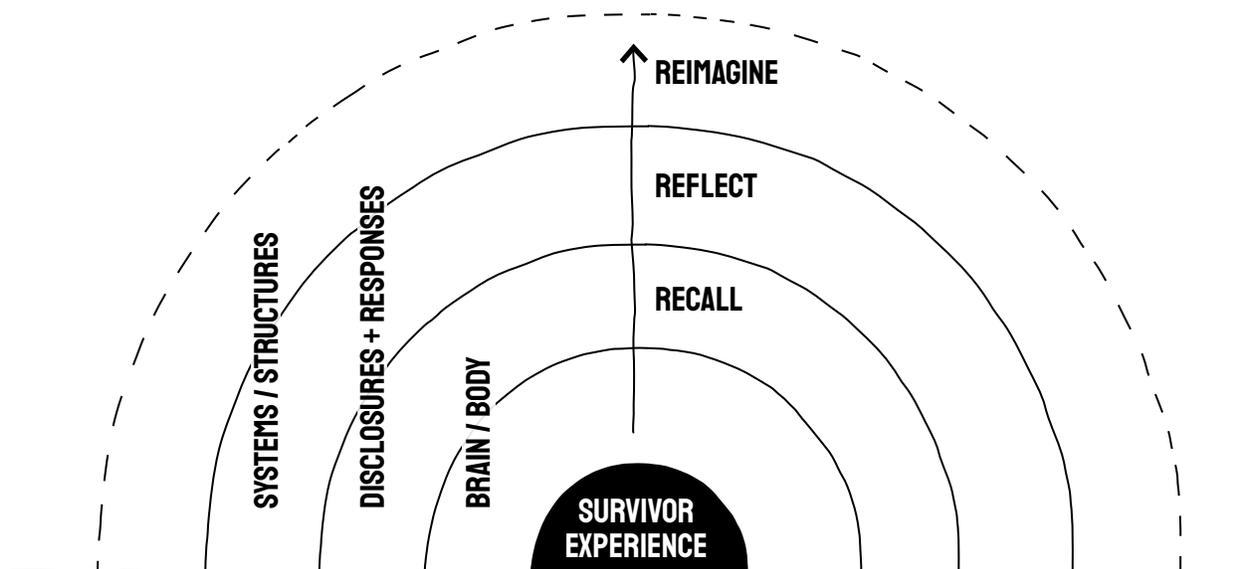
Concentric Circle conversations will interrupt this status quo. They'll embolden participants with the tools and vocabulary to talk about their physical and social experiences, rebuild the connection between survivor and community through bearing witness, and turn pain into power when testimony is empathetically experienced by community and decision makers.

Community norms, discussion topics, conversation practices and learning resources are customized to the community and the conversation, but the arc generally guides participants through the layers of their own experiences, from the impact of their trauma on the brain and body, to their community's response to their experience, to the systems and institutions for healing of justice they encountered or hoped for. Survivors resonate with current events and the triggers in the world around them, within the context of their ongoing survival

of the traumas they've experienced. They share their healing wisdom and common injustices, and finally, innovate and reimagine the resources and cultural climate that could have reshaped their journeys of healing and justice.

These deep group acknowledgment opportunities often take place over multiple or ongoing sessions, or can be held all in one day. In many cases, survivors are given the opportunity to invite relevant community members in stages to the conversation: friends, partners, family, allies, advocates, mentors, first responders, community influencers or people who have harmed or been harmed. These invited participants get the rare opportunity to hear intimate truths and survival wisdom, and engage in authentic active acknowledgment of what has happened in their community.

In addition to Concentric Circle facilitators, conversations include community partner facilitators and a wellbeing advocate, as well as conversational and follow up resources sent to participants for continued support, discussion and learning. Conversations are documented with consent and used to elevate the voices of survivors.



**IN THE LAST TWO YEARS  
WE'VE HOSTED OVER 25  
IN PERSON AND ONLINE  
CONVERSATIONS  
IN 3 STATES**

## NOT YOUR AVERAGE SUPPORT GROUP

### WE CENTER SURVIVOR WISDOM

Conversations are facilitated by survivors, and with survivors. We value the lived experience and hard earned wisdom of survivors and want their needs and agendas to lead the collective conversation.

### WE HONOR THE CULTURE OF EVERY COMMUNITY

By partnering with existing community coalitions, customizing, collaborating, and co-facilitating we can offer more culturally calibrated and intersection-specific discussions and experiences across different communities.

### WE EMPHASIZE EMPATHY, VALIDATION, ACKNOWLEDGMENT + ACCOUNTABILITY

Our spaces are for practicing vulnerability, validation, and radical listening, relating to and honoring one another's stories, struggles and solutions.

### WE DISMANTLE BARRIERS

Conversations are always free, and we problem solve access barriers for participants around transportation, child and elder care, language, technology and safe physical and digital space. We even compensate the partner org for their collaboration time.

### WE CREATE SPACE FOR RADICAL INNOVATION

We foster systemic critique informed by our struggles, recognizing the structures, values and norms at play in our victimization, to reimagine interventions that could have changed the course of our healing.

### WE CULTIVATE COMMUNITY INVITATIONS

When survivors share, it matters who is listening. We consider together who needs to be in the room, not just those closest to the survivor or situation, but also advocates, responders, community members and power holders, who have the capacity and responsibility to transform the conditions surrounding the harm.

### WE'RE HERE FOR THE LONG HAUL

We develop long-term relationships with regions and partners, and function to support survivors in the long-term, when resources for trauma typically dry up.

## CONCENTRIC CIRCLES "FOR THE RECORD" PILOT LOS ANGELES, CA

**PARTNER** [Nous Tous Gallery](#)  
Artist run gallery and community space

**COMMUNITY** Los Angeles survivors, their allies, and friends of the Nous Tous social space

**LOCATION** Nous Tous Gallery, Los Angeles

**DATES** 10/23/18  
10/28/18

**DURATION** 4 hrs per event,  
2 conversation  
events

## ACCOUNTABILITY CIRCLES VICARIOUS RESTORATIVE DIALOGUE

**PARTNER** [Oregon Center for Change](#)  
Group psychological treatment center

**COMMUNITY** Vicarious restorative discussion with survivors from HC staff and people with sex offenses mandated to treatment

**LOCATION** Oregon Center for Change, Oregon

**DATES** 1/14/19  
1/15/19  
8/5/19  
8/6/19

**DURATION** 2 hrs each  
7 conversation  
groups

## CONCENTRIC CIRCLES [ENGLISH + ESPAÑOL] SAN FRANCISCO, CA

**PARTNER** [W.O.M.A.N., Inc.](#)  
SF Domestic Violence Organization

**COMMUNITY** Sessions for English and Spanish speaking W.O.M.A.N., Inc. clients and community

**LOCATION** The Women's Building, San Francisco

**DATES** 11/23/19 (eng)  
11/24/19 (esp)

**DURATION** 4 hr single  
event

## CONCENTRIC CIRCLES SERIES SERIES FOR W.O.M.A.N INC. ADVOCATES

**PARTNER** [W.O.M.A.N., Inc.](#)  
SF Bay Area Domestic Violence Agency

**COMMUNITY** Developed specifically for W.O.M.A.N., Inc. advocates as part of volunteer training

**LOCATION** Web platform (Zoom room with call in)

**DATES** 7/23/20  
7/30/20  
8/6/20

**DURATION** 1.5 hrs each  
3 part series

## CONCENTRIC CIRCLES SERIES JEFFERSON COUNTY, WA

**PARTNER** [Dove House Advocacy Services](#)  
Jefferson County Anti-Violence Agency

**COMMUNITY** Washington survivors, their allies and community members

**LOCATION** Web platform [Zoom room with call in]

**DATES** Every Tues  
Began 8/18/20

**DURATION** 1.5 hrs each  
15 part series

# RESEARCH

# FOCUS GROUPS

Although the literature on post-assault recovery has advanced, sexual assault survivors are still often studied as a homogeneous population, and very little is known about the long-term healing processes from the survivor perspective.

While we know about immediate or crisis based health services, few studies have examined if and how survivors benefit from long-term community care services and resources during the years following a violation.<sup>13</sup> This is especially true for Black, Indigenous and People of Color, trans folks and individuals that identify as LGBTQIA, male-identified survivors, survivors of incest or child sexual abuse, undocumented survivors, survivors engaged in sex work, without housing or who have been formerly incarcerated. Furthermore, we know little about what "justice" means to survivors and how that definition and access to it may impact their recovery.<sup>14</sup>

Intimate violence is characterized by underreporting and case attrition. Victims who decide to report their victimization often begin

a lengthy process that involves continuous interactions with various criminal justice officials, including law enforcement, social service providers, and attorneys. Throughout the process, many victims encounter individuals who are skeptical about their claims, diminish their credibility, are insensitive, minimize their experience, or are dismissive of them entirely. This is such a pervasive experience that it is often referred to as secondary victimization, the second rape or the second assault.<sup>15</sup>

Although there has been an increase in the number of law and policy interventions designed to address the sexual violence 'justice gap',<sup>16</sup> the gap persists. Many survivors are left without a sense of receiving justice through our conventional legal system. Studies with survivors have shown that they are more concerned with treatment than punishment, reconnecting with their communities, preventing sex offenses in the future, having a voice in the dialogue with criminal justice professionals, and recognition related to the actions of individual perpetrators, friends, families, and communities.<sup>17</sup>



**OUT OF EVERY 1000 SEXUAL ASSAULTS, 995 INSTANCES WILL NEVER BE ADDRESSED BY THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM**

**WE INVOLVE SURVIVORS  
AT EVERY LEVEL**

Survivors are often the subjects of research, but rarely the surveyors. We recognize the need for and benefit of survivor perspectives in all aspects of the research process including as advisors on design and delivery decisions, planning and decision-making, as lead researchers, data analysts, and in the dissemination of research results (citation). Our research team is headed up by a "survivor scholar", a rape survivor and sex crime researcher, who offers unique insight into trauma sensitive, healing centered scholarship.

**WE FOCUS ON THOSE MOST  
IMPACTED, AND THE LEAST REPRESENTED**

In addition to survivors, we'll also hold targeted focus groups of individuals who are either completely ignored or targeted and terrorized by the traditional justice system, and have not had a voice in the development of legislation, public policy, or treatment and healing modalities. These will include targeted groups of survivors who are undocumented immigrants, sex workers, transgender, unhoused or formerly incarcerated, survivor family members, friends and community, and those who have perpetrated intimate harm and their communities as well.

**OUR CENTRAL RESEARCH INQUIRIES**

Our central research questions will include: What does justice look like for survivors of intimate harm? What do survivors need throughout their healing process? What did their communities and families offer in terms of support that they found healing? What was offered that was hurtful? What systems for justice, if any, could they access? What experiences did they face in navigating them? While the primary goal is to better understand the long-term healing needs of survivors, the research will also evaluate the role that myth plays on survivor experiences, and will likely vary by social location.

**WE ARE RESPONSIVE TO THE DATA,  
AND ACTIVE IN ITS DISSEMINATION**

As we grow our data we will use it to calibrate our own programming, media and outreach, and share our findings with published journals and at national and international conferences. The scholarly publications will reach professionals in the fields of criminology, sociology, social work, law, and psychology, and will be shared internationally with both practitioners and academics. The research results will be presented at conferences attended by academics, researchers, policymakers, students, law enforcement professionals, and treatment professionals.

**WE ADDRESS INTERSECTIONALITY  
AND UNDERREPRESENTATION**

Treating survivors as a homogeneous population erases the intersectional dynamics of overlapping systemic oppression. A critical dimension of our research explores how healing and justice intersect with race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability, gender identification and sexual orientation. Just as critically, we recognize that focus group facilitators need be reflective of study participants, engendering safe and constructive discourse and honest socio-cultural critique.

**WE LOOK AT  
HEALING IN THE LONG TERM**

We will follow-up with the initial focus group members to track their healing experiences along the way and to document how their perspectives on justice and healing remain stable or change over time. We're also interested in expanding the work to include researching the impact of anti-myth education on other community stakeholders, looking at barriers and intrinsic bias in first responders, and partner with ongoing research in restorative justice and offender recidivism.

# AMPLIFICATION

# CONTENT CAMPAIGNS

Rape culture is widely defined as a set of values and beliefs that provide an environment conducive to rape,<sup>18</sup> where “rape is often not acknowledged as a crime and its victims are frequently blamed... for their own violation.”<sup>19</sup>

We consume the messages of rape culture day in and day out. In politics, film, advertising, social media, in the news, and through the internet myths are disseminated that normalize violence, minimize responsibility, and criticize survivor behavior.

These narratives flavor the conversations we have, the stories we share, the jokes we tell, the excuses we make, the way we respond to harm, the norms we tolerate and the solutions we call on. To change the cultural response to intimate harm we have to transform the content of the conversation.

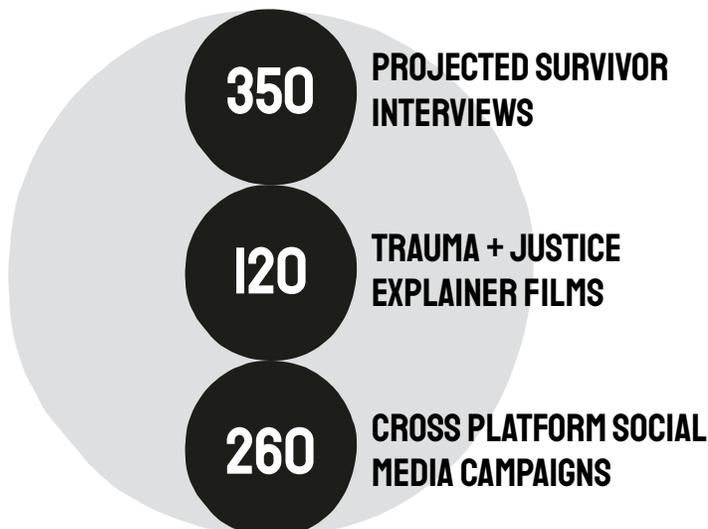
In the first quantitative analysis of rape culture in the U.S., studying media bias in news reporting of sexual violence, researchers found that

media coverage that propagates rape myths fundamentally and influentially shapes the fate of victims, perpetrators, and law enforcement. Rape myth propagation in the media “predicts both the frequency of rape and its pursuit through the local criminal justice system. In jurisdictions where rape culture was more prevalent, there were more documented rape cases, [and] authorities were less vigilant in pursuing them.”<sup>20</sup>

The content of our conversations impacts the outcome of the harm at hand. Rape culture is perpetuated by mythology and misunderstanding, so to right this ship we need to hear more directly and more often from survivors themselves, and increase the visibility of non-binary community approaches to healing, harm reduction and justice.

In response to this climate, we aim to feed the conversation with the right kind of information. Our media dimension seeks to amplify survivors and inform their communities, arming the public with a deeper understanding of intimate harm, the reality of its impacts, and community based options for healing and justice.

## IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE ARE PREPARED TO ACCOMPLISH



As a coalition of survivors, we’re all too familiar with the tendency to respond to our disclosures with questions about the details of the violation, rather than asking us what we need now to heal. As a culture, we are trained by cop dramas, forensic shows, true crime and reality judge TV that we are all entitled to play detective, judge and jury. For survivors, this line of questioning is invalidating, retraumatizing and ultimately unhelpful. Though false claims are virtually non-existent statistically\*, the public is still biased towards doubt and disbelief, especially when the victim is a person of color\*.

So we enter the conversation believing survivors, with the assumption that trauma is evidence enough. We focus on amplifying the hard-earned wisdom of people who are creatively surviving the short and long-term impacts of their varied and intersectional experiences with harm. We’ve found that while our traumas might be different, our survival has a lot in common.

## COMMON KNOWLEDGE CAMPAIGNS

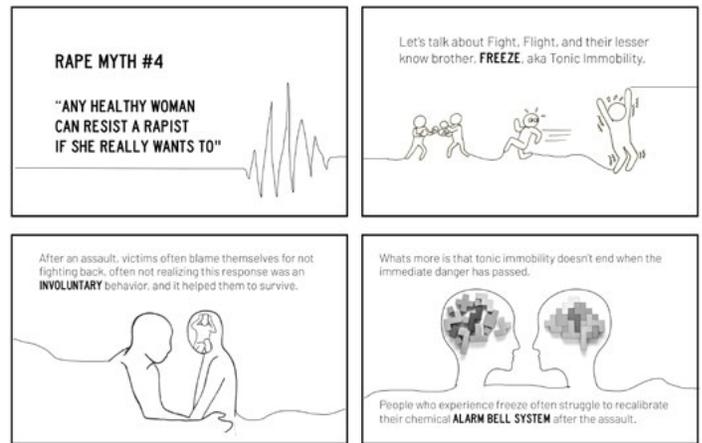
Utilizing social media, graphics, gifs, videos, stories, shorts and podcasts, we'll deep dive into trauma science, how-we-got-here histories, systemic paradigm explainers, and myth busters, amplifying emerging research, Indigenous wisdom and survivor voices while connecting the dots between challenging experiences and underlying "-isms."

## AMPLIFYING SURVIVOR VOICES

In addition to recording Consentric Circles, we create opportunities to follow up with interested survivors to schedule individual interviews. These direct-to-camera testimonials and audio sessions about self-determined healing and justice provide a chance for survivors to expand on what came up in the circles and stand as a powerful archive of demands and visions.

## RAISING UP THE RESEARCH

We work to make emerging scholarly information more widely accessible and engaging. We raise up advocate wisdom, community wisdom, community justice initiatives, and our own peer-reviewed research and that of other colleagues. We transform long-form texts, often hidden behind costly access walls, into widely available infographics, videos and ability friendly visuals.



## STYLE

### VOICE AND TONE

- our is style simple, genderless, minimal
- our voice is about amplifying, not advertising
- awareness raising, movement building
- anchored in our shared humanity, with recognition of the role of balancing empathy and common ground with fact presentation in effective educational content<sup>21</sup>

### AESTHETIC

- we exist in the landscape of "explainer" tv, adding history, depth and dimension to topics we understand only at a surface level
- we combine live action voice over and real survivor testimony, evocative data visualization, empathic animation and educative motion graphics, amplifying with simple language, relatable metaphor, and powerful data

### PRODUCTION

- we value and practice consensual post production, consulting consenting survivors throughout production and post, clarifying our intentions in the use of their stories, and empowering survivors and partners to use our content for their own posts or disclosure processes

### COLLABORATION

- every partnership is an ethical and visual collaboration - we build our communication universe together, in the language of the community, adapted to their outreach channels, giving their organizers and advocates the final word

### REPRESENTATION

- we elevate the voices of survivors you don't typically hear from, prioritizing marginalized and intersectional voices and experiences
- we work to rebalanced the outsized representation of white cisgendered female survivors, who are statistically not the most impacted by intimate violence, but who often take center stage

# A VALUES DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

## ALEXA SARDINA RESEARCH

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- Assistant professor in the Division of Criminal Justice at California State University, Sacramento
- Research focuses on the intersection of sexual violence and restorative justice
- Co-host of Beyond Fear: The Sex Crimes Podcast
- Co-founder of the It Happened to Alexa Foundation-Co-founded the It Happened to Alexa Foundation

## STEPHANIE BURNS PROGRAM DIRECTION

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- intersection of education, social justice & human potential
- survivor & public speaker, community leader
- educational consultant, developing programs, trainings and workshops throughout the country
- 25+ years in experiential education and inquiry and project based design, implementation, coaching and facilitation
- Founder of Surviving & Thriving, a community event & fundraiser in celebration and honor of survivors

## ALEXIS ROSE CREATIVE DIRECTION

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- multi-disciplinary designer and visual artist, work exhibited throughout the US
- over a decade in film design and direction, photography, visual marketing, graphic and web design, and social media production
- education in sustainability, restorative design and sacred space
- survivor, public speaker, advocate, circle keeper, and activist, anchored in personal experience with trauma and transformative justice

# **HEALING COURAGE IS A GROWING COALITION OF SURVIVORS COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE TOXIC MYTHOLOGY AROUND INTIMATE VIOLATION, GENDER VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARM, BY CENTERING THE WISDOM OF SURVIVORS AND REDEFINING OUR COLLECTIVE APPROACHES TO HEALING AND JUSTICE.**

We've designed an organizational structure and culture grounded in our lived experiences and expertise as survivors, educators, researchers, designers, activists and advocates.

From budget allocation to partner collaboration, in community norms, conflicts, and creation, Healing Courage fuses equitable principles and practices that are both transformative and human-centered into everything we envision and realize.

We demonstrate alignment with these practices across all functions of the organization and the systems constructed within, including our horizontal leadership model, our equitable hiring practices to reduce implicit bias, our evidence-based performance indicators and our innovative educational pedagogy.

Our founding team embodies a deep commitment to serve, learn and grow, a drive for excellence, impact and results, and an understanding of the care and compassion for self and others that's required to carry out systemic change with courage, integrity, accountability, and joy. We search for this shared alignment and cultural consistency in our partners, advisors, funders and collaborators - centering the community expertise for grassroots success.

As circle keepers of various backgrounds, it is our priority to cultivate spaces and conversations that allow for deep levels of cultural critique, relation building and awareness of overlapping forms of oppression, while holding trauma and acknowledging our complex body positionality within those systems. We know that non-profit culture can often default to white superiority norms, credentialism, and capitalistic hierarchy. To create research, discourse and creative environments that can hold, acknowledge, celebrate and understand intersectional experiences, we'll use hiring guidelines that prioritize staff that can operate from an anti-oppression lens with authentic connections to the communities we work with, establishing culturally relevant accountability procedures, and cultivating decolonized forms of engagement.<sup>22</sup> Building a relational culture in which folks are seen, heard & honored for their lived experiences, contributions and unique strengths & perspectives is our imperative, responsibility and honor.

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# HEALING COURAGE

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